

## **Volume II**

# **Women of the Landschaft:**

How Creativity Articulates this Reality

## **Transcripts and Recordings**

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# **Women of the Landschaft:**

## How Creativity Articulates this Reality

### **Transcripts and Recordings**

This document contains twenty-six literal transcripts from interviews that occurred in 2009-2012. Julie M Bennett facilitated all interviews.

The interviews were recorded with country women living on properties outside of towns and cities in regional Victoria. Each interview took between 2-4 hours and centred around the meaning and value of each woman's creative expression, how their environment influenced their work and their stories about living in the country.

There were no limits to the age of a participant. However the youngest was thirty-three and the oldest was ninety-three years of age. Most participants were born in the country or they had lived most of their adult life on the land.

Recordings of thirty-three interviews, which include those that were transcribed, are on DVD disc in a pocket at the back of this document. All files are Mp3 format with twenty-four hours of recordings.

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Recordings of interviews are on DVD  
at the back of this document.

Facilitator: So when you heard about...what was the interesting thing about it? Why did you connect with what was being said in the email?

Interviewee: Because I believe really strongly in country...yeah turn the chair around if you'd like, turn it 'round...um, because I feel really strongly about life in the country, and what women are doing in the country. And there's a huge network of people who survive because of their art. It's their lifeblood – it's my lifeblood. It's really my way of rewarding myself if I decide to do something in the house – because half the time I'm a teacher, and I've always been a teacher, I love to inspire others. And so I'm part of two very vibrant hand weavers and spinners groups, and we just bounce stuff and Shepparton was just basically knitters and spinners, they no longer are; Wangaratta is now very, very creative, so we all teach each other stuff.

F: Right. So is it being part of a group as well?

I: No. It's part of the story, it's only...the real story goes back to when I was a little girl.

F: Right.

I: Because I worked out some time ago, my first craft group that I was part of I must have been no more than five. My mum got together with the neighbours and we made Christmas presents and in German they're called *pundatella* – the coloured plates where you roll up streamer and form it into a plate and lacquer it. And every person in the family has their own coloured plate that keeps getting refilled by mother every year. For weeks before Christmas there's a family plate and you have your own individual plate of all the different Christmas biscuits. And so, plus, things like cutting and folding paper and making snowflake shapes out, um...yeah. So...

F: And then you arrive here, and then you've got family. Did you do much when you had a family?

I: Yeah it was my survival. There's a weaving on the wall up there that was done half an hour at a time, when I'm breastfeeding one. Andrew was sitting there and he'd come in with a half-eaten worm or whatever and you could only do half an hour. I'd come from a staff of 19 at Blackburn Primary School right, and suddenly you're home with no neighbours with a first baby particularly, so I've always done things. It just got to be multiplied when you retired. But even when I was teaching I taught German through Art. I taught it through all the activities because there was no material made that was appropriate for country children. There was only six programs in Melbourne, and then there was Debnit and Thoona (?). So I had one day, because I'm always accidentally the first I get to make the rules with what I'm doing.

F: (laughs) Right. Yeah.

I: Right? So um, when the children look back at the years of what I did they had every puppeteer in Australia come to Thoona. We had Richard...

F: Oh so you started with puppets?

I: Puppets, and song. So my Mama made puppets to survive in Ocean Grove, and there's no way I could have taught. Imagine starting in the middle of the year – which the German program did – and you're teaching children baby stuff. Right. You stick a puppet on their hand and the puppet's making the mistake, not them. It's called 'ego surviving'.

F: Right. Do you know Helen Gibson at all?

I: Yeah.

F: Right I've done Helen Gibson with her puppets, with 'Wallah' the Koala.

I: Yes, she was part of another project, but there's actually two Helen Gibsons.

F: Oh is there?

I: Yes. Because the other Helen Gibson is one of my Thoona Mums, she's also an artist. She's a painter. And um, yeah.

F: So puppets are amazing. Puppets in the country.

- I: Puppets are totally...so they had Richard Bradshaw – shadow puppeteer, ‘Handspan’, in the days he had ‘Handspan’ we had ‘Handspan’ for a month at Thoona. And we had all sorts of puppeteers, and because I did a whole lot of different stuff the Goethe Institute would ring me if a puppeteer was coming. The programs in Melbourne got the puppeteer for a program, we had him for a week. The Consul came – the craziest thing – the German Consul came out to Thoona to see what they’d paid for! And he was okay – she was disgusting. She said ‘Annaleesa didn’t even wait for responses’ but everyone fell in love with the Prussian driver, he was totally glorious. But yeah the kids have had so many...so Art is really the stuff that threads – but there was an era when it was called ‘craft’.
- F: Right. What’s your distinction between Art and Craft?
- I: Um...you have to have skills to be able to produce art, and it needs to be something that no one else has thought of, or you think no one else has thought of – it’s not made from someone else’s pattern.
- F: Right, your pre-conceived...
- I: So nowadays when we were in teacher’s college we were supp...I’m a sculptor, we were supposed to draw our sculptures – I can’t. And now they label me as an intuitive artist. You allow it to evolve. So I don’t know what something’s going to be as I’m beginning it.
- F: Well that’s a philosophy that – Colin used to say that Craft was pre-conceived. You can actually find a lot of weavers or anyone who doesn’t follow a pattern is an artist.
- I: Yeah. So the other day at Spinners we were, I’ve done a fair bit of felting over the years, and the gnomes down there are needle felters, and they were doing some wet felting. Now one of the ladies was in dire trouble. She had never made anything, she didn’t know the end result of, and she was really concerned – how big was this going to be. ‘What am I going to make out of?’ And people always say to me ‘What are you going to do with them?’ and I don’t know yet. You don’t.
- F: It’s a bit scary for some people.
- I: Okay. Over yonder behind you there’s what’s left of a very old basket.
- F: Is this your walnut?
- I: No, the walnut basket I’ll show you. That basket I’ve never been able to repeat it. It’s the era I call ‘innocence’; when you’re doing something, it’s lost quite a bit of it’s strains over the years, and spiders have built in it too, but it had an incredibly beautiful shape and once I got more skills I just couldn’t do it. Somehow the innocence, that’s why I always keep the very first when I’m experimenting. I don’t sell it. And on the table there’s a journey with a stitch. There’s a journey with – the browns, yes – that was the first piece, okay. The one with the beads on top is the last piece. So there’s three pieces um, as I got better...
- F: So you made the felt as well?
- I: That’s blanket cutter. That’s op shop blanket cutter. The green one is felted. The orange is base brack material cut up. The one in between is chucked into the washing machine – blanket – the lovely um...
- F: So it’s not far from, as you say, when you were a child with the plates and...
- I: I’ve always...some people think they’re original when they call me a ‘bag lady’. They’re *not* original. I’ve been called that a million times. I have more bags and scarves than any one in Wangaratta. And when people go ‘what are you going to put in it?’ I go ‘I don’t know yet.’ But there’ll be something. But yeah, there’s lots on...I am...
- F: ...only because I am...
- I: I am totally happy with it. I do it too. On the table, the green, is an op shop rescue I framed the stitching. There’s an exhibition coming some time on...with all the, I’ve got a huge amount of them, I’ve been collecting them for a long time. Um...there’s so much around us that we can use.
- F: So, the value and meaning of art?
- I: The value and meaning of art I think is...is being able to create something to inspire others that also satisfies you.
- F: Right. If you didn’t have it?
- I: If I didn’t have it...I don’t know what I would do. I certainly wouldn’t be happy. Okay, over yonder, with the rings in it, um, this is some art yarn that I’m supposed to be practicing this afternoon that I learnt...in the early days when we still lived in Mooroolbark...
- F: These are fantastic...
- I: Oh and these, these are the reason that my pictures – there’s a pile that is covered now, it’s got the spikes and the little display on top, that’s the twenty picture frames that were

on the table this morning. I'm very good at disguising things. And um...I couldn't stand them on the table anymore. That's my huge knitting mill. That's what the scarf that I had on before that I took off, that's what that was made of. It's like one thing leads to another. The curtains over there behind you – one year in Mooroolbark I felt absolutely dreadful because I spent my last two dollars, they now call them broomstick handles – knitting needles.

- F: Oh right.  
I: Nobody had named them then...  
F: The really big ones?  
I: The *really* big ones.  
F: Right.  
I: Um...I knitted white wool – I don't ply my wool, that's why this art is fun for me because I don't normally ply. And um, I had knitted curtains that hung in the schoolhouse in Millewa. People came from miles to see my curtains because nobody – everybody plied! It was taken for granted that when you spin wool you ply it. But again, teaching in my lounge room in Mooroolbark I found out that my homespun wool looked more professional than Country Spun - had put out some yarn. So I taught myself how to put the bumps back in, come to Wangaratta and I get invited to go to spinners, and they think I'm a beginning spinner. On dying days I never have to label my yarn, because I was the only one who didn't have plied yarn! Um...and even now, and this is – one day we're eating, in one of our lovely cafes and I was given this mountain of alpaca – this is alpaca, single plied alpaca...  
F: Met a fantastic lady who, Rosemary Kingsmill, she's actually in the Mildura gallery – I'll turn this off now...(tape cuts)  
I: ...native language, because we've done... because of the journey of two folks from extreme ends of Germany, who come to Australia, you've got another culture – my first Aunt becomes my teacher – my first teacher becomes my Aunt, her paintings are on the wall there, it's quite bizarre. Within two months of being in Australia the Queen was being crowned! And I go home and tell my mum that in the Interim magazines there was the coronation coach but it had no Queen! My mum made the Queen. And that began a life long friendship with Aunt Ruth for the rest of our lives, um...and so when I was growing up she was the one that took me, not my sister...  
F: You've got no relatives here?  
I: No. Only the children that my sister and I had, my parents are now dead, my sister was six and I was eight going on nine, so we lived Ocean Grove for the first three years, and in Ocean Grove there was the...migrant camps, as my aunty Ruth said, the 'factory fodder', that was filled – because it was Shell, they were the 'factory fodder' for Shell refinery. And because I love telling stories, over the years I discovered why Geelong Grammar has a refinery beside them.  
F: A what beside them?  
I: Shell Refinery is right next-door to Geelong Refinery. Our teacher was also a sponsor at um Geelong Grammar. And so...mum and dad...  
F: Oh so you were sponsored to come out.  
I: I actually have a refugee past. Dad as the German Army Captain – over the years we've heard a lot more about Hitler and how he *didn't* listen to his advisors, my Dad was academically a hundred-and-something in the whole German Army, and so he was sent where his creative thinking could be used the most: France; later, Russia. And he saw the writing on the wall, so he got his beautiful wife – my mum – and his tiny baby out of there.  
F: Right.  
I: Um, Uncle brings him home, and that's why I'm the product of two ends of Germany. And at every German conference, if someone asks you – they always ask you where your parents came from – and when I told them, they would say the same thing – 'Impossible'. It was! There was nothing in common between the two ends of Germany, which gives you a wonderful background because it gives you the culture of both ends. And then you come to Australia...  
F: You didn't get any prejudice against you, being German?

- I: Ocean Grove...oh okay. My folks said, the minute we got here, now they both spoke English, not Australian, and Dad was here 12 months before us – the job Allan Marshall got my Dad was...
- F: Allan Marshall taught at Swinburne...
- I: *Not* the Author. Yeah!
- F: ...The illustrator – the drawer...
- I: Allan Marshall no, I don't know...
- F: The writer...
- I: Not the writer, the teacher, Allan Marshall became Principle of Geelong Grammar. He was billeted by Dad's – we were going to Canada and one morning – this is the few affluent years, and Cold War time in Germany, when um, breakfast is a ceremony in Germany. So here you are, sitting at the breakfast table, the paper arrives and it says 'Come to Australia We need You', and we thought 'who do we know in Australia?' and Dad's Colonel had sponsored a teacher at Geelong Grammar. And so, we have the letters in scrapbook – we have the letters, she did this wonderful book of our journey to Australia. Um...yeah. And so, um...the job he got for my dad – '52 he was cleaning the corridors of Geelong Grammar. They'd set up the fashion house, you saw the photos, and can you imagine how glorious it is, can you imagine *then* how *they* felt. In '52 the propaganda hadn't turned off, they've now got a German Army Captain cleaning their corridors! Now I love telling that story.
- F: Now you've written that all down have you? It's just amazing...
- I: It is. It's quite...
- F: But that wouldn't be uncommon, would it? I mean, families coming over...
- I: People came, you know, as the little girl and my sister, as we were about to come into Fremantle and later Melbourne, it was um, we felt the anxiety of the adults – 'What are we doing?' – they knew *nothing* much about Australia before they came. You know, there's...it's a really...
- F: So would you say Art played a role in blending in, and...?
- I: Oh, well I never made an effort of blending in because...okay when we got here Mum and Dad said 'Now you're not to speak German, even at home, for three months'. We were with Dutch children, which were not particularly educated, they were what I call the mob who follows whoever. It doesn't matter what country, um...so you didn't identify the fact that you were German. I've never had an accent. My Aunty Ruth was very careful how you spoke, my parents were, my third teacher was Ken Himmons – the youngest surviving gunner in the RAF, and he spoke beautiful English. I get asked by English people what part of England I come from. So, if you've never had an accent – you're not Chinese, you don't look different...
- F: It's not a problem.
- I: You know, it wasn't until I came to 'Wang' that people said you're different – interesting – and that's nice. I'm in my early 30s and ladies in their early 30s look at why I couldn't remove the German-ness out of the – but the Prussian-ness was a much, much later! Because Prussia united, in other words conquered the West of Germany. Right, and because I've got the two halves...and now...
- F: Right...so just bringing the focus back to Art, the focus being Art, sort of...so what do you consider yourself, as an Artist? What do you sort of say?
- I: I'm labeled a fiber Artist.
- F: A fiber artist. Okay.
- I: But I do many things...
- F: Yeah well you can see...
- I: It came through baskets, okay. The first time I was labeled an Artist I was making a...(tape skips) glorified cubby in the main street in Mansfield, in the middle of the – there's that lovely big medium strip. Next to me was this lovely person that the Goethe Institute had sent. When the person had wrote Geeta Amor – Artist – we all laughed. It stuck. So gradually, gradually, the more your work progressed – and then there was that era where there was a huge amount of Craft money, and I was one of the regional crafts people, still labeled craft at that point – whose work traveled all over and ended up at the Spy Gallery in Melbourne. And then I went back teaching. And then...
- F: So how does the environment – being rural – influence? Does it have an influence on your artwork?

- I: Huge. Because that's the – I think, um, well I labeled my baskets the walnut baskets. Okay, there's a teeny – if you get the little figure by the cottage, there's a tiny walnut basket there, no, no in front of the cottage there's a tiny figure...
- F: Oh yes.
- I: That's the smallest walnut basket I have ever made. That's the tiniest one. It's just all balanced. That's the tiniest one I've ever made – it's no bigger than my thumbnail.
- F: My goodness. And what's that all, just fuse wire is it?
- I: No, it's um...I'm very good at walking around and asking people for their left-overs, and that came from um, motor-winding wire. So I had a lot of rolls of the varying thicknesses of motor winding wire. Yeah. And in between – so the baskets were all about natural material, there was stuff I found – I discovered that New Zealand flax and cotorline palm were great mediums, cotorline palm was my structure, the flax – I learnt over varying time was how to split, but it started off with willow, until we went to Queensland and I was taught how to use some soft materials and it went on. And after years of teaching people would go 'Geeta, what if?' – and their 'what if?' would take off to a whole lot of my other 'what ifs'.
- F: Okay so was it because of you being in country Victoria that you got into the baskets?
- I: It began as a hobby and we had an adult education centre, and you could dream up whatever courses you liked, and they got advertised, there was this lovely brochure that went out – that era's all gone. There was money to support it. Then gradually I taught it all. There were other adult education centres within Kooee, the exhibitions started, and stuff got more way out. But then through recycling – it's down over yonder, see the two gnomes are sitting on?
- F: Yeah...
- I: That's the innards of an electric blanket. So I invented a stitch that um...the bigger one up higher, that's my first – no, maybe my second attempt at using the purple cable from the performing arts centre. So, and through that space, my um, my documenting happened first with my baskets, then with my teaching, and then for 15 months I photographed the building rising.
- F: Oh you mentioned this...
- I: And the building rising gave me another – the tip by now was officially the transfer station where I got *lots* of materials, I called it my Greek market place...as well, because there was lots of discussion as well...
- F: We like her...
- I: Yes, we like her too. Um, so there's this abundance of materials, but they went from just natural materials to looking at what can I stock from going to the tip? So that's how the electric blanket ones began, because all of that, and then that's the last of the – I mean what can you do with strapping?
- F: This is lovely. Look at the lines...
- I: Oh, take the other one off, the one that's upside down – because of these two, the pictures are going on the wall. Because who's ever made something that's decent out of strapping? And um, I learnt how to do this technique, only the base um, in January the basket-makers of Victoria have a muster, but I did learn how to do the sides, so this is my version of the sides, which is a variation of another technique that I developed. And people were so tickled that someone using strapping, that's even hard to put in the bin because it jumps everywhere
- F: So you went with it though, you went with...
- I: Yeah, yeah. And that's why I particularly wanted to learn that technique because it's one of the few things I couldn't use with the leftovers from the performing arts centre. Many of the other things worked out really – there's huge baskets over in the shed that I made out of the varying – I know every cable that goes into the performing arts centre because I've been allowed to use all the leftovers. It went from the occupational health and safety person saving me the sign that's behind the nose from the old building, to me being allowed to take out whatever I liked from the skip. There's a lot of leftovers in a skip, and one day...
- F: How many years back is this that you're talking?
- I: Um, it's about David's first birthday – so the completion, so we're talking two years and a bit back – So September two years,
- F: Yeah...



- I: So, they muddled a whole cable drum of the purple that's the base of that other one. That's the stage cable undone. There's a massive amount. There's beading – because of the time in the Philippines we learnt how to do tribal beading, and I did that with all of Chisholm Street on coat hangers, across the span of the coat hangers because I couldn't find any natural material that worked. And you have a crown over your head – plus the spider's extra addition – but look at the beautiful dome!
- F: Isn't it lovely.
- I: Isn't it glorious! So...
- F: You're so privileged to have this as your home.
- I: There's so many...um that's going to be here, or um...(aside) oh we really need that in the middle Kate.
- I 2: Oh well I didn't do anything to it.
- I: It just came on by itself did it?
- I 2: You've got the controller there, turn it off.
- I: Oh have I? I'll turn it off that's a good idea. Okay. Caught up in other things...yeah.
- F: No, you're doing really well.
- I: So, the 'angels' got inspired, always done angels – I'll cut you one in a minute. A friend – there's little looms that I love to use, and a friend – I researched and researched and wanted someone local and discovered they were much more complicated and there's this lovely lady Barbara Thomas in Gympie so I ordered. I ordered them for the group and there were tiny ones, and I go 'What do you do with the tiny ones?' and she said 'I make angels'. So we've been exchanging images over the web, over email, so I made my version of angels, which is sort of a pass me down in a sense, because my mum –
- F: And you made all of these?
- I: No, no. They're bought. But the angels below and the cut angel. Um, so yeah, there's a whole – I love collecting rocks and shapes of rocks and doing stuff with the rocks, um...that figure – the pottery figure is another absolutely beautiful story: we had holocaust exhibition called 'Courage to Care' in Wang. I was *not* going in. But on the door was the only student of mine who's teaching German and there was folks there who said 'It's not about what happened.' That week I met three holocaust survivors – the last one, and they knew who I was – and the last one was a sculptor too. Who sculpted her way out of the horror. They were all in Dachau. She was in Dachau – while she was in Dachau she had only sweet dreams, the minute she got out of Dachau for 20 years she had nightmares. And when we visited her here was these gnarled hands – red clay hands. At the beginning and at the end there was these beautiful clear white porcelain hands when she had sculpted her way out. We've had – that was her gift to me, we've had a tiny side exhibition, when I became the hugging hat-ranger of Wangaratta.
- F: (laughs)
- I: Mm...there's a lot of...actually that's inaccurate. I did a festival for the council, and because I had three months instead of 12 months to build up to it I decided I had to do something eccentric and I became the hugging hat-ranger of Wangaratta – we're bush-ranger country are we not? Ned Kelly, right? I love hugging, and it was about hats – the exhibition. I added hand-shoes – can you guess what hand-shoe is? Germans are very descriptive: there's the shoe for the foot and there's the shoe for a hand. And within a week you heard other people saying what a hand-shoe was. And so one of our local cartoonists who worked for the paper at the time did a cartoon of me um, as the hugging hat-ranger. And, um, yeah. But the next time, we have a textile festival – we live in a textile town – 'Stitched Up' and I ended up with my own hall full of things, um, Rural Australians for Refugees happened at that time, and um, we, with a beautiful Brigadeen Nun we were making a banner. And we had a new Dean and he thought that all that was going to happen was, in his hall, we were going to put the banner. But Geeta filled the hall. And what did we call it Pete?
- I 2: Sorry?
- I: The festival when we did the...um...something or other about hearts, anyway. Oh yeah, the banner said: 'Through their story, hearts open.' It was all about hearts, which is also my symbol.
- F: Access. You mentioned Access Art?
- I: Women's Access. Women's Access years ago, I and Maureen were given the role of doing a week's worth of conferences of whatever we liked of what we thought was

