

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA HODGKINSON

Refers to tapes 78_BC_DV

P = Patricia Hodgkinson T = Trish Fitzsimons E = Erica Addis

T OK. So this is now Camera Tape No 78. It's DAT Tape No 76. It's the 10th January 2002. We're with Patricia Hodgkinson. Trish Fitzsimons – Oh, it's the 10th. It's the 9th. I beg your pardon.

E I'm rolling.

T Um, so I want you to tell me about your mum in relation to, to medicine. Not to herself. Geoffrey what's his name – Geoffrey Dutton in *Squatters* talks about there being a whole category of kind of upper class female invalids in, in Australian history. I want you to talk about that in relation to your mum.

P Um my mother was a – God I wish my words wouldn't desert me when I want them. My mother was a hypochondriac born. And if she decided that she needed an operation on something – her tonsils or something or other, she would – no matter what expense or how inconvenient to my father, she would pack up everything and the Saratoga trunk full of all the, the best china, and she'd go to Melbourne – oh Brisbane first or whatever, and if the specialist said to her 'No, there's nothing wrong with your tonsils Mrs Richards. There's nothing wrong with them at all' – well she'd simply go to Sydney or somewhere until she got somebody to agree with her. And he'd take them out anyway. See whether he cared whether it was real or not and whatnot, because that – and I, I know, and Helen knows, what this is about. This was release from what – everything that she hated so much with the station. That meant mostly she could get back to Melbourne where she still had friends and whatnot. That was – we now know – we didn't know it then. We wouldn't have known what hypochondria was anyway. Mother said her tonsils looked wrong. She came back and she tried to convince somebody – this was for real, that she had a long time to get somebody to agree, she had a goitre operation. Now it didn't – I have learned since, a lot that happens to people who have goitres. That they're very temperamental and this, that and the other. It's the ah rejection of - good glands that should flow there get choked off in emotional people sort of thing. So she certainly had this goitre operation and

in those days, you know, it left you with a big bump on your throat sort of thing. Ah, that's only the beginning. I can't tell you the other things because with her hypochondria it meant that she'd get release. She'd go down to see a doctor or something or other. The worst one of all – the worst one of all was the goit – the ah gallstone operation. She took a long time to convince doctors but finally she got one to find out ooh yes, that was for real alright. So she had the gallstone operation and she had the gallstones put in a little blue velvet bag and when mother had her visitors from then on, Patricia – Helen – bring the blue velvet bag with my stones. Helen and I'd have to get this bloody blue velvet bag and dump it there. And I can see – ah Helen had to take them away. I can see my tall sister coming there. Sister, if anything should be taken from me from my insides, you have to promise that you will **put it in the toilet**. None of us could bear wanting anything to do with it. But mother had these bloody little stones in the blue velvet bag. And Helen and I – our lives was that 'bring the blue velvet bag' with the gallstones. So, as I – as we now know, because we're all so dead clever aren't we, when we get older and learn things, and we read medical journals and we listen to the man on the TV that's there, that was what she – she's a hypochondriac born, but she got the best out of it because she got escape. And that was how it was.

T Do you think – did having a baby provide a similar escape? Did that get her away too?

P Oh yes. But although that was perfectly natural in those days. When Lance de Call, Lance de Courcy-Talbert Scott Richards was born in Melbourne in 1915, ah she went down, I suppose, for a month beforehand and she certainly stayed two or three months ah down there with her um best friends – some people who looked after her when, when she was a child. She had three months in Melbourne. So each child was ah three months old before my father saw it. That was Laurie and Helen. For my life I've long since forgotten where Helen was born and little Lucille. But when it came to me, probably Poppa jacked up and he probably had about a bloody enough of mother and her tripping off, you know, for four months. So this is how I got to be born, practically on the spot, at Wilcannia Cottage Hospital and Mt Leonard – not Mt Leonard. Mt Murchison, you know, was about 40 miles

