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**OH 693**

Full transcript of an interview with

**ANNA (NAN) MORRISON**

in April 2004

by Anna Pope

Recording available on CD

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

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

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

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

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**Series of interviews with Nan Morrison recorded by Anna Pope on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 18<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 for The State Library of South Australia Oral History Collection.**

TAPE 1 SIDE A

**(A baby, James Pope, is present in the room and vocalises frequently. There is distortion in speaking voices, which may be due to high recording volume or over-proximity to microphones.)**

**Today is the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2004, this is tape one, an interview with Nan Morrison taken by Anna Pope, and Nan Morrison is particularly going to be talking about Harriet Stirling, Nan being one of her nieces, and we will talk more about the family relationships during this interview.**

**Harriet Stirling was born in 1878 and died in 1943. She was the oldest of seven children of Edward Charles and Jane Stirling, *née* Gilbert. And Edward Charles Stirling himself was a great scholar, and a lot of this would have rubbed off on Harriet, as we will discuss further with Aunt Nan. (baby coughs)**

**So firstly I'd like to ask my Aunt Nan what she remembers, that she knows about, of Harriet's early life.**

Well, Aunt Harrie was very close to my mother, who was the second daughter of Edward and Jane Stirling, and so we used to hear all sorts of stories from both Aunt Harrie and my mother about their childhood. Aunt Harrie seems to have been a rather adventurous child, and I remember the story that she once, for some reason, ran away from home. And she left a note to say that she had –

[ROBERT H MORRISON]        Hello there.

[INTERVIEWEE] – (laughs) shh! – run away from home for some reason, and she left a note to say 'I have run away from home'. And she ran, and she got as far as the end of the drive and met a cow, so she ran home again and took the note and nobody ever found it. (laughs) So that was the extent of her departure from home, nobody knew she had run!

**Do you know how old she was at that time?**

No, I imagine she must have been about eight, something like that. And she had a great friend, Ethel – two friends: Ethel Cooper and Emmie Carr. Emmie Carr was particularly close to Aunt Harrie. She and her sister spent a lot of time at St Vigean's, because their parents had died when they were children and they were being brought up by their grandmother, and they spent many holidays with the Stirlings at St Vigean's. They were almost like part of the family. And although Aunt Emmie, as I called her – she was my godmother – and Aunt Harrie were three years apart they were very, very close friends and always remained so. But when they were children, when they were old enough to go away from the property, they used to go into the tunnels of the railways and stand against the side of the tunnel while the trains went through and thought this was very exciting. But it scared the living daylight out of the train drivers and they complained, and grandfather was asked to deal with the matter so they didn't do it again.

As far as schooling was concerned, they had education at home with governesses, they had a big schoolroom and some of the neighbouring children used to join them. And while they had Fraulein Düring – she was really Baroness von Düring but she didn't use her title – when Miss Düring was there they had very good teaching, but she left to be married – I'm not sure what year, it could have been when Mother and Aunt Harrie were about ten and eleven, or perhaps a little older – she left to be married and became Mrs Day. I still remember her. She used to live in those homes in Prescott Terrace – they're still there, they're little units for people who didn't have much money, because when she was with us she didn't have much – and she lived there. My family all kept in close touch with her. But after that the governesses were not of a very (pause) educational standard, shall we say, and Aunt Harrie, who was not interested in being taught, used to invent all sorts of games, one of which was that everyone should put their rubbers<sup>1</sup> on the bustle of the governess, and the person whose rubber stayed there longest would win the game! (laughs) So this was a great distraction. Another was she got herself wrapped up as a parcel and put on top of a cupboard – I don't know what age she was then – and the governess, who must have been short-sighted, went the next lesson without noticing this wriggling parcel on top

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<sup>1</sup> Rubbers = erasers.

of the cupboard (laughs) until finally she did notice and Aunt Harrie was unwrapped and brought down. But she was not interested in schooling at all.

And when Aunt Anna Gilbert, Grandmother Stirling's sister, who lived in England and had her other nieces at Cheltenham Ladies' College, she was very aware of the difference of education that the Stirling family were having, and her other nieces, the Fergusons, and she wrote to Grandfather and said that she would like to educate one of her nieces at Cheltenham Ladies' College, which was one of the leading schools at that time, that and I think it was the London Girls' – I've forgotten what it was called, but Miss Beale and Miss Bus was the Headmistress of the one in London – they were very well-known in the education world, and Aunt Harrie was offered – as she was the eldest, she was offered the chance to go to Cheltenham Ladies' College for three years, but she refused. She didn't want to go, she wasn't interested. And so Mother, being the second child – she was fourteen – she was asked whether she would like to go, and my mother said it was a terrible decision because it would mean being away three years from the family, but she was very aware of how lacking the education was and Grandfather wrote a letter accepting and gave it to my mother to post, and she could decide herself whether she would go or not. And from there my mother walked round the Stirling Post Office, and when she'd posted the letter she would have done anything to have got it back, but she didn't feel she could go back on it. So Mother went off to Cheltenham Ladies' College and Aunt Harrie stayed with the rather indifferent governesses that they had.

I don't know the names of any of them until Miss Schroeder came, and she had Aunt Nina and Edward, the elder son. She taught them, and I think by that time Aunt Harrie was well past because she would have been ten years older than Aunt Nina, she would be well past the schoolroom, so her education was really more what she learnt from her father and mother, I think, than what she learnt from those later governesses.

**And just to clarify a few things: so your grandfather, Nan refers to her grandfather, who is of course Edward Charles Stirling, the father of Harriet, and Harriet's sisters were Anna, being the second child, and she was of course Nan's mother, and then Mary – no, and then Jeannie –**

Jeannie –

**– then Mary –**

– Mary –

– **then Nina** –

– Nina, Edward and Gilbert.

– **that’s right. And Edward and Gilbert, unfortunately, both died young.**

Yes, Edward was killed in an accident when he was eight, and Gilbert died of some – you know, one of the childish illnesses babies used to die of in those days, when he was a few months old.

**And as Harrie was a lot older than all of her siblings, did she have a lot to do with their bringing up?**

Well, there were nurses and governesses. I don’t know that she had so much ‘bringing up’, but she was terribly interested in them, and there’s a lovely letter when Aunt Nina was born that you may have seen, that her father wrote to her and Aunt Harrie replies, and it shows a lovely relationship between the father and the daughter, which I think is very nice. But she *loved* babies, from an early stage, she just loved babies, and there’s a lovely photograph of her nursing – not nursing, but beside the cradle of Aunt Nina as a child, and you can see the loving intensity on her face.  
(laughs)

**I think we’ll include a copy of the letter with the oral history so that it’s there with this record –**

Yes.

– **because you’ve shown it to me and it is indeed a lovely letter.**

Yes, and her father’s – it’s a very amusing letter, she is begging to go – because the baby was born in town and they were up in the Hills, and she’s begging to go down, that she’ll ‘be very good’ and she ‘won’t be a nuisance’ (laughs) and she’d love to see the baby!

**So you said that she didn’t learn as much from her governesses after Baroness von Düring left, and that she probably learnt more from her parents. What sort of things do you think she would have learnt from her parents?**

Well, Aunt Harrie, for the rest of her life, had a love of the garden. And her father, of course, was a tremendous gardener and he established the garden at St Vigean’s, importing many of the trees and the shrubs, and he was the first person to import

rhododendrons to South Australia. And Aunt Harrie had a great love of gardens, and when she herself was older, at St Vigean's, as there were four gardeners, she used to have not much opportunity to garden, but she had her own fern garden which was a sort of shadehouse behind the old stables. And I can remember going with her while she watered the ferns, and she obviously was very interested in her own little garden. And later, when St Vigean's was sold and she bought her own house, Brothock, she had a beautiful garden there and spent a great deal of time in it.

**And so she was particularly interested in – she had ferns, as you said, and at Brothock she would have had a much more varied garden, of course.**

Oh, yes. She had the most beautiful trees and rhododendrons and bulbs, all sorts of plants – it was a picture, and when everyone went to see her we used to walk round the garden with her and she'd point out the latest thing that she'd done. And she was extremely devoted to that garden. And when I was older – when she had her own house at Brothock I used to stay with her there quite often. She had two nieces, Judith Woollard, Aunt Jeannie's daughter, and I were the only two nieces – she had five nephews – and I think she had a special bond with other women and girls, because she used to have Judith and me to stay quite often.

By the time she had Brothock, of course, we were – that must have been when I was about nineteen when she built Brothock, because my grandmother had died when I was nineteen. She died the same week as George V, because I can remember everybody in the city was wearing black armbands for George V, and I felt it was very suitable because they also stood for my grandmother, (laughs) to whom we were very attached. (break in recording)

**So how did it come that Aunt Harrie was able to build Brothock? And chose to leave the house? Do you remember how that all happened?**

Well, St Vigean's was a fairly big house, it was built to hold a family of seven children, a governess, nurses, four maids, and it was a very large house, and for a single woman would take a great deal of upkeep. It also had six and a half acres of garden. So Aunt Harrie wanted to build her own, smaller house, and so Grandfather had a block of land on the corner of Birch Road, the upper end of Birch Road, just near Ayers Hill Road, and so that land was retained and that was also where the water supply for St Vigean's came from because it had a wonderful spring. So Aunt Harrie built her house on that, and it was a house where she could have friends to stay, but it

was manageable with one maid, whereas the other one had (laughs) four maids, and took a lot of upkeep. It was a two-story, very big house. It's still there.

**So what happened to St Vigean's after Aunt Harrie left?**

Well, when my grandmother died, of course, it was just left in the estate – it wasn't left to anybody, it was just left to the whole family – and there was a great deal of discussion about if anybody could live there, but there was no-one who could really have managed it as things were, because it was the Depression and [it] took a lot of upkeep, and it was always hoped that the Botanic Gardens might take it because it was really like a botanic garden, but of course at that time nobody had much money and so it was decided to sell it, and that's when Aunt Harrie built Brothock and moved from St Vigean's, and it was sold to Romilly Harry, who was a lawyer, who had four boys, and he lived there a good many years. Then he cut up the garden and sold off blocks for building, and then eventually he sold St Vigean's house itself and went to live in a house at the bottom of the garden.

**Do you remember which year this all happened, that St Vigean's was sold and ---.**

It must have been about '37 – '36 I think was when my grandmother died, the beginning of '36 I *think* – '35, '36, '37 is when all this happened, when my grandmother died, when decisions had to be made about the house and garden, and Aunt Harrie's future very much was in the forefront of everybody's mind. And everyone wanted her – she had lived as St Vigean's all her life and I remember the three sisters who still lived in Adelaide were very concerned that she should have the house and all the things from St Vigean's that she needed before anybody else had their say of what they had. So the house when she built it at Brothock was very attractive and it had a huge entrance hall with a big window at the end looking out on her – I think it was an oak tree, a beautiful tree, and it just looked out on that, this lovely view down the passage. And she had one maid, who did the cooking and the housework.

**And the house Brothock is no longer there, is that correct?**

Oh, no, it's there.

**Oh, it is there, sorry.**



Oh yes, yes, it's very much there, you can see it as you drive past.

**Oh, good.**

I'm not sure that all the garden is there, I've got an idea some building may have taken place on part of the garden. It was quite a big garden, including its own water supply.

**One of the things for which your Aunt Harrie was particularly noted was her joint founding of the Nursing Mothers' Association, which she did with Helen Mayo. Can you tell me how she came to know Helen Mayo?**

As far as I know they'd known each other all their lives, because the Mayo family and the Stirling family and the Gilbert family, they were all close friends. And Aunt Harrie and Helen Mayo were very close friends all their lives, and they were both extremely interested in children and their welfare, and I think the education of mothers because often people having children, as I know only too well, (laughs) don't know very much about looking after them when they first become mothers. And they started, I think the School for Mothers first. I may say that although Aunt Harrie didn't marry, I don't think she really wanted to marry. I think she was one of the very happy people who live on their own. Although she loved company, she had lots of people to stay – but she once said to Mother and Aunt Jeannie, who had to hurry away from some family function because I think I had measles and Judith had something else, and Aunt Harrie said to them, 'I hug myself when I see what you have to do with your children'! She loved children, but she liked her independence, and she liked having them when she wanted them, really. So that's why she used to have us to stay.

**And so some of the practical ways in which she showed how much she loved children included the founding of the association that we were just talking about, which has now become the Nursing Mothers' Association.**

It was ..... the School for Mothers –

**School for Mothers, and then the –**

– well, I think it's become the – what is it called? – the Mothers and Babies has actually become the – it's got another name now.

**It's the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association.**

Yes, it's now become – I think I saw something that you had in your folder.

**I believe it's the Nursing Mothers' Association now.**

No, I think that's a different thing. That's one run by mothers, isn't it? I think it was the – I did see something in your folder which was the teenagers, I think all of the care of children. (sound of handling papers) I'm afraid I can't see where it is here. It was when I was looking through it earlier.

**Well, we can confirm that later, easily.**

Yes.

**So what I was wondering is what you remember about the time when she and Helen Mayo decided to found the –**

That was before I was born, it was well before I was well before I was born.

**– the School for Mothers.**

Yes. I wasn't born till 1917, and she must have begun this about 1909, was it?

**I think it was 1907.**

Nineteen hundred and seven. So that was long before I was born. When I knew her she was very involved with the Mothers' and Babies', and there was a tremendous number of well-known people, like Lady Mawson, the Mayos of course, and another doctor – a lot of people really used to raise money for them, like Lady de Crespigny, all sorts of people like these who worked for them, but the actual Mothers' and Babies' Association was – well, it was started with a School for Mothers, I think, first of all about 1907, and that went on to become the Mothers' and Babies'.

**Yes. I think it was renamed in the 1920s.**

In 1927 it became the Mothers' and Babies' *Health* Association.

**Yes.**

In 1909 it was a School for Mothers, and in 1907 it was just, I think, some classes.

**Yes. I think there was a committee formed –**

Yes.

**– to try and found – – –.**

Yes. And she was on the State Children's Council in 1907, and later became the President. Her father, Edward Stirling, had been the first President of the State

Children's Council, and then she was a member from 1907. So the welfare of children was always very close to her heart.

### **So how did they operate in the early days?**

I don't really know, except they used to meet I think in North Terrace somewhere, and the people interested used to meet, and they developed – from the central group they developed regional groups where mothers and babies could get help. And I know they had the east-west train that went across the Nullarbor, there used to be a special train and the Mothers' and Babies' used to visit once a month so the people in the Outback could come down to the train on a certain day, and I believe that the train driver used to find it hard to get away because the nurses would be on the outside talking to the mothers and he'd say, 'I'm leaving' and he used to start to draw the train away very, very slowly, so the nurse would have to chase after it and get on! (laughs) But they were in the country, they were in all the suburbs later, because I know when I had my daughter in 1941 I remember soon after I came out of hospital a Mother's and Babies' nurse arriving at the door to see if everything was in control, and every week you could go to the centre and have the baby weighed if you needed to, and ask for any advice of rashes and this sort of thing. You were told if you needed a doctor or not! (laughs) I can't really say how that got going, but I also don't know how the Foster Mothers' Association came about, but Aunt Harrie was very much in the forefront of that. My cousin Judith thinks that she was the founder of the Foster Mothers – I don't know about that, but that's what she thinks – and this was where children, instead of being in orphanages, when it was thought more suitable, they were out with foster families. And as a young child I remember going around in her car visiting the foster families – I used to be left in the car while Aunt Harrie went in and talked to the mothers and the children concerned. I used to long to go in too, but of course (laughs) that was not my place, I had to stay in the car!

I also remember being taken down to Mareeba Hospital which was begun it must have been in the 1920s – I'm not sure when Mareeba began, but that was a hospital for babies because the Adelaide Children's Hospital did not take in children under the age of two for fear of infection. So Aunt Harrie and Helen Mayo started the Mareeba Babies' Hospital –

### **In 1914.**

– well, that was before I was born. They started that so that babies should get proper medical help in those first two years of life.

**Yes, that was a wonderful thing, actually, because of course babies weren't admitted into the public hospitals until they were two –**

No, no.

**– which meant that there was no specially organised hospital in which they could be treated and they were generally treated at home. (baby cries)**

So that quite a lot of babies actually died of infant illnesses in those two years.

**Can you tell me what you remember of going to visit Mareeba?**

Well, Mareeba was a big old house at Woodville, as far as I remember, and Aunt Harrie took me down there when I must have been about thirteen or fourteen, I think. Perhaps I was younger, but I think I was that because it was probably when I was beginning to think about what I wanted to do. And she took me down to Mareeba to see the baby hospital. And I can remember being absolutely fascinated there with children in cots. I can't remember what they had the matter with them, but there were some Aboriginal children and some white children, they were all suffering from something that needed careful attention, because before this of course, before the hospital was opened, they would only have been nursed at home if parents couldn't afford a private hospital. And the atmosphere was light and airy and I remember it being a happy place, really. They didn't seem to be crying babies, they were all looked after with loving attention, and Aunt Harrie was welcomed very much by the sisters in charge. And I can't remember when her – I don't know whether her association with Mareeba ever stopped. Well, certainly her interest in it remained, she used to talk about it a lot.

After Mareeba, of course, Torrens House was started, which was where mothers and babies would go to stay when they needed help or were not quite ready to go home when they came out of hospital after the baby was born. And some of the mothers and babies who came into Mareeba also were those who were not able to establish feeding at home and they had a week or two weeks there under supervision till they could get the baby stabilised and then they could go home. It was a most wonderful service for people who were having difficulties – an absolute lifeline, really.

**Yes, and Torrens House remains a marvellous resource for women who've had babies.**

I think now it is just open from Mondays till Thursdays for the mothers – I know that they are closed at the weekends, but I know that the people can go in but I don't think you stay there now, I think you go in for the day?

**Oh, some people can stay there –**

You can stay.

**– I know of several mothers who've – – –.**

But I know that then they go home for the weekend because there's no-one – it doesn't stay open on the weekend.

**Yes, that's right.**

Before it used to be open seven days a week and you stayed the full time, somebody on duty all the time.

**Well, it's certainly a fantastic facility and I know many women who've been helped greatly by it.**

Yes, yes.

**So essentially, with regards to Mareeba, I believe that – – –.**

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

– – – problems and so on, and they were dealt with by the Committee. But I can't really tell you more than that.

**And how was the hospital financed?**

I don't know. I simply don't know. I know money was raised, but whether that was for extras – it must have been funded, I should think, by the government. I don't know, though.

**And initially probably by a lot of donations.**

I should think so, but again that's guessing on my part.

**So Aunt Harrie herself was probably one of the donors, perhaps –**

Oh, I should think so.

**– and involved with a lot of fundraising as well.**

Well, I think a lot of Adelaide people were interested in fundraising for Mareeba.

**And at the same time she was working in fundraising for the School for Mothers, which later became the Nursing Mothers' Health Association, I presume.**

Well, I think that the Nursing Mothers, from what I can remember, was a sort of offshoot, and was really started by mothers who were very keen to breastfeed their babies – I mean, certainly Mothers' and Babies' supported that, but a lot of mothers had so much problems that the Mothers' and Babies' were also involved in finding the suitable food for babies that couldn't be fed by their mothers. I think the Nursing Mothers was an offshoot.

**Sorry, I said it the wrong way – I meant to say the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association.**

Oh, yes.

**So the School for Mothers, she was involved with –**

Oh, I see.

**– I think that was funded originally mostly by donations and subscriptions.**

I should think so. I know it started very early in the piece, long before I was born.

**Well, it was officially founded in 1909, I believe.**

Yes.

**And I think that Helen Mayo and Harriet Stirling had worked towards its foundation from at least 1907.**

That's when Aunt Harrie joined the Council for Children, Children's Council.

**So the State Children's Council is another thing in which she was involved, and I think her father was actually the first President, is that correct?**

Yes, he was the first President, and he was President for two years before it was taken on by somebody else. And then Aunt Harrie became the President in 1922.

**Right.**

So she followed her father in it.

**And I believe that the State Children's Council was founded by Catherine Helen Spence and Harriet Stirling, jointly. What did they actually do?**

The Council –

**The State Children's Council.**

– no, that was founded by her father, Edward Stirling.

**Well, I understood that he was the first President.**

Yes, but it was founded – I don't think Aunt Harrie actually – – –.

**Well, I had some information that said that she –**

Ah!

**– she was, that Catherine Helen Spence formed the State Children's Council with support from Harriet Stirling, and that they appointed her father, who was a prominent figure, as its first President.**

Yes. Well, I certainly know that Catherine Helen Spence was – I think that she formed it with support by a lot of people, yes.

**And do you know what the State Children's Council was actually designed to do?**

Well, I think it was for the protection and education of children. I don't really know, I'm afraid.

**And one of the things I believe that they did was they had orphan wards of state who were looked after, and I think that might have been the beginning of this fostering – – –.**

Yes. Children were taken into orphan homes, and often it was far better for them to be in a normal family environment. And, as I mentioned before, my cousin Judith thinks that Aunt Harrie was the founder of the foster plan, but I don't know anything about that. But certainly she was involved in it from the beginning. And I can remember, as I mentioned before, going with her when she was visiting the foster parents and children in the Hills, but I would be left in the car while she talked to parents about their problems that they needed, and so on. Now, I know that she took one girl, when she was fourteen, who was not very bright, she became a kitchen maid at St Vigean's, her name was Alice. Alice was very loving and Aunt Harrie used to try and keep a motherly eye on her, but she wasn't at St Vigean's very long before she left to have a baby, and she was in foster care. And I think she had three more children at least, when I last heard. It was very difficult with children who were really sub-normal who were taken advantage of by all sorts of people. And those

children, of course, also came into the care of the Children's Board, and went on into either orphan homes or, again, the foster care.

Another boy who was left an orphan by his parents' who'd come from overseas, and there was absolutely nobody to look after him in Australia, he became a ward of the state and he had money, and Aunt Harrie became his guardian and he went to Scotch College and went on to become a leading figure in the forestry industry in South Australia, and did extremely well.

**And his name was ---?**

Clifford Bruin Smith.

**And she helped in very practical ways with the Children's Council as well, because she used to have children to visit her at St Vigean's and ---.**

Yes, well, every Christmas she gave a party for the foster children, and it was when the strawberries grew at St Vigean's – they used to grow the most wonderful strawberries – and I can remember Aunt Nina helping Aunt Harrie set out the tables on the veranda at St Vigean's. They looked beautiful, with flowers and decorations, balloons and everything for a Christmas party for the foster children, who used to arrive in buses. And Judith and I were just onlookers, we were not part of the party. We used to watch and be envious of this wonderful party! (laughs) But Aunt Harrie used to put everything into it to make it a really lovely occasion for the children, helped by her sisters, because they were a close family and they all supported Aunt Harrie in what she did.