- appropriate for country women. And um, out of that came a discussion group, a meditation group, a family clinic, um...and we actually looked really seriously at the role of the women, and realized that women were what holds society together, because they organize the house, they did the family thing, many women nowadays have to go to work – they can do both. Hold the family together, and if the woman disappears, how many gentlemen – some gentlemen can – but how many gentlemen...? And if the marriage breaks, the gentlemen usually marries again very rapidly, but the lady very often never does. So that was a lot of basis of a lot of thinking, because we had to come up with a definition – and again we were one of the first, it hadn't happened, and yeah.
- F: So is this a bit like 'Women Gathering'? The government incentive for women gathering and they'd give \$500 to a group, if they came up with...?
- I: I don't know about that...
- F: I only heard about it at Wangaratta, and went to the Women's Health there and spoke with Julie Turner, who said there was a Women's Gathering...
- I: Maureen works there now, my friend who was Women's Access days, okay.
- F: I don't know if it still exists but the government would give \$500 for a group of women if they got together – now they could do a recipe book, or yoga, or anything just as long as they got together.
- I: Well if I...my survival in the country is women's networks. And it came out of Women's Access – the discussion group. The scariest thing I have ever done was invite someone to do the meditation class as part of this Women's Access. 27 women enrolled, and she said I'm not going to do it unless you help me. I have a Dad whose sometimes labeled a mystic, too. And, so, the two of us had a circle of 27 women and we hadn't a clue what any of them thought. And one darling lady – Fergie – said everything we weren't game to say. It was incredibly scary, and out of that came...
- F: What did she say?
- I: She said, um...well, I guess we were being fairly basic – meditating was considered radical, so, she took whatever we said just that little bit further, I can't remember exact quotes, but the meditation group that rose out of that – the women were brushing the smell of the incense off them in case their husbands thought they were witches. I am not exaggerating.
- F: We're talking thirty years ago, aren't we?
- I: We're talking early '80s. They were concerned as to what the *cleaner* would smell the next morning. So you know, I've always been on the edge, and art is a part of that.
- F: How do you think Art has helped played this role of women?
- I: Because it gives you a way of expressing yourself, whether or not others understand. When I did the hugging hat-ranger a lot of people did not understand what I was doing. I didn't have 30 hats and write stories about them, I had a huge amount of hats, I used the local handicapped – the folks that help them, their workshop, I used that as my working space – I have friends everywhere that I can, I've got resources everywhere. And so I had these huge boxes and they drilled holes in them for me, and I had huge poles, just cut from pretend bamboo out the front, and we classified them into the Army hats, into the dress hats, and, and, and...and lots of stories were told. And if you were there, people – oh and then my cousin from Germany got really inspired about it. He's a teacher, a lecturer, working for distance education – he sent to me – it made a whole other exhibition – he sent me hats through the ages. He had stuff I couldn't access via email – he went to libraries and got all sorts of stuff for me, that made another whole exhibition.
- F: When you say exhibition, who assembles it for you?
- I: I just put it up myself. So that was at the centre.
- I 2: He sent an email...
- I: He sent them, he emailed them, I printed them – Peter printed them. I framed them in simple frames – this is when I was doing stuff for the council, bought frames, um...and just simple black frames and so there were like, what, a lot of pictures. It went around a whole room.
- F: In Wangaratta?
- I: In Wangaratta, at the centre. And yeah, I wondered about that. And um...so the exhibition of the hats also had an alcove in the front that some of my children's artistic friend's had put together, which got me into an interesting amount of bother – because one of them had

- cleverly documented, done the pretend you know when you do a play with pictures, that said Elvis was a copy of a Russian Elvis. They had done it absolutely superbly. Peter...?
- I 2: He put it together saying that Elvis had really been Russian.
- I: Right. He was the copy of the Russian Elvis! (laughs)
- I 2: So you had a lot of um, he'd done photographic
- I: Really amazing stuff. And I was asked to take it down, and I said 'No'. and I happened to be at the sheltered workshop with this mountain of um, they re-do torpedo boxes that um...things that have these great – in the toilet is some of the shelving – great armaments. We have the armament produces, A...what is it? ADI is in the area. So the ADI was in the workshop refurbishing boxes that was totally toxic stuff, which was – actually had those in the gallery – I borrowed some of those toxins we had to open all the doors and stuff and air the place out before people went in. Now here am I sitting next to this mountain of boxes, being told to take them down and telling the young guy Simon who happened to be the PR person from the Gallery in Melbourne.
- F: Benalla there...?
- I: No, No. Melbourne Gallery – the National Gallery. The publicist from the National Gallery, and he said 'Geeta if they tell you to take it down, I will write an article for the Age saying 'Wangaratta BANS'', that took care of it being down! (laughs) And um...so yeah I'm always doing stuff on the edge, but yeah I think really if we go back to that question of what does Art mean for me, I don't think I could survive now – and yes okay you might call that craft – but if I've invented the concept the next person that does it is craft. Um, the knitting mill that um, this is how the yarn's being produced, now the yarn's behind you, and that has to flow freely. Um, and I've lost the stitch so it's now broken, doesn't matter. But yeah, that's making the yarn that I made the pink things in the corner. Now this is totally crazy – it came from England, with a Dutch name, and it's the oldest German company from 12 generations (pre- 1500) that produce it. They also made the press-studs and safety pins, so it's not old, but the company itself is. It goes back to pre-1500. And this is a bit of their heritage inside here, they dealt in metal and in copper. There are six copper rods in here. And so...
- F: It's heavy isn't it...
- I: It's very heavy. It's also very sturdy.
- F: So you get great support from your family?
- I: Peter is amazing. Peter is the...well, he's very like – in lots of ways – my Dad, who in the days of Ocean Grove meals could be late because Mum was painting puppet hands, Dad would be making the stands, that the puppet hands were on. Mum made mobiles that were sold in all the amazing giftware and baby wear shops all across Australia. She built up a business where the map of Australia was marked with where her mobiles were. And Dad would do the support stuff. Um, he's the Mystic. Peter may not be the mystic – I'm the mystic, but yeah he's a wonderful support person. And without the – oh, for instance the possibility for me exchanging images with Barbara and my worldwide Internet circle – Pete's the researcher I'm the communicator. And so...without the...
- F: When you were mentioning on the phone about the gender – males sort of thing in the country, you mentioned how you see it?
- I: Okay, the last story in that I guess, is um...we've got an amazing exhibition in Wang right now – the Embroiders Guild's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Um, and...one of the founding members is Morney Storic. And she's a wonderful old journalist, she's a doctor in studying, and her story was that of the men – she's Rupert Murdoch's peer, so when she got her first apprentice – what do you call it – cadetship, she was a year ahead, later ended up working for him in London and um...so, also got to be able to work with this amazing embroidery. Made the Queen's gowns – coronation gown. And the guys, she had one day off when she could do her embroidery, and they really put her down, until the Queen admired one of her pieces. So, somehow through that space – part of our family story is, amazing people have always ended up in our lives. Um, it didn't matter whether you were living in the tiny flat behind Wattle grove, or here, it's...okay you notice I dress a little differently...
- F: No
- I: Good. (laughs) Well, this blanket got cut up yesterday morning
- F: It's a great idea actually.
- I: This is a Geeta skirt, this is an Ishka that I've played with.
- F: Yes, it's interesting, you're a work of art.

- I: And the hat – this was supposed to be the hat for the celebration for the shed and all the renovations being finished, well it isn't finished – the house isn't finished – we ate too many meals out, but we have a wonderful granite bench kitchen, and you noticed the collage on the cupboards? Well, that's built – the kitchen's built by one of my Thoonia preppies by his company and him. And it was totally amazing designing the kitchen with Blair – like 'Hey, how can...there's this special double-glaze cupboards so I can have my collages'. Part of my Art is also photography. And making the collages. Which came out of the German days.
- F: Did you study photography?
- I: Well now yes, but in the old days no. I spent a fortune in Germany – the two scholarships taking photos because I had to photograph stuff for the children didn't I? And over the years there's a great collage that I did for an assessment, I cut up – you know when you've already used all the good photos? So you had to cut out the yawning kid, didn't you? And that became the collages and it became part of my assessment process.
- F: So you have grandchildren now?
- I: One. We have to wait 'til...
- F: And how old is she?
- I: She's not yet two.
- F: So she doesn't quite...
- I: But she'll already dance and...okay, Chris, Andrew and Ritchie are very much into computer, amazing computer graphics – the older two boys. They're 43, and 40. Christopher's 33. Christopher's partner is Jodi Fullicer...(tape cuts)...There were no basket makers here! I was *the* basket maker. Except for Sid. There was isolation. That's why my baskets are called the melon baskets. Not 'til last year did I know exactly why...
- F: The melon and walnut baskets.
- I: and then the affirmation book with the melon and walnut...
- F: But would you call this isolation?
- I: Yes. It was very much isolation.
- I 2: But then it brang people together with things like Spinning, and those things.
- I: Okay, when you say isolation it's through our Art's network and community arts that we have a network of people. Until you find that network, and create that network and encourage that network, okay, the total difference between Wang Hand weavers and Spinner's and Benalla; in the old days Benalla were the creative ones and we weren't. Now the roles have switched.
- F: Right.
- I: So that's why teaching, and encouraging and sharing...
- F: But you could have this in the city, couldn't you?
- I: I don't know that it would work the same. Because in your space here you sit – you create things that others haven't. I think, well I *know* that I was making walnut baskets before the person in Melbourne was considered the expert. I figured out of a German book actually, but the name came out of a CWA pamphlet. I have...Peter – the pink books on the pile. You know the handcraft books from Neetchen, it's on the pile in there. There's an awful lot of stuff that came out of...
- F: And you wouldn't have this in the city you don't think?
- I: I don't think...I could have been the expert. Okay, when we were in Mooroolbark, um, I was – we left Mooroolbark when I was 32 with the children. Yes, I was young. I wove that, but the networks in the city are harder to create because people don't talk to each other as easily – in the country, people talk to each other.
- F: Right, okay.
- I: Actually that's the...
- I 2: I was going to say you were more isolated in Mooroolbark...(laughs)
- I: I was more isolated, and quite right – I was more isolated. I had to walk, I had no car. Peter had the car, he took the car to work. The day I had to ring the doctor with the first pregnancy to say I'm coming to hospital we had no phone – I had to walk fifteen minutes, no I had to walk to someone else's phone. If Peter was ill I didn't have a license then, I had to walk 25 minutes to the petrol station to make a phone call.
- I 2: Well that was almost cutting it – that was the very end...
- I: Well Mooroolbark was the very edge of the city then, and...yeah, and so here, um, through the centre, through the – and that's the reason we stayed...

- I 2: The adult education centre.
- I: Right, um, yeah. Again it was the first, too. First country centre.
- I 2: It was the first adult education centre, it was before Melbourne had one.
- I: Yeah, it was before Melbourne. A lot of things have happened in Wangaratta and the country because of the need for people to communicate. It's really – and through the centre we had family camps, which we were also when I was pregnant when I was Chris – which made it 30 or 35 years ago. When I organized an excursion to the Arts Centre in Melbourne with Rob the education officer – Rob Gilbraith, he kept going 'How come you know all these people?' Because we invited them all to Shelley and then you have *real* time with people. Like, the first scholarship in Germany, some of my friends were really jealous of me because I got to go visit a really famous author in her home, and spend two hours with her, because she had been to a conference – a Goethe Conference – and my luck was, and it was really luck, the book that she had drawn and it was all handwritten, ran out, just before I got there – it was the last copy and I go 'Oh Marie, I really want one' she gave me *her* copy! Her hand written, numbered pages, copy. Hand-numbered – the rest was printed obviously. And so I was actually allowed to visit her at home, in Heidelberg in Germany. So because I'm different, I'm prepared to ask questions and that comes out of my background. And that's where the Art comes from – being prepared to be different.
- F: So Art's been your communicator?
- I: Yeah. And teaching, and telling stories, and the photos, now. Because the photos spoke... and doing things with the children that no one else did. You know, in the beginning when we taught language, when we were beginning teaching German the Primary teachers were asked to see what the Year 7 and 8 were doing. Before long, because we were all experienced teachers – they asked the 7 and 8s to see what we were doing. And we changed the whole...
- F: So you did teaching here? You went and got your diploma and...
- I: I did my training – migrants make sure that their children are as highly educated as they possibly can. My sister and I were both Primary school trained.
- F: Is your sister creative?
- I: No. Well, she's a crafts person in my definition, but her time is worth about 500 an hour – she's an internet, she's like Peter – she's an internet...trains the mentors, so she's gone in a very different direction. Her house is glorious, yes.
- F: But this is glorious.
- I: This is very different. This is a very different house.
- F: Much more interesting...I've got a sister like that – she's the opposite.
- I: And what's interesting about that is that we're two – you know if you...
- F: ...you take your shoes off when you go inside...
- I: Yeah. You know the Venn diagram, right? We have the interlocking circles, right, well, in the middle we're totally in harmony, but the outsides – I like to use butterflies, as an example – the wing's are totally, totally different...that's an early piece – that's the era when I was doing copper embossing. Toadstools, insects, go way back...
- I 2: That'd be Mooroolbark.
- I: That's Mooroolbark. When we first arrived in Australia, um, my sister got chickenpox, my teacher – because of the Queen – she was already family, and she sent home the shiny paper, and my mum allowed me to make collages in the back of story books – and they're still here. So the images of the insects and the beetles and the grasses, go way back to them. The reflection up high – that's a basket from way back. No, on the – behind you – I'm looking in the camera – that's been exhibited all over the place. Um...
- I 2: In isolation I guess – oh really?!...(laughs)
- I: But the isolation – see there's a very fragile basket on the table near the cobweb...now that is very fragile – in the early days I knew nothing about what materials I just thought the longest materials were the best materials, that's weeping willow – that dries incredibly brittle. Um, and um...we had one of – part of the reason we're in Wangaratta is that friend's moved up here to support elderly parents, Heather's elderly parents, and um, in the early basket era they sent me cuttings from America – her husband's American, they moved to America, and um...yeah my wild baskets – in fact we found some cuttings the

- other day, oh no...behind um...behind the picture, Julie, behind the new picture, this is some of my relatively, well signature baskets. Don't worry if the gnomes fall down...
- I 2: What are you looking for?
- I: The baskets. Yes. Please. This fish basket – don't worry if they fall, doesn't matter. Um, this is the basket I taught, this illustrates the cord line, and the reds. This was part of an exhibition in Wangaratta and this has been exhibited all over the place too. These are the reeds, and that's the technique I used to finish those.
- F: Okay. A different medium creates a totally different...
- I: Totally, totally different. This I believe were reeds that I picked on the way to Bendigo – Castlemaine – when I had an exhibition in Castlemaine, many, many years ago as part of Castlemaine festival. And this basket – the fish basket – is now, there's all sorts of variations, and people don't actually realize, people in Melbourne – that I began the fish basket. Um, my beautiful Aboriginal Sandy Atkinson – John Atkinson, um...taught me, we went across in the high days of the adult education centres, um...Heather, who was then organizing tours, we went up to the keeping place in Shepparton, she and Sandy – he was John Atkinson to us in those days – finished their business in five minutes, and then I asked about the baskets – we were in his office like lightning. He told us about all the paintings around his walls, no one had heard about dot-paintings yet, the meaning of the paintings when you have the horse shoe shapes, the symbolism, right? So from then on, we used to go across on a regular basis with the children. So my baskets went from containers, actually this sort of shape but wider, became soft materials, and one day, for an exhibition the rejects were thrown in the hallway, I took three of these fish – which were not as wide then – on the table and they landed like fish talking to each other. They were hung that way. And so, I love mistakes, I think they're the most amazing stuff. So this is the cordline. Right. And this is the flax, the flax is the thread. It was at a workshop that someone showed me how you split flax. So every time I taught something someone would do the what if and teach you something else and you'd take that on. And it's basically because of Sandy. And yesterday it was totally weird – we've got the National Park – the Waubee and Ovens National Park open, um, and...
- F: So have you done any installation work, like that?
- I: Yeah, we've done lots of...
- F: They would hang beautifully from trees and...
- I: We've done a lot of things. Community arts days there were a lot. I had a tiny one, an installation, that got moved because I wanted to see the sea.
- I 2: I guess your big baskets...
- I: Oh yeah, okay. Thank you Pete. Early community arts days, because I'm a dreadful scrounger, and had access at that stage to all the factories, I...when I was relearning German the manager of the floor of the mill was also learning German because most of the machinery came from Germany. Therefore, I was able – I had access to the back of the mill. And, so, one day I'm sitting and I'm allowed to get whatever I like out of there, so I made um...I was invited to be the, well it was still called a crafts person at that stage – to be the extension of the textile town Wangaratta that was doing a promotion of itself in Eastlands, Canberra, in South Australia and Canberra – the shopping centres. And for that effort I made a basket out of the um...oh I know it went back to John Trimble saying 'Would you like a guided tour of the mill?' He didn't tell us it would take two hours, and Peter was carrying Christopher. And here was all the um, the pre-stages of the wool, looking like merinos on their end. And that's stuck in my mind, so that basket was a coil basket which is a pre-generation of those pink ones on the table, but you can sit in it. And the top was finger knitted, so we invented a way you could finger knit really quickly...
- F: And it could withstand weight like that?
- I: Yeah, it hung. It hung...
- I 2: ...with a metal stand like that...
- I: Yeah. So one of my...so at that stage – it was suspended from ceilings and stuff from that stage, because that was the one that had the stand at that stage. So, okay, then we had a community arts event, by now Malcolm Handsford has been employed by the council to see the last dream building that hadn't happened. That's the pre-story of why I got to photograph this one...and the first community arts festival we did I made a *huge* one of those. Now, someone had dropped in the garbage at my mum and dad's in East Camberwell, a huge white knitted tube. I stuffed it with all the stuff from the mill, and I

made a huge, huge base. Twenty-three people could sit inside that one. And the people who came to the event helped finger knit the top. Yes you're right the first one did have the stand – Peter made the stand, it was in our lounge room for a long time. The second one I don't know what happened to it, it would have disappeared eventually, it was huge. It would have taken the whole front floor of the lounge room. Yeah, so with community arts, also, we again invited lots of amazing people, I was on the first committee. So this all combined, and that led to the time of Women's Access, and then to teaching German. And all, lots of the people and lots of the things that I had – like the dragon – there was this amazing, amazing dragon that was made, an inflatable dragon, that you ran with, and this huge dragon came from behind. The children at Thoonia got to have all of those things, um...it's to me, I guess, we survived through – my mum survived through her puppets and her creating things and her mobiles. When we left home, my mum was so focused on us, if she hadn't made the mobiles, and she was also the businessperson, yeah. And so, I guess my angels are an echo of mum's mobiles, Pete? Aren't they, really? Oh and the other thing we haven't talked about is the scissor-cuts. Have a look, down near the window there's an angel still hanging there. Um...right. Now, in a market place in Germany I bought, luckily, I bought some white ones.

F: I'd love to see your Christmas tree.

I: Yes. Yeah. There's all sizes, and...so one of the arts I've developed, and these are traditional patterns, they're not one of my patterns – but what I did do originally was with the children, I imported these special scissor cutting scissors, I imported them from Germany.

F: That one?

I: No, this is a fine... I had a picture of some...they have longish handles and a very fine blade. The first pair I bought in Germany was \$30. They're incredibly, they're very special – very pointy – very special. But the children's ones weren't as expensive as that, so I blew up on the photocopier – it's the creative thinking behind that makes it – so the designs, and as the children got better we shrank them. See this is a tiny one – see the thistle?

F: Oh tiny!

I: Dandelion I mean. So first we blew them up, then we shrank them as the children got better. And my...and used them as letterheads on the photocopier. And that's another reason why the country is amazing. I could do stuff on the photocopier – I had the key to school I could go in there and work for hours. The folks in the city at the big schools had to have the secretary do the photocopying.

F: Little things like that...

I: That's a *big* thing. Because my shadow puppet shows that I did with the children, I could take a storybook this size and I could blow it up to whatever size. So...okay, consider the challenge...

F: So, why aren't there more creative women in the country?

