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Full transcript of an interview with

KATHRYN FINNIGAN

on 16 & 20 August 1999

by Denise Schumann

for the

**HONORED WOMEN ORAL HISTORY
PROJECT**

Recording available on CD

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Denise Schumann interviewing Kathryn Finnigan on the 16th and 20th August 1999.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Interview with Kathryn Finnigan, who was one of the first women to achieve commissioned rank in the South Australian Police Force in 1985. Kathryn Finnigan was awarded the Australian Police Medal in 1998. Her career has had many ‘firsts’, and she is considered a trail-blazer for many young women wanting to carve out a career in the police force. This interview is recorded as part of the Honoured Women Oral History Project for the Mortlock Library of South Australia.

Kathryn, could you please just tell me when and where you were born?

I was born in Barcaldine, Queensland, on the fifteenth of January 1940.

What are some of your earliest childhood memories concerning your parents?

Well, my mother was made a widow in 1943, when my Dad was killed in the Second World War – he was killed in New Guinea – and she raised my sister, Robyn, and myself on her own, really.

What were conditions like at Barcaldine in Queensland? Is that Far North Queensland?

No; Barcaldine is inland from Longreach and inland from Rockhampton on the coast of Queensland: you go in, right up – it is near the Hall of Fame, Barcaldine. And my early memories – I cannot remember anything about Barcaldine. I have been back several times in my later life, but my earliest recollections, I think, were when Mum was working in Yeppoon, which is another seaside – coastal – town in Queensland, and she received the letter to tell her that Dad had been killed. I think that memory is also boosted by the fact that people used to talk about it, you know, when I was younger.

What were the origins of your mother? What was her family background?

I don't really know, except that she was a domestic. She was working somewhere around Barcaldine and she met my father, who was working on the main roads as a labourer.

So it was a fairly working class background you were describing?

Oh, yes, yes. Mum's mother had a hard life herself, and so she put Mum and Mum's two sisters into an orphanage; and they would never talk about it – my aunties would never talk about it; Mum vaguely mentioned it occasionally – and then they were put out to service on properties in Queensland. They went on sheep and cattle properties and worked as domestics.

Did your mother have any particular religious affiliation?

She changed to Catholic religion when she married my father, who was a practising Catholic.

So were you brought up a Catholic?

Yes, we were; because in those days Mum had to promise that she would bring up the children – any children from the marriage, she would bring them up as Catholic.

From those early memories, it sounds as though the family network was not particularly strong at the time of your father's death, that you had – did you have to move place again – I think you mentioned Yeppoon?

Oh, yes. Mum somehow – Mum used to keep working with her sister Heather, and Heather had a son called John who was my cousin, and the two women and we three sort of all followed each other around, as I can understand. And my Auntie Heather's husband deserted her – he was not killed and did not even go to the War, but he just left her – so here was this deserted wife and this widow working in all sorts of employment throughout Queensland.

Australia in the 1940s would not have been an easy place for a woman with a young child. Did your mother ever talk about that time in her life?

No. She would not talk about it. No. And I can still remember bits and pieces of in and out of hotels and learning how to – because she worked in hotels, we ate a lot of our meals there, Robyn and I, and I can remember being taught 'proper-like' (laughs) how to eat in a dining room and getting the slaps because we, you know, weren't eating correctly and using knives and forks. But, you know, it is all very vague, and I think – – –.

So there was obviously no financial support after your father died.

Yes.

Whereabouts was he killed?

In Markham Valley in New Guinea.

He was only in New Guinea several weeks and he was killed.

Yes.

So he had only just left Australia?

Yes.

Did you ever have any memories of him leaving and going away at all, any images of him? Or you were just too young?

Too young; I do have some photos that I have resurrected and had reprinted of us all – Mum and himself and myself – and then there's a nice one of him holding my sister. Yes, so I cannot really remember him.

Do you remember at all when your mother received that news? Any reaction, or did she talk at all later on about him at all? Is there any strong memory of her talking about him –

No; she just – – –.

– and would she go into why he went, he joined the Army?

No, nothing. And I do remember the day she got the telegram: all the women in this hotel seemed to congregate around her. But I mean, I don't know if I have half made it up, or – – –. I do remember – 'cause I was only three, nearly four – I do remember Armistice Day when war ended. I had my tonsils out and I was in hospital, and all the whistles and fire engines: I do remember that.

Now, you've mentioned you've got a sister, Robyn. What's the age difference there – when was she born?

She is only about eighteen months younger than I.

So you were fairly close. Did you look to comfort each other? Were you often the elder sister having to be responsible for the younger one, if your mother was working full-time?

I cannot remember doing that. We always got on well, and then we drifted apart over political matters as we grew older; and also Mum's lifestyle – Robyn took a different track through life, I suppose. But – – –.

Let's go and track a bit of that lifestyle –

Yes.

– because I think it has probably influenced your life in many ways. Let’s talk about Yeppoon and some of those early memories, about your early childhood – say, the first, do you remember your first day at school?

No, I cannot. All I remember – it is almost blocked out, I think, because I can remember going into boarding school when I was ten.

So that was obviously a fairly significant event in your life. Whereabouts were you at that time, Kathryn?

In Longreach. But prior to that, I do remember working, being on sheep stations with Mum, and working in the shearing sheds – I mean, when I say ‘working’, just delivering morning tea and swearing like troopers and getting a clip under the ear or over the back of the head for swearing.

So it was a fairly tough life for a child – or would you say that you weren’t aware that it was tough.

I was not aware at all, no.

So you never thought that you were deprived in any way?

No, no. It just seemed the norm. There were so many other people doing the same thing, I think, in those years. My education, as I grew older of course, I think, suffered; because I – I mean, Mum had been trying to teach us correspondence in the bush, and we would just nick off to the shearing sheds.

Can you remember some of the big pastoral stations that you actually stayed on?

I can remember one out from Longreach called Muttaborra – it was another little town – and Mum lived with a man then, or she was his housekeeper, but I think there was more to it than that, a housekeeper. And I can remember this tall man riding a horse and he was teaching us how to ride and probably – as I said, I think there may have been a bit of romance there, I don’t know.

Was your family one that had books around? Did you read a lot?

Yes. We were Legacy wards then. Legacy used to send us books at Christmas, and the *Billabong* series, we used to wait patiently – *impatiently*, really – for the mailman to arrive. And the mailman, in the outback, I think was once a month. And we would have these *Billabong* books and take it in turns to read them: we devoured them.

As a child, then, it seems that you became fairly independent or self-reliant. How would you describe your relationship with your mother while she was caring – was it a nurturing relationship, do you think?

No. She always had to go off and work. After she would go off to work, I think Robyn and I sort of fended for ourselves. We were supposed to do our homework, of course, but, as I said earlier, I cannot remember a lot of that. But I think I probably took Robyn under my wing when we went to boarding school. Because the nuns were fairly – – –.

So that was the Catholic boarding school, Kathryn?

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Now, whereabouts was the boarding school?

The first one was at Longreach with the Presentation Sisters. Well, you see, the nuns were quite cruel in a lot of ways, looking back on it, and very strict; but I think Robyn and I were fairly boisterous and uncontrollable, having run around the shearing sheds of outback Queensland, swearing like troopers. And I can remember Mum asking a sister when she came to see us for holidays, ‘How are my girls going?’ – very proudly asking – and Sister So-and-so said, ‘They have a lot of square edges that need rounding off.’.

That’s a very diplomatic way (interviewee laughs) of saying that you had a full vocabulary. The Catholic system in the 1950s, as you say, would have been fairly strict. That would have been a culture clash for you – coming from rural Queensland and also being separated from your mother. How did you – what were your experiences there or memories of that time? What was the place like? Can you give a description of it?

Yes, yes. It was a two-storied, wonderful old building – it is not there now, ’cause we went looking for it several years ago and it is been pulled down. And the nuns used to live upstairs: their rooms were adjacent to the boarders, and we all had to sleep in big dormitories, and if someone was coughing a nun would suddenly appear. And of course they would not put their full regalia on, they would just have something over their head, and we used to always giggle and think we could see Sister’s hair – because they had such a habit that you could not see if they had hair or not.

So you weren’t traumatised about going into the boarding school.

No, I don't think so, no.

Did you enjoy the company?

Yes, yes. We would be asked to go home for school holidays with different friends from other pastoral places, which was good.

Was Robyn there with you at that time, too?

Yes, yes.

So what about in the dormitories? Did you have beds close together?

I cannot honestly remember.

Cannot describe that, cannot remember that at all?

No.

What about the daily routine? Any memories of – you said it was tough and strict.

Oh, we had to do our chores and clean up, wash up, do all those things, hang out the washing. I can remember stoking some burners – they must have been to keep the heat going, or something.

Any particular friend who stands out at that time?

No, not then, no. I did make a lot later on, when I went to another school. It was in Longreach I can remember getting my periods and of course Mum hadn't told us *anything* about that and the nuns did not, either. And I can remember asking some of the other girls all about it.

Did you think you were dying?

Well, I used to wish that I had got them. I would be saying to them, when they used to have to go into this special room at that time of the month, and I would wait outside, and 'What's it feel like? What's it feel like?'. I do remember that; it was dreadful.

It is a bit like the Muslim –

Oh!

– tradition, where you were separated.

I know.

So you learned at a very early age, then, to – as I said before – to be self-reliant; but also to seek company with other children your own age, and to look for information from them. How did your mother communicate with you during this period?

Oh, letters. She was a great letter-writer. And Sunday nights we would always write letters.

Did she come and visit you?

Yes. Holidays, she used to come and try and take us out or we would go somewhere, but I cannot remember a lot about that.

Was there any particular nun that sticks out in your memory at all there? Was there anybody that had an influence on you?

No, not really. I can remember a tall nun. But I get them mixed up, because there were several orders of nuns, and I do get them mixed up. I do remember having to learn to do fancy-work, and I have often said in my late life, latter life, that I had – all I learned was how to pray and how to do fancy-work, because I was a great embroiderer, you know. I don't do it now. I could not spell; I could not – I mean, we just did not learn about anything about Australia, you know, 1066 and the Britons and the conquests of England.

What about the Catholic values that were imparted?

Oh, yes. That's another thing.

Any memories of early religious beliefs?

Not so much when I was in Longreach, but later on, yes.

How long were you at the boarding school in Longreach?

About three years, I think. And then we went to a state school in Julia Creek, and then we went to a day school, a Catholic day school, with the St Joseph nuns in Julia Creek, and then I went to boarding school again at St Mary's College.

How far away was Julia Creek? Was that another rural town?

Yes, it was, yes.

Was that inland –

Yes.

– or on the coast?

Inland from Townsville, and in between Townsville and Mount Isa.

How many would have been in Julia Creek?

Oh, about five hundred people – a lot of pastoralists (coughs) used to come in and use it, you know.

What did your mother do there?

She worked in a hospital.

Well, that was a change from working as a domestic in private houses.

Yes. She worked in the hospital – as a domestic – and she loved it there. We had a little maisonette by the railway, and my sister and I went to the school, and – went to the state school for a couple of years, and then the Catholic school had been built at the St Joseph's, and we went there.

What year approximately of your schooling would that have been?

Oh, in the 'fifties some time. I know left school in 1957, so about 1954.

Did you do your Intermediate there?

Yes. It was called, oh – – –.

Year ten?

Junior.

Junior.

The Junior. And then the Leaving was the – – –.

And what kind of subjects did you do, Kathryn, at school, through that secondary period?

I can remember doing algebra, which I failed miserably; arithmetic, spelling – I used to love to write – compositions, shorthand.

So you were being sort of directed into a commercial course?

Yes, yes.

Did you have any idea about what you wanted to be?

Yes, I wanted to be a nun, with all the religion that was being pumped into us. And I had a wise mother who said, 'Yes, you can be a nun, provided you work in the workforce for one year'. I thought, oh, that was a bit hard.

Did you ever think – at that point in your life, as you were getting older – about the idea that you'd had quite a matriarchal upbringing, between your mother and nuns? There hadn't been too many men in your life, other than some of the men that your mother related with. What were some of the consequences – she had some traumatic relationships during this period, didn't she?

Yes. She lived with a man in Julia Creek prior to us getting this maisonette, but – he seemed really nice, you know, prior to a lot of things happening. I suppose we were becoming more wise as to what was actually happening. He had a club foot – I'll always remember him – and he had a fruit shop. And she worked part-time in the fruit shop to help him. But he would become quite violent at night through drinking – and Mum drank quite a bit too – and they would have fights and he would tip us all out into the street. And I think we were, I was going to – I don't know if it was the state school or the Catholic school, because we were day scholars at the Catholic school, you know, a bit mixed up – but anyway, we would be tipped out in the middle of the night, and the police would be called, and they were always very nice because we knew the policemen's sons and – – –.

It was a small town.

Oh, yes – it was so embarrassing. And that's when my thoughts then started to turn towards policing.

It is difficult to reflect on this period, I know. How did that impinge on your view of the world? Do you think that you thought you had a particularly difficult life, or that this was kind of the normal in a rural town? Were there other cases –

Oh, yes.

– where kids went through this?

Oh, yes, yes. Down the street there was another – 'Mad Max' we used to call this man – he would do the same to his wife and family. And they were married; I mean, Mum was just living with this fellow.

How was that seen in a small town? And given you came from a Catholic background, was that kind of double values about cohabiting with somebody – I mean, small town Queensland 1950s – – –.

I don't think so. Well, it did, but there were so many people doing it, because – – –.

So it was really the norm.

Yes, exactly. I mean, women had to do that sort of thing. I took that point of view, even though – and I cannot remember any great religious conflicts in my life about that – but I used to think, well, Mum was doing it to help us get an education. And she used to often say that to my sister, who went a bit stupid about such things, and Mum would say, 'Well, I am doing it so you girls can get an education.' And whether I just accepted that and just went along with it and did not worry – – –. But there were so many other girls whose parents were fighting and even – there was a lot of child abuse. This fellow never ever hit *us*. You know, he gave Mum a few backflips, but – – –.

But he never sort of handled you in any way?

No.

You were probably luckier than some others?

I think so – oh, yes, than some other kids further down the street. But also there was a lack of support – there was no agency that could help us move out, you know. I used to say to Mum, 'Why don't you leave him?' and she would say, 'Well, where would we go?'; and Robyn would just storm off where I would sort of query it.

Even at that early age you were well aware of the fact that there was very little support for a family in this sort of strife or this situation. What about the nuns at school? Was there any assistance through the parish or the Catholic priest?

I can remember Mum getting some assistance for school fees and books. And we won scholarships too. There were quite a lot of little monetary scholarships that went up, and we always used to hang out to see if we were successful, and we did get quite a few, Robyn and I. Whether they were put towards us, you know, I don't know – but we always thought we had won them.

Do you remember anything about the Josephite nuns? Were they different?

No; they were quite – I can remember one was very cruel. I learned piano, and Mum spent a fortune trying to teach us, have us taught; and I can remember blood spurting out my fingers one night. One day I went and this nun had just got hold of my fingers and really belted them into the keys, and had hold of my hand and went up

and down the keyboard. I think the fact that I had turned up for a lesson with gloves on had something to do with it. And she just did a na-na – I mean, she just went off the planet. And then when I think of the lives that they led, you know, it is no wonder.

Hesitate I to say did you continue with your piano?

I did for a while, but it has completely gone out of my mind. I cannot play a note now.

Did your mother play piano?

No.

She just wanted you to have those opportunities.

Yes. I learned poetry – elocution – and I won a lot of prizes with my elocution, and Mum was very proud of me in that area. And I enjoyed that, poetry – I haven't looked at a poetry book since.

Did you compete in eisteddfods?

Yes, did all that, and won.

Do you remember any particular eisteddfod where you – – –?

I can remember a poem: it was 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright.' That's about all I know now (laughs), but I won something reciting that poem. Yes, it was good. So she did try very hard to give us an education.

Let us turn to the completion of your schooling. In what year did you finally leave school?