from there I think it was. And the gorgeous tale about my getting born is that my father had never met up with any of his first born children. He'd never seen a baby after birth ever – ever, ever. So he's gone into the Cottage Hospital to go up the stairs to see my mother, and to see me. And just as he's coming down the steps, two beautiful English ladies who'd been staying at Mt Murchison, came along and they said 'Oh Mr Richards. You've come to see your little baby daughter' and Poppa was reeling. Literally, he said 'Gawd Almighty. I've never seen anything uglier in my bloody life', you know? He was shaken. He was horrified. He didn't even think it could be so ugly. 'Oh my God'. And he staggered off and on his way. Then years rolled by, quite a long – when Aunt Judith was at a – as a special guest at the Victoria Club in London ah meeting of the Geographic Society and she's a special guest, and when the lecture was over, the lecturer told all about um ah the aunts and where their bush upbringing they'd had etc, and to very old ladies got up from the audience and they said 'Miss Scott Richards. Would you happen to have had a brother out on the Darling in New South Wales and whatnot. And Aunty said 'Yes. Yes!' Oh, please do tell us how did that little baby girl get on? They Poppa would have killed me by that time. How did he ever take to her? Aunty was – would you like to believe she's the apple of his eye and she can do anything she damn well doing. But he just - he'd never seen a baby in his life – even in granny's time, you know, it would've been kept away from the children, wouldn't it eh?

T So after your mother stopped going away for babies then, the hypochondria was kind of the equivalent?

P Yeah. Oh she didn't stop going away for babies. She couldn't help it when we got to Mt Leonard, ah because Jack was born in Broken Hill I think and then um Peter, Peter was born in Longreach. Well she had to go to Longreach for a month beforehand – a couple of months, but then that was practically in the front yard, you know. That was 460 miles away or something like that. And ah young Terry, the youngest one. He was born in Longreach too I think, and she had to give up that nonsense about retreating to Melbourne. But on the medicine bit, this is really really terrible. When ah baby Terry, born in August 1926, and I was there, because I was put into boarding school for the

time it took mother to have the baby and come back to the station, and back we came to Mt Leonard with this gorgeous big fat lovely chubby baby. The minute he got home he started to wilt like a flower. He had – whether it was thrush or some baby thing that was common and known at the time, and ah Poppa had to go away. We all had to take turns. Little baby Terry was in the hammock and we had to take turns all day and night to keep swinging it, to keep a bit of breeze going on him and whatnot. But he was I can remember his cry. Like a little kitten's. You know, a mewling of, of a kitten. Anyhow Poppa and the men were away and John Gray Park, the bookkeeper, he was there, and he just said to my mother 'I can't stand it any longer. You've got to get some medicine'. And she said 'I know that, and how are we going to get it?'. John Gray Park said – and we had the Chev then, and he said 'I will drive into Longreach'. That was nearly 500 miles away. A bit short of 500 I think. Driving along – have you write down what you want? Yes, mother wrote down the It had heroine in it. It was quite common in those days, but particularly for ailing and dying people. It eased the, the pain. Whatever this medicine was, um something chloridine wrote down on the piece of paper. When John Gray Park drove up, he drove night and day 'til he got to Longreach, and when he got to the only doctor there, the only doctor there was out to it. On a drug binge. And John Gray Park was a very educated fellow from um Sydney. He'd gone to – put his age up to go to World War I. Came back a nervous total wreck so he was sent out to the bush to be made whole again. John Gray Park simply picked up something. Smashed the doctor's medicine cabinet thing, got the piece of paper, got this, drove 400 miles straight back again. And whether it was the medicine or whether dear Terry had the will to live or not, I don't know. But there's a photograph taken of him late, later than that, when one goat, Jean, one goat was put aside for Terry and a few – six weeks after that, it's bulging on again, and as far as I know, that brother's never had a cold in his life or never had an injury of any sort.

T So breast feeding wasn't, wasn't the go?