I: There are. They're everywhere. It's a matter of connecting. And that's where Women's Access gave me the connecting. And then through community arts – because Sale and Geelong had spent too much there was a moratorium on all new performing arts centres. Malcolm set up a community arts network instead. And out of that came my, I've had many exhibition, well I guess it's not too many – in the foyer of TAFE of the photos that I took of the building, until February. So it's September 18, the celebration of it being finished – um...I called it 'The Journey Counts'. Because Malcolm taught us that it's the journey towards the piece. And that's why the stories – one day some of our household things will be in the immigration museum. I'll show you the potato masher in a minute, and there's a wonderful plate. It just looks like an ordinary potato masher, Petey, do you feel like getting it?

I 2: Where is it?

I: Just in the...utensils standing up in the kitchen. It just looks like an ordinary potato masher...

I 2: I think it is!

F: (laughs)

I: Except there's one slight problem, it's the front of a gas mask.

F: Oh really?

I: Right? The actual mashing bit. And one day – thank god I asked my mum, I don't know why I asked her. And the metal – after the war, and the base of – everything is destroyed

- and recreating. And so, once the natural basket era gradually merged into the stopping stuff going into the tip...
- I 2: One potato masher.
- F: *That* potato masher. So you use it do you?
- I: Oh yeah. Just the family potato masher.
- I 2: The handle is from something else...
- I: Oh the handle...
- F: But this is like Australians, this makeshift?
- I: This is the stock of migrants – the pioneers. And after the War, um...people had to be incredibly creative. Can you imagine – one of the stories that Marie Marks, that lovely author I was telling you about? One of the stories, her personal stories – she's standing in Dresden. Now, on SBS you know you were saying German television on our telly – Dresden is the place where most amazing cultural place. Here is an American Soldier spreading his arms out, very proud of them flattening Dresden. 'Look at what we've done!' with great pride. Unfortunately they haven't changed much.
- F: So you fitted in well with Australians, really, didn't you?
- I: Because my parents were creative thinkers. I don't have to tell you I'm German unless I choose. The Chinese borders we had – oh that's the other element that's really important in my journey. When we came to um...a doctor family rescued us from Ocean Grove, gave us a flat behind Whitehorse Clinic...
- F: What's that?
- I 2: You said rescued...
- I: Rescued is an interesting word. They befriended our...well...when I went to Germany I discovered that our Australian friends even looked like our German family. It almost freaked me out. When you stand in a crowd of people, when you're invited to the beginning of a puppet festival – I told you about – right, they were no different to being in a festival. When I had my stuff in an exhibition in Castlemaine, one of my old Art teachers at Geelong West was also part of an exhibition in Geelong West, we didn't know anywhere – anyone, who was at that opening. You picked very rapidly who were the artists and who were the hanger-oners. It was no different in Germany. In fact, the picture I thought was the most – this is later I took, of the most German Grandma, my gorgeous scoop goes 'She's just like my Grandma'. So, the difference, and so they very quickly connected with similar people. We've always had doctors in our lives, I was going to be the most famous surgeon in the world. Um...and um...yeah and they made a flat available behind Whitehorse Road Clinic, so that we could save up for the house, the house was in East Camberwell in Woorhow Street. It was paid for in five years, and mum and dad, by now, Dad's working in the Government Aeronautical factory in East Melbourne – and I love telling this – because he retired with the complete drawings, three cabinets full, of the Akharem Missile. When they went to Germany the only trip to Germany – they had a gentlemen follow them on the whole trip. They said 'Hello' on the way into the trip, and on the way out, right. My dad, and there was no way – that was still East West time, there was no way he would have gone to the east because he would still have been in the Black list – he would have put his life in danger. Um, and so...the Chinese – they chose Asian students to be the people who would help...yeah that's another Geeta creation – that was the copper era. Um...hat down there. And yeah...so all the way through there was creative thinking that now, if you have two ends of Germany plus Australia, plus all the Asian students came from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Borneo. And I loved them. I discussed hours with them. They were rich, from rich families who could obviously support students overseas. But we never thought about them as being rich.
- I 2: You're talking about early '60s aren't you?
- I: Yeah, I went to Camberwell High, it was one of the five High Schools where you didn't have to sit external exams...you know, they're...migrants do stuff to make sure that their children can have stuff to fall back on. If I hadn't been a trained primary school teacher I could not have become the first...
- F: So how did you move up here? Because you mentioned...(tape cuts)
- I: Right... the wrap-around skirts and the sandals that you had re-soled and my hair in plaits...
- F: Right, you hadn't changed?



- I: Well, I stopped having my hair short when everyone with grey hair had it short. And I enjoyed your pigtails. So...the day that, when I was on centre committee, I was on centre committee for six years, there were two doctor's wives, and one of them jumped down my throat every time I opened my mouth and down the street we were making a mural – this is community arts days as well – that night, Governor Murray and Lady Murray – this was the birthday, and I got dressed up.
- F: I can't imagine what you looked like...
- I: Well I had my mother's wedding dress on, my mother's wedding dress was this amazing black lace and...
- F: She had a black wedding dress?

Facilitator: (laughs) You know it well. Oh I like that.

Interviewee: What Jeffrey and I were doing, I didn't feel a thing. No, not until I woke up one morning and I had a headache for three and a half weeks they couldn't shift. Not again. No way. Locked up from here...to here

I 2: Helping out harvest.

I: Trying to. Well I thought I was doing well, (laughs)

I 2: Well I was helping out New Years Eve and I was riding in a rough ute and we had to drive very fast, there was a big storm coming. And I didn't know, I shook myself enough from that because just the way my back is. And you just...

I: You don't realize, and you block the pain out. That's what they told me I did. I blocked it out until the pain had no where to go but into my head. So it's taken...

I 2: You're a strong lady.

I: Oh...

F: So how much of your work are you helping out on the farm, and how much is for you?

I: Well at the moment all of it is for me! (laughs) I've been barred! I'm in deep shit. I can't even get on the ride-on mower! You see me out there, (laughing) it's a disgrace, since before Christmas and I said yesterday 'can I have the ride-on mower' 'cos it's one of these not steering wheel but its got these bars, and I'm okay once it's going, but I haven't been on it for a while I get a bit jittery, because it takes off. So it's the first day we got it off back to the bushes

F: Is that the one...

I: Yeah, they're fabulous. They turn, I have a ball on the thing. I was having a lovely time, anyway, I said to him 'I'm sick of that orchard out there' yesterday, and 'what do you think you're going to do about it?' and I said 'I'm going to get the ride-on mower out of the shed' and he said 'you've got another thing coming for you.'

F: Oh, that's nice he's protecting you.

I: Yes but he doesn't do any of the work. (laughs) So instead I took on the chook yards and the dog yards but I didn't wheel the wheelbarrow, so...

I 2: It doesn't get done, does it? Unless the girls do it.

I: Yeah. I don't know who they think is going to clean the dog yard and the chook yard. Yes.

F: So preserving is...

I: I enjoy it, I hate it at harvest time though!

I 2: It's the timing of it.

I: It's the timing of it all. It's right on harvest so you're really tired because you're trying to do other things, and preserve your bottles and make your jams and make your stuff like that.

F: I didn't realize that.

I: Yeah, just the timing of the fruit.

F: So they're all off your own trees? Pears?

I: Pears come in in the end of February, so that's a bit better, but that's when we try to get a break.

F: So when the harvest comes you say, what role do you play with the harvest?

I: Well, usually run this, skip that, run into town 'cos something's broken down...

I 2: Towing things up at the...

I: ...paddocks, yeah, 'don't hit the gateway darlin'' (laughs) cut the wire.

F: So you can't keep something bubbling on the stove obviously?

I: No, not a good idea. You can turn it off before you go. It has been known to happen, come home to a burnt bun.

I 2: Some people are preserving things in the microwave now.

I: Yeah, I've tried that but I can't get...nup, don't like it.

F: So you're a prize winning preserver?

I: No, Ruby Gregor would have been. She would have put her's in the show down.

I 2: If you want an older person to talk to, she's a lovely lady.  
 I: Oh she's lovely. She's up the road. You'd just love her, she's 93  
 F: Oh really? And still living on the property?  
 I 2: On her own.  
 I: Yes, and she's a beautiful, lovely lady, she's just a gorgeous person.  
 I 2: She'd have lots of stories...

I: Yes she would. I could contact William and see.  
 I 2: Yes, you do that. I um, I was just thinking I'll get going now, but um, I was thinking maybe if we're going to catch up with Yvonne Anderson we could, if you come out from Woomelang in the morning and come down to where my farm is...  
 I: I could draw a map for her  
 I 2: Even if you wanted to come down to Dianne in the morning.  
 F: No I'll meet you.  
 I: Anyway...  
 F: I'll meet you at your place because we haven't taken your garden. I want to see this garden that the tornado's gone through.  
 I 2: (laughs)  
 I: It's bugged me up totally, you should see out the front here, I'm sick of the wind now.  
 I: The previous owner, we've only been out here what five and a half years, the previous owner, beautiful plantations, you look out there and it took out the two trees, cleanly took them out, I'm standing over here because all I could hear 'crack, crack' before I got the dogs out of the way. Got the chooks locked up but it was the funniest sight.  
 I 2: Mm.  
 I: You've gotta have a sense of humour, because I've been up the paddock and it rained down the other block at Pop's and I said to David, I said to my brother 'well that's bugged me for the day' he said because he carts for us, anyway, we got nearly bogged in the sand, we were having a bit of trouble getting in the bottom gates down there because of the sand, so anyway, we came up over the next block and David's still stripping, it's only over the hill, anyway, so he came to tip another load in and said 'I'm going home' but it's just as well he'd only gone half an hour when the storm hit. And I'd come up and said if you can't strip there you can strip at King Horn's because it's beautiful sunshine and nothing happened. I got home and there was nothing here, come inside to do a few jobs and all of sudden my aviary birds and everything went dead quiet and I know something was wrong then. And I thought 'right', I went out the back door and thought 'Holy Shit' was the next words that came out of my mouth, and I looked out there and there was this, you could see it rolling, and it was just like dirty brown, but behind it was black, and I thought - I've got a new pup over there - and I thought 'she's going to be scared' so I took my old dog out of here who I was spoiling by letting her lay outside the air-conditioner because it was pretty hot, and I raced her over to the yard, and I thought 'chooks!' and how am I going to get them out at this hour, because they don't normally follow a bucket of feed, but this day they must have known, so a bucket of feed, and I locked them in, and I'd been cleaning curtains and washing windows all day, and I got the last window shut and it hit, and I mean it *hit* and I'm standing there and I thought I can't go anywhere because it's tin, even though everything was down things started to fly around. And the next thing, the chook yard - with the chooks in it - took off! (laughs)  
 You've got to imagine this, the chook yard's like this, the next thing she's like *that*, and she's gone back about eight feet back with the chooks in it. And I had some drums they like to sit in, because some of them are pretty old I can't knock them on the head, they live to old age here, anyway they took off and I thought 'I can't go out there 'cos the tin's flying off the top!' and I thought 'okay, I'll just have to look when it finishes' and I hear *crack* and the two big pines come down behind it, which is behind there, and I could hear more cracking and I went to the front of the house and I thought 'no, get away' because those big trees are out the front out there, anyway I wasn't even game to look out there, and I thought 'oh well,' and when it was over I went out - 'cos it was getting darker out then - and I checked to see if the chooks were okay, and they were fine, just picked up all the things that had tipped over.  
 F: A few broken eggs...  
 I: No, no, it was just the tin that they normally sit on. Anyway they were fine, but anyway I had to try and stop at the foxes, it was like this, (laughs) and you should have seen the timber out the front, it was just awful.

I 2: I was at Lake Boga when the storms started, when it came from that direction over here. I'd been to a council meeting out in Warracknabeel, driven from Warracknabeel to Swan Hill, to have a town hall meeting over there, then had to go to Melbourne. So, I saw this storm starting and I thought 'What do I do?'; Do I keep driving to Melbourne, or do I head for home? And I thought I should probably stay with my original plans, so I took off to Melbourne, then the boss rang me that night and said 'we've had a bloody tornado through here' and I thought he was exaggerating...

I: He heard the news, I'm sure they looked up the map to see where Woomelang was.

I 2: Then I came home the next day and my back fence had gone, sheets of tin off every building around the farm yard, um, spout hanging, and the worst thing was the damage to the trees. All the trees on the roadside were all ripped and torn, and tipped upside down and roots in the air... it was quite a horrific sight.

I: We tried to get out of here 'cos David's dad's – he passed away in June, and he had sheep and all that up at the property so we thought we'd better get up there – anyway, this is early next morning – we got up, and we got down the front track where you couldn't get out, and we had to get out a chainsaw and it was raining, and we were chainsawing and chainsawing, and we got up to Jolly's Rd and I said to David – 'holy shit' it might be two or three hours before we get out of here, and he said 'well we've just got to go' so he chainsawed and tipped over, and next minute we could hear this noise up in the corner and it was David and I said 'what the hell was that?' and he said 'oh that would be Gary Gregor doing burn outs in the mud' (laughs) and I said 'don't be stupid' but Gary does do that sort of thing.

I 2: (laughs) sometimes, yeah.

I: Anyway, it went on and on and on. And I said it can't be Gary, he'd be out of fuel by now, anyway, next thing down comes the Shire with the bulldozer and I said 'we better get out of the way for them' (laughs) ... (tape cuts)

I: ...and he said to me 'and what are you doing?' and I'm thinking 'woosh', it was great.

F: So when was this exactly?

I: The 25<sup>th</sup> of November.

I 2: Is that when it was? I have insurance claims at home that say December the... (tape cuts)

I: And when he comes I said, and mind you he was a bit unsure of me, 'cos he hardly knew me and he said 'you come here' (laughs) and anyway he came through the door and he's a bit timid, Alan, and anyway I took him round the corner, I think he was a bit unaware about where the hell he was going and I opened up my pantry and I said 'this is'... (tape cuts)

F: ...girls are? Why are they doing it?

I: Oh well... (tape cuts)... a tub of ice cream and I said 'well the freezer's there', next thing he hints, he says 'got some nice apricot jam there' and something else – he wanted to have a few things – (laughs) he's gorgeous really.

I 2: Diane sent me home a lot of... (tape cuts)

I: Something to do without it costing too much.

F: Oh the girls on the farm here?

I: Yea

F: They're going back to needle work are they?

I: Yeah, some of them in the groups. Some of them are saying they're going to do that next, some of them have been patch-working and some reckon they're going to – someone the other night was asking how to do the little fencing work.

F: Oh, okay.

I: So, yeah. A lot of them are liking the old antique-y stuff, because they can't afford... (tape cuts)... to put in their houses, and they want to change 'cos you know how you get bored...

F: do a cushion or something...

I: Yeah, so they either get something and they do it up or recycle it, or make it interesting again. Yeah, so some of them are doing that.

F: Oh. So um... (tape cuts) ...that's where I am. So I'm hence, traveling around just seeing other women, and seeing how do you survive? How do you survive out here?

I: Yeah, I barter a lot. (laughs)

F: What do you mean?

I: Well, like the brick work out there I can't lay it, so I've dug up the bricks out the back because there's an old tumisick, because I'm not working so I can't afford to – well I try not to add to the farm bills, so I pick them up, I clean them, and then there's a chap in town I'm friendly, his wife – Sharon – we're good mates, and it's just her partner and he's bloody

hopeless at painting and everything, he's got no idea, so I said to her 'right, well I'll come and help paint your house on the inside, and we'll work together and have some fun' which we do, while he comes and lays my bricks.

F: Does this happen a lot?

I: Well, I don't know, that's just how I survive.

F: Right. So you'll give a jar of preserves for something?

I: Oh, not necessarily. I just love to give people stuff.

F: Right.

I: Though, Hoss has given me hay and won't take money for it. So, when my vegie patch was good I take fruit and vegie – mind you it hasn't worked very well in the last 12 months because I can't get much to grow out of it, so I reckon it's the weather.

F: Right.

I: Plus, my back gave up so I had to stop for a little while. And I'll get back in and start a winter crop ...

F: Right, but what about the 'you' time? What's for you out here? Like that's not for you out here...

I: That's for me. Yep.

F: That's for you? You feel good about yourself, you get confidence?

I: Yep, I'm a project sort of girl, my daughter says. Mum's always got a project. She's not happy until she's done, and when we come here, it still looks like we've done nothing, but the previous owners left shit everywhere. And up the back here there *was* a lovely lot of trees (laughs) but he dumped the wire here and he dumped the wire there, and it was all buried in the sand and I thought 'oh yeah, so I'll have that all cleaned up in a week' – four months later – I'm still digging. And I thought it was a little bit of wire like that, and I pull it up and it's a whole role of barbed wire, so I've got a big corner up the back and I still haven't got back 'cos I don't work with snakes – I'm not very good with snakes so I'll wait for winter to come and I'll go finish cleaning up the scrap metal.

F: Oh okay.

I: But I enjoy that, that's my...I'm out in the open, I don't mind housework, I'm happy to do it for the day, but I don't want to be inside all the time either. So I like to get out...

F: And do the farm work as well?

I: Well, not necessarily. I like to achieve something, so it mightn't be exactly what he wants to do, but I'd like to clean something, I'd like to do something, it's what I want to do. It's like I've got the bricks done, but I've got to find some more bricks.

F: Yeah.

I: So I've got to go scouting for them now.

F: Oh okay. So that's interesting that your kids say 'Mum's a project mum'. I'm like that, I can't bear it...not achieving something.

I: Nup, I've got to achieve something.

F: And the kids live at home?

I: No, they're all gone now. Last one left, yeah, he's having his first lot of holidays up in Queensland at the moment.

F: Right.

I: Yeah. So he's gone.

F: So how did you find that?

I: Lovely, yeah.

F: You liked it?

I: I think...

F: Did they board? Where do you go to tertiary school from somewhere like here?

I: No, our kids didn't go to tertiary school, he got a diesel apprenticeship offered to him, with the shire, yeah. He's doing VCAL and VET through Hudgen, our kids actually, we lived in town, we've only been out here six years, 'cos David's dad was difficult.

F: Really.

I: Yeah. He was a difficult man, and um, there was a house over there, but no one wanted to live there. The deal was we were supposed to swap over at some time. It didn't happen. Twenty four years later we thought bugger it. So this property came up on the market and we bought it. Unbeknownst to him, so that went down like a lead balloon, didn't it. He was a control freak.

F: And he's still on the property?

I: He passed away six months ago.  
 F: Oh his dad?  
 I: Mm.  
 F: Well that was good. (laughs) Well they'll never let go of control, will they?  
 I: He's bullied him to the day.  
 F: Has he? Mm. So he's free.  
 I: Yeah. He's just starting to adjust back to the guy I used to know.  
 F: Oh, that's lovely.  
 I: Yeah, but it's sad. Thirty years of it nearly.  
 F: Have you grown up on a farm?

I: I was born on a farm down in Warracknabeel, down near Sheep Hills,  
 F: Okay. So you know the nature of it all?  
 I: Yeah, lived in town...  
 F: And the kids wouldn't come back to the farm would they?  
 I: The youngest one wants to, but things will have to change, because there's just not enough money in it. We're battling to survive let alone bringing him back, no way. Not for ten years the way this is going.  
 F: Just bad drought?  
 I: Just drought after drought after drought. Yep. So, can't afford it.  
 F: But you love it out here?  
 I: Yeah, love it. I wouldn't want to go into town, I've lived there long enough, thank you very much. And I'm not going to retire back either!  
 F: Yeah?  
 I: When you're up here you've got to go somewhere when you get older to doctors and things 'cos that's what you seem to need.  
 F: Move down south a bit?  
 I: I'd love to go back to Bendigo, go and live two years there. When we had the drought back in the early 80s, '84, '86, that's when we shifted down to Bendigo, we weren't getting a very good deal with the... anyway, the bank manager came around, he was worried, we weren't eating and we said 'what are you talking about?' and he said 'I've gone through your figures and I can't see how you're eating' and I opened up the cupboard and in those days I said 'well we're not starving' and he couldn't believe everything I had in the cupboard.  
 F: Really? So, your preserving has saved you?  
 I: Yeah, I've been preserving since well, since we've been married. My mother used to preserve, and grow her own veggies and stuff.  
 F: So you don't love it? Preserving?  
 I: I don't love it, but I do it for survival. Yeah. And now I just do it out of habit, because now I haven't got all the kids but I just do it 'cos the fruit's there and I don't like waste. I pass it on to girlfriends and stuff.  
 F: Oh, fantastic.  
 I: So I still preserve for that reason. And I like my fresh fruit.  
 F: Do you go in the shows and those sorts of things?  
 I: No, I hate competition. I hate it. I hate the bickering, that's just me.  
 F: Yep. Small towns...  
 I: Small towns. I don't cope very well with that sort of stuff, that's why I prefer it out here. I had 24 years of it in town, I just didn't realize until I shifted, how wearing that was.  
 F: So when you're in town David went out to his father's farm every day? Like he's never been away from home really? As such...  
 I: Well he met me when he was a mechanic, that's how he met me, when he was working down in Warrick, but he was demanded to come home (whispers) *every weekend* and work on Friday night. A couple of times we took off, and...  
 F: And no wife? No mother?  
 I: She's in town.  
 F: She's pleased too I guess, is she?  
 I: Shouldn't say that.  
 F: Those sort of people are dreadful aren't they? I mean it's hard enough, it's isolated enough...(tape cuts)

I: Scrap booking, we're going there and she dragged me in and I said 'no, I'm not interested' I'm not creative so I wouldn't go, and one day she conned me and I went to shut her up basically, and...