Well, I was seventeen when I finally left, having completed two years at St Mary's College in Charters Towers, which was on the coast of Queensland, just in from Townsville. It was the Good Samaritan sisters. And I do have some very happy memories of that time, and I still correspond with a lot of girls that I made friends with there. But that's when all the sex things seemed to come out in me – the nuns hammering these dreadful stories about virginity and how you shouldn't go out with a boy, and – – –.

Shouldn't wear black patent shoes?

That's right.

Did you have a school social?

Well, Charters Towers was full of secondary schools – all religious denominations – and we had a social with Mount Carmel, a boys’ Catholic school. Yes, I can remember that.

Any interesting engagements with the other sex there?

Oh, no. I had to wear gloves and dance so many feet apart, and the nuns would be positioned strategically around the hall. Yes, no, you never got the urge.

Do you remember your first dress?

Well, my first *nice* dress was my Confirmation one: Mum had saved up, and I had a beautiful dress with patent leather shoes (laughs), and I was very pleased with that, yes. But no; I cannot remember anything special. We used to all swap, anyway. If someone did not have anything, and the girls that did – we were very generous, and we would all swap and borrow and lend.

Any particular characters at that time in Charters Towers that remained with you through your life – – –?

Oh, a lot of Italians, yes, a lot of Italian girls. And there were several from Julia Creek as well who went to school, and we still maintain correspondence.

Still to this day?

Yes, yes. They had a big reunion in about 1984, I think, and out of my class I was the only one who never married. Several – oh, a *lot* had got divorced, Catholic girls had been divorced; and some were in terrible relationships – so I sort of stood out as the one that never married.

Late 'fifties: what about things like music – you were a young person – what do you remember from that era?

Well, I used to play for the dances because I was fairly good at the piano. Oh, I don’t know – I mean, now I am looking at the *Hello Girls* on the ABC, and there’s just so much there: all those songs, and the clothing, and the morality that they are exhibiting, you know, is just what I went through, I suppose.

Do you think that’s peculiar to just your particular life, or do you think that’s part and parcel of young people – – –?

Oh, yes, I think so. And of course that one is made in Britain, and I mean they must have been going through the same thing.

It was a time in the late 'fifties. What about politics? Were you aware of what was happening in Australia at that time?

Not really. I do remember the big shearing, shearers' strike in Queensland, because you'd walk past a hotel and there'd be shearers being kicked and bashed and called 'scabs', and yes, I can remember that – the violence that was around. But other than that, no, I passed blissfully through it all.

What about things like the Communist Party or the Labor Party or the Liberal Party – were you aware of the dynamics of politics at the time?

Oh, yes. And I can remember the Queen's coronation, of course. Everybody was talking all about that. Because we were learning all about British history, and that was hammered home. But I do remember people saying, 'So-and-so's a Communist,' and 'They are spies,' but oh, you know.

It did not really impinge much on your life.

No, no.

So at the end of your experience at Charters Towers, you moved to?

Well, I got a job when I left school, in a garage as a shorthand typist at Julia Creek. And also it was a TAA depot and I did 'plane bookings and things like that – that was interesting.

How did you get the job? Was it advertised or had your mother made contact with somebody?

Oh, no. There were plenty of jobs in those days. I had several choices. It was Byrne's Garage – B-Y-R-N-E, I always remember it because there were a lot of brothers, they were Catholics as well – and there were just plenty of choices in those days. And that was when I still had a bit of an inkling I might want to be a nun – and a policewoman. Then I went through a phase when I wanted to be a nurse, so they had me up at the hospital, and as soon as I saw bedpans and blood and guts I (hesitation) – I left.

What about your social life at that time?

Oh, it was good. I was very involved – when I say *very* involved, I think we held hands and kissed, that’s about it in the late 1950s. Then I got very fond of a lad, and he wanted to get married and he was a shearer, and we were sort of engaged – Desi, his name was – he was a very smart man about town. He used to wear black shirts and show the hair on his chest and roll his sleeves up; and I had big skirts with rope petticoats; and we would go to dances – he was a great dancer. But I was just – I just felt – well, everybody expected Desi and I to get married, and I wanted to escape. I just knew there was something else out there. And with another girlfriend we left and went to Sydney *en route* to New Zealand.

Now, that’s a fairly ambitious thing to do from Julia Creek, Far North Queensland, small town, to have aspirations to move down to Sydney. Had you ever been to Sydney?

Never been to Sydney.

Brisbane?

May have been to Brisbane; but I think I was about – I was well into my teens before I saw the *sea*. I mean, I probably saw the sea in Townsville, but I can remember going to Brisbane. I won a competition, too, before I took off for New Zealand, and it was run by the Red Cross, and it was to meet Princess Alexandra. And I went to Brisbane with a male, a Richard Magoffin – his father was a very wealthy pastoralist. Richard and I were chosen to represent Julia Creek. And we went to Brisbane and, oh, we went to functions, and I have got wonderful photographs, and it was just – I was representing Julia Creek – and the *Courier Mail* published photos all about Richard and I.

Thank you, Kathryn.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Kathryn, we were talking about your trip down to Brisbane after you’d won a competition. Would you like to explain to me – at this stage, while you were working in the garage – what on earth possessed you to enter a competition to meet one of the Royal Family, Princess Alexandra?

Well, it was not a competition as we know it now. It was run by the Red Cross, and they wanted a male and a female young person – and probably like rural youth is now – to represent their area, and there was a series of interviews and you had to talk about how involved you were with the community, what you’d done, things like that;

and they selected. You know, it was like a Miss Australia type thing. And, yes, it was – I don't know how it eventuated, but I applied and, as I said, went through all these interviews, stages, and was selected.

One would have to comment that it is fairly amazing for a person who had come from such a socially or economically deprived background that you were able to compete with the cream of rural youth to then go on to meet royalty.

It was good. We spent I think ten days in Brisbane, and I can remember a wonderful garden party. And of course, prior to this, there was a big flurry to get my wardrobe together! Well, I had beautiful clothes. I had a neighbour who was a dressmaker and the trouble that she went to and the money I obviously spent – because I was working – to buy linen, and she made it all up. And hats – hats were all the go, and I have got these wonderful photos (laughs) of me, I can hardly see out from under these big hats. And I went to Government House in Brisbane.

What did your mother think? What did your sister think?

Oh, my sister probably thought it was a load of rubbish, but Mum was very proud of me, yes. And so was all of Julia Creek. It was – you know, you were asking me before – I just can never remember, I was never penalised, or I never thought I was a lesser person because of the domestic situation between my mother and this man. I never ever thought that. I was embarrassed often, being turfed out of our house in the middle of the night and the police coming, and that did prey on me a bit, but I could hold my head up. Perhaps I held it up and disregarded what perhaps people may have been saying behind my back.

How did you get to Brisbane? Did you fly?

I think we flew, and I had accommodation in the Catholic convent at the 'Gabba, I can remember. And I don't know where Richard stayed, probably with friends. But I think we had to find our own accommodation, so that's probably how I ended up in the Catholic convent.

And what about the big moment when you met the Princess? Did you have to learn how to curtsy?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes. We met her several times at all these functions – at the Showgrounds, at Government House, at a cocktail party, and then there was a great

big ball. That was one of the dresses I did buy, a great big orange tulle thing, miles and miles of it. And then, yes, there were several instances when we met her.

Now you mentioned that you then decided to go to Sydney and work. Why was Sydney the choice?

Well, this friend Veronica, she wanted to escape as well, and her mother was in a dreadful marriage with her stepfather. She said, ‘Oh, look, I have got an aunt in Sydney: why don’t we go to New Zealand?’ – no, she wanted to go to New Zealand: she said, ‘I have got an aunt in Sydney we can stay with for a couple of nights.’ Anyway, I did not have enough money. So I said to her, ‘Look, I have got to be honest with you: I’ll go to New Zealand, but I’ll have to work in Sydney first.’ We worked for a little while – oh, she worked for a little while, but then she went ahead of me to New Zealand.

We stayed with this silly aunt of hers who was – she was in a dreadful marriage as well. Little fat thing, she was – and (laughs) she used to read our letters, we found out, because we would write home – we were *great* letter-writers in those days – and I wrote home and told Mum that the bed had bugs, and Mum wrote back and said, you know, what to do, try and put it out in the sun. And this Auntie was waiting for us, arms folded, one night and said how dare we tell people we had bugs in her beds, and it turned out she had opened our letters. But anyway, I worked as a shorthand typist at Double Bay. I used to walk from Moore Street – Cleveland Street, Moore Park every day to Kings Cross, and get a bus from Kings Cross to Double Bay, and I worked at Epstein and Company, and worked with some lovely women there as a shorthand typist. At night I would work in a coffee shop in Oxford Street and save my money.

One would have to say a girl moving from a rural town who was of limited experience, going down to the big city, Sydney, late 1950s – you weren’t overwhelmed by any of this?

Oh, I think I was – – –.

You took it all in your stride?

Oh, yes, I had some near-misses, though. I was very lonely, and letter-writing sort of alleviated that. I used to go to the pictures quite a lot. At Epstein and Company I met this woman, Madeleine, and she was a Hungarian and she had just come out in the big Hungarian uprising. She used to drive this little Volkswagen. She worked an

electronic machine of some sorts at Epsteins, while I did the shorthand and typing. She took me home to her flat one night and said would I like to go out with a couple of boys, or men. I said, 'Oh, yes.' And we had a wonderful night, and she opened up her cupboard, her wardrobe, and it was full of beautiful clothes and furs, and she gave me one of her dresses to put on, because my clothing obviously was not good enough. So I had this wonderful night and dinner. I left, and I cannot even remember the fellow; there was nothing untoward, I got rid of him easily; and I thought how glamorous it all was, and it turns out she was a prostitute (laughs). She used to work during the day on this machine and, I mean – – –.

She was obviously trying to see if you would join the group (laughter).

I don't know, but I cannot remember any pressure. And I cannot – I mean, the fellow was not all hands, and (laughs) I had a lucky escape – probably my guardian angel.

Because Sydney in those days would have been a place that probably had a view of life that would have been a little bit more on the edge than, say, somewhere like Adelaide – there would have been more nightclubs? You would have been more vulnerable as a young person. Did your mother ever give you any instructions about surviving?

No. No, nobody did. I –

And so you just really –

– just learned, yes.

– had to fend for yourself and trust your own intuition with people?

Yes. I have got photos of Veronica in the early days in Sydney – we went out with all these Army people. But we were in groups, you know, nobody would molest you. I suppose it happened, I was so naïve, I did not know it was happening! Sex was not on my mind.

Now, your friend went to New Zealand. Had you by this stage got enough money to join her?

Yes, I think I worked in Sydney for about five months, I suppose, I cannot remember. I would have to look at a diary: I have kept diaries on and off, in those early days. And then I went to New Zealand and I shared a cabin with two other girls – and I am still very friendly with one to this day, Yvonne, she lives in Sydney

– and we got to know each other; we went over on the old *Wanganilla* and landed in Auckland and worked our way round New Zealand, working in hotels as waitresses and housemaids.

What was New Zealand like?

Oh, it was fun, it was good.

Was it a very undeveloped place – compared to Australia, what were the differences?

Well, I thought it was wonderful, coming from the bush. I mean, I was still a bushie at heart. And I just thought it was a beautiful country, you know, with the snow – we worked in chalets when it was snowing and we learned to ski.

So the landscape was a really important part of your consciousness there.

Yes. I had a few hairy experiences, you know, as I was getting older and boys were – you know, I was discovering men, I suppose. A couple of silly old fellows would try to drag you into their room when you delivered their breakfast in the big rooms at the chalets, you know, they would say ‘Come in’ and you’d come in, and then you’d put their breakfast down and you’d feel the hand up your skirt and, you know. But we – all the women and all the girls used to talk about these things and we helped each other: we would say, ‘Well, don’t go into room number nine, he is a dirty old fellow in there,’ or something, you know.

But you obviously weren’t feeling that you needed to be married, even though the social pressures at that time would have been quite strong for girls to be married, to have a home and a family and a Hills hoist in the backyard. But there was something else – – –.

Yes; I don’t know what it was. It was always, I was always searching for something to – I knew there was something else out there that I wanted to do, and it was in Christchurch while I was working my way around New Zealand that I met this policewoman. And she was an older lady even then – and I unfortunately don’t even know her name – and I told her that I had been toying with the idea of becoming a policewoman, and she had a wonderful talk to me. It was only a matter of hours, but – – –.

But it obviously really was one of those critical turning points in your life?

Yes, it was. And, you know, I keep thinking the words, you know, ‘This is a wonderful occupation where you can help people – you can make a difference.’

So your choice in life was affected by this woman.

Yes.

You then made some plans about how you were going to become a policewoman.

Yes. I had to leave New Zealand rather hurriedly over a personal crisis in my sister’s life, and I went to Canberra. I stayed with her for some time there and I worked in a (pause) removalist, a van removalist place, at Fyshwick, and did a bit of work in the Russian Embassy there as a typist, shorthand typist.

That would have been an interesting time.

Yes, it was. You had to – – –.

Height of the Cold War.

Yes. But I was only in the typing pool and typing visas and things, and I remember if you did not destroy a mistaken piece of paper – we did not have shredders then; you had to rip it up into minute pieces and put it in the bin – and if a guard could decipher something, you were docked some of your wages and you were castigated and everything else. Anyway, I worked in Canberra for a while and made some nice friends – boarded with a lovely family and I am still friendly with their daughter who lives in Adelaide now – and then I went back to Julia Creek and I worked in the Shire Council office. And here I was, the world traveller sort of thing, just because I had been to New Zealand.

What was the reason for returning to Julia Creek?

Well, Mum was there for a while, and – I don’t know if Robyn had returned then. No, she did not return; she stayed in Canberra – Mum had gone home, and I wanted to work in the, I had got this other important job in the Shire office, and again wanted to see what it was like. The boyfriend had gone off with my best girlfriend by then, they were an item, and I thought, ‘I am going to take off and work my way round Australia.’ I wanted, *always* wanted to see Australia. I got as far as Alice Springs, and again, I met a nice South Australian policeman and his wife, who told me that I did not have to be a certain height to join the South Australian police, but

in Queensland when I had enquired, and New South Wales, a woman had to be five foot six. In South Australia you only had to be five foot four. I had been making enquiries of different police forces around Australia, with this quest to become a policewoman.

Anyway, I wrote – he must have given me a name – I wrote to South Australia, and Miss Connie McGrath was the Principal: she wrote back to me and said if ever I am in Adelaide, come and have an interview. Well, I made sure I *was* in Adelaide. I flew down and had an interview, and she said, ‘We have to wait for a vacancy.’ I was always very conscious of keeping in touch with the South Australian police. I had also enquired about Tasmania, and they always seemed very anxious to have me, and I thought, ‘Right,’ at one stage, ‘Blow it – I am going to South Australia.’ I was in Alice Springs when President Kennedy was assassinated, I remember that, and I came down to South Australia, to Adelaide, and virtually said, ‘Here I am; and if you don’t have me I am going to Tasmania.’ So I got accepted, and they said, ‘There is a vacancy,’ but I had to just wait a couple of days, and then they rang and said, ‘No; the girl who was to be married is not being married now. You will have to get a job and stay in Adelaide. We still want you but you have to wait for a vacancy.’ So I got a job in a printing firm in Wright Street, and I worked there for about six months. I would walk past the police station and see the detectives with their big coats on and their little hats, and think, ‘I am going to be one of you one day’ (laughs).

Can you remember, in the interview with Miss McGrath, did she ever ask you why you wanted to be a policewoman?

Oh, yes, they always asked you that.

What did you respond?

Oh, that I wanted to help people and to make a difference in the world, and – oh, I was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and I just wanted to help young people. And I think I told her that my life had been a little bit difficult, and of course she was a good Catholic, and in those days if you were a Catholic you got into the Police Force.

It was one of the few times that being a Catholic helped you.

Yes, indeed.

What did you write down as your occupation?

I wrote down that my occupation was a waitress.

