

INTERVIEW WITH JUNE JACKSON

5 June 2000

Updated 04/01/10

Timecode from Tapes 15_BC_DV

Topics in Bold

I = Interviewer

R = Respondent

TAPE 1 – SIDE A

I Okay, so this is Tape 15 and the time code is 19.22. This is Tape No. 8 for DAT, 5 June, Channels of History. This is June Jackson in her workplace which is the Post Office in Boulia. Trish FitzSimons on sound and Erica Addis on camera.

TAPE 15_BC_DV

Okay, so June, tell me where and when you were born, the date, the place and how your birth happened, whether it was midwife or hospital or what you know of the circumstances of your birth.

R 00:19:34:10 3 June 1944 in Georgetown, Queensland, at the hospital.

I And what was your name then?

R 00:19:44:00 That's a bit controversial because my father insisted I was June Elizabeth and my mother insisted I was Elizabeth June, so I've gone with what's on the birth certificate which is Elizabeth June.

I And was that what your mother said or your father said?

R 00:19:55:09 My mother said, because she said June Elizabeth Wilcox was JEW and she didn't want me called JEW, so I'm Elizabeth.

I So your parents always planned that you would be called June but Elizabeth went first on the birth certificate?

R Mmmm.

I And how had your family ... Georgetown isn't actually in the Channel Country, is it?

R No.

I So, I know that your family has got a long connection to the Channel Country. I'd like you to explain that connection and also how it was that you came to be born in Georgetown.

R **Braided Channels**

00:20:35:00 My great-grandmother was married out here, came out here as a young girl, as Bid Campbell would have told you. They drew Maxland and my grandmother was one of her first marriage children. She was the only daughter to that marriage. She married a gentleman quite 19-20 years older than her and they eventually went, after leaving here, went to several properties and then she and her husband and two of her brothers went up around Georgetown Forsyth, mining, and they had mines up there. So obviously my mother and her two brothers went with her family. She met my father up there and we were born up there, my sister and I, and then they came back out here to this area after the mine failed and they were looking for something else. 00:21:36:16

I Do you know any of the circumstances ... was your father a miner working for another company, or he was in business for himself?

R 00:21:36:12 No. My father was a stockman and that's when my mother married him. Evidently he was up around the Forsyth Georgetown area there. He was working. His parents had properties, I think, or something up there, or holdings or whatever, and he was a jockey and quite well-known horseman, and that's all I really know of them.

I So your father was a jockey. Was that in ... because country races have always been important, haven't they?

R Mmmm.

I Was he a jockey just around the west?

R 00:22:20:00 Yes, in the north really. I don't know whether he ever rode out here but he did up around the Georgetown Forsyth area up there.

I Now when I think of a jockey, I think of a man five foot two and five stone. I mean, I'm exaggerating, but was that the kind of man your father was or was he a strapping stockman that also rode horses quickly?

R 0:22:45:00 He was a stockman who rode horses quickly. Yes, he was about six foot, I guess, and quite a big man. In later years, you can't believe how big people can become small, but he was reasonably big in his prime.

I I am clearly getting a little bit confused in the generations of your family. It was your grandfather that had gone to Georgetown to mine, was it, and your mother met your father who was a stockman working up there?

R That's correct.

I Right. So when you said it was the mine failing that brought your parents to this area, how does that work because it was your grandfather that was the miner and your father that was the stockman?

R 00:23:31:17 It brought them back here to this area. This was where my grandmother and my mother grew up so when that failed the two boys that had gone with my grandparents were Brian and Jack McGlinchy. It was Brian McGlinchy and Jack Robinson, and their mother was the one that had Maxland. So they just came back home. I don't know whether the mine folded or failed or what, I really don't know, but I know they then all packed up and came back here to this area, which was home. So they brought their husbands back ... the women brought their husbands back home to this area again.

I So how old were you when you arrived in this area?

R I'd say I probably would have been about three, three-and-a-half.

I Do you have any memory of that moving?

R I don't have any memory of the moving. I have several memories of Georgetown or Forsyth. Forsyth, I think. And then I have memories of Coorabulka.