F: And you loved it?

I: I did! And I came home and David said 'you're very relaxed' and I said 'I've had a good day.'

F: More for what you're doing or the chitter chatter?

I: Um, a bit of both, because it was a project, again. I decided I'd do my brother's fiftieth birthday, because losing Mum when I was thirteen and the boy's were younger they didn't have anything so I had all these old photos, they never wanted to see them before so I put together this album for his fiftieth birthday in October and he was just...

F: Oh, makes me all tingly

I: Yeah he was, he's a trucky come mechanic, and puts the gruff on, if you know what I mean, but underneath he's an old softy.

F: Oh that was nice to do that.

I: Yeah, so he didn't really look at it the day of the party, and I think there's some stuff in there that must have been pretty hard for him.

F: So he must have done it in private...

I: Yeah, I think he must have done it in private, and I think Boxing Day we have our Christmas, it was down at his place, and he brought it out for the rest of the boys, for the brothers to see, and they all spent ages just looking...

F: So what are you working on now?

I: Ah, well this one I've just done, my aunty's 70 this weekend, mum's sister, I get on – she's like a sister to me – and we get on really well, and I didn't realize it was 70 and I was talking to her one night, and she said 'and by the way, no flowers and no – and I'm not having a party!'

F: Oh my goodness.

I: I thought...

F: You'd forgotten about it anyway!

I: And I thought 'oh! Aunty Bett!' and so I got on the phone and I sent her flowers for her 60<sup>th</sup> because she's been so good to me over the years, what am I going to do, so I put a scrapbook together

F: And you've had no mum...

I: No. And um, I put a scrapbook together, lots of little photos like this and I've blown them up and yeah, it's been...

F: So you're good on the computer.

I: Oh well, I have a play. Yeah. So, I'm getting there, I've got a new program. I'm learning to swear at it! (laughs)

F: So how long will your scrap booking go for? Until you run out of birthdays I guess...

I: Oh I'm going to have to go til...the girls were laughing about it the other week because they said 'we're going to have to be 120 before we stop because we've got that much ahead of us and we keep getting sidetracked!' I haven't even started my kids let alone ours. And I want to do a family history one for David, he's got these lovely old photos of his family, they actually have got dark blood further on, and he's got all this family, lovely photos, and I want to put them in an album before somebody loses it. But, the trouble is I'm going to have to put them in the album and then I'm going to have to do a heap of typing to make it interesting, to go with the story.

F: Get him to talk

I: Yeah, well we already, oh well, we've written down everything we've got but this is only the Anderson book, but this is sort of – David's lucky because he's got – when they're 21 they get a spoon – it sounds silly but they were John Wesley's – the minister – and he used to give away to his servants his silver.

F: Oh really? And they worked as servants at the...

I: One of the negroes, Jamaican negroes was working for John Wesley, the church minister, and he used to give them a knife and fork or spoons from his cutlery set.

F: So this goes back to his great grandfather?

I: Yeah, great great, and it's been handed down from the oldest son to the oldest son, for generations. Well David's got it and he has to hand it down to our 21 year old son, youngest

mind you is shitty because he's got the family name – the Wesley in his name – the other one hasn't.

F: Oh you mean the middle name.

I: And he thinks he should get it (laughs).

F: Oh they want it now, prestige.

I: Oh no, my kids are very sentimental, they like their bit.

F: Ancestry.

I: Yeah, they do. They're funny. And um, yes so, but then there's a gold pocket watch, so there's a spoon and a pocket watch. So when David dies he gets a gold pocket watch and it goes...(tape cuts)

**END OF RECORDING  
END OF TRANSCRIPTION**



Facilitator: So I thought, well that will be my study, because I was feeling guilty about this role and I wasn't doing what was expected and my husband was making me feel...sort of thing, so I just wondered who else was doing it. So I chose Victoria, and country women living on properties, not towns anymore, just properties, who are living in a unique environment – a very male culture, and um...

Interviewee: And it is.

F: Well whether it still is or not, I mean the CFA meetings are always held at six o'clock, women aren't around...so I've had a lot to do with a sociologist – Margaret Olsen – who has been Rural Women's spokesperson in Canberra and she – I said 'Look have things changed? Because women are now working' and she said 'the boundaries might have changed, but the fences are still there'

I: That is so true.

F: So I thought I'd come out and get on the road and see what women are doing on properties and how they're getting that piece of 'me' time, how they're saying 'I am here' and getting their confidence, and sense of self-esteem. And how do you do it? And in a visual, I'm staying mainly in the visual areas, not that they go out to work – and that's great and they feel good and I think Helen gets a lot from her socializing with people – I'm not doing it if they're sports people or play golf or anything, that's fine, I'm doing it purely from the creative – and that can be baking cakes or scones or anything. It can be anything – gardening, sewing, whatever. I wrap...(tape cuts)

I: She's a very arty person. But she's such an interesting lady; all this stuff would just interest her tremendously. (tape cuts)

I'm seventy-three, in my body, and I look back over my mother's life and my grandmother's life and I thought 'the poor dears' they've done nothing in their life except cater for the men, and everyone would say it's like Moloney's farm, it was never Mrs. Moloney's farm or like that.

F: It's the farmer's wife, not the farmer's husband.

I: Yeah. Just the farmer's wife, you know?

F: Do you think that still exists?

I: Perhaps not so much in the younger generation now, because the women are more, most of the women won't stand for it. But my age group, you were sort of conditioned to it, but I'm a bit of a rebel. (laughs)

F: (laughs) So how did you...?

I: Well I just thought, I've got to have a life of my own too, and we battled hard for a start too, we battled really hard. We didn't have much money, we bought land when we first got married and it was a real battle, you know, Eric was a farmer in 1959 and struggled, and we lived in different homes around the district because we didn't have a home of our own. By then I had two children and I said 'we need a home' so we built this and we've renovated it endlessly over the last forty-six years. Started off lock-up stage, lived in it without any plaster or anything, and gradually I've – I think I've done most of it – got it to where I sort of wanted. It's not a flash home but I think it's comfortable. And I love those sorts of things, and I've always loved gardening even as a little girl, and this was just a bare paddock, there was nothing here when we came – not a thing. And I thought 'oh well, I'll create a garden' and created all around and everything.

F: And why did you get that impulse do you think? Where did that...I mean, you just have to I think.

I: Well I'm a worker. I like being very, very active.

F: Project woman.

I: Yeah, I like being very active. I love reading. I'm actually a music-singing teacher; I just never followed it up. I got my degrees at Patchy, through Bellungen College of Music, because my mum and dad both came from Ballarat, they were actually both born in Ballarat and my mum came up when she was about twenty-one and married dad and he was originally from Ballarat and Brown Hill and they were very musical and mum was determined that she was going to have us all taught music and singing and yes... so I've done all that, I used to sing at weddings and concerts

and everything. But then when you get married, and you're busy, financially you're battling and you've got children, you sort of let all the things that were you slide. And um, I worked side-by-side with my husband really, I did.

F: Like you were doing as much tractor work and...

I: I didn't actually do...well I used to pull him out of bogs and things like that but you were forever running for them. But I used to help tail the lambs, and pick up all the lambs and things like that... I was his dog I reckon.

F: Being yelled at at the sheep yards like a dog 'Get out, Get out!'

I: Yeah!

F: I couldn't cope with it, I'm afraid.

I: One day Eric was going crook at me saying I wasn't branding them right and I put the branding oil down and I said 'right you can do it yourself, I'm not helping' and he had to apologise and after that he never growled at me again.

F: Oh really? Good on you!

I: And I thought there was nothing here, no gardening. And the kids were starting to grow up, probably like your son a little bit younger, and I thought 'I'll start a garden' and just loved it. It's more or less, as I said, well it's all my creation, and just loved it. Eric will help now that we're retired, we lease our farm but we're retired from actual farm work, only three years ago. And he'll help now, but before that I mostly done it all myself. Yes.

F: So how much part of your day was your garden? Were you anxious to get out there?

I: Yes, I love it; I can't get out there quick enough! But when I first started it I was probably out there five, or six hours a day, when the kids were at school, but now I get up really early, I spend three hours in the morning and probably an hour at night.

F: Right, and what does it bring you? What does it do for you? What value do you put on it?

I: I love it. Like I said yesterday it's so peaceful, and it's just, I'm at peace. It's just a lovely feeling. And I feel like – I mean it's not beautiful, we'll walk around after – but I just feel I've created something in a harsh environment.

F: and how do you keep up with the droughts? I mean, are you allowed water on the garden?

I: Yeah. My husband built a great big dam for me, before the pipe water. That wasn't big enough, so we had to make it bigger (laughs). And for a start...

F: Well that's very generous, a lot of husbands...

I: He did. But for a start he used to grizzle about the garden and how much time I spent in it, but then people started to talk about Yvonne Anderson's garden, not Eric Anderson's garden, but Yvonne Anderson's, and we had a big open day for charity here, it'd be nineteen years ago now, I wouldn't know where to put my hands on the photos, it was absolutely beautiful then, and he was that proud, that after that he just thought 'mm, gee!' you know? I think it was, underneath it was probably a male-ego I think? A little bit. But that didn't worry me; it didn't worry me at all. Um, I'm probably not a person that seeks a lot of company, I'm very happy with my own company. Probably – I was bred up in the Mallee.

F: So you're a country girl?

I: Yeah, I'm a country girl. But we were quite fortunate when we were kids because mum and dad – there were seven of us children – they would pack us up and go down to Melbourne and we would do all the shows, they would take us to all the shows and then take us out for supper. Mum and dad would have coffee in the little shops down below the theatre, and dad would shout us kids all spiders, and lemonade. So in lots of ways we were a little bit fortunate in the childhood we had.

F: In education, a social education.

I: Yeah, well mum and dad were onto that sort of, cultural side of things. Which was very fortunate. I had a neighbour – she passed away a couple of years ago – and she said 'did you know, not many country people enjoyed that? They didn't get the chance to go and do that'. Children that were brought up in the country. And I think it was really because mum and dad had come from Ballarat and seen the other side, plus their families were sort of, very much into musical evenings and things like that.

F: Do any of your children want to come back and be on the farm?

I: Um, problem (was) we didn't have a big enough holding – I was saying to Helen this morning – the '83 drought, or '82 drought, that was a terrible drought, nobody got any money, none at all, not even a dollar. So our son was twenty, and he said 'Mum, I'm going over to Perth' because there was work in Perth, so him and my daughter's husband – they weren't married then – and two or three other boys went over and they got work. And Michael – they all came home – but

Michael stayed and got work in the Argyle Diamond mine, set himself up, but he met a beautiful girl, she's a lovely girl; I love her like a daughter, she's a lovely daughter-in-law.

F: And they live...?

I: In Perth still. So I don't think he ever will. See Eric's family have been here for about 118 years, so when we finish, that'll probably be the end of this Nyalla area with Anderson.

F: Oh okay.

I: Yeah.

F: And so you're related to David, who I saw last night?

I: Yes, David is Eric's nephew.

F: Oh okay. So that's interesting. So the drought that happened in '85, what happened to the garden then?

I: Well, as I said, Eric built me this dam, so I was sort of fortunate to keep it going. I made it too big...

F: You just couldn't stop yourself.

I: So, I was fortunate. I mean, in those days water wasn't a big issue, it is now. I mean it's a huge issue now, but in those days – I had an eight thousand cubic yard dam if that means anything to you, that's a huge dam, and so I wasn't short of water. Plus the big Denning channels – which they're filling in now – that ran past through our farm nine months of the year and we could just fill our dam willy-nilly all the time. Because we were on this main big Denning channel. So there was no dream that we would be on pipeline and pay for every litre of water.

F: It must seem amazing to you to pay for every litre of water now...

I: Yes. I mean we paid rates before, we paid quite expensive rates, but you didn't pay per litre of water, it was a rate for the farm. So, actually, water hasn't ever really been an issue because of the Denning channel, but for a lot of other people it has been.

F: So the plants that you've planted, where do you get them? Do you buy them or do you propagate or what?

I: Ah, most of it now, the garden actually almost looks after itself now, apart from cutting back and that, a lot of things self-seed. And I've got a sister in Corroight and she's a fanatical gardener like I am, and she's got a beautiful garden down in Corroight which is that volcanic country and she pots up for me all the time. She's very generous, like we swap. And at the garden club we meet once a month and we have stalls and if I see something I haven't got I grab that. And I belong to the Digger's Club, have you heard of that?

F: Yes, down in Mornington.

I: I've been with that for about fifteen years. I love his plants.

F: Do you go down there?

I: Yes, I go wherever there's a garden!

F: You might have come to a property nearest Mollolick. Mollolick?

I: I've never been to it, but my sister has. Yes, I'd love to do that though.

F: It sort of doesn't open itself up to public much anymore; they've stopped doing that a couple of years ago.

I: I can't name the gardens but I have been with my sister to some of the open gardens down in Ballarat.

F: Mooramong? Have you been down to Mooramong?

I: I can't remember the names, but look we probably have been. We've been to some beautiful garden all around Castlemaine and everywhere. You get great ideas from them.

F: Yes. So in your life, looking back, your garden has played what role? I mean it's just been – I mean children are one thing – but...

I: My children are my life. My children and my husband come first, but, um, well I wasn't interested – when I was young I played netball and tennis and I did take up a little bit of golf but they didn't give me the satisfaction I was looking for. And whatever courses came to Hopetoun I used to do... (tape cuts) ...I'm trying to learn a computer now. (laughs)

F: Terrific.

I: *Trying* to. I'm a slow pupil. Um, yeah, I just love trying things. I guess, I think the garden – well as I said – I don't really need a lot of people, I'm very happy within myself, I mean I'd be lost without my family and my extended family, I'd be lost without them, we're all very close, and our three children and grand-children. And Eric. But I get a lot of enjoyment out of the garden, and I've met a lot of lovely people. They're probably only acquaintances but they've been lovely people. You know, all the trips and different things I've gone on, I've been on quite a few garden trips, I just love it.

F: I'm hoping that um... (tape cuts)...

I: He really has. He would go out of his way to put the sheep in another paddock so that he didn't use the water I need. I mean, he's very proud of the garden. He grizzles about it but he's very proud.

F: So you go and sit in the garden and all that or not really?

I: A garden – you never sit in the garden when you're a gardener.

F: Because you always see a weed or something?

I: (laughs) No, I don't. I'll take you down after. Our little hobby last year was a little frog pond.

F: Yes, I've heard about your frog pond.

I: Because the dams will be empty shortly – we've still got water but we've left it there for nature – but because there's not going to be any channels and there won't be any dams, just troughs, the little lizards and everything won't have water. So I sent an article in the Hopetoun paper and I didn't really say I wanted it, but I just went into land care and I said I was interested in any literature you had, anyway the lady gave it to me, and a couple of months later the doorbell rang and I went out and she's a gorgeous lady – Heather Drendel – and she said she was from Land Care; I'd never met her before, and she said 'Yvonne I was recommended to come to your place, we're looking for a nice garden area to put a frog pond, would you be interested?' (and Yvonne replied) 'Oh yes, I'd be interested.' So, the requirements for it are that we dig a hole, so we got our neighbour – actually he was here this morning – to come with his front end load on tractor and dig a big hole, and you had to buy a liner and a...um...

F: Aerator is it?

I: No, the thing the water runs in, a valve. So we had our neighbour come in and he made that, he's really great our neighbour his name's William Gregor and he made that, and Heather came and she said 'we're going to turn it into a demonstration day' so we were quite excited, and thirty two people turned up, which is good for here, you know, different ones that were interested, and she said 'we'll have a barbecue', she said 'you don't have to do anything' but I got to and I made ten dozen different sorts of biscuits, because I thought you can't just have a cuppa for tea and nothing to eat, so I made up ten dozen biscuits and took them down and we had them for morning tea, they supplied the cuppa and everything, and the biscuits went down well but it was such a lovely...(tape cuts)

... Would never take money out of the farm.

F: So it was a separate budget?

I: And Grampians ... Water; they actually came up and they were most impressed – two of the top sort of ones. And yeah, you get a subsidy of seventeen dollars a year – it's really not much – the lady said to me 'it's really only a token figure isn't it?' and I said 'yes' and she said 'well I'm in that department, I haven't ever been and seen one of these ponds before, but I'll be looking into that', but I haven't heard if she's raised it or not. So that's our latest endeavour, which I'll take you down to shortly. And it has got frogs in it, yeah.

F: I can't imagine frogs in this environment out here.

I: Oh, got frogs everywhere out here, in the garden I hate it when I'm digging when I accidentally hurt them, but no we've got frogs everywhere, they're beautiful!

F: And you've got a gorgeous style about you.

I: Thanks very much.

F: You know, just the way you are. (tape cuts)

I: That's a lot of money. (tape cuts) ...Happened to the chooks, I used to have three or four hundred chooks, and we were able to sell eggs locally, and we couldn't keep up the demand. And I even killed...(tape mutes)

F: ...business, three hundred chooks, free range?

I: Yeah, free range. Still have some but I'm only down to a hundred, as I said I'm seventy-three so I've had to back off.

F: Okay.

I: and that was my income, so I happened to be in Horsham when I was looking for the tiles, and I (had) seen them there, and I always think my name's not a usual name – Yvonne – and one of the chooks was named Yvonne and I thought 'it has to be' (laughs) so there's Yvonne, Henrietta, and so that's how I've got the chooks.

F: It was meant to be.

I: It was meant to be! Because people say to me 'what did you pick chooks for?' (tape cuts)

I: And it had my name on it, (laughs), plus, round Hopetoun I'm sort of known as the chook lady.

F: I love chooks, I love their little 'chirp choop chirp' when their happy.

I: Yes.

(tape cuts)

Other voice: And I'd hate, when...(tape cuts)

I: I don't want you to say to Anne I said that, but even Anne said you've got your own income Yvonne. Like a lot of women felt like they didn't have any income of their own.

F: Well it could have been up to them to get their own income couldn't it? Or not?

I: Oh they could have, but I wanted to have my own income, my own money. Not that Eric was lousy – he wasn't – but I just wanted my own income. Because most money – as you probably know – on the farm, goes straight back into the farm. There was always something to buy on the farm. And it's altered now, but years ago a home came second to the farm.

F: But it's still not...(tape cuts)

I: But that was what it seemed to have been though, Julie, I could name numerous families, their homes I always felt were...like their farms and the machinery was really expensive but the home was always a second.

F: But that's the male culture showing through isn't it?

I: But it has changed. It's actually not like that now. I think you'll find that most women that go on the farm now go into a nice brick veneer home, or a nice home.

F: And how do you think they're surviving? Out in a nice home, in an isolated area now?

Because I haven't met many young people at all, most that responded...

I: Well most of them are working now; most of them have a job, either in Hopetoun or travel to other districts.

F: And the husbands are on their own all day?

I: Yes. See years ago I think, probably like you said, if we didn't have the husband's meal ready or something because you'd been out in the paddock we felt guilty, but even that's changed. The young men of today, they think nothing of it – whatever. Make themselves a sandwich. Like I can remember...

F: But it's slow, it's been a slow change hasn't it?

I: Oh, it's very slow. I actually think women have had to fight hard to get any equality and I still don't think it's right there myself. I still think women have to fight to...

F: Why do you think it's been so slow for women in the country? Just...

I: Because I think it was a male environment. And I would say not the young men, I think Eric's age, and the neighbours that are Eric's age, they grew up in a culture where the woman was expected to stay home and put the meal on the table and just be there for the men.

F: Mm. Because they say that...(tape cuts)

I: I mean, I was only thirty miles away...

F: At Erskine House did you?

I: Well, we met at a dance but I think we might have stayed – it might have been a place somewhere down there, I can't think of it now, Eric might know. But we met at this dance, that's how I met him, and of course it went on from there. And we both had more or less nothing when we got married, and whatever we've got we've worked together for. And I think I've worked just as hard as him. I went picking stumps with him out in the paddock. My dad used to have a lot of land with stumps on it, and we were so broke, or so financially buying land, you know, and my dad said 'if you want to pick the stumps and load them'

F: I just click so you'll get used to me clicking (taking photos). Go on...

I: And um, anyway. We went picking stumps and I used to help Eric pick the stumps.

F: Well he had no help, and you need help, don't you?

I: Sorry?

F: You need that other person helping you don't you?

I: Well you do, but this is a male thing; I was the best stacker he reckons, but when it came to loading and throwing them off in Hopetoun he didn't want me to be seen. He didn't want people to know that I'd been out there...

