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**OH 1/40**

Full transcript of an interview with

**ETHEL LINDA WILSON**

on 25 June 1986

by Beth M. Robertson

Recording available on cassette

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Abbreviations: The interviewee's alterations may be identified by their initials in insertions in the transcript.

Punctuation: Square bracket [ ] indicate material in the transcript that does not occur on the original tape recording. This is usually words, phrases or sentences which the interviewee has inserted to clarify or correct meaning. These are not necessarily differentiated from insertions the interviewer or by Somerville Collection staff which are either minor (a linking word for clarification) or clearly editorial. Relatively insignificant word substitutions or additions by the interviewee as well as minor deletions of words or phrases are often not indicated in the interest of readability. Extensive additional material supplied by the interviewee is usually placed in footnotes at the bottom of the relevant page rather than in square brackets within the text.

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

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

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that it has not been possible to verify to date.

Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print**.

Discrepancies between transcript and tape: This proofread transcript represents the authoritative version of this oral history interview. 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 tape. See the Punctuation section above.) Minor discrepancies of grammar and sentence structure made in the interest of readability can be ignored but significant changes such as deletion 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 any other form of audio publication.

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**Collateral Material** in File 8619 includes:  
Photographs 8619A-C

**Cover Illustration** The Wilkinson family of Bordertown in about 1915. Ethel is being held up on the seat by her father.

### PREFACE

Ethel Wilson (nee Wilkinson) was born in 1913 at Coomandook, the fifth of eight children. Ethel's mother was an untrained midwife. Her father, a shearer and labourer, took the family to Bordertown in about 1915 and then in about 1924 went on to the land at Yumali. However the first venture, a share farm, soon failed and the second could not support the family as the poor seasons of the 1920s continued. Ethel began school at Bordertown (where a special train trip was arranged to take the local children - and many of their parents - to see the sea for the first time), continued at Coomandook and finished at Coonalpyn (travelling to school on the passing goods or passenger trains). After getting her QC Ethel stayed at home to help her mother for about two years until the family moved to Murray Bridge in about 1929 where Ethel began domestic work. Later in the 1930s the family lived on Hindmarsh Island where Ethel's brothers had a stone crushing contract and the women ran a boarding house for barrage labourers - a period worth investigating in a further interview. Mrs Wilson married in 1940 and had four children.

Mrs Wilson was 73 years of age at the time of the interview.

The interview took place Mrs Wilson's lounge room. There is a good deal of background noise - but the recording levels are very good and Mrs Wilson speaks with enthusiasm.

The interview session resulted in two hours and fifteen minutes of tape recorded information.

'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, Ethel Wilson, is referred to by the initials EW 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 EW] 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 Ethel Wilson** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on 25 June 1986

TAPE 1 SIDE A

**If you could start by telling me your full name?**

Ethel Linda Wilson - I was Wilkinson.

**What was the date of your birth?**

On the twelfth of February 1913.

**Where were you born?**

In my mother's and father's home at Coomandook. Just a little iron house.

**How long did you live at Coomandook?**

About two years before we went to Bordertown from there. It was a very hot summer that I was born, and the only way my Dad could keep me alive was to put wet bags and hang them around the table, and I was laid on the floor under the table. It was so hot - it was a hundred and fourteen.

**Did your parents talk about this in later years?**

They often used to say, 'Oh, it should be hot today, because' - when it was my birthday. They'd say, 'Well it's not as hot as the day you were born because it was a hundred and fourteen!'

**Did your mother have any help with the birth?**

Oh yes, she had a lady that came and lived in - a midwife - and she came and lived in for a few days, because there were no hospitals that you could go to then.

**How long did you stay at Bordertown?**

I think we went to Blundy's first [this was a property, not a town] and then we came back right into Bordertown when I was four. That's when my next sister was born. Yes, that's right. I know I was five when she was born. We stopped out at Blundy's for about two and a half years, I guess.

**Then how long in Bordertown?**

I went to school in Bordertown until I was about ten, then we shifted to Yumali. I went to school at Coomandook for quite a while. My father used to take me to school in a buggy - it was four miles - and then I would go home. He'd pick me up again at nighttime. Then a Mr Ballard exchanged - - -. Well, I

lived with Ballards and went to school from their place with their daughter, then I'd go home at the weekend. Then we heard you could travel by the train to Coonalpyn, so we put in for a ticket to go to Coonalpyn, so I went to the Coonalpyn school from then on. We had to catch the half past seven train in the morning, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the twelve o'clock passenger train on the other two days.

**We'll be talking about your school days a little later on - I'm looking forward to that. I'd like to talk a little bit about your parents before talking about your childhood. Can you tell me your father's name?**

William Henry Wilkinson.

**Do you know where he was born?**

He was born at Delamere, down near Strathalbyn.

**Did he ever talk about his childhood?**

He didn't go to school very much, because he was from a big family and he had to go out to work to help keep the other children. I can remember him saying when he was about twelve he went out to work cutting saplings - little gum trees. He used to whistle a lot, and the man asked him not to whistle because it was using up too much of his strength. (laughs) So he had to give up his whistling and he said that hurt more than any hard work.

He used to get the cows in in the mornings, but he didn't have shoes on - he didn't have shoes - but he used to run through the pools of water to make his feet warmer than they were on the grass.

I can't remember anything from then on until he was about fifteen or sixteen. But he didn't live home with his parents very much because he was working for a Mr Hunt in Bordertown, and he used to pick up stone, I think it was. Mr and Mrs Hunt took him as a little baby because his mother was ill after he was born, and then he went on living with them. And he used to pick up stone and used to build stone walls. He did that for years and years, even after he was married. They didn't have fences round their properties - they had these stone walls - and there was such a lot of stone around Bordertown, it was the cheapest way to clear the ground and to have the fences.

**Do you know how it came that, being born at Delamere, he was taken by a family at Bordertown?**

Well, I think they must have shifted to Bordertown. No, I think the Hunts lived at Delamere - yes, because the Hunts are still round Delamere there now - and I think they more or less took him because it was one less for the

parents to keep. And they were very fond of Dad. He was like part of the family.

**Did he see much of his own parents during this time?**

Oh yes, he was always home with his parents of a weekend and spent a lot of time with his family. Well, then he came back home afterwards - - -. No, I'm not quite sure whether he came back home or whether it was - - -. I think they must have lived on adjoining properties, and he spent the time between the two families.

**You were telling me last week that there was a teacher boarding there.**

Yes, the Hunts used to have the teacher boarding with them, and there was a swamp between them and the school, and he used to piggyback this teacher across so she wouldn't have wet feet, or wet clothing. And then the teacher used to teach him at night time, because he didn't have very much education.

**Do you think that he was able to read and write?**

Oh yes, he used to write letters. But instead of having a capital I, he had the little i with the dot over it. I had a letter for many, many years, and I don't know what happened to it - just a letter he wrote to us. But he could read. He taught himself to read fairly well. Because in that paper there it said that he was Secretary of something to do with the church, so he must have learned to read fairly well. But he used to love looking at papers and reading papers and helping himself in that way.

**What sort of work did he do after he was out of his early teens?**

I think he mainly did shearing. Well, he was a shearer most of his life. He did shearing and then, you know, helping on farms, although he had his own little farm, but he used to work on other farms as well.

**Did that mean that he'd be away from home for periods of time?**

Well, I know he used to work on the railway, and they'd have to go away on Sunday night - that was when I was five. He used to go down to Kybybolite and they had a big camp there and they were putting the railway line through to Kingston I think it was. He used to go of a Sunday night, on the little trike, and they'd come back - there was quite a gang of them - and they'd come back on the, I suppose it'd be the Saturday night, or Friday night - I'm not sure now. Then Mum would cook up food and bread and things for him to take again the next week - ready for the next week. But I don't know how long he stopped there.

Well then the mill started in Bordertown - Noske's Mill - and he went on to there. He was in the mills for years and years, at the Noske Mill.

**What sort of work did he do there?**

He was a flour sifter I think they called it. He had to - - -. The flour had to go through a silk sieve, and he had to make sure that that sieve was moving, to separate the flour from the bran and pollard.

**So he was working there for the period you were living at Bordertown was he?**

Yes. Yes, he worked there until the mill closed. It was shifted to Murray Bridge. Then he took the farm on at Yumali then and we shifted down there.

**How do you remember your father? What sort of a man was he?**

A loving man. He would never say a word against anyone unless it was something good. He always said, 'If you can't say anything good about a person, don't say anything,' and he lived up to that. He would never correct us - Mum had to do all the correcting - but if he spoke, we knew he meant it. (laughs)  
Yes, he was a wonderful little man.

**From the photographs you've shown me you always seemed to have lots of animals around.**

Yes.

**Was he fond of animals?**

Yes, he was very fond of animals - animals and birds. Yes, he always had canaries and a dog or a cat. We loved all animals. That old white horse in that photo with the goats, we used to drive her - - -. I think she had four or five foals, like, in her lifetime, and she'd had a broken leg. He had to swing her between two trees until her leg was set, and of course her leg was set straight. He made like a sling out of bags and put her in, and then as she moved, she could just move her leg [on the ground]. But afterwards her leg was just a little bit stiff in the joint, and you could always track Dolly, because she used to just kick one leg with a little bit of dirt. She couldn't bend it as well as she could the other one.

**That's very unusual for someone to try to set a horse's leg.**

Yes, to try and set a leg. I don't know how she broke her leg, but you could track anywhere because this little bit of dirt that she used to kick up with a knee that she couldn't bend as quickly as she could the other.

**Was it a foreleg?**

I couldn't tell you now. No, I couldn't tell you. But I remember we used to go over and feed her. Dad had her between these two trees and it was in the drought, and I can remember she used to come up to the back door. It was the only animal we had, I think, because she used to come to the back door and Mum used to give her a slice of bread, and she always used to come up to the door for her slice of bread. And then we were right out of food - there was no food about - and Dad opened up the mattress. We had a mattress with cocky chaff - we used to have mattresses with cocky chaff then - and we used to feed her this cocky chaff. Then the rains came and of course that saved her life.

**What period are you talking about?**

This was when I was about four. I think it was Blundy's.

**So about 1917.**

Yes, it'd be about 1917 when the drought was on.

**Do you remember, was she strung up between the trees for quite a while?**

I can't remember. I can remember taking food over to her, and I remember the boys used to climb up the trees to get some sort of food out of the tree. I don't know whether it was bulloak or sheoak or something, and they used to cut down this green - leaves - out of the tree, and she used to eat those. But it's just a vague memory of this horse, you know, strung up with this bag - a sling, so she could still use her other three legs.

**Would your father keep her foals?**

Yes, all the time we were on the farm we had her foals. She was white, but she didn't have any white foals. She had a blue one and she had a ginger one. I don't know - I don't remember the first one. I think that might have been a white one. But I remember the last two foals.

**You've mentioned that your father was brought up by the Hunts. Did you know his parents at all?**

Oh yes. Yes, we used to always go to their home. We had lovely times, in the Bordertown years - they lived in Bordertown. We always used to go there. Oh, it was a big thing to go out to Grandma and Grandpa's and we'd all take food, and all the families would go and meet there. We used to play in the sandhills and have a lovely - - -. Oh, they were lovely grandparents. He wasn't really brought up by the Hunts, I suppose, but just as a child. Through his childhood he was always with the Hunts.

