

INTERVIEW WITH BEV MAUNSELL

21 June 2000

Timecode refers to tape 52_BC_SP

Topics in Bold

I = Interviewer

R = Respondent

I This is tape 52 camera, tape 19 DAT, no ADF but it's about 1 hour and 1 minute and this is tape 5 from Bev Maunsell. 52_BC_SP

Okay. What shifted in race relations? You were saying that there are some tensions now that there weren't before. Is that what you're saying?

R 04:01:50:16 Yes. Yes, I feel that that's the case. I wonder if it's ummm because ... I feel that even if the Aboriginal people, the local Aboriginal people, may choose to get on with their lives and not become a part of this issue, that they are encouraged to do so. There is so much media attention focussed on all sorts of Aboriginal issues, whether it be Land Rights, whether it be ummm reconciliation, whether it be ummm WIK or whatever. It appears that for years these issues have been, are issues on the news, and these things have been brought to Aboriginals' attention. Ummm so I think they're really having it pushed down their throats, whether they want to just get on with their lives and not, you know, think it's an issue, or whether they don't. That's my personal opinion. I feel a little sad that ummm I'd probably say that I feel sad that to think that ummm even when, yeah, Aboriginal people who live as close as Windorah might be affected or may feel that any white person, to feel that white people discriminate against them. Ummm I would hate to think that there was ever a wide division. If there's a small division, or a fine line there now, that ummm I think it would probably be fuelled by ummm everything they are seeing on the media, what they're hearing and seeing. I wonder if ummm sometimes it ... yeah, ummm I don't suggest that people aren't sympathetic. That wasn't my inference, that people weren't sympathetic towards reconciliation or any other issue. Ummm I just feel that it has not been handled correctly. It continues not to be handled correctly. I don't think it's ever going to be handled correctly. Ummm it was approached from the wrong direction in the beginning. Instead of riling people up and having people become vicious, I mean, you have these people that ... sometimes they don't even know why they're rallying or they don't understand. They may have a leader ummm who's leading them in a direction that they're not even sure where they're going. I'm sure that it could have just been dealt with in a much calmer manner, a more understanding manner, so that we were all made aware, or we all are probably aware, of the problem. I think that a lot of areas are financial issues and people are backing these things for the wrong reasons and I'm very

unhappy with that, and I'd also hate to think that that did cause a very wide ummm gap between white and Aboriginal relationships in the west, in the western part of Queensland anyway, in the south-west corner. 04:05:55:04

I My impression is that relationships have actually been closer here than in other parts of Queensland.

R 04:05:56:04 Mmmm. Yes. You know, I know that, you know, I heard a story many, many years ago that was supposed to have happened many, many years ago at a property called Mount Leonard at Betoota, where Aboriginal stockmen only knocked on the back door. I don't suggest that that's incorrect but I should imagine that in those days, so did the mailman knock on the back door, whether he be white or Aboriginal. So I think that sometimes ummm it's not discrimination, it's made into discrimination. There could even be, you know, times when the boot's on the other foot but there's always centred ... I think that's sad.

Race Relations/Gorringe

04:07:09:00 Okay. Either last year or the year before, I just can't recall, we attended Johnny Gorrenge's birthday party in Windorah and there were so many people that attended that party, I probably couldn't estimate the number of people that attended. There were property owners and managers that travelled vast distances to come back to Windorah especially for his party, and from all over. And I honestly did hope that night of that party, as everybody joined in and danced together and helped him celebrate his birthday party, that we were not seeing the end of an era, or the end of a time when that would continue to happen. My wish would be that that would continue to happen in this part of Queensland, or the nation, or whatever. Yeah, that would be my ideal but it's probably looking at the situation through rose-coloured glasses. But that is still happening here. That's the point that I'd like to make. His Mum's funeral, and you found many small aircraft that had flown from all over, and hundreds of people in attendance, and my wish would be that that type of life continued but unfortunately I don't think it will.

I Your brother has married an Aboriginal woman?

R Mmmm.

I How did that happen and was that difficult for your family or was that an entirely ... I'm interested in that because, again, that's pretty rare in other bits of Australia.