I So your earliest memories, then, are in Georgetown. What do you remember of that area?

R 00:24:42:09 I can remember having my face washed with some sort of soap which I thought would never heal because I got into my mother's lipstick, and in those days I think it was real red lipstick and I painted my face. And I can remember her scrubbing and scrubbing and scrubbing at my face while I sat in this horrible cold tin tub.

I So that would have been half punishment and half getting the lipstick off your face?

R 00:25:11:02 Well, I think it was just that at that time there was no hot water. It had to come off, so she just sat me in the tub and had a dish cloth and was going like this. I wasn't in cold water. I was just sitting in the cold tub and I can remember saying something like 'It's cold' and sitting in a and Mum saying 'Show me your face, show me your face. I want to clean your face' and sort of I don't even remember how old I was, whether it was night time, day time, but I can remember getting my face scrubbed rather harshly. I don't remember getting a smack for it, which I probably should have done because I'd say Mum would have had one lipstick and really didn't need to see it plastered all over my face.

I So if you say you were living without hot water, you probably can't remember much of Georgetown, but what do you think were the physical circumstances of life for your parents there?

R 00:26:06:17 Very hard. The water would have been boiled in a copper down the back, I'd say, or on the stove in a kettle. And I can remember, you know, all having a bath, well my sister and mother and I anyway, all having a bath in the one water. Obviously there would have been running water, no doubt, which I don't remember, but I know the three of us used to have a

bath in the one water. And then when Dad came home she'd chuck a bit more hot water in there and he'd then put the water out on the garden. I can remember those. I can remember having a birthday party, I think for one of my cousins, under a white frangipani tree, and I have loved white frangipani trees ever since. I can remember Dad coming home drunk one day, one night obviously, and falling down the steps, and I can remember my mother throwing him a blanket and saying 'Well, that's where you've fallen so that's where you stay'. And that's really all I can remember. I have photos of times that I think 'Oh, yeah, I probably remember that' but I really don't think I do. It's only the photo that perhaps brings back memories.

I It's gets hazy, doesn't it? And so then when you came here to the Channel Country, it was to Coorabulka that you went, was it?

R **Gender Relations/Work**

00:27:36:04 Well, I'm a little hazy. I think my grandmother and family went to Maxland and we probably would have gone with her. Then I'd say Dad may have got the job at Kurabulka as head stockman. Mum was then cook, so I'd say they've got a job as a package, a head stockman and a cook, and us two girls went with them. But I can always remember sort of Maxland was always there, that was just ... I don't know whether I'd say 'home' but it was always somewhere there, and that was Maxland.

I So would your grandmother ... Jenny was your grandmother?

R No, that was my great-grandmother.

I Great-grandmother. Was she still at Maxland or had it then passed into somebody else?

R 00:28:13:08 I think Uncle Brian and Aunty Bub were there then. I know they were there then but I don't know whether my great-grandmother and great-grandfather were still there or not. I really don't remember too much of my great-grandparents in the early years until we went to Charters Towers to live.

I So would Uncle Brian have inherited Maxland as the eldest son? Was that his position?

R Mmmm.

I And is that usually how inheritance goes in this area? That eldest sons inherit?

R Ah, I'd say probably, yeah.

I So then when you, you know you're not sure whether you came first to Kurabulka or Maxland, but tell me about your childhood at Kurabulka. It was only a fairly short period, wasn't it, till your parents split up? Do you want to just tell me about that?

R **Childhood**

00:29:11:12 Yes. Some of my memories of Kurabulka, having very, very bad eye problems with flies and waking up in the morning with eyes all stuck. And the house we lived in must have been a little way away from the kitchen area because I can remember Mum, Dad, whoever happened to be around, carrying my sister and I over and putting us near the big wood stove until after breakfast when Mum had time to wipe our eyes and get us seeing again. I can remember that. I can remember being near the horse yards once and told to keep very quiet, and skitching the pup onto the horse, which didn't please my father very much because I can remember wearing the handle of his whip around my backside. Ummm, I can remember being in the bore drains, which I think we were told not to go near. In those days they still had the flowing bores with running water for cattle.