**What did his father do for a living?**

He was a farmer. He had his little farm at Bordertown. And evidently he had land on both sides of the railway because he used to have to cross the railway with his stock. There's still a crossing there and it's called Wilkinson's Crossing, so they must have put a crossing there for them to drive the stock across.

**Did you continue to visit your grandparents after you moved up to Yumali?**

Oh yes. No, he died soon after we went to Yumali, Grandpa did, but Grandma came and stopped with us when our youngest brother was, oh, about, twelve months old I suppose. I know we've got photos. I haven't got one, but my brother's got a photo of Grandma and Dad and our young brother - like, the three generations. Oh yes, we visited them right up until just before Grandma died. She must've been close on ninety when she died. I wasn't married when she died.

**Do you know what her background was?**

No, I don't know much about it - about her background. I don't know what she did other than being at home. She used to do a lot of crochet work, I remember. She used to do a terrible lot of crochet work. I've still got crochet work in there that she did.

**Did she teach you anything like that?**

She didn't - my Mum did, because my Mum was a great one for crocheting. She always made collars for our dresses - Grandma did - made us collars for our dresses, and little bags to take to Sunday School to put our tickets in. She used to do a lot of crochet work.

**What tickets were they?**

The little Sunday School tickets with the little verse on. We had to learn that verse and take it back the next Sunday and repeat that verse. When we got six of those little tickets and we repeated the tickets every Sunday, we got a bigger one, and we used to keep our collection in our handkerchief and our ticket in this little bag.

**Do you remember the time of your grandfather's death?**

Yes. We were living at Yumali and our little brother was about twelve months old, or eighteen months old perhaps, and they sent for my Mum to come down because he was so ill, and she went down. My brother had long white curls and while she was away, down at Grandpa's funeral, Dad cut his curls off, and

Mum was broken hearted when she came home and she hadn't had a photo of Bob with his long curls. Of course we didn't like it because they all thought it was a girl, and so Dad cut all his curls off while she was away. So Bob was - I suppose he was eighteen months old then, when Grandpa died.

**Was your mother away for long?**

Well she looked after him for a while before he died, at home - like, at the home. I don't know why he was home, because there was a hospital in Bordertown. I don't know why he wasn't in the hospital, and it wasn't far from their place.

**Who looked after you children while she was away?**

Oh, we all looked after each other. My other sister, and I was about twelve. Yes, I suppose I would have been about twelve then. Well, that made my sister seventeen, and then there were the two brothers older again. Dad was home with us, he didn't go - he stopped home with us.

**I'd like to talk a bit about your mother. Can you tell me what her name was?**

Elsie Mary Wilkinson, but she was Spotswood.

**Where had she been born?**

She was born away up near the Flinders, at Dalkie, I think it is.

**I don't know that there's a Dalkeith. I was having a look at that. There's one in Western Australia.**

I think it's Dalkie. Well up near the Flinders - up there somewhere, I don't know just where. I've never been up there.

**What were her people doing up there?**

They were farmers - big sheep farmers up there. Then they shifted down to Wamboony, out from Bordertown. Took up virgin land out there and cleared that. There were three brothers that went down there together, and that's when Mum and Dad met, down there.

**Did they tell you about that time?**

Not very much. We weren't that interested. It's a shame we didn't go into that sort of thing. I don't know how they met or anything.

**Did your mother tell you much about her childhood?**

No she didn't. I don't know, whether we were too busy or whether we weren't interested in - - -. We didn't know her parents because they were both dead before we - - -. Well, we never ever met either of her parents. Her father was

only fifty one when he died and I don't know what Grandma was. She was older by that photo, but I don't know just what age she would have been. But he was a very young man when he died.

**Did you ever hear about the circumstances of his death?**

Well, we heard a yarn, but I don't think it could've been true. We were told that he had - - -. It was a very hot day and he came in from the paddock and he was famished for a drink, and they had to cart all their water. He went to the - - -. We had wood stoves with hobs on the side, and Grandma always used to leave the teapot there for him, whenever he came in, to drink cold tea. He just grabbed the teapot and had a drink, and somebody told us - oh, the people that we were talking to, said he died with a bleeding from his stomach. They reckoned that he had swallowed a centipede that must have been in the spout of the teapot and it stung him. Whether that's right. That's the only thing we ever heard. I don't know why we haven't gone into it, to see what happened to him. But he wasn't ill. Evidently he wasn't ill. In that book there it said it was a terrible shock when he died. So I don't know what - - -. I was asking my sister the other day and she said, 'We've never ever found out what Grandpa Spotswood died from'. There's nobody left that we can ask.

**And you're a little bit doubtful of the story you were told.**

I just can't think that that could happen.

**It's a bit gruesome.**

It does sound a bit. No, I just can't think that'd be true.

**You were telling me last week that your mother was something of a midwife.**

Yes, that's right. She used to go out and help when there was need for her to go.

I remember one morning my Dad come in - I was going to school, and I suppose Elsie would have been fourteen, thirteen or fourteen. He said, 'Come on Maudie' - he always called her Maudie, her name was Elsie Maude, but she was named after my Dad's sister. He said, 'Come on Maudie,' he said, 'Mum had to go out to Mrs Jessop's this morning'. He said, 'You'll have to cut the dinners and get the others to school'. So up we got and cut the dinners. We were always very close, my sister and I, although there was five years between us. We always worked together - we still do. He'd have to go to work and of course sometimes Elsie used to have to stay home for the little ones that weren't at school.

**Did that happen even when she was school age, if your mother had to go out?**

Yes, she used to still stay home and look after the other children.

**Did that happen in your school days too, when you - - -?**

Only at Coonalpyn - when I was going to the Coonalpyn school - and there was a woman brought in that was having a - - -. Well, she was having her baby, but she was premature, and Mum came in and she said, 'Oh, you won't be going to school today. I want you to take the children and get right away from the house'. Like, the doctor had come from Tailem Bend and Elsie had to stay home because she had the Post Office to run and the Telephone Exchange, so I went off with the other three and looked after them while the baby was born.

I often remember - poor little baby [EW's youngest brother, Bob]. I don't know just what age he'd be, but I know he was heavy. I suppose he was about twelve months. Oh, he might not even have been that old, but he could say 'ninga' for drink, so he must've been ten months anyway. He used to say, 'Ning ning, ning ning,' and I'd say, 'No, we haven't got any drink'. We played in the buggy and he kept crying for a 'ning ning'. So anyway, oh, it must've been two o'clock in the afternoon, or after lunch anyway, so we went down and asked one of the women. There was a Mrs Hillman there, she was helping Mum, and we said, 'Oh, Bobby's crying all the time,' and she said, 'Oh, you poor children. You haven't had any dinner'. So she made up some bread and butter and - a big plate - I can remember, a big enamel plate, with bread and butter on it, and gave us some milk to take up. We had it in the buggy and the baby went to sleep on the bottom of the buggy - only on a bag. There was no rug - we didn't have any rugs or anything - and he slept and slept and slept. (laughs)

**How many hours were you out there?**

Well, I don't know. It was before school time, so it must've been before seven, and it must have been well in the afternoon before we went down to get something to eat, so we must've been out there till about four o'clock I suppose. I remember tying a bit of rope on the front of the buggy and giving it to the two girls and they made out they were driving horses. But we weren't allowed to make a noise, I can remember that.

**Do you remember what happened to the woman?**

Oh, she lost her baby - her baby died. She had another one afterwards. They were building a new house and they weren't able to finish this house. She had a big family - I think she had nine children - and the boys used to sleep in a

stripper - you know, the old iron stripper. That was their bedroom, right against the house, and the girls had a bedroom. I think there were five girls - four girls, I suppose. I don't know whether there was four girls or five - anyway, there were nine children. She couldn't ask a doctor to come there because she didn't have anything, so the husband come over and asked could she come to our place. Well, we didn't have much either, but still, we shifted out and let her come in and she had her baby there. It was a little girl, and I remember my brother making a little coffin for it and it was buried on his property out from Yumali a bit.

**You say they didn't have much at their house. Do you think they didn't even have a bed or - - -?**

I don't think they would have had a spare bed because the boys used to lay down in the stripper. They might have had mattresses but they didn't have beds. They just laid on the bottom part of the stripper.

**Was it normal for women to come to your house?**

No. No, we had never met this woman before. We knew him, but we didn't know her. But we had a phone and there were very few phones around the district, and I think that's why they picked our place to come to. That's the only reason I can think of.

**I wanted to talk a bit about the work that your mother did in the local communities. Did she ever tell you how she came to start going out?**

No she didn't. No, she didn't tell where - - -. I think she must have been self-taught. I think she'd been with other women that did that sort of thing, because I remember the last time she went to Jessop's, she went - - - [at night EW]. The doctor used to call and pick her up and take her out, and then she would - after her and the doctor would deliver the baby - she'd stay on for a day or two and look after the mother and the baby and the rest of the family until the mother was on her feet again.

I remember once there was a woman not far from our place - a few, one and a half mile perhaps - and she must have been going to have a baby, and I don't know why, but the doctor came for Mum and she went down to her and they gave her a curette. I don't know why, but I had to go down to this place, and I knocked and knocked on the door and nobody came and I went in. And I'll never forget. I saw all this blood and I ran for my life and ran home again, and I said to Elsie, I said, 'Oh, I think Mrs Martlow's dead'. Anyway, I shouldn't have gone in, but somebody had come to the house and they wanted Mum particular but of course she wasn't home but I knew she was down at

Martlow's and Elsie sent me down to get her. So that's what was happening there. So she must have been there on call, you know, when anybody wanted her.

**Did you have any idea at all who she had learned from?**

No. No, had no idea. Only, I knew she was a great friend of Granny Carson's who was another midwife in Bordertown. She was there before there was any doctors. I know her and Mrs Carson were great friends. Whether she learned from her or not I don't know.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

**Did you ever meet Granny Carson yourself?**

Oh yes. Yes, we knew Granny Carson. Yes, she used to go to the same church as we did. She was our Sunday School teacher and we used to, oh, run to meet her. Yes, she was a real dear. But for years and years I thought she was my own grandmother, because I didn't have a second grandmother and I just thought she was our own grandmother. We were friends with, like, her grandchildren, and of course everyone called her Granny, and I didn't know. Oh, I suppose I was about eight or nine before I realised that she wasn't my own grandmother. But everyone called her Granny Carson.

**Did your mother have any sort of a nickname in the community?**

No, only Auntie Mamie, that was all. Her name was Mary but she was always known as Mamie. She was just Auntie Mamie. Because, we had such a lot of cousins around Bordertown, everyone called her Auntie Mamie, and Uncle Bill, and so did all the other people about.

**When your mother was having children, who helped her?**

Well, the last baby I know she had the doctor, but usually her sister - sister-in-law. They used to just come and she'd have the babies and have them in the house. She never went to a hospital to have a baby.

**You've mentioned the doctors taking her out to cases. Was she well thought of by the local doctors?**

Well there was only the one doctor - Dr Broadbent - he was the only doctor in Bordertown. She must've been or he wouldn't have called for her I suppose.

**She did this work in all the places you lived?**

Only there, in Bordertown - only Bordertown that I know of. No, we were at Yumali when Mrs Sexton lost her baby. So, yes, she must have - - -.