R 04:09:02:12 No. I think that was difficult for both of them and this is the point that I make with that, that it's just as difficult for the gin's side of the family, if it's difficult at all. But if anyone considers it to be difficult, I'm not them and I don't begin to judge, but yeah, so I would ... I don't know. I would imagine that if there was any difficulty on the groom's side, there would also be difficulty on the bride's side. That would be my way of looking at it. But I would ... yeah, because that's where I say to you, it's racial. I feel that it's racial to even, you know, try and give an opinion on that because if we aren't racial, we don't really have an opinion because it's united as one. You know what I'm saying? You know, you just ...

I It seems that out here to be not racist means to not notice race.

R Yes.

I In the city, to be not racist means to respect the differences of different races. I think that's true.

R 04:10:28:10 Right. That's an interesting point too, Trish, really. It's something I would have ... and I probably did nod my head to not notice. I feel embarrassed to think that I might be discussing the differences, if there are differences. I feel that if we're going to discuss differences, then, with the left hand, we can't very well say on the right that there are none. Yeah. So, you know, I think that that's just probably point made, you know. As far as my three nephews go, Kevin and Jean, they are just loving, normal nephews and wonderful people, and I don't know why I'm saying this because it's just, you know, to me it's not an issue because all of my nephews and nieces are nephews and nieces, and that's it, full stop. My friends are friends, regardless of whether they are of what race or, you know, I don't really probably ... 04:11:53:20

I Linda said exactly the same thing. Linda Crombie adores those grandchildren, adores them. I had no idea that it was linked to you but she says that it was a little bit hard for her at first but she absolutely adores those kids.

R Oh, yes.

I Is there anything I haven't asked you about women in the Channel Country that you think is important for me to understand, or about your life? Have I missed out anything big?

R **Accidents**

04:12:27:14 No. Probably ... not that I can think. It starts to go round in circles, I suppose. Yeah, I do believe that ummm I admire women all over the west. I honestly do. I admire all of the women who have lived their lives in the south-west corner, as I do, and you know, northern New South Wales or anywhere else, because I think we will relate to each other as into how we've lived and experiences we've had. I think there's a comradeship and a closeness. There are bonds formed out here that you probably don't have the opportunity to have formed in other areas because we all do have to, as I said, pitch in, help each other, be there for each other, whether it be an accident, whether it be death. We, you know, carry on the medical role or whatever else until such times as we have professional help on site, so ummm I admire all western people for the role that they've played in helping other people and being there during sickness, during death. I mean, we've had many tragic accidents in the west that ... or probably all people have, where just your normal everyday person has to be there and stay there and assist that person. I lost my Mum through an accident. I know that there were people there that came along, who found that accident. You're very aware of those things. There's no ringing triple zero, you just deal with it until someone comes along. 04:14:24:24

I on the phone for you.

R My granddaughter. Would you mind telling her ...

Race Relations

04:15:42:10 Aboriginal people themselves, it's ... from my observances it's not always Aboriginal people who approach the issue in the first place. It is quite often not and I often wonder if it were, if it may not have been approached in perhaps a different manner and then you wouldn't be dealing with so much division about it. You wouldn't be dealing with statements like well, take the cars and the clothes and you know, hand back a spare and a lap lap and let them have their land back. You wouldn't be dealing with statements and things like that because ummm but while ever we know and we're aware that there are people in higher places riding on their coat tails, so to speak, making lots of money from these issues, then I think that it'll be really hard to close the gap of division.

I A last thing. Tell me what your mother told you. Tell me did either your mother or father have statements they made that they'd say over and over to help you in life? Like my mother would always say, 'If you think you'll lose, you've lost'.

R 04:17:14:20 Oh, my mother said plenty, I suppose, yet it was ummm I was from an era where a lot of those things were said to you consistently. But my father probably gave me the advice that I do think of the most, as in one of those little phrases, and he said to me, 'Never lose your sense of humour. Bev, never lose your sense of humour' and I turned around and laughed and said, 'What, do you think I'll need it?' but I often have had to ummm consistently repeat those words. There's been times when I've thought, 'You really put the pressure on here, Dad,' you know, and things like that, and ummm but I think that's helped me. That's helped me a lot in my life, just those few little words, and I'm quite sure that when he said it, that he really had no idea how often I probably would have to even call upon that thought, but that's probably the one that I've referred to the most through the years. And there were a lot of times I didn't have the sense of humour working very well but I think that probably ummm the ability to be able to laugh again or to share a smile does help. It's good medicine. 04:18:51:10

I Thank you very much. Thank you for all you've shared with us.

R Thank you, Trish.

END OF INTERVIEW

Bev's Hands