I think this has followed you throughout your time in the Police Force, hasn't it?

Yes. Wherever I have had to go to on my records it has got 'Kathryn Finnigan joined the Police Force on 25th of May 1964, occupation waitress'.

Would you like to set the record straight, Kathryn?

Well, I was a stenographer, but I was semi-waitressing.

Can you outline in the 1960s what actually happened to women who went into the Police Force and how it was set up?

Well, I joined as an adult, and there were thirty-odd people in this course, and out of the course of adults were perhaps ten cadets who were just finishing their three or four year apprenticeship from the Academy at Fort Largs. My course went through Thebarton Barracks, and it was a seventeen-week course.

When you say 'adults', you are meaning women who were in their twenties?

Oh, yes; there were only two of us, two women. I was twenty-four, and Eleanor, the other girl who joined – she was from Gawler originally, but she was a governess from Broken Hill – she and I and all these other men had had other lives, other professions – soldiers, there were a couple of soldiers. Yes, they were all in their twenties. And we did this seventeen-week wonder course, and – – –.

What did that involve, can you elaborate on that?

A lot of law. We had to write all these things out, what constituted an offence; and you had to learn off by heart the caution that you give people, you know, like 'I am now arresting you. You do not have to say anything unless your lawyer is present,' and all that. That was magic to me: I loved it: I thought, 'One day I am going to say that to a prisoner' – and I was just, I just flowed through that era. We had to do pistol firing, we had a Browning that we had to learn how to handle; and we had to do physical fitness, a bit of judo, unarmed combat.

So you weren't treated separately at this point.

Oh, no, no.

Men and women alike doing the same training.

Yes. And we also had lessons in culinary expertise: we had to learn how to set a table, how to eat, go from the outside in and how to pass this.

So etiquette played a big –

Etiquette – that’s the word, etiquette.

– part in training as a police officer in the 1960s.

Because the male officers often were called on to escort debutantes in those days. But seventeen weeks. And I lived at – I had to board at a private hostel called the Afton private hostel on South Terrace, because I did not know anyone in Adelaide. Mum had come down to see me settled in and she and my sister disappeared into New Guinea then.

Do you remember any of your colleagues from that time?

Yes, yes, there’s quite a few. A couple have died and they were wonderful, wonderful men. But there was one *sleaze* person who used to teach us to drive, and coming from Queensland where there were no hills he used to take me up into the Hills, and I was terrified and I would hang onto the seat. I had a licence for many years, I might add. I think – I had got it in Julia Creek and the policeman knew me and, I mean, I don’t think my driving expertise was great – but anyway, I used to have to go out and do this course, and you had to pass a special course to get into the Police Force. And this sleaze would take me up into the Hills and he was all over me: he was molesting me and kissing me, and I just could not stand it – I would fend him off, you know, he was just indecently assaulting me, really. And it worried me, and he would tell me that if I told anybody I would not pass.

Did this happen to the other woman?

Yes. I thought, ‘This is not right,’ and I think he only did it to me twice. And I would always ask that I did not go with him. And, finally, Eleanor and I compared notes, and she said, ‘Oh, he is doing the same to me.’ And she said, ‘I don’t think we have to put up with this, do we?’ I said ‘No.’ So we went and saw this *lovely* man and (laughs) told him. And he was horrified, and this fellow almost – well, he got discharged, he got sent out of the Force.

So that’s really your first experience of harassment in some way.

Yes, yes. But I mean he just said that he would not pass us, and it was so important to me to pass this because it could ruin my career. As I said, I put up with it twice. I would be all coy and say ‘Don’t do that, don’t do that,’ instead of giving him a what-o!

What about some of the other males that you trained with? Did you ever remain friendly with any of them?

Oh, yes. We have a reunion even now – I organised a lot of the reunions, I might add – and we had up to a twenty-fifth year reunion and we kept talking about we should do our thirtieth, but we never ever did.

Kathryn, at this time, women were restricted in the Police Force to a particular role. Can you elaborate for me exactly where women police fitted into the Police Force and what some of their functions were?

Well, there were forty-five women in the Force when I graduated and joined the Women Police. The Women Police branch was separate from the mainstream of policing – they even had their own seniority list. We weren’t integrated with the others – that did not happen till many years later – and women in those early days, in 1964 when I joined, only dealt with women and children, neglected children, uncontrollable girls, and destitute women. And we would arrest young children who were in an awful environment, and if they were neglected we would put them before the Juvenile Court and then we would take them to the various homes around so welfare agencies could work with the families and they *may* get them back. And with the uncontrollable girls we would drag them screaming and kicking from the courts when an order had been made, and we would put them in Vaughan House.

So you really had a mission, in the sense of being a sort of charitable, social welfare sort of function, didn’t you?

Yes. Although we had the powers of arrest, and we used those powers to arrest people for neglect or an uncontrollable child. We did not do a lot of criminal work: we would accompany the detectives, keep our mouths shut, and we were mainly there to protect the males from a female if she made an allegation that during her questioning or an investigation the detective or the policeman made an improper suggestion to her.

So it was strictly divided along gender lines –

Yes. Definitely.

– the various tasks of your job. At that time, did you wear a uniform?

No. Women in the South Australian Police did not go into uniform until 1974.

So what did you wear?

Oh, glamorous clothes (laughs). Only the best. Suits. Always had to have a hat, a handbag, and always had to wear gloves. High heels.

How did you find that, when you were dealing with a very tough case?

Oh, we felt very superior, didn't we?

So the clothes were part of that sort of image of being, lording over people and that sort of thing.

Oh, yes. And we would be picked out. I mean, we used to have to patrol the dances. There was a dance opposite – the Palais, opposite the Royal Adelaide Hospital, there was an old hall there that is no longer there – and we would have to go in at nine o'clock at night or thereabouts and walk around while everybody was dancing and just see that (laughs) they were behaving themselves. I mean, I can remember seeing Peter, Paul and Mary there, and we would go to all the pop concerts – that was one good thing – but how stupid! And we would have these silly hats on our heads and walk around like a model.

So this is the, this is very much in the middle of the 1960s when I suppose Adelaide was still a fairly conservative place.

Yes.

From your position as a newly-qualified and trained policewoman, what was life like in Adelaide?

Oh, well, I was caught up in the euphoria of being a policewoman and would *tell* everybody. I mean, and then you'd go out to parties – and parties were just wonderful. I think we kept to ourselves because I did not know a lot of other people. When I graduated I rented half, a room and a little sort of kitchenette and toilet from a little old lady in Highgate, and kept company with a lot of policemen and policewomen, you know. We would have *lovely* parties and – yes, it was good. And a lot of drinking – I learned to drink; I mean, I hadn't drunk much, let alone tasted the lovely wines that South Australia has.

After you graduated, what were some of your first duties?

I can remember going to the Show to look after lost children, and to go to Oakbank when it was always pouring with rain and my job, with another policewoman, was to care for lost children. I can remember once at the Royal Adelaide Show it was flooding, and we had all these screaming children, and the water was rising where they had us and we had to lift these kids up, and of course it was cold in September, and we had these heaters so we would have to be careful we did not electrocute ourselves. The kids were screaming, and this man came in this day and said, 'How are you going?' and I said 'And which bloody kid is yours?' and he looked at me – it was only Commissioner McKinna! (laughter) He was lovely, the Brigadier. Oh, since then we've often talked about that time, and he is still alive and I still see him – he is eighty-odd now, and a lovely man.

Can you remember any of the sort of notorious children cases at that time?

Oh, the Beaumont children, of course, working – doing some jobs on that.

What was your involvement with that?

Oh, I just think every now and again somebody would say 'There's an enquiry come up: let's take a woman police officer,' and they would go out and interview people. And I can always remember having an opinion as to who did it – which was completely wrong, I am sure; nobody knows. I was heavily involved in the Ratcliffe-Gordon case, taking a lot of telephone enquiries, writing them down and subsequent enquiries, interviewing people. It was unsuccessful; we never ever found anybody for that. There were shoplifters in those early days.

Any interesting characters? Were there sort of habitual shoplifters that you can remember?

Oh, yes. And I can remember my very first shoplifter. It was a dear little old lady, and I think it was at Coles or 'Woollies' in Rundle Street then, and going along with this detective and she was saying, oh, she had never done this before, and please let her off, and oh, she was so old and decrepit, and he said 'We've got to take you home.' We used to take them home and search their houses. And I believed her, and I am tugging on his sleeve, 'Oh, let her go,' you know, 'Can I pay for it?' I was so soft (laughs). And we got home and it was like an Aladdin's cave – she had stolen everything.

You talked a bit about how there were specific requirements with regard to language, and I think at one point you were talking about when you had to take testimony, and that seems to be an interesting comment in your career about, I suppose, how values have changed a bit – particularly, say, in cases where people were molested or raped or whatever, in those early days.

Yes.

What was some of the language?

Oh, right. Well, of course, in the Women Police we had this hierarchical structure that, you know, there was Miss Saltmarsh, Miss Rudd, Miss Richardson, Miss McGrath and, you know, you'd almost bow to them in the morning. And they would give you instructions. And the other women police would take you with them and you would sit in on interviews and learn from them as to what the questions were and how they framed their questions in a statement form. And you'd start off indecent telephone calls, you know, and you'd have to ask them what the man said. It was pretty vile in those days, you know, you did not use the 'F' word, and of course the women would not say it sometimes. And you'd get to – they would write it down, they would pass it across to you, and you were never allowed to say, 'Oh, he said "fuck".' And the woman would go all red or her husband would be sitting there and, ah, it was terrible! And if you were really, really good and you'd graduated, the Women Police would send you out all alone in a car with a driver usually in those early days, and you would take your own indecent telephone calls and you thought you were so important. And then you would graduate to indecent assault or an indecent exposure.

So there was a hierarchy.

Oh, yes. And if you were good at indecent telephone calls you would then graduate to indecent exposure. And from indecent exposures we went to indecent assault, carnal knowledge, and then onto rape.

Kathryn, I gather that there were certain legal requirements about the type of language that you were allowed to use, or words that were used – I mean, this had legal implications.

Yes. We were taught how to take statements, and I think back now that the Crown Law Department and the courts had some input into it as well, but it was an era when you did not come out and ask the direct question; you had to elicit it from these

women and hope that they knew what they were talking about. But most of the time their knowledge on sex was equivalent to my own.

Because of the social conventions of the day and the morals of the day that these things were not talked about?

That's right.

So it must have been a very difficult situation.

It was. And of course in those early days the young women police were told on their off days, when there was not a lot doing and our services weren't required, that we had to sit in this room and read all these statements and try and pick up the vibes as to how to take a statement and what sort of questions to ask.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

Interview with Kathryn Finnigan, who was one of the first women to achieve commissioned rank in the South Australian Police Force in 1985. Kathryn was also awarded the Australian Police Medal in 1998. Tape two for the Mortlock Library of South Australia's Honoured Women Oral History Project.

Kathryn, in the previous interview, we were talking about your early experiences as a police graduate. What was the role of the women police at this time? I know that they had jurisdiction for particular aspects of welfare, particularly for neglected children. What was the *Child Protection Act*?

Well, it was to do with the protection of children from neglected homes and uncontrollable children, almost like what is termed child abuse now.

So it was a piece of legislation that actually gave the government powers to intervene in family matters. It was a fairly powerful Act.

It was. Sometimes we could not act unless the Community Welfare gave us permission. A lot of times if a case was so obvious and the children were distressed we could remove them and then contact the welfare. But it was very powerful.

And it really was very much based on that role that the government did have a part to play in the welfare and in protection of children and families. What about agencies like Vaughan House?

Well, that was an offshoot of the Community Welfare – FACS, as it is now known – and it was for girls that had to be somehow controlled. I mean, often they were into promiscuity and sexual misbehaviours: if Mum said, 'Oh, she is a trollop and I cannot control her and she is sneaking out at night,' this girl would then go before a

court with all the evidence, and the Juvenile Court judge would decide whether she should have a term in Vaughan House or not.

This was a very different philosophy to what is the contemporary philosophy, where most children are kept within the family. This was actually almost the antithesis of that, where they were taken from the family?.

Yes.

What sort of place was Vaughan House in the 1960s? I know it conjures up for me something that was a quite fearful or terrifying prospect for any girl.

Well, it was. It was almost like, it was like a female adult prison. Because – I never liked taking girls to Vaughan House, although to me it was gratifying to know that the courts had agreed with my opinion, perhaps, that a girl was uncontrollable. That was good. But on reflection, and I mean even in those early days, the girls did not come out any better.

Who was that run by?

Community Welfare Department. And they had a matron there who used to walk around with – oh, all the staff walked around with great big keys in their belts, and girls would be locked up. They had riots, girls were molested in there. It was horrible. But it was the best thing at the time. Parents opted for it – you know, because they had exhausted all their avenues of trying to control this girl, and the law at the time said that a girl could not be, you know, morally wrong. They were caretakers of morals as well.

What about some of the social values of those days? On one side we had a fairly conservative Liberal government that had been in power for a long time, the Playford Government; on the other, we had a lot of values being challenged, whether it was through in the American systems where the – America's involvement in Vietnam, or whether it was rock music. But it seemed to be a time of great social change, didn't it? Was there a clash between the two sorts of value systems that were operating?

Definitely. We had the Pill which was coming in and girls had heard about that; and Mum might have cottoned on that the girl had been to the doctor to ask for the Pill, and then she would gather that the girl was promiscuous or having sex. I mean, they did not have to be promiscuous, just having sex with her boyfriend and they were trotted into the Women Police. We were seen as the end of everything – we were the solvers of all their problems.

So it was a very powerful position. Did you ever question your role, say, where children were separated from a mother, or you just enacted what were the legal requirements? Were there any cases that really touched you, about where you were forced to act but did not really feel that you should have been in that situation?

No, no. I – you see, we had degrees of warnings which we gave to these people if they weren't towing the line and the children were grubby and neglected. The women police used to give them a lot of food parcels. And then they would try and teach them – we would have them on our books and go back regularly, and if they were improving that was good, and we would give them a wonderful tick and say, 'Well, done, good and faithful servant,' sort of thing.

So you also had an educative role.

Ah, yes. Because there weren't the supporting agencies that we now have. I mean, they now can go and budget and learn domestic science and all this, you know.

So it was not just a punitive action by the Women Police? Your role was actually quite broad?

Oh, yes.

Social mediation, really.

Yes. And if we could see an improvement they would be given a tick and we would not go any further. And often the mothers would ring us up, saying 'Little Sally's going all right.' It was only in the extreme cases that we acted, but there were a lot of those, though.

Do you think in hindsight it was worse in that period in the 1960s than it is now? That sort of social deprivation? Or was it a different kind of deprivation?

It was different, quite different. It was – oh, I don't know. I mean, now we've got third generation unemployed and a lot of the supporting mums have never learned how to budget or how to care for babies or children, I suppose. But I am not amongst it like I was, and I suppose that is the difference.

In a way, it was a sort of Florence Nightingale role – the very broad view of policing, which is much broader than it is now, today. Is that what really attracted you? Did you ever see yourself in any of the cases?

Oh, yes, yes, quite often. And I would say to them, the girl or the mother – I mean, not that I was sexually active – but for the neglected children and the battered wife I

would just say, 'Look, I know what you are going through.' And I would often cry – yes, I would. 'Cause I get emotional talking about my own life, as you know.

But you had great empathy?

Oh, I did, yes.

You must have had a great sense of how to relate to those people, probably more so than some others who'd never experienced those things.

I did. And we would often talk around the coffee table. And I know some of my bosses said that – they never ever told you were doing a good job, but later in my life they would say that they could see that I was *living* some of the pain of those people, yes.

Well, after a time you got your first posting, Kathryn, to Whyalla. Whyalla in the 1960s – can you paint a picture for me?