**I know that in the early to mid 1920s midwives then had to become officially registered by the State.**

Yes.

**Do you remember if she did anything to comply with those regulations?**

No she didn't.

**Did she continue as you got older?**

No, I think the last one was at Yumali. I think that was the last one where she must've been. Oh, I was about twelve. I don't know just how old she would have been. I can't even think how old she could've been when she helped the doctor with that one. I think that was the last time. I don't remember any others.

**Did she ever train anybody up herself - any younger woman?**

No. No, she never. And yet my sisters went nursing. Whether it influenced them that she was midwife, I don't know - it might've done.

**You've mentioned one or two women who she attended. Do you remember any other examples of her work?**

Well I know one woman she went to five times. Like, one of those women, she went to her five times. And also my Auntie Rose - she was my Dad's sister - like, she was with her when her twins were born, and I don't know whether the next baby or not. But I remember being there and Mum was getting the clothes off the line - I was about four, I suppose - and Mum was getting the clothes off the line. I was picking up the pegs and bringing them in, and there was a little wee doily - I've still got it - a little tiny doily like that, and I picked it up and I brought it in afterwards. Auntie Rose said, 'You can have that'. Like, I went into the bedroom. Mum had the clothes on the bottom of the bed and she was folding them up and I brought this little wee doily in. I've always treasured that because she died during that time. Auntie Rose died.

**Was that as a result of the birth?**

Yes, something to do with white leg. Oh, not just then, a little afterwards. I can remember these two little tiny babies, one on each arm. But I think she had another baby after that. I remember that dear little doily that she gave me and I put beads around it and I always used it as a milk jug cover. I've still got it.

**I suppose there would quite frequently have been babies or mothers dying at the time of the birth.**

I suppose. I remember her going to her sister too, when she had one of her babies. She was out from Bordertown - Mrs Dinning - she went to her, and she helped at that birth. I think the doctor must've been there too because I can remember her - - -. I was sitting on the bottom of the bed and she had quite a family, and she said, 'You know I can't get better, Mamie,' she said. She said, 'Well, never mind' - no, she said, 'You know I can't get better, Mamie. What's going to happen to my children?' She had one little girl and I think it was five boys, and she said, 'Will you take my little girl?' Mum said, 'Yes, I'll take your little girl'. There was one little boy younger than the little girl and he said, 'What about me?' and I can remember that just as though it was only a few weeks ago. I remember Mum putting her arm around this little boy when he said, 'What about me?' She did die later. Like, she did die, but I don't know what the trouble was - whether it was blood poison or what. I suppose there was a lot of it about at that time, just in their own homes.

**Did your mother take in the little girl?**

No, the father married again. Yes, he married again. He had another fairly big family after that. I think there was about twelve - ten or twelve children altogether.

**So did your mother often take you to the home where she was attending a birth?**

When I was a baby - when I was little - I'd go along with her. There was five years between my sister and I, but after she had the next sister, I don't remember - - -. Oh, yes, she still went out to the Jessops when their babies - - -. Of course we were all older then. She still went out there and left us home then. I suppose there was no one else to stop with me.

**From what we were talking about last week, you're the fifth of eight children in your family.**

That's right.

**Your youngest brother was born about eleven years after you were born.**

Yes, ten or eleven years I think. I can never remember. I can remember when he was born, but - - - [looks through papers]. I had to get all their ages because I wasn't sure. Yes, he was born in 1924, so that is just eleven years afterwards.

**And your oldest, was it a brother?**

Oldest brother, he was born in nineteen hundred and four.

**Right, so there's twenty years.**

Yes, having babies.

**I wanted to ask you about your mother's own experiences with having babies, because that's a long, long time. Did you remember the times of the births of the younger children?**

Yes, I remember Bob and I remember Edna, and I remember Anne - the three that are younger than me.

**Annie was born in 1918 I think you said.**

'18 - five years after I was born.

**What do you remember of that time?**

I remember, it was my birthday on the twelfth of February and my auntie came back from Africa - that was when we first saw the motorcar - oh, it must have been twelve months before I suppose. When it came near my birthday she said, 'What would you like for your birthday?' and I said, 'Oh, I'd like a doll'. She said, 'Oh, we'll see,' so when it came my birthday I didn't get a doll and she said, 'Oh, I'll get a little doll that you'll keep for ever'.

So, anyway, I didn't get a birthday present - I mean I got a present but I didn't get any doll - and time went on and on, and I said, 'Auntie, you said you'd give me a doll'. She wasn't married - she was living with us, but she wasn't married then. I said, 'You said you'd give me a doll'. She said, 'I'll give you a doll one of these days, a live one'. Then when the baby came - she was born on the twenty second of February - oh, I thought that was all right. So I picked her up and I was going to take her outside to play. She said, 'Oh no'. I said, 'You said she was mine'. I was quite shocked that I couldn't have her. (laughs) I remember that part all right, but I can't remember any doctor being there or whether it was Granny - Granny Carson might've been there. But I can remember Auntie Lottie promising me this baby doll.

**What about when Edna was born?**

Edna? Well, I can remember. We were in bed and our Auntie Et - she was Dad's sister - she came over. We didn't know there was anything going on. We were sent to bed early and bouncing on the beds as usual. There were three of us in one bed - no, two of us it must've been. No, Annie was there - there must have been the three of us were all in one double bed. And Auntie Et came in and she said, 'Look what I've found,' and this little, wee, black headed baby. We said, 'Where did you find it?' and she said, 'This is your new sister'. Oh, we thought that was beautiful. That's all I remember, but Auntie Et was there, I remember that.

Then when Bob was born, we knew Mum was going to have a baby. Oh, I can remember, she was rubbing her back on the door as she was going past, and I said, 'What's the matter Mum, can't you get through the door?' I must have noticed that she was big, I suppose, and I said, 'Can't you get through the door?' and she said, 'Oh, my back's itchy,' so she got me to scratch her back. I thought, 'That's a funny thing. Fancy Mum not being able to touch her back, and scratch her back,' and anyway I think it was about two days afterwards and Dad came out and he said, 'Oh well, we've got another little boy'. Oh, we were that thrilled. I thought it was lovely to have a baby, but I didn't know there was so much work attached to it though. (laughs)

**Where were you children while Bob was being born?**

In the house. It must've been through the night. Evidently Mum didn't have a bad time of it or anything because she just got our tea, and I remember Dad coming in the next morning and saying about we'd got a little brother.

**You said that when Bob was going to be born, you did know that your mother was pregnant?**

Yes. Well, we knew she was big, but we didn't know there was a baby about. I was so ignorant about all those sorts of things although I was eleven. I just thought she'd put on weight.

**It's interesting how even the children of midwives didn't know about birth and so on.**

No, no, that's right.

**Do you remember when you did find out what it meant?**

Oh, I must've been thirteen or more I reckon, before I really knew where babies came from. I had no idea.

**How did you find out?**

I think one of the girls at school told me, and I said, 'Oh, no' - I couldn't believe that, and they said, 'Yes, that's true'. So anyway, I wasn't satisfied and I asked Mum. I said, 'Mum, do babies really come out of a mother's stomach?' and she said, 'Yes'. She said, 'Who told you that?' I told her, and she said, 'Well I'll tell you properly,' so then - - -. I can remember, she was dressing a fowl, and she explained to me the parts of the fowl as she was dressing this fowl. And I still thought babies' arms came out of the arms and the legs were fitted into the mother's legs, right up till, oh, I must've been fourteen or fifteen I suppose, before I - - -. I must've been terrible ignorant. Can't believe it now. (laughs)

**Did your mother give you any sort of sex education?**

No not really. She told us, like, we had to be prepared for our menstruation time, but that was the only thing. That's the only thing that she ever spoke about.

**Did she warn you, as you got older and were going out with boys, that you might have to be careful or behave yourselves?**

No. Yes, we were always taught to never let a man touch us, but no, she didn't warn us very much at all really. We more or less had to learn from the next one.

**I find it a little bit odd, and perhaps you might too, looking back, that a woman like your mother with so much knowledge about childbirth - - -.**

Yes, and didn't pass it on to the girls especially. No, it does seem funny.

**When you were growing up, did you have any funny ideas about where these babies appeared from, both your mother's and the ones she was helping to deliver?**

Oh, we used to think that God sent them from heaven, that's what we were told. God was going to send a baby, and it would arrive. Never heard it come, but it was there - it was like Father Christmas. We just thought it was part of - - -. Found under a cabbage and all this sort of thing, and we believed it, because we had no reason to doubt anything that they'd ever told us. It's awful to think back now.

**You mentioned that one of her sisters was in Africa.**

That's right.

**How did she come to be there?**

She went over as the lady-in-waiting for Mr and Mrs Cahill. I don't know what - he must've been an Ambassador for Australia, I suppose, in Africa. I don't know, but she was over there for about four years, I think, in Africa - three or four years. She was single and she came back when I was about three, I suppose, or four. I don't know just how long she was there. She was there when I was born, because I remember her writing to my sister - seeing a card, years afterwards, and it said, 'Now you've got a little sister you'll have to help your Mother more,' or something. So I must've been born while she was there, and I was about three when she came back, so she must've been over there about four years.

**You mentioned she arrived in an automobile.**

Oh yes, this hire car, and we were that frightened. I can remember, my mother used to wear a long black skirt. I remember burying my head in Mum's skirt. Mum was trying to run to the car and we were really frightened. It was just this noise coming, and we didn't know what the noise was, and I buried my head in her apron, and she sort of brushed me aside to go to her sister I suppose, and that hurt me more than - - -. But I was frightened of that noise. It was a car and it didn't have a hood on it. Whether it had a hood that laid back or not I don't know. It would be a fabric hood I suppose.

**Had you seen a car before?**

Never, no. I don't think I'd ever seen a picture of one. Because we were way out in the scrub - we wouldn't have had books. This Ted McKenzie, the man was that was driving it. She came to Bordertown and of course had no way to come out to our place, so she had to get this hire car. Oh, I'll never forget that. It was the funniest thing out, frightened of this motorcar. (laughs) I think I remember it more because Mum sort of brushed me aside to go and meet her sister.

**What do you remember of your mother's character?**

She was a very stern woman, but she was very kind. But if she said a thing, she meant it. She was a very religious woman. She knew the Bible from back to front. I don't know how many times she read it through - as a book, not as a Bible, as a book of history. Sometimes we'd say, 'Mum, what happened in - - -?' - we'd refer to something that had happened. She'd say, 'Oh, that's in Psalms,' or 'that's in - - -,' somewhere. She knew it just as though it was just an ordinary book that she'd read. I'm afraid I've never read it through myself.

**Did she read it to you?**

Oh yes, every night - - -. Not to me, not to us - but every night she read to Dad. Of course he couldn't read like she could, so Mum read every night of her life. She'd read a part of the Bible to Dad. When they went to bed, you'd hear Mum'd be reading. Then they'd talk on it, and then she'd read a bit more, and I suppose that was the only way Dad had of knowing the Bible. Although he was religious, but I guess that was the only way he got to understanding it.

**Do you think they actually discussed it with one another?**

Yes, I think they really discussed it with one another.

**Was her religious nature reflected in the way that she treated you?**

Yes it was.