**So apart from the yearly Christmas extravaganza, were there other times when she'd take children personally under her wing and look after them?**

I don't know. She used to visit orphan homes, whether she took the children out ---. I think she would have been very careful about taking one and not others, I think she would have visited them all. I don't think, apart from these two who had nobody else – Clifford, who was very bright, and Alice, who was sub-normal – I don't know that she had any others that she took any particular individual attention, I think it was the overall care of the children.

As far as taking out, she used to take out her nieces and nephews, (laughs) we used to be taken out. She had a car with a dickie seat, in which one of the joys was to ride in the dickie seat. But she was very good to her nieces and nephews.



**So she spent a lot of quality time with you and took you out.**

Oh, we used to stay with her.

**Yes.**

I think particularly her nieces. She always felt that women had a harder row to hoe than men, and when she died, for instance, she left £600 to each of her nephews, but she left £800 to her two nieces! I felt we were slightly favoured in that regard, because she thought we needed it more.

**So do you think that some of her beliefs in the way in which women were treated in society came from her parents?**

Well, I think always – she would have seen the struggle for suffrage for women, and of course it was – although Grandfather introduced the Bill for women's suffrage in 1885 or '6, it wasn't passed until 1894, by which time she would have been well in her teens. I remember there was a long account in the paper about somebody saying that they were sure – this paper article said they were sure that the pressure from his daughters would have made him introduce the Suffrage for Women Bill into Parliament, but by that time Aunt Harrie must have been six (laughs) and her sisters were younger so I don't think there would have been any pressure, it was something that he himself felt very strongly. He felt very, very strongly about education for women, and that's why he so regretted – he told Ethel Cooper how much he regretted the fact that his daughters hadn't had a better education in their teens after Miss von Düring left, because some of the governesses really were not really up to teaching at that level. And that's why my mother, of course, went to Cheltenham in England.

And he was strongly in favour of women's rights, he was strongly in favour of women doing Medicine, and when the medical degree started, Grandfather was one of the founders of it. There was never any embargo on women. In fact, a woman entered the Medical School in the second year of its – after two years of its actually being founded, the School being founded, so that women were able to do Medicine. And this is something he felt very strongly about, that women should be educated by other women in medical matters, because he said men stuck together and often didn't inform their patients about what was the matter with them. He was terribly upset, my mother told me, about a wedding that took place of a young woman who married a man who had syphilis, and she of course would know nothing about this, nor did she

know what was the matter with her when she got ill herself. Because they were male doctors only, no woman doctor to tell her, because the men would stick by the husband. And so he was terribly keen on women doing Medicine.

**And probably having daughters would have made him very aware of the fact that they were not going to be educated as well as young men he saw around him, and –**

Yes, yes.

**– that possibly increased his concern.**

Well, he must have been concerned. He was a very – Aunt Harrie and my mother and her sisters, they were given a great deal of freedom. My mother said that they were given freedom, he trusted them, and they would talk to him. I don't know how much education he gave them on sexual matters, I don't know if he did, but he certainly was somebody that my mother said they could go to if they had problems and he would help to sort them out. My grandmother was wonderful with 'tea and sympathy', but I think if you wanted advice you'd go to Grandfather! (laughs)

**Okay.**

That is the background in which the children grew up, with women's rights very much to the fore, so Aunt Harrie would have absorbed that, very much, even if she (laughs) wasn't absorbing much in the schoolroom.

**And Edward Charles Stirling was obviously very supportive of her work with children because he –**

Oh, yes.

**– was the first President of the State Children's Council which was founded with Catherine Helen Spence.**

Yes.

**And presumably – getting back to what we were talking about with regards to Harrie's work towards bettering the position of women in society – in a sense she's carrying on from a lot of her father's teachings by doing that.**

Yes.

**And was she involved at all with the Women's Suffrage Movement?**

I don't know. Because that would have been going on – you see, it started when she was – well, she was born in '78, so by the time she was twenty women *had* the vote.

They got the vote, you see, when she was only sixteen, before she could vote. So I doubt if she had much; she would have *heard* a lot about it, but I don't know that she would have been involved in it because it was so very much on the way and about to become law.

**And nevertheless, though, even after women had the vote, there were still lot of things that women had to fight for –**

Yes.

**– and more equality that they – – –.**

Yes. Well, I don't know how much she worked for, apart from the babies and the education of mothers. But of course she started the School for Mothers I think it was in 1907, by which time she would have been twenty-nine.

**Yes.**

They did a lot of travelling, you see. In her twenties she was travelling a lot. And she was taken by her father, when he went to collect Mother from school he took Aunt Harrie with him, so that would have been when Mother was seventeen and Aunt Harrie eighteen, and he then took them on the Continent, they went to France and Germany, I don't know where else, but I know they went travelling. And I remember it was on the ship, it was a French ship, and Aunt Harrie was supposed to be using her French, and somebody asked where her grandfather was and she gave the wrong word because a smoking room and a manure heap I think are very close – one is *fumière* and one is *fumier* – and she put him in the wrong one! (laughs) So I don't know how good her French was.

**Well, perhaps because of her education she had fairly indifferent French.**

I know they had very good German, because they had a German governess, and they could speak German fluently. I know my mother and Aunt Harrie and Aunt Jeannie all spoke German very fluently. I don't know about the others.

**So whilst in England did she have anything – and in Europe – did she have anything to do with visiting any hospitals over there or anything like that?**

I don't know. I think it was mainly visiting family, because all Grandfather's sisters, all five of them, were all in England, and her mother's two sisters were in England, I

think. She spent a lot of time just visiting her relations and going on the Continent and so on. But I don't really know about visiting hospitals.

**And so obviously when she came back to South Australia she had friendships with Catherine Helen Spence and Helen Mayo – – –.**

Catherine Helen Spence had been friends with her grandparents, Edward and Harriet Stirling of Strathalbyn. She was a great friend of theirs, and also of Grandfather's and Granny's.

**And so it was through these connections that they managed to brainstorm and actually form some of these wonderful institutions –**

It must have been, yes.

**– for helping children and mothers.**

Because they would have had many friends. See, the Barr Smiths were friends, the Elders were friends, there were a lot of friends with money who were supporting good causes.

**So essentially Aunt Harrie's role was as an administrator and trying to make things happen, and I mean obviously she didn't have the medical qualifications but she had the care and the concern.**

Yes, the background from her father, who was a doctor, of course.

**Yes. And so, medically, presumably she wasn't actually able to actually –**

No.

**– help look after people, it was more in the organization.**

No, no. She just had that feeling for it, and of course Dr Helen Mayo provided the medical side.

**So is there anything else that you remember about her work with the foster children and the State Children's Council?**

I know that she used to go and visit the Edwardstown Boys' Home, which I think was a – I think that was an orphanage for boys as well as I think they took boys who had been in the Reformatory when they – whether they were the orphans as well – – –. But I know there were boys there who had come from the Reformatory. There used to be all sorts of problems that Aunt Harrie used to be called on to help, advise on and so on, but that's all I know. I was taken down to some function of the Edwardstown

Boys' Home and I don't remember very much about it except the boys who'd be kept fairly regimented at that stage by their master, their schoolmaster, because it was school too. It was a school as well as a home. I don't remember – later on, of course, there was a – I was on the committee of the Farr House, Julia Farr House Orphan Home for girls, I was on the committee of that for some time, and I don't know whether she had ever been involved with that. That was started by Julia Farr, who was the wife of one of the bishops, so she must have been involved in the old days, too. I was on the committee long after Aunt Harrie had died.

**Okay, so you're not aware of her having necessarily been involved in that, but you just wonder whether she might have been. Is that what you're saying? You're not sure whether she was involved with the founding of Julia Farr?**

No, I don't know. I think it was Julia Farr herself who did it. Whether she had anything to do with it I don't know.

**She was obviously a person who could see a lot of needs in society, particularly regarding health. Now, just getting back to the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association, when she and Helen Mayo founded the School for Mothers, as it was originally known, is there anything else that you remember about how that was actually founded and what work she did for them, apart from working on the committee?**

Well, I don't know, because that was long before I was born, and so I don't really know what her part was in it. Because I was later on the scene, you see, it was well in existence when I was born.

**What do you remember her actually doing when she was taking you out and about and you were staying with her and so forth? How much involvement do you remember her having with the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association?**

Oh, well, she was always going to committee meetings or being rung up about them. I don't remember the details because she wouldn't have told me, you know. She was just very involved all the time. It was part of her life, it was part of her life, and we were part of her life, and so it was sometimes we went with her and (laughs) often we didn't.

**I guess I was just trying to get an idea on how much work it was maintaining these things as well as founding them. I mean, obviously she founded them.**

She was very involved all the time.

**So involved with the Mareeba Babies' Hospital –**

Yes.

**– the State Children’s Council –**

Yes.

**– and of course with the Mothers’ and Babies’ Health Association.**

Yes.

**Were there any other bodies or associations that you remember her being closely involved with?**

I can’t think of any, not offhand.

**Is there anything else that she was interested in or involved in, apart from – I mean, obviously these would have taken up a lot of her time.**

It took up a lot of her time, and for a lot of the time she lived at home with her mother, until her mother died. And so some time was taken up with her mother, of course. And there was a distant cousin, Philip Darke, who was a clergyman, and he came out to Queensland as a ‘bush brother’, and when he came on holiday he often came down to St Vigean’s and so he would be there and Aunt Harrie seemed to be very good to him. But he didn’t have any money, I think, bush brothers weren’t paid much. He was very interested in books, as Aunt Harrie was. He was a great reader and they used to share books in common. (laughs) I’m sorry if I’m a bit distracted – Timothy’s on the floor!

**We have a baby [James Pope] on the floor, in case anyone’s wondering.**

Which is very suitable for a Mothers’ and Babies’ talk.

**I’m sure Aunt Harrie would have been thrilled.**

Oh, she did love nursing babies, because she died when my younger child, Robert, was about two months old, I think, because he was born at the end of 1942 and she died at the beginning of 1943. And she used to love Anna, who was fourteen months older, used to love nursing her. But when Robert was born she was pretty ill, but she used to love being visited with the babies.

**And so she’d done lots of dandling on her knee, as it were.**

Yes, she certainly did. And she had Judith and me to stay at St Vigean’s before – you know, while Granny was still alive. Judith and I used to stay. And we used to love it

up there because the garden was so beautiful, and we used to spend our time, I remember, walking on stilts around the garden and Aunt Harrie sort of keeping a watchful eye on us, and we used to love it up there with her, and my grandmother, of course. But Aunt Harrie was a very warm person, and this used to be very apparent when Judith's father died, when Judith was not yet twelve, she was only eleven and a half.

**That was Thorburn Robertson, is that right?**

Thorburn Brailsford Robertson. And Stirling, the youngest of the Robertson children, was only four. And while he was so ill before he died, Aunt Harrie simply took Stirling to St Vigean's where he stayed, while David and Judith came to us, so Aunt Jeannie was completely free to look after Uncle Thorburn. But even after Uncle Thorburn died, because Stirling was a bit lost at four, you know, and a bit of a handful, Aunt Harrie often had him to stay with her and used to look after him, be a mentor to him, really.

**Yes. And Stirling, of course, was the youngest child of Thorburn Brailsford Robertson –**

Yes.

**– and Jeannie.**

And I know that Aunt Harrie helped with Stirling's education because money was very tight after he died, after Thorburn Brailsford Robertson died. Aunt Jeannie didn't have very much income and the family helped, and I know Stirling was Aunt Harrie's special project.

**Yes, okay. So she had a lot to do with Stirling as well as with her two nieces.**

And with the other .....

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2: TAPE 2 SIDE A

**This is tape two with Nan Morrison on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2004, and we've been talking about Harriet Stirling and her life and her help, the work that she did helping children, but also specifically helping members of her own family. And we were just talking about Stirling, her nephew, and how she took him under her wing when he was four, when his father died. And she looked after him a lot, and she also spent a lot of time helping out her nieces and nephews. So perhaps, if you have any other recollections about that – –?**

My father had osteomyelitis since he was eight years old, and when he used to get abscesses and sometimes be whisked off to hospital, to leave my mother free Aunt Harrie used to come and pick me up and I used to go and stay. Ted was six years older, so of course he was not the problem, as I was at an early age. So often, some crisis, Aunt Harrie would arrive in her car and (laughs) off I'd go to stay with her. She was wonderful, the way she used to step in when anybody had some crisis, and come to the rescue. And we all loved Aunt Harrie and were always happy to go with her. And, as I say, the sisters were very close. Aunt Harrie, after all, was born in '78, my mother in '79, the middle of '79, and Aunt Jeannie at the beginning of January '81, so they were all within three years of each other. Very close.

Judith and David and Stirling, with their mother, lived quite close to St Vigean's, at Maroonika, [10 Milan Terrace] Mount Lofty, and Judith was telling me the other day about when she was sixteen and allowed to get a licence, as we could in those days, by just going in and paying your ten-and-six and answering three questions – 'Which side of the road do you drive on?', 'What's the speed limit?' and that sort of thing – and Judith, of course, didn't have any professional driving lessons. Aunt Harrie said she'd teach her. The first time out with Judith Aunt Harrie said, 'Judith, I cannot bear it, take the car and teach yourself to drive'! (laughs) So Judith took Aunt Harrie's car and practised driving in quiet places, and said, 'Well, Aunt Harrie, I felt her car was the only way she could get around, but she trusted her niece to cope with it all right.' That was typical of Aunt Harrie. I can imagine it would have been nerve-wracking sitting beside a beginner driver. In those days the roads were so much quieter. I had one lesson – a man who used to do our, look after our cars, took me out and said, 'You can drive'. And after that I was expected to drive. He took me through the city and everything. (laughs) Life was very different with driving then.

Aunt Harrie had a little dog called Toby, he was an Australian terrier, which she had first of all at St Vigean's. She adored Toby and Toby adored her, and Toby had her under his paw, you might say. And he refused to have his meal unless Aunt Harrie stood by his dish. I don't know what happened when Aunt Harrie went away, as she did quite often, but the maids or the gardener must have coped all right because he didn't seem to fade away. But if Aunt Harrie was in the house she had to stand by him while he fed.



Judith mentioned that she had an aviary of birds. I don't remember that at all, so she must have had birds at St Vigean's, but I don't – and Judith doesn't remember what sort of birds, but I don't remember that at all, but that is something that Judith remembers.

**Did she have any other animals or pets when you knew her?**

I think there was a cat. I know Aunt Jeannie had a – no, perhaps she didn't have a cat. It was Aunt Jeannie's cat that lived to be twenty-three, very aged cat. But Toby lived for a very long time and he kept Aunt Harrie very busy, he was a very demanding little dog. But Aunt Harrie loved him dearly.

**I just wondered if she might have been a collector of strays.**

I don't think so, I don't think so. Only stray children, I think.

**So with regard to the children, did she have any other children to stay with her at St Vigean's or Brothock? Did she have any – apart from her nieces and nephews?**

I don't remember her having other children to stay, I think she had her hands full with us. (laughs) Judith and I sometimes stayed together up at St Vigean's. In 1941, which was just two years before she died, it was while I had my first child, I was very unwell in the early stages and Aunt Harrie had both brought my husband and me to stay for about three weeks when I was at my worst, and it was wonderful to have that because my mother had died before the War, and so it was wonderful to have an aunt taking loving care of me instead of a mother. Because ..... was – it was just before he went into the Army and he was going up and down to the ABC<sup>2</sup>, so he went up and down to work while I stayed and was looked after by Aunt Harrie.

I remember another story of Aunt Harrie with her car, because she got a two-seater car quite early in the piece. And one day, when she was driving down from the Hills to town, probably to one of her committee meetings, when she slowed to turn a corner a man opened the passenger door and got in beside her. Because in those days you didn't have cars that locked, you just had canvas hoods and the doors had no locks on them. And Aunt Harrie asked him to get out, which he refused to do, he said he wanted to go to town. But Aunt Harrie was – not pleased by this, but she kept a level head and when she came down Glen Osmond Road she turned right into the

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<sup>2</sup> ABC – Australian Broadcasting Commission (now Corporation).

Fullarton Road and turned into the gates of the Parkside Mental Hospital, where she had friends who were doctors, and he got very upset and said, 'Where are you going, where are you going? I'm not mad', and she just said, 'I am taking you in here'. So he leapt out of the car as fast as he leapt in. (laughs) And Aunt Harrie – that's another thing, she did take an interest in the mental hospital. I think she – this is very vague, but I think she had an interest, she certainly had friends who were doctors there, and I think she took an interest in some of the patients. She was a very compassionate woman, as you can see, and I remember being told that story about her coming down – it must have been in the 1920s because I remember being told this story and being terribly impressed by Aunt Harrie's level-headedness of thinking of driving into the Parkside Mental Hospital, (laughs) which got rid of her unwanted passenger very quickly.

**That would have been very nerve-wracking to have something like that happen.**

Yes, apparently he was rather a derelict-looking character, too, he didn't look well, he looked pretty unkempt, I believe, you know, he was probably just wanting to hitch a ride to town.

**And so, with regard to things medical, were there any other things that you remember about Aunt Harrie's interests, perhaps even over and above the work which she did for children and mothers?**

No, I don't remember any other interests of hers in medical matters. Of course with children it was not just the medical care, it was their total care, education and so on. As I say, she, I think, was responsible for the private education of her nephew, Stirling.

**That's right, after his father died.**

Yes. Well, he was four when his father died, and when he went to school he went to school at Miss de Mole's, which was a school close by to where Aunt Jeannie lived, where Stirling lived. But when he went to a private – he went to St Peter's, and David went to Queen's College first, that was in North Adelaide, and he stayed with us while he was at Queen's because he didn't want to be a boarder. He was about eight and nine at the time. Then he went on to be a day-boy at St Peter's. I can't remember if Stirling started straight at St Peter's after Miss de Mole – probably he

did, because the boys would have come down together. But certainly Aunt Harrie was interested in education.

I think when I was taken to Mareeba which was with, perhaps, the thought that I might like to take up nursing and look after the children, but in actual fact I took up physiotherapy and looked after children, cerebral palsied children, when I was a physiotherapist. But I did think at one stage of being a mothercraft nurse, but it didn't really – it was physiotherapy that I practised in those – and I'm vastly thankful I did that training because it was wonderful.

**So did Aunt Harrie have anything to do with you, or gave you support for, choosing physiotherapy?**

She didn't help me choose physiotherapy, I was at Invergowrie Homecraft Hostel in Melbourne when I was seventeen trying to decide what I was going to do with my life, because I hadn't decided at that stage, and my father said, well, I had to think of doing something. And so I was sent with Judith to the Invergowrie Homecraft Hostel where we learnt how to (laughs) keep house and cook and all these things while I was thinking about what I wanted to do. And it was then that I thought about physiotherapy and I became very keen on the idea. So when I came back I had to do the Leaving, which we needed in those days – it wasn't called Matriculation – because I had refused to do it at school, and so I had to do the Leaving when I came back and then went on to do Physiotherapy at the Adelaide University.

**And how long was the course then?**

It was a bit under three years. It became four years later. It was two years when I started, but they lengthened it so it became nearly three years when I finished. And of course during that time there was an epidemic of poliomyelitis, so a lot of my training with children was with polio, because they had the use of students – of full-blown physiotherapists they didn't have enough, so we were given our own panel of patients and had to work with them.

But Aunt Harrie always was interested in what I was doing, she was interested in everything we did. She was a very loving aunt.

**Did any of the other nieces and nephews go into Medicine, or things medical?**

Yes, Stirling did. Stirling became – he first of all did Science and then Medicine, and he became a doctor. But he also died young. He must have been only in his early forties.

**That's right, and he had four children.**

He had four children.

**Yes.**

Yes, he did a wonderful lot of work for out at the Northfield – was it called Northfield then? – Northfield, for people who had the drinking problem.

**Was it the Hampstead – – –?**

No, Hampstead's the Repatriation.

**Oh, okay.**

There was Strathmont and there was Northfield. I don't know whether it's the Northfield, because there was the Robertson Ward named after him, but of course now that hospital has been done away with.

**I'm sorry, I'm not aware of that.**

I think so. But anyway, he did wonderful work with the people who had drug problems and drinking problems, they thought the world of him there, he was very good. But unfortunately he died in his early forties.

**And of course his second daughter, or second child, Beth Robertson, is one of the – was the chief Oral History Officer for many years at the State Library –**

Yes.

**– and is now managing that branch. This is in fact where this equipment comes from. (laughter)**

Yes. Beth has done wonderful work there.

**And his oldest child, Helen, became a doctor as well.**

She is a doctor of medicine, yes.

**She is a doctor, still a doctor. So of Aunt Harrie's nieces and nephews only three now survive, yourself and Judith who was Jeannie's oldest.**

Yes. Well, I am eighty-seven and she is eighty-six, she'll be eighty-seven in July, and then there's Andrew .....

**Who is Nina's second son.**

Nina's younger – he's the youngest of the nieces and nephews. He is now in the seventies.

**Yes. So Nina had two children.**

Two boys, yes.

**Two boys.**

John and Andrew.

**Jeannie had three.**

Yes. And my mother had two. Well, she had three, but the middle one died.

**Yes, very sadly. Because she had a very similar name to you, didn't she. Is it Anna – – –?**

Anna Theodora, and I am Anna –

**Dorothea.**

– Dorothea.

**Yes.**

She only lived a few hours. She was premature when she was born. When Aunt Harrie learnt of her premature birth she hurried to get to the house where my mother was, because at that time trained nurses didn't have the training to look after babies, and the baby, although it was July and very cold, had been bathed and dressed, and Aunt Harrie was trying to get there to wrap her in cotton wool and olive oil because she knew that this should be the treatment. But the trained nurse had been trained to wash, bath and dress a baby when it was born, premature or not. And I think all this sort of must have – this was in 1915, when Aunt Harrie was well aware of the need for babies – – –. But she felt that there was no need for that baby to have died, if she'd had proper attention when she was born. But she would never tell my father or mother that, she told me that later.

**Yes. Well, it must have strengthened, I suppose, her efforts in the education of mothers and education of nurses.**

It was obviously very much in her whole makeup. But she herself hurried there to try and stop what she knew would happen.