F: That he worked his wife!

I: (laughs) Not that it worried me. (tape cuts)...And I think that everything like the farms we've bought and the house and everything we've done together. And it's been, he can't sort of say 'you weren't there, it's all mine' or something.

F: Right, and you're happy that you've given it away and leasing?

I: Oh, yes, because it was getting too much for Eric. If we had the son home – I always dreamt that Michael would come home and take over, but the drought has been really tough and it wouldn't have sustained through family. Like you can't really expect the family to go back through it and struggle. And he had his own business in Perth and his wife's an accountant so why would they want to come back?

F: Do they come back with the grandkids and things, to the frog pond? They'd love that...

I: The son flies home – he's a beautiful person I know – I used to cry when he left. He flies home every twelve months, and then the whole family comes home every two years for Christmas.

F: You know what you get on your computer? ...(tape cuts)...he doesn't want to drag. But they learnt how to drive and all that, but he just can't stand it anymore, it's driven him away from it more than anything. Anyway, so he's in China...

#### **END OF FIRST RECORDING**

I: ...and the women

F: Suicide and things, the men?

I: Mm. But the women they went in and done all these...

F: What were they doing? What sort of things?

I: Um this lady, she's down near Wederburn and they were having a really hard time, and she was making quilts and doonas and everything, out of the wool.

F: Not spinning it?

I: Ah, she possibly would have, I don't know about that, but it was the wool off the farm, and she sells now pillows and doonas and everything at all these field days that we have.

F: Oh okay.

I: And she's from around Wederburn way. Yeah. And she had her story in the weekly times, and I'm going back now probably in the '80s, and she got this going and it kept the farm afloat. But that was only one case. I've read, and I'm a pretty good reader, I've read lots of stories where it's been the wives that have got to, and done something, and really got things going again, or carried the farm through when things have been tough, so I often think...(tape cuts)

#### **END OF RECORDING END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

- I: School Council, and I started to develop a bit of an opinion (laughs) and you could get this sense of 'who does she think she is?' (laughs)
- F: (laughs) Okay. So you wrote about yourself it wasn't about someone else?
- I: No, no no.
- F: So you got it all out?
- I: But I don't know whether I really want to record this on tape...
- F: Okay. No don't have to do that.
- I: But, yes, so some of my poetry has been just for myself. Just the end of an era, and you just say to yourself 'well, that part of my life is over now, let's move on'. So it's ah, sometimes capturing all the things that have been annoying me or aggravating me.
- F: So it's your way of putting it away.
- I: Putting it in a little box and putting it away, and move on.
- F: That's great. It's a great psychological thing...
- I: Setting new goals and thinking 'right well I'm not going to do that ever again, I'm going to do this'
- F: Terrific.
- I: So that's a coping strategy I suppose, that I have always...(tape cuts)...I'll perhaps give you this one to read. I plan to read this later in life, but it's memoirs of an early part of my married life with my husband in Apex. And I'm at home with the kids and he's out having a good time at Apex.
- F: So the Apex Club is a huge thing in the town?
- I: Oh it's finished now.
- F: Oh it's finished?
- I: All the service clubs are finished now.
- F: Why did it finish?
- I: Because the women said stay home and help us! I don't know. There's just been enough to do with farms and sporting groups.
- F: And as you say some just don't get involved at all.
- I: That actually finishes a bit rude (chuckles)
- F: (laughs) Yeah.
- I: It's just...
- F: But it's therapy for you isn't it?
- I: Oh I don't know, I rarely do it. Rarely. But there's a story about my daughter and love for one of her teachers. It was just important for me to capture that. And she was a wonderful teacher, and she turned my daughter's life around. And I would love that teacher to see that poem and say 'listen'...
- F: Is she alive still?
- I: Yeah, but I don't know where she is. But my daughter was going through a stage at primary school where kids were teasing her and nonsense was going on, and this teacher came along and said 'You tell me everything' and she built a report with her and it boosted her confidence and she just kept on achieving, and now she's a division one...So it's nice to have special people in your life that come along.
- F: And you need to write a poem about it.
- I: Oh, it's silly really. (tape cuts)
- F: So did you feel bad about leaving the farm? In search of yourself?
- I: In the beginning I didn't. I felt that I deserved something for myself, and originally, my study was something for myself. And I never intended to gain work. It was just 'I need to do something' and I achieved this diploma in community service. And then when they found out I had that qualification they said 'oh well we can utilize you' and when I did feel guilty was when I took up full time work.
- F: How did your husband respond to that? Not happy or did he let you go?

- I: No, he was okay about that because there was money coming in. And he would be much the same as other farmers where they missed their wife and they need someone at home to help them coordinate things but they make that sacrifice because it's helpful to have that extra bit of money coming in.
- F: And does the money go to the farm on another piece of machinery or does it go to you? Oh we talked about this...
- I: Yeah. Well in my case it stayed with me, but I invested it into a house. But, I think, I wouldn't have objected to using that money to run the household or to save some money on the farm that way. But it also contributed to buying our last car that we had, in my name, so no, there was no problem

#### END OF FIRST RECORDING

- F: ...Your garden. What were you saying, how it all?
- I: Well, the first garden that I planted it had to be planted because my husband had been batching here own his own when his mother left. So the first garden was planted and then we had an almighty hailstorm, which slashed all the plants and ruined them.
- F: So you were a young bride?
- I: Young bride and then a couple of years later we had a mouse plague and of course the geranium that was growing all over the garage and the potato creeper that was all over the fence was destroyed by the mouse plague. Then I tried again and I had a beautiful garden for about ten years and it was okay, plenty of lawn for the kids to play on and um, just enough colour here and there to make it look civilized (laughs) basically. And then when I went away to do study the men didn't keep the water up but I salvaged a little bit and then the drought came and virtually wiped most of it out, even the Kalkirri lawn suffered badly and that's a really tough one.
- F: And around about when did the drought start?
- I: About 2000.
- F: And it has been drought ever since?
- I: Well it's been inclement seasons ever since, and things look, there's a little bit of lushness now because we had six inches of rain in November and December with the mini tornado that came through.
- F: (laughs)
- I: So, really, I'm starting to feel defeated about being able to have a garden out here, and I've said to my husband 'If I start again I want a big fence all the way around' and he doesn't like that because he likes to be able to see out the window and see down the paddocks, and he doesn't like anything blocking his view so it's a bit of a dilemma. And I think the next stage I'll have to do a more drought tolerant garden, with less lawn and more rocks and stones. Tufted grasses and so forth. Obviously geranium does very well here – that red geranium out the front of the house is a very old geranium that I brought from my own home near Bachelight. And some of the succulents that are still alive are ones that survive out in the Mallee. So it is a case of trying to get away from the English Garden look, to a more native type of garden. I've looked into aranmoffilers(?). There's a lady down at Minyip who's written a book about the aranmoffilers and they are apparently much more drought tolerant and easier to manage and attract birds and plenty of flowers so they're colourful. It's just about getting motivated and getting the time.
- F: I liked your comment in the email that the garden is the buffer between the farm and the house. And now you don't have it anymore.
- I: No, you walk out the back door to the clothesline and it's virtually in the paddock. It's been disheartening but...
- F: So more counseling work then? Concentration's gone outside the farm a little bit hasn't it?
- I: Oh I've had to. I've had to. I love people, and I love being able to achieve things, so. I could have said no to everything and I could have come home from work and I could have come home from study and I could have been the devoted farming wife that had bikkies in the bikkie tin and the garden perhaps would have had a better chance of survival if I had been here twenty-four-seven
- F: But...



- I: But. Um, I just feel that I would have missed out on so much of life. I would have missed out on life. Because in that time I've restored the Hopetoun show, and you'll meet Winston tomorrow and he and I, he was President and I was secretary and he and I got that show back on the road. I've met Ian McNamara from 'Australia All Over' in that time, I've achieved things on council, completed projects...
- F: So it's given you a sense of what? Identity or... what does it mean to you personally?
- I: I think that there's only so many failures that people can live with. You have to find something, whether you're a young person, a middle-aged person or an old person, you need to have some success to feel worthwhile. And to constantly be faced with obstacles that you can't do anything about it can really wear you away. It just eats at your soul that you've just...
- F: Things like drought do you mean?
- I: Yeah, things like drought but even before the drought – trying to have a garden that was like a town garden and some people can achieve it and some can't. And the drought brings other problems like not having enough money, so do you waste money planting more garden, and then have it die the following season?
- F: Do you ever buy water? Do you take a preference in the farm? The garden could actually be recognized as a need of yours.
- I: It could. At one stage we did have spare rainwater and... but I wouldn't dare use the rainwater on the garden. We had water in our dam, some people had to cart water, at least we didn't have to do that. But in my case it was more about not having an automatic sprinkler set up, and having to be here. I mean, the way the garden was set up it was designed that I had to be here seven days a week and it was a seven day a week role to have a magnificent garden all the way around the house. And have the house perfect and keep up to all the farm business and accounting and so forth. So I've rearranged my life, and when you prioritise things sometimes some things just have to go amiss. And, you can't live in a dirty house so that still becomes a priority, and having nice clothes is still a priority, but, I've virtually just had to eliminate what I... what was taking the most time and resources away from...
- F: So your 'me' time is your social role on council really? That's where you get the satisfaction...
- I: I think so, it's gone from the garden to people. Basically.
- F: I mean, people yesterday loved you, didn't they? They went on and on, which is a lovely thing.
- I: Oh! It is. Like Avon, probably, when you speak to her - she knows, I came from a very quiet family. We weren't public citizens. We weren't out there, and I guess she's seen me grow over the years and develop and now that I'm out there and I'm achieving it becomes a bit of an addiction. And you think 'oh well, we got that money for that project, now we must be able to get some money for this project' or 'how can we make the whole community better' or 'how can we improve life here?' and, uh, I've just decided...
- F: And you don't think younger women are doing that? Like your daughter in law, why she's in town? She doesn't have a sense of community, does that come from being a farming wife? That you get that sense of community?
- I: Well I think it does, because you realize that if you don't do your bit, we have nothing. I guess you could compare my garden with a community, and if you don't nurture it and pay attention to it it'll just disappear, it'll just disintegrate and perish.
- F: So you've taken from nurturing the garden to nurturing the community, really.
- I: (laughs) Yes. If you think about it that way, maybe I have. I would dearly love to have the garden back, and it means a lot to me to have pleasant surrounds. I have standards and values, but, to have to spend all of your time in a garden alone that no one really sees to me is not satisfying. It's not...
- F: Well you did, to begin with it was. When you were probably showing your husband – new husband –
- I: Oh, and trying to impress my mother in law, you know, I can cook and I can cook anything! And you know, I've been in that role. I can make beautiful sponges, I can make pavlovas I can do all that traditional cooking, but it doesn't make me feel good. I mean it's lovely if you serve up an afternoon tea and you have some pride in that you've made all those items on the table but it's gone in fifteen minutes. Whereas some of the things

that I'm involved with now are on going and they are lasting. And photographs are lasting, I love photography – you asked me before about what I do in my daily routine – I forgot to mention, it's not just getting up and answering the phone, it's turning the computer on and checking what emails there are today. And then there's you know, a computer, a whole folder of everywhere I go, I take my camera and take photos of people I'm with, and it's a record. And that was very handy when the Governor came up because we had a collection of Shire photographs that I put in a folder and gave to him as a take away gift from our region. And it just showed regular people doing regular things, and it wouldn't matter if it was the top half of the shire or the bottom half of the shire, you still have dedicated parents working on school committees, you still have little shops and multi-shops like at Woomelang, you've got Post Office, News agency, Café all in one. There's an all in one shop at Patchewoolie. And we took photos of all the good crops we had last year, because it had been years since we'd had something to photograph – significant. And I think what I love through a photographer's eyes, is the ever-changing scenery. Like at the moment it's grey, cinnamon, beige, there's all these dull colours, but as the season progresses, and as the crop comes up there's vivid green. We have several months where there's just acres and miles of green, which is a lovely sight. And then as you get into spring out come all these yellow weeds like Dandelions and gazaleas that shouldn't be there on the side of the roads, the canola crops are vivid yellow. So, there is, I've been asked before about why do you love to live where you live, and well it's ever changing.

- F: There's a famous artist in England – Andy Goldsworther who does a lot of rock work who said; 'you can only see change...(tape cuts)...
- I: (laughs) that's a good point.
- F: Which is nice.
- I: But I could confirm that here, because I could take a photograph every month, say in that one direction, which is something I might do this year, and it would just show how it does change.

#### END OF SECOND RECORDING

- F: Yeah, Hopetoun, so how big?
- I: Hopetoun has a population of around seven or eight hundred, it varies.
- F: But it covers how far?
- I: Our shire covers a bit over 7,000 kilometers, and we have a population of 7,000 people.
- F: Seven hundred or seven thousand?
- I: Seven thousand.
- F: How much in the town and how much in the properties?
- I: I actually have figures at home I could give you.
- F: Is there a lot in town, or a balance, or more in the country?
- I: Um, probably more in the country than in the towns, yes.
- F: Oh, wow. Seven thousand farms. Well, there's four thousand farms.
- I: I've actually got the figures at home, I haven't memorized them. But there'd be something like 2,900 farming entities.
- F: And you've lived in Hopetoun all your life? How did you get here?
- I: I was born in Hopetoun, and raised at a little place called Turf-West. A little town about 20 miles north from Hopetoun, doesn't exist anymore, but that was the name for the area. Near Patchewollock. And, um, I used to walk to school.
- F: Which was how far?
- I: Oh, about three miles.
- F: Yeah.
- I: And then, went to secondary education at Ouyen, so basically, apart from three years in Melbourne when I was a teenager, I've lived here most of my life.
- F: Raised a family? Kids no longer here?
- I: No, my two boys are on the farm with us, they live in Hopetoun but they farm with us. My daughter's a nurse, she's not far away she's in Horsham.
- F: This is lovely! (tape cuts) I'm pretty pleased you did it...(tape cuts)

#### ANOTHER INTERVIEWEE IS THEN HEARD

(referred to as I 2):

- F: So it was your loneliness that made you open this, would you say?
- I 2: *Oh, well I hurt my back lifting old people at an old-folk's home in Hopetoun, and I couldn't go back to that work, so I created this. I went and traveled across to Horsham and learnt how to do the picture frame and we bought this so I can start up....(tape cuts)*
- F: What are you doing um...? (tape cuts)
- I: Peter was very supportive, wasn't he? He did respect the fact that you needed something to do.
- I 2: Oh yeah
- I: And your framing business has...
- I 2: Oh he's supportive enough, he just doesn't like change. All he could see was 'it's gonna cost, it's gonna cost'. And you've got to spend money to make money, I feel.
- F: But what about your happiness? Or didn't it come into it?
- I 2: Oh well, he was going to work. He was seeing people all the time, he wasn't worried about me. (laughs) Well he wasn't!
- I: Yes, but we do things unconsciously sometimes to make ourselves happy. Don't you think? I mean, you probably didn't set out to with the primary goal 'I'm doing this to make myself happy' (laughs) it just sort of becomes a secondary...
- I 2: I wasn't ready for retirement. (tape cuts)

#### HELEN BALLENTINE INTERVIEW THEN RESUMES:

- F: You know, being the Mayor – I know you on council, but...
- I: It's a quieter role as councilor, but I'm still involved in listening to what the community needs are and supporting them and advocating for what they may need. Um, at the moment we've got an independent unit living project that needs some funding and um, for years now, just as in the councilor role, if my community needed certain skills that they may not have I have stepped in, such as designing signs for projects (laughs). And it's a real dilemma because it's a crossover of roles, one minute you're the volunteer and the next minute you're the councilor. Then you're the mayor and you're opening the sign! (laughs)
- F: Well, that's what happens with small towns, everybody does everything. (truck drives past) Gosh, it's a busy high way isn't it? You don't see many cars...
- I: Normally it's quiet, but that's the extra traffic on the road because of the Lucosan Mining Ouyen. So we've had part of the Kalarhi Truck company transport up to 80 loads per day from the mine. That's what the expected figures were once the mines were fully operational.
- F: So you started off as a farming wife, then you had the kids...
- I: Oh yes, had the kids, followed them through schools. Became a school councilor of both schools, um, then did a little bit of work in adult literacy – coordinating adult education programs, then decided to become a welfare worker ; became a welfare worker, worked in the health service, pioneered a welfare service up here. Worked in the health service for three years and then returned to study – I used to go up to Mt. Helen to do a bit more study. And then the drought hit and then I had to change my plans. So I went from being a social worker and a councilor to being a Shire Councilor. So, the skills that I have transferred from one to the other is community development. I'm very interested in how my community can modernize and change and become a more livable environment.
- F: Right. And you obviously know a lot of women on the land around here, how do you think they're going to survive on these farms? Like, as I said, the studies have shown that they work hard, they contribute, yet they're not really acknowledged – they may be within the family a source of power – but...
- I: Well many of them...
- F: Does expression play a role here or not?
- I: No...well many of them work because they have to work. So it's really sad for the male farmers because they're very lonely out there on the farms because they don't have the wife to make the scones and morning teas and afternoon teas and they don't have the company of their wife.
- F: Do you hear them saying this?

- I: Mm. (agrees) It's one thing they do miss. And, although the life of women is improved from a financial sense and a social sense, by being able to access work, there's still that loss of connection with – it's a different connection now, with their farm.
- F: They're happier though aren't they?
- I: Oh, I would assume they are happier. But a lot of them perhaps haven't had a choice, it's just bringing in an income – grab whatever job you could have and most of it is personal care work or home-help work. So it's not um – it's more the social contact that would be the bonus for them.
- F: I mean as more people are getting educated, and not born on the land and being married sort of...how do you feel that they're going to educate a woman going out to a farm? To do scones and cream as you say...
- I: (laughs)
- F: You know, they're just not going to do it, are they?
- I: I have a daughter in law who was born in Melbourne and there's no way she would live on a farm. We made sure that they had a house in town and she works.
- F: In Hopetoun?
- I: Yes. She was originally working with the Newspaper and now she's working at the Secondary College because it's not in her upbringing to know how farms work, she doesn't have a comprehension of what might be needed. You know, her husband might be on the tractor all day, and he might need something to eat, it doesn't come into... he can get it himself. Well, if you're stranded on a tractor in the middle of the paddock you can't! (laughs) And the way that I guess I satisfied my intellectual needs from farming was to take on computerization of the farm office, so I do all the financial side of the farming business. So when I'm home that's what I'm busy at.
- F: How did the drought poem and this sort of expression come out then? And your writing, because you're terrific on your writing...
- I: I love writing, and I rarely write poems. Prior to writing this one, the other poem I wrote was in about 1995, so I'm not consistently writing poems, it's just at times I feel that um...Hello! (interrupted by someone else) ...I feel that it's the best way to try and contain a whole lot of feelings and issues in a small compact piece of work.
- F: So what you're nearly saying is when it just builds up...
- I: When it overloads! Overload! You do a good poem! (laughs)
- F: It's a lovely way you sort of said it. You said it 'contains', as if it's some sort of container that you put everything into...
- I: Oh I think so...
- F: Yeah, it's a lovely way of putting it.
- I: Yes, you just put it in a container and it just eliminates all the crap and you can focus on the real stuff.
- F: So how many times have you done this? (laughs)
- I: I'm about to do another one...
- F: Are you about to blow? (laughs)
- I: It's funny thing, some of the issues I wrote about in 1995 are still quite relevant. It's interesting. It explains to me a little bit about rural life, and the frustrations about being a volunteer – because for a long time I was just a volunteer. And it's like that conversation we were having about 'just a farmer's wife'; that low sense of self-esteem where you're needed to do this, this and this, and you feel that you have to in order to be a good member of the community. And it was about 1997 that I returned to study, and I returned to study because I thought I've got so many skills but I can't prove that I've got these skills. Um, and I don't just want to be a volunteer for the rest of my life, I want some recognition for what I'm doing. So, I loved every bit of three years of study in the welfare course, doing it part-time, um, that step-by-step process of earning recognition for effort.
- F: That you knew you had...
- I: So, one subject took six months, so you knew that you'd get a reward at the end of the six month's hard work. And probably it was a good move to go from being out of school for twenty-four years to go into a TAFE course because the TAFE course does provide a lot of recognition as you go, and the more you achieve the more you're encouraged to achieve. And then after I got my confidence back, I then applied for a University course.
- F: And your husband is supportive of this?
- I: I had to be a little devious in the beginning.