**How would you children be disciplined?**

More with the tongue. I don't ever remember getting a smack. Oh, Mum, might just smack you as you go past or anything, if you gave her a bit of cheek, but we were never smacked with a strap. I remember once, our youngest brother - he was very spoilt because he had appendicitis when he was four - and he used to get away with anything. Mum used to say, 'Dad, I wish you'd speak to Bob,' and he'd say, 'Hello Bobbie'. (laughs) He used to say, 'I'll smack you with a bootlace if you don't look out,' and things like that, but that was the only way Dad ever - - -. If he said a thing we knew that we had to do it, but he never ever laid a hand on anyone that I know of.

**I wanted to talk with you about different places that you lived while you were growing up.**

Yes.

**You've mentioned that you went first out to Blundy when you were a little girl. Were you old enough to remember moving out there?**

No. No, I can't remember moving. I must've been about two, I suppose, when we went there. I can't remember, but I remember there was a big pit out the back - a big hole in the ground - and we used to get sticks. We had no toys that I can remember, but we had - - -. Dad must've dug this hole to build the house with - got the sand from here - and we used to get a stick with a nob on it and we'd make marks down this - oh, it was just like a little cliff. And these were our games. We used to pull our sticks down and the one that had the last lot of sand trickling down, they were the winners. Then we'd all do it again. I can remember playing, you know, and if ever we wanted to hide we used to get down in this place where Dad had taken the sand out. We used to play there in the sand for hour after hour. But that was the only thing I can remember we played with. And I remember we had to run past that hole to go out to this motorcar - or get away from this motorcar.

**What was the house made of, do you remember?**

No I don't. I can't remember. Must've been stone from a paddock I think, because that'd be seventy years ago - seventy-odd years ago.

**Was your father working as a shearer or at the Mill at this time?**

No, he'd be shearing. The Mill wasn't built - - -. I was about five or six - no, I might've been about eight or nine - when the Mill was built. So he'd still be working, like, either making fences or shearing or something at that time.

**Did you have any neighbours at Blundy?**

No, never saw ---. I don't know when we saw neighbours. I don't ever remember ---. I remember once ---. No, I can't remember, it was before my time, but it was so far - no, that was at Coomandook - and we were away out. Before I was born, we were way out from the Line, right away from all roads. Of course Mum used to read to the other children and read the Bible. I remember Mum telling us, Hartley ran, and he said, 'Mum, here comes Jesus. He's on a horse,' and it was one of the neighbours coming to say war had broken out. So that must've been in 1914, and that was the first man that the older brothers and sisters had ever seen other than my Dad and his young brother that lived with us. So we didn't see many neighbours. (laughs) It was all just rough scrub out there.

**When you moved to Blundy, did your uncle come with you?**

No, he went to the war. He went straight off to the war and he was at the war.

**Do you remember moving into Bordertown?**

No I don't. I can't remember the move - it just seems as though there was a blank there. I can remember that photo being taken. It might only be because of the photo that I can remember the kids and the old goat. But we were right beside a big runaway hole called the Cannawigara runaway hole, I think it is, and I can remember ---. It's a funny thing - it fills and it empties. They reckon it's something to do with the lakes at Mount Gambier. It'll be full and then you'll go down perhaps a few days afterwards and it'll be right down. But I don't know whether it ever came up again. It's just one of the mysteries.

I remember somebody saying they had ducks swimming on there once and it emptied and they didn't see the ducks again. Whether the ducks flew away when they knew it was emptying or not, I don't know. But we used to have Muscovy ducks and the wild ducks used to come on to that swamp, I suppose you'd call it - a runaway hole they called it - and my Dad shot a duck and it was gradually sort of moving out. I can remember standing beside the water and my eldest brother - he would be about twelve I suppose - and he got on the horse, and he went after - old Dolly - and he went after this duck. And of course as she moved her feet the duck was going further and he was leaning over trying to get this duck, and Mum called out and she said, 'Come back - leave the duck!'. We didn't get the duck - it was a wild duck. (laughs) I remember this huge sheet of water and Alan was trying to get this duck that Dad had shot.

**So were you living on the outskirts of the township?**

Oh yes, right away from everything. There must've been neighbours around somewhere. I don't know - I don't ever remember going to a neighbour's place. Then we shifted right into the town - bought a house right in Bordertown - and we lived there till we came down to Yumali.

**Do you remember that home?**

Yes.

**What sort of a house was it?**

In Yumali?

**In Bordertown.**

Oh, in Bordertown? That was an iron house - all iron. I can remember poor old Dad, he was putting a verandah on the back to keep it a bit cool, and he was up on the roof, and he moved on to the next sheet of iron and it wasn't nailed on and he came straight through. I can still remember - he was sitting with a hammer in his hand and he said, 'Well, that was a quick way of getting down'.  
(laughs)

Yes, he used to do a lot of work - you know, putting rooms on, and he had a new chimney put up and that. Yes, that was an iron house.

**How many rooms?**

Well, there was what we called the front room, and that was like - we'd call it a lounge now. There was the front room and Mum's bedroom, and our bedroom and the kitchen and the boys' room at the back, and then Dad enclosed this big back verandah.

**Did it get hot?**

Yes, it got hot, but, I don't know, we didn't have anything to cool off with - we didn't seem to worry. I remember we used to sit out under the lucerne trees. We had lucerne trees all along the side - I suppose that was to keep the heat off it - and we used to sit out there under the lucerne tree of a summer's night. We used to have a gramophone and we used to play this gramophone, and Uncle was a few blocks away and he used to sing out, 'Put another record on'. Because there was no cars much about and the music used to travel.

**Did you have much of a yard at Bordertown?**

Yes, had a lovely garden in Bordertown. Dad had a lovely garden. He used to get a lot of brush - you know, the broom the fences are made of now. He had a lovely flower house he'd made for Mum and he had a chaff shed he made

with the broom and he had pig sties and cow yards and everything made from brush.

**So you had quite a lot of livestock?**

Yes. Oh yes, he always had his own pigs and fowls. He used to breed pure bred Andalusian and Bardrock fowls. Yes, he always had a lot of fowls. Wherever he went he had his fowls.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

**With the livestock that you had in Bordertown, would your father slaughter his own pigs?**

Yes, we used to kill our own pigs. We had an old bath. I can remember we had - - -. He and his brother-in-law used to come and kill the pigs and this old bath. We used to carry the water down and scald the pigs in the bath. We'd all hop in and scrape the hair off the pigs - thought it was lovely.

**Were they big pigs?**

Yes, fairly big pigs.

**But room enough for children in the bath as well.**

Oh no, it wasn't the house bath. (laughs) We had a tub. We used to use a tub, but we had that old bath for the - - -. I wonder if Dad made the bath. He might have made it out of cement, for doing that. I don't know, but we had a tub that we used to bath in. I remember the bath in front of the old wood fire. The three little ones'd always have their bath and then the eldest one. Then Dad'd empty all the water and we'd start again. (laughs) But I don't know when Mum and Dad had their bath, because we'd have to be in bed before they had theirs. But we only had a round tub and we used to sit in it or squat in it. But I remember this big long thing and this pig used to lie in it. It had to lie in it to be scraped.

**Did you actually get in with it?**

No. No, we used to lean over the side and scrape it with an old knife - scrape the hair off it. Then we had our own cow and our own horse and buggy there, in Bordertown. So we must have had about four blocks I reckon. I think it must have been like four house blocks we had.

**What sort of things did you grow?**

Oh he grew everything that - you know, all eatables. But we never wasted any water - although it's good water there - but he always carried the handbowl water down and put it amongst the tomatoes. He used to have drains for the

tomatoes and beans. I remember Mum used to love asparagus and he had a little bit of asparagus down at the bottom for Mum - that was Mum's. Yes, he used to grow all sorts of beautiful - - -. He used to get odourless onions from Victoria and he used to grow these beautiful onions.

Yes, I can remember him going - he'd say, 'Well you can come down and help me,' when it was holidays or weekends. He said, 'You little ones can come down and break the necks of the onions,' and we'd have to bend them over so as they would gradually die back - get all the goodness into the onion.

**Do you know if he ever had any surplus that he'd sell?**

Oh, he didn't used to sell - he used to give. Like, give it to the neighbours and anybody that'd come, you know, 'A few onions,' and things like that. He used to love sharing it with other people. But I can't remember fruit trees - can't remember any fruit trees.

**Did he put any small crop in to feed the cows and horse?**

No. He used to have lucerne. He used to grow the lucerne for the fowls and the cow, but see, I think he used to bring - - -. We had a hay shed so he must have brought the hay in - must have bought hay from other people and put it into the shed. Because we used to play down on the hay. He had an old bed - an old ordinary wire mattress - and he had it on four ropes, or chains, and he had that in the shed, and we used to swing on that. We'd all get on this for a swing, and we'd wait until we got real high and then we'd jump into the hay.

**Was that what it was meant for?**

Yes, it was meant for us to swing on, but we used to jump into this hay. And we got poor old Mum - it must've been just before Bob was born - we got Mum and we said - we used to call it the hammock - and we said, 'Come on'. Oh, and Dad covered the wire with bag, so it wouldn't hurt us - it wouldn't scratch us or anything. And we said, 'Come and have a swing on the hammock, Mum'. We got Mum on, and we were swinging it, and one of the wires broke. We had to try and get her off this thing without hurting her - sort of down one corner. So I remember the boys brought some hay over for her to fall on to, or to get on to. I don't remember her getting on it again. (laughs)

**I meant to ask you before, do you know whether your mother accepted any money for the cases she went out on?**

No. No one had any money in those days. We just sort of just bartered - you know, swap things about. No, she never ever charged for anything like that.

**Did she make butter from the cow's milk?**

Yes, we used to always make our own butter, and had our own eggs.

**You said that your parents bought the house in Bordertown, so you think they owned it.**

Yes, they owned it, because when we left we sold it and came down to Yumali.

**Was anyone else living with you in Bordertown, apart from the children and your parents?**

No, only ourselves.

**Did your mother ever have any help in the house?**

No. No, we all had our own chores. We had jobs that each one of us had to do.

**What sort of things?**

Oh, like the boys, they'd have to do the fowls. In fact my eldest brother, he was working in the railway, and the second brother he was out at Hunt's, working at Hunt's, and my sister was working for a family - housework, doing housework. But my other brother, he had the fowls to do, and I had the dishes to do, and the two little ones, they had little jobs to do, but they weren't very old at that time. One was only seven and the other one'd be about four.

**About how old were you when you moved to Yumali?**

I think I must've been about eleven. No, wait a minute. Bob was a few months old. How old was Edna? Edna was four when we went down there.

**She was born in 1920.**

Yes, well, I was more than seven.

**But she was four years old.**

Oh, she was four, that's right. Yes, I was about eleven, that's right.

**Do you remember the move to Yumali?**

Yes. Oh, we were excited - so excited about going in a train. It was our first trip - no, second trip in a train. When we were at Bordertown school there were so many children had never had a ride in a train, or never seen the sea, that Mr Huntley - he was the schoolteacher - he got a special train. And everybody from Bordertown - they closed the school and most of the shops - and they took a train trip to Kingston, so that all the children could see the sea. Oh, it was a marvellous day. We left real early in the morning, took our dinner with us and must've had tea on the train coming back, I suppose. It was a full day, anyway. It was a lovely trip. Such a lot of men and women had never seen the sea. You wouldn't think that was possible.