**And perhaps also the death of her youngest brother, Gilbert, at an early age may have also –**

Well, that must have been very –

**– concerned her.**

– upsetting for her at that age, because she must have been then thirteen, perhaps, and I think then the dying of a – I believe the nurse didn't mention – my grandfather was ill at the time and my grandmother was very much involved in looking after her husband, so the nurse of the baby didn't mention that there was something wrong with the baby until it was too late. So the whole thing was a –

**Terrible –**

– yes.

**– tragedy. And, of course, the older brother –**

Oh, Edward.

**– Edward died of an accident.**

He was climbing a tree and he fell. It was on Birch Road, I think, down near the Fishers' house. And he fell from the tree, not terribly far, but underneath the tree was a broken branch with a pointed base sticking up, and he fell on it head-first and it penetrated the skull, and he was very ill and then was operated on in the Adelaide Hospital, and Aunt Harrie remembered the day when Grandfather was told that he was out of danger, and that night they drank to the recovery of Edward but he died that night.

**Oh!**

Had a haemorrhage, probably. So it was all a disastrous tragedy. And Dr Joseph Verco said he never saw Professor Stirling smile again after the death of his son. But I think he must have smiled. I was two when he died, I still remember him, but I don't remember if he smiled or not –

**He probably didn't smile as much again.**

– but I do remember a very, very powerful presence. (baby cries)

**Sorry about that. Yes, he probably smiled in private, but perhaps didn't smile in public.**

Well, I know that I just loved him dearly as a small child, and I can remember sitting on his lap and playing with his watch chain, on which he had many things, you know, including this diamond, which after his death Mother had made into a ring. But that diamond would have been given to him by somebody and it was on his watch chain, and I thought his watch chain was wonderful. And I can still remember the smell of his clothes, the tobaccoey smell of his clothes, sitting on his lap in the smoking room. And then, even more clearly, I remember looking for him. It must have been when he died, because I was only two years and six weeks when he died. But I remember looking for him everywhere and the maid saying, 'No, no, he's gone away'. But I knew people who went away came back, because people often went on holidays, and I didn't understand death at all. So I looked for him for quite a long time in the rooms where I'd been used to seeing him. But he left a powerful impression, even at that age. (laughs) I still remember it.

Aunt Harrie looked very like her father, I think, possibly a lot of his makeup in her.

**So did she ever have – she obviously had a lot of good friends –**

She had very close friends.

**– and also of course with her big family.**

And a lot of first cousins. I mean, there were all the Ferguson cousins who were very close and all the Gilbert cousins who were very close, and who lived near to Aunt Harrie in the last years of her life. And there were so many friends, she had *lots* of friends. And there even was one person that she was very fond of that she might have married, who was killed in one of the wars, I don't know which one. He was a very – but I can't remember who it is because she was not married. But Aunt Harrie was very happy with her lot, so that she wasn't grieving for anyone, you know, anyone that she might have married, I know. You could have told if she was grieving, I'm sure. But she was, as she said to my mother, 'I hug myself when I see what you have to cope with'. (laughs)

**So she didn't have any romantic disappointments that you're aware of.**

No, unless it was that one, that friend who was killed.

**That would have been terrible.**

My mother wondered whether there was something there. But she certainly didn't let it ruin her life.

**Your mother herself had something happen to her regarding romance, didn't she, before she actually met your father?**

Well, when she was in England, when she was about twenty-three, she met a doctor. And I think she was rather swept off her feet by him and became engaged to him. And then she went back to St Vigean's, and this doctor said he would come out and visit them, and he did. And my mother said as soon as he came she just realised that he was not right, he was not the sort of person that she wanted to marry, and she was very upset because he didn't really fit in with the whole feeling of the family, and she knew that she would be unhappy married to him. And so she told him she wanted to break it off, and he said if she broke off the engagement he would kill himself. And so my mother was (laughs) absolutely distracted, and her father called her into his smoking room one day and said, 'Now, I know something is very wrong. A girl engaged to be married, a young woman with everything before her, should be happy and you are obviously not'. So my mother then told him of this engagement which she realised was a mistake, and of the threat of suicide, and her father said, 'Well, you must break it off. You'd have this sort of emotional blackmail all your life if you married him, so you must break it off and he will not commit suicide'. And she did break it off, and he did not commit suicide. (laughs) So all was well.

**When was it that she took up the woodcarving course? I was told that she did that as therapy or something after – is that true?**

Well, I don't know if it was therapy. But all the young women of that time used to take up all sorts of hobbies and she took up woodcarving, and Ted has the big table that she'd done.

**And the chair, I've got the chair.**

Have you?

**She carved the seat of the chair.**

And the table is beautiful.



**Yes, now, the table, I'm not sure who's got that. Perhaps my Uncle Edward or somebody.**

Yes, I don't know where it is. But she didn't carry on with that after she was married. But then my father came out from England in 1907 and he met her, he was invited to a ball at Government House, was it Dr — —? (pause) I think Hunt was the — I know he used to visit St Vigean's a lot, this Governor, and I think his name was George, he used to ask the girls to call him 'Uncle George', which they did. And Mother and Dad were introduced by the *aide-de-camp* at the Government House Ball, so it went from there, really. They took to each other *immediately*.

**So she was the first of the children to marry, wasn't she?**

Yes, she married in 1910, and Aunt Jeannie married the same year, later in the year. Mother married in April and I think Aunt Jeannie married about December.

**And we've spoken about the three sisters who married, Nina, Jeannie and your mother, Anna, but there was one other sister, Mary, who didn't marry. Now, what did she do?**

She travelled a lot. She wasn't a VAD<sup>3</sup> in the First World War, she belonged to some Scottish organization similar to a VAD, and she was in the Middle East as a support for nursing staff and she was there for some years. And she travelled a great deal, she just loved Egypt, she had the most wonderful bird, the ibis, carved wooden bird in her room at St Vigean's which I always absolutely loved. I don't know where it is now, do you know?

**No. A carved wooden ibis, no.**

Beautiful.

**I think I've seen a photograph of it.**

..... carving, wooden carving of an ibis.

**Perhaps Uncle Edward *might* have it, or someone at Maroonica or something?**

I just don't know where it is, but it was beautiful and she had it in her room. But she just loved the Egyptian art. And she travelled widely. And she had terrible asthma. She had had to spend a lot of time as a child down at the beach, where she stayed

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<sup>3</sup> VAD – Voluntary Aid Detachment [of nursing volunteers].

with the Hart family – Marian Hart was a friend, and Captain Hart and Mrs Hart were friends of the family, and Aunt Mary had to spend a lot of her time. She was very unhappy being away from home, but the climate at Mount Lofty – and, I suppose, the pollen –

**Yes.**

– upset her. And so she had a lot of time there. But when she was older she travelled, she was very keen on travel. But in the First World War, as I say, she was in this equivalent of the VAD, working in Turkey, I think she was. Anyway, she was certainly with an interest in Egypt, and later she did a lot of travelling. I remember her coming and going, because she died, I think, in 1925 when I was eight. But before that I remember her coming home from overseas a lot, she used to bring presents, and I remember her sending Christmas presents that were posted. Very exciting parcels would arrive with lovely things for dolls' houses from Austria and all this sort of thing. And then, in 1925, she got a severe sinus infection when she was on the Continent, and she was given some drugs to ease the pain. When she got back to England she was admitted to hospital and friends – I think it was Dr Plummer and Professor Strong – both friends went to see her. I know Professor Strong was not allowed to see her, but he could hear her calling for help because of her pain – he could hear her, 'Please help me'. And it is thought that she was given medication for it but that she also took the painkillers that she'd been given on the Continent, and she died. But whether she died as a result of the mixture of the drugs, or from the illness, that she may have had a burst abscess – my mother had that and she had to have an operation, but of course nothing was done for Aunt Mary.

**So which year was that that she actually died in?**

Nineteen twenty-five, when I was eight. I remember the horrifying business of cables arriving to say that she was desperately ill, and of course there's nothing you could do six weeks away by sea.

**Yes.**

And then the cable to say she had died, and my grandmother was distraught.

**Yes, it's terrible.**

And so were her three sisters.

## END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

— — — what I learnt later. And I told you what I learnt when I was six. I said Alice came to St Vigean's as an under housemaid or a kitchen maid or something, but of course she came because she was pregnant. She was in a foster home and she couldn't stay there, so Aunt Harrie took her under her wing and took her to St Vigean's, and I think I asked, 'What is Alice doing?' and they said, 'Oh, she's an assistant housemaid', or something of the kind, but in actual fact she was there to be looked after until she had the baby. And then Aunt Harrie bought a doll for her — very beautiful — and I've got a photograph of me nursing Alice's doll. Because I liked Alice because she was about the mental age of me, and I was six. And so I thought Alice was really good fun to play with. (laughs) But she was kept there until she had the baby, and then I don't know where she went afterwards. But I now that she went on to have two or three more children, and I did see her when she was — when I was grown up, and I was with Aunt Harrie, and she said, 'That is Alice standing at the gate' — she had visited somebody, and she said, 'That's Alice'. So Alice was with a foster mother then, probably just called an assistant because she was well and truly grown up, as I was, and I was six when I knew her first. And she would not have been capable of doing the work of a housemaid or anything, because mentally she was very — well, about a six year-old, I should think.

### **So how long was she living with Aunt Harrie?**

Oh, she must have been only there for about six months until the baby was born. But I think, you see, the maids there, there were four maids, and they would all take an interest in Alice and see that she ate the right food and that she was doing the right things before the baby was born. And Aunt Harrie used to take her round the garden and this sort of thing, and she got this doll and I think Alice used to dress and undress the doll, and I suppose with the idea of — I think in those days, when girls had illegitimate children that were adopted, they used to keep them, I think, for the first two weeks.

### **So her child was adopted?**

I think so. She would have been adopted or gone to an orphanage, because Alice would have been totally incapable of looking after a child, and it was sad to think that she went on to have several more, except that I hope that they went to adoptive

homes where the parents were wanting them. Alice was very sweet-natured and everything, but it was just that she couldn't have coped with things herself, so that's why Aunt Harrie brought her to St Vigean's.

**Did you notice any stigma attached to her as an unmarried mother at the time she was in St Vigean's?**

Well, I was only six, so if there was any, well, I think Aunt Harrie would have made sure that she was – I mean, she was not capable of knowing what she was doing, I think, in some ways. I wasn't aware of any but, as I say, I was only six.

**Yes.**

(laughs) But of course, in the general population, there was a great deal of stigma at that time.

**Well, there would have been a lot of disapproval, I would presume.**

Well, even when I was a young woman, you know, when people had illegitimate children they were usually whisked away to another state to stay with somebody until the baby was born, then they'd come back and they had been 'working' or doing something, as it was said, in another state. They didn't usually stay here, you know, they went away.

**So Aunt Harrie would have really been brave to look after her – – –.**

No, she wouldn't have thought anything about – it would be what Alice needed, and she would do what Alice needed. And what the world thought about it, I mean, would be secondary because the needs of Alice would have come first.

**And I think that gives a good indication of her character.**

Yes. And another thing that I didn't tell you was she always felt children in these homes, they needed to have the life of children and not regimented little soldiers and that sort of thing, and she actually gave the dolls' house that she and her sisters had had at St Vigean's to the Edwardstown Children's Home. She gave the family dolls' house to them so that the children would get pleasure from playing – that's also why she used to give the parties at St Vigean's in strawberry time before Christmas, so that children would have a party that they could unwind and be children and play games and things.

**That's actually lovely, isn't it.**

Well, in those times in particular because, you know, you'd hear of orphanages run in those times where they didn't have much fun, those children.

**Must be much like the concentration camps we have out here now for our migrants.**

I won't start on that now, dear – (laughter) I think we'll get right off the subject!

**I'm sure, like us, Aunt Harrie would not have approved!**

She was a – I think that photograph I showed you showed this wonderful, compassionate face –

**Yes.**

– and what was rather sad is that Aunt Jeannie – I've got some papers here which I'll let you have – Aunt Jeannie had a letter from them in the 1950s, I think, when they published that thing, and they wished they'd had a – she wrote and said she was sorry, they didn't have a good photograph of her. They didn't have one in that thing, they had one of Dr Helen Mayo in that paper that you showed me and the letters that went back: 'I wish we'd known that there was a photograph'. But they never approached Aunt Harrie's sister who was there at the time, who could have let her have that photograph that I showed you, that shows – and they write and say, 'What a lovely, compassionate face'. And I still haven't got that photograph – – –. (laughs)

**Well, we must put a copy of it in the Mortlock Library, some sort of scan or something, if there's something we could – – –.**

Well, that would be good.

**I could certainly do that.**

I know Judith has it in Hobart, she's got the photograph. But, you see, that was taken after Mother died and she probably gave it to her sisters, but whether Ted had it – – –.

**I haven't seen the photograph in question, but we will make sure that there's a copy put into the Mortlock.**

Because perhaps there could be a copy taken of the one –

**Yes.**

– that Judith has.

**Yes, I shall speak to Judith.**

Because it is the best photograph of her that I know. And it was taken, it must have been – my mother died in 1939 and she died in 1943, I think it must have been taken – oh, I think it must have been taken in the 1930s. My father and all the Stirlings, they all had lots of photographs taken because of all their relations in England, and they used to send all these photographs backwards and forwards. And the terrible thing is that my father, of course, who liked to send my photograph to all the relations, after they died they all came back and a lot of them came back to Ted. Then, when Ted died, they all came to me and I've got a *drawerful* of photographs of myself, which I do not want! (laughs) Taken at *all* ages!

**Oh, they're wonderful photographs.**

There are some nice photographs, but I've got dozens of them!

**Well, you've got plenty of grandchildren to spread them between.**

Ah, well, whether they would want them – – –.

**I'm sure they would.**

Ah, dear.

**So actually speaking of the humanity of Harriet Stirling and what motivated many of her actions was concern for people and especially children, I should also just mention that you, of course, have been working for many years for Amnesty International, so I think you've inherited a lot of that care for humanity.**

Well, I think perhaps work I did for the longest was working with handicapped children.

**Yes, of course.**

And I was a physiotherapist and I worked for – oh, I think it was over fourteen years – I worked with children with cerebral palsy, which was a wonderful time in my life.

**I'm sure you made a huge difference to their lives, too, so obviously that legacy of caring has passed through the generations.**

Well, I don't know, but I certainly loved my work.

**Wonderful. And getting back to Aunt Harrie and her own sort of friendships with medical people and her work, she was obviously closely connected with Helen Mayo.**

She was a very, very great friend of Helen Mayo's, and also with Dr Finlayson. And later Dr Finlayson and Dr Mayo shared a house in North Adelaide – I think that's become part of St Ann's<sup>4</sup>, that house. She had a great many very close friends, and of course she used to go to Melbourne and Sydney to see her friends, and she had a lot in England, and they used to stay with her too, of course.

**And how did she meet Helen Mayo?**

I think they were just friends – I think they were always friends of the family. I don't know where they met, it was well (laughs) before my time.

**Certainly.**

Dr Helen Mayo was my doctor for the first three years of my life, and we had a bit of trouble there because she was going to give me an injection when I was three and my mother said, 'Shall I hold down her arm?' and Dr Mayo said, 'Oh no, that's all right'. And she gave me the injection, I jumped a mile, the needle broke in my arm and I then had to have an anaesthetic to have it dug out. And I screamed every time I saw Dr Mayo after that so I had to change doctors. But we became friends later on. (laughs) But I still have the scar on my arm where the needle was dug out!

**I guess everyone makes mistakes at times.**

It seems strange of somebody who was used to children to think you could plunge a needle into an arm and the child wouldn't jump! (laughs)

**Indeed. So do you have any other memories of Dr Mayo?**

When I was older I remember going to her house and we had – because I remember her, a rather sad occasion actually, when she had a party for Emmie Carr and Ethel Cooper, who were great friends, and Emmie Carr had come over from Kangaroo Island where she lived. Her husband was a doctor on Kangaroo Island and Emmie had come – she was my godmother – and she had come over to meet her sister who'd come back from England, Ethel Cooper, and Helen Mayo gave a great big party to welcome Ethel. And while we were there, a telephone call came through asking to speak to my mother. It was one of our maids, who said, 'A telegram has come'. And

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<sup>4</sup> St Ann's College, situated at 187 Brougham Place, is a residential college for university students.

Mother always said telegrams should be opened and you should know immediately what it was for, and Mother asked the maid to read the telegram to her over the telephone. And it was to say that Dr Carr had been drowned. He'd gone to visit the Captain – at night, he'd gone to visit the Captain on the ship, the *Karatta*, and it was nearly midnight when he was going off on the little gangway and he fell into the sea. It was in the dark. And he couldn't be found that night, and he was found. And this was of course – they'd been looking for him, and she was ringing to tell – –. So Dr Mayo and mother took Aunt Emmie into her room and this was the end of the party, as you can imagine. We took Aunt Emmie home and then first thing the next morning she and E, who was also staying with us, went off back to Kangaroo Island. So it was a very sad time.

**So 'E' was Ethel, is that right?**

Was Ethel Cooper. And Ethel Cooper and Emmie Carr were very great friends of all our family. Their parents had died and they were brought up by a grandmother, and so they often stayed at St Vigean's. Aunt Emmie was three years older than Aunt Harrie, and Ethel I think was two years older than Aunt Emmie. But even though they were older they all became wonderfully close friends.

**So just to clarify a couple of points, we were talking about Emmie Carr and Ethel Cooper. Ethel was the sister of Emmie Carr.**

She was the older sister and didn't marry, and she was the one who went to Germany to study music and was there when the War broke out, and was there all through the War.

**In Germany?**

Yes. And a very interesting account of her letters written to Emmie Carr during those years, which were sent to America, who were neutral, to Aunt Jeannie Robertson, my mother's sister, and she would then forward them on because you couldn't write from Germany to Australia because we were at war – and Decie Denholm, there was a book, *Behind the lines*, I think it's called, *A woman behind the lines*, and it's a very interesting account of Ethel's life in Germany at the time.

**Very good. And her younger sister, Emmie Carr, was married to the Dr Carr that you spoke of before.**



Yes, Emmie Carr was married to Dr Hamden Carr, who was a doctor, and they went to Kangaroo Island at American River, where he was the doctor. He used to go to Hog's Bay where he had rooms, and people used to come – he had a surgery at the house where people came to get attention.

**And how is Hamden spelt, his first name?**

H-A-M – oh, dear me.

**Well, perhaps we can worry about that later on.**

I think it was Hamden. I'm not sure, though.

**Okay. And the ship from which he was lost was called –**

*Karatta.*

**– Karatta, and that was apparently the ship that went –**

That was the ship that travelled between the mainland – I used to catch it at Glenelg and then go to American River on it. It was a very rough journey, very funny little ship. (laughs) But I was very fond of it.

**So it went to Kangaroo Island.**

Yes. I think it was the only boat at that time that went to Kangaroo Island. And everything – they used to carry all the fodder and sheep and things on the boat.

**So did Emmie and Dr Hamden Carr have any children?**

Yes, they did. They had Christian who was killed in the 1914 war, and they had I think three other boys and Mary, who married Jimmy Cowell, and then later, after he died, she married Claude Hamilton.

**Okay. And I of course have met Mary.**

Yes.

**So that explains *that* connection.**

Yes, yes. It pulls it together, doesn't it. (laughs)

**So the Carrs aren't actually related to us –**

They're no relation.

**– by blood.**

I always called Aunt Emmie ‘Aunt Emmie’ – she was my godmother and I always felt she was my aunt, and I used to say to my mother if I couldn’t have had my mother as a mother I would have chosen Aunt Emmie. (laughs) She was wonderful with children.

**Yes. And did she have anything to do with –**

The Mothers’ and Babies’?

**– the work of – – –? Yes.**

She had a lot to do with it, and so did Lady Mawson. Lady Mawson was a tremendous supporter of the Mothers’ and Babies’. But Emmie Carr certainly was.

**And Lady Mawson, of course, was the wife of –**

Sir Douglas.

**– Sir Douglas Mawson, and also another friend of the Stirling family.**

Yes. Yes. Yes, they were – in fact, the Mawsons were the first visitors – well, they weren’t Mawsons, it was when Sir Douglas was engaged to Paquita del Pratt[?] that they were the first visitors my parents had to dinner when my parents got married, they were their first visitors. (laughs) And I think they had just got engaged, so it must have been 1910.

**Lovely. And do you remember meeting them?**

The Mawsons?

**Yes.**

Oh, yes, because their daughters, Pat and Jessica – Pat was older but Jessica was my age, and she was a very good friend. And we often used to go down – well, when I say ‘often’, *sometimes* we used to go down to Brighton to have afternoon tea with the Mawsons. And as you walked around the house you fell over something and it had come from the Antarctic. Oh, they were a lovely family, and I was very – Jessica is still alive, Pat unfortunately had died a few years ago. But Jessica is very frail, I’m told, I haven’t seen her lately. And Jessica – both girls were married with children, so there are a lot of descendants of the Mawsons. (laughs)

**And what were their married names?**

Well, Pat married Ifor Thomas, who was also at the University, I think, in the Zoology Department with her, a lecturer, and Jessica married Peter McEwen, who was on the land in the Hindmarsh Valley.

**And so was Pat herself involved with – – –?**

Yes, she was lecturing at the University in Zoology, I think it was, because she did Zoology and she was doing Zoology when Ted was there. And I think she was a great help to her father in later years, helping him with his papers, because he had so much stuff from the Antarctic that he needed help, and Pat would have been the ideal one to help him.

**Excellent.**

And Jessica also did Science, because she and I were at the University together, and I was doing Physiotherapy and she was doing Science. (dog barks in the distance)

**And getting back to Dr Mayo, are there any other stories that you remember of her, or spending time with her?**

Not really, she was just always a figure who was around. She was just a friend of the family, as so many of them were. She was a much closer friend than Dr Finlayson. Dr Finlayson became a friend because she was a friend of Dr Mayo's, I think.

**Right.**

But Dr Mayo – and, you see, Elton Mayo was Dad's best man or groomsman at his wedding, and he was also Ted's godfather, so that the Mayos had a very close association.

**Elton Mayo being her father.**

Her father?

**Oh, sorry, Helen Mayo's brother.**

Yes. And where Ted, in his tape, talks of the other brother being George, it was John. John was the doctor who lived just at the back, our back gate. John Mayo, who lived with his sister, whose name I can't think of at the moment. But they lived in the Andover Flats which were off the lane behind our house in Buxton Street, they faced Childers Street.

**So Helen had two brothers and a sister?**

She had Elton, Herbert – I don't think she had any sisters. Yes, she must have, she had that sister who was unmarried. There was Elton, Herbert and John that I know of.

**And Herbert, was he also a doctor?**

No, he was a judge. He was the lawyer, and he became, I think, Chief Justice. I think Herbert Mayo was Chief Justice. He was certainly a Supreme Court judge.