- F: What did you do? (laughs)
- I: (laughs) I just mentioned that this course I enrolled in was only a one year course, and then it suddenly became a two year course, and then it became a three year course. And then 'oh, it'll bring in some money' so then, you know, everything's got to focus around money, and it did bring in money, and I made the most of the money I earned.
- F: But did that go towards a new piece of equipment?
- I: No, I bought two houses. (laughs)
- F: (laughs) But do you think most women working tend to put it back into the farm, or do they keep it for themselves now?
- I: No, they keep it for themselves.
- F: Do they?
- I: Mm hmm.
- F: 'Cause there's a bit of reading that I've been doing, well actually I've been talking to Margaret Olsten and I asked 'has it changed?' and she said they've been going out to work but it's still the money – as long as everything runs smoothly at home and nothing's really interrupted and the money goes to some other sort of equipment on the farm.
- I: No, the farm budget is definitely all farm – like I haven't spent any money on my house since 1995, that's the last time I actually renovated the kitchen. There's just been no room in the budget since then, I could have spent some of my income – of farm income – on the house, but I didn't. I purchased another house in Hopetoun. But then as the drought's gone on and on and on, I cashed that in. But I didn't put that into the farm either, I helped my daughter get established, because I thought it was really important to start buying a house. So I've been encouraging my daughter to have a lot more independence than I ever had. And she's a division one nurse now.
- F: So your daughter got the education and your sons just returned to the farm? Would you say?
- I: Mm. Yeah.
- F: It's fairly traditional.
- I: Oh well our first son didn't like school and when he was fifteen he came home and became a farm apprentice. And he did a TAFE course in Swan Hill. Our second son didn't think there was room for him on the farm so he went away. He probably is the one that should have been encouraged to get a University Education because he had a lot of ability but he got sidetracked and did an electrical course and didn't like it and ended up working in the Western district for a little while, then we got an offer for some more land becoming available to lease and so we asked him if he wanted to come home, and he's been home ever since. And he's the one that got married. So, yeah, there's a need for them to have education in farm management. I need someone to take over the role that I'm actually doing; the financial record keeping and management.
- F: And you don't see your daughter-in-laws, or that one doing it?
- I: Ah, she does have good skills in that area, because she did do the record keeping for one of the jobs she had in Hopetoun but at this stage it's a little too complicated to hand over to anyone – there's debt management and that requires a specific skill. And budgets and planning and negotiating. So there's a lot there that I do alleviate my husband and two sons so they can get on with the hard yakka of physical work.
- F: So what would you say – in your life – what is your 'me' time? Is it being a councilor and sort of feeling effective there?
- I: I think it may well be. It has become my social life as well. I've had the department of planning and community development interview me last week. You probably know or have heard of, Emma Mahoney.
- F: Oh yeah. Is she the one that I think got your contact with me?
- I: Mm. And she said, you know, 'what do you do for Helen?' (laughs) and I'm thinking, consciously I don't know. Um, probably as you say – I do get a lot of enjoyment out of this public realm because I'm always meeting people, there's good conversations, I can use some of my skills and have a sense of achievement when we have a win of funding for something, or completing a project, so it's being out there and, I don't know, private time for me is having the house completely to myself. I like total silence. I don't like TV or anything like that, it's just having a complete break from everyone and people. But I don't pick up a paint brush or...
- F: But you do write poems, and you do express yourself, as you say.

- I: I do spend time on the computer sometimes I might have a build up of something, a build up of ideas, I might just brainstorm something and then just delete it, because there's no purpose for it. But it's just an overflow of – I need to be doing more with my life than I am – but I can't. I can't access that at this time.
- F: Well you're getting there...
- I: See I'd love to be employed somewhere and making a difference, but anyway.
- F: And the council doesn't employ anyone in that sort of role?
- I: No. And if I did leave council I would have to wait at least two years because of conflict of interest before I could – like I couldn't create a role as a councilor, and say to the council 'listen, we need a community developer' and then resign from council and (laughs) ...because I would be in trouble for that.
- F: Be employed! Okay...
- I: But the frustration is, I've seen so many gaps and I've seen so many places where I could be employed but people don't know how to ask council or ask the government to create that position that I can apply for.
- F: They don't know the language? The don't know the system, they don't know the language?
- I: They don't have the language and they don't know the system. There was a position that I could see could be created in Hopetoun, but they even had DPCPD people come up and talk to the locals about if you can access funding for this and one feller just shook his head and said 'no, I don't like 'grey' funding, I like funding that's black and white.' So, that was the end of the story.
- F: What's the male culture around Hopetoun and around here? How do they see women, do you think, from that attitude?
- I: Um, women are definitely the workers. The drivers, um, it's incredible how many women in Hopetoun are heads of families leading things in the community. The men seem to be taking a back seat in leadership.
- F: Oh really?
- I: Mm. Which is quite a reverse from the '60s and '70s. The type of men that want to be leaders aren't there anymore.
- F: So, are women managing the farms and the husband's are just working at it?
- I: Um, I know another two or three women who don't work off farm like myself who are doing finance and books and so, I would say that I'd know of at least three others who would have a significant input into the management of their farms. And then men are just, as we'd put it, the workers. So you've got queen bees. (laughs)
- F: Well it's very different than what a lot of the studies show. I mean, it seems to be getting a bit tired, is what you're saying, and...
- I: Yes, the men are um...you'll find that the women are much more resilient than the men. I've spoken to Gill Miller about this down at Grampians Community Health Centre, in Stall, and there were a group of women from down south who were interested in Gill coming up and talking to them about resilience and you know; 'what do we need to do?' and she said well, 'you're already resilient' because women are already doing things to fill in their time and to get some reward for what they're doing. Whether it's cross-stitching, whether it's painting, whether it's running art galleries like this. Women are finding ways to build that need in their life.
- F: Why don't you think they had it before though? Do you think it is education? Do you think it's just a general emancipation of women, or feminism or...?
- I: I don't see it as feminism, I don't see it as anything political. I just see it as, it's always been here in this region, but it's never been reported that like, I've worked as a child on farm, I worked as a teenager on the farm. There was no...my mother always worked on the farm – she was a farm girl – she always worked for her father on the farm. So there's always been a strong involvement of women, from what I've seen, in rural areas. They're the ones that have always said 'hey, we need a school' or 'we need a church', 'let's make sausage rolls and raise money to fund a school' and they've done that, sixty or seventy years ago.
- F: So they have always been doing it, but they haven't been acknowledged for it?
- I: Yeah. Oh never acknowledged. In fact, last year when I was mayor, one conversation I did have – I did an independent tour around the shire with a journalist and what we found was that there were a lot of women who hadn't been acknowledged and I suggested that I wanted to write a book, about the women of Yarranambra. And in that book, just

recognized the wide range of skills and things that they've contributed to. Because up until um, the last ten or twenty years you didn't even hear what women were doing. So at least now someone will achieve an award for something, or, there's been several women in this northern sector of the shire such as Bev Waughn over in Woomelang – she won a hero's award because she noticed that the general store was going to close and what were they going to do, and she was running the post office. So she got highly creative and when the shop closed she took over the bread and milk, and someone else took over something else, and she organized a roster of people to keep the fuel station open. So, there's some incredible stories around, and I would have loved to encapsulate those stories in a book, and I did apply for some funding but I couldn't get any avenues of where to um, you know, I just couldn't come up with funding. And now I have people saying to me, even Ruth Mitchell that you're going to meet over in Woomelang, 'are you still going to write that book about women?' (laughs) and I said well, 'I still have that intention but until I find some funding'...

F: And have you approached Regional Arts Victoria for some funding?

I: Well, I think I have to perhaps try and find a contact there and try and speak to someone.

F: And Emma can't help you on that?

I: Haven't spoken to Emma about it. Maybe that's another idea. I just became so busy as Mayor that it didn't leave a lot of space. (tape cuts)  
(laughing)

**ANOTHER TWO WOMEN ARE HEARD: referred to as I 2 (from previously) and I 3:**

I 3: (laughing) You're not listening to me I hope!

I 2: When I was sixteen I went to work out on the farm, I had to learn how to milk cows, and when I fed the cattle I always made sure that the bull was fed first.

F: Always made sure what?

I 2: The bull. He was on the other side of the fence but I made sure I always fed him first.

F: Why did they say that?

I 2: No, that was my idea.

F: Oh, right.

I: Feed the bull and everyone's happy.

I 2: That's right. Then I fed the cows, and he was occupied and wouldn't try to jump the fence or anything like that.

F: Well I'm not home feeding my bull, I'm out and about.

I 2: My lovely friend is 89 and she crochets beautiful. For years she won heaps of prizes in the Agricultural show with her crocheting and her cooking,

F: Right

I 3: Funny, I don't cook anymore, I just have raw biscuits! (laughs)

F: Right, so what was the value of your crochet? What was the value of that expression for you? What did it mean to you, to do it?

I 3: Well I just wanted something to do because I couldn't just sit and not do anything. My mother used to crochet but I didn't crochet until after she died. And I do the Van Dyke pattern – all I remember is that you go up and go so many times and do a stitch, then you go down and you miss that number of stitches, and going up it makes that peak and when you miss them it makes the bottom peak.

I 2: ...lends most of it to charity.

F: Right. And your expression, your form of 'me' time is what? Your garden?

I 2: (whispers) I love gardening.

F: So what does it mean to you, your garden?

I 2: My sanity.

I 3: (laughs) Don't put that! That's off the record though!

F: No, we need to, we've got to voice it, otherwise no one hears it.

I: And everyone says things like that. We're all saying that. I'm shire councilor to keep my sanity – I have to be out and be amongst people.

I 2: You do have to have something.

F: I have got a woman nearby in Tateoon, she hates kitchen and the domestic, so she does rock walls. So she goes out and makes dry stone walls. She said, 'I don't care if they pull it out and plant a crop in when I'm gone, but I'm just going to do this'. And that's what she does.

I 2: That's what I say to my husband, I say 'I don't care what happens to my garden when I'm gone, but while I'm here I'll do it how I want to.'

F: So maybe we could drop in and take a photo.

I: Oh yes. Would that be okay Avon?

I 2: Sorry?

I: If we drop in sometime and take a photo of your garden? You and your garden?

I 2: It's got bare patches from the drought, but I'm getting there. (laughs)

F: Yes, well that's what I'm trying to show – your countrywoman doing cakes and preserves is art, and an expression and survival for them. And I'm saying survival as an evolutionary thing – it is a survival, and it's an evolutionary survival. So whether it's a cake or preserve, the men – instead of buying water for the sheep, they should be putting water on the garden because that's the woman's sustainability first.

I 2: But I think women are the strong ones, not the men.

I: We've just had a conversation around the resilience of.

I 2: I'll go before I say too much!

I: Save it...

F: Well we might see you in your gorgeous garden if we could come over later.

I 2: Yes. There's bare patches...don't expect it to be like in Ballarat.

I: We've got to go to Narelle's now...(tape cuts)

**END OF RECORDING**  
**END OF TRANSCRIPTION**



F: How...

I: Well, there were so many stresses and stressful things happening on the land, and I think women need an outlet for something else just to get away for a few hours or do something creative, so they can cope with what's at home.

F: Do you think that was applicable to you?

I: Not really. No, I was very fortunate. I had a good - we had good times because we were early on the farm and we were able to survive properly. We didn't have to borrow money a lot to do anything. I think but now the way things are and people have got so much overhead with their farms and everything, it's just a kind of a vicious circle the way it's turning out for people.

Women, I think, are sort of trying to do their own thing and I think they're finding it hard to support their husbands because their husbands are so stressed out that they can't cope, and I think this might be happening. I'm not sure about that, but I can - you see all these things and you hear them every day and we don't hear everything, and if - I'm sure if you went and asked people about the rural situations now they'd - you'd find out a lot more what is going on. We only hear little bits in the media. We don't hear the full stories. But I think that's why I think women have just got to get out. I think it's desperation sometimes to be able to have to go and do it. But I wasn't - I didn't do it because of that because - I just did it because of the love of it, the love of creating. Before that when I had the children at school I used to do cakes. We used to ice the cakes every year for the school fetes. One year I crocheted a lot of little dolly clothes. I did 100 little small tiny dolls and they sold loads of those, of the things.

**[Part 2]**

F: How did you start? Is...

I: Well, I've always liked dolls all my life and I used to fiddle around - we lived at Cobram for 28 years. We did dairy farming up in Cobram. I used to like the dolls and I used to make apple head dolls. One day the *Women's Weekly* had...

F: But where did you start? Like was your mum in it or...

I: No, it was just from me. My grandmother was a dressmaker and she taught elocution and she was very talented, and I think I must have - something must have come through in the genes from there. Then I used to always sew, I've always sewn, and I sewed for the children and did all that all my life.

F: You were on a property at that stage?

I: Yes, we were on the farm at Cobram. Then I saw this magazine with these beautiful - a lady was making these beautiful china dolls and she - I read where she'd sent to America for the bits and pieces, and then I found out that you could do them in Melbourne. So I used to go down at the weekends and do weekend seminars in Melbourne with the - at this doll factory. This man had a factory down there called [L&A] Dolls and I used to go down there every weekend and learn how to - to visit them.

F: How many years ago are we talking? What are we talking?

I: It must be 20 years ago now and it sort of snowballed from there. When I was in Cobram and the children were grown up a bit - I've got two older ones and the younger daughter, and then I started to buy some moulds and experiment and do them myself. Then people wanted to learn how to do it, and they asked me would I show them, and it sort of evolved into a business then. I used to go and do weekend seminars away. I used to go as far as Leeton and Griffith and to a place called [Seeker] in Alexandra down south here.

F: You got good support from your family?

I: Fantastic, yes. My husband used to cart the kiln in the back of the car and he used to help...

F: You're lucky. Because he was a farmer, wasn't he?

I: Yeah.

F: He was farming?

I: Yeah.

F: So how much of your work was actually helping on the farm and...

I: I used to help in the dairy. There was only the two of us, and we milked over 100 cows, and we did that for 28 years. The children were busy...

[Interruption]

So we - the kiddies didn't have time to help because they were starting school and things like that.

F: So what value did you put in your work? Like what did it mean to you?

I: Well, I just used to love doing it because I used to love what the women got out of it, because there's just so many aspects to it. There's every side of knitting, sewing, crochet, leatherwork for shoes and things. There was just - and making wigs. Just there was so much to it. I used to teach young children or a few young girls that had disabilities. One girl's father made her a little stand, because she used to shake, and we used to put the head on the stand and she used to be able to paint it and do things. It just gave you so much pleasure to do that for them. Another girl used to come and she was suffering from - she couldn't go outside and so she used to come. We said look come and then if you don't want to stay just get up and walk - and she stayed nearly the two days, and she was really absorbed in it, and she forgot about all her bits and pieces. So it was really fantastic in that sense, the sort of - and to me I had to be a psychiatrist and every other thing because you'd hear all these women's problems and troubles and...

F: Did you see it as getting away from the farm a bit? I mean was it - was that an issue?

I: Yes. It was an outlet to get away for a while, it was. But of course the kids were more grown up when I started and that was easier because it was hard when they were smaller to get away, but...

F: So did you see it as an expression of you? How did you - when I say the value of art to you, I mean probably more to you than what it was to others. What did it sort of do for you personally?

I: Yes, well, I got a lot of pleasure out of doing it because I loved it. I loved the painting side of it, and I loved the teaching side of it, and if I had have been a bit...

F: So would you say your surroundings, being on a farm and working the farm and all, helped - made you...

I: Well, I lived here all my life. Like when I was younger this was where I was bred and born. My grandfather selected this property. It's only about - it was - 300 acres was up next door and he selected that and we've been here...

F: But would you say the lifestyle, the farming, encouraged you to have something outside farming or...

I: I would say, yes, I needed to have some other outlet because it was constant. Milking cows is constant day and night. You couldn't go far or do much away from the farm because you always had to be back there to milk the cows.

F: I think they now have people that come in for you if you want a holiday or anything?

I: Yes, now it must be a lot better, but when we were doing it there was nobody to help unless you paid someone, and usually you couldn't afford to pay people while you went away. So that's what we did. But then we - when we finished at Cobram we came back here and I still continued to teach in here at home for - I taught here for I suppose five or six years when we came down here. That kept me really busy.

F: You've given them up just...

I: Yes, I'm having a quiet time now because I did have breast cancer and I've got over that and I've...

F: Do you think you will go back to it?

I: I'd love to. I really would love to start doing a bit more because I've got so many - I like the costume dolls and the costumes that the French dolls had were made on the days when they used to wear the beautiful busts and all the 1870s gear. I've got about five or six of those dolls to dress.

F: You must have lived in another century?

I: I think I was born in another century.

F: I think. You're fascinated by the bustles or something of...

I: Yes, and the gloves. We used to make little leather gloves and all the sort of thing, and it's just been a long process to learn it all. Even doing the other side, the sleeping eyes, so they rock and go to sleep, that's another story in another time on its own. The doll makers of our era have had to do everything. Not like the old antique doll makers, they did one thing; maybe dye the wigs or they did the shoes or the eyes. We as doll makers today have had to

do wigs, eyes, the whole process, everything. So we think we're a lot cleverer than the old antique doll maker for...

F: You show a lot. You show. You mainly...

I: Yes, I used to show a lot of dolls and then I used to get a lot of pleasure out of my girls winning all the blue ribbons. That was the thing that I used to love...

F: Yeah. They did them but under your guidance.

I: Yeah. Yes, they'd make them in their weekends, and then they'd go home and dress them and bring them back, and then they'd show them. Because I'd go in there and they'd have all these beautiful blue ribbons. I wouldn't let anything go out of my studio that wasn't correct. A lot of people do which is a shame. But the old antique reproductions have got to be very similar to the old dolls or they're not worth having.

F: You'll leave it to your kids?

I: Yes, the kids will get most of them.

F: Is this one you did too?

I: Yes, that's a Christmas style. She...

F: Did you do that this year? You didn't do it this year?

I: No, no, she's been done for quite a long time now. She's got all the little Christmas ornaments on her, but she hasn't got her frock on. She's only got her petticoat at the moment.

F: Do you want to sit in the chair there? Because the lovely reds of your chair with your red doll. When did you do - so you've had her for a long time, have you?

I: Yes. She's about 10 or 12 years old. She's got her petticoat on here, but she's stuffed with paper to make her little skirt sit out.

F: They're like little personalities I guess to you, are they?

I: Yes. Yes, they've each got their little individual looks and...

F: She's gorgeous. I can't believe you were...

I: And their little wigs.

F: You didn't make that pompom thing for...

I: Which?

F: For the [teapot] and things like that?

I: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. That's a...

F: Sorry, I just have to bring that in because it's just so gorgeous. If you hold her again and I'll just put this here just so I can get a shot with the two different talents that you have.

[Interruption]

F: Your husband is very supportive of you like that?

I: Yeah.

F: Terrific. I'll put that back on.

I: Yes, he's had to put up with a lot over the years. Anyway he's been good so we've been lucky.

F: So my angle - I can sort of turn this off.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewee: ... Too much to call myself an artist, I think. Definitely come at it from the craft point of view, but I think there's a big element of design in there somewhere. I have a Maths/Science based background which probably accounts for the...

Facilitator: I.F.F

I: Yeah, well that and the geometric nature of my rugs for example. And weaving in general is very...

F: So your study is what? What did you study in?

I: Maths Science and Computer Science. I'm a nerd actually. (laughs) with an inner creativity bug I suppose. Because I've always done some form and it's usually textiles.

F: Well that's interesting that the IFF spotted you, because you covered both their aspects didn't you? The art aspect, and the fact that you were interested in Maths.

I: True, although that revelation about the Maths came later, because I'd already submitted a photograph to them to...

F: Did they make a call around the world or something?

I: Yes, it was well publicized. I found an ad in the Ashwood Spinning Magazine called "The Wheel" and it was a little introduction to hyperbolic crochet and what it was all about. I'm not even sure if it mentioned the Reef or not. It may have done because of course it was the mathematician Dana Termina that used the technique first to illustrate Maths principles. That part of it was intriguing although I must admit Maths at that point was many years behind me and I didn't really look into the hyperbolic geometry and I still haven't, but it's nice to know it's there. Um, so seeing that I made a sample which I thought was quite pleasing in colour and form, took a photograph and whipped that off to... I'm not sure whether that initialized or had something about the Reef but when I sent that – that is the photo that started it all – my little piece.

F: And is that all mathematically worked out from your point of view? Or do you have to use Maths to do it?

I: There is underlying... No you don't (have to use Maths). You have to use a simple counting procedure, which is why high Maths is not necessary to actually do this. It's an exponential increase, so it works like compound interest. You are increasing on top of your increases, and after a point you have so many stitches it can't go any further so it begins to crinkle and ruffle, so it's the same shape as say, frilly lettuce or kelp, some of those forms of nature. But it's extremely easy to do, and the complexity comes from a multitude of tiny steps, really. But the steps are repetitive.

F: And yet they don't end up looking the same?

I: No, because it depends on the degree of increase, I suppose.

F: So the number of stitches you start with?

I: Ah the number of stitches you start with, and the rate of the increase. You might decide to put in an increase every ten stitches, in which case it's a very shallow and very gentle increase. Or, if you were to double the stitches you've got the sequence: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 and so on.