I So that would have been hot water?

R 00:30:10:10 Mmmm. And I can remember the mail lady coming. Or mail man, I'm not really sure whether it was a mail man or a mail lady, because my mother was on so many properties and there were so many mail people. I've an idea it may have been a mail man out here and he always brought us a treat like a chocolate or a lolly, because being out there we didn't see

anyone except the mailman and that was great that he would bring these things out. And I don't know whether he brought them out all the time or just every now and then. I really don't remember anything much.

I And what do you remember of your parents separating? How old were you and what do you remember at the time and how do you now understand that?

R **Gender Relations**

00:30:54:16 To be honest, I never even knew that they had separated until I was about seven or eight because, oh I don't know, I think I was just used to men going away and working, and being gone say a week, ten days, a month, and I don't think it ever even clicked until someone told me that my mother and father weren't living together. And I don't even know if I thought too much about it then. I mean, I was in such a, I suppose, close relationship with my mother and grandmother and sister that it really didn't worry me that he wasn't there. I think it was probably when I was about fourteen that I sort of wanted then to make contact with him. I don't think I missed him, to be honest.

I Because you probably would have been seeing lots of other kids around the place who didn't see their fathers much?

R **Mustering/Gender Relations**

00:31:53:18 Mmmm. It wasn't a big thing to have a man there all the time, because the mustering camps would go out, probably a month at a time, with the big properties with no fences. They'd be home for a night and they'd be gone again next morning when you woke up, so they sort of weren't a real big factor in your life, I don't think.

I And can you explain what a mustering camp is as opposed to droving?

R 00:33:21:20 A mustering camp is, on these large properties because there's hardly any fences, every twelve months they try and get all their stock together for branding or de-horning or selling, or whatever, so there would be a big camp of could be ten men, could be twenty men, all depends. They'd

have a dray or something packed up with tents and food and whatever, and off they'd go and they'd just build yards or whatever while they were out and do what they had to do while they were there. There was none of this bringing them back into the station for this job, so they could be gone for any length of time until they did what they thought was the full muster. And droving is having a herd together, moving them from one place to the other, sort of one property to another or one property here to 2-5,000k away, and that is droving. They're droving them.

I So at the outcome, at the end of a mustering camp, quite likely there would be some then beasts to be droved or to be put onto a road train more recently?

R Yes.

I So do you remember, in the time when your parents were together, how was it when your Dad came back after being away? Would that be a big deal or he wasn't really a relevant personage?

R 00:33:44:10 I think it was more the excitement of everybody coming back. You know, the whole camp. All of a sudden, hey there was lots of people around again, instead of just the old cook and my mother and probably the station manager's wife. I think it was just the fact, the excitement that the camp's coming back and they'd sit down and play their mouth organs and things like that, so the whole place would just liven up again. And that's probably all I can remember about the fact that they were coming back. And I don't even know whether my father was gone for a month, or whatever. I really don't. Time means nothing to children, I don't think, especially fifty-odd years on when you're trying to remember it.

I So as you remember it now, how did life shift from your parents breaking up? Did that mean that your Mum ceased to be station cook on Kurabulka?

R **Gender Relations/Family Structure/Work**

00:34:43:10 Yes. She and my grandmother moved to Charters Towers, taking my sister and I with her. They bought a home in Charters Towers but then Mum would go out station cooking, so she would be gone, say, six months of the year. Then she would come back and get a job as a barmaid or hotel house cleaner or something for six months. Then she'd go again. Big money on the properties, cooking, and she'd spend nothing, so she was keeping her mother. Well, my grandmother, she was on a pension, and keeping us two girls. I don't think my father ever contributed.

I And did your Mum have a bitterness towards your father or just it was like he'd drifted off into the sunset and you didn't hear about him?