**And he had a son who Grandfather [ES Booth] mentioned in his history.**

He had two sons, he had Eric, who went down on the *Sydney* in the Second World War, and George is the one who did Science at the University that Ted mentions as being a brother, but he was actually Herbert's son.

**Excellent, that's clarified that. And of course Helen Mayo didn't herself have any children or ever marry, did she?**

She didn't marry, no.

**But you said that she was quite involved with all her nieces and nephews.**

Oh, I think so. I think her family was quite a close one, you know, the Mayos. And they had a good family – a wide family, really, of relations. Because I used to know the Herbert Mayo – Diana Mayo was a friend of mine.

**And she was related how, Diana?**

Well, she was Herbert's daughter, George's sister, and they also had a sister, Betty. And then there was Eric, who went down on the *Sydney*, who married Janet Simpson and they had two sons, John and Oliver Mayo. Oliver Mayo lives just round on Lockwood Road, not far from here.

**In Burnside?**

Yes.

**Thank you. And are there any other things that you'd like to say about either Helen Mayo or Aunt Harrie that you – – –.**

Well, I can't think of them at the moment. You know, things come in flashes.

**That's absolutely fine.**

There's one thing I must say, that she went to England at the same time as Aunt Jeannie Robertson, her sister, who went overseas taking Judith and David and Stirling in 1938. And they were in Germany when things began to get unpleasant and Hitler was on the rise very markedly. And I remember Aunt Jeannie stayed – Aunt Harrie was not there then – Aunt Jeannie was, I think, in it might have been Munich or one of the major cities, and the people she was staying with said Germany would never stand for another war. 'We will never have another war.' But in the meantime the German army was marching and they were having a very obvious presence, and it was not at all a comfortable time. But in England Aunt Harrie joined them, and Judith remembers they motored around England, and it must have been when the Abdication took place, when –

**Edward VIII abdicated.**

– Edward VIII abdicated, or when all that time was unsettled. Because Judith said she remembers Aunt Harrie saying, 'Oh, I did feel so safe when Queen Victoria was on the throne', and I thought it must have been a time of great – of course the South African War and the Boer War went on, but it didn't involve the world as the Great War did, and with an abdication, I mean, this has never happened before. Such a thing happening must have rocked that generation – well, it rocked *our* generation too, but it must have rocked that generation even more. I remember a very unsettled time, and she was in England at that time. But Judith remembers that very, very clearly. (laughs)

**And Judith, of course, is now living in Tasmania. And she is – – –?**

She is Jeannie Robertson's daughter.

**That's right, the oldest.**

And she's five months' difference in age from me and we have been very close all our lives, and now, at the age of eighty-seven, she's the only person alive who shares my childhood. There's nobody else I can talk to about it, so I tell her she must take care of herself.

**Yes, and we must get some more stories from her as well.**

We always speak on the telephone every week.

**Lovely. And we were talking earlier about Aunt Harrie's mother, your grandmother, and you had a lot of interesting stories to tell about her.**

Well, she was, of course, very – I was very close to her.

**She was *née* Jane Gilbert.**

Yes, she was Jane Gilbert and she married –

**EC Stirling.**

– EC Stirling. And he died when I was – well, I was born on January 30<sup>th</sup>, and I was two – and he died at the beginning of March, so I was about two years and six weeks, I suppose, when he died. But I still remember him very clearly, because I remember sitting on his lap in the smoking room and playing with his watch chain, which had all sorts of exciting things on it, it was quite different from my father's watch chain, and I also remember he smelt quite different because he smoked a pipe. And he had a rough tweed jacket and I can still remember the smell of that. But I even remember more clearly looking for him when he must have died, and I remember going into the drawing room and looking behind the drawing room door to see if he was there. And I kept looking everywhere, in every room where I'd seen him, and one of the maids was dusting there and she said, 'What are you looking for, Nan?' And I said, 'Grandfather'. And she said, 'Oh, no, he's gone away'. But that didn't mean death to me because death didn't mean anything to me then. I just thought people who went away on holidays came back. But my mother had to try and explain to me that he wouldn't be coming back, but I did look for him for a long time.

**Yes, it's awful when you're a child and you lose someone, it's so hard to comprehend.**

Well, at two it is incomprehensible – – –.

**Absolutely. It's amazing that you actually remember him at all from such a young age.**

Ah, I remember him. And I also remember dropping a plate – it must have been one of the Royal Worcester, the blue and white plates – I dropped it and broke it. And I was standing outside my grandmother's bedroom door which was closed – again I think it must have been shortly after he died – and I stood there and said, 'What will Grandfather say?' And a maid saying, 'Shh, shh, shh!' And I didn't know why they were hushing me, you know, because I didn't realise of course that he'd died. But I

don't know why it was what would Grandfather say. It wasn't what Granny would say, it was what would Grandfather say. (laughs) But nobody was cross at all!

**That's fortunate.**

But I used to sit with Granny listening to stories of her childhood, and also I was fascinated about stories of my grandfather. I was always asking her, 'Please tell me about Grandfather'. I obviously wanted to get closer as I got older, because of the memories of him. 'Please tell me stories about Grandfather,' and a lot of them were about him in the garden, which he loved so much. And I remember her saying that some visitors – he had said he was going to spend the afternoon in the garden, and he had on his old clothes, and then some people arrived for afternoon tea. And Grandfather, who had a door in the smoking room that led straight out into the garden, just said to Granny, 'Say that I am out', and he said that he went outside and said this from the veranda, from outside the door. 'You can say that I am out' – – –.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B: TAPE 3 SIDE A

**Just in the middle of a story about EC Stirling and Jane Stirling at St Vigean's, when EC Stirling had heard that visitors had arrived he'd requested his wife to tell them that he was out.**

And he went outside onto the veranda and said through the door, 'You can say that I am out'. So she, with truth, could say he was out. But she did wish that he wouldn't garden so close to the window where she was – – –. But he looked so disreputable in his old clothes she thought he would probably be taken for a gardener, but I'm sure the gardeners dressed better than he did when he was in the garden. But also, when – this was his great passion, his garden, this was his – well, I mean one of his great passions. He just loved getting out and working in the garden. But he had several full-time gardeners, but sometimes he would be near one of the gates and passers-by would say, 'Would you get into trouble if you gave me some of those flowers?' And he used to give people a bunch of flowers. 'Will your boss be cross with you?' He said, 'I don't think I'll get into trouble', he used to say. And he never minded if people asked him for flowers, but he was absolutely furious when people came in and helped themselves. They actually tore boughs of the Japanese cherries when they were in flower, doing great damage to the trees. Terrible. People would just come in the bottom gate near the pond and take flowers, just steal them.

**Yes, that's not very nice.**

But whenever he was asked he would give them most happily. And of course the garden provided flowers for the house all year round. In the lobby there was a baize door – you see on television stories about ‘upstairs, downstairs’ – well, at St Vigean’s I always said it was ‘the other side of the baize door’, because the other side of the baize door there was a big lobby and then all the kitchen quarters went off, and then the maids’ bedrooms and their sitting room and their big dining room, they were all the other side of the baize door. But there was this big table where flowers used to be brought in, often by the gardeners, and then either Aunt Nina or Aunt Harrie would arrange the flowers. But Aunt Nina wasn’t married until I was ten, so she was there in my young life at home. Aunt Mary died when I was eight but she was overseas a great deal of the time so I didn’t see as much of her as of the others. And I was a bit nervous about Mary. She always seemed to me to be rather (pause) formidable. And I can remember, as a small child, sitting by the fire in the nursery and Ted was there and a nurse – I think it was Bessie – and we had a terrific thunderstorm. It was just overhead, you know, I was quite frightened – I must have been about three or four. And Ted, who was five and a half years older than me, he said, ‘If Aunt Mary was here she would never allow that’. And so he obviously – he was very devoted to Aunt Mary, but he obviously realised (laughs) she had a presence that she could stop a thunderstorm!

When I went to St Vigean’s and Aunt Mary was there, when I was younger, and she used to say she’d put me to bed, I always preferred it if one of the others put me to bed, because I was – she was a little bit more remote. And there is something that I should mention about – I don’t know whether it should go with any part of Pewsey Vale that I mentioned, but Granny, who had of course come from Pewsey Vale when she was married, she had – one of the maids she had, the housemaid, was May Hurst. And Joe Hurst, her father, had come out from Wiltshire, the same place as Joseph Gilbert. And I don’t know whether they came out at the same time or if he came out later, but he was on Pewsey Vale I think all the time Pewsey Vale was there, and he was the blacksmith, and he used to look after the horses, and he did all the blacksmithing. And he was married here and he’d had five children, and they all lived on Pewsey Vale. And May, the youngest daughter, became the housemaid at St Vigean’s when she was fourteen.



She was noted for not liking children, and I took an absolute fancy for May and we couldn't be parted, and I was the first child that May liked. And the only other child she seemed to like was John Jaffrey, my cousin, because she went to Aunt Nina – when Aunt Nina was married she went as Aunt Nina's maid to Medindie. So there was a strong connection. And then Bessie, who was the elder daughter, she was my nurse at Buxton Street, when anyone was – my mother was very ill when I was about four with a frontal sinus abscess and she had to have an operation and a bit of skull taken out to relieve it because they didn't know now what they do, and they took a bit of skull out, and she was told there was a fifty-fifty chance of her living when she had the operation. And Bessie, of course, was there looking after me, and if Bessie was there I felt very secure. And Bessie and May were a very big part of our lives, and we were in touch with them until they died in the '90s, they were in the '90s, and they were in a nursing home in the end, but we were always in touch with them because they were wonderful people, and they were part of our lives.

**So speaking of the servants at St Vigean's, there must have been a large number of them.**

There were four – well, when my mother was young there were not only the four maids but there were governesses and nurses, I think they always had two nurses, then there'd be a governess for the older children, and then four – there was a parlourmaid, a housemaid, a cook and a kitchenmaid. And then the washing was done by Mrs Grimes, which is a wonderful name for a washerwoman, I think, and she came for two whole days and sometimes a third day if there was a great deal of washing. And there was a great big laundry off the back veranda of St Vigean's, and there was a pump, a hand pump, that you could pump the water up on the back veranda. And often the pump, I was allowed to help pump on the washing day when they were pumping up the water. And the big coppers were going in this great big laundry, and of course there was no electricity so the fires used to be alight and the irons would be lined up in front of the fire heating up. They were the good old flatirons, and so they had about half a dozen so you'd keep taking a new one then put it back and get another one. The ironing was immense, and it was a two-day job every week. (laughs)

**So was the laundry actually in the house or in a separate building?**

No, it was actually on the back veranda. You went out of the back door and the laundry door faced on the other side of the veranda.

**Yes.**

And it was, I suppose, partly for safety, too, because it would be a big wood fire. The kitchen was inside the house with a big woodstove, very big woodstove.

**Were there any male staff who worked in the house at St Vigean's?**

No. Oh, except there was a boot boy when my mother was young. There was a boot boy, because he used to go down to meet the train if there was a visitor and carry – because often the visitors would walk up through the garden to the house if it was fine, and the boot boy would bring the luggage. And if they were coming for longer, or more than one visitor, he would take the dogcart down and he would bring up the luggage while the visitors would walk up through the garden. And when Grandfather went to work he used to walk down through the garden and out through the bottom gate, which was just a couple of hundred yards to the Mount Lofty Railway Station, and he would go to the University by train. And then when he came back in the evening he'd be able to walk back up through his beautiful garden.

**Lovely. And of course the garden, in those days, was much larger than it is now.**

Well, it was six and a half acres.

**Six and a half.**

Yes. And now the house is left, I think, with one and a half acres.

**Yes, and there are several other –**

A lot of other houses built on the –

**– smaller buildings around – – –.**

– yes, and there's a house built right by the pond that Romilly Harry built after he bought St Vigean's.

**I think the potting shed's now a house, isn't it – the old potting shed?**

Where the potting shed was is a house, yes, and then there's another one –

**The coach house is now a separate house.**

– that’s a separate house. It’s very close to the house, and I always – I’ve never been up to see how they’ve divided that.

**Oh, yes. Well, it is close to the house but it’s got a sort of separate garden, like it’s a very separate feeling. They’ve got a large wall.**

Well, the other part of the St Vigean’s garden was cut off with Laurel House, I think it’s called. And the coach house was a big coach house.

**It is quite big, it’s two-storey with the sleeping quarters above.**

Yes. It was two storeys then. And on the back of it, of course, was Aunt Harrie’s fern house, so I expect it was built out that way. But also the upper part of the garden, where the fowls were kept and the tennis courts were, that was cut off, I think, as part of the house that became Laurel House. But the main house looked out – the back of it was onto a courtyard, which was surrounded by sheds and the laundry, and then at the other end was the coach house, and then the big gates, so you drove in from the front drive into the back courtyard and into the stables. So it is very close, I mean it’s only the double gates, you might say, that separated the house from the coach house.

**Yes, they are close. I think a lot of those old sheds and stuff have gone now.**

I’m sure they would, they were just old iron sheds where the fowl food was kept, you know, the bran and pollard. Because my grandmother loved feeding the fowls, and the maids wouldn’t let her do anything. She was not allowed to do nearly enough – she must have been terribly bored, because she just sat while people waited on her. And when she used to say, ‘Let’s go and feed the fowls’ – she would be up in the seventies then, I suppose – well, it was up some steep steps and up to the top of the garden where the fowlhouse was – but we used to go out the western door and we used to crouch down so we’d be below the level of the kitchen window so the maids couldn’t see us so we could get to the sheds and the bran and pollard. (laughs) And then we’d go up these steep steps of course, and if one of the gardeners caught us Granny, of course, would have to run for (laughter) – have to go back, because nobody would let her lift a finger. I think they thought that she was old and she shouldn’t do anything.

**So she was tyrannised by her staff, was she?**

Because she must have done – she was terrified of the staff, yes. (laughter) She was a very gentle person. Everybody brought their troubles to her and there'd be a lot of tea and sympathy in her room. But she and I used to, when we could, get out with the bran and pollard to feed the fowls. And when one was killed for dinner she would never eat it. She would eat bought fowl, but she wouldn't eat her own fowl. (laughs)

**Great sensibility.**

But when I was very young, of course, the fowls were in the paddock, which is over where Lyndhurst is now built. Up at the top of Laurel Road, on the other side of the – I've forgotten what that road [is], goes to the crossroads – there were paddocks that extended, that all belonged to Grandfather, and the fowls used to be on the loose out there and we used to go looking for the eggs under the bushes. You never quite knew, although I remember May saying, 'They usually lay their eggs under this bush' and we'd find some there. 'And this bush.' They seemed to have their pet spots. But then, when that was sold off, the fowls were brought to the top of the garden and I think they were put where the tennis court used to be.

**And so we were speaking before about all the inside staff and all the women who were there, and there were three gardeners I think you said. And were there any other outside staff?**

Well, that little cottage that's on the other side of the road that Aunt Nina kept after St Vigean's was sold, the bluestone cottage –

**Yes.**

– which had an acre of garden also, that was where the head gardener lived, and he had his – well, the one I knew was Mr Fairhall, and Mrs Fairhall his wife, and they had a daughter, Eva Fairhall – well, they lived in that cottage. It was a lovely little cottage. And he used to grow the most wonderful asparagus in this garden. Beds and beds of asparagus that used to be dished up for asparagus season in the St Vigean's dining room.

**Wonderful. And were there any other – –?**

Then Crystal used to come, he lived nearby. I was always trying to arrange a match because I loved Crystal and I loved May, and I thought they should get married. I didn't know that Crystal had a wife and family somewhere else! (laughs)

**Is that spelt the same as the stone, crystal?**

Crystal, yes.

**He was another gardener, was he?**

He was a gardener. And then there was Conlon[?]. He was another one I tried to marry off to May, but he also was married. (laughs) He drove the car, he was the chauffeur and did jobs around the place as well. And then I think they used to get in part-time gardeners in busy times. I think that there were the three men all the time, and then extras at other times.

**So did Conlon live in the coach house?**

Oh, no, nobody lived in the coach house.

**Oh, okay.**

It was just a room for changing, you know, when he was changing out of his work clothes into his driving clothes, there was a room upstairs where he changed. I think sometimes in the old days perhaps a driver of the coach would sleep overnight if it was late or something, but not when I was there, not in my time.

**Were there other staff such as stable hands and that sort of thing?**

Well, there may have been, but when I was there there was just a pony, and I've got a picture of Crystal holding the pony with me on it.

**And they would have, of course, had a car.**

But that was down in the paddock that Grandfather owned where the water supply was, where Aunt Harrie built her house later, down on the corner of Birch Road. That was where the pony then was kept, not over – the big paddock. Crystal brought it in and that's when I was sitting on its back. And he used to draw the little dogcart that Aunt Harrie used to go visiting her foster children in.

**So do you remember when they bought their first car?**

I think that must have been bought very early. I don't remember, no. I think they must have had the car when I was – I don't know if it was before Grandfather died or after.

**Before you were born, it would have been?**

Well, it could have been when I was, you know – but I remember it when I was very young. It could have been bought – but it could well have been bought before I was born. I just don't know.

**You were born in 1917 –**

Yes.

**– just for the tape.**

Yes, yes. I'm eighty-seven now.

**So I presume that there probably was more staff to look after the horses and things before –**

There may well have been –

**– in the sort of late nineteenth century –**

– the boot boy probably once –

**– and the very early twentieth century.**

– looked after the horses and that sort of thing.

**Yes. But they perhaps didn't need them as much when you were growing up.**

But I remember one boot boy accidentally shot his grandmother.

**Ooh!**

And Granny said to the father of the boy, 'I'm so terribly sorry about your mother. Was it an accident? I'm so terribly sorry about your mother being shot.' And he said, 'Well, boys will be boys'. (laughter) This was a story that my grandmother used to tell me, too. Another stories about Grandfather, I remember a visitor while overseas was asked to spend – a scientist would come, and Grandfather asked him to spend the weekend. And Monday came and the visitor showed no sign of leaving, and Tuesday came and he was still there. And Granny said to Grandfather, 'When is Dr So-and-so leaving?' And Grandfather said, 'I will find out'. So at dinner he said, 'Well, So-and-so, I'm catching the nine o'clock train tomorrow. Which train are you catching?' So I think they left on the same train. (laughs) He was very direct, Grandfather, people knew where they were with him.

Another story I was told, when they lived in the Strangways – not the Strangways Terrace, the house – LeFevre Terrace, LeFevre Terrace, when they lived – the first

house where they came out to after they came out from England, which looked out on the parklands. It's still there, you know that big house that Uncle Lance bought for them?

**Yes, now, what's the address, do you remember?**

Well, it's LeFevre Terrace and it's on the corner of – oh, I'm not sure which street it is, but it's a semi-detached house and it's the one on the corner, right on the corner. And Granny *hated* that house because Uncle Lance, who I think was a bachelor at the time, bought the house and Granny came with three small children and nurses and it had very steep stairs, and it was a most unsuitable house that anyone could have had. Granny said it wasn't suitable at all. But they stayed there while they built the St Vigean's house, and they kept it as their winter house until they bought the one in Melbourne Street, where I was born. But yes, there was somebody who lived in the street who did something Grandfather greatly disapproved of, he was on the Council, this other man was on the Council, and Grandfather was absolutely horrified by his behaviour. And they both used to walk to town, this other man to his office and Grandfather to the University, and one day they came out at the same time in the street and Grandfather said to him, 'Well, So-and-so, which side of the street are you walking on, for I will walk on the other'. (laughter) Whereas he used to walk with him. So I think everybody knew where they were with Grandfather.

**So do you remember why he was – – –?**

No, I don't, I just know he'd done something that Grandfather considered was totally wrong, and Grandfather didn't approve of things that were, you know, not morally right. He used to be – – –.

**He wasn't an apathetic sort of person.**

No, he was not apathetic at all. (laughs)

**Good on him! So I'm just interested also in how all the different daughters of EC and Jane Stirling eventually settled in their own houses.**

Well, just before that, dear, I think I'd like to go back. There was something Ted mentioned in his tapes that when Grandfather and Granny were married, Granny had something that Grandfather wanted her to have operated on in London. Well, what happened was that they were going to live in South Australia, they were going to live

in Adelaide, and Grandfather was working here, but when Granny became pregnant with Aunt Harrie it was found that she had a cyst, an ovarian cyst, so she was pregnant with an ovarian cyst and Grandfather was not happy that she should have surgery by anyone but the doctor in London. And Aunt Harrie used to say, ‘I was seen *months* before I was born by Dr So-and-so’, because when the cyst was removed, of course, she was revealed *in utero*. But all went well and Aunt Harrie was born – you know, it was wonderful to have that operation in those days and Aunt Harrie was hale and hearty and went to full term.

**Now, she was born – where was she born again?**

In London.

**Yes.**

And so was Mother, and so was Aunt Jeannie. The three of them were born in London.

**So they stayed there for those few years.**

They stayed there and Grandfather continued his work in the London hospitals, and lecturing. And then he came back in I think it was 1981 [sic] he came back and became Chief –

**In 1881.**

– 1881, and became Chief Surgeon at the Adelaide Hospital, and it was then that he was asked to set up the Medical School.

**And that’s when they moved to LeFevre Terrace and then built St Vigean’s.**

Well, when they came back from England they went straight to LeFevre Terrace, and while he was at LeFevre Terrace the building of St Vigean’s took place, which I think they moved into in 1884.

**So before they left for England where were they living?**

I don’t know, I have often wondered. I have often meant to ask, but of course Ted might have known. I don’t know where they lived.

**All right. Now, I wanted to – you were saying also that your Granny, Jane Stirling, née Gilbert, had told you a lot of stories about her childhood at Pewsey Vale.**



Yes.

**So perhaps before we leave that generation it might be worth seeing if you can remember anything.**

Well, in a way it has been superimposed – her stories to me have been superimposed by Cousin Dolly, her niece's letter to Tony, which has been published by the Libraries Board.

**Letter to Tony who?**

Gilbert.

**Yes.**

You see, Dorothy Gilbert was William Gilbert's – William Gilbert was Jane Stirling's brother, and he inherited Pewsey Vale from his father. He was the only son. And he had eleven children, of which Cousin Dolly I think was the fifth. Several died as babies, and Henry was the oldest – he was a doctor – then Cousin Dolly. And Cousin Dolly wrote a letter, at Tony's request – Tony being Henry's son – and describing life at Pewsey Vale. And she described so much that is the same as Granny told me, that now I think I've got them a bit confused. But it was a wonderful life and it didn't seem to change much, they just had lots of visitors and they had a wonderful country life. But they were all very busy, they all had their jobs to do and they all took part in work on the property, and I think the story, as told by Cousin Dolly, is better than anything that I could tell you.