P They were not in a condition to breast feed. Any of them. I can't remember whether they did or not because we certainly would've seen people pop the

breast for certain children, but I don't think so. Because of their diet and everything, they just didn't have the milk for them. Glaxo. Glaxo products, you know. Every baby grew up on Glaxo in the bush there. But I've thought so often, my mother must've died 10 deaths with this baby that we're just rocking, rocking, rocking there, hoping Mr Park will get back in time.

T So your mother must've known quite a lot about medicine if she was writing down the name of drugs. No, she would have been in touch with, you know, whatever friends or whatnot, in Melbourne whatnot, were doing with their children. What Terry had was something common to all babies at the time and yes, she had to find a whole heap of medical knowledge. Even without medicines you can still do a job. Oh, she had to do and she did do some marvellous things. This stupid stockman who – were chopping wood and they were just as likely to chop their leg off as anything else, you know. Horrendous wounds, and she never flinched. She bathed them in Condis crystals and wrapped them up and whatnot. Yes, she was born – in another life she would have made a wonderful nurse or doctor, because she had no fear of pain and blood and whatnot. And even the animals too. Ah we had ah brumbies on the station. Brumbies by the 100,000 eating all our stock out and whatnot. Good horses that had gone bad. And every ah oh year or two, my brother Laurie, another good tough stockman, would have to out. Round up you know, about 25 of these brumbies, bring them in. They'd smash the horse fences ah rails down straight away, try and contain these brumbies, until ah it was My brother Laurie got six pounds a break (?), a horse, you know. And it took forever and I had to – silly little old me, I had to go up there and sit on the rails – the top rail of the fence, while Laurie is trying to tame this mad thing here and its hoofs are coming down and I know they've got to land on me so I scarper. I go far. This great thing on a horse to come down. Get back on! And I'd have to get back on the fence and Laurie'd the horse then, and this is how – I again nearly lost my life. When Laurie's – after six days of bags and things and he's got the horse to accept a saddle and a rider, only just, I – being the best rider, had to ride on my quiet pony beside Laurie while he's taking it for his first ride out. Over the gibbers. You know those awful gibbers and things, and of course all the brumby's trying to do is

knock my pony silly and me with it, you know, over the fence and whatnot. It was ghastly. I never got any of that six quid either, but anyway he would just – he'd say 'Oh, don't make a fuss. Stop making such a fuss'. I said 'He's going to kill me'. He says 'Well if he doesn't, I will anyway', you know? Because he wanted his six quid.

T How did you mum get on with the other women around?

P Awful. Um unless they were 'of her class'. Now some of the Monkira (?) and all those crack stations out there, well she always knew – whoever it was, she knew their people in Melbourne or something or other, but others like Mrs um –

T Duncan? Schaffer?

P Ah old ah Miss Duncan, well she couldn't speak to Miss Duncan because Poppa and Miss Duncan weren't on speaks for you know, the first 40 years or so, but Mrs Mrs Mrs ah Mc, Mc, Mc – ah Monkira – just up the road there – ah after World War I, quite a lot of English young ladies found their way out there with the old early mis – London missionaries or something or other, because there were so many ah spinster girls who would never find a husband, ever, and things and they would be shipped out here to the whatever it was. There was a thing that if you wanted a governess, you sent to this place in Sydney. So out from – I could talk of half a dozen or more who were out there, straight from old England. They'd come out, as – before, and they'd be brides in two minutes flat. They wouldn't last long in the back country, would they? And ah Mrs, Mrs Monkira, Mick's wife, oh, she was straight from the mills in Lancashire. I think she was only about 16 or 17 when she came out. Straight out to the bush where she was alleged to be a governess who – she couldn't even speak the Queen's English let alone anything else. But she went off. You know, she got off and she had about six kids before she knows where she is. But she um gave into the bush like so many other women did. Took to the bottle. And she'd be fine because sometimes she – you couldn't get a drink on that station for three months maybe, and then they'd bribe somebody for a case of rum and she and Mick'd just get to the whole case of rum and there was no trying to do anything with Mr and Mrs during that time. And

it was tragic because when she wasn't on the rum, she was like all Lancashire people, you know? Big and hearty and wonderful people. Totally illiterate. So of course you can't imagine mother and Mrs Monkira having a long friendship.