It was a city of about thirty-odd thousand people; BHP was very viable, an energetic, wonderful employer of people; and it was my first time away, I suppose, as a policewoman. And, although I was attached to the CIB, I was in plain clothes – I was still in that section of the Women Police, and I went there with another, there was another policewoman, and then she got married and they never ever replaced her, so I was on my own there for almost four years. Had a lot of migrants, because Whyalla was a migrant town, and very busy; and I was almost – I was accepted as a detective, virtually, because I worked with the CIB and I liked that.

That's really crossing over, isn't it?

Yes.

Was it because there was only one of you, that you seemed to have that closeness with the males? Were there any that resented you at all?

Oh, yes, the uniform. Do you know, there's always this (laughs) opposition between uniform and CIB – and that exists today, although not as much.

And what is that about?

I don't know. Uniform – and I have been in both sides, both camps – uniform then used to think that the CIB were up themselves and thought they were 'It-and-a-bit'. And they had far more freedom, and they weren't accountable for their actions and their time as much as uniformed personnel are, who are under the thumb and really

have to justify their hours, whereas the CIB can go off and talk to a witness and perhaps go down the pub for a counter lunch and – you know, and all that.

A different mode of operation.

Yes.

Whyalla, you weren't at all intimidated by going to this what would have been seen to be a pretty rough industrial town?

Ah.

Do you think your early background kind of put you in good stead to cope with that sort of lifestyle?

It did; and I enjoyed the freedom away from the, like the 'Mother House', the Principal of the Women Police. Oh, some of those early women – lovely as they were – kept you under their thumb, and you could not sneeze.

So you were fairly restricted?

Oh, yes, and suddenly I had freedom and – yes, I enjoyed it there. Loved it.

Do you feel you had a position of status, being the only female there?

Yes. I worked hard: because you were the only female you were called in by both uniform and CIB for anything that involved a woman and a child. You worked a lot of overtime, and were constantly on the go. My personal life suffered.

In what way, Kathryn?

Oh (hesitation), I have never been that successful with my personal life (laughs) because of the demands of policing. You'd have to drop everything, you know, even if you were ready to go out, and suddenly you got a call from the Inspector to say, 'Look, there's a rape,' or something, you'd have to ring up the fellow and say, 'Look, I am sorry – I don't know what time I am going to get off.'

Were men intimidated by you, too, being a female police woman? Would they think – was there a bit of a distance there because they –

Oh, yes, yes.

– thought you were just one of the blokes?

Yes. We used to lie about our occupation in those early days. I could not do that in Whyalla, but at parties in Adelaide we always said we were nurses or something.

Because if you said you were a policewoman, oh! – somebody'd got a speeding ticket and wanted to talk to you about it, or, you know, did not like coppers and would call us 'pigs'. It was the era then, too, of the Vietnam Moratoriums and marches, and – – –.

And police did not actually have a kind of – weren't really respected, I suppose, within the social system by the younger generation.

Yes.

So in Whyalla you were the only girl in the cop shop.

Yes.

And how did that work with all, with the men there? There were no problems of harassment or discrimination?

Oh, yes, there was. I got on very well, except for my private life – I was going out with a couple of fellows there on and off – and I remember one farmer I was going with, and he used to come over and spend the weekend. His car would be in the driveway, and midnight – come midnight or some early hours in the morning – I would see a spotlight come zooming in, and there'd be snide remarks about the overnight visitors and things like that, yes.

So it was fairly intrusive.

Yes.

What about any long-term friendships?

In Whyalla, yes – a lot with some of the police. I played tennis and I still see some of those people there. I liked to get away from police people; I liked to – – –.

Mix with the community.

Yes. And mix through my church, the Catholic church there, I still correspond with some people that I knew then.

So you were still a practising strict Catholic back then.

Yes. I don't know if ever strict, but I (laughs) went to church every Sunday and went to Confession if I did anything wrong. Oh! You know, when I think about it. Whyalla was good, but I had to get out of there. I just felt I was – I had had four years there, and I just rang up the Principal one day and said, 'Look, I have got to get

away from Whyalla.’ I did a lot of travelling, because Whyalla had in their jurisdiction Woomera, Coober Pedy and Andamooka in those early days, and we would have to travel with the detectives if an incident happened like an incest or a rape, anything indecent – we would have to hurry up and get in the car and drive helter skelter to Woomera or to, you know, Coober Pedy. And I liked all that part of the country then.

It was real frontier policing.

Yes.

Are there any cases that stick in your mind at that time?

Oh, well, yes: there were a lot of Yugoslav crime things that happened at Coober Pedy – and it was all dirt roads: you had to really go through the bulldust to drive there, they weren’t sealed like they are now.

These were some of the bombings that occurred?

Yes; and the indecencies – terrible rapes; and a couple of bad Aboriginal bashings and things like that. But I was just so thrilled to be up there. And also we had court there and I used to be the typist for the court cases on the old Remingtons with the carbon paper (laughs) and, yes, that was good. Yes.

What about the Aboriginal missions? How did the police cope with Aboriginal issues in those days, in the 1960s?

Well, again, I only dealt with Aboriginals when they were in trouble, you know, like something had happened to them. And I was oblivious to any bad behaviour on behalf of the police, but in latter years I know that went on. Because the police were really the custodians of the Aboriginals – in the early days, used to chain them up and *kill* them. I mean, the government in the 1800s used to tell the police to execute them, I mean, it was dreadful. And, of course, I think this has been inbred in a lot of the Aboriginals today – the youth, they don’t forgive the police for that.

There’s no single case that you remember during those four years?

Not with Aboriginals. I did not live next door to, but I know there some lovely, well-adjusted Aboriginals who mixed with the local community, I played tennis with them, and some of them went to my church. There were some really lovely families in Whyalla.

What were some of the predominant crimes in Whyalla?

Child abuse, sexual abuse. We had a lot of cases where migrants were involved in incest, and it may appear that I am picking on migrants, but remember Whyalla was a predominantly migrant town – and again I used to have to pinch myself to say that not every migrant is a crook or does something dreadful to their children, because we only saw the ones that came under our notice. But there were a lot of well-adjusted, lovely migrants there. So I always used to say to my young women police later in my life, ‘Just don’t judge everybody by the people that come across your desk.’

Did you think some of those problems were caused, or the kind of over-abundance of those problems, were caused through geographical isolation – being torn between cultures?

Well, I think – – –.

– were there any factors that really kind of contributed to that high incidence of those crimes?

No, because some of the terrible indecencies that occurred, I mean, that was not isolation or anything. I mean, incest was rife, and I still cannot understand why.

So it was almost – what you are saying is it was almost an acceptable practice?

Well, yes, but they got into trouble for it. But there was so much of it in those days. And I can remember several cases where the fathers actually raped their daughter on the boats coming out, and one man told me that he wanted to make sure that his girl’s virginity was lost because he did not want some bloody Australian doing it, and *he* did it – that was his excuse. I don’t think the court believed that, but that’s what happened. I can remember running around trying to get a Crown Law opinion on how far was the boat out from Australian shores when this occurred: was it an international thing? There were a couple of cases I remember.

Was it often hushed up, those sorts of crimes? How were they brought to your attention? Was it through the victims themselves? How were those crimes reported in those days?

Well, often the girls would tell a girlfriend and then the girlfriend would tell the Mum and then the Mum would come to us and we would have to make discreet inquiries; or sometimes the girl – – –.

So it was a female network –

Yes.

– that often supported them.

And also often the girl would become pregnant, and then the secret was out. And I can remember a terrible case that was an Australian family, and the mother had shot off somewhere, I don't think permanently – she was not in a home, anyway – and the grandfather stood at my doorway with this little, young eight or nine year-old girl at the time, and she was bleeding from the vagina. And he had put a hanky up there to stop her bleeding, and he just said to me, 'Look what her father's done.' And I'll always remember Whyalla for that case.

Did you find yourself having to leave because you just could not take much more of that?

I had to sign for that girl to go and have – she had to have an operation that day to fix up the vagina. And there was just constant barrage of all these sort of indecencies. And because I was on call all the time and I had a boss that said, you know, 'You should make yourself available,' and I ended up having no life. And in the end I just said, 'No, I have got to go; I want to have another life.' And I wanted to progress also into the Police Force and, although I had wonderful experience in the country – and any girl that goes to the country now is streets ahead of anybody that stays all her life in the city, because you had a wide variety of offences and you have to really improvise at times and make do with what's there – so, yes, I came back in 1971.

So did you have a career course mapped out concerning what you wanted to do and why, when you went back to the city?

I wanted to study, and I did not have time to study in the country with all the interruptions with my callouts and on call all the time, so I wanted to come and do some external courses, because my education had been lacking – in my whole life, really – and I picked up through the police that you really have to do external courses and try and get – well, it is an equivalent to a degree. And so I enrolled at TAFE and did a few things like that and sat for exams and passed, you know. I passed my First Class Constable's exam; I became a Senior Constable, and then I did my Sergeant's exam, my Third Grade Sergeant – passed that; I had a couple of goes

at getting my Second Grade, because I had failed one subject and had to do external courses. And, yes, I just felt that I would get more experience back in the city.

And was it acceptable for women to set their sights on moving up the ranks, as you were trying to do at that time?

It was very difficult, because they did not allow the women police to go any further – those smart women police who'd tried and tried to do their exams were knocked back and failed, quite often.

So there was a deliberate policy to keep the women police at a particular level.

Yes, just to keep them there as an appendage to the men, really. And some of these women I am sure *were* good at what they were doing, and that they – the men later on said they did not have enough information, they did not have enough knowledge to pass the broad range of subjects that were in the examination. Because they were just doing welfare type work, so they did not know enough about drunken drivers, traffic, things like that. I don't know. But I know, to me, they were always very smart, these women and they would not let them pass exams.

Was there a particular mentor who guided you through this period?

No, I just – a lot of the men I worked with. After Whyalla I went into the Women Police again, but I then went into the Drug Squad, I was the first female to go into that. And once I had proved myself there, that I could swear and I could drink and – – –.

Now, Kathryn, you have to explain how that came about, though. How did you manage to get into the Drug Squad?

Well, Jock Silverblade, God bless him, was the Sergeant there in charge of the Drug Squad, and it was only just starting up in Adelaide.

He had a pretty notorious reputation.

Yes (laughs); yes, he did. And I used to talk to him – the men would always come in, we used to have to make them cups of coffee – we were on the same floor, and I would talk to Jock and tell him that I wanted to get out of this sex environment (laughs) that we were in, taking sexual statements. And he said would I be interested, and he went to bat for me. Yes, he was good. And he was allowed to have me on trial and I fitted in and I stayed.

So did they have to make particular administrative arrangements to allow you to enter into the Drug Squad?

Yes, they did. But a lot of the girls did not want to do it, and so I was – oh, I was as brave as Ned Kelly. It was lovely, I just enjoyed it so much. But in the end I burned out and I had to leave – well, I left.

Now this is the 1970s when drugs were – well, I would say they are still pretty rife in Adelaide, but it was a different culture again.

Yes.

It was that more liberal kind of ideology that one could do whatever they liked in association, as you said, with probably the Vietnam War and the Pill and all those things.

Yes.

What was the drug scene in Adelaide in the 1970s? What were you policing?

Well, marijuana to start with. It was not even called Indian hemp then, it was just marijuana, ‘pot’, you know, the flower people were all around, and I can remember us going down to Meadows – there was a big pop festival and we were supposed to be ‘undercover’ – in brackets!

So what was your outfit?

Oh, I have got a photo of it! A T-shirt, T-shirt with a headband around my head and all these beads around my neck! I mean, the beads looked dreadful, they weren’t even the flower power beads, they were out of a good costume I used to wear in the Women Police. Yes, and we would try and talk silly and chew chewing gum and – oh dear, we must have been dreadful. But that was the era, it was fun.

So you maintained – I mean, through the seriousness of these things – obviously your sense of humour has assisted you, and it must have in the Drug Squad. What did you find out about the Drug Squad in those days? I mean, were you going for the little people, or was it that the police actually knew that there was some bigger picture emerging here in Australia at that time. Did you actually link in with the Federal Police?

Yes, and I was lucky enough to do a course in Manly for three weeks, a drug course, where we had international lecturers, people from Hong Kong and Singapore, so I was beginning to know what was going on; and I also was sent for three months – and I lived in Melbourne – on an exchange, and I lived in a hotel and worked with

the undercover police and the Drug Squad in Melbourne, and I still retain contact with the now Commissioner of Western Australia who was my Sergeant there. And when I was promoted not long ago he sent me a letter of congratulations.

Did you find that you were unique in being the first woman in a state drug squad? Were there other women also beginning to infiltrate the system, should I say?

Yes, in other states. And, you know, I never ever looked at it, I just thought, 'What a wonderful opportunity!' and 'Seize the day,' and went. Um, yes, it was good.

So how do you think that broadened your view of policing? I mean, you obviously have gone from a very domestic level, you were now looking at big crime, in a sense. Is that where it was at?

Oh, yes. But I was not sort of involved then in those early days in 1971, 1972 – in organised crime, as such. I was just so happy to be questioning men, boys, about my 'pinch', shall we say. If we went to a house, the Sergeant would say, 'Right, Kathryn, you do this room, you do that room,' and be it males or females. And suddenly I was allowed to question an offender, where before, I mean, it was only childish sort of stuff. And then I had to then go forward once I had questioned somebody and arrested them or reported them, I followed that case through to the courts; I gave evidence in court if they had pleaded not guilty, and often it was in a jury – in front of a jury – and it was great.

Did you ever think about the seriousness of the crime in those days? Was it merely recreational use that these people were involved in, or was it – were there some Mr Bigs that you thought were behind the scene?

Oh, I just – I was very naïve, I suppose – but I just thought, even to get a couple of seeds sometimes was stamping out crime! And I mean after – well, I was there for seven years; I mean, in the end you would not even worry about a few piddly little seeds, you know – but some of my sergeants would almost go down with a microscope and try and get flakes of cannabis from somebody's jumper and charge them with possession! I mean, it was so stupid.

Were there any famous cases that you were involved in?

Well, a lot of – over the seven years, of course, yes, there were.

Any celebrities?

Oh (laughs) – I know Joe Cocker, I was involved with that. I did not actually do the pinch, but I was involved with searching his motel room and – oh, you know, we put our chests out and thought what a big fish we had got. But yes, there were a lot of – – –.

Because it was very much associated –

Yes.

– with the music industry, wasn't it?

Exactly, yes.

I mean, the Rolling Stones and a few others.

Well, LSD was also very rife in those early days, and Adelaide – we had a lot of 'jumpers', you know, people jumping from high buildings under the influence of LSD, hallucinogenic. And it was sad: it was a sad part of my life, because parents who may have brought their kids in for me to growl at them and warn them about the perils of drug taking, in the early 1970s, often would end up on a slab in the morgue overdosed on heroin or cocaine or something. And I saw several like that. I was involved with the Neil Muir murder-mutilation case.

This is the middle 1970s, isn't it?

Yes.

Now, that was a drug-related case, wasn't it?

I believe so. A doctor did stand trial for his murder, but he was acquitted. But I had arrested Neil several months before and I was asked to go to the morgue one night and look at this body, and they did not tell me they only had the head – it was the torso – and it was Neil's face so I was able to recognise him. But yes, there was a lot of vicious things.

That would have been a fairly, a fairly – again, you seem to have jumped from the fat – no, I should say from the frypan (laughter) – to dealing with extremes, almost, of behaviour –

But it was – – –.

– and human – the worst side of human nature.

Yes. But that's policing. That is policing. But to me it was interesting. And I mean we would have to go to postmortems, even, and to me it was just – apart from the smell: I always hated the smell and sometimes I would dry retch and sometimes I would vomit – but I just found it so interesting to see where the needle had gone into the arm and perhaps caused an overdose or death, and – – –. Yes, to me, coming from this goody-goody-good-shoes, that I would walk around like a model, and sometimes I wore old clothes and had my Walther strapped to the inside of my ankle. I mean, I just thought I was Miss Starsky and Hutch, you know. It was *life*, it was great.

You were talking an interesting thing there about almost the smell of death. Can you remember that first death that you saw?