**Yes, and where is that – – –?**

But when Joseph Gilbert – Ted said he didn't quite know why he came out, but he came out with a South Australian company, he was reading *The Times* in a hotel in London when he read about I think it was the *Buckinghamshire* was about to leave for the 'new colony of South Australia', and he was in his thirties then, at least. And he thought this would be a good idea to go. So he went round to the shipping office to ask about this ship, and one of the commissioners for the South Australian company was there, and talked to him and told him all about it. So he decided then and there that he would go. This decided him, even though his brother Henry was already here. But his father tried to talk him out of coming to South Australia and said that nothing in his upbringing had prepared him for the life of a pioneer. But he

made a *tremendous* success of being a pioneer. He came out in 1839 and by 1840 [sic] was on the land at Pewsey Vale. They had a special survey done later, but he was on the land before that survey was done. And he met Anna Browne, who was in her property that her brothers had bought for her at Wangalere – W-A-N-G-A-L-E-R-E.

**That's the Brownes?**

With an 'E' –

**Yes.**

– not two 'E's', as they put in one paper[?]. (laughs) And her brothers, Dr Browne and – was a great friend of Joseph Gilbert, they'd come out on the ship together so that's how they got to know – Anna Browne came out later. She came out in 1840. And when they married, he was up in his forties and she was thirty-five, but they went on to have four children in spite of that. There was William, Jane, Sarah and Anna.

**And they all lived at – – –?**

And William had stayed there after his father died, and so Cousin Dolly was his eldest daughter, and she wrote this letter to Tony describing life at Pewsey Vale.

**And Tony being – – –?**

Her nephew, Henry Gilbert's son. Henry Gilbert's second son.

**All right. I've just got a note on that.**

I'm afraid I jump from one thing to another.

**That's all right!**

..... stay on an even keel!

**That's okay. So Dolly Gilbert's aunt was your grandmother –**

Yes.

**– and she is Jane Gilbert, who then became Jane Stirling, and did she – how did she meet her husband, EC Stirling?**

I don't know how they met first, but in the story she told me when I asked – I think probably at dances or something like that, I don't know – but there used to be polo

was played, but I don't know at what stage. Uncle Lance introduced polo when he came back, so it must have been going then because Grandfather played polo, and the Gilberts used to go and watch the polo matches up at Pewsey Vale, they used to be held on the Angases' property, the polo matches, and it's possible that they met through that, but I don't know. But Granny told me a story of Grandfather coming up ---. When people visited Pewsey Vale, in those days the train went as far as Gawler, then a carriage used to be sent to pick up the visitors and driven all the way from Gawler to Pewsey Vale. And Grandfather had decided he wanted ---.

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE B

**--- in particular, and other things that you remember that we'd like to record. So we were talking about Jane Stirling and you said that you had several other recollections from her of her life, not necessarily just at Pewsey Vale but also at St Vigean's. So if you'd like to tell me any other stories about her that would be good.**

Well, she had of course five daughters and two sons and, as I think we've mentioned before, the tragedy of the loss of the two sons -

**Yes.**

- one as a baby, Gilbert, who died when he was a few months old. The nurse didn't tell my grandmother that there was anything the matter with the baby because at the time Grandfather was ill and she was looking after Grandfather, so the nurse didn't want to worry her and Grandfather. And I think the baby had something that possibly could have been cured had they been told earlier, so that Gilbert died. And Edward, who was a very bright child, Ted said he died when he was seven - I understood he was eight, but Ted is much more likely to be right in that. But he fell from a tree, down Birch Road. He had climbed a tree, not very far up, but when he fell there was a broken branch underneath with a jagged bit sticking up, and his head struck that and it penetrated his head. And he was desperately ill for some time. He was in the Adelaide Hospital. A Dr Martin, I think, operated on him, and he had just been pronounced out of danger and the family had all drunk to the fact that Edward was now out of danger and would be improving, when he died that night. So it was a sort of double blow, as it were.

**How terrible.**

And Dr Verco said that he didn't think he'd ever seen Professor Stirling smile again after the death of Edward. It must have been the most shocking blow.

**Yes, it would have been terrible.**

But I would like to say a bit more about Grandfather that my mother – my mother told me quite a lot about him, too. She was obviously very close to her father and she said when she wanted advice she used to go to him because he always had very – you know, you went to Granny, I think, for tea and sympathy, and you went to Grandfather for advice. (laughs) That's how it seems that they strike me. But Grandfather, as you know, introduced the bill for women's suffrage in 1886. It was not passed until 1894, but he was very, very strongly in favour of women's rights and was very anxious that women should do Medicine, because my mother said he was extremely upset because a young woman – young society woman in Adelaide – married a man who had syphilis. Now, there were only male doctors, she of course got ill, nobody told her what was the matter with her, because Grandfather said men stuck together. So, to protect the husband, the woman wasn't told. And he felt strongly that there should be women doctors who could educate and look after women. And so that is why, when the Medical School started in the 1880s, there was no bar to women becoming medical students just as much as men. In fact, when the Melbourne Medical School or University wrote and asked Adelaide University how it was that they had been able to admit women, because they wanted to admit women but I think there must have been something in their constitution that prevented it, Adelaide couldn't help them because there'd never been anything to stop women doing Medicine. In fact, the first woman, Miss Flower, entered the Medical School I think two years after it began, so it was quite early in the piece.

**It's interesting, isn't it, that – well, I suppose perhaps they didn't feel an inclination, but none of his own daughters, his five daughters, actually chose to study Medicine, although they would have been able to.**

Well, my mother was the only one who would have had what would be the Matriculation, the others didn't. The others had governesses at home. And I think I should explain to you why it is that Mother was the only one to go to Cheltenham Ladies' College. As I mentioned to you, there were four children of Joseph Gilbert: William, Jane, Sarah and Anna. Now, Sarah married John Ferguson, who was a military man, and went to England and then to Ceylon where he was a – I've

forgotten what they call it – he was in charge of the military, the officers in Ceylon, and they lived in Ceylon. And at that time Joseph Gilbert died and Anna Gilbert had been looking after her father, because her mother had died some years before. And when Joseph Gilbert died, William inherited Pewsey Vale and Anna went to join Sarah Ferguson in Ceylon. And Anna stayed with Sarah for the rest of her life and looked after Aunt Sarah, who was rather delicate, and the children. In fact, she was quite a managing sort of person, she managed them all. (with amusement) She was little and round and quite a strong personality, and she ran that household, and I remember her well when we went to England when I was twelve. She was a wonderful person, but she looked after Aunt Sarah, who had bronchitis, and she used to see that everything ran smoothly, and she was a very outgoing person – a wonderful great-aunt. But when they went to England and the Ferguson girls went to Cheltenham Ladies' College, she could see what a wonderful education they had compared with the Stirlings, who had governesses. They had one very good governess when they were young, Fraulein von Düring, but she left to be married and they didn't have very good governesses then until Miss Schroeder came, but that was later when Aunt Nina was needing a governess. And Aunt Anna wrote to Grandfather and said she would very much like to educate one of his daughters at Cheltenham Ladies' College. She would take on the responsibility of the education. And so Aunt Harrie, as the eldest, was given the opportunity, and she was not in the least interested in the – she didn't really like her schoolwork at all, and she turned it down flat. So then Mother was the next one, so Mother was given the opportunity. My mother said she was fourteen and it was a nightmarish thing, because she *longed* to have a good education, she knew that they weren't getting a good one, but she hated the thought of being away from her family. But Grandfather said he would write a letter to Aunt Anna accepting it on Mother's behalf, but that Mother could post the letter or not as she chose. And so Mother was given this letter accepting, which she needn't post, or she could or not as she chose. And she went down to the Post Office in Stirling and she walked around it for about an hour, not knowing what to do. And finally she posted it and then would have done anything to get it back. So she went off for three years to England, where she stayed with the Fergusons – Aunt Anna got her her uniforms and everything – and she would spend a lot of the time with the Fergusons.

And there's a lovely letter I've got from Great-Uncle John Ferguson when she left, to say it was like losing a daughter that she should be going away, that she had been just one of the family and had been a greatly treasured one. So she was greatly – she had these wonderful cousins, they were very close, and also when she was there, of course, she used to go and stay with the Stirling relations who were – all her aunts in the Stirling side were in England as well. Used to stay with Aunt Edith, and with Aunt Mary Ingram, and with Aunt Annie, and also with her Aunt Alice, the youngest one.

**Alice – – –?**

Alice Stirling, she was the youngest, I think, wasn't she?

**Now, Alice Stirling, the youngest of whom?**

She was Grandfather's youngest sister.

**Oh, okay. And Aunt Annie you mentioned?**

Aunt Annie Dale.

**Yes.**

When we knew her she lived in [40]Green Street<sup>5</sup> –

**So how was she related?**

– and Edith lived in Elm Park Gardens.

**Okay. So these are – was Aunt Annie also a younger sister of EC Stirling?**

Yes. Well, she wasn't so much younger.

**Oh, a sister.**

She was a sister. Alice was quite a lot younger.

**So what about Mary and Edith?**

Mary was the oldest of the girls.

**So these are all sisters?**

I'm not quite sure of the order – it's on the family tree, you will see.

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<sup>5</sup> Off Park Lane, now a Middle Eastern Embassy.

**Okay.**

But Edward was the eldest and then Mary, and I think Lancelot must have come next because they were not very far apart, and then perhaps Annie, then Edith, and then Willy and Alice.

**Did Edith marry?**

Yes, she married twice. She married Arthur Gemmel – no, not Arthur. Alan Gemmel – no, Alan I think was one of her sons. She married a Gemmel, anyway, and had two sons, and he died and then she married Arthur Badcock – Batcock?

**And they all lived –**

Batcock.

**– they all lived in England, did they?**

Yes. Yes. When they went to England because of the boys' education, because there was no university here, they went back in 1864, I think it was, and the whole family went back to England. And there the girls all stayed, and the three boys came back when they grew up.

**The three boys being EC Stirling –**

EC Stirling, then Lancelot Stirling, who went back to live in The Lodge, where they were born.

**– in Strathalbyn.**

In Strathalbyn. And Willy, William, the younger son, he was the one who dyed his hair black to go to the War.

**What, so that he could pass as a younger man?**

Yes. (laughs)

**As opposed to –**

He was up in his forties.

**– dyeing it black in early mourning!**

Anyway, he went off – I've forgotten which war it was – he would have been in his forties. Might have been the 1914 war.

**So his name was –**

William.

**– William.**

I don't know what his other name was.

**Now, you had a story about Lancelot as well, who of course was – –.**

Well, Lancelot married Florence Milne, and they had three sons and two daughters. And it's very sad that there weren't any children of any of those five, three of whom married. Now, two of the boys went to the 1914 war. Eric was the eldest, and he stayed back to look after the property, but Guy and Tom Stirling went to the War. Guy was injured – he was shot, and he was injured in the leg, he had quite a limp at times I remember; and Tom was very badly shell-shocked, and I remember I met them – I can only remember meeting them both once, Guy up at The Lodge, Strathalbyn, where he lived with his parents (sound of lawnmower in distance) and he had a golf course, he didn't do anything. Ted said that he was quite a good artist and he wanted to go to France, to Paris, but his parents wouldn't agree to that. Tom had a house or cottage down near Victor Harbor, and because of the shell-shocked state he was in he was an alcoholic. And I met him once when we went down to Victor Harbor for a holiday, he came down to the railway station to see us, and he seemed such – he was a very nice fellow. But people who knew him used to tell me – and I used to say, 'Oh yes, my mother had a cousin, Tom Stirling, who lived near here'. They'd say, 'Oh, I remember him well. He was such a nice man, but he was nearly always under the weather'. And the shell shock, we never hear now of people being shell-shocked, it's all post-traumatic stress syndrome – I presume that is shell shock, I don't know.

**I think that that's one of – I mean, I think that it covers a broad range of problems –**

It must cover shell shock as well.

**– which include shell shock, but other sorts of traumas.**

But shell shock was a definite thing that people suffered from, from the Second World War and the First World War.

**It's not surprising.**



We always heard of the [people], because John Faulkner, my cousin on Dad's side, first cousin, he was shell-shocked. He went on the landings on Normandy. He wasn't on the first day but he led his men on on the second day when the Germans were ready for them, and as they landed they were bombarded and he had part of a finger blown off and he was blinded. And he suffered badly for the rest of his life from shell shock. I think he had depression. His sight came back, it must have detached – I suppose the blast detached his retinas or something – but he was blind for some months. And Sheila, his wife, told me that it was a terrible time.

**And John died a few years ago, but Sheila's still living in – England?**

Yes, she's in the nineties and she's living with one of her daughters who has made a separate little flat for her.

**With Mary?**

No, with Linda.

**Oh, with Linda, I didn't know that.**

Well, they live very close together, and Linda and her husband John bought quite a big house, because when John retired they decided they'd have this place down by the sea, a bed-and-breakfast. And John did the doing up of it and they've made it into a very nice house, because Anna and Brian stayed there.

**That was a white house, was it, is that right?**

No, that was before.

**Oh, okay.**

John and Sheila had that. And then they moved to a flat in Essex. And this is down at – oh, what's the name of the place, where they live now? I can look that up in the – but they live at the seaside. Well, Linda and John bought this place and then Sheila left this flat where she was on her own, not managing very well because she's got trouble with her back, and she has her own apartment in John and Linda's house, and in the same street Mary has bought her house, so they live very close together. And when John and Linda go away Mary is able to look after Sheila. At Christmas and that sort of thing.

**Wonderful. So they're – – –.**

But we've gone right away from – – –.

**We have, we've got away from Lance Stirling, who was the last member of the Stirling family you were talking about.**

We got onto shell shock, and Tom was badly shell-shocked. But Ted didn't mention they went to the War and that they were both of them affected by the War.

**Right. And actually I should probably clarify, too, John Faulkner's connection.**

Well, he was Dad's nephew, his sister's only surviving son.

**So he was Sidney Russell Booth's nephew, and his sister was called – – –?**

May.

**Another May.**

She married Herbert Faulkner – F-A-U-L-K-N-E-R – who was an engineer.

**Thank you. And obviously the Booth family is –**

We can go to them later. (laughs)

**– a whole nother can of worms. But, getting back to the Stirlings, so Lancelot Stirling had no grandchildren.**

None. And his two daughters, Jean Proctor and Madge Colley, were both married and neither had children. And Eric married and he had no children.

**So Jean Proctor, sorry, and –**

Madge Colley.

**– thank you.**

Colleys Reserve, they lived at Glenelg, I think.

**Yes.**

And Jean Proctor was a neighbour of the Mawsons at Brighton.

**And so Lance Stirling himself had a very interesting life and was a very important person.**

Yes. Well, he was a President of the Legislative Council for many years – it was a record, I think.

**And you said he introduced polo!**

He introduced polo to South Australia, yes. And his father had introduced Shetland ponies. (laughs)

**That's true – his father, Edward Stirling.**

Yes.

**And I remember seeing a photograph of them pulling his and EC Stirling's pony cart, Shetland ponies pulling it, outside Urrbrae House where they lived at that time.**

Yes. And I have a photograph of them all on ponies outside Urrbrae House, which they rented while the boys were at St Peter's.

**Do we know roughly when he introduced Shetland ponies?**

Yes, I think it was at the beginning of the year that they went to England. I think it was in 1864. Because Ted tells that wonderful story of the man who brought out to Urrbrae House, he arrived with the ponies, and then that man was recognised by Uncle Lance as being the Roger Tychbourne claimant, because Ted speaks of this in his tapes.

**Tychbourne?**

Yes, Tychbourne. T-Y-C-H-B-O-U-R-N-E, I think it is – I wouldn't swear to it. But there was a famous case in England: a Roger Tychbourne was thought to have been lost at sea and Lady Tychbourne was devastated, but then this man came claiming to be the lost Roger Tychbourne many years later. But Uncle Lance, who had gone through Cambridge and was then a barrister at the Inns of Court, was asked by his brother-in-law, William Ingram, if he would sit in on some of the interesting cases and report them for the *Illustrated London News*, of which he was Managing Director. And there was Uncle Lance reporting on the Tychbourne case, to see the claimant of Roger Tychbourne the man who had brought out the Shetland ponies to Urrbrae House! (laughs)

**Oh, I see. So that happened after he brought them out.**

Yes.

**So he was found to be a fake, was he?**

Yes. Well, I suppose he was a horse stealer or something, went on to be the fake Roger Tychbourne.

**Worth a try. Did he get away with it?**

Lady Tychbourne accepted that he *was* her son –

**Oh, okay.**

– so it must have been a terrible double loss for her when she lost the second Roger Tychbourne.

**Oh, dear.**

It was such a coincidence, wasn't it!

**It was, indeed. And when you said that Edward Stirling's son, Lance Stirling, introduced polo, when would that have been, do you know?**

When he came back from England – I'm not sure when he came back, probably in the 1870s, because he was at the Inns of Court for a while – then he came back to his property at Strathalbyn and polo had recently been introduced to England, I believe, from India before he came back, and he was very taken. He and Grandfather loved things with horses. And so when he came back here he introduced polo to South Australia.

**What, in the 1880s?**

1870s, 1880s, I'm not sure. I'm not sure, but he was – – –.

**I want to know whether they played polo on Shetland ponies. They might have got the children to do that!**

Hardly, hardly. Of course, Rob used to play polo later.

**Rob, your husband?**

Yes.

**Rob Morrison.**

And they played it down at Birkalla, down near the train line that ran down to Glenelg in the old days. Birkalla was on the way. Because we used to drive down on the train line which was no longer in use, leading the horse out of the car window. (laughs) Very uncomfortable procedure, I can tell you!

**It would have been. I don't hear much about polo nowadays.**

Oh, it's well and truly played out to the North somewhere, they've got new polo grounds out there.

**Okay. And so, getting back to Lance Stirling and some of the things that he did, he was an important biochemist, was he not? Is that right –**

No.

**– or am I getting him mixed up with someone else?**

You're thinking of – – –.

**Oh, I'm thinking of Thorburn Robertson, sorry. I apologise, let's forget that bit.**

No, he was very much on the Legislative Council, and he also had very – he and Grandfather had merino sheep which used to be run at Highland Valley and at Nalpa. At some times of the year they'd be up on the high ground, and sometimes they'd be down by the lake. Grandfather inherited Nalpa, I think, and Uncle Lance Highland Valley.

**So he was mainly a pastoralist and a politician.**

Yes, pastoralist and a politician.

**Thank you. And I remember now why I was mentioning Thorburn Robertson, because you told me a story off the record before about Thorburn Robertson, who was of course Aunt Jeannie's –**

Husband.

**– the second – sorry, the daughter of EC Stirling's husband<sup>6</sup>. So perhaps you could tell me a bit about Aunt Jeannie and her husband.**

Could we turn off one moment?

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B: TAPE 4 SIDE A

**Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004, and this is interview three with Nan Morrison taken by Anna Pope, and we've been talking particularly about the Stirling family with some of the other things that are connected with that, and the first thing that we want to talk about today is how EC Stirling and Jane Gilbert, the grandparents of Nan Morrison, met.**

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<sup>6</sup> *i.e.* the husband of EC Stirling's daughter.

Yes. I was hazy about that last time you asked me, but of course I remember now that William Gilbert, Jane's brother, and EC Stirling were students together at St Peter's College and became friends there. So it's pretty sure that that's how they would have met, staying in each other's houses, which they did in those days.

**And they had five daughters and –**

And two sons.

**– and we've already spoken at some length about Aunt Harrie, and we've going to speak further about your own mother, Anna. The third daughter was Jeannie –**

Yes. Jane, but she was called Jeannie. And she married Thorburn Brailsford Robertson in 1910 and went to live in California at Berkeley University where Uncle Thorburn was a lecturer. He had been a student of Grandfather EC Stirling's, and that's how Aunt Jeannie had met him. And he went on from there to Toronto, where he worked with Banting and Best on insulin before being appointed as Professor of Biochemistry at Adelaide University in 1919, when he arrived back here after Grandfather had died in the same year. And about 1923, I think it was – it could be a year or two later but I think it was about 1923 – a friend of mine, Betty Cornish, her father was – she wasn't a friend then, but became later – her father became terribly ill with diabetes, I believe he was unconscious. And Mrs Cornish told me that it was Uncle Thorburn who saved him because Uncle Thorburn, who had worked on insulin, cabled Banting and Best to ask if he could make insulin to try and save Mr Cornish's life and they gave permission. So he used to go out to the abattoirs and collect the fresh pancreases from the killed pigs and rush back to the laboratory, where a technician, Mrs Dorothy Maguire, used to work on it, and they used to produce insulin which was then rushed to the hospital and used on Mr Cornish, and he survived. And he survived on insulin for at least another twenty years, until after his daughter was grown up. And they were always saying it was Uncle Thorburn who saved his life. And he also, in his method of producing insulin from the pancreases of pigs, made a much cheaper form of insulin than had been made in Toronto, and this I think became the general way of using it in those days. Now, of course, it's all synthetic.

**Yes. Well, it's a lovely story. And I think you told me earlier another story about how he was presenting a paper at a medical dinner.**

Yes, well, he worked out a way of treating ulcers, he found some material that worked on ulcers, and Dr Gorrie, who lived at Mt Lofty, used it – I think it was Dr Gorrie who used it on I think ten patients, with a success rate of a hundred per cent. And he was asked – Uncle Thorburn was asked to give a paper on an Australian Medical Association evening, and he came to give his paper and a number of doctors got up and objected to him giving it because he was not a doctor of medicine. And I think very nobly, Uncle Thorburn left his paper to be read by somebody else, because he was so keen that this information should go. But there was terrible jealousy between doctors and scientists. Doctors did *not* want to have scientists taking any of the curative side of the profession from them. And I thought it was so small-minded of them –

**Crazy.**

– there was a general vote, and more voted for him to leave than to stay.

**Absolutely crazy.**

Yes. It goes on today. And while David was still alive – that's Uncle Thorburn's elder son – he was asked for the papers on this ulcer treatment that he had because some scientists in Melbourne wanted to work on it, and I don't know what the outcome of that was. But it was not used here, except by Dr Gorrie.

**Dr – – –?**

Gorrie, G-O-double-R-I-E. He was a friend, and he was a doctor at Mount Lofty and a friend, and he and Uncle Thorburn worked together on these things.