T So class was a – was a dividing line for your mother –

P All the way.

T A lot of women.

P Yeah. It, it was not only mother who felt that way. There were other people – closer in stations. The big stations further in. Oooh dear! Only Brisbane society would visit those big stations. Like Mayfield and whatnot. They were not so bad because most of the – all those Mayfield women had been raised out there. But at the other great big sheep stations and whatnot, well the governors ah sent their sons out there, you know, to learn how to be stockmen.

T So are you saying that girls that grew up there were less class conscious than those who arrived from somewhere else?

P They were class conscious in the opposite way. That they'd just ohhh, what a wonderful life we must leave because we were sent down to school and we had to wear silk dresses and we were people from another planet to the Birdsville boys and girls. It was all so awful, so artificial. That's the way things were. It took World War II to alter the pattern. It'd still be like that if it hadn't been for World War II.

T Why? What did World War II represent?

P World War II took all the young able-bodied ah men off and like my brothers. Three of my four brothers joined up right away. The fourth one, Peter, they wouldn't take because he was the only stockman left on Mt Leonard station and the other three were overseas in the Middle East and God knows where. And when Pete got the – they said to him 'Where do you come from?'. 'Mooradin'. He said 'Oh stationed'. 'What's your father do?'. 'He, he owns this station' and the people in the Army just said 'You get right back there fast. We need beef. We don't need dead soldiers'. Broke Peter's heart. His only chance, you know, to really get away but ah one was a prisoner of war

and one was up in New Guinea and all over there, and so poor Pete. It changed his life terribly. But none of my brothers there, ever went back near the station. They married city girls. One from Melbourne. One from Sydney, and they – the city girls said to my brothers ‘If you think we’re going out there to Boulia dust storms and no refrigeration, you gotta nothing thing coming’. Broke Poppa’s heart. After five generations, no more Richards – Scott Richards to chase cattle under a hot Queensland sun. Broke his heart.

T Now you left Mt Leonard too. How did that happen?

P When – 1939, I had finished um college and I was thinking about how I could sweet talk Poppa into – I’d matriculated. In those days you matriculated at your Leaving I think. I had matriculated and I’d done very very well and ‘cause - just I loved the subjects that I had, and so I was thinking, waiting for Poppa to sort of indicate what I’d do and his was to keep me away from the station because at that age – anyway, I was contemplating that and having a helluva good time in Melbourne. Released from this terribly nice ladies college and I can remember not getting up ‘til 11 or 12, so long as you met up at the Oriental Hotel ah you know, and had drinkies before lunch and then you hung around ‘til it was time for drinkies, and I had a ball. And of course, you knew perfectly well that a ball had to fall on top of your head. You mustn’t enjoy yourself like that, must you eh? Poppa knew nothing about my little exploits at the Oriental Hotel. But in ’39, as I say, at – right from the jump, three of my brothers went and enlisted. And then I got to thinking, and I thought no. I can’t even contemplate going to university because I’ve got brothers who’ve given up everything they have and this bit I knew, I’ve had a feeling in my water that this is going to be a very serious bit of business, and while I’m butterflying around Melbourne University, they’ll be slogging their way through jungles and God knows what. No. That wasn’t going to add up. And so I went ah I was having my drinkies in the Oriental on a Friday night, I think, with all my mates. Fascinating all my mates. And a fellow came – one of our number came along with us and he said ‘Hey Trish. I wonder what sort of job they’ll give you?’. ‘What are you talking out?’. Manpower regulations had just been declared that day, Friday, and they – Manpower had phoned. He said I kind of figure somehow or other, that you’ll be on Monday, you’ll be in