Oh, I saw a few in Whyalla, and I can remember one – – –.

Would they be violent ones or drug-related ones?

No; often they were people who lived alone and, you know, somebody hadn't seen them. And I can remember a dreadful one at Whyalla. A dear little old man had been in a tin shed for weeks and, I mean, they just get black and blow up with all the maggots and things, you know. It is always the smell. I am always interested to *look*, and I think most police will tell you it is the smell.

That first hits you.

Yes.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

Kathryn, you were talking about your involvement, I suppose, with the process of death and dead bodies and things. I did not actually understand that that really was a part of women policing. So can you elaborate on that for me?

Well, yes. Women police were given the job – and mostly it happened on night shift, although a lot happened during the day, of course – but if somebody was killed in an accident, or some sudden death, or if somebody died in a hospital and these people could not be reached on telephones – and in those days telephones were not a norm like they are now – it was the duty of the Woman Police Officer to go with a driver or a uniformed policeman and knock on the door at all hours of the day and night and break the news to Mrs Smith that her son had been killed in an accident or Mr So-and-so, the father, husband, lover. It was dreadful. And I can remember one

night shift, which was seven nights, I think I had nine deaths to advise people of during that time. Because some nights you would get – if it was a multiple accident, multiple deaths, you would have to do the whole lot. And you always went to the next door neighbour, you had to wake them up, and say, ‘Well, look, what’s Mrs Smith, Mrs Jones, like – is she in there on her own?’ And you would tell that next door neighbour, and sometimes – most times – they would come in with you, and as soon as you knocked on the door they would see Mrs Smith, the neighbour, standing there with the police and think the worst. And – terrible.

These are often things that are untalked about within the police culture. As I said, it seems from your experiences that you were almost thrown into, you know, the extremes of kind of human behaviour. What training did they give you in how to handle this sort of function of informing someone that someone that they – was either a relative or family – – –?

You would have to go with a senior policewoman and watch her do it: that’s all the training you ever got.

Were there standard methods? Did they say, ‘This is what you do’?

Well, they would give you a bit of a rough idea, but I mean when you have somebody faint on you straight away, or somebody starts screaming – and I had a woman jump up on a wardrobe one night and I had to get her down: I still don’t know how she levitated up there. It was dreadful. A dear little Italian lady. Her husband and brother had been killed in the one accident. Nobody – you just learned, you picked it up, as you went along.

So you really learned on the job –

Yes.

– and in one sense there was no counselling afterwards for a number of these, what seems to be, as I said, sort of the extreme ends of human experience.

Yes.

I am interested to know how you accommodated these different aspects of human behaviour. Is it a bit like doctors, that you kind of did not reflect too much on it, that you – did you develop – as you said, you talked about drinking and –

Yes.

– people’s sense of humour: is that how people coped with it?

Yes. But just before I go onto how we coped, not only did we deliver the death messages, but we used to have to take these people to the morgue to identify their loved ones as well. And we always had to wait till the person was cleaned up if it was a horrific accident, and that to me – that’s where I saw a lot of dead bodies – and I would cry, with people would be crying, and I did not even know these people, and I would cry over that. But yes, we did not have any support except each other. And we would come back to the Women Police Office, as it was in those days, and the senior might say to you, ‘Oh, how did you get on?’ and you’d say, ‘Oh, it was awful,’ you know. And you’d talk a bit about it, and latter times we would just go over to the [Police] Club after we finished work – not night shift, of course – but I could not sleep a lot of times if I did a lot of death notices during the night shift, and you’d just go to sleep through exhaustion worrying about it. But after a while you got used to it, you really did. You’d talk about it, and if somebody looked like they were having a lot of problems with it you’d say, ‘Look, let’s go over the Club after work and have a few grogs and joke and talk about it.’

So a kind of camaraderie of the Police Force really was part of the way that you learned to cope?

Yes. And I can remember a mother, taking a mother to West Terrace – the old West Terrace morgue – and she grabbed her young son off the barouche, and it slipped; the body slipped off the barouche. Well, I got hysterical laughing, I mean, when I would repeat that story. It was the only way you could cope with it. I mean, here I was trying to pick up this body, it was jumping and flung all over the place. And, you know, when I – you’d have a few grogs and we would laugh hysterically about it because you were talking about it. And I mean, really, it is dreadful when you think about it. Was something out of Monty Python.

It is black humour, isn’t it?

Yes, yes.

Well, it is very interesting – the Drug Squad, I think, is where we were talking about your involvement there: you were obviously pushed professionally into all sorts of areas then, and your accreditation – – –. What was your next move after that?

Well, I tried to get out of the Drug Squad after I had been there for five years. I felt burnt out; it was – there was a bit of corruption in the Drug Squad then, and it was

being investigated, and I just did not – I knew what was happening, and I just did not want to be a part of it. I was not going to be another Serpico and rat on people, but I wanted to – I had *tried*; I had spoken to an Inspector about some misconduct that was going on, and he turned it right around on me and told the people I was informing on, who were police officers – and I thought, ‘No, this is not for me.’

Again, was this a combination of the sorts of mixed organisational values that you said, you know, you weren’t going to rat on people, but obviously there was some ethical problems there, but there was a culture of silence, that you did not do that to other members of the Force.

Oh, yes, there was that then too; but there was also a lot of good police officers who – well, one fella went with me when we reported this matter to this Inspector and, as I said, he turned around and told these people, and they made my life a bit hectic for a while. But I had had enough of it; I was – my life, my mother had died. She came down to live with me, she had cancer of the throat, and I was trying to care for her and sit on plantations all night, you know, with shotguns held at my face and all this jazz. And I did not want that any more; and I was burnt out – I was spending a lot of time in court, some awful cases that went on for days. And we had had the Arkaba shooting, I was heavily involved in that. And I just wanted to get out of the Drug Squad. So finally I got – I had to find a policewoman replacement, and several did not want to do it – and so finally someone I talked into doing it.

Kathryn, just one question there: did you ever find, with changes in government and political parties – we haven’t actually talked about that, about how policing was influenced. I mean, again, we are going through the Dunstan era here after a very conservative Liberal government. There must have been some impact of the Dunstan Government upon the role of the police – particularly with the investigation of Salisbury, the Police Commissioner who came out in the 1970s. I think given at this point where we are talking, it is probably interesting to reflect upon that particular time in the Force, given that *you* were also under pressure, but it seems the Police Force was under pressure, too.

Yes. Well, also – I have got to be careful here because then I went into our union then. But Drug Squad, yes. Drug Squad was heavily linked with the Vice Squad, and women police used to be seconded to work in the Vice Squad, and of course Dunstan’s era making homosexuality legal, and there was the Duncan Affair, when it was alleged that the police threw Duncan into the river. And it was the era when our Special Branch had been investigated. And I know we used to have to report back

and make cards out if we had seen some prominent – I mean, if we saw people loitering down by the Torrens, and homosexuality was – – –.

That would have been a very difficult thing –

Yes.

– with that legislative reform, to suddenly move from one set of values to where it was an illegal act, to suddenly being a *legal* act.

That's right.

Did the police – I mean, obviously there was no assistance given to the police to come to grips with those radical changes in legislation. Was that often one of the problems, that the politicians were too far out in front?

Well, there was that also. But then we used to be called in every now and again to sit through a lecture, and I mean we all hated Dunstan because we were supposed to be apolitical, I mean a-religious, apolitical, a-everything. I mean, I think in the end we were asexual (laughs). So I don't know, we were *nothing*: we weren't allowed to express an opinion. We had to go right down that middle line, you see. So suddenly – we all hated Dunstan because he sacked Salisbury, and I marched during the big Salisbury demonstration.

Was that seen as direct political interference –

Oh, yes!

– or unfair political – – –.

Oh, unfair direct, and knowing what we believed about Dunstan – I mean, you know, we all had our opinion about Don Dunstan, be it right or wrong – and we just did not like, well, I did not like what he stood for. And being a Catholic, and homosexuality and all this – you thought you knew everything. And I mean half the things were rumours, as it turns out, I am sure. Not only that, Don Dunstan himself, his private life drew attention – there were judges – and we always knew best, and we thought we knew everything – – –.

Was the authority of the Police Force being undermined? It had been set up as a kind of social institution that was highly respected. That dismissal of Salisbury was a huge symbolic gesture to the community outside that maybe the police weren't to be as revered and respected and unquestioned. Did it have that effect? It must have caused a lot of internal problems.

Well, it did, because we did not like – well, I say ‘we’, collectively – *I* did not like the fact that Salisbury had been appointed over a South Australian or an Australian Commissioner. I did not even like Salisbury. But come all this hoo-ha – I mean, he used to walk around the buildings, and he did not know our names like dear old Brigadier McKinna did: he would say, ‘Hello, Kathryn’ in the lift, you know – probably because I had sworn at him at the Showgrounds many years ago – but Salisbury was this pompous Englishman that came out, and – although, on reflection he did, he put some new ideas in train and it was good – but, you know, it took us a while to accept Salisbury. And then when he got sacked by Dunstan – well, Salisbury was the best thing, and we sort of all turned again.

What about some of the other changes, though, some of the radical feminist ideas that had begun to infiltrate government organisations such as equal opportunity, and discrimination, and harassment – terms that were never used before? You were there at a critical time, in the Police Force: how did you see what was happening? Because the 1970s seems to be a pretty chaotic time for the South Australian Police Force.

I don’t think I took much notice of what was going on outside the Force. I mean, I was just so happy to be in there doing my job, the drugs, and of course from 1971 to 1979 I was in the Drug Squad, you see, and doing courses, and I was madly in love with this fella that I was on with for seven years (laughs), and life was a breeze!

But the Force had been restructured, hadn’t it?

Yes, yes, from 1974.

Can you elaborate on that?

Well, 1974 the Women Police ceased to be the Women Police, as such – we were, they were all turfed into the general stream of policing then. And a lot of my friends were treated badly because they went into uniform and were given dreadful jobs and found it hard to assimilate and to work side by side with the Uniform branch when we had been treated like queens, really, princesses. And suddenly they had to, you know, toe the line and go to parades and go into uniform. And I mean I avoided all that until later years, but jeez, some of the girls *left*.

So rather than seeing it as something that was positive, they actually –

Oh!

– viewed it as being a step backwards?

Dreadful! And it was the way it was done. It was stealthily done, and – – –.

Who was responsible for that?

Commissioner Draper, I think, from memory. And some of his Superintendents and Inspectors did it so sneakily. And they did not have any input. I think the Principal, Miss Richardson, was asked a few things; and she kept it all quiet, and I think she was told to shut up about it. And suddenly the women were asked – the first thing they knew that it was going to be uniform, we were asked to have some input into what we should wear; and I know they went to the air hostesses and copied some of the air hostesses' dress and jacket for the first one. But again I was running around in jeans and old clothes, so it did not worry me – I was sort of – – –.

So in many respects it did not provide new or equal opportunities for women police; it actually put you back quite a few years, do you think?

No, no: it *did* provide it, but it was never sold properly; it was never fully explained. And the young women who were in the Academy and were coming, it was wonderful, and *I* thought it was wonderful. But I was really away from it; I was doing what I loved. But some of the women, some of the old supervisors, were put in back rooms on concrete floors and were just given escort duties. And one in particular comes to mind, and she ended up with terrible arthritis, she was treated dreadfully – and she had been a *villain* to us, but a loved villain, but very strict – and suddenly she was reduced to this escort duty. I thought it was disgusting. And they could not cope with it and they grizzled, and it was never sold properly. But anyway, *I* jumped at it and loved it, and a lot of girls did and were given the opportunities and seized the day.

So under the new restructuring, women could begin to start applying for specific ranks.

Yes. Yes, and the men found it difficult, too. Some of the old-time diehards did not want to accept women police: we were all right there to accompany them and look glamorous and make them cups of coffee, but yes, some of them were quite rude. I can remember a fellow, I went to get in the car door, and he said, 'Oh, you get the same wages as me, open your own bloody door.' We used to get touched up, we would get molested, we would get – it all counts as harassment now. But I just took

the tack that I had become really tough and I would give them back what they gave me: I would swear at them and I was not a shrinking violet. Some of the girls would be in tears, they never did anything about it, and of course it is now harassment and discrimination.

So it was not really, as you said, well-handled in that there did not seem to be – I mean, if somebody was harassed, they really would not want to report it because it really would not be –

Yes.

– in their interests.

No. And I mean the men would be – some of the men were *awful* if they wanted you to go out with them. And I mean I had a real thing about not going out with a married man, being this good Catholic – this was the early days. You know, these fellows would say they would want to take you off and do the business, and you'd say no, and they would try and try again – because you seemed to draw the same men from the General Squad perhaps to go out and do shoplifters, and you seemed to get the same one all the time and he would try it on and, you know, you'd get quite upset that you did not do this sort of thing. And then finally, if you'd got enough courage to say to one of the other women police, 'Oh, look, I don't want to go out with Bob or Bert or whatever' – 'Oh, isn't he a lecherous old bum,' you know, and I would say, 'Oh, has he done that to you?' 'Oh, yes.' But then they would call you, you were either a trollop or a lesbian. You know, you could not win. And it was hard.

But you were obviously made of strong, steely stuff.

Yes, but it has affected my life. I mean, it is the religious thing in my whole life, I think, that has probably had some impact on the way I am now – happy as anything now, but I mean my relationships with fellas have been a bit of a disaster. But there's still time yet (laughs).

I think it was in the 1980s you moved to Burnside: was that CIB?

Yes, it was. It was opposite the Feathers Hotel at Hazelwood Park. There was a vacancy, and because I wanted to get out of the Drug Squad I just filled that vacancy. And I worked as a detective and had a partner and just did all the CIB type

things. The first twelve months, I must admit, I was really quite shell-shocked, I suppose: it took me a long time to get over the Drug Squad.

Do you mean that you were really so mentally and physically exhausted?

Yes. I was; and I was also still having to give evidence in Supreme Court, Central District Court, Magistrates Court, with old cases; so I was –

Still there.

– still there. And it was very hard.

Did you ever think at that point that you might leave the Police Force ever? Did that ever – – –?

No. I never wanted to leave the Police Force. No.

So it did not matter how bad things got.

No. I just coasted along, and I suppose I used to talk about it. Burnside CIB also had a couple of other detectives who'd left the Drug Squad as well, so we used to just knock around with each other and talk about things and – yes, I made some, I had good support from a lot of the detectives.

You never went through a crisis about thinking about the fact that you might have wanted a family or children, or wanted to be married?

Oh, no, I was having too much fun. And also I could see the pressures that were put on the married detectives and their lives, and how hard it was for them. And I mean I used to spend, you know, eight hours in a car talking to a fellow if he was my partner, and I would hear about how hard it was financially and their wives would not understand them if they had to drop this and keep working, and they never could go to their children's sports day, and I thought, 'Oh dear,' you know.

So you never felt compelled to move into getting married?

No. I, as I said, had a relationship with a fellow for about seven years, and it just petered out. And – no; I was never short of some nice companions, shall I say, but never got the urge to settle down.

Now, it was a fairly, I gather, traumatic thing when your mother died. She was still quite young. Did that cause you to reflect on your life?

Well, getting back to Mum, when she – because she lived in New Guinea, and Dad's buried up there, and my sister worked up there for a long time – I had always wanted

to buy a house, because Mum had always lived in rented accommodation; and I thought, 'Well, I could look after her.' And so I bought a unit and when she got sick – she had cancer of the throat because she smoked a lot of cigarettes – she came down and lived with me: she retired from Port Moresby and lived with me. But she was – the cancer had come back again. And I was trying to work in the Drug Squad and go home to her, and I would find her lying on the floor – she was so sick. And anyway, she died in 1979, aged sixty-two. It was sad.

This goal of having your own patch of land, how important was that?

Well, it was very important. And I bought a unit when I came back from Whyalla, with a thousand dollars and borrowed the rest. And then I sold the unit after Mum died, because I could still see her in the unit, and I bought my house at Millswood. And I made quite a good profit on the old unit.