**And we were also talking about Aunt Jeannie, because of course she was a professional musician.**

Well, she was not really a professional, because I don't think that orchestra was professional.

**Oh, okay.**

It was all made up of amateurs and professionals. But Aunt Jeannie was a viola player, and she played in Mr Foote's[?] Orchestra, which was the fall-under[?] of the South Australian Orchestra, for a long time. And I remember hearing her as a child. And Uncle Thorburn played the cello, but that was just at home, he didn't play in the orchestra. They sometimes used to play together. Aunt Jeannie also played the

piano. And she and my mother were the only two of the family who were really musical – my mother played the piano and the violin – and it was not generally a musical family.

**I think you said that Harrie played a bit of piano –**

I think she played the piano.

**– but didn't really pursue it.**

No. She was not really very keen on – I mean, I think she quite liked music but she wasn't as keen as Mother and Aunt Jeannie were. I don't know about Aunt Mary and music because I was only eight when she died. Aunt Nina was not musical.

**Possibly because of their father, partly.**

Well, he was tone deaf. He could only tell *God save the queen* because people stood up.

**Yes. Well, I think you can't be good at everything, and he was certainly good at almost everything else, wasn't he?**

He was certainly good at a lot of things.

**He was an amazing man. So, getting back to the Robertsons, they settled not far from St Vigean's, didn't they?**

They bought the house – a very old house, Maroonica – which was not far from St Vigean's, and I can remember going there for the first time when I was two and Judith was two. And we, of course, became very close friends and we still are. She lives in Hobart and we speak every week.

**And they had three children: Judith – – –.**

There was Judith, who was born in California; and there was David, who was born here, he was four years younger; and then, four years later, Stirling, who became a doctor and David became a physicist.

**And there was a great tragedy when Judith was only twelve, is that right?**

She was twelve when her father died of pneumonia and asthma, and David was eight and Stirling was four. And because Aunt Jeannie didn't want the children to know how ill their father was – she had to take him to the hospital in Glenelg because they felt the sea air might help him – and Judith and David stayed with us and Stirling



with Aunt Harrie. And it was a frightful time because Judith said she knew her father was dying but she never mentioned it, she was terribly controlled, because she was devoted to her father. David didn't realise because he was younger. I realised because I was also twelve. And it was terrible when the news came that he had died, and Judith and David went home. And Aunt Jeannie was left with very little money because the superannuation from the University, which was small, had been tied up on his mother, who was still alive – old Mrs Robertson – and Aunt Jeannie had not a great deal of money to bring up her three children on. And I know Aunt Harrie helped with Stirling's education and my parents helped with David's education. And so she had a pretty hard time of it.

**And you said that she used to sell flowers.**

She used to sell flowers. Lilies of the valley used to grow like weeds at St Vigean's down near the pond, they used to come up in the path, and she used to get – I've forgotten what it was, each flower – and Judith and I used to pick these little flowers. And she also grew them at home. And Miss Downs, whose shop was next door to the Queen Adelaide Club, I think she was the one who used to buy them from Aunt Jeannie. She used to go down with her basket of lilies of the valley and pop in before she went to the Queen Adelaide Club. (laughs)

**I think you also mentioned something about Dorothy Maguire, she was the researcher who helped Dr Robertson.**

She was the technician who worked at the Animal Nutrition Laboratory where Uncle Thorburn was working and doing his experiments with the mice.

**Mice?**

I went there a couple of times and saw these – terrible smell of mice, I remember!

**So he taught as well as researched.**

Ah, yes. And I presume he lectured, but he certainly did a lot of research.

**Yes.**

He was in the middle of some important research when he got this bad cold, and he insisted that his work could not wait, so he went to work and got pneumonia and died, and this was always held up to us: it was better to go to bed with a cold! (laughs)

**Absolutely.**

It was an object lesson. But it was a tragedy, because he was a very outstanding scientist, and a terrible loss to the community, really, because he had so much to contribute. He was, I think, forty-six when he died.

**Terrible. Were there any other anecdotes or things that you wanted to tell us about the Robertson family?**

Well, I don't think so. We just spent a lot of time together with holidays, and Judith and I used to have – and we were at the University together. We also went across to Melbourne for a year to the Invergowrie Homecraft Hostel. I didn't know what I wanted to do. Judith knew she wanted to do Science. I had no idea what I wanted to do, so Judith was really a bit young to go to the University, her mother thought it was a good idea if she had a year off after school, and I refused to go to Invergowrie unless Judith went too, so we both went (laughs) and we both didn't really like it, and Judith *hated* it. I was *terribly* homesick, and I think a living proof of that is that I have a collection of seventy-six letters that I wrote to my parents. Even though we came home every holiday and my parents used to come to Melbourne every term to see me halfway through, I still managed to write seventy-six letters to them in that time!

**What did you do at the place in Melbourne?**

Oh, it was a general – we did, you know, the general things that you would do to run a house, house management.

**So it was sort of like a finishing school, was it?**

No, it was not a finishing – they insisted it was *not* a finishing school, and we weren't taught all the arranging flowers and that sort of thing. It was how to run your own house, and also home nursing, first aid and working in a kindergarten – all sorts of things to give you some idea, I think, of general things in life. And I think there were about thirty boarders and there were some day girls, but Judith and I, of course, were boarders. And we had quite a lot of experiences there. And I think it was there that I knew that I wanted to go into the medical side of things, and it was while I was at the Invergowrie Homecraft Hostel that I realised I would like to do Physiotherapy. But of course I had refused to do the Leaving at school, so it meant I had to come back

and do Leaving to be able to get into Physiotherapy, which I did the following year, and I have never regretted it. But Invergowrie was – well, my parents said it was to wean me from them, because I was a very, very home-loving daughter. And when my father asked me what I wanted to do I said, ‘I want to stay at home’. (laughs) And he said no, I needed to have something to earn my living. So I had to think, and I think Aunt Harrie took me to Mareeba and – you know, whether I’d like to be a mothercraft nurse, or – – –. I didn’t want to do any of those things, but I did want to be a physiotherapist, I found in the end. And that’s what I have been.

**You’re also going to talk about the Buxton Street house that your parents eventually bought.**

Well, they bought it in 1917 –

**Before that?**

– and we moved there when I was six months old. Before that they’d had a house near Annesley College in Parkside, in Palmer Street, I think it was, which Mother said was full of salt damp. And then I think they had a little time at Melbourne Street, which was my grandparents’ house where I was born. That was because it was terribly hot, I was born in a heatwave and my mother had an underground room which was cold – they had two big underground rooms there, so I was born (laughs) underground at Melbourne Street. The house is still there and so is the room. And then my mother and father bought the Buxton Street house. Now, when my mother died in 1939, in May 1939, my father had – Ted didn’t have a job. He was looking for work, there was terrible unemployment at that time, and he and Freya were married before Mother died, I think because she wanted to see that – they had been engaged for a long time and she wanted to see them married. And Dad gave Ted an allowance – we had most wonderful parents, we couldn’t have had better parents, I always think – and my father gave Ted an allowance and the use of the Tennyson cottage for Ted and Freya to live in, and the use of the car that Mother was not driving, so that they could be independent. And Mother knew that they were having a child before she died, but of course never lived to see Andrew. And, as I say, Ted hadn’t been able to get a job. Rob was here looking for a job, and Rob got one at the ABC. He had – I’ll have to get back to him later. But when Mother died it was decided that Ted and Freya, who could not afford to buy a house – they wanted to

live in the Hills and Dad had a block of land up in the Hills where he built Arbroath. He and Freya used to pore over house plans which they drew up and a house was built, rather on the design that Aunt Harrie had built her house, Brothock, which was at the top of Ayers Hill Road and the top of Birch Road. And so Dad's house was rather the same style only bigger, because it was built for him and Ted and Freya and a family, and it was designed for that and also for a maid, because Dad employed a maid all the time that they lived together until he died.

**Thank you.**

And what I was going to say was that when he built that house, Rob and I were engaged to be married and Rob had a job, and Dad offered me the Buxton Street house, because he was building for Ted and Freya and then he felt that I should be offered the house. And I thought about it very carefully – I loved that house, but it was so much a family house where we had been so very happy as a family, I didn't think it was a good idea for Rob and me to start our married life where all I would be doing would be missing my parents, and it wasn't a very good site for Rob. And I said I felt we should start afresh. And so the house was let and then later Dad again asked – Rob and I had bought a house at Glenunga which was on that side of town because with Dad living at Mount Lofty we thought it would be nearer for us to communicate. Because with the War on later Dad of course stayed with me quite often. When he had trouble with his leg he would often stay with me so I could take him to the doctor, when his leg was amputated he stayed with me. But before he sold the house finally, just after the War I think, he again asked me would I like it, because he was determined to be fair to us both. And I said no, I really did want to stay at Glenunga because that was where Rob and I had made *our* home and made *our* garden; and I always think, although it was not nearly such a good house as the one at North Adelaide, I still think we made the right decision.

**Oh, you had a beautiful garden.**

Yes. The house was – – –.

**Huge garden.**

Yes, it was a lovely garden that Rob planted, and we had room for two horses there and the fowl house. It was a lovely place to bring up a family, and we had

neighbours that were friends and Anna went to PGC<sup>7</sup> and we were right on the tramline for Robert to go to St Peter's. And so I'm sure it was the right decision. I was sorry to see the Buxton Street house go, and of course the cottage at Tennyson was sold fairly near the beginning of the War because we had terrible shortage of houses and there were squatters. If a house was left empty it was squatted in, and you just had no way of putting people out. And we had no petrol – well, I had one and a half gallons a month, which wouldn't get one to Tennyson and back, and so Dad said that he thought the only thing was to sell the Tennyson house, and it was very sad but we just couldn't get up and down for holidays or weekends, and so that house was sold and later the Buxton Street house was sold. And it was sold to, I think, a dentist who came from Broken Hill.

**I remember the Buxton Street house because a friend of mine owned it during the '80s and I visited them there. And I think your parents had built a ballroom out the back, hadn't they?**

When my mother had to have an operation for an abscess in her frontal sinus, they took about the size of a shilling or ten cent piece out of her – just where the eyebrow is. You couldn't really see, except I could see – when she was tired you could see the throbbing, because there was no bone there. And she always was very susceptible to noise. And they built this room out the back so we would be able to play and make plenty of noise and not disturb her. And this was used by a friend who lived in the same street, Stephanie Edwards, to give dancing classes, and Ted was one of the pupils. And I remember I used to – as I was six years younger I used to go down and watch them dancing. I thought this was wonderful! And so they had, you know, a number of young people used to come and have their dancing classes there with Stephanie Edwards, who lived further up Buxton Street.

**I think the house in question was at – is it 104 or 204?**

Hundred and four.

**A hundred and four Buxton Street.**

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<sup>7</sup> PGC – Presbyterian Girls' College (now Seymour College).

And my very great friend, Marcia Jack [later Marcia Blackburn], lived at fifty-two Buxton Street<sup>8</sup>, and we were great friends until she died – I think it was nearly eighty years.

**So you said that your – did your parents have a maid at Buxton Street?**

Oh, yes, we always had a maid. And my father continued to have one after my mother died. And the one we had at Buxton Street, Helen, who was the same age as I was, she didn't want to go to Mount Lofty, so they got a new one, Olive, who lived at Mount Lofty, and she was very helpful when Freya was so ill and Andrew was a small boy. I went up – Rob was in the Army at that stage, and I went up and stayed for a while, but I was having another child, I had Anna then, and I looked after Ted and – Ted was at the hospital a lot of the time and I looked after – well, the maid was there but she went on holiday, and I was looking after Dad and Ted and Andrew and Anna as a baby for a while. But it was in summer, and I was terribly allergic to the grasses, and I got really ill and had to come home again. And so that was before Robert was born, and of course Glenunga Avenue was left empty while I was up there and so it was really, when I went home again, it was really better. (sound of handling papers) But Olive then was – of course she did all the cooking, and another woman came in to do heavy cleaning, but the Schuberts lived in the cottage and so Toni used to do a lot to help with Andrew.

**And did Olive live in the house at Arbroath –**

Yes, yes.

**– in the maid's room?**

Yes. Just opposite the kitchen?

**Yes.**

You know, in that little passage.

**Yes.**

And she had a bathroom. And when she left there was another one, and then I think Freya said she'd rather have somebody coming in for the day and she had a woman

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<sup>8</sup> Now gone; part of Helping Hand nursing home.

who came in every day. When she was better she wanted to do the cooking herself, she'd always been used to doing it at home when she was at The Cedars, her family home<sup>9</sup>. But of course for two years she couldn't do it, she was so ill with the abscess on her lung.

**And did you ever have a maid at Glenunga?**

I used to have somebody that came to clean; I didn't have a maid at Glenunga.

**Not a live-in maid.**

No.

**But at Buxton Street there was a live-in maid as well, wasn't there.**

Always, yes, yes. She had a room – if you remember, when you went in the main hall and you turned down a long passage –

**Yes.**

– the maid's room was the first door on the right.

**Oh, okay.**

And mind was the second door on the right. Dad's dressing room was the first on the left and Ted's room was the second on the left. (laughs) That was a lovely old house.

**Yes, it was quite big, too.**

Oh, yes.

**Stretches right down the block.**

Yes. It doesn't leave much garden, though.

**No, that's right.**

Had a beautiful fig tree and a beautiful apricot tree, (laughs) I well remember! But I don't know if they're still there. And then that lovely room down the back. We used to have a gramophone and a lot of my friends I used to have for musical evenings, they used to come and we used to play records – there were about twelve of us, I

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<sup>9</sup> Heysen family – her father was Sir Hans Heysen.

suppose, when I was at university used to come there every fortnight. We had what we called 'the Mutual Benefit Society', and –

**Lovely.**

– my mother used to provide – I used to be allowed to go and buy the cakes, and I used to buy some rather expensive ones. Mother felt I'd better (laughs) tone it down a bit, every fortnight. And it was a lovely way to entertain friends.

**It was wonderful. And I think, I remember Grandfather mentioned, you used to have poetry reading and music appreciation and stuff –**

Well, *I* didn't have poetry reading.

**– in that room.**

It was always – – –. *He* may have, but I had music, mine were all music evenings. And a friend, Michael Quinn-Young, had made the gramophone, which was a marvellous – he was an engineer and he used to listen to it, and he used to do little bits of adjustment and this, that and the other, and it had a huge baffle board, so that it was a very good reception we had from it.

**And one thing that I think you mentioned you wanted to say something more about last week, last time we were together, was the Hurst family who used to be maids at St Vigean's.**

Well, the Hurst family – yes, this is something: Joe Hurst, who was, I suppose, not much younger than Joseph Gilbert, had come from Wiltshire. He was a blacksmith. And he came out to join my great-grandfather, Joseph Gilbert, he came out to Pewsey Vale, and there he married and he had a cottage on the property at Pewsey Vale and had five children. And Bessie, the eldest daughter, became my nurse, and May, the younger daughter – her name was really Mary, but she was called 'May' because of Aunt Mary – she became a housemaid when she was fourteen with Granny at St Vigean's. And May stayed – – –.

END OF TAPE 4 SIDE A: TAPE 4 SIDE B

[Hurst family continued] – – – been right through the War, the two older ones who were old enough, and went right through unscathed, whereas two of the Gilberts were killed. But I remember a picture of these three boys, the two sons, two first sons, that had gone to the War, and Will, who was too young, who would have gone had he



been old enough, but he wasn't. (laughs) And they always commented on the fact that their two brothers came back without having anything the matter, while the two Gilberts were killed. And then they moved to – I think that house, I've forgotten what happened, they had to move and they went down to Croydon where Bessie had a big garden and had fowls and grew vegetables, right up to the time she went into the nursing home. But Ted and I got very worried because they had no telephone, and one of them had a bad fall and it took a lot of trouble to get help, and so Ted and I had a telephone installed for them. And I don't think they liked the telephone very much, but at least they could use it in emergencies! (laughs)

**And, just to clarify, too, when we were speaking before about Maroonica I should have said it's 10 Milan Terrace, Stirling, the location of that house. And Brothock is Laurel Road –**

No, not Laurel Road.

**– is it? No, sorry.**

It's Birch Road.

**Birch Road.**

Birch Road, yes. At the top of Birch Road, just round the corner from Ayers Hill Road.

**That's right. And Arbroath, where Ted and Freya – – –.**

Well, that was the other side of the main road.

**A hundred and sixty – – –.**

I don't know the number. It was Old Mount Barker Road.

**I think it was 164 Old Mount Barker Road, Stirling, just across the road from the tennis court on Old Mount Barker Road.**

Yes, yes.

**And I myself spent a lot of time there.**

And the bottom of their land went down to Pomona Road until it was acquired for the freeway.

**Yes, that's right.**

And to me Arbroath lost its charm when the freeway – that awful noise.

**Yes.**

Ted said he got used to it, but it really was awful – and took the bottom part of the garden.

**It was a great imposition, yes.**

And it took the whole water supply that they had, the most marvellous water supply. It took that. And it took three acres.

**Yes, it's unfortunate. That would have happened throughout the route of the freeway, I'm sure lots of land would have got broken up.**

Yes.

**Well, there's a lot more information, of course, about Arbroath in the tapes with ES Booth in the Oral History Collection.**

Yes.

**Were there any other things that you'd like to talk about with relation to your parents and Buxton Street?**

Well, my father, of course, had osteomyelitis and had frequent bouts of abscesses and so on. He worked sometimes when you would think nobody *could* work, but then, when his abscess would ....., he'd run a high temperature and have to be rushed off to hospital to have his abscess opened. And we had this sort of thing, but it was – in spite of this, Ted and I had an extraordinarily (telephone rings) settled family life – in spite of the setbacks with Dad's leg, we had a remarkably settled life. You know, Ted and I were – I asked my mother once: I said, 'Am I spoilt?' And she said, 'No, dear, you are indulged.' (laughs) We both of us were indulged, we both felt very secure at home, and we could talk to our parents about anything. And Ted and I, although there was that big gap, we – when we were young, of course, I was just a nuisance, I think – but when I was about fourteen I got interested in music, and Ted and I had quite a lot in common, and he used to talk about art and we used to go to things together and we became friends, but not until I was about fourteen. And he, of course, was in Melbourne the year that I was at Invergowrie, too, so I used to see him there at the Morrisons' because I used to go to the Morrisons' every Sunday.

**He was doing his Honours at Melbourne University.**

He was doing Honours and terribly bored with the subject he had, poor dear, he hated it. But he used to enjoy going to the Morrisons', taking his gramophone and records to play to them. And I used to go on Sundays because we had those days off from Invergowrie.

But one thing that ties up Invergowrie was what I was saying about Dad's leg. When we did Home Nursing we had our practical exam, we had to go in to a doctor who would question us about things, and the first thing the doctor said was, 'Tell me, how would you make a bread poultice?' Well, I'd made *hundreds* for my father to put on his leg so I rattled it off and she said to me, 'Have you ever *made* a bread poultice?' I said, 'Yes, my father has osteomyelitis.' She said, 'Oh, well then you would know all about it.' (laughs) And so I used to help Dad doing his dressings when I was a child. My mother always said that Dad had had to cope with his leg since he was eight, and she felt she liked to be there with him when he did his leg – sometimes she would do it for him – but she always felt it was a lonely thing to have to cope with his leg. And so when he stayed with me after Mother died, you know, I used to always try and do his leg for him – before it was amputated, of course, and after that I gave him exercises to try and get him ready for an artificial leg. But it was a very heavy leg, you know, it was a terrible effort for him getting round with that artificial leg, as it often made his stump sore, and so he'd just have to get round on crutches.

But anyway, to get back to Buxton Street: as I said, we were terribly fortunate in our parents. And I don't think either of us liked school much. I said at the age of ten, I remember, 'Do I have to go to school? It greatly interferes with my life.' I didn't regard school as part of my life at all, it was something (laughs) extraneous I had to endure. But I *loved* the university. But of course every summer – when I was eight we bought the house at Tennyson, and because it was right on the seafront we used to go down there for three months every year, so at the beginning of the year I used to come to school by train and I enjoyed doing that. And then, when it was hot, you'd go home and dive into the sea. It was marvellous. But that house had elastic sides: it had three bedrooms, but the dining room became a bedroom and the little front porch became a bedroom – we used to have sometimes ten people sleeping in that house. And we had the most marvellous holidays there.

**Now, that's – do you know the address of the house?**

No. Unfortunately, Ted and I do not know what happened to my parents' address book. He thought I had it, I thought he had it. And I thought it would have been at Arbroath, but nowhere could it be found. And it would have had addresses of people in England, lots of things that we wanted. But all I know is that the name of the house was "Kanoundra", and it was The Esplanade, it was right on the seafront. And there was no road in front; the road went behind. We had a lawn running down round to the top of the sand cliffs and then steps down onto the beach, so there was nothing to interfere with our sight of the sea.

**I think we looked for it at one time, Grandfather and myself –**

I think it's gone.

**– and we couldn't find it.**

I think there are flats there now. I have looked for it a number of times, and I think I've stood in front of where it was. But I think it's flats now.

**Because it was quite near the Gilberts' place – The Grange, was it called?**

The Gilberts were about halfway between us and the jetty. We were fifty-five chains, as the old measurement, from the jetty. And I remember that very well, because I said once, 'I'm going to swim to the jetty' – that's over half a mile, you see – 'before I am fourteen.' And, two days before I was fourteen, Dad said, 'I thought you were going to swim to the jetty before you were fourteen.' And a friend of ours, Mr Forbes – the Forbes' used to take a house down near us for the holidays, and that was always very pleasant, and Mr Malcolm Forbes was lovely with young people, he was a master at St Peter's and that's how my parents got to know him, he was Ted's master at one stage – and he said, 'I'll swim with you.' So we swam to the jetty – against the tide, the tide was going the other way – but I got there, but I wouldn't like to tell you what style I swam in. I think it was sidestroke, backstroke, overarm, breaststroke, everything, just to get there! And then Mr Forbes insisted that we ran back. I've never felt anything like my legs, they were like lead! (laughter) And the next day was my birthday. I was fourteen. And I never did it again. I used to love swimming but I was not trained to be a long distance swimmer, I'd never swum a long distance before, so half a mile was a bit of a long one.