R 00:35:31:08 Ummm, I think the bitterness was the fact that he never contributed to our upbringing and the fact that he just would prefer to pretend that we weren't there, and get on with his life. I think a lot of the problems were that my great-grandmother and her husband, he was about twenty years older than her, my grandmother's husband was nineteen years older than her, my father was nineteen years older than my mother, and I think these men were already in their way. And then to marry a nineteen or eighteen-year-old girl is a big step and a big shock to them, that they've got to do this and they've got to do that, and my father was obviously a pretty heavy drinker all his life, and I don't think that working, you know, twelve months of the year to support a wife and two children was his idea of what he was put on this earth for.

I So you're saying that in the McGlinchy clan it was ... because certainly talking to Bid, that great-grandmother of yours sounded like a rock kind of keeping the whole family together. You're saying that it was quite a female-dominated family in your experience of it?

R 00:36:47:14 I think so, yeah. But I do remember that when we moved to Charters Towers my great-grandmother and grandfather were living there then.

I Was it the Channel Country that your Mum was coming back to work in?

R No, she just worked wherever. Around Charters Towers, Hughenden, Prairie, anywhere between here and Charters Towers. The closest she could get the better because then if they had someone come in for the show, well she might be able to jump in with them and come back and see us girls. But she worked wherever she could.

I And so was being looked after by your grandmother, did that feel like a kind of abandonment? Or you were so close to her you just accepted that that's how things were?

R 00:37:31:02 Oh, never abandonment, no. She ... oh, my grandmother was, you know, she was just one of these women that was there. If there was a job to be done, she did it, and like her mother and like her sisters. It didn't matter what needed to be done, she was there. And I think she was just pleased, perhaps, to see my mother get out of an abusive relationship. I mean, I don't think my father ever hit her, but the alcohol wasn't conducive to a happy life for us two kids, and I think she was just happy to say 'Well, look, we'll go to Charters Towers, take the girls and I'll look after them while you get a job'. I mean, she was just always there, my great-grandmother was always there, and I sort of really didn't see a need for men at all. I never missed them and I had a lot of friends, boy friends, you know friends that were boys, and always have, and I've never felt the need to say 'I've missed my father' or 'I've missed my grandfather'. I never knew my grandfather because he and my grandmother had split up before I ever even remember him. I didn't see him till I would have been ten, before I even met my grandfather for the first and last time.

I Tell me about your great-grandmother and your great-grandfather? What were they like as characters? Because I suppose I've heard quite a lot about them from Bid.

R **Gender Relations/Family Structure**

00:38:54:18 I can only remember bits and pieces, I suppose. I can remember once my father arrived in Charters Towers and took us down town, took my sister and myself down town, and he said we would be gone

two-and-a-half hours. I can remember him taking us home after, say, four or five hours and this lady coming out of my grandmother's house and abusing this man, and I can just remember standing behind him, thinking 'What is my Big Gran going on about?' and they thought that he had abducted us, and they had been onto the police and they were just leaving the house when he turned up. I can remember her being like this big lady with white hair just raging. I can remember that and thought 'She's just like a big bull-terrier', you know. And probably she wasn't that big but to a small child, and in such a temper, and my grandmother stood there and my mother, and they didn't say a thing. With my grandmothers, one was ... my great-grandmother was Big Gran and my grandmother was Little Gran. So there was no conflict about Big Gran and Little Gran, that's all we ever called them.

I And Big Gran was a tiger?

R 00:40:14:10 Big Gran was a tiger, yeah, because she thought that he had taken us children and she was letting him know, under no circumstances did he ever need to see us again. And he never saw us again till I was about sixteen. So he never came back again. And I can remember Christmases, everyone sitting around the big table like that photo you've seen, many of those, different celebrations. It was always where everyone went to. When they came to Charters Towers, everyone went to Big Gran's. All the children eventually went to boarding schools there so the parents would come down to see the children and they'd all end up at Big Gran's. She lived in one house, which I think was Paul Street, and I can remember talking to the lady through the fence, and this lady had red setters, and I can remember thinking 'I want to live there with a dog like that', and eventually my great-grandparents did buy that home and lived there for quite some years. Then after they died and left the house it fell into very bad repair, disrepair, and then I think it was the Seventh Day Adventists or something bought it and restored it, and it's just great to drive into Charters Towers now and up that street and see this home so beautifully restored. 00:41:44:04