So it was important to put your roots down.

Oh, yes. Yes. To have something myself. Because, as I said, we were turfed in and out of houses, and Mum lived with various men, and we lived in funny little flats, and I wanted something of my own. And I did it myself, and that was a real big goal, yes.

Rates of pay: was there a discrepancy between what males and females were paid?

No; we always had the same. South Australia has always enjoyed equal pay.

So that was a first.

Yes. Well, we – the Women Police in South Australia were the first to have powers of arrest in the British Commonwealth. We were even ahead of Great Britain.

Burnside CIB in the 1980s. For how long, Kathryn?

About four years I was there, and I was made a Sergeant there, the first female to be appointed a Detective Sergeant. And it was while I was there that I was heavily involved in our police union.

Now, that's something we haven't spoken about. Would you like to give me a little bit of background on that? How did you become political?

Well, I would grizzle about what the union was doing, or our – we call it an association, the Police Association – and because I would, I think there were only

three women at Burnside and we were always surrounded by men, and I would listen to them, and I would grizzle about our wages and promotion and all this; and somebody said to me, 'Well, put your money where your mouth is,' and I got involved with – I stood for election and got one of the highest votes ever, and the first female to be on the executive of the Police Association. I did a lot of canvassing; because in the Police Force I had proven myself: I had been in the Drug Squad, done it hard, done my own work, and the men knew that I was capable. I was not a woman who was a shrinking violet: I would call the shots, I would call it as it was – perhaps a bit rough, in some cases.

But they knew that you were straight, too.

Oh, yes, exactly. And they could rely on me. I mean, I would have to back up people with guns and all that. And I worked my way into the annals of history of the South Australian Police and I am very proud of it, yes. But I did it my way, and some women might not agree with it, and that's it.

Given when you were invited onto, or won membership of, the executive of the Police Association, did you find that you were becoming a role model for younger women in the Force? Were you often looked to, or were you often spouted as being the name in the Force for women to aspire to the sort of things that you were doing?

I don't know. I don't know what the big bosses did, but I was fairly high profile in the police union.

This is what I meant, yes. So in what way? How were you high profile?

They tended to use me a bit if we wanted to push women's issues, and I did that; I allowed myself to do that. But then I would jack up every now and again and say, 'Now, look,' you know, 'Women – we are a big mixture, you know, it is male and female.' And I would have a lot of women coming up at conferences and all that and talking to me, and – – –. And of course uniform women were well and truly in the Police Force then; and on our union we had a lot of problems with complaints against women police and males working in mobile patrols, because some of the wives would complain that their husbands were on with the policewoman if they did night shift and all that. So there were industrial matters we had to cope with. Guns – the women wearing the guns on their hips did not want the big guns because it

affected them, you know. And occupational health and safety issues were coming into vogue then. So I was there at the coalface for a lot of that.

And what kind of expertise did you bring to it? Was it just from your own personal experience, or did you actually actively go out and start looking at what arrangements were elsewhere, what was happening in other organisations? Did you go on a bit of a self-education?

No. The Association sent us, I went to Albury-Wodonga for two weeks, on a big course there; and heard trade unionism at its worst – they would sing all these Red songs at night (laughs): the more red they drank, the more you would ‘Hide your badge, Comrade,’ sort of thing. And – oh! And all these different unions: they had men from waterworks, the Sydney Watersiders and – oh! it was a good awakening for me, yes. But also I did a lot of TUIT courses here, and took an interest in it. But I was never – I perhaps thought like a man a lot of times, because I worked with so many men. I just, I never – – –.

What do you mean by that, you ‘thought like a man’?

Well, I never thought, ‘Well, this is a women’s issue; this is a male issue.’ I just thought police, you know, it was just one big police force.

You never delineated between males and females.

No; no. And I used to get cross towards the end of my career, when some of these women would say, ‘No, this is purely for females’ – and some cases *are*, you know, pregnancies and all that – but I just got cross with some of the women trying to push women’s issues totally.

To the exclusion of the broader social conditions.

Right. For promotion, saying that promotion was not available for women. Well, promotion was not available for men either.

What were the major – what *were* the issues at that time for police?

Oh, handguns, powers of arrest, you know; again, this is where the Dunstan, the different political forces, were coming in. Wage structure. All that.

Did police actually feel that their powers had been lessened?

Oh, yes, the powers to move on, you know, the cease loitering, I can remember that. The handguns took up a lot of our time, because one group of rabblers would

say, ‘Well, you know, the police shouldn’t be wearing guns when they go to do shoplifting and go into a departmental store.’ But our argument was it was our tool of trade and, you know, if a carpenter goes in he has his hammer; well, a police officer, it is the firearm. And we were looking at police regulations, we were looking at the powers of arrest – all that sort of thing at the time. It is a constant turnover keeping going.

In that particular period – given that there was such a radical change in social values as well – did the Police Force begin to question what its actual role in society was? I mean, was this kind of an era where it was not quite determined what the responsibilities of the Police Force should be?

Yes.

Were you there to protect people, or were you there simply to enact legislation?

Well, a bit of both. And I think financial constraints were coming in and budgets were being tightened, and therefore police were trying to offload some of the duties that we had always done. For example, if little Miss Smith’s cat got up a tree, well, the police would come and get it. We would say, ‘Well, that’s the Fire Brigade’s.’ Accidents, for example, we would cut people out of car wrecks. We were getting together with the Fire Brigade to say, ‘Well, let’s share our resources.’

Because this is the time when, I suppose, after or during the Bannan era it was the time of economic cutbacks –

Yes.

– and also, I suppose, the excesses of the State Bank. But it was a time where the functions of the Police Force were beginning to be looked at fairly critically.

Indeed. And we were more under the microscope than ever.

Did you – and you might find this difficult to answer – were there certain Police Ministers who were harder for the Police Association to work with than others?

I cannot remember unless I went back through my scrapbook. But we used to – – –.

Obviously made a big impact! (laughter)

We used to butter up whatever side was there – if the Liberals were in and weren’t giving us something, (sound of light aeroplane overhead) we would get the Labor Shadow Minister, we would go to him and he would bring it up; and there were ways and means to get our message across.

You were always a very active association, that still continues today. I don't know whether the legacy of that was set in your era, where it seems that suddenly for the first time the Police Association seemed to become a public relations kind of body in the 1980s.

Yes.

Were there any particular people that you worked with at that time in the Police Association who were very politically active and who really did become the voice of the Police Association?

Well, of course, since the early days when Ralph Tremethick and a few of those started it up, it kept pace with society. And Dan Brophy was, I think, about the first outsider to come in, and he was a great mentor of mine: he kept saying to me, 'Do your exams, go for your commissioned officer exams,' and things like that. But then he got turfed out because he did not do something or other and somebody did not like him. But he brought an open mind; he opened up the Association more to scrutiny to the press and things like that, which I thought was good. And we used the press, the TV and the different media to publicise the lot of the police officer.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B: TAPE 3 SIDE A

Interview with Kathryn Finnnigan, who was one of the first women to achieve commissioned rank in the South Australian Police Force in 1985. Kathryn Finnnigan was awarded the Australian Police Medal in 1998. Her career has had many firsts, and she is considered a trailblazer for many young women wanting to pursue a career in the Police Force. This interview is recorded as part of the Honoured Women Oral History Project for the Mortlock Library of South Australia. Tape two [sic].

Kathryn, in previous discussions we were talking about your appointment to the South Australian Police Association and some of the issues that it was trying to grapple with in the 1980s. Can you recap on some of those issues, such as the effect of the reorganisation of the Police Force?

I mean, not only were we grappling with it within the Association; it was very hard as a serving police officer as well. Wage restructuring – the tier wages had come in. There was the issue about the guns being worn and exposed on the hips of police officers – that took up a lot of time in the 1980s.

Did you find yourself at all being frowned upon for making that move into becoming such a forthright advocate, I suppose, of police officers and their issues? Was it considered to be something that was not in the best interests of your career?

Oh, no; to the contrary. I had been accused, on one occasion by somebody, that the reason I went into the Association was to be a stepping stone for promotion to commissioned rank. But that was – I discarded that, because that was not my intention. As I said earlier, I was not – I did not agree with what was happening in the Association and I put my money where my mouth was, and stood for election and got elected to the executive.

Could you just summarise, then, the main issues that you supported at that time for police? You mentioned wages.

Wages; and I think police housing in the country has *always* been a problem. We did get reduced rent on our houses in the country, but that was to encourage people and their families to stay in the country; because some of the far northern areas, a lot of police – and especially families – did not want to go to those areas, so if we made housing available at a reasonable rate or a lot cheaper than they would get in Adelaide, it was always a welcome addition to the policing.

Had the Police Force fallen behind, I suppose, in parity with other professions like nursing and teaching? What were the wages like?

Well, we did not ever compare it with that. The comparison was always made with interstate police forces and we were way behind and, to bring it up, we had to fight tooth and nail with the government because of the financial constraints put on us.

Did the new reorganisation of the Police Force allow people like you – did it open up career opportunities that hitherto hadn't been there?

No, I don't think it did. If anything it made it a bit harder, because we had the – oh, I just cannot think now – the appeal process was put in place. If somebody was selected for a position and another person thought it was wrong they could appeal, and the appeal process just devastated the Police Department: it was one of the worst things that had happened. Because it pitted one man against another. I can remember doing an investigation, later on, into the Star Force. And there were two Star Force men vying for the one Sergeant's position and, I mean, they were dealing with guns every day of their lives, and at one stage a gun was pointed at an applicant.

And so it broke down that camaraderie and support which was essential to policing.

It was dreadful – – –.

It was an inappropriate model, organisational model, to adopt?

I mean, so many other government departments had the same process; but I don't know *now* what's happening, but it put us in turmoil.

In 1979, another policewoman obtained the, I suppose, the 'first' in becoming the first commissioned officer, and this is Miss Leditschke. You were commissioned in 1985. Were you surprised by that commission?

No; I was (laughs) very happy that I had finally got it. Several women had attempted the course between 1979 and 1984, and had failed. Because in those days you had to do a twelve week course up at Echunga and live in for three months up there, and it was very difficult.

What did the course involved, can you remember?

Oh, it was a lot of study in psychiatric and psychology, and you were examined one way and another. There was map reading, I know, because I always failed map reading – I did not know North from South; I was terrible – and had I realised, I got myself into a real tizz about map reading; and I realised when I was commissioned I could always have a Sergeant to do it for me! But anyway. There was a lot of law and managerial issues.

So it was looking at leadership –

Yes.

– and the ability to lead people. And was it all measured by men?

Oh, indeed, yes. Yes. And of course I was one of the lucky ones, because a lot of the men on my course had tried – one man had tried five times – to pass the commissioned officers' course and had failed. So I mean it was not only women who were failing; they were being very selective, and probably rightly so. But one of the reasons *I* thought I would have a go at it was because they made this fellow an Inspector, and I thought, 'Gee, if he can become an Inspector, so can I,' so that spurred me on. But I got through the first time, yes.

Just talking a little bit about that assessment: you said you had to live for twelve weeks at Echunga?

Yes – I came home at weekends – and it was very stressful. And one of the instructors told me later that they put a lot of stress on me, and one night I was just

so fed up, I went – because I had to sleep, you know, on my own: all the men slept in a barrack-type arrangement – and I got back into my office, back into my room, and I cried. I thought, ‘I don’t need this.’ They had been riding me very hard during the day, and I thought it was unfair, and so did a lot of my classmates, and they sort of – one fellow even put a photostat copy of his hand through my window at one stage and said, ‘Need a hand?’, you know – and that made me worse: I was bawling to myself. And I went over to use the ’phone to order a taxi – because we did not have cars, we had to go up in a bus – and somebody was talking on the ’phone to his wife, and he was on and on and on, and I was stirred up and I wanted to order this taxi: I was going to give it the flick, I had had enough. I told that lad later on that he probably saved my life and my career, because I just wanted out.

When you say they were ‘riding’ you, do you mean they were singling you out –

Yes.

– in these group sessions? What sort of things did they do, if you can articulate? Did they belittle you? Did they use sarcasm? What sort of things did they do? Or they just made you do things three times more – in a way different, more difficult than anybody else, or what?

Well, they would give me jobs, like in a scenario, that was quite difficult, where they would be quite selective with the men. Mind you, the men had done a lot of this playacting before – I mean, they had done it reality, where I hadn’t. So in retrospect, I suppose, they were trying to give me this experience that I lacked. But to me – and I was on show in front of people and if I failed I felt dreadful and I would have to do it again – but it was a really good camaraderie amongst the twelve men that were with me, twelve or thirteen, I think there were fourteen of us on the course. And they just told me not to give up. And, as I said, one of the instructors told me: he said, ‘Look, we are only doing it for your own benefit.’ But I was so bruised and battered.

So 1985 was a very big year. Where did you take up your first Inspector’s position?

Well, it was at Darlington. I was in charge of the Uniform section there. And then I relieved a short while at Christies Beach.

What were the issues facing you in those suburban stations?

Oh, it was primarily mobile patrol, attending at taskings that came over the air – anything from murders to bank holdups, to traffic offences, to drunken driving, to child abuse. We got a very good, wide range of offences.

Did you like suburban policing like that?

Yes, I did, yes.

Back at the grass roots?

Yes. Mind you, I was the supervisor, I was the boss. And I had to see that all the staff and the patrol men and women did their job. And you also had Traffic and you had the Breathalyser Unit underneath you; the Forensic Science, you know, the fingerprints people. And you had to see that, if an offence occurred, that they all attended and did their job correctly – yes, it was good.

How did they respond to a female Inspector?

Oh, the young people did not have a problem with it; it was the silly old fellas that often had a problem with it, yes.

Any notorious cases while you were associated with Darlington and Christies Beach?

Oh, I cannot remember without going through my scrapbooks, which are in an awful mess at the moment.

Well, 1985 was an important year; you moved from Darlington and Christies Beach and then you went back into the central office, didn't you?

Yes; I came back into Adelaide Division, and I was there for a couple of years in charge of Team Four, and it was a delight to have these young men and women, you know, doing their job in the Adelaide area and North Adelaide – that was our area that we had to deal with. Also the City Watch House came under my control when I was on shift, and that was always a big responsibility: the deaths in custody; the reorganisation of the cells; all that. And we had overcrowding with prisoners because of the problems with Correctional Services. We had attempts, suicides in the cells. Cells were always a great problem, yes.

You mention deaths in custody, which became a critical issue during that period: do you have any personal beliefs about that problem, about what was happening with the indigenous people?

Well, it was carried on later when I went to the Yorke Peninsula, of course, because all the cells had to be redesigned – the mesh on the cells, so that people could not hang themselves – and in the country it was more hands on, where we would get the indigenous people, the relatives in to talk to them and to accompany them to court. In Adelaide, it was a little bit more difficult because of the way the cells were constructed: you could not always have quite a lot of relatives hanging around, talking [to] them. But I do – this is only my personal view – but I do believe that there was an orchestrated process, I suppose, on behalf of some of the young Aboriginal people to attempt or to hang themselves to get the police in trouble.

There's been that traditional kind of tension between police and Aboriginals.

Yes.

I mean, their perception of the Police Force is one that, I suppose, is very negative.

Oh, yes.

How did you cope with that?

Well, you have to keep in mind that there are a lot of good Aboriginal people out there, and it is only this small minority that we see. But, going on from the deaths in custody, there were quite a lot of attempt suicides by white people who got terribly depressed being cut off from family and friends. But it was the Aboriginal people that got all the publicity, and would make it very difficult for the police just in a normal arrest. You know, they would say, 'Come on, arrest me – I am going to hang myself.' And you know that's very hard to take when you get it time and time again.

What did the police do at that time to prepare some of the younger officers to, I suppose, handle those sorts of situations – given that many of them would not have been exposed to Aboriginal people, which is probably one of the problems to begin with, and maybe that some of their values might have been prejudicial towards them anyway. How do you break that down in an organisation that's always been in that kind of role?