**So adults went too.**

Yes, all the fathers and mothers, they all went.

**Did your parents go?**

Oh yes. I can remember, Edna must've been a baby, and Mum took a tin of condensed milk - of course we never had condensed milk because we had our own cow. And when it came time to come home, there was a little bit of the milk left in the tin. But Mum had made a cover - a little cloth cover to put over the top so that the flies couldn't get in it - and she'd put it over the top of this condensed milk. She opened a little side of it, and we just poured it out for our drinks. And there was a little bit left in the bottom and I was helping her pack up and she said, 'Do you want to eat the rest of that condensed milk?' I said, 'Oh yes,' so I had some. I said, 'Oh, the lumps are lovely in it,' and she said, 'There shouldn't be any lumps in it'. I took it out of my mouth and there was this big ant - you know, a sugar ant - they'd come up and got in, sugar ants. I never touched condensed milk, I don't think, for years after. (laughs)

**You remember seeing the sea?**

Yes. Oh yes, it went for ever. I'll never forget that. We made big holes in the seaweed and got into it and got warm in the - - -. You know, must've been a bit warm perhaps, I was cold perhaps. I remember making these big holes in the seaweed and we got away down into it. And Dad dug a big hole for the baby to lie in. Oh, it was wonderful. Took our shoes off and ran in the water.

**Would anyone have gone swimming?**

Yes there were quite a few of the older ones. I suppose they knew what water was. I remember the train trip was so slow that the bigger boys, like our bigger brothers, they got out on the side of the road - as the train was going, it was only the narrow gauge - and they played football, and some of the bigger girls got out and they picked flowers - gathered flowers on the side of the road. While the train was moving. Then they'd come back, catch up on the train again. We were scared they were going to miss out, but, no, they didn't.

**How many people, do you suppose, went down that day?**

Oh it was a full train load. I wouldn't have any idea. Hundreds. I think there would be hundreds, because there were over a hundred children in the Bordertown school and by the time you take all the children and their young brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, I think there'd be quite a few hundred. It was a special train.

**So you say you went by train to get to Yumali.**

Yes, that's right, we travelled by train and got to Yumali.

**Did you bring much of the furniture from Bordertown?**

No, not very much at all. I can remember Mum and Dad having a big sale. I remember they had an organ, and I remember my sister - oh, somebody said, 'Does it play?' and Dad said, 'Yes, it's a beautiful organ'. So he said, 'Come and play on the organ,' and so Elsie played something - I don't know what it was - and it was sold. Afterwards Elsie cried and she said, 'Oh,' she said, 'I loved that organ'. And there was a man there, a Mr Verco, and she used to work for him, and he said, 'Never mind,' he said, 'you'll get a piano when you go to Yumali,' and he said, 'I'll give your Dad - - -' - because Dad used to work for Mr Verco, and so did Elsie, and he said, 'I'll give you the deposit for a piano when you go to Yumali,' so he did. Of course Elsie worked in the Post Office. With the money from the Post Office she gradually paid off the piano. So we had that - she got her music. She used to love playing music, but I don't think she touches it at all now.

**Where did you live in Yumali?**

Right on the railway line. Not right on it, on the hill. The house is still there, on the upper side of the railway line, and it's right up on a hill and you just look straight down on to the platform. Well, the house was there, and we had to come over here to catch the train, and then the train used to come back in front of our place up to Ki Ki.

We had an old white cockatoo Dad'd got out of a nest when we were in Bordertown, and he would never - - - [talk EW]. He used to chew through every chain you'd put on his leg and he used to follow us children from the house, when we'd go down. He'd sit on the notice board of the Yumali station and he'd wait there and as soon as the train came he'd sit on the carriage and he'd travel back, and then'd he'd fly up home. We used to watch for it. Every morning - he used to do that every morning. He used to fly back home up to the house.

**Is the house on the inland or the sea side of the railway line?**

On the Coorong side - on the opposite side. It's still there. There's a big verandah right round, but it didn't have a verandah when we were there.

**So what was it like when you were living in it?**

Oh lovely. It was a lovely home. It's a stone home. What did we have? There was Mum's room, the boys' room, the girls' room, and the dining room. Then there was a pantry - walk in pantry. We had the separator in there. Then there was a big kitchen. Then there was another room off - I don't know what that was. Yes, it was a lovely home.

**You would have been a fairly large family by that time?**

Yes we were, and we were all home - there was no married ones. We had our cousin living with us. His Mum and Dad had died and he was living with us. He worked round Yumali and round Coomandook. We always had a few extras.

**You said that your sister looked after the Post Office and Telephone Exchange. Was that in the house?**

That was in the passage of the house. That was part of the - - -. And the people used to come to the front door, and that was part of the house.

**Would people come often to use the telephone?**

Oh yes. Yes, we had a lot of people used to come in wanting - - -. My brother used to buy wheat - he was the agent for the wheat, for Crosby, Mann & Co I think was the agents, and they used to come and send telegrams through for so much wheat. Then we had - the policeman used to come out as far as our place, and then he used to borrow a horse and go round to the different people delivering summonses and all these sort of things, and he used to come up and borrow a horse from our place and go out from there.

**Do you know why your family had moved to Yumali?**

I think Dad just wanted to get the boys on the land, because there were four boys and he wanted somewhere for them to start off. I think he loved the land himself and we were running this farm. We were in partnership with this Mr Wilkin, and we were all living there together. I don't know how we did it, but they lived there and we lived there for a time. Then he went insolvent and of course Yumali had to be sold. Well Elder, Smith & Co, I think it was, they took over all his property - well, they took everything - so of course we couldn't stay on then because the place had to be sold. So we went on to another place further over. We hadn't bought that place - we were only on partnership - and we went on to another place, further over, near Netherpton, and we were there until we came through to Murray Bridge then, farming that place.

**How big was the first one at Yumali?**

Oh, it had hundreds of acres. Oh, we had drought after drought there - very little rain through there at that time. I can remember one year, Dad brought all the wheat home in a buggy. That's all the wheat we got for the year. He brought that home and we had to keep that for seed wheat for the next year and a bit for the fowls. But, oh, the kangaroos and emus used to take most of our wheat. They didn't take - - -. I said they'd take it, but they used to hop on it and cut it up when it was only young. They'd come in to eat, and as they'd hop of course they'd hop it all - there were no fences around it - and we lost most of our crops through kangaroos and emus. They used to do the damage. It wasn't the wheat they ate, it was just the damage they did.

**Did your father try to do anything to stop them coming on?**

Well, they put fences, but fences don't stop kangaroos or emus. They just break them or go straight through them, or over the top. We had a bit of farming around the house itself, but the ones - you know, the new ground where they cleared - that was just useless really, only for feed. But we didn't have any sheep, we only had cattle, horses.

**Do you remember the clearing process?**

Yes. The boys used to go out. They used to have railway irons, and they'd have the horses [harnessed] on to these chains on to these railway irons, and they'd drag that through the scrub and that would break the timber down - it was only low scrub. And then they used to go along for what they called spring backs and they'd cut those spring backs off, and then they had to wait until the proper day when the wind was blowing the right way, and then they'd light it and that would burn back and burn all the leafy stuff off. Then the men'd go down and pack all the heaps up - the boughs, the heavy boughs - and then they used to go and burn all those off afterwards. We always used to watch. We were frightened that the wind would change and bring the fire back over the rest of the property.

**Was there scrub close to the house when you first moved in?**

Yes, just about up to the back - - -. It was always scrub right around. They kept that for windbreaks. Because we used to get very hot winds, and they used to leave that around, but we had the road going through. But on the other side it was all right - on the railway side it was all right. It was always cleared on that side.

But water was the biggest trouble there. We used to have to buy water from Murray Bridge for the stock. They had what they call a stand pipe, but

you had to cart water for about two miles from that and put in our own tanks. If the wind didn't blow, of course the windmills wouldn't turn and there wouldn't be any water in the stand pipes. So we used to have to buy the water from Murray Bridge and it'd come down by train. Well, you only had so long to empty that water into your own tanks, because they'd pick the truck up on their way back. The goods trains used to pick the tanks up to go back to Murray Bridge again, or Tailem Bend.

**What did you do for water at the house itself?**

We had a big cement tank - great big cement tank - that we used to catch from the roof. The rain water that was. But we never wasted any water at all. You know, the handbowl water always had to go out on to the garden. We still had a little bit of a garden, although it wasn't much. We didn't have a sink to wash in - we just had a little handbowl - and all the water used to go into a bucket and Dad used to take it down to the garden when he'd come home at night.

**You've mentioned that he was in partnership. Was the other homestead near you? The other family?**

They lived in the same house.

**Oh, did they?**

Yes, there was only he and his wife and a baby, and they, like, lived in the same house. But I still don't know - I can't remember where they could've all slept. When I think of it, there were ten of us. Well, all the boys must've been in one room. I suppose the baby'd be in the bedroom with Mum and Dad, and I suppose all of us girls slept in one room. I suppose what we called the dining room, I suppose that's where the other couple and their baby slept. I can't remember.

**Did you take meals together?**

Yes, I think we must have done. But I think they could have only been there a few months before they shifted. I can remember once taking their baby - her baby, Billy and my brother Bob - - -. I used to take them in the one pram and, you know, wheel them about the paddocks - oh, down the road and back again. They were there a little while, although they couldn't have been very big for two babies to be in one pram.

**When they were insolvent and had to leave, was your father able to keep on working the property himself?**

No. No, because this man that owned the property - - -. We were only on partnership with the cropping.

**Oh, would he be sharecropping?**

Yes, like sharefarming, we were. And of course when he lost everything, they took the cattle and the horses and everything - all the implements. That's where he got behind with his payments, was on the implements. So they - I think it was Elder, Smith & Co, or one of those firms, they took over. We could have gone on, I suppose, but we couldn't have found enough money to have paid our half of the farm.

**That must have been a difficult time for your family.**

It was a very hard time at that time, although we had the money from the Post Office that was helping. But we went on to this other farm. That was a lovely home we went into - another stone home - and we stopped there until - - -. Some of the family wanted to - - - [go to work EW]. Elsie went nursing and the boys had to go out working because the farm wasn't big enough. It was big enough, but the seasons were against us and we couldn't stock the farm with sheep and cattle. We had a few cows but not many. So the boys went out working. Well, then, we were only renting that place, so we went to Murray Bridge. The younger girls, us younger ones, we wanted to get out and work, so we went to Murray Bridge and gave up the farm altogether.

**Do you remember as a girl how your parents' shortage of money affected the family life? Did you ever notice it?**

Well we didn't notice it, because we'd never been used to money. We never had money to spend or anything. It was a great thing if we were allowed to buy our dinner at school and things like that. (laughs) No, we never had any money to spare.

**Did you have ways when you were children of earning a bit of money for yourselves?**

No, I don't ever remember.

**Some children would trap rabbits and sell the skins, things like that.**

Well our brothers used to trap rabbits and sell the skins, but the money all went into the housekeeping. They didn't have the money themselves. But we never ever went hungry. Mum used to make our own bread and butter - we never ever went hungry.