**It does sound it.**

But Forbes' used to stay down near us, and the Wells family, Guy Wells family, lived down there and so my parents used to have bridge fours, they used to come to us because Dad often would be resting. He had a sort of stretcher under the window he could lie on, and when he couldn't go on the beach he could just look out at the sea because Dad and I both *loved* the sea, and Mother and Ted both loved the Hills, so we used to just – I just used to love that time. I still love the sea, but of course I don't get much chance to get there now. If I stand on the front lawn here I can look at the sea on a fine day. (laughs)

**Yes. Ah well, it's lovely and peaceful up here, of course.**

But, you know, my parents had a lot of friends, and of course the aunts used to come. And sometimes, if there was some crisis, Aunt Harrie would arrive. And when I was little she used to take me off to stay to make it easier for Mother to go to hospital to see Dad and that sort of thing. And it was wonderful having all these wonderful aunts.

**Yes, lovely. And I should just say that this here is 6 Bradfield –**

This is 6 Bradfield Street, Burnside.

**– Burnside.**

And we did live at 21 Glenunga Avenue, Glenunga. And we lived there for forty-one years, and we bought it in August 1939, just before we were married and just before the War broke out. And so we lived there and the children grew up there, and Robert always is so thankful we had a large garden because he used it to the full. He was always outside. He had a cricket team who used to play in the garden, and then in winter they had a football team, the neighbouring children. And when Robert was fourteen I said I wanted my garden back. (laughs) So the side lawn became a garden again, because I felt we were going to lose windows when they were as large as that. And they used to just get round to the Glenunga oval when they were old enough to go off on their own. But yes, it was wonderful having that garden. We had a barbecue in it, and the children, when they grew up, they had dances out in the arbour. They had a couple of dances with a lantern put up under the weeping elm – it all looked lovely.

**Wonderful. And I should just point out that your husband is Robert –**

Robert [Hay] Morrison.

– **Morrison, and your children are Anna and Robert –**

Well, Rob. My husband is Rob –

– **Morrison, which is a little bit confusing, yes.**

– and my son is Robert [Goyder Booth Morrison]. (laughs)

**Just for the tape, for the historians of the future.**

Yes.

**And of course you're known as 'Nan', whereas your daughter's name is Anna.**

Yes, yes. Well, Anna was called after my mother, Anna Stirling, and my mother had died, you see, in May and I married in September. And Aunt Harrie – the wedding reception was at Aunt Harrie's. It was very small, just sort of family and very close friends, I think twenty-three of us, because the War had just broken out, Mother had died in May, and so Rob and I got married and had the reception – afternoon tea – at Aunt Harrie's.

**At Brothock?**

At Brothock. And we moved straight into Glenunga Avenue. There was no chance of having a honeymoon. Rob had – we were married on a Wednesday, I think he had four days off before he went back to work because all leave had been cancelled in the ABC, where he worked. And he was then an announcer, then after the War, after the War ended, the ABC wanted to start an independent news service, and so Rob was seconded out later, in 1945 I suppose it was, to start the independent news service with the ABC. Because, before that, they had taken their news from *The Advertiser* and *The News*. So the independent news service came into being, and Rob had to go around the state appointing correspondents, their own correspondents. From Broken Hill to Darwin, Alice Springs and all over the state he had correspondents who were sending in news stories for the independents. But the papers fought the ABC like *mad* and tried to stop them getting stories, but the ABC were thrilled when they heard one day that the ABC news was run in the *Advertiser* offices so they could hear what the news was (laughs) from them. Eventually the 'war' stopped in the press area, and

Rob had a most wonderful – he got a wonderful staff around him. It was a very good news service at that stage.

**Excellent. And both of your children, of course, have done notable work and been recently recognised for that.**

Yes. Well, Robert is next week receiving the OAM<sup>10</sup> for his work for science education and science communication and his work for the environment, and Anna received her OAM last year for her work for the Botanic Gardens. She was one of the founders of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens, she was on the first committee and was one of the founders of the guides of the Botanic Gardens. She was a guide for many years. Then she was on the board of the Botanic Gardens, and for ten years she was the editor, with Eric Simms, of *The Gazette of the Friends of the Botanic Gardens*, and so she received an OAM last year. She's fourteen months older than Robert so it was very suitable that (laughs) she got it first. But I think it's lucky I didn't have three children, because everybody would be looking at the honours list next year!

**And did you want to say anything more about your children?**

Well, if I started I wouldn't stop! (laughter) They have been everything one could wish. And we're fortunate in they both live in South Australia, Robert at Bridgewater, Anna in Rose Park, and so we see them – – –.

**Yes, and you have five grandchildren.**

We have five grandchildren and –

**And – – –?**

– three great-grandchildren.

**Yes, you're very lucky.**

We have one grandchild, Mary, in London. She's been there now for must be four years.

**That's Mary Cox.**

Mary Cox.

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<sup>10</sup> OAM – Medal of the Order of Australia.

**Jane Cox?**

And Jane is living here in Norwood, married to David Wright, and she's got a daughter Julia. And Anna's son, Tom, is now in New York with his wife, Kate, and two children, Benjamin, four, and Elise, one – well, four and half and one and a quarter, I suppose. They have been for two years in Brussels in Belgium for Tom's work – he is a lawyer in New York, a corporate lawyer. He spent last week in Russia because he has been involved in breaking up a great big company in Russia into fourteen companies.

**Goodness.**

(laughs) And I think last week was his last trip, he hopes, to Russia because it's terrible. They spend all night on the 'plane, work next day, fly home next day and it's not much fun –

**No.**

– especially when you've got a young family.

**It would be terrible. And of course he was there on nine-eleven.**

He went right through. He was at Liberty Plaza One when the first 'plane hit in the [World] Trade Centre, and Benjamin was at a child care centre about two doors away. And Tom collected Benjamin and they were running through the ashes falling on them. Tom couldn't see where they were going and he fell once, but managed not to fall on Benjamin. Benjamin was nearly two, I think five days short of being two, and Tom saw people leaping from the building. It must have been a terrible experience. And he got down to the river where they got a ferry across to New Jersey and got to a rather seedy hotel where he could clean up Benjamin and get a room, because they couldn't get in touch with Kate who was at the United Nations Building. And she got in touch with them that afternoon to know they were alive, but they couldn't meet up together till the next day. But anyway, that is another story.

**A terrible story, yes.**

And then Robert's two sons are here, married. One [James] is living at Rostrevor in his house, and Callan, the younger one, who is twenty-four, and his wife, Vic, are in the process – we hope – of buying a house at Reynella. It's just a question of all the funding coming together. I hope they get it because at the moment they're paying the



earth in rent, and as Vic only has casual work they can't afford paying what they are in rent with nothing at the end of it.

**Yes. And Callan's in computers, isn't he? Callan works in computers.**

He works in computers, yes.

**And isn't James working at the ABC?**

He's in the – yes, he's working in the News Department at the ABC, and he also is doing further study, and he also spends one morning working in a bookshop, Matilda's, at Mount Lofty, which means he collects more and more books. They can hardly have room for them in his house. But he can get them at a discount, and they call him 'the Oracle of the Hills', because he knows where every book can be found. (laughs) A lot of people go to him at Matilda's. Because when I went to Dymock's and Angus and Robertson's to get a book neither of them could get it for me, so I rang up James and James, in five minutes, told me yes, he could get it for me.

**Good on him! The world needs efficient people.**

Yes. Well, he's very, very good at chasing up where you can get books.

**Excellent.**

Getting back to Buxton Street, of course Ted went across to St Peter's. He used often to bicycle to St Peters from there. And I went to a school called Creveen, which is at Palmer Place where I used to walk to school. And when Dad was not laid up with his leg he used to walk me to school and then he'd walk on to town. He loved walking, you know, and it was a great hardship when he couldn't walk. But I don't know if you've read my father's memoir.

**No, I haven't.**

Well, when he had his leg amputated, and for a long time he couldn't do anything, Ted and I persuaded him to write his memoirs. He had kept diaries for a lot of his time. He kept a diary of our trip in 1929 when we went to England. That was a marvellous time. But he wrote, in the 1940s, he wrote his memoirs and that's something that you'd find very interesting.

**Indeed. And have you written *your* memoirs?**

I've written bits. I've written *A child traveller* in 1929 when we went to England, and – no, I haven't. I'm doing (laughs) my memoirs now!

**Oh, well, I think we'll need to buy some more tapes to do some more memoirs later on.**

But I must speak about when we lived at Buxton Street, the family all together and very happily together. And then my parents always talked about when they went to England, because all my father's family – he had nobody here apart from us, he didn't have any of his brothers and sisters – he had a brother and a sister. But he had a brother in Japan and a sister in Jamaica or Curaçao in the West Indies, because she was married to a mining engineer. And so there was a plan that they would all meet together with my grandmother Booth, who was in London. And so, in the days when there were no telephones and everything had to be done by letter and cabling, it was quite a job to get all of them back to England together in 1929. And I can remember my parents talking about 'when we go to England', and I suppose I must have been about ten. And I said, 'When *are* we going to England?' And Dad said, 'When my ship comes in.' And I was amazed because I didn't know we had a ship. (laughs) Anyway, finally, I remember coming home from school and Dad was home early and they were poring over a plan of a ship on the sitting room table, and they had decided we would go by the Blue Funnel Line [*Nestor*] around South Africa, and we would come back through the canal on the *Orama*, [P&O Orient] Line. And so this was the – I remember being shown where our cabins would be, because Mother – because I was only twelve, I was only eleven when the booking was done and I could have travelled as a child, which would have meant that I couldn't go on the top two decks, I would have to have meals separately from the family, but as I turned twelve before we went I was allowed to travel as an adult so my parents paid an adult fare, so I went as the youngest adult on the ship. And I'm so glad I did because I would have been away from my parents for meals, I would have missed out on a lot of things. And so I travelled as an adult. And that was an amazing story because we left here on the *Nestor* and it must have been at the end of March in 1929, and my father had been to the doctor's to make sure his leg was in good condition. We were travelling on the Blue Funnel Line because it had a doctor. Well, I think any ship that had over a hundred passengers had to have a doctor on board, but because of my father's

uncertainty with his leg it was decided we should travel on a ship where there was medical attention.

So we set off on this wonderful trip on the *Nestor*, and I can remember the excitement when we got to Western Australia and we went on shore at Fremantle, because this was the first time my foot had touched soil outside South Australia. Ted had been to Melbourne so he was very much more ahead of me. And then, when we got to Durban, I can remember coming into the wharf and the smell smelt quite different, it was a sort of spicy smell, it was quite different to the smell of Australia. And then we went on to – we had two days in Durban where our ship was re-coaled. It was a coaling ship, and that was terrible because all night the coaling went on and it was the most terrible noise, and some people went ashore to stay for the night. I could see why. But none of us had much sleep and I remember we went off to see Durban feeling very exhausted and very glad we were to sail again. Well, I loved Durban, I must say. It was a beautiful – we had beautiful weather there. And then we went round to Cape Town, and as we were coming to Cape Town my father's leg began to play up, he was getting an abscess, and so instead of going on a bus tour with other people we had to hire a car so my father could put his leg up. We went at Cape Town, that wonderful trip motoring – it was a ninety-nine mile trip, motoring around the coast past Simonstown and down to what was said to be where the Atlantic met the Indian Ocean. I think my geography's right, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. And standing there. And I declared one side was a different colour from the other, but nobody else could see (laughs) where they met. I believe that the meeting is actually about five miles further on now, but we thought we were seeing it. It was where they thought it was the meeting of the oceans.

END OF TAPE 4 SIDE B: TAPE 5 SIDE A

**This is side A of tape five with Nan Morrison, and I'd just like you to continue about your trip to Europe.**

Well, that next day my father – that night my father became very ill indeed and his leg simply blew up, and my mother realised he had an abscess which had to be opened. And so she called the ship's doctor, whose name was Dr Johnston, and Dr Johnston we didn't realise was on the ship because he really wasn't capable of doing any doctoring. And he came to see my father and Dad was delirious by this time, and

he said he thought perhaps the bacon at breakfast had not agreed with him. And there was his great, swollen leg! Well, we were travelling on the ship with Rae Elder and her daughter Mary, who was about sixteen or seventeen at the time, and Rae Elder knew Dr Stansfield, a leading physician from Sydney, who was on the boat. And she told Dr Stansfield what had happened and he went down and asked my mother could he see my father. And, of course, she was thankful. And he saw exactly what was the matter and he knew that at Cape Town, a Dr Gluckman, who was a young surgeon, had got on and he called in Dr Gluckman. And of course they couldn't do anything on the boat because Dr Johnston was in charge, but these two men together went to Dr Johnston and said Dad – Mr Booth – was so ill, would Dr Johnston like them to look after him, because they realised that Dr Johnston had the whole ship on his hands.

**Very tactful.**

And Dr Johnston very gratefully said yes, he would be quite happy. And Dad was moved up into the ship's hospital, which was simply not equipped for much at all, hardly any provisions for illness. And I remember a call went out for anyone who had cotton wool or rag or anything, could they hand it into the purser's office. And any disinfectants. There was nothing. I can remember hearing two passengers talking, saying, 'What would have happened if there was a fire on the ship? What would Dr Johnston have done?' There was nothing to have done. Well, the ship was actually stopped while Dr Gluckman operated on Dad's leg. He said it was so close to the main artery that the danger was that it could haemorrhage, and if it didn't haemorrhage they hoped he would get alive to England, because the infection had spread very much. And so Dad was in the hospital, there were not enough people to look after him, so passengers who had been nurses volunteered, and they did a round-the-clock roster to look after Dad. It was absolutely wonderful – my mother of course was looking after him all the time. But these two doctors, Dr Gluckman and Dr Stansfield, really saved Dad's life. We called in at Las Palmas on the way and there my mother was cabling to the Victoria League, because she was President of the Victoria League in Adelaide, or Vice-President. Think she was President. And Dad was the auditor for them. And the Victoria League organised a hospital for Dad and they had an ambulance to meet the ship at the dock at Liverpool, where we got in.

And Dad was asked whether he would like to stay in Liverpool and have a Dr Jones, who was a well-known surgeon, but he was known as ‘Butcher Jones’ and Dad said no, he didn’t want Butcher Jones and he would rather go on to London. So we went by train from Liverpool to London, to the hospital, and Dr Gluckman went to the hospital to hand Dad over to Dr Love, who was Dad’s surgeon in London. And, you know, Mother asked that they would send in an account. They would not send in – they would not be paid a penny for all that attention. And Dr Gluckman had seen Dad at least twice a day, *and* operated on him.

**Gave them something to do on the trip, probably! Might have been boring otherwise.**

No, no, it wasn’t boring, there was lots to do on the trip, it was a wonderful – you know, all these wonderful games. Deck tennis and all sorts of things, there was plenty to do. But, I mean, they just were committed to being wonderful doctors. And what’s more, Dr Stansfield used to play in a trio down in the dining room in the afternoons, he played cello, and it was there that I heard the cello being played for the first time as an instrument apart from an orchestra, and it was then that I wanted to play the cello. And it was Dr Stansfield who inspired me (laughs) to learn the cello. But anyway, Dad was got to the hospital in South Kensington, and the matron of the hospital said that she had never had anyone come into the hospital so ill who had lived to leave it again. And he was there for weeks, because he had to have a huge operation. Dad wanted his leg amputated, but Dr Love didn’t want to amputate it because he had had trouble in the other leg once, and so he was operated on and he recovered very, very slowly. But there was Mother in London, we were in a private hotel, Ted was seventeen and a half and able to get himself around, but I was only twelve. (break in recording)

**You were only twelve.**

Yes, I was twelve and so I couldn’t really –

**And marooned in London.**

– get let loose on London. And so my mother and I went round to the Victoria League, they were wonderful – you know, Victoria League was working right through the world, really. My mother used to help people in Adelaide when they arrived from England, and the Victoria League was wonderful for us. And Mother

asked was there anybody they could suggest who could take me around London? And they said yes, there was somebody: a Miss Sannah Lee. They would ask if she was free. Now, Miss Anna Lee, she must have been – at twelve I suppose you're not very – I think she would have been about sixty, she was a musician, a pianist. She had learnt in Germany from Lester Titschke, and had been a fellow pupil with Mark Hamburg, another well-known pianist. But then the 1914 war must have come and sort of cut her career off. And I think she was very poor, living in a bedsitting room, with a gas ring, and she was incredibly ugly with dyed red hair and extremely knowledgeable and extremely nice, and I don't think she was very good with children but I was very used to grown-ups so we got on very well. And Ted got on with her very well, too, so sometimes Ted used to choose to come out with us. But Miss Lee didn't believe – and she would come five days a week, at nine o'clock I think it was, or half-past nine, to the hotel; Mother was completely free to go to the hospital and spend all the time with Dad, Ted could do what he liked so visiting people and going round to museums and just doing anything that he chose to do, while Miss Lee took me sightseeing round London. Nobody could have had a better introduction to London than I had. And then she used to take me back at lunchtime to the hotel – I think it was at lunchtime – to the hotel, or sometimes after lunch or the middle of the afternoon at times. And there was a very nice manageress in the hotel, Miss Brown, who told Mother I could be left with her any time, that she would like to keep me there if it suited Mother. And as Miss Lee didn't believe in catching buses we walked (laughs) just about everywhere. Sometimes my legs ached and Ted would be sent off with Miss Lee to give me a rest. And I used to stay in the hotel. And I *loved* those days when I stayed in the hotel, just as much as the ones sightseeing – and in fact, sometimes more. Because I used to help the parlourmaid fold the table napkins into fancy shapes, and I used to help Miss Brown count the laundry – how many pillowcases and how many tablecloths – and go with her into the kitchen to order the meals. And I used to love those days. And then the hall porter, he was absolutely marvellous. He taught me how to whistle with my two little fingers in the mouth, because he used to go out on the front porch and whistle for a taxi, because there was a taxi rank at the end, and so finally I was able to whistle for him. And he used to stand behind to let the taxi driver know that it was genuine. (laughs) At twelve this is absolutely wonderful. And then sometimes Ted and I used to go to the pictures – I

remember going to see the Marx Brothers, one of the early talking pictures, you know, because talking pictures only came in about 1928 or something. So sometimes Ted and I would go to the pictures. But I was kept sort of occupied. I was taken to Windsor Castle to see the Queen's dolls' house, which absolutely fascinated me.

**But you wouldn't have walked there.**

No, we went by train. And we went to Hampton Court by train. (sound of distant lawnmower) No, we didn't, we went by ferry. But also Ted and I went to stay with our Grandmother Booth, who lived at Teddington, because Aunt May, Dad's sister, and her husband, Herbert Faulkner, who was the mining engineer – and they had one son, John, that I mentioned earlier – as they lived in Curaçao and John was at Shrewsbury College, they bought this house, a smallish, very comfortable, three-bedroomed house I think it was, with a room for a maid upstairs as well – she had a maid – and Granny lived in Aunt May's and Uncle Bert's house so that John always had somewhere to go for his weekends off, and so that was his home. And it was right on a backwater of the Thames, and when we stayed there I had the use of a rowing-boat from the man next door, and I spent *all* my time out on this backwater. I wasn't allowed to go on the main part because the ferries were pretty fast and there was quite a lot of traffic on the river, but I could go to the end of the backwater and there I rowed or I paddled backwards and forwards absolutely sort of drinking in the atmosphere. I can remember some of the people who lived on that backwater, too.

**Do you remember the address of the house, your grandmother's house?**

Broomswater, 4 Broomswater, I think it was. I've got a note of it somewhere. I've got a note of it – I could look at it now, if you like.

**Well, perhaps we can add it later.**

I'll give it to you later<sup>11</sup>.

**Yes.**

But 4 Broomswater. She was the second-to-end house on one side, and she took us to Wembley to see the Tattoo, the Royal Tattoo. It was very exciting. And it was with her that we went to Hampton Court, because we caught the ferry which was from

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<sup>11</sup> 4 Broomswater West, Teddington.

Teddington, we could catch the ferry there. And it wasn't with Miss Lee, I went with Ted and Granny Booth. And most of the time I was extremely happy just to be on the backwater. And after dinner Granny used to say, 'Well, come in before it's dark', because I used to go out and I'd still be out on that backwater and when it was getting dark I'd come in and find it was ten o'clock because I wasn't used to twilight. I'd be absolutely amazed – of course, I'd never stayed up till ten o'clock at home. (laughs)

**So how long did you actually live in London, all up?**

Well, my father's diary would show that, because after a couple of months it was thought that it would be good to get Dad out of London to a nursing home in Surrey, to Hindhead in Surrey, so from my grandmother's we went back to the hotel and then we all went down to Surrey where Dad was in a lovely nursing home on the ground floor, looking out on a valley of pine trees. It was very dark. And Mother and Ted and I had rooms along part of a country road, a very nice place where we had a sitting room and bedrooms – my mother and I shared a room and Ted had one of his own – and we used to walk to the nursing home each day. And there a physiotherapist, I think it probably was, was getting Dad up to stand because he had to have a calliper made while he was there, because his leg had so much bone taken out of it that he couldn't take any weight on it. So he had this fixed-plate calliper so that he could walk, and I remember he used to walk a few steps. And then we hired a big car and we used to go motoring around the area. We went to visit some of Mother's relations and friends and Dad's relations and friends, we used to go out in the afternoon in this big car, and of course Dad's illness put a complete kybosh on all the things that they had planned to do, because we were going to go on the Continent. So it was arranged that Cousin Olive Ferguson, one of Mother's cousins, would take Ted for three weeks on the Continent – and Ted has told you all about that –

**Yes.**

– and then Dad's cousins, the Majendies – Hilary Majendie was the daughter of his aunt, his mother's sister's child was Hilary Majendie, that was her married name – and Hilary asked whether I'd go and stay with them down on the Kent coast at – oh! I know the name perfectly well. Anyway – it's on the tip of my tongue – but anyway I stayed down there at the sea. Well, they had a lovely house and there were three young children, younger than me, and they had a nurse, sort of governess-nurse, and



she used to take us on the beach, and she was great company for me because I think I enjoyed her company even more than the – I think the eldest one was ten, I think they were about ten, eight and four, the three children. But while we were there, Aunt May and Uncle Bert and John all came because John had his holidays, so this was the reunion. Uncle Melland came from Japan and the others from Curaçao, and we all met together. And I remember Uncle Melland coming down to Surrey to see Dad in the nursing home, and he had a sports car, a Bugati. He was a widower at that time – his first wife was a lot older than he was, he married her in England. Granny used to say, ‘He needed a mother, not a wife,’ and he married somebody who was about Granny’s age, I think. (laughs) And I think it was a happy marriage but there were no children. She was a *lot* older than he was. She had taught him Japanese when he was working in Japan, and I think it was loneliness probably and they were very much shared same interests. And she had died before 1929 of cancer, and so he came. And he had bought this beautiful Bugati, this sports car, and he used to take me along the lanes of Surrey. And I remember once we reached (with emphasis) sixty miles an hour, something that was *unheard* of (laughs) at that time – I thought it was marvellous. He was a wonderful uncle, Uncle Melland, and as you should know your brother is called after him.