Well, when they came out of the Academy, or during their time at the Academy, there were a lot of Aboriginal people lecturing to police officers. Our Police Department was quite up-front on that. They would have these outside lecturers come in, and police – from their first day that they came into the Academy – were taught the different cultures, the historical background of Aboriginal people and policing. If by any chance the police officer down the track did something against

an Aboriginal that had been proved was incorrect behaviour, they were then sent off to do a course. And our Department has been quite strong in that area of latter years.

In many respects your career at this time really is a mirror towards, or reflects, I suppose, what was happening within the Police Force at large: that it was having to contend or cope with many of these social changes – indigenous people, drugs, corruption. Do you want to talk a little bit about your involvement with the Anti-Corruption or Internal Affairs branch?

Mmh'm. After a couple of years in uniform in the Adelaide Division, and because of my detective training and my investigative role, I suppose, my experience, I was told one day by the Commissioner that I had to start in our Internal Investigation Unit, which was to investigate police who'd overstepped the mark, Police Complaints. So I spent a couple of years working there as an investigator. Anybody that made a complaint about a police officer went through the Internal Affairs.

Kathryn, did police corruption become an issue in the 1980s? I mean, we haven't mentioned it before. Was it always there, or was it just exposed in the 1980s?

I think the Police Department was looking within itself, you know, after a few things that happened interstate. And I think there was a Royal Commission into the Drug Squad not long after I left it, because of corrupt practices. And I think the Police Department as a whole was more conscious of corrupt people. But Internal Affairs was mainly, for example, if a police officer assaulted somebody; if they were rude; if there were dishonesty offences committed; bad assaults; attempted murders – all sorts of things. Any criminal offence that was brought against a police officer was dealt with by the Police Complaints – the Police Investigation Unit. And then we had to send all our completed reports to the Police Complaints Authority, which oversaw the work we did; and then they would suggest to the Police Commissioner this sort of action should be taken against a particular officer; and then the Commissioner would either agree or disagree; and then it had to go to the Minister sometimes when they could not agree; and the charges would be laid or dismissed.

It was interesting that you were appointed to that position. Obviously, the police have always been a very male-dominated force. Putting a woman in to oversee or to be involved in these investigations: what do you think was the kind of rationale behind that?

I never thought of myself as being 'the woman': it was just another body to sit on a seat. I mean, it was – – –.

Did you bring something different to it, though?

Oh, I think I did.

Do you think that you were outside the ‘boys’ network’?

I think women always bring something different into a squad or a unit wherever you are. And I made it very clear in the early days that I was not going to be interviewing just women: I wanted to be part of it. And my boss at the time was Commander Curly Marshall, who was a great mentor of mine as well, and he was great: he would just see that I was treated equally and the jobs that came in would be distributed evenly and we all had our share.

Kathryn, we were talking about the Anti-Corruption branch, and I suppose I want to explore that area where the police, it seems to me, were being forced into some very grey areas in the 1980s where they weren’t actually being protected with legislation, or maybe the legal framework was out of step. Now, you were involved in some very interesting undercover or drug operations, where maybe the police were put in a position. Would you like to talk a little bit about that?

Well, from my Drug Squad days it became obvious that, to get information in those early days, that we would turn a blind eye, shall I say. If somebody had a small amount of cannabis for their own use, and they would say, ‘Oh, look, if you let me keep it we’ll give you something – we’ll hand up ‘Mr Big’,’ or something like that: well, that was always done. That was accepted, provided we told our boss, and it was done. And a lot of good work came out of those instances. I believe there were some cases where even a small amount of heroin was allowed to remain with the offender for his own use, and they would hand up some really good arrests.

It became obvious then that the grey area had been overstepped sometimes by some of the police officers – and I cannot remember specifics – but it was obvious that it had to be tightened up. So reports had to then go in, and we even had to go so far as to arrest that person or report them and do all the paperwork, and then if they came up with some good information we would go to Prosecution and we would withdraw it, or Prosecution would turn up on the day the person was supposed to be in court and say, ‘Tender no evidence.’ I mean, I think that still goes on, to a certain amount. But it has to be up-front. And police officers found that very difficult to do, because some of our bosses were a bit skittish about it; some were gutless; some were over the top; and it depended on who was your boss.

It was also difficult for the police because, while you were pursuing some of these 'Mr Bigs' and corrupt forces that were working in Adelaide, it was also very politically sensitive, too.

Yes, it was. Because the Anti-Corruption branch was formed in the late 1980s – about 1986, I suppose, 1987 – and that stemmed from legislation made by Parliament to try and get amongst the CEOs of government instrumentalities, even judges sort of got caught up in it somewhere along the line; and it went away a little bit from the police although it had been formed out of their policy audit section, and this audit section was to look at practices and procedures within the Department, and if there was some procedure that was not working they had to look at it and see what we could do to change it. So we did have an audit on us from many years ago, but it had been upgraded by merging with this Anti-Corruption branch.

There must always have been that tension, particularly after the Salisbury affair, though, where the police – while trying to handle these corrupt agencies or people or forces or whoever they were, and also being responsible to the Minister to keep him informed – so the political *versus* what actually policing is about. It is always – particularly, it seems, in the 1980s and 1990s – seems to be a very difficult area for the police to walk.

Given my experience later on after the Anti-Corruption branch, when I worked with the Police Commissioner as his staff officer and ministerial liaison officer, it became very obvious to me that – how involved politics are in policing. I had not realised, and I think I was oblivious to all of this, and most police officers are until they get into senior management.

What about the involvement with the NCA? Because that was also a hotbed –

Yes.

– in the 1980s, even into the 1990s, particularly with the tragic bombing there of a particular officer – but the NCA also was a place full of controversy in many respects. Now, you had some involvement.

Yes, I did; we all did. The NCA, when it opened in Adelaide, was like a breath of fresh air, really. They had so much money that they could spend on surveillance, covert operations; and of course the South Australian Police Department were seconded – serving police officers – to the NCA. At one time I think there was probably about ten, or six. And most police officers really strove to be selected, because the NCA had this unlimited amount of money, and it was like a Starsky and

Hutch type thing, you know: they had these cars that they could hire and do undercover work, and it was great. I never aspired to do that; but yes, I did work with the NCA on several occasions. One involved a senior South Australian police officer – I had to go with NCA's officers and search houses and things. It was always difficult when you were going against one of your own but, you know, you did it.

Did organised crime target specific members of the Police Force or the judiciary, do you think? I mean – well, it is probably a difficult question – but do you believe organised crime at this time really did get a strong foothold in Adelaide?

I don't know; but the Barry Moyes affair, of course, blew up in all our faces, and Barry was a Chief Inspector in the Drug Squad who was selling drugs from the drug cabinet. And we all had to wear the brunt of the Barry Moyes affair.

But he was a bit more than just him working in isolation: he did have links, didn't he –

Oh, yes.

– with organised crime, –

Yes.

– which must have caused, as you say, a bit of doubt about whether the police were being charged. Did you ever go on any courses? I remember you mentioning that you did – looking at the sort of big picture of what was happening.

Well, I was lucky enough to have an exchange in Melbourne for quite a few months, and then I did a big course in Manly on drugs. Yes, there were international aspects interwoven into those courses. And our Police Department often brought out experts who, you know, in the auditorium we would listen to. And the NCA used to bring people out, and we would join in.

It just seems that around Australia – if you look at Queensland, New South Wales, and then into Melbourne and even into South Australia, which has always been seen to be a very 'straight' police force – that obviously the police were being targeted by organised crime. So it must have made life very difficult.

Just on that, we did – we do have, still – our Bureau of Criminal Investigation, which is Australia-wide and comes out of Canberra; and some of our best principals of that BCI have been South Australians in charge in Canberra. And also, you know, our BCI, it was only as good as the information that came into it. And we did have

an Organised Crime Squad here in Adelaide that dealt with that. So we were fully conversant, and if we got information and we fed it in, there was often big operations on organised crime within our own ranks and branch.

Following on Internal Affairs, you moved to, I believe, Yorke Peninsula where you had some interesting experiences.

Yes. When I was in the Anti-Corruption branch I formed a task force of about six men to go to the Yorke Peninsula to look into the illegal abalone industry – it was being threatened over there: there were attempt murders, a lot of drugs, assaults, firearm offences – and we worked over there for several months and were successful in Operation Abalone. And I came back and I applied for a vacancy that was there and I was promoted to Chief Inspector.

Most people would have seen Yorke Peninsula as being a very quiet little place, so here was this very interesting, as you say, Starsky and Hutch stuff going on over there: were you ever threatened at all?

I was not, no. But I wanted to get out of Adelaide. I mean, when you look back, I had been in our Internal Affairs; I had been in the Anti-Corruption; I had been ostracised by a lot of my fellow police officers because of the work I was doing; and I just was a bit burned out. So I was looking forward to going to the Yorke Peninsula.

You did not answer me, but have you ever been threatened while – – –?

Oh, yes. Over the years, of course, I have had my share of broken, broken nose, black eyes, bites, shotgun under my chin, fell out of a car one day and the firearm discharged – that was my fault: I had a shotgun and fell out of the boot of the car. To me then it was all exciting. I was involved in the shooting at the Arkaba, where we shot and killed one offender and wounded another. But that's all part of the excitement of it all.

So you were never, you never felt worried for your own safety?

I was always very cautious coming home when I was in the Drug Squad. Some of the Drug Squad members had their delivered milk tampered with and there was a syringe, a prick in the – you know, when they used to have the old bottles? – and it was believed that it had been doped up. I was very *au fait* with my firearm, and I

have always had a silent number on my telephone. And – yes, you have to take precautions.

In Yorke Peninsula I was in charge of thirteen small police stations, and it was my privilege to have so many *good* men and women in charge of those little stations. I really got to know their wives, their families, and I thoroughly enjoyed my four years, or five years, at Kadina. I lived at Kadina, but I went all over the Yorke Peninsula. It was lovely.

You always seem to have this ability to get back to the country at certain times: it is almost as though you need to regenerate back in the country.

Yes; and – oh, you know, with my other interests, and getting involved with the community. That's been my life, really – not having a family, I suppose, I have just enjoyed it.

From Yorke Peninsula you moved to – – –?

I became the staff officer, ministerial liaison officer, for the then Commissioner David Hunt; and that's when I had to keep the peace between the Police Commissioner and the Police Minister, who at the time was Wayne Matthew. And one day I'll write a book about that: I won't say anything about it now. But it was very difficult, and – – –.

Was it a clash of personalities?

Ah! The demands made by the Minister – and not only the Police Minister, but any minister who had something, some police event occur in his or her area was on the 'phone and I had to then go to the police district and make sure I had a succinct record of what had actually happened, you know. And they all wanted to spruik in Parliament and tell it, topnote themselves, but – oh, a lot of work had to go on behind the scenes.

What sort of person was David Hunt?

I found him a very nice man. I think he could have been a bit stronger in some issues of policing, but with Mr Hurley, who was the deputy, I felt they ran a very good police service.

Do you think it was deliberate that they picked you as a woman to kind of facilitate between Mr Hunt and Mr Matthew?

No, not at all. Mr Hurley had asked me to come back from Kadina, and my transfer was fairly quick, but no; I just think I had proved myself, they knew what I could do; and often I could not even say a word when the Commissioner and Mr Matthew were talking, but I would come out of those meetings and I had steam coming out of my ears because Mr Hunt would say, 'Yes, Minister', 'No, Minister'. But that's the way of politics. I mean, he could see the big picture; I could not.

So was he an interesting mover and shaker, or do you believe that he just had to toe the line with the Minister?

As I said earlier, I did not realise the pressures that were put on the Police Commissioner by Parliament. And it was a wakening for me. Perhaps a lot of other people realised it, but I had never realised it. And I just could not *believe* the pressures that Parliament, how they virtually ran the Police Department. And I still believe that they should not have the impact that they do have.

You believe there should be much more separation between politics and policing?

Yes. I mean, we have to get the money from Parliament, of course, to run the police service, but there's too much interference.

Was there political interference because, you know, it was appropriate that certain election issues would be raised, and that they could make some, get some kudos out of it?

Yes, a lot of times it was. It was grandstanding in Parliament – this is my opinion (laughs), only my opinion – the grandstanding that went on; the kudos, as you say: and they just used the Police Commissioner as they wished.

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE B

Interview with Kathryn Finnigan, continuing. Kathryn, we were talking about policing in the 1990s. Now, in 1995 you were appointed to Norwood after a brief time with the Anti-Corruption branch. What was Norwood like in 1995?

Well, I was attached to, in charge of, the Norwood CIB, and we were in the new building over the existing new police station. The dear old police station was still there on the corner. Things were good. You know, we were a very busy station: I had thirty-odd detectives there; and my area also covered Stirling, because the Stirling CIB came under my command. Stirling later moved to Mount Barker. But, you know, we were a very active, busy little unit.

Some of the major things that you were policing at that time, what would it have been? Larceny – – –?

Lot of housebreaking, because of the affluent society around Norwood. But our area went right down to South Road, almost to Winston Avenue, one side of Winston Avenue. We had Blackwood – not Blackwood; some of the – Springfield, Carrick Hill, all the Unley area; we went right up to the Hills – – –.

So it is a good social mix there.

Yes.

Were there any – what about car stealing? That was a major – – –.

Yes, car stealing, housebreaking. We had a lot of violent – ‘home invasions’ is the modern term, but it is actually burglary and robbery – but dear little old ladies in retirement homes were threatened and broken in, rooms were invaded and handbags and jewellery stolen: we had a lot of that when I was at Norwood.

Did that peak? Do you think that was a response to the fact that there had been a lot of cutbacks to the police, given what had happened with the State Bank debt and the Liberal Government’s obvious philosophy of economic rationalism, that everything has to be reduced to a bottom line? Did you see a rise in that violent crime during the 1990s?

No; I think the reason – my opinion is that the reason for this violent crime was the drugs. I mean, it was all motivated by drug offenders. And they were just – the bank, the banks had increased their security; see, a lot of the soft target areas were the service stations and, you know, they would just go in and hold up a service station; and then they turned to the little old ladies, the bag snatchers, you know. That was quite relevant then, and they were doing it *carte blanche*.

Was there an increase, do you think, in drug addicts and heroin addicts and all that sort of – you saw that increasing during the – – –?

Oh, yes. And of course, at Norwood they’ve got that drug rehabilitation centre there.

On Osmond Terrace.

Yes. Mind you, we had very close liaison with the group there, and they were most helpful – as we were: we would not impinge on their area, and they would let us know anything they could that would help us. And of course then we saw the era of

the Cash Converters. Oh! – that caused no end of trouble with the CIB. The stolen property was all sent through Cash Converters.

It still is, probably (laughs).

Well, I think they are making inroads into it there. I think they were almost to charge some of the Cash Converter management with offences.

What about that philosophy of rationalising police areas? There was, obviously, a lot of community concern when local police stations were being shut down. It is almost a bit like when the branch banking system was being shut down – that people felt that their communities were being dismantled, in a way.

And rightly so. I was totally against it. The hours of the uniformed police in the police station were cut back; we had not had any recruiting at the Academy for years; if anybody left or got sick – and stress within the Police Department was taking its toll – we could not replace police officers; and we were right down to the bone. And then they brought in this changing of all the divisions and areas, and Norwood CIB was the first CIB unit to amalgamate and to change, and I had to do that in my term there.

You had to oversee that?

Yes.

So what were the implications of that?

Well, I had to try and sell it to my staff, who were quite violent against it; and then we would have meeting upon meeting with the property sections and our financial people from Adelaide; and we formed committees, and we had a lot of input from all the staff; and there'd be fights left, right and centre, because they were trying to move us back into this old building in Angas Street, which is earmarked still for demolition in a couple of years' time. And they spent something like half a million dollars relocating Norwood CIB to Adelaide CIB, the Adelaide CIB detectives did not want us in there and it was a most stressful time.

So it really was driven by, again, economic motives and bottom line – that there was probably some very valuable land that was going to be, properties that were going to be sold off.