**You've mentioned your father shooting duck and rabbit as well. What sort of things would the boys hunt that you'd eat on the table?**

We had dogs - kangaroo dogs - and they used to go out and hunt - - -. Oh, at Yumali, we used to go and hunt kangaroos and emus. We even ate an emu. We didn't know they were protected when we went down there and we ate an emu. We skinned the emu and did the skin - you know, preserved it, I don't know what you call it now. We had it in front of the fireplace, this lovely emu skin, and Mr Cane - he was the policeman - and he said, 'Oh, next time you see me coming,' he said, 'put that behind the piano, will you'. Dad said, 'Why?' and he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'they're protected,' so that went straight in the fire. This beautiful skin. (laughs)

**Did it have the feathers on?**

Yes. Yes, and this big tail, and oh, we were so careful the way we pegged it out, and Dad preserved it somehow - I don't know how he did it. But we didn't know the emus were protected and Dad said, 'We even ate some of the meat'. And he said, 'Oh, well,' he said, 'don't do it again'. He said, 'You're allowed to kill them, but they must lie where they die'. You could shoot them on your property but you mustn't move them - they had to stay there. But of course the kangaroos weren't protected. The boys used to go out and - - -. All boys from round the neighbourhood, they'd have a day, and they'd all go out kangarooing, to try and get the kangaroo population down a bit. We had dogs, and they all used to bring their dogs and they used to go out for a full day kangarooing. Any little young kangaroos' parts - you know, just the little legs - we used to eat those. Used to love those.

**What other sort of wild life would you - - -?**

Oh, rabbits and hares. But you can't trap hares - you've got to chase them with a dog. We used to trap rabbits - catch them with - - - [dogs EW]. But that was about all there was.

**What about parrots or some of the bird life?**

No, never ever eaten parrots. We've eaten pigeons because we were overstocked with pigeons, but nobody liked the dark meat.

**Were there any quail in the area?**

No. There were quail, but we didn't eat them. They used to fly up out of the crops and things, but I don't ever remember anybody eating the quail.

**So were there times when the family would be relying on hunted meat for the table?**

Yes I suppose there were. Because I know Mum'd say, 'Oh, Dad, we're getting a bit short. Can you kill some of the chickens or some of the roosters? Got any roosters to kill?' and Dad'd kill a couple of roosters and we'd have that for a while. Yes, lots of time we'd have to go out and catch rabbit. We never ever got sick of rabbit, but Mum used to pickle them somehow, when we got plenty and in the winter when they were nice and fat. Mum used to pickle them in brine and we'd always have those as a spare. Mum used to pickle the pig - do it down and do all the bacon down with coarse salt. And, I don't know, something else she used to use - salt petre, would that be right? I think it was salt petre and salt she used to do all this bacon down, and then we used to hang it.

**In the bad seasons, would you have to get rid of most of your livestock?**

Yes, I remember in the bad times, all we had left was old Dolly in the real drought - she was the only one we kept.

**Was that while you were still at Yumali?**

No, that was while we were in Bordertown. We brought her down to Yumali with us and, yes, she was still going. I think she was over twenty when she died. No, we didn't have any sheep, although I remember Dad got a few killers - what they call killers, eaters - and we just had those roaming about, just a few sheep. Dad used to kill one now and again, but when it was pretty bad we didn't have any - very little stock.

**You've mentioned your mother preserving meat. What other sorts of things would she be able to stock away?**

She used to do a lot of preserving - fruits, and things like that - but we had to buy the fruit. I can remember, she used to send a lot of eggs down to Brice's [A.A.] I think it was, and in exchange for the eggs we'd get back flour and big four gallon tins of jam - quince and - - -. I remember quince, because I remember Dad saying, 'Oh,' he said, 'the poor tree,' and he picked up a bough. You know, there was a bough of a quince tree in this tin of quince. But quince and peach - I remember those two jams. But Mum used to preserve pears and, oh, everything. She used to preserve a lot of - - -. And Dad used to grow a lot of melons, and we were always having melon chutney, melon jam. Pumpkins - he used to grow pumpkins - even at Yumali where there was very little water, only the water from the bath and washing your hands. Washing and things - we used to water the garden with that.

**So did you keep a large number of fowls, to have surplus eggs?**

Yes, Dad always had a lot of fowls. We were in the Red Comb [all eggs for shops had to go through this organisation, EW], and we had to weigh the eggs and they had to be a certain size, and they were all done out in little boxes and we used to have send them on the railway down to the - I suppose it'd be Port Adelaide the factory was. Then they'd send back the - - -. They'd build up. Perhaps you'd get ten pounds worth and then when you wanted enough, well you'd send for an order, and they'd send down flour and sugar and jam, or whatever you wanted.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

**We've been talking about various routines when you were living on the farms at Yumali. Did you as a young girl have any outside chores to do?**

Oh, we used to help. When there wasn't enough to do inside - well I suppose we could have done more inside, but we used to go with Dad. Dad used to have a tip dray and there was a lot of stone - little stones - on the farm, and we used to go along and make rows of stone, and then Dad'd come along with the tip dray and throw it into the dray. If ever we had any time, we'd just go and make little heaps of stone out on the paddock - in the paddocks - and then Dad'd used to come and he'd pick up this stone and then take it over to the side of the fence and just empty it along there. But that was always in our spare time.

Or else we'd go out and put any wood that was about - we'd put it all in little heaps, and Dad used to come down with the dray and load it up and bring it up ready for through the winter when we needed fires. We had fires all the time because we only had wood fires. That was the only fire we had. Had wood fires and the old kerosene lamps. Had no power on at all there.

**One thing that often comes up when I'm talking to people, are the different uses made of the kerosene tins. Did you have different ways that you used the empty tins?**

Yes. Dad used to make our drawers. He used to nail the boxes together - fasten them somehow together - and the kerosene tins, he used to put on the side and turn the edges over, and the handles'd be on here, and we used to keep our socks and things like that in them. Even out in the kitchen, he had one out there, and had the outside painted and we used to keep tea towels and serviettes - oh, not serviettes I suppose - tea towels and towels and face washers and things like that. Just pull out the drawer, and we used to put our names on - you know, whose it was, in the bedroom. We often used to do things like that.

Another thing Dad used to do was to cut the tin cornerways, and double it out like that, and then he used to put timber right around it, and that was our washing up - one part for washing and the other one for draining, draining for the dishes. He used to do that for the fowls too. He used to open them up like that for the fowls for them to drink out of.

I remember Mum had a beautiful tin Dad made for her for her sultana cake. She used to make this huge sultana cake in this tin. Oh, it was a lovely tin for making sultana cakes.

**Was that out of a kerosene tin?**

That was out of a kerosene tin, yes. And he used to make buckets out of kerosene tins - you know, with the handle over the top. We used to get all our kerosene in - - -. It was in tins, but in boxes - used to come in a box, a case. Dad used to make - - -. Sometimes he had a - oh, we had a high chair made out of one of the boxes. He had the bottom part and then the top was a half of one, and the baby used to sort of sit in this little box, and that was the high chair. Then he had a little thing that went over the top for the tray, or else bring it up to the table. Oh yes there was lots of uses for the old kerosene tin. I can remember him making a roof for the fowl house - nailing them all together - and the water used to come straight off then, it didn't used to soak in.

**I wanted to talk with you a bit about the different activities the family had together. You've mentioned your mother was a religious woman. Did you attend church regularly?**

Yes. Yes, we used to drive from Yumali to Ki Ki to church every Sunday. It didn't amalgamate - it was really a Congregational minister - but everyone used to go. We wouldn't miss going to church, or Mum too, when - - -. All depends who could get in the buggy, because it was only one buggy. But Mum used to love to go to church, and Dad did too, but we always used to go to church. I don't know, we used to go to Sunday School as well. Whether we came home and went back or whether we took our dinner, I can't remember that. I know we used to go down there to Sunday School.

**How many people would attend?**

Sometimes about twenty altogether. The minister used to come from Coomandook and go right down to Ki Ki. Oh, he used to pick some of us up, that's right. He used to pick some of us up in his car, because he was a single man, and we always used to let Mum go in the car because we couldn't play up while she was there. We used to play up a bit in the buggy, you know (laughs) -

you know, do different things we wouldn't do if she was there. We always used to say, 'Oh no, Mum, you go in the car. It's better for you to go in the car'.

**What sort of things would you do?**

Oh, perhaps go a different way, and get out and walk for a while. Because we had to go through sand and sometimes the horse couldn't pull us all. We'd all get out and we'd decide to have a bit of a play around before we went on any further and get back in the buggy. Sometimes we'd be late, but we didn't mind.

**Were there other places where the family would go out together on a regular basis?**

No. The boys used to go to what they called the Amalgamated Football Club - Amalgamated Sports Club, I think it was called. Well, the boys used to play football, the three older ones, or the two older ones - used to play football.

There used to be a Strawberry Fete once a year - we used to go to that. But that was about the other only thing that was on. We used to go to the Strawberry Fete, the older ones, but Mum used to stop home with the little ones.

**Where was that held?**

That was held in the Coomandook hall - that was four miles away.

**Were there strawberries?**

Yes, real strawberries and real cream.

**Would they be grown locally?**

No, I don't know where they got them from. Also you could have ice cream. Well, that was the first time I'd ever tasted ice cream, at one of these, and I thought it was beautiful. I suppose I was about eleven then, when I went to that.

**Were there Sunday School picnics?**

No, we didn't have any Sunday School picnics from the Ki Ki church, I don't know why. It's a wonder they didn't have some sort of a gathering.

**What about local agricultural shows?**

No, they didn't have any shows there at all. I suppose the people were too scattered to have any shows.

**Were there local dances?**

Yes, there was - just about every week, every Saturday night - there was a dance. Either there or else Coonalpyn, or Yumali they'd have - - -. Oh, sometimes they'd have a concert and we'd all go to that. But I remember once we went to a concert at Ki Ki and everybody from all round used to go, and then it'd be somewhere else and then everyone'd go there. We had one sports day, I remember, at Ki Ki, because I remember Mr and Mrs Griffin had come out from England and they donated all these beautiful strings of beads for winners of the races. I don't know what the boys got, but the girls - - -. I remember my two sisters got strings of beads for winning some race, and they came from - I think it was India, they got them, on the way out. Oh, I was envious because I didn't get one. (laughs)

**You've mentioned how your family was having bad times with the seasons and your father having to change work. Were there wealthy people in the areas when you were growing up?**

Yes there were. Yes, there were people that had money, but I suppose they kept it. I can't remember - I don't know whether they employed people. But there were people down round the South-East with money.

**Was there anyone in the vicinity of Yumali who you would have considered well off?**

No. No, there was no one there that - - -. Oh, there was a man that had an apple orchard. He had a big apple orchard and he always had plenty of fruit, and he had a big home, but I don't know - - -. He had a big family, too, but I don't know that he had much money. He had stock. I remember once we were over there and they were taking a load of calves to Tailem Bend to sell. They went out and one of these calves had jumped over the top of the truck and had killed - like, it had hung itself, because somehow it must've been tied in the truck and it jumped over. So he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'if you'd like to skin that,' he said, 'you can have it,' he said to us, so we took it home and Dad skinned it. But they used to take their stock through to Tailem Bend for sale. They always had a lot of horses and I learned to ride over there. I used to go and stay with them quite a lot, and they had this beautiful orchard. There was apple trees everywhere. Only apples I think. I can't remember any other trees, just apple trees. He used to send a lot of his stuff away and used to supply all round the neighbourhood with apples. Never charged for them.