F: So this...

I: And that's just a geometric doubling.

F: Oh is it, okay.

I: Mm hmm. But the point is it's an incredibly rapid increase if you are doubling every stitch obviously because within... let me see, five steps is 32, I mean if you started with two of course, it takes no time at all to get to a thousand, so things become unworkable if you choose your increase.

F: So this was an amazing find for you though wasn't it?

I: Oh I loved it, yes.

F: That someone was going to combine both your talents or your loves.

I: Yes, and on top of that I have the materials on hand. Because I think my pieces worked because I was using fairly strong and stiff wool. It's commercial carpet yarn. And my major hobby in the craft/art world is rug weaving. So I have all this brightly coloured, fairly sturdy yarn to work with. I wasn't using up my knitting balls or anything, which I don't think it's as successful in soft yarn to use. So these are fairly sculptural pieces.

F: They wouldn't stand up or anything...

I: It just happened.

F: Is this your own wool? Is this your own carpet sheep?

I: Um, not necessarily. Most of them are commercial carpet yarn, but I've dyed it. So I can show you after..

F: ...The dying process. Okay. But you do have sheep that you...

I: I do. And sometimes some of my pieces have got some handspun in them. But I mean, I do enjoy spinning my own sheep's wool, but in order to get a project to completion I don't use it all the time.

F: So there's a couple of Australian's that have been selected for this

I: Yeah, there's a few. There's a handful. There's a woman in Sydney who I've not met, a woman over in Bendigo who I have met – she lives in urban Bendigo – Marian Middleburg – she's a full time textile artist.

F: Right, where does she live?

I: Oh, I'm not sure exactly.

F: In Victoria?

I: Yeah, in Bendigo.

F: Oh okay. It was funny, some of the shots when you look at them...

I: Yeah I've got a whole lot out the back...

F: Oh okay, terrific.

I: Lets have something to eat first!

F: And that article on Arts Australia is where I came across it I guess, I just thought that's fantastic what they're doing. And it's the two directors of IFF that were doing...

I: They were expatriates of Australians, twin sisters Margaret and Christine Wertheim.

F: And you got to meet these people or you just sent your work over?

I: Um, well I did get to meet them because on a different track – still textiles – I actually spent about two and a half weeks in California about a year ago.

F: That must have been fabulous for you!

I: It was pretty amazing. The eleventh International Funghi and Fibre Symposium, which is a small group of people that go round and dye textiles with funghi. Extract dyes from funghi. Yeah I'm trying to work out – it's funghi season now – so they're popping up all over the place because it's warm and we've had rain and I'm doing my best to identify them. I collect them in the sense that I photograph them, and I'm on the look out for the ones that I know – I've learnt over the years – which ones have got dye in them. So most of the contents of my freezer are dye mushrooms (laughs) not edible ones.

F: Okay, so you'd do a whole series for that? It'll come in series like that? Like the coral was one thing, now you're...

I: No, It's whatever is happening at the moment. I mean, I'm not as busy this year as last, for example, I had a fair study burden last year so I didn't do anything much at all. This year I've got less, and the funghi season is a good one, hence I'm out there looking. And I will be doing some dying from the funghi and from plant material that I either cultivate or collect.

F: So you exhibit yourself?

I: Um, I've never had an exhibition as such. I've participated in the Spring Arts Fair in Mansfield where I've had a few rugs hung up in the café. At most I'm a half a dozen a rug year person, I'm not full swing.

F: So it's full time? You're doing (studying) full time?

I: No.

F: Do you work?

I: Yes. I have casual work, and um, keeping things under control here is some work. Look I think really I have a fair amount of time to try things out, not as much as I'd like, of course. Um while we're eating do you think... (tape cuts)

I: I collected a saying from a French colleague, and it is this: *Petit, a petit l'oiseau fait son ni*. Now, I apologise for the bad French but it means 'little by little the bird makes it's nest.' And when she told me that one – it's something about being patient. And something about big tasks get done if you take them a tiny bit at a time. And I thought 'well how appropriate for all my textile work which seems to take absolutely forever!' But, by that little saying I suppose I can carry on, one pick at a time. A pick is a pass of the shuttle by the way.

**END OF RECORDING**  
**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- F: ...So what value do you put on your patchwork? What value do you put on your artwork?  
...Here you can sit over here, I can't hear you.
- I: ...looking for something...it was basically loneliness. That's what...and I went to Mailing Rd because I loved the feel of Mailing Rd, and happened to pass the patchwork shop, and that was the... so it would have been, it would have been looking for something. What I really want to do, the reason I do anything artistic, is because I want to create a sort of a farmhouse environment.
- F: But you were doing this as I know, beforehand weren't you?
- I: Yeah...but it's really basically, the creativity surrounding the home. It's about the home.
- F: So the patchwork is...
- I: It's really about me, being a homemaker and enjoying all the different aspects to home making.
- F: And that's... yes?
- I: Yep, basically. It's not about the patchwork, it's about the love of the home, and all the feathering of the nest and making beautiful...
- F: So why the patchwork?
- I: Because it's part of the background and the backdrop that I so love, it's really creating the look that I enjoy. And patchwork is just a way of making my home the way I want it to look.
- F: Okay. And have you ever exhibited works, or sold quilts?
- I: No... they're for me. They're for me, and the home I wish to make.  
But there is a side to it, I've got to say, I am very um...almost surprised to see how therapeutic it is, to actually sit and do something, and the hours go, and you don't actually realize that it has actually made you zone out, without realizing that was going to happen. It was really very much about creating a lovely quilt, without the actual feeling that the craft itself would give me back anything. And then I realized there was something, there was something therapeutic about the fact that you are actually doing something that takes your mind off all other things in your life. Those thoughts just somehow don't penetrate; they don't creep in. Your mind is... It's almost a sort of form of meditation without realizing that it will do that to you. It takes you out of your life, and for a moment there you're in a space where you're not thinking.
- F: Okay, and do you get support from your husband for all this?
- I: Oh absolutely, yeah.
- F: And how did you begin to do it?
- I: It was basically born out of a need to fill a void that came out of actually having a failed pregnancy, and I actually decided then to go and do something that took me out of the house, and I happened to wander into Mailing Rd in Melbourne on a shopping trip, and I loved the quilt in the window and thought, I'd really like to buy that quilt. And wandered in to the quilt shop and asked the lady how much is the quilt in the window and she said 'Well it's just not for sale, and if it were it would be priceless, you couldn't put a price on it because of the man-hours, and the um...the time it takes...
- F: Okay. And you were self-taught, or did you have a grandmother that taught you?
- I: Nobody taught me how to sew; I never really even knew I could sew. I was never even person who would take out a sewing machine. Um, and I questioned the lady again, 'but you know, if you were to sell it...' and she just said 'there's just no price; I can't put a price on it. You'll have to come and make one.' And she thrust the paperwork for the course into my hand, and said 'there's a course starting and it's worth \$100 or something, and really you should come'. And she was such a... her whole presence and her whole charm, and the shop was such a, you know...it was such a...it was like stepping back in time, and so the setting was charming and all those elements made me think, well maybe I will, but part of me never really thought I'd complete anything. It was just a charming setting and there was something pulling me into that, but I probably thought 'oh, I'll never finish it, I'll never do a quilt'. I'll just be taught how to do it, but I'll probably never get a quilt out of this.

- F: Yeah, and so how many quilts would you have done, in how long was this? When did you start?
- I: I think I probably had one quilt on the go for years, I finished a quilt initially that was a single bed quilt, that would have taken 6 months, and then after that I had a quilt on the go for about two years, and you put them away and sort of get them out as you have sort of, parts of times in your life where you, somehow have a bit of a void and need something, and you get the quilt out. It was just a, um, it was one of those sort of things that, a bit like picking up a book. There's some books you actually have to read right through, and other books you have to pick up and put down and might not finish for years, and the quilts have been a bit like that. One quilt I might finish, and another might be there resting and waiting for me to come back to it. So it's hard to say how long it takes to finish any of these things, because some of them have been on the go for years, and others have been finished within a couple of months. But I'd have, um, fifteen quilts now. In various shapes and sizes.
- F: And so for yourself, it was sort of 'me' time, was it? It gave you what? A sense of what about yourself?
- I: Well, it wasn't intentional, but I guess what I realized after a while was that it was actually making me, um...yeah relax. And without actually knowing that's what I would get out of it. It was really a project that I wanted because I liked the idea of having lovely quilts in my house, but the therapy was um, a sort of, almost a bit of a surprise.

**END OF FIRST RECORDING.**  
**END OF RECORDING**

Facilitator: ...hopefully you'll come across people that might be able to help me but if someone does cooking, that's fine, but if you see that someone does something it really takes it to the next step of putting all the olives around or the apricots the right way or making it special.

Interviewee: I used to know someone who decorates cakes - my neighbour does down there - she decorates cakes.

Facilitator: Is she on a farm and things?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: They're the sort of people I'd love to get to because as you know...

Interviewee: Her parents were immigrants and she was brought up - she cleaned her brother's shoes and she did the cooking and she made their beds and tidied their rooms and did everything. She's quite an interesting - very basic, very nice country woman but she is always cooking for the church, cooking and decorating things.

Facilitator: Well as you know, this lady with the rock wall, Andy Goldsworthy. Do you know Andy Goldsworthy's work in English...

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: He does rock walls; amazing rock walls and spheres and he's quite famous for it, so he's very highly - in the environmental work. You know, he'll do leaves on a pond but had them beautifully. It's all ephemeral, a bit ephemeral stuff, Andy Goldsworthy.

Interviewee: Oh, I saw them the other day in the Canberra Gallery. Very pornographic.

Facilitator: Yeah, they are, aren't they? But she does other stuff with weaving.

Interviewee: Isn't that funny? I saw the just on Monday, I went to the art gallery and we did see those, yes.

Facilitator: But she does these knitting and things so it starts at home in a lot of ways and of course, as you know, Macarthur with sheep; he was in England, she...

Interviewee: She ran the place but she never mentioned...

Facilitator: Never mentioned. Gould. She did all the drawings of the birds and things.

Interviewee: Well with Burley Griffin, Marion did most of the work.

Facilitator: Oh, did she?

Interviewee: Oh, yes.

Facilitator: The designing?

Interviewee: The wife, but you never hear about her. There are some people now trying to - visible, bring her out and say, well she really did a huge lot of work, she did all the drawings and things like that. Unbelievable. Burley Griffin's wife.

Facilitator: It happens a lot.

Interviewee: It does.

Facilitator: This is just starting off to be my first sort of trek out.

[Susan\_Campbell\_East\_Wangaratta\_Vic\_15th\_Dec\_2009]

Interviewee: ...and her husband had died and she was bringing up the family and she got those riding a horse to get the cattle out of the fire and the stirrups burnt her leg. She would have been in her 90s. She was - he brain was going but I just loved her. She was just the most wonderful woman and she'd come up to this farm and she kept the farm going...



I've got a few friends like that, too, that do that sort of thing. It's all different isn't it? But I don't know...

Facilitator: It must do [unclear] *Farmer Needs a Wife*, that series? I just watched it to see Harriet...

Interviewee: ...and have been totally isolated, had nothing to do - not allowed to have a say and her husband supports the parents, not the wife.

Facilitator: And the mother on the other farm comes over and does the shopping or the washing or cooks the dinner for them.

Interviewee: Yes. One person I heard telling me once, she wasn't even allowed to paint the - they were on a farm and they lived in the cottage, she wasn't even allowed to paint the cottage the colour she wanted. She had to do what she was told. She couldn't do any changes or anything and she wasn't allowed to go to family discussions on the property.

Facilitator: What happened to her?

Interviewee: Terrible.

Facilitator: What happened?

Interviewee: I think she left in the end, I forget exactly. But I just remember hearing that and I thought, this is terrible because - we brought this property, I haven't had that issue. Well, I've had issues, not that one.

Facilitator: I think it's a big issue, the mother in law and the property.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's not easy. It's very difficult and daughters in law can be very difficult, too, don't...

Facilitator: So you're the mother in law now.

Interviewee: We won't go into...

Facilitator: I have...

[Susan\_Campbell\_Wangaratta\_15th\_Dec\_2009]

Interviewee: But I went to work in Albury.

Facilitator: Albury? Where's Albury from here, that's not...

Interviewee: Like, 100km up the road.

Facilitator: Every day?

Interviewee: For 15 years.

Facilitator: From that shack?

Interviewee: Mm. I started down there. When I started working up - we were in there and then we were up here and for 15 years, from when my youngest son was six.

Facilitator: Any of them back on the farm?

Interviewee: That farm next door that you went to, that's one son.

Facilitator: Oh, okay.

Interviewee: But the other one I've just been up to, he's in Canberra.

Facilitator: So they came back close by? That must be lovely for you to have that company.

Interviewee: Mm.

Facilitator: Sometimes? So that's how it arose, basically. I was there and we were in a little kit home we built until we did a round earth house.

Interviewee: Oh, did you? No...

Facilitator: Sorry?

Interviewee: Did you like round earth?

Facilitator: It's stunning, yeah. It's fantastic.

Interviewee: I think it's nice. Well this is - we just dug the stone up in the garden. Well, not in the garden, we did a bit in the garden, but around the paddocks and built the house. We put solar panels on it here in 1972 so it's all - the hot water is all solar.

Facilitator: Terrific. It is a journey that's meant to be a bit of fun stuff.

Interviewee: Oh, it is.

Facilitator: It's not sitting here - I mean, it is, but you've probably already, as you say, thinking of doing something else I guess, are you, or you'll be here for...

Interviewee: Oh, well, we're planning because we're getting too old and, you see, we've got no water here at the moment. We ran out of water last February and we were carting water to 4,500 sheep plus feeding them all because

we had no feed so we just - I said one day, right, they're out. So we had a complete disbursal.

Facilitator: The lamb prices are so good at the moment.

Interviewee: Well we couldn't do anything. If we'd counted - they are good, but we did reasonably well. If we'd kept them for, like, nearly 12 months we'd have been still carting water right through the winter. We're still carting. We're not carting water but - vegetable garden - I usually don't buy any vegetables at all. We've got no water in the garden. Nothing. That's my vegetable garden. There's no water in the garden.

Facilitator: So what do you run now?

Interviewee: We've got about 600, 700 sheep, that's all. We've got a crop over there; we've got a bit of crop. But no, we can't do it. We've sowed down a lot of paddocks that had been decimated with the drought and the wind - we got a lot of wind last year, just blew all the top soil off and all the seed went with it.

We've had 300mm, for the last three years, of rain. Each year; 300mm for 12 months. We should have had up to 650 to 700. We've had no run-off for five years, no run-off at all. It's difficult.

Facilitator: So drinking water is all carried in?

Interviewee: No, we've got 20,000 gallons of rainwater.

Facilitator: That's after three years?

Interviewee: Yes. Well whenever we get rain - we've got all this house, we've got all the sheds and we've also got two 8,000 gallon tanks on the shed so we've got plenty in rainwater, in fact, it was running over when we got 42mm the other day which is the best rain we've had for three years. The tank was running over because we've got so much roof, so that's not a worry, that's not a problem at all. It's just - the big dam, we've got 23ML dam there which has been dry since last February.

Then we put a solar pump on a spring that had never gone down. That stopped, so that's dry too - never ever known to go dry. So it's bad, but anyway, we didn't get burnt out. Friends of ours got burnt out and [unclear]. A lot of people are a lot worse off than we are. Now we've sold the sheep, it's better, but before that...

Facilitator: But before then, what did you run?

Interviewee: We ran Merino - self-replacing Merino flock. We've got a Border Leicester stud. We bred first-cross ewes and we have prime lambs as well. We used to milk sheep, that's another thing we did.

Facilitator: You didn't do cheese making and things, did you?

Interviewee: No. Oh, I made yoghurt and sold that which wasn't allowed.

Facilitator: I tell you what we've got into, we got into Dorper sheep.

Interviewee: Oh, did you?

Facilitator: Yes, which is fantastic.

Interviewee: Quite a few people around here are getting into Dorspers.

Facilitator: They're just drought-proof, they live off nothing. Small lambs, no [pulling/pooling], you see twins after the first few...

Interviewee: Merinos live on nothing - first-cross - but we got Friesian - we imported Friesian semen for the sheep milking. We milked sheep for 15 years and all...

Facilitator: Where's your market for that?

Interviewee: Milk went to Milawa to the cheese factory and they made sheep's milk cheese out of it, which is just over there. But because of all the restrictions and the government clamp downs on everything you turned around and did, we just had to give it away, we couldn't cope anymore. It just became a nightmare, thanks to the government and their restrictions - out they went. So that was the end of that industry.

Facilitator: So you're selling all your lambs now are you? You're not really building up?

Interviewee: No, we haven't sold any. This year we've sold some prime lambs, yes. We're sort of building up but we're not really fussed. We're better off not having them because how can you cart water for sheep?

We've got a big tank up top which reticulates right around so we used to have to cart the water up and put it in the tank and we'd pump it out of a big mine around here. Well, the mine had got wrecked because they had 60mm in 10 minutes up here in the hills in February when there was no cover. It all washed down into the mine and you still can't pump out of it because it's all yuck.

Facilitator: So what's your husband? He's working on the land, he's out working?

Interviewee: He's out working. We've built all stone troughs, I don't know whether you saw them on the way up, but all our troughs are big, round stone troughs and some of them - because of the dry - they've cracked so he's out fixing the troughs. Anyway, we've got no water to put in them so it doesn't really matter.

Facilitator: So how much of your time again is, like, what's most of your time spent on?

Interviewee: God only knows. Well, I'm President of the Victorian Farm Tree and Landcare Land Management Association at the VFF, so I spend quite a bit of time of that because I'm the president of that so I'm up and down to Melbourne a lot and I'm also on the board of Conservation Volunteers Australia, which I have been for awhile. I've been president twice of that. So I do that and I do landscaping. I'm still running my practice.

Facilitator: From here?

Interviewee: Yes. I've got a couple of jobs on with that.

Facilitator: So you're not really out on the farm?

Interviewee: Well I am whenever I can and I do. Depends what we're doing. At the moment we've got a bloke working for us but if there's no one here, I'm out there most of the day working on the farm and I have done...

Facilitator: How do you - do you love that?

Interviewee: I do. I mean, I'm still the roustabout in the shearing shed after all these years when we shear but this year I wasn't because I had to go to Melbourne because my mother died last year and I had to go, so that was another thing because she was in care so I was down to Melbourne every week. You're asking what I do. I was down to Melbourne every week with her and then we had all that drama, doing that and I've just recently...

Facilitator: So the hardest challenge about...

Interviewee: ...[unclear] big house so the house is full of stuff that I don't really need at the moment that I have to still go through.

Facilitator: So what's the greatest challenge out of all of that? I mean, what do you see as really - is it you? Is it...

Interviewee: Making this a sustainable farm. We won the Victorian Landcare award for sustainable agriculture with our farm back in 2003. We won that award. We've planted probably 200,000 trees here so I'm farm planner as well. I plant all the farm. We've planted hundreds of thousands of trees on that and revegetated and done a lot of work - environmental work - on the farm so that's one of my main things, environmental planning. Fighting this business of there's no climate change and I'm very involved in all that. I'm also in Australian Women in Agriculture and the sustainable farming group in Wangaratta. A lot of boards and committees I'm on, yes.

Facilitator: So where does the creative come in for you? What influences or why is it there? What value do you put on it?

Interviewee: A lot. My mother was very creative. I think my father was, too, yes. I've always been like that; making something, doing something. That has to be part of my life otherwise I go really around the bend. It keeps me sane, as sane as possible anyway. I play bridge as well. So yes, I do a few things. I do a lot of...

Facilitator: How does your family respond to your art? Encouraging you or is it a little bit of a...

Interviewee: Oh, it's just there. Actually, I was just thinking this morning when I was thinking about what you're doing, the boys when they were at school used

to be quite creative; making things in wood and things like that but I don't think either of them do that now.

Facilitator: You just held onto it because you must...

Interviewee: I've just been up to Canberra to do a course in glass making. It was wonderful. I'm going back to do more. I loved it. I just got so excited.

Facilitator: I think it would be fabulous.

Interviewee: Well I wasn't actually blowing this time, I was just - you know with the steel rod...

Facilitator: Twisting and things?

Interviewee: Twisting it and making things.

Facilitator: I think I saw it at Murano, outside Venice. What's that Island they have? Murano?

Interviewee: Murano.

Facilitator: Yes, I saw it there.

Interviewee: So that's what I've just come back from doing.

Facilitator: It's amazing that you've got time for that, the art side. It really is, because you've got - one would think - more critical things to do.

Interviewee: And I do silver smithing once a week, every Monday morning. I go into town, I've got a friend, and we sit down in her studio and do silver smithing and silver and gold work. So that's a has to.