**Yes, Melland<sup>12</sup>, yes.**

Yes. And then we all met together at Teddington, at Granny’s, while – all the family together, for the first time the Booths were together since 1907 when Dad had left England for Australia. And there’s a lovely description which you can read in Dad’s memoirs of when he arrived first in Australia, the unmade road leading up King William Street to the Town Hall. It was a stony, unmade road. (laughs) But I’ll leave you to read it because it’s *all* written out there.

**Yes, I shall read that.**

And we had this – when Dad was allowed to leave the nursing home we went back to London so that Dr Love could see Dad and say whether he could go touring round England. And he’d said on condition we had a trained nurse with us, because he needed extensive dressings and packing of the wound. And so there was a nurse

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<sup>12</sup> Melland Stirling Booth, b.1972.

from Hindhead, where we were, that nursing home, who was leaving because she was going to be married, and she was engaged to a doctor who lived in Leeds, I think it was. And so she came and lived with us from then on, and we hired a car with a marvellous driver, Buzzard, who was our chauffeur, and took us to stay with various relations or near various relations in different parts of England. We went up to Cheltenham first and stayed in rooms near the Fergusons, and the routine used to be that Nurse Ward, who was looking after Dad – we would all have breakfast together, then Nurse Ward would do Dad's dressings, get him up while Mother and Ted and I did whatever we wanted to do, like shopping or a bit of sightseeing, then we'd have an early lunch and then the car would come for us and we would go off and see the Fergusons or we would go sightseeing to see different places all up around there in the Cotswolds. Had some wonderful outings, and we went to see cathedrals and churches, and at twelve sometimes I got tired of looking at churches and I used to want to go for a walk. And Nurse Ward, who wasn't very – she used to have the afternoons off and sometimes *she* would like to go for a walk, so she and I used to walk together and she was good company for me. She wasn't in the least bit interested in anything intellectual. I remember she always was asked whether she would like to go on the outings, and whenever – I've forgotten where we were when Mother said, 'Would you like to come and see Milton's house?' She said, 'I'm not in the least interested in Milton.' So (laughs) she would go off and do her own thing or else she'd go for a walk with me, because I wasn't allowed to walk by myself. And she was trying to lose weight before her wedding, (laughs) so she used to happily walk with me! We walked for miles in some places, and when we went to stay at Rochdale, where we stayed in Uncle Joe Heape's house, he was married to Eleanor Booth, and Eleanor's sister, Emily, had been the one I think I mentioned to you that had looked after Dad when he had to stay up near his surgeon. Aunt Emily was like Dad's second mother, and she *doted* on Dad. And she had a little house near to Glebe House, which was Uncle Joe's house – Joe who married Eleanor Booth – and so Uncle Joe lent the house to Aunt Emily so she could have us all to stay because she couldn't have had us in her little house. And he also lent one of his maids and Aunt Emily brought her own maid, and she had the two maids to look after us. And we all stayed in Glebe House together and Aunt Emily was in her element. She was the most wonderful, warm, loving person ever you could imagine. She didn't marry,

which was to me very sad, because Uncle Joe was terribly warm and loving and Aunt [Eleanor] was rather reserved and remote. They had one son, Bernard, who was Ted's godfather. He was very close – – – .

**Eleanor, you mean Eleanor was – is that who you mean?**

Eleanor Heath –

**Was reserved.**

– she was Eleanor Booth, nothing to do with Eleanor Sykes.

**No, no, but I just meant – – – .**

Eleanor and Bernard had one son, Bernard.

**Oh yes, okay.**

And I said to my mother one day, 'Why did Uncle Joe marry Aunt Eleanor and not Aunt Emily? Aunt Emily is so much nicer.' (laughs) And Mother said, 'Well, opposites often attract.' Because Aunt Emily and Uncle Joe were very alike, they were both warm and outgoing, and Aunt Eleanor was very ..... Now, Ted got to know Aunt Eleanor well because they were both very keen on music, but at twelve I couldn't see anything – I mean, I liked Aunt Eleanor all right but she was rather remote, and Aunt Emily was not. You know, Aunt Emily was just – I could talk to Aunt Emily as to an equal, but (laughs) not to Aunt Eleanor.

And then we went across, with Aunt Emily as well, to stay with the Heapes because they had a very big house and a very big garden, a wonderful place – Hartley in Cheshire – and we all stayed there and that was a wonderful time. And I think, you know, that photograph of Ted and me on the bridge, leading to the chalet in the middle of the – – –?

**I can't picture it.**

Well, I've got it, I'll show you afterwards, I've got it –

**All right.**

– just in the dining room, I can show you that. Well, Ted and I on a little bridge leading to the chalet in the middle of this lake. And we used to take Dad for walks in the big bath chair – there are lots of photographs of that, too – walking around the garden. There was a croquet lawn, a beautifully smooth croquet lawn where we

could play, and marvellous garden – I don't know what's happened to it now, because Uncle Bert and his wife had no children and so there were no descendants of that family, and Uncle Bernard we visited in his lovely house and garden, so I don't know what happened to any of those homes that were so – where we stayed. Well, we didn't stay in Cousin Bernard's house, we visited him there but we stayed in Hartley.

And we also went on and drove to Salisbury, where we stayed, and Buzzard was our chauffeur. I loved sitting in the front with Buzzard because he used to tell me all sorts of stories about the War, and he had snow white hair although he wasn't terribly old. He said his hair went white in the night because he was shot in the jaw – he was in the War – he was shot in the jaw an hour before the Armistice was signed. You couldn't – I didn't see anything, but I thought that Buzzard was lovely and I had quite a crush on Buzzard, I think. (laughs)

And when we came back to London we had rooms in Prince of Wales Terrace. We had a very nice sitting room and we were able to entertain friends to dinner there. And Dad and Mother had a bedroom on the ground floor, Sister Ward and I shared a room upstairs and Ted was there too, and we were there until we actually left for Australia again.

**So you didn't actually get to go to Europe that trip?**

I didn't go to Europe, no. I stayed with the Majendies because I was only twelve, as I say.

**And how long were your family away?**

Nine months.

**Nine months.**

We went at the end of March and we left England on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1929 and we arrived back here in December. And my mother was terribly tired when we got on the ship. We decided that Mother should rest as much as possible – she had very severe fibrositis in her shoulder – and so it was my job to do Dad's dressings in the morning because Dr Love saw him before we left and I was, I did the – – –.

END OF TAPE 5 SIDE A: TAPE 5 SIDE B

[On the way back to Australia from England, our ship stopped at Toulon in France. There we visited some cousins, Nina and ....., both married. Nina was married to a naval officer, and her sister had been married to a farmer. They lived next to each other in Toulon. Nina's older sister had lived] on the land, on the eastern side of France, and their land was mined when the Germans occupied and they could never go back. And they were very poor. And I remember Mother saying to – oh, I wish I could remember her name – I remember her saying to this cousin, 'We did want to bring you a present but we thought it would be better if we could find out what you would like us to give you for a present.' And what she would like as a present was those wooden *sabots* for the children because they only had one pair of shoes each and they were ruined going to school, and they needed wooden *sabots* to get to school and she couldn't afford to buy them. So Mother and I went out, we had great fun buying wooden *sabots* for the children. (laughs) And I tried walking in a pair, it was hopeless, they were dreadful! I couldn't believe why anybody could walk in them. But we took them back and they were so thrilled to have these wooden shoes. And then we – not the children, but the two parents of this poorer family – we went next door to have lunch and I was wondering, lunch in France, what were we going to have? Frogs' legs or snails, what were we going to have? We had *weiner schnitzel*. (laughs) And it was absolutely lovely. Then they came back to the ship with us to see Dad and I remember – of course, I didn't speak French, Mother spoke it fluently, Nina spoke a little English – and so we had a very interesting gathering on the deck with Dad, and it was lovely because Dad was able to meet Mother's cousins. And then we went off from Toulon – the whole fleet was in, and Nina's husband was in with the fleet and so we met him as well. He came back in the middle of lunch and there was great French excitement, as you can imagine. (laughs) And, unfortunately, Nina and her husband later separated, I don't know what happened because we've lost touch with them. And this is one of the great sadnesses about this loss of the address book –

**Yes.**

– because all these addresses were in there. And of course Ted and I didn't have them separately.

And then we went on to must have been Colombo – oh, we went through the [Suez] Canal, and I thought that was absolutely fascinating. I thought that going through the Canal might be dull looking at all this sand but it wasn't, there was so much to watch. I had a day of absolute bliss and got very sunburnt! (laughs) I had a hat on but I must have looked the wrong way because I remember getting a very sunburnt face. And we went through – and that was rather funny, because we actually got to Port Said in the afternoon, and we were going to leave at half past three in the afternoon and so we would miss most of the Canal because we would be going through at night. But something held up – there were ships coming the other way so we had to – we were held up, we were told we were not going to leave until eight o'clock at night. I was absolutely dismayed, I did want to see the Canal. And I went down to the cabin and I knelt by the berths and I prayed that something would stop us from going through the Canal until the morning because I wanted to see it. Well, you would hardly believe it, but a fog descended about eight o'clock (laughs) and a message came over the tannoy to say that the ship would be tied up for most of the night anyway and we would not be able to sail through until the next morning, and I thought that God had answered my prayers. And so, at nine o'clock next morning we set sail, we were going through the Canal the whole of the next day, and I felt very proud of having achieved my aim.

Then we went to Colombo, which I found quite fascinating. We were only there for the day, of course, and then back to Western Australia and home. And it was like another world.

**Would have been a great – – –.**

But it was a wonderful nine months and, yes, considering all the things that we couldn't do, was marvellous the things that we could do.

**Well, that's great.**

But Dad had trouble with his leg from then on, always.

**And speaking of your cousin Nina, your cousin Nina in France, you also had an Aunt Nina who was Harrie's and your mother's –**

Younger sister.

**– younger sister.**

Yes.

**And I think there was something you wanted to tell me about her.**

Yes. Well, when she was eighteen she became very unwell with tuberculosis. And she had been staying with a friend and the butler had a most terrible cough, and Aunt Nina remembers him putting the soup in front of her while he had a coughing fit. She always thought that's where she caught it – we don't know, of course, but that was what she thought. But she very nearly died, she was terribly ill, and she had a room upstairs off the balcony at St Vigean's, and they partitioned the part of the balcony off so she would have privacy because she couldn't cope with visitors a lot of the time. And when she'd been ill for a long time with every doctor doing all they could, a friend of the family's, Raymond Owen, who'd had tuberculosis, came to see Grandfather and said that he had been cured by a Dr Drake who lived in the Dandenongs in Melbourne, who'd cured himself. And he'd followed much the same principles of those Swiss – you know, Swiss treatments, of a cold climate and graduated exercises and diet and all that sort of thing. And so Aunt Nina was consulted, Grandfather went across to see Dr Drake and took Aunt Nina, and Aunt Nina told me that when Dr Drake saw her X-rays he said, 'Well, miracles *have* happened.' And so then there she was, I think she must have been in her early twenties, she lived in a little hut up in the Dandenongs – all the patients had separate little huts, and they were visited in the mornings by a nurse and their temperatures taken, and whatever their temperature was doing they had so much rest, so much walk and meals, and so on. And she said it was a terribly isolating time, and she always remembered when the man in the next hut to her died and was taken away, and she wondered if her turn would come. Well, then Grandfather arranged for – when Aunt Nina was well enough to leave this sanatorium and go to a house on her own with a nurse, Grandfather got Miss Muriel Peck, who was a trained nurse, who lived in Melbourne, to go with Aunt Nina to this house at Emerald in the Dandenongs. Now, I'm not sure if Emerald House was owned by the Pecks or whether it became theirs later, but Aunt Nina lived in this little Emerald house for at least a year with Muriel Peck. And Muriel Peck had sisters who used to come up too, and they became great friends to the family. I mean, the Pecks were wonderful to Aunt Nina and, when Judith and I were in Melbourne at the Invergowrie Homecraft

Hostel, they always asked Judith out to their house and playing card games with us – they were wonderful. And one of the Miss Pecks married a Mr Anderson, who was the managing director of the Adelaide Car Service and they imported all the Austin cars, and we always used to get our cars from them. (laughs) And Mrs Anderson was a very great friend – I can't remember her Christian name at the moment – but she was a great friend of Aunt Nina's and they used to visit each other until Mrs Anderson died. And then Faerlie Anderson<sup>13</sup>, her daughter, they became friends. She was a friend of mine, too. And Bill Anderson, the eldest child, he died of TB of the kidneys, so it was – I used to go and see him when he was so ill, he was about my age, and so there was a sad connection there.

But Aunt Nina was pronounced cured when she was twenty-eight – that's ten years after she got ill, ten years later when she was twenty-eight, so all her young life, really, was taken up with illness. And Uncle Max, who went to the War, they had an understanding, but Aunt Nina said she would not marry until she'd been cured for ten years, so when she was thirty-eight she married Uncle Max.

**Oh! Goodness.**

Well, she thought she could have a recurrence, you see, and she didn't want that to be landed on anybody. And she had two sons.

**So she married Max Jaffrey.**

She married Max Jaffrey, who had spent a lot of time at St Vigean's because his mother – when they lived at Port Pirie – his mother had died and Mr Jaffrey came down to town with Uncle Max and Gertrude Jaffrey, and there was another daughter who was married, in Melbourne. But Uncle Max spent quite a lot of time, and so did Gertrude, at St Vigean's staying. So many people stayed at St Vigean's that it would be hard to find those who didn't stay there, almost.

**Now, I know you have some things you wanted to add to Grandfather's oral history tapes that you've written down there, so did you want to mention any of those with the rest of this session?**

Yes, there was something I noticed. Ted was a little bit hazy about what Mother did when she came back from England after she was educated.

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<sup>13</sup> Faerlie Anderson later married Dr Mervin Smith, surgeon.



**Yes.**

Well, Mother had a tremendous flair and interest in acting, so she went on not only with her music when she came back – she learnt the violin and the piano – but she and a number of her friends used to put on plays in various church halls to pay off the repairs of the roofs of a good many churches in the Hills. And they did a lot of acting. And I don't know what plays they put on, but they spent quite a lot of time doing this and it must have been the – Mother was a rather reserved person, but she was a marvellous actress, and strangely enough Rob's mother was too, and Rob and I have a son, Robert, who of course nearly became an actor. He did act for a while with a – here he was in Shakespeare's plays with a professional company. He very nearly left his Honours degree to become an actor but finally decided not to. But Mother, I remember Mother telling me that when Grandfather found out how many people were coming up to the Stirling Institute building to see the play that Mother and her friends were putting on, he hired a train and Mother said she's never forgotten, when they looked out the front of the hall when they were getting ready, to see a column of people marching up from the railway station – because it's on the same road as the Institute building – headed by the Bishop, because of course they were paying off the church roof. (laughs) And this, I think, happened quite often. But Grandfather obviously supported them in all this, and Granny too, supported them in all their activities. But once Aunt Harrie got stage fright, and as the curtain went up she burst into tears and they had to put the (laughs) curtain down again. She was not fond of acting.

**So Aunt Harrie didn't act but Anna did.**

She did act, but I think only in small parts. But Mother, I think, took some of the leading parts, and a lot of their friends, I think – like the Fishers and the Makins<sup>14</sup> and the Bagots – they all sort of took part in doing this.

**I should also mention that when you previously said that your son, Robert, had once thought about doing acting more professionally – you know, regularly –**

Yes.

**– he ended up acting on a children's educational –**

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<sup>14</sup> Guy Makin was Nan's godfather.

Well, he didn't act –

– **well, not acting, but presenting on an educational –**

– but he was a very –

– **show, it was excellent.**

– I'm sure that helped him in his teaching.

***The curiosity show, yes.***

Yes, *The curiosity show*, which he and Dean Hutton did for Channel 9 for eighteen years –

**It was during the '80s, was it?**

– eighteen years, yes.

**That was an excellent show.**

*The curiosity show.* The reason why it came to an end was it was when everybody had to put women in and they tried to introduce a woman presenter and it just didn't work. And so it was decided – Robert and Dean decided it was far better to end on a high note instead of going into a – – –. Well, I think it was – I want to fill in that, that that was one of the things that Mother did apart from going on with her music. And she took part in the Victoria League when that was set up.

But actually she went back to England for a year when she was – in the early 1900s when she must have been about twenty-two, she went back to see all her relations. And while she was there she worked – she would love to have been a social worker. One of her Ferguson cousins was a social worker. Ted said that Cousin Anna was a librarian; I had thought *she* was the social worker, but it could have been Olive who was the social worker. I just don't know, but *one* of them was a social worker, and Mother would have loved to have done that. And while she was in London in the early 1900s she did assist in a program which was a slum clearance program in the East End of London, and Mother said there were little alleys off little alleys off little alleys, and these terrible little houses were being cleared out and people put into a new – what became the next slum, I think, but a more hygienic place they were being moved to, and Mother thoroughly enjoyed helping in that work. And she would have loved to have done social work, but there was nothing here of that kind at all so she

wasn't able to do that. In fact, Social Studies were not introduced until after I had begun Physiotherapy at the university, which was not until the late 1930s that social work, as Social Studies, was introduced into the university.

**So did your mother, Anna, help her sister, Harrie, with her endeavours with the child and youth .....?**

I think they all did, yes. But Mother really branched off on her own with the Victoria League, which she helped to – I think the introduction of it, I think. But she worked very hard in those early days to get it going, and it was a very lively thing at one stage. I think now it's rather faded out, they've given up their rooms, it was near North Terrace, and now – I've forgotten where they are now, I've lost touch with Victoria League. I used to be a member of it. But it used to help people who came out from England and, in the early days, I remember Mother helped a Mrs Barrett who came out from England or Ireland and she was terribly ill before she had her first child, and Mother used to go and visit her and do all she could to help her. And when the first child, Mary, was born – Mary Barrett – Mr and Mrs Barrett were Roman Catholics and Mother was asked by Mrs Barrett if she'd be Mary's godmother, even though Mother was Church of England. And the parish priest said Mother had done more than anybody to help Mrs Barrett and it would be very nice for her to be the godmother, but the Roman Catholic Archbishop said no. But the parish priest ignored this and Mother was the godmother to Mary Barrett. And then there was another daughter, Marjorie, and Mrs Barrett was never very strong and Mother was always going out to see Mrs Barrett and taking things to help her, I remember going with her. And Mrs Barrett died when the girls were in the teens and Mr Barrett couldn't really cope, so they went into the Goodwood Orphanage, which is near where you used to live, and they were comparatively happy there, as happy as they could be without their mother. Their father used to see them frequently and they used to be able to go home to their father. And Mary became a secretary and did very well. I think she went to Melbourne, because when my mother was dying Mary came to visit her and I think that was from Melbourne. But Marjorie decided she wanted to be a nun and she became a nun, and Mother and I – I was still at school when she became a nun – and we went to her ordination, would it be? Induction? Whatever it is when you are made a nun. We went to the St Xavier's Cathedral, and because we were not Roman Catholics we had to sit in the little side chapel with other non-

Catholics. And I remember having incense shaken over us, I don't know whether that was to purify us or what! But I was rather horrified by this whole business of being married to the church, and there was a wedding cake and bridal gown. Oh, dear! I found it terribly depressing, myself. And we went to this little party afterwards where Mary and Marjorie Barrett were. But they thought a lot of Mother because Mother had done a lot, and Mary came to visit Mother when she was dying – as I said, I think from Melbourne. But after Mother died we lost touch.

**And were there any other additions you wanted to make to things that – – –?**

Well, another thing perhaps: my father came home once and said that he had been told – his partner, Mr Counsell – that there was a young man who was ill in rooms in town. And Dad called in and saw this young man, it was Arthur Coles. And he came home and told Mother that there was this – he was a poet, but he'd been offered a job in Adelaide with *The Advertiser* – he was a journalist as well – and he'd come out, but when he got here he was told the job was no longer available and he was absolutely on his beam end. And so Mother said, 'Well, we'd better ask him for a weekend,' and so Arthur Coles came to stay with us for a weekend, this very nice young man, who was shell-shocked in the War. He had gone to the War when he was seventeen and been in France in those terrible conditions, and he was badly shell-shocked, he used to get the shakes and Mother used to try and cope with it. Well, he not only stayed for a weekend, but he stayed for ten months. And Mother went to see Sir Langdon Bonython and said, 'Now, this young man has come out from England, he was promised a job and he got here with very little money to go to this job, which he was then told was not available.' And so they took him on as a proof reader. And so he used to work at night. And so our big room at the back was turned into Arthur's room so he could sleep in the day. And Arthur stayed with us for ten months before he saved enough money to be able to go back to England, where he got quite a good job, I think editing some journal. And we saw him when we went back to England, of course, but he used to say Mother was his second mother.

But it was rather amusing then, because Mother was asked to help another young man and his name was Arthur too, Arthur Dupen. He had come from Western Australia with a wife and a baby and he had no job and it was very hard, because it was the Depression. And Mother helped to get him into the police force. And Arthur

stayed with us for six weeks. And I can always remember when we – we liked him very much, but when he was able to get his wife from Western Australia – he came over by himself to try and get a job, and then they had a flat in Hill Street, I think it was. No, Ward Street, they had a flat in Ward Street. And he got a job as a policeman, but he was very tall and he had to keep his weight up and he found it very hard to do so. He then got a job in the eastern states. But once – my father was a JP<sup>15</sup> and I remember one evening there was a ring at the front doorbell. Ted and I were in the sitting room with Mother and Dad, and Mother went to the front door and it was somebody who wanted Dad's signature on some papers. And as we got up to leave the room, to leave this signing, we heard the man say that his name was Arthur somebody, (laughs) and Ted and I took fright. We thought, 'Not another Arthur!' Anyway, he only wanted his signature witnessed, and when we came back we said, 'Oh, Mother, we thought you might be taking in another Arthur.' She said, 'No, no more.'

But Mother did a lot to help a lot of people. Friends who were not well-off. I remember our friends who had a big family, she used to go round and help with the darning of the socks, for instance. She used to be very practical in her help. And a lot of people used to come and pour out their troubles to Mother and ask for help. I remember we had an odd job man whose wife came because she found her husband had been unfaithful and was having an illegitimate child. She used to have to try and help in these – I don't know quite what help she could do except give the wife comfort about her husband. The marriage did not break up so they evidently stayed together. But he used to do all our odd jobs. (laughs)

END OF INTERVIEW.

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<sup>15</sup> JP – Justice of the Peace.