a pickle factory shoving labels on pickle jars. He frightened the living daylight of me. I thought 'Oh God, oh God, oh God'. I left my drinks – put my drink down. I went across the way, top of Collins Street there where they had a recruiting office. Two days later I'm a WAFO. They heard all my story in an hour - they , were OK. Where are your family? I said I don't have any family here in Melbourne at all. Ah my father – mother's disappeared somewhere and my father's come out there and whatnot, and they just said what have you been doing and I told them. Well they took – responded to something in me I suppose, because they decided that I'd be wasted just as a – a little old ACW. Ah, that I'd be a welfare officer. Already, in that short time since the um Airforce, the Ladies Airforce thing had been formed, they'd put in Welfare Officers to begin with who were 60 years of age plus and that had not worked. The young little wifeys were not going to spill their all to these old women, you know. So they decided to go back up another angle and they knew perfectly well where I'd issued from – the Oriental. They decided to have somebody around. I was all of 19 I think. I think I was about 19. Somebody of their own age and stage. And they – awf – they – wife in Melbourne, they were awfully good and they didn't let me – they let me go and make my own mistakes and they didn't tell me what I had to do and whatnot. And they said look, you just follow your instincts and you'll be fine. You've got a way of getting across to people and you'll be fine. If you get into any bother, well you have an ACW officer you know here. You've got people you know who'll help you. I went in. I was tailored. I was made for the job. I really really was because the kids'd just split themselves laughing at the things that I didn't get caught at, you know.

T And you ended up marrying another serviceman, didn't you?

P Hugh – the – in 1945, the British Navy come out here. Squadrons, and Hugh was a flyer, a fleet air armed flyer, and they had their planes loaded on here in Sydney Harbour for the final assault on Japan, and they had been – when the short time they were here in Sydney, they had their planes and they trained and trained and trained doing all their add ons and drops and things like that, for this final assault. So Hugh – this squadron landed on Maryborough, Queensland, overnight. I'd been away in Sydney. I had five days leave. Been

in Sydney. Got back on the Midnight Aura. That was the train from Brisbane up to Maryborough – Aura. It was all wooden slat seatings and what not, and I ah just had my kit bag over my shoulder and a black soldier up on top, sleeping on the rack, he jumped down and he said ‘Here. I’ll bunk you up’. He said ‘this is the best seat on the train’. You’re up away from all the soldiers drinking booze and throwing up and doing Gawd knows what down below. And this lovely fellow just pulled me up there and I slept like a babe until I got off the train at 5.00am in Maryborough. My driver met me and drove me out and I saw this sea of blue tents as far as the eye could see, and I said ACW whoever, what’s going on here? Oh Madam, she said, it’s the British. They’ve landed. Oh, you’ll love them. I said I hate their rotten guts, and I will have nothing to do with them. Famous last words. Six weeks later I’m married to one. But that was because when Singapore fell, Winston Churchill never ever – I wash my mouth out every time I say Winston Churchill – when Singapore fell, he said Australia was expendable. Our troops were in the Middle East and they refused to let our troops come home and fight for our country here, so I was ropable and any time anybody mentioned English, pommies, whatnot there – I met Hugh one night. That night there was a reception, a dance, in the mess for him. I met my glorious Hubert. Six weeks later, being - er Katie –ah Kay Taylor, WAF officer, who followed me down the aisle at St James here in Sydney, and she just said ‘Not lonely. Not bad for one who hated their guts six weeks ago’.

T And how about your mum? How did she come to leave the Channel Country?