**Do you know how he managed for water?**

No I don't. Unless it was - - - [a spring EW]. It was low lying. It was between Netherton and Coomandook. Whether it was a bit low lying. It was a very level place there, and nice ground, so I suppose it must've been a bit of a soak

or something. Oh, he had a windmill, so I suppose he'd water the trees from the windmill.

**Did you consider your family to be poor when you were growing up?**

Yes, I did. But we enjoyed ourselves, and a lot of people around us were the same. They didn't have much more than we did.

**I wanted to talk with you about your days at school. You mentioned before that you started off at Bordertown. Do you remember starting school?**

Yes, I remember starting school. I was seven when I started school - well everyone was seven at that time. My brother - I think he left the day I started. Was he fourteen years older than me? He was born in nineteen hundred and four - no, he was nine years old than me. He must have left the day my sister started I suppose. But anyway, I remember I started school when we shifted, not closer to the school, because we were a fair way - must've been two mile out - and we bought this little iron place in Bordertown and I started from there. I had my three brothers and my sister and I - we all went to the same school.

**Had your older brothers and sister missed school when you were further out?**

I suppose they must have done. I think they must have done because I know my second brother and my sister were in the same class - same grade - so they must have both started together when they got nearer a school. But they all did fairly well at school - all got their PCs, or QCs we used to call them then.

**You mentioned that the Bordertown school had about a hundred children.**

Yes. Yes, I think there were a hundred children there.

**How many classrooms?**

Oh, it was a very old school. It only went up to Grade 7 and then they made it up to Grade 9 afterwards, but not in that one school. They had to go to another part of Bordertown to go to the 9th Grade. Well there'd be the seven classes I suppose - have to be seven rooms, because we all were in a different room.

**Were you?**

Yes. Yes, each class was in a different room.

**So you would have been at the Bordertown school for your first three years or thereabouts.**

Yes, I was still at Bordertown school when Bob was a baby. He was about six months old when we left Bordertown to go to Yumali.

**What do you remember of those early classes at school?**

I remember we had these big long desks, and we had the inkwells along. I can remember once - I had long hair - and I remember a boy - I had two plaits - and I remember a boy tied my hair through the inkwell and I stood up and I couldn't get away and I just started to cry. The teacher didn't know what was wrong with me, and she come and she said, 'What in the world's the matter?' I said, 'I can't get up'. Anyway, this hair was tied into the inkwell. But we had these long desks, and then while I was in that grade, we got the short desks. And as you stand up the seats would go back, and I remember the teacher had terrible trouble to get us to put the seats back as we stood up instead of letting them just go bang.

I don't know how many would be in our class. I reckoned there'd be easy twenty in our class when I think of all the different ones, and there was only the one teacher. She always sat with her back to us. There was a big picture up on the wall and she used to watch us from there. She used to say, 'Stop talking so-and-so,' and we'd look at her. We didn't know how she knew, and she said, 'I've got eyes in the back of my head,' and I thought for years she did have eyes in the back of her head. I don't know, somebody told us afterwards she used to watch this big picture on the wall.

**The reflection.**

Yes, the reflection. She could see just what was going on.

**You've mentioned that it was a Mr Huntley, was it, who arranged the trip to the beach.**

Mr Huntley, that's right.

**Was he your teacher that year?**

No. No, he was the headmaster and he taught Grade 7. No, he had four or five children of his own. He had one little girl - I remember Helen - and John and Dean. He was so - oh, I suppose you'd say surprised - to think that there was such a lot of the children had never seen the sea and he couldn't get it through to them what the sea looked like. That's why he got up the trip to go down to the sea. And of course the train trip, that was wonderful too.

**Were you sorry to leave the Bordertown school when you moved away?**

Oh, I think we were too excited, to think we were going on a farm. We did miss a lot of our friends and our relatives when we went down on the farm, but there were other things that took over. Our new neighbours and our new school and new friends. We didn't have neighbours very close, but we made friends with the neighbours and school children.

**You've mentioned that you first of all went to the Coomandook school.**

Yes, I went to that. It was just a little, wee school. I think there was about twelve children there and Dad used to drive me down, or one of my elder brothers used to drive me down, in the buggy. My other sister, although she had started school, they didn't worry to send her. I had to teach her at home.

**Did you?**

Yes. So I used to go down in the buggy and then they used to - - -. I don't know what they did, but they used to bring me back at night. That didn't last very long because Mr Ballard - he was a great friend of Dad's, and Dad used to do shearing for him. He said, 'Look, let Ethel stay here with us and she can go - - -' - they had three children, one girl the same age, and he said, 'She can go to school from here, and that'll save Dad coming backwards and forwards'. So I stopped there and then Dad used to do his shearing each year for him. That bartered out the difference.

**How long did you stay with the Ballards?**

I think till I was - - - [eleven years old EW]. Oh, I suppose I stopped there about a year with them, and I used to go home of a weekend. Sometimes I'd walk home, because they were about a mile from the school. That only left three miles for me to walk home, so that wasn't too bad. I used to walk home and stay home for the weekend. Then Dad used to bring me back on Sunday night and I'd be ready - or else Monday morning - and I'd be ready for another week.

**Did your younger sister stay away from school for a while?**

Yes, until we got the - - -. It took a while for us to get a permit, or a ticket, to go on the train. After Mum arranged for this ticket, well then, I took her on the train and we went on the train to Coonalpyn.

**How long did that trip take in the morning?**

We used to leave at half past seven. It all depended on the goods we had to pick up at Ki Ki - they'd perhaps be shunting there for an hour. We very seldom got there before nine - half past eight or nine. We used to go into

school quarter to nine. Sometimes we were a little bit late, but sometimes we had a bit of a play before we went in.

**You were saying you caught the half past seven train three days a week.**

Yes.

**Then what happened on the other two days?**

There was no train in the morning - there was no goods train in the morning - we had to catch the midday passenger. So Tuesdays and Thursdays we only had a half a day. But we could always catch the passenger train home at night - that was at four o'clock.

**Every day of the week?**

Yes, every day of the week that was.

**When you caught the goods train, where would the children sit?**

In the goods - - -. There was a part in the brake van. There was a little part where the workmen sit. Well, we had one of those. We used to sit in those little compartments.

**How did you amuse yourselves when they were shunting at Ki Ki?**

Oh, terrible things we used to do. Oh, at Ki Ki? Oh, we used to learn. The guard made sure that we didn't get out of the train, but it was such a slow trip from Ki Ki to Coolanpyn - there's a lot of hills - and we used to get out and walk along the edges of the train, from one carriage to another and things like that. Things that would make my blood go cold now, when I think of it. There was one boy, he was really good, and he could go from one - - -. You had to go from one carriage to another and sort of swing out and grab the other carriage, and he was real good. So we thought we could beat him, so we did it too - the girls weren't going to be beaten, so we used to do it too.

**How many children would travel on the train?**

Oh, there were four Bartletts - there was Clarrie, Edna, Cathy and Frank - and Annie and Edna and I, that was seven. There was Bill Cooley, was eight, and there was Maudie and Phyllis Burge and Jackie Rynne and Roma Molter. Oh, it'd be twelve or thirteen every day. Oh, and Edna Goodall, she was from Ki Ki. So there'd be twelve or thirteen, perhaps fourteen sometimes, every day.

**That's quite a crowd.**

Yes, and the boys used to - we didn't do it, but the boys used to get their rulers and they'd get the - - -. There was a toilet in the train, in the carriage

where we were - like, it was like a double carriage and there was a little toilet - and they used to get the toilet paper on their ruler and hold it out the window. This'd be flapping and flapping until the guard'd see it and then he'd come in about it and say, 'Now the next time you do that you've got to pay for it'. But it didn't make any difference - the boys still used to do it.

**So the guard wouldn't always be in with you.**

Oh no, he was never in with us. He was in the middle part. He had his books to do. And then there was a little part there for the workmen and there was another part up that end for the workmen, and he was just in the middle, and that's where he stayed, with the goods. Oh, we had a lovely time. I still love train travelling. We've just been up to Alice Springs - we went up by train.

**Would there be any way that the teacher would make you catch up with the Tuesday and Thursday morning classes?**

No, it was always left - - -. The work was on the board and we had to copy that down. If we didn't do that, well that was up to us. He always used to try to have spelling and things like that, in the morning part so that we - or else history or something, that we could pick up and any other lessons. We only had one teacher for the whole school. He was very good like that. We got through. We got our QCs [Qualifying Certificate]. I don't know how we did it, but - - -.

**Do you remember the QC?**

Yes I remember. There were two of the Coonalpyn children, they sat for their QC the same day, so they came down and stayed with us at Yumali, and then this other boy and girl and I. My brother drove us down to sit at the Coomandook hall. We had to sit at the hall, and the minister and - - -. Two ministers I think. No, a minister and the man on the - the stationmaster and somebody else had to be there to watch us do our exams. There weren't only us three - there were others from Netherton and from all around, from the other side of the town, or the other schools, from Jabuk and over there - they all came there to have their exam. We had to sit there and these people used to have to watch us and see that we didn't cheat.

**You've mentioned your mother keeping you home one day when she was looking after - was it Mrs Sexton, who lost the baby?**

Yes, that's right.

**Were there other times when you'd be kept home from school?**

That was the only day I ever remember staying home.

**So you wouldn't be kept home to help in the house or look after children?**

No. No, that's the only day I ever remember staying home. I don't ever remember being sick or anything. Ki Ki school started up while we were still at the Coonalpyn school, but I didn't go to the Ki Ki school because I was doing my Grade 7 and the teacher thought it was best for me to carry on there, so the three of us used to have to go on our own to Coonalpyn and the others used to get off at Ki Ki. That was only four miles away, but I think it was eighteen up to Coonalpyn. They used to get off there and then they'd meet the train at night time, and we'd all get on again to go home.

**What was your teacher like at Coonalpyn?**

Very good. Mr Kennedy was our first one, and Mr Murphy. We only had two teachers while we were there. Like, one was there and then one went away - went to Tasmania. He used to still write to us from Tasmania and tell us different things and send us a post card now and again. He was very good.

**Did you think the schooling that you did receive was worthwhile?**

Oh I think so, yes. Yes, we got good marks in our QC, so, seeing we missed so much time, he must have been a good teacher. But I don't know how he got through, because he must have had forty children, I suppose, and he had from Grade 1 up to Grade 7. No one ever took over. Sometimes one from Grade 7 would take the little ones, but he did the lot himself and we were all in one room - we just had one room. I think he used to give Grade 7 more time than perhaps he would have if we hadn't have been doing our QC. I think he spent more time with us in that last six months than he would have ordinarily if he was in another school. But he was very good, but we always had a lot of homework, I remember that. Still, we didn't mind that - got out of the dishes.

**Where would you do the homework?**

Round the kitchen table. We had an Aladdin lamp and that used to give lovely light - soft light - and we always had to do our homework round the kitchen table.

**Would your mother have had to do the washing up on the kitchen table?**

No, we had another cupboard over the side that we used to do - - -. Dad had a bench along there and Mum used to do the washing up. But usually we had to do the homework as soon as we got home, as much as we could - as soon as we got home before tea. But as a rule we didn't get home much before five because it was eighteen miles from Coonalpyn to home.