I think it did not apply to Norwood, because the area, the police station, is still there and the patrols moved. But if they were going to try and save money they certainly

did not with our move, because it cost so much to relocate us – and this is where the rationale, we just could not believe it – but we were just told to do it and shut up.

You mention the training of new police officers, that as a ministerial policy Fort Largs was closed down for a while. That must have caused a lot of problems – and continue to cause problems – in that there must be a bit of a gap there with those trainees who never came through the system.

Well, there was. And I think now the Police Association is, you know, just saying, ‘Well, this is the reason, because we’ve had to cut back.’ And with the government the way it was, with the rubbery figures they would quote, it was just an illusion. They would get up and you would just laugh at the nightly news and somebody, one minister, would get up and say, ‘Oh, yes, but the police have got two hundred people.’ It was just rubbery figures.

So again, we are continuing with that theme that the police were a bit of a political football. If something went wrong they were blamed –

Yes.

– and obviously there was, it did become a bit of an election issue at this time, particularly in that last election, the issue of crime and rising crime and community policing. Do you think under the new Police Commissioner that we might turn the clock back, or do you think that – given that he is from Victoria, which has got a *very* strong bottom line policy – that they’ll continue to suffer further cutbacks?

Again I think Commissioner Hyde is still a puppet of the government, and he is just doing what he is told to do. There’s no consistency with the ministers and the government: they are just like a band-aid – ‘We’ll fix this with a small band-aid; we’ll put somebody here; we’ll rob Peter to pay Paul as far as police numbers are going,’ and it is causing so much stress. I know the police service has to learn to work within a budget, and it can be done, and we can cut back on some areas. But crime is rising, irrespective of how many people we put out on the streets; and if we put less there we are never going to catch up.

So morale was affected –

Oh, indeed so.

– during this period.

Yes. And morale in the last ten, fifteen years has been on the decline in the police service. You know, that may be a bad statement to say – it may be the same in other industries, I don't know, but – – –.

How did you – when you were in charge of the CIB, Norwood CIB, and covering the Stirling area – how did you try to instil in those people to sort of keep them on top? What sort of things – what was your way of managing that situation?

Well, I managed it, but I was never very successful with it because I felt like I was the mother hen, mother bird in a nest, and I had all these little birds opening their mouths wanting *more* things for me. And some people I could convince that the move – well, it was just, we just had to do it; and perhaps joining with the Adelaide CIB people, you know, we could be better at policing, at detecting and all that sort of thing – but it did not wash. I mean, it was hollow words, and I could not convince them. Because I really, in my heart of hearts, did not believe it was true.

While you were in charge of the Norwood CIB, there was the very famous Heysen case.

Indeed.

How did you crack that one?

A lot of hard work (laughs). All these paintings had been stolen from the Academy at Hahndorf and, even though people thought it was an inside job, we just could not prove it – the alarm had been turned off, all this sort of thing. One of the detectives at Stirling had got some information, and we just worked on it, and we had to negotiate with the owner of the paintings, Mr Peter Heysen, to put up some money so we could offer it to this person in Melbourne who allegedly had some of the paintings – they only surfaced about sixteen months after the actual theft because they would all been cut out of their frames – and the Heysen family employed a private investigator who just complicated matters. So this detective and myself and my boss – Chief Superintendent Johnson – we worked with undercover people in Sydney or Melbourne and we ended up getting the paintings back.

Who was responsible for taking the paintings?

It was an interstate person – I cannot recall the name straight off – but we never ever knew who actually *stole* the paintings. This fellow ended up with them, and we ended up paying something like \$45,000 to get them back. He was charged with

that, and I think he got off in the end but we got the paintings back. The insurance company played ball with us, and we just did all the negotiating ourselves.

That was something a little different –

Yes.

– when it came to policing. There was a similar – wasn't there a similar theft from Carrick Hill, too?

Yes. Yes, the Wunderlich – yes, years ago. Yes.

Also during this time, the – I believe it was the Police Commissioner – wanted you to work with the Governor, Sir Eric Neal.

Yes, yes. Commissioner Hunt asked me – or told me, actually – he wanted me to be an honorary *aide-de-camp* to the Governor, Sir Eric Neal, when he came into office. And just explaining that: the Governor has eight honorary aides, two from the Police Force – and of course when Dame Roma was there she insisted that a female *and* a male – so there was two from the police, two from the Air Force, Army and Navy – they were the Reserves from those forces – and we did all the after hours work and weekend work. We were on an eight week roster, because there were eight of us, and every eight weeks we would have to give up our own time and – – –.

Did you want to do this?

No, I did not. Did not want to be involved in all this highfaluting stuff. But the Commissioner insisted I do it, so – – –.

So what did you have to do? What were your duties?

Well, I would just accompany the Governor and Lady Neal on whatever their diary had for that week. I got to go some very nice places, and you just had to make sure you opened the door for the Governor and saluted, because you wore your uniform, and make sure that he kept his appointments. If he had to go from one appointment – say, a cocktail party – and then he was due at the opera, make sure that you left on time; and you made yourself quite unpopular sometimes with the organisers because they wanted to get into the ear of the Governor, and the Governor loved to talk so you'd have to politely move him on. And it was quite good.

Did you see another view of life?

Indeed, yes. I mixed with some very nice people.

Did you mix with some very powerful people, as well?

Oh, indeed, yes. And some people that you would not want to mix, see again as well (laughs), people who – you could tell the ones that were genuine and those that were not.

What's your personal belief about the role of the Governor? Do you think he has a role, or she has a role?

Yes, I do. Knowing the work that the Governor and Lady Neal perform for the State, and their workload is horrific, and often it is at the whim of the Premier who may ring up and say that they have a visiting dignitary, be it an Ambassador or a High Commissioner, and the Governor – and then they have to put on a luncheon or a reception. To see the Governor manipulate people around a dining room table – say if there was the High Commissioner for Kenya or something, he would invite people who were doing business with Kenya – and to see them just operate; and, you know, there's been a lot of good work come out for South Australia, a lot of industry has benefited.

What's Government House like?

Oh, it is a delight, but it takes a lot of hard work to keep it that way. You have to sit on a lot of boards, and you cannot hang a picture up unless permission is given; you cannot change the décor because there is a big plan for it; they've got a big plan for the garden; and – – –.

Did you ever stay over there in your duties?

Yes.

You did.

Yes, yes. And then, as you know, the Governor asked me to continue when I retired.

Well, let's move to your retirement: you moved from Norwood back into Adelaide. You only lasted a short time – and I gather that was a response to the fact that you weren't totally committed to this reorganisation, and maybe felt that your own personal resources were suffering a little bit – that you decided to retire. That was a big decision, Kathryn –

Yes, I –

– in 1998.

– I had always planned to retire in the year 2000, but I just thought life was passing me by; I was getting too stressed; I did not agree – as you say – I did not fully support the move; and I thought, ‘It is time for Kathryn Heather.’

So was it the fact that your heart really was not in the job any more?

No. Well, I suppose it was; but I never let that show. I just got sick of policing, and –

All the politics?

– the politics; and I do believe it is a young person’s job, and I was heading for the late fifties, and I thought, ‘I don’t need this any more.’ And, rather than grizzle and stay there and begrudgingly do a job that I was not happy in, I thought, ‘Oh, it is time for me.’

Do you feel that you were ever worn out by the blokes in the Force?

How do you mean, ‘worn out’?

Had your resolve finally been cracked, in a way – you’d been for years standing up as being one of the only few women to achieve senior rank, and it had taken extra work and extra effort and extra energy – did you feel in a sense that by your time in the 1950s that you were still having to do everything twice as hard as everybody else?

No, no. I was fully accepted for those ten years, twelve years, as a commissioned officer. And I was, you know, encouraged, and I am sure just accepted as a fellow police officer. I did not feel that *at all* in commissioned rank.

In those ten years, though, you had been given some fairly difficult and sensitive jobs which must have, I suppose, ultimately taken a toll in a sense, as you said, that you really wanted time for yourself.

Yes, but I grasped those challenges. To me it was part of the job. I just loved it. I don’t think I did any more or any less than any male police officer.

In one of your articles, I think, in the newspaper when there was a bit of – I think it was at a conference – you came out quite strongly against people who were making, women who were saying that there was discrimination in the Police Force and that – – –. You began to see this as a political issue, a bit of a beat-up, didn’t you?

Yes, I did. Because you've got to be fair. Some of the women who were standing up at that conference were complaining that they wanted preferential treatment – they wanted this and they wanted that – and they weren't prepared to give themselves. And I just stood up for the males, that I was their boss, and I could see the problems *they* were encountering. And I just think you've got to be fair. And if a woman doesn't get it on merit, I don't think she should be given an *entrée* into promotion.

Do you believe that maybe the males, too – as you mentioned there – weren't, or don't have the support network:, coping with all the kinds of changes they've had to cope with? Do you think they are adequately supported to understand some of these changes or the stresses in the job? Are there more resources devoted to women in that sense, or not?

Well, nowadays there are; but I think we are still catching up. Women *are* still catching up. Men cannot – you've got to sell it correctly, you know, to the men. The majority of men will agree, but provided that the woman is not set aside and given this preferential treatment. I think – I have got a lot of female friends in the Police Force who have been, have proved themselves, and they agree with my stance during that conference, that it has got to be done on merit. You just cannot do it because you are a woman.

Did you – did some of the women – were they a bit angry with you when you said that?

Oh, yes! Oh, I got some dreadful letters, yes! But I got some very encouraging ones as well.

It is interesting, that clash of perspectives. Were many of those women a lot younger than you?

Yes, yes. And they, some of them, the majority had married and had babies, and they wanted to come back after they had the babe, and that's right. But they wanted to step into the area they had left but did not want to work, did not want to face the angry man with the gun in a patrol car, wanted a cushy job in the back where they could perhaps lecture to schools, and still wanted the same promotion. And that's just not on.

You are very much an egalitarian woman, aren't you?

(laughs) Yes. Yes.

Now, I would like you to read your citation. You were given the Australian Police Medal on the 26th of January 1998. I think that was only ten days after you officially retired. It is a wonderful tribute to your services to the Police Force: maybe it would be nice for you to read that citation.

All right. I received it on the 6th of May 1998, and my sister came down from Brisbane, which was lovely. It said:

‘For distinguished service, to Chief Inspector Kathryn Heather Finnigan. Chief Inspector Finnigan has served in the South Australian Police Department since 1964 in general duties, specialist criminal investigations, internal investigations and country divisional postings. Not only has she performed her duties in a competent manner, but has applied herself to other aspects of the policing service, thus promoting camaraderie and *esprit-de-corps* during some very sensitive times. Her own strength of character and loyalty to the police service and the wider community through her law enforcement activities is commendable.’

What does the award mean to you, Kathryn?

Oh, it is another medal to wear! Oh, no, it was a great honour; and when the Commissioner told me that I had been nominated for it – and I knew that before I retired, and he really wanted me to stay in until after that, and I said, no, I had made up my mind – but it was a great honour. And, you know, a lot of police get this Australian Police Medal every year, but not many women. And there have been several have got it now, and I just saw it as a medal to say ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’

Have many received it in South Australia, or is that mainly interstate?

No, there’s been about two others: one prior to me and one after. So it was good to know that whoever nominates you – and I think it comes from the senior executive group of the Police Department – that they thought it was my turn.

You also have received another medal as well, haven’t you? Or award?

Oh, yes; I got the Jean Harris Award in June of that same year, and it is only the second one given to a woman in South Australia: the first was the lady who did Meals on Wheels.

Doris Taylor?

Yes; so she was the first recipient, I believe. And this just says:

‘In recognition to Kathryn Heather Finnigan for outstanding service to the development and progress of women in society.’

So that was a thrill.

And who was that given by, Kathryn?

Two Rotary Clubs, Flagstaff Hill and Lockleys, approached me jointly, because I do give a lot of lectures as a guest speaker and some of them knew of my expertise, I suppose, and decided to give me this.

That’s actually been another aspect of you – you haven’t actually stopped since you’ve retired, have you?

Yes; and I also lecture to the University of Adelaide School of Management about five times a year as – they put me up as a role model, and women from all over Australia come on these courses. And yes, I have been doing that for several years.

What sort of things do you talk about in the lectures?

Just my life; and – – –

‘Just my life’, she says (laughter).

And how women can perhaps get on in their own careers, and I just explain some of the things that happened to me, the discrimination, the harassment, the good things, and just my way of dealing with situations.

How important has it been for you to have a strong sense of self? Because you seem to be a fairly composed person.

Oh, I have my moments (laughs). I have always had to believe in myself because, you know, as we’ve said on these tapes: coming from the background I did I was determined that there was always something out there for me to better myself, to keep striving to do the best I could.

You’ve also maintained a strong belief in the goodness of human nature, unlike some people or women who may have experienced similar things who end up being a little bit cynical about life. You still have a strong sense of goodness in people, as though that almost overrides the bad things.

Yes. It may appear that way now, but it was very conflicting during my early days of policing. And I think my religious beliefs helped me there. I often say they have confused my personal life (laughs) to a great degree; but yes, I think if I hadn’t had

my religious beliefs to fall back on I don't think I would have survived. I am not a real goody-goody Christian, but there is that strong belief that the people we dealt with in the police service was a small minority, but there's just so many happy, lovely people out there.

You are a practising Catholic –

Yes.

– and, as you say, that's caused you some confusion.

Yes.

It must have been – given the strong religious beliefs that underpin the Catholic Church – it must have been hard for you to reconcile some of those conflicts during your life.

Yes. For example, if a girl had been raped and as a result of the rape was pregnant, often in those early days the mother would bring the girl in and say, 'Well, look, should she have an abortion?' I mean, it was just such a terrible decision. And I mean you could never make it for an individual, they had to do it themselves. Where I would, myself, believe why should this child be brought into the world as a result of this man jumping out from the bushes? I mean, these are the ones I am talking about; not the next door neighbour's children getting together. But that was always a big conflict; and euthanasia and death and things like that.

I was going to say, touching on – there's some very critical issues that we've looked at during these discussions; and one would be the area of suicide and euthanasia.

Yes.

How did you kind of remain dispassionate and not judgmental in those situations?

Well, you'd always – if they would ask you your opinion, you would give it; but you'd always have to say, 'In the end it is your decision.' And I mean it is hard to deal with these issues, this conflict – I mean, within my own mind. I mean, I sway one way or the other. It is a bit like the Republic or the Monarchy at the moment: I don't know which way I am going to go. In the end you just hope you do the right thing.

But I suppose you would say then that your religion's given you a set of beliefs against which you can measure some of these situations, and it is not simply black and white.

Oh, no. And I have changed my mind about a lot of religious things too, and had great arguments with the religious about it. I remember a priest telling me I was too hard on myself. I don't know. I am not a great, I am not a good person. I mean, I am a good person – I try to live a good life – but doing these interviews I think there's just so many other people out there who do good things, and have had an interesting life. It is just that I have had a lot of publicity, I think.

Maybe you haven't had enough publicity! (laughter) Finally, if you could change your life, would you have changed it?

No. I would do exactly the same again. I loved every minute of the Police Department. There were days when I hated it and, you know, instances which caused me pain; but I would recommend it to any woman to take up a police career. It is getting harder, I know, but I have been very proud to be a part of South Australian police history. And I would do it all again.

So you don't regret that the sacrifices that you've had to make, in the sense of not having a family or children, it has still been all worth it?

Oh, yes, definitely. Do it all again.

You have said one or two times recently that it has been at a great personal cost.

Yes. My personal relationships with men have never been that successful. Work always intruded on it. Shift work. And – I don't know – I am still striving for Mr Perfect, and I have been told many times he is not out there. But I have had my share of lovely men, lovely relationships, and no, I cannot complain.

So it is a new phase in your life now.

Yes; it is going to be bowls, entertaining, meeting new people. I have just got so many lovely friends, it is time to catch up with them.

Thank you, Kathryn.

TAPE ENDS