P Well, she left it on and off over the whole years sort of thing, but my sister married in – sh-sh-sh – about ’36 or something like that. Helen was a teacher and she went up as school teacher to um I forgotten the name of the place. Was just 10 miles from Kingaroy, this little country town up there, and she boarded with a country ah peanut – they’re all peanut farmers. And she boarded with this family, McIlains, and they had two sons who ran all the peanut stuff for them and um John, who was quite a lot older who was peanut farming – good old Queensland country stock, slow spoken whatnot. Ohhh, he just fell head over heels and stupid Helen goes and marries him. Not that I’d rather her marrying John but it just cut her off, like mother before, you

know. Cut her off in her life. Anyhow, Helen um was well settled on these two farms and then mother mentally deteriorated over this time she had and there was no way she could live out west and my father was beside himself. My martyr sister with a young baby, er a little girl about 2 or 3, and my nephew er, er a sickly little baby – had him to look after, took mother on and for the next I don't know quite how long it was before she died. By which time I'm over in England. I had three years over in England, when Hugh had to be repatriated somewhere but thank God, I never had to persuade him to come back to Australia. He just said he and all the rest of his squadron took one look at Sydney, Australia, they took one look at Australia and said how quickly can we get this war over and get back here. Hugh was in love with Australia at first sight. So I never had to persuade him to come back. But Helen had all the burden and all the – and it was frightening I suppose in a terrible state. But I knew nothing about that, and there it was.

T Mmm. So what when – what year would your mum have died?

P While I was in England. We landed there in '45. Oh it must've been '47 or something. But I'd had no contact with my mother ah since before I joined the airforce I think. Mmm.

T What do you remember your mother saying? Like if you were to have your mother beside you here now saying things that she would say over and over, what would come to mind?

P I think I'd revert to childhood and I'd shrivel – you know, curl up in a ball. What does she say those things for, you know? If I ever understood her, which I hardly ever did anyway, but she would just embarrass me and I was frightened of her. Let's face it. I was shit-scared of her, from an early age. I'd do anything not to displease her. We never had a comfortable – although I was told by my father and I was told by my sister Helen whatnot, that I cut off all relations after a couple of shocking incidents when I was first sent in the Airforce – I was sent up to RTO Brisbane and I tried to make contact with her then and of course, disaster. The whole, whole thing. Not – not to be spoken about again. And so I cut off all things you see, but apparently she cut things out of the newspaper about me and um – ah Miss Patricia Richards, Welfare

Office, RAAF, entertaining - three Generals I'm entertaining mark you. Not at the Oriental but you know, at some things I –

T People like us.

P People like us. No. Five star Generals. I never got less than a five star General you know? But they had to talk to me because I had to do – when I was going around hospitals and things, I made it my business to look after any soldier who was there. They didn't have to be Australian. And they didn't have to be male. They could be American or they – whoever – where I saw a need in those hospitals, particularly a whole heap of the gobs – the American GIs, who'd been plucked off farms as babies practically and they were so hopelessly homesick and somebody had to do something about it. And as I said, the Airforce gave me my charter. I could do what I want where I saw a need for it.

T Your one thing that you and Mum it seems have in common, is actually books and writing. Do you want to talk to me now about your interest in history? What –

P Oh yes indeed I do, because I don't know, I suppose it was mother talking because she was SO proud of this aristocratic ah father of hers and she told me, although she could colour history to suit her purposes, and it's on the desk in there, is – only just in the last couple of years, Moira Ferguson who's over in Ireland and she sent a picture of OUR castle. Fergumore or something or other, and it's the one where her English nobility went across and said this country's too good for you lot of uneducated Irish mobs, you know, and there it's been ever since then. This is about 1300 and something or other they went there. She was enormously proud of the ah that lineage because ah her husband, her husband's family, the Scott comes from Sir Walter Scott. I'm the one, two, three four, great, great, great, great grandniece of Sir Walter Scott and granny – oh did she make much. Anything Scottish I don't know. And she could rub my mother's nose in the fact that the Scott lineage, you know, absolutely knocked the de Coorsie Talbots not exactly because 1300 and something's pretty far back anyway. But all this vying of whose family history was the more important sort of thing. But ah with the Scott I was well