**Was there any suggestion that you or any of your brothers and sisters could go on further in school?**

No, I wanted to be a schoolteacher. Always wanted to be a schoolteacher, so Mum wrote and asked Mr Kennedy and he wrote back and he said, 'No'. He said if I was in an ordinary school that I could get there every day it would be all right, but seeing I was missing so much he didn't think it was possible unless I went to Tailem Bend and boarded. Well that was just out of the question altogether, so I just altered my mind. (laughs)

**Why was that out of the question?**

Oh well, we couldn't have afforded boarding in Tailem Bend. Couldn't afford to board there and go to school.

**Were you disappointed?**

Oh I don't suppose. It used to worry me. If I could have been a schoolteacher and lived home - I loved home so much - if I could have been a schoolteacher and lived at home would have been all right, but the thought of going away from the family, that worried me.

**Did you have any other ideas of the sort of work you might like to do?**

No, that's the only thing I wanted to do, was to be a schoolteacher, or be a mother - that's all I wanted. When I was in Bordertown, I can remember, we had a teacher, a Miss Woolcock, and she was a lovely teacher and she said, 'Now, I want you to all write what you'd like to be when you grow up, and why'. And I wrote, 'I'd like to be a mother and make pasties for my children,' so she sent the letter home to Mum - what I had written. Mum said, 'Why do you want to make pasties?' and I said, 'Oh, I love pasties so much'. Mum used to make beautiful pasties. (laughs) That's all I wanted to be, was to be a mother. You'd think after eight of us, you'd think it would've been enough children. (laughs)

**Were you expected to help your mother with the younger ones?**

Oh yes. We knew it was our job to help. They were our brothers and sisters and it was up to us to help if we could.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B: TAPE 3 SIDE A

**We were just talking about you leaving school. What happened when you left school?**

I just went - - -. There was one woman was sick and I went and helped her - like, helped in her home, for a little while, while she was sick. Then, oh, I just

helped Mum about the house. My eldest sister had gone nursing, so I just helped Mum around the house, that was all, you know, with the ordinary work.

**Two of your sisters went nursing. Did you have any idea about doing that?**

No, I thought I was too short to go nursing. (laughs) They both went back to Bordertown and did nursing. One was five years older and one was five years younger, but they grew up at different times.

**How long did you stay at home helping your mother after you left school?**

Till we went to Murray Bridge. We shifted to Murray Bridge. My brother was twenty one when we shifted to Murray Bridge - Vic was twenty one - so I would have been about nineteen I suppose. Oh no, I couldn't have been. I was seventeen or eighteen when we went to Murray Bridge.

**Yes, I think you said about 1928, '29.**

Bob was five because he hadn't started school. Yes, he had started school because he was left handed. He started school in Parkin Hall [which stood in one of Mr William's paddocks on the road between Coomandook and Netherton EW] - he started school - and the teacher - - -. Mum said, 'Oh, he's left handed,' and he said, 'Oh, I'll break him from being left handed'. Mum said, 'I don't know how you will,' and he said, 'I will'. He said, 'I've got a way of my own'. He taught him to hold a piece of chalk and draw across the blackboard and rub it out as quick as he could with a duster, and that made him write with his right hand. He still writes with his right hand.

**Which hand did he have to hold the chalk in?**

In his right hand. He had to work this hand quicker than the other hand, and he said, 'If you give the left hand something to do more than the other hand, it'll take over,' and it did. He's left handed in everything other than writing. That's how he got him to start writing right handed.

**So you went to Murray Bridge about 1929.**

Yes, I think it might have been. Yes about 1929.

**You would have left school about 19—?**

I was fourteen when I left school.

**About 1927. So did you have about two years at home.**

Yes, it would've been about two years.

**What sort of things did you do during the day?**

Mend socks (laughs), and cooking, and there was always the fowls and the eggs to weigh, and everything like that - cows to be milked. Used to milk the cows, and then we used to have to gather the eggs from the day before, and the next day we used to wipe them all with a cloth and weigh them and pack them all ready for the man when he came to send them to town.

**How many times a week would you send them to town?**

Only once a week I think. I can only remember the truck coming once a week and we'd send them off to town.

**About how many dozen do you think you'd be sending off?**

Sometimes we'd have two of those big cases. I think we had a forty eight dozen box and a twenty four - like a half one, which held twenty four dozen. So sometimes we'd have forty eight dozen, sometimes we'd have sixty dozen to send. But they were only about sixpence a dozen in those days. But still, it was something.

**Did you raise your own chickens?**

Yes, all our own. We set our own hens and had our own chickens.

**Did you ever have any trouble with things preying on the fowls?**

Yes, one night we had a ferret got in amongst the fowls and killed such a lot of them. Just killed and went on and killed and killed. They couldn't get away because they were shut in at night time, but the ferret got in somehow. It must have been a wild ferret or got away from someone. Oh, he killed a terrible lot of fowls, but you couldn't use them because they were dead. We used to have to shut them in of a night time because of the foxes. They were very close. We had scrub pretty close and they used to come up of a night time. But it was the only time I ever remember anything happening, was the ferret that killed them all.

**Would you have been helping your mother with the washday?**

Oh yes, washing and ironing and mending.

**What day of the week did you do the washing?**

Always Monday. Had to get washed Monday.

**How early would you start in the morning?**

Oh, the men'd go off to work about seven I suppose. We used to have to cart our water in drums. We didn't have enough water to use rainwater, so we used to cart our water with drums, and the boys'd tip the water out of the petrol

drums the night before - and we had tubs - and in the morning the boys used to light the petrol. Because there'd be always a skim of petrol over the water and they used to just light the petrol - the water, and you know, the flash of the petrol would go and then we could start. But we used to have a big old copper outside and we used to boil up the copper. Everything was outside - the wringer and everything. We'd start about seven and of course there were four boys and the three of us girls, and Mum and Dad, so we had a fair bit of washing to do.

**Were you the only one home helping your mother at that stage?**

Yes, my sister still was going to school - Ann was still at school. Elsie was away nursing.

**What sort of iron did you have?**

Oh, box iron. You know, one with the coals in it. It was a lovely old iron - had a rooster on the top I remember. We used to get the coals out. Oh, we had two lots of irons, because there were those others - Mrs Potts, I think they were. You had to squeeze the top and put the handle on them and I think there were three in a set and they had to always stay on the top of the oven. You'd have to rub them a little bit before you started to iron because there'd always be a little bit of smoke come through from the wood fire. We had the two lots of irons. They always kept you warm, though, a lot warmer than the electric irons do.

**What about in hot weather? It must have been hot then?**

Yes, I suppose it was, but we didn't notice. I didn't feel the heat in those days.

**You've mentioned mending socks. Did you do dressmaking yourself?**

No. No, only when I had my own family I used to make their little frocks and things like that, but I didn't make anything for myself. I used to just mend socks. Every time we'd sit down to mend socks, Mum'd say, 'What is a thing that nobody ever wants to find - they always look for, but they hope they'll never find? A hole in a sock'. (laughs)

**What about the house cleaning? How was that done?**

Oh well that was done every day. Like, the kitchen floor had to be swept. Not washed every day, but swept every day. It was only lino. It had to be swept every day, and the room where the separator was, that had to be washed every day because that was a wooden floor and we had to wash that every day.

**Did you have any kind of disinfectant?**

I don't ever remember. But I remember in the toilet we always used to have to have - oh, what's that dreadful smell. I can smell it - everywhere I go, I always think of a toilet - phenyl. Used to have to put phenyl in the water when we scrubbed - the top of the seat was only wood and we used to have to always scrub that, every day.

**Was that out the back?**

Yes, all down the yard.

**Was that just a hole in the ground?**

Yes, just a hole in the ground. Then we had some ashes and we'd have to scatter a few ashes over the top to stop the smell from coming up.

**How long would it take before you had to move to another hole?**

I don't remember ever having to - I don't ever remember it having been filled. We were there for years and years. I don't remember a new - - -. Oh, it was at the end of the path. I don't know whether the ashes made it - - -. Oh, I don't know.

**Would all the ashes go down there?**

No, we used to sieve the ashes, so there wouldn't be coal - there'd only be just the ash. We had, like a grid, and we used to just put it on the top and it'd fall through and then we used to throw the coals away. Had this bucket down there and we had a little shovel thing in it, and we used to just scatter a few into the toilet afterwards.

**You've mentioned just after you left school going out helping with the woman who was ill. Did you do any other work for people round about?**

Not down there, no. When we went to Murray Bridge, Mum's sister had a boarding house in Tailem Bend, and I went down there and I worked with her for quite a while. She had quite a lot of boarders and she had two daughters of her own - three daughters of her own - and she wanted somebody. She asked me if I'd go down so I started there. Well then, when I'd finished with her I came back and one woman from our church was looking - - -. No, she wasn't from our church. Her sister was at the Church of Christ and she wanted to know if I would like to work in a coffee palace, so I started there. I was there for quite a few years. Then I went and worked in the - oh, like a boarding house, but it was a - - -. One was a coffee palace and the other was a boarding house.

**You were telling me last week about the first job you did, when you were paid in vegetables.**

Oh yes, that was in Murray Bridge. (laughs) He just lived a little way from us and he had a very sick daughter - she was sick in the mind - and he come up to see - - -. His wife wasn't well and he come up to see if I would just go down. Because he knew I used to go out - if anyone had a baby, I'd go and do a bit of housework and look after the place until the mother was strong enough. So this Mr Leishman came up and he said would I come down and give them a hand. So I went down. It was just, like, through a paddock and into the next street, and we had a cow, so I could just cut through the paddock and down to his place. I was getting two and six a week and as many melons and pumpkins as I could carry home. (laughs) That was wonderful too. But that was just to do the housework, and I didn't have to do any cooking. He did the cooking and I just had to do the housework and the washing and ironing and things like that. I was there a few weeks till his wife got better. I often used to pop in and see how they were and she'd say, 'I wonder if you'd mind doing the ironing'. Then they'd give me some little thing for doing the ironing.

**Would you keep the money you earned?**

No. No, that all went into the housekeeping. (laughs)

**After you'd left school and you were living at home in Yumali, what sort of things would you do in your spare time?**

Needlework, knitting socks for some of the other children and things like that.

**Did you have any sort of social activities?**

No, only, like, Sunday School was the only thing, and the church. We weren't that far from the church really. The second house we went to at - the second stone house we went to - was only about two miles from the church there. We used to be friends with the Chapmans that had the apple orchard and they used to sometimes pick me up and we'd go down together, or else we'd walk down. We'd all go down - the younger ones, too, would all go down there. That's where the three younger children went to school, down there, at Parkin Hall church. It was a church at weekend and then school through the week. That was the same at Coonalpyn - it was a hall - it was used for the school through the week and then Pastime Club on the Saturday and church for Sunday.

**What sort of club?**

Pastime Club. Just pastime. Anything at all. They'd have table tennis, or anything, or just meet there I think.

**You were showing me a photograph of you and your brothers and sisters with tennis raquets. Where would you play that?**

Just on our own in our own - - -. Like, we make a little court there, just a dirt court, and we used to just play there. Some of our neighbours used to come and play there. Mr and Mrs Ballard had a little place they scooped out and that was just a dirt court and we used to play there.

**Well I think we've done very well in covering the period up until 1930. Thank you very, very much for sharing your memories with me.**

That's all right.

**It's been very enjoyable.**