versed in Sir Walter Scott and all the things. Mark you, I've never read a er Sir Walter Scott novel past chapter 1 in my life. Too much verbiage. I couldn't get on with it, but I was very proud of that ancestor, Walter Scott, if you knew his life, you'd know why. And so there was all this ping pong between my mother's family and my father's family. Poppa never entered into it. Thought it was a whole lot of bloody nonsense. Never entered into it. But all this underlying thing one-upmanship about who was the longest lineage. Who had the most famous. Well Sir Walter Scott is known for his writings wasn't he, you know? When he first started writing novels, they were serialised in the London papers and Scottish papers, and Queen Victoria said she couldn't wait for the next week to come. Oh Mr Scott. Do tell what's going to happen in the next thing.

T So it's family history that took you into the study of history then?

P Yes, because Sir Walter Scott didn't mean a Godamn thing to me 'til I got older and then, quite early on – and I got the cutting out of the Scottish Gazette there about the life. Early on, I found out this life of Sir Walter Scott. His father was a sheriff – you know, a legal man. A wide term is sheriff in Scotland. But his father was the head sheriff in Edinburgh and his son in turn did – went to Law School, and he became ah a county sheriff. That is he went on horseback and he did all his things around ah the border. The border – tale, border tales are his. Round about the border of England and Scotland. While he was on horseback and doing all his sheriff's work and whatnot he came upon all the wonderful border legends there are and all those things, so he started writing them up and these are all these wonderful books and that things. And he began to make ooh, money. A lot of money out of his writing so he gave the sheriff business away and then of course he had to have a publisher so he had this publisher, Ballantyne, and ah the publishing of Walter Scott's books, thanks to a little bit of a leg up by Queen Victoria, he made masses of money (?). and he turned it all over to Ballantyne, the publisher, who had to invest it or do whatever it is and when he's in full fig with all these writings and whatnot, they have to bankrupt. Ballantynes, Scott, the lot. Now the shame of that – and of course this just comes about as Walter Scott has got his dream. He's built his castle er on the Tee, on the Tee in

Scotland, just on the border there, and the dee(?) stupid, the dee, and he is devastated is Sir Walter Scott, and so he's so far in debt and incredible sum. Like 90 thousand pounds in those days. Gawd, that'd be millions in these days wouldn't it? Anyhow, Sir Walter Scott from then on, wrote himself to death. And he –

T And how about you? When did you start writing?

P Oh I think it – ah started writing, reminiscences and those sort of things, because I was always awfully good and composition. You know, compositions? Mmm. I used to think that was a bit good, you know, me and the compositions. And all – I never ever wanted to write anything except history, and history – but as I say, this Walter Scott business got to me, because he was already consumptive. He had to go away to Italy when he was an old man to try and save his lungs, and there's a pathetic portrait. It's in ah Gerbera(?), in his home there. This pathetic portrait of the old frail gentleman with a plaid around his shoulders. Candle light. And he's writing, writing, writing. He cleared that debt before he died.

T So writing's -

P Did that made me proud? It just makes me proud. And I see in my father and sons and whatnot, that Walter Scott spirit. I see that in my sons and whatnot.

T So did you grow up knowing about things like the Mt Leonard massacre for instance?

P Not a word. I only found out about that only a short time ago. I don't know how it was but I came upon that. Something.

T So just talk about that a bit. We discussed it over lunch. Why, why was it that you didn't know about the kind of, the ugly history if you like underlying –

P Because as you very well know my dear, you're a documentary maker, and you've come upon this before. The shame of current Australians today and civil, the apath – the shame that we could – Australians could ever have allowed it to happen. I've told you why it happened on Mt Leonard. This policeman was absolutely shit scared that he'd lose his life to the blacks. It was terror that made him do that. But on all my years on Mt Leonard, not a

peep. Not a word was ever said. And of course, conversation was being made, like my mother and the other station owners' wives, when the Race Meeting came along, and of course everybody had sent down to Finny Aisles (?) for their race dray and Henderson Hats. They did a nice side line in ladies hats as well. And all this wonderful finery for the races. And my mother, I think, was the first to start it, she said oh the poor gins. They'd be hanging on the outskirts and the, the race course would wear a clay pan, you know, that's it, but they'd be over there out of the way and they'd be watching the races in their dirty old gin dresses and whatnot. So mother used to get two bolts of material ah that you made curtains with or something. They had sunflowers this size and they had something – something purple and something orange. As long as they were colourful and she made what we later called muu-muus. Mother Hupboards, you know? Neck, armholes and whatnot. And then she went way over the top and she bought them all white sandshoes. They never had anything on their feet but they used to – I can see. They used to walk around and they'd be looking at their feet all the time.

T You think – you – I think you used some word like 'recompense'. I mean why was it do you think, that it was – that this knowledge was kept from you children?

P Shame! No – see mother wasn't there at the time, and all the successive people who were there were so – not only ashamed, but afraid that it might get down south you know, to judges and sticky people. Historians and the Peter Elkins, the anthropologist you know? If they got their sticky nose into it – ohhh, there'd be hell to pay, wouldn't there? But at the time, it never ever leaked out. Here is this total bastard shooting every tenth. Don't care if they're black. They're humans. And just riding off and leaving their bones to rot.

T How about, I know in some of the histories I've read, there's pretty ugly histories around like (?) and basically forced sexual relationships between white men and black women.

P Mmm.

T What do you know about that in the Channel Country?

P I do ah and this is the first ta – thing is a tale that my mother ah told against herself that ah the white men didn't always turn away, pull up his pants and go away after he had molested the, the black gin. Ah some of them and very – squatters of high note, actually got their boy – the girls they didn't seem to worry about, the girls – the boy, and educated him. Some went to St Peter's College in Adelaide and some went whatnot. Anyhow my mother's standing at the front of ah Mt Murchison? Whichever station it was that Pop was on at the time, and a smart little black boy rode up on a, on a horse, and he jumped down and my mother said in a friendly tone 'Hullo little black fellow. Hullo little black piccaninny. Which way you bin jump up?'. That's the way you talk to things there. And he said 'Oh, Mrs Scott-Richards. I'm Mr de Burg-Purse's man and Mr de Burg-Purse wonders if you and your husband would join them for Sunday lunch this coming Sunday. And mother crumbled, nearly crumbled into a heap when she realised because de Burg-Purse was quite a known name in Scottocracy. She nearly (?) because apparently she was the only one who didn't know that Mr de Burg-Purse had had a little bit of dalliance and he never, ever denied it. Brought the kid up.

T And would regard that, from the world of your childhood, was that an exception or would that have been a common –

P Oooh no. There were heaps of 'em. Worse than the straight black and straight white – worse than that, were the tragic people in between called half-castes. They were neither fish nor flesh nor fowl, except that some of them had such strength of character. A family called the Gorrings. Oranges with a 'g' in front. And bill Gorange, he was – they were – the boys were mostly stockmen but Billy Gorange, he was a – he turned out to be a drover. Now any stockman – any station owner who had the good fortune to be able to book up Billy Gorange to take their cattle down to Adelaide to market, boy, he was ahead of the game. Really and truly. He knew that his stock was in good hands so a few of the Gorange people, and they're still out around Clifton Hill and on the other side of Birdsville, um they took (?), and then – because Billy Gorange was such ah obviously outstandingly wonderful man in himself, that ah I know Pop and everybody around about there, did everything they could to convince the people who owned the stations they are on, you know, to

give him a go and need be a head station – a stockman-head station manager or something, until he got his own place. He made enough money and he had such fame as a drover, that he got enough for a downpayment on a station just over the border in South Australia and so he started his empire from there because he had the backing of every station owner who'd ever had the luck to have him(?). So there's the Goranges. That was OK with half-castes but the half-castes – just awful. You know, you'd get to a station –

T Hold. We have to cut.

End of Side B