Facilitator: As I said, there seems to be, from what you're saying, so many other critical things, so many other things that take up your time but you have allowed for this section to be there as a must.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: No cooking?

Interviewee: Well I do - yeah, I do...

Facilitator: Are you a cooker or a preserver?

Interviewee: ...and I do a lot of dressmaking. I make all my granddaughters dress up clothes. I'll show you, I've got photos of those. The last one I had was in tears it was so difficult and I said, no more for a little while.

Facilitator: So when you read the article, what first came into your mind?

Interviewee: I just said, oh - if I can help someone I usually like to help people if they're doing things - encourage things to happen because I think it's so good people doing things. I can't stand people that sit down and just say, I'm too busy, I can't do anything, and they do nothing. So if I see things that I can get involved in, I do.

Facilitator: And you identified with it or you just saw it as a...

Interviewee: Yes. Definitely.

So what do you do? This?

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

Facilitator: I mean I guess, my thing is, how did you come to need this? Or is it a need, or...this form of expression. Because I'm looking at art, as well as cooking as a form of expression, and as I said, gardening. So, what does it mean to you? What has it meant to you?

Interviewee: Do you mean this area? Living in this property?

I: It all has to do with the property. I think it all came about with the pergola, having the vines hanging over the pergola in this outside area, and we just...both my husband and myself had a need for an outside area because we liked outside life, having property. And in from here we discovered... we'd done a wood fired oven here because it's part of our culture, part of what we enjoyed, so then we just started...this is where I spend a lot of time - when I'm not working.

F: So how much of the time are you on the farm working and how much time for you? Is this your 'me' in your life, your bit of 'me'?

I: Ah, yes.

F: Do you know what I mean? It's sort of like...

I: Yes, it's a little bit of 'me' when I'm not working. When I'm not working to make money, this is where I work, not particularly making money, just passion, yeah, definitely.

F: Okay, that's what I'm sort-of after. How women are getting that little bit of ...

I: This is one part of it, but I'm also involved in other things, but this is one of my getaways from working hard to have to make a living, to have to make money. This is my little hide-away, I would say.

F: Right, that's what I meant, yes.

I: So some of the tours come through here and like to show off...

F: So did you start the tourism part, or did someone approach you and say 'oh we love this, can we send people?' or was that part of your development?

I: It wasn't our business development at all, it's still not, so we're still not really making money out of it, like that, but um... oh I just recently had a bus load of people come up from Melbourne, about two weeks ago, and they come around to have a look at the dry fruit packing, and then the organizer rang me after and said 'Elina, the whole group wants to come back next year, but only if you'll cook them a meal at your place, they want to stay and have a meal at your place.'

F: How many people are we talking here?

I: Fifty.

F: Oh you're joking! So you're used to that are you?

I: Yeah, I do it occasionally, so I cooked them a meal and I thought 'Oh these people wouldn't definitely want to come', and um, I worked out they just wanted the culture, they just wanted to go back to their roots.

F: And they were all Italian?

I: They were an all-Italian group, but I often have other Australian groups as well. And these people are just so excited when they come, and I just got enjoyment seeing the excitement from them, because they were just so excited they were seeing the olives and the tomato sauce, the big pots. I cooked them pasta in a big pot and I made bread in the oven, and they were just so excited. And I thought, isn't it wonderful just to see that.

F: So a business is coming out of it now?

I: A little bit of a business occasionally, but we're not using it, it's just something that happens occasionally. We could make it happen all the time, I would like to, but um, it's not an area that we have time to go into full time.

F: If you could show me...

- I: Well that's the wood-oven, I make bread, I can make 35 loaves at one time, and um, whenever I make the bread there's always someone here, you know, there's always a crowd. My family comes.
- F: Yes, so it's not as if you're slaving out here on your own like it's a chore. Everyone's sort-of merry and there's wine...
- I: Well yes, no, well they find out I'm making the bread – 'mum's making bread today' and the word gets around, you know, I'll have the hot bread coming out of the oven and before you know it someone turns up.
- F: So is this your culture? You were brought up with this sort of environment?
- I: Oh yes, definitely. I was born in Italy, I came out to Australia when I was two and a half, but my culture was very much like I was living in Italy, because my parents came out many years ago, with their friends, and they just continued where they left off, they didn't actually... I mean, I'd go to school and I was fine, I'd come home, as soon as you walked into that house you were Italian again. You spoke Italian, ate Italian, strict Italian! And you know, everything else, so of course it was a culture.
- F: And you didn't react against that, you loved that still? Or did you...
- I: Ah no, I didn't react, um, no. I think I had a good life because I sort of went away and had done what I liked to do and came home and opened a business, so um, I was very fortunate, and I liked it. My mother was also very involved in the community, even though she couldn't speak English, she was always involved. I don't think I could live without being involved in a community, it would really be so sad not to be involved. If you're just involved in working that's something else.
- F: Oh my goodness, this is fantastic! (laughs) What a great room!
- I: As you can see, there's no stove in here, so it's not another kitchen. I would say this is my hideaway, and I'm making whatever I'm making, I'll disappear in here, and if the kids call me and know that I'm not around then they know I'm I here.
- F: So what value do you put on all of this? What is it to you?
- I: Um, a satisfaction. I do go to the farmer's market, when I can. And I only go because I enjoy the culture of being there. I take my little bits of preserves and olives and dry fruit that we produce, I just enjoy it, and love people when they come up and ask 'what is this, I've never tasted it before' and I love introducing people to something new.
- F: Yes.
- I: And I get so much enjoyment out of it because when they ask what to do with it, and they come back and say 'oh we tried it, it's beautiful'
- F: So you've got a bit of a following?
- I: I just love introducing people to new things.
- F: So how did you end up in a vineyard here?
- I: Well, both Gino and I ...
- F: Can I just, I hope you don't mind if I snap photos as we go... I'm not a photographer and you're probably used to photographers that set you up and things, but it's documentary, so it's how it is, I don't change, I don't manipulate or anything like that. So it's basically just saying this is your passion, in a way. So how did you start getting here?
- I: So Gino, he was an electrician, and I was a hairdresser – I had my own business, then um, one day he came home and he said I've had enough of working in ceilings in wet and rainy conditions and 42 degree heat for two whole weeks, so we had a look at property...
- F: So you hadn't been in vines before?
- I: He grew up on land, and yes, so we wanted to be in town, and from there we grew out of that and sold that, and bought this property here, which is a larger property, and another property in Irymple, and another in Murdoch as well. So, for a table grape property it's really a large property.
- F: Right, like it would be down in Hopetoun, where a property is 25,000 acres...
- I: Yes, for livestock. See this is table grapes, and dried fruit, between table grapes and dry fruit and say, wine grapes, table grapes are far more labor intensive. You could run a wine grape property with two men for the size ours is. For table grapes, you actually need about ten people.
- F: So that's what's collapsing at the moment isn't it...
- I: The wine grapes is gone, that's collapsed.

- F: Yes, it really is. I just saw this woman in Wemen, and she said 'last year it was \$200 a tonne, and we just decided – forget it'. They just dropped it, the machinery is still sitting there, everything's frozen until they decide what they're going to do.
- I: See table grapes is the only one that's still moving, this year we've had bad luck because we've had berries on the branch, and haven't developed to full capacity. This year we have a lower market...
- F: But you'd have a set market, wouldn't you?
- I: We have, but even with the set market we haven't got the quality.
- F: They wouldn't... so are they buying them in from overseas if you can't do it?
- I: Um, well, they're just not buying. The quality's just not there. Overseas does compete with our markets as well, so we'll have those problems if we don't have a good year of course.
- F: And so what's the future?
- I: For the table grapes? Well, we're very hopeful...
- F: Are you on the channel, on the pipeline? Are you irrigated?
- I: Oh yes, you have to be irrigated for table grapes...
- F: On this new pipeline that they're all talking about?
- I: There is a pipeline, but this is not new to us, water's always been valuable to properties, but they've cut down our rights, our water rights, so then say if you have a hundred litres of water, they'll cut it back to say, half. So we've actually had to buy the extra water. Farmers at that stage have to make the decision whether they're going to keep going, or cut their water off.
- F: I think for these people, for this property, the younger son sort of wasn't really interested, and it just meant that if they were to continue it would have meant a whole lot of new tractors, and the expense of the machinery. And at 65 or whatever they were, they thought it's just not worth starting to upgrade and do the whole thing.
- I: See we put a lot of money into the infrastructure. We decided to buy water and keep going. If we hadn't have bought water - Because once you don't irrigate your property that's it you can't go back – so we growers had to make a decision, it was really hard. I mean, what do you do? So we went and bought water hoping that we don't... with the profit that it would make it should do.
- F: So does that go up in price? I mean do they keep raising the water price?
- I: Oh yes.
- F: Do you sell these commercially or just for people here?
- I: The preserves I make is only what my family eats, I used to make all these...
- F: Really?! Your family eats all this? (laughs)
- I: Well I do take a few to the market, but what I mean is I used to make a lot of other preserves as well, and then they'd sit there because ...it's for certain things, so thought what's the point in making them if no one eats them? Because I don't really have a seller out there to sell them from, unless it's the farmer's market, but even then, I don't get enjoyment as much because I'd rather make something that my family eats...
- F: Yes, because don't you have all health and everything now? If you're to sell at markets?
- I: Oh yes, I'm registered, so that's quite okay. I'll make my big batch of tomato sauce...
- F: And that will last you how long?
- I: Well, 12 months. My married children, I have two married children...
- F: I know you have six grandchildren or something...
- I: Almost seven! (laughs)
- F: I said 'you must be the babysitter' or something and she said 'oh no, she gives me so much more back, and she took it to Bali or something, so that's very shrewd of his daughter to do that.
- I: Yeah, so they sort of help out with the sauce. We actually brought in 700 kilos of tomato-made sauce, but then I had another row of tomatoes planted down the vineyard so I actually made all these different sauces with the whole tomato, I just thought I'll make a sauce that I can just throw over the pasta, it's got oil in it and everything – it's beautiful. And I make all different sizes; I make family size. The girls are running around, they're really busy, and she asked 'what's for dinner mum?' and I just said 'well you can go and make it yourself, grab the pasta and you're right'. So that's a one person or two person serve, and a family serve.
- F: And you don't need to freeze it or anything either, so they can last forever...
- I: Well yes, they last about 3 years.

F: Yes, if you didn't have children it would!

I: And I make the olives, we grow olives, I've always watched my mother make olives and it's something that just comes naturally. Both things come naturally.

F: Yeah I saw them on the tray over there.

I: Yes, this has been an interesting one, we make our own olive oil too, with the um, dry way. My mother used to make it it's an Italian recipe, they used to make it and just put it away, and you weren't allowed to use it until Christmas, to make Christmas pastries and things. It's a syrup made of black Muscat grapes...

F: Instead of what? Instead of the milk or the oil?

I: Oh you can use it in fruitcakes, or in stewed fruit, it's a grape syrup, there's no additives in it. So my mother used to make it, and when my mother passed away I couldn't find any, and went looking around the shops and couldn't find it.

F: Okay, well you've got the grapes...

I: Yeah! I thought, I've got the grapes and the recipe and so I started making it. And I gave some to my friends and they liked it, and I thought why not the rest of Australia?

Yeah, we distribute it all around.

F: So you are making money... by the both.

I: Yes, I guess.

F: And so Stefano's helped you? Is it Stefano?

I: Stefano, yes.

F: He's helped you, I guess, in promoting all of this?

I: Well he's been good because, I mean, we're already making it, but then he um, ...like a lot of others.

I: I was looking for a story on us, on the products...

F: You're not so interested you were saying though, you're not particularly interested in making business...

I: Yes, that's right. So, we've been featured in a lot of magazines... so a lot of people have sort of, had the chance to see...

F: ...No I haven't...

I: It's a lifestyle channel on food, and Lisa rang me one day and I said 'oh I saw some picking,' and she said 'I'm just looking for your place because, you know, I want to invite you...' because he came out here and kept looking, and I said when they come back in a few days to bring their manager. And he said, 'this is just a great setting, do you mind if we film here?' So they actually filmed the kitchen and they were here about 3 months...

F: Well that would be good...

I: Yes, it was a nice experience for us...

F: Yeah, and you'd get paid for it, you know...

I: Yes, for something that's existing and you love it anyway. So when the opportunity comes your way, I think...

F: ...Just grab it

I: You just grab it, it's an experience. You look at it as an experience, not so much, you know...

F: But it's great for the kids to see, you know, you're bringing your craft to the people.

I: And we met some wonderful people, you know, chefs that come to the show and....

F: ...So we'll go outside...Hello! (Talks to someone else)...it's amazing how many creative people love their pets... (Talks to pet)

I: So I don't have much to show you today, but that's okay. I had a big baking day yesterday, so I left the stove inside yesterday and baked Easter egg...traditional Easter egg things.

F: I saw you brought home the eggs...your daughter said 'bring home some eggs!'

And then you walked in the door with a big Easter egg, and she said 'I don't mean that!'

I: (Laughs) I wanted to um, I didn't want to buy little Easter eggs because I make my own...

F: You make your own Easter eggs as well?

I: I make traditional ones, I'll show you when I go inside, so I made all them yesterday, but because we have seven grandchildren and they're all going to be here for Easter I thought 'I'll buy this great big one' and then they all break away from it, and then their mums can take some home and use it for cooking...

F: Yes...

I: And you know, dip their bananas in it and do whatever they want to do with it...



F: The ones with the icing sugar, aren't they? On the other side? Is it icing patterns, no?

I: No, no.

F: Oh that's Greek. I think I'm thinking of a Greek tradition.

I: Yes, that's Greek. No, mine are just printed in the traditional way. My mother used to make them, and I just like making them every year. Want me to....

F: Yeah, maybe just...

(Discussing photograph settings)

F: I'm hoping to get about a hundred women, from around Victoria... well, I've got about 30 and I've only just started since Christmas...

(Discussing the project)

F: ...Because I get the feeling that women might not be on farms (in the future) in isolation, I'm talking big farms. That's why this may be different because you sort of mix a lot with other people, so you're probably not so hungry for an expression of your own. Would you say, or...?

I: Yes, you're probably right to say that to a certain extent. With me, I find that my life is so busy, and I'm always around people – people that work here, and you know, the people that always come. If you're the lady of a vineyard, you know, my role, you do everything. You're in the office, you're in the field, you're training, you're cooking, and you're entertaining people. This can all happen in one day, you entertain people because a tour comes through, um, you correspond on telephone. It's just becomes you know, busy at times...

Sometimes I actually get embarrassed when people stay here because I'm actually always 'go, go, go', so I don't, I'm not... it's not something I've looked for, it's just happened that way.

F: A magnet...

I: You know what I mean? You're into that lifestyle and sometimes, you feel like you're on a busy highway and you just have to keep going – you can't get off. If you know what I mean, it's hard to explain.

F: So maybe it's not 'me' time anymore, in that you're really now...it's becoming a chore. Is it becoming a chore? Because it's a balance... you need to get a balance...

I: It's not... it's your business, and your business is still there. So it's your business and it's your, other things that you enjoy doing...

F: Yeah, you're on this treadmill, and it's just not getting off, but it's lovely, the cool water.

(Laughs)

I: And you sort of think, you know, you have to stop and think, you know, my daughter is off this farm, and she went and stayed with a girlfriend, only a few years back and she stayed at her friends and she said, 'mum I never see you sitting down and putting your legs up', she said 'when I went to so-and-so's place her mum sat down and put her legs up and watched TV all afternoon' and she really made me think about that. And I thought 'that's true, I don't do that, I don't sit down and watch TV all afternoon'. I hate sitting down for too long anyway, because it's just not me. I sort of spend more time saying 'okay, I can get away and I can do this,' and the kids ring me and want this done and I say 'well yes, I can come' and I work around my own because I'm self-employed I can do that. And that's the good thing about being self-employed – you can work around your own time. Even though you're really busy – I have two married children with grandchildren and I can't look after them now when they (the parents) go to work. I'm always available when they're sick and they can't take them to crèche, or if there's an emergency I'll leave my work and I'll go and look after them. So you can... you've got your moneymaking business – trying to make money business (laughs) that's your income, but then you can work around it. And I think that' why it's good to be on the land, and be your own boss.

F: Yes. And your husband supports you in...

I: Yes.

F: You know, he doesn't say 'come back on to helping me', when he sees you doing this?

I: Oh no, I do this when I can, I can't leave my business and come in here and do this...

F: So your business you see as the grapes?

I: The grapes, yes. The grapes, the people working there, the people down in training that I have to do, I do it down there so I have to train the people that come to work because their not always experienced. So my job is that I have to train them when they come in, I have to make sure they have all their government formalities filled. So that is the business.

F: Okay.

I: This is the enjoyment when people come through and see whatever I make here that's all part of the enjoyment.

F: Maybe...what do you do with the olives? Do you scoop them out? What do you do with those? Or is that for decoration?

I: No it's not for decoration. I just make them, and when I have more than what we need I take them to the farmer's market, and um...

F: Okay. And you scoop them out and give them to people and they buy in scoops and stuff like that?

I: Um...

F: Or do they buy the whole thing?

I: Um, no I scoop them.

F: Okay you do, I just wondered about a big family buying the whole thing.

I: No, no, I scoop them. I made one for my daughter; she's taken the whole tub. Her family was picking some, so she rang me and over the phone I gave her instructions how to keep them and how to serve them. So she's had her own go at it, and if her's don't turn out I've got plenty more here.

F: Don't tell me you've written a book on it all have you?

I: No, I haven't, but my intention is that before it's too late I do want to write a book, and not so much on food, the food will come into it too, but I want to write a book about the experiences of life growing up with two cultures. I really want to do that one day, I don't know where to start though (laughs), but I'm hoping to get there.

F: What, you mean the writing? Is it hard to start?

I: Not the book, but where do I start from...

F: Oh okay, so where from? From what time in life?

I: Yes, so, but at the moment my life is just too busy to do it, but once I get the opportunity to slow down in my work that's where I'll be putting my energy.

F: I bet the sun comes in here beautifully when it's not an overcast day...

I: It does, but you know that photos come out better on an overcast day?

F: I'll show you a shot that I've just taken...

I: Because I know, underneath the pergola people just come in and take shots all the time, and if it's a sunny day they get the light (and it) pulls away and makes it (the photo) dark.

F: Sometimes. Yes.

(Talks about the camera, photos and Kay Sylvester)

F: ...And well, I don't know that many people in Mildura actually on properties doing something creative, so, I've come up for you and for her, in a way and hoping that maybe if I go into town tomorrow and maybe talk with people, people might lead me onto other people. Unless you know people that are doing interesting things?

(tape cuts)

I: ...I was doing hairdressing and I had a really good staff and it was really big... I didn't have five minutes in the day – I couldn't get away for lunch I was so busy. And in 1974 when I actually left the salon, but I still worked for a number of years – for my brother – but I actually gave away my own business, and I came on the land, and being Italian too, other mothers and wives say to me 'oh Elina, to leave the salon and go work in the block' and so many people were saying that to me and sort of, downgrading me because you know 'why would you leave a salon and come on the block?' well to me because I had already experienced that glamour work, I'd experienced all that glamour – I didn't need that glamour anymore, I'd experienced that and it was really full-on and I really enjoyed it, - I loved it – but it was full on work. You work by appointments, you work by pleasing people, and you didn't have a minute to go to the doctor's even, because you work by appointments. And when I came on the land, I loved it. For the first time in my life it was the land, I didn't have to please the wives, you know, it was just a different lifestyle and if I hadn't had that experience working for people, for a different lifestyle, I wouldn't have enjoyed it. Because I'd already done that I enjoyed the freedom of the land.

F: And what sort of, is it a male culture? I mean, are you allowed to maintain decisions on the farming business side of it?

I: It's got better. It never used to be, um, that way. But I think over the years it's changing. I think women can have a say in ...

F: Like you'd have a say in what's being bought and...what happens to things...?

I: I used to get more... see it's changed, I used to get more involved when our property was smaller in what we buy, in machinery, but as it got bigger I'm more involved in my areas of work and my husband's involved in his areas of work. As far as machinery goes – unless we can't afford it and I say 'just think about it very carefully'...

F: Okay. So you don't feel there's a culture that's stopping you from being you, in a way, or restricting your say?

I: No, I'm very much in the business.

F: Is that true of most vineyards around now? Would you say?

I: Probably not. I can still see a lot of it...

F: And as you say, the Italian men would be fairly strong and the women are just in the kitchen a lot more, I would have thought.

I: Yes, yes. But the men like that still like the women to be out working you know, they wouldn't leave them in the kitchen.

F: They want both...?

I: Yes, they want both. (laughs)

F: So other women you know on blocks like this, do they have any 'me' time? Do they...

I: Um, probably because they're not that way inclined. I think if they were that way inclined they would. You have to have a passion for being the 'me' time person. I think if you don't have that passion I don't think you find it.

F: Right... well (female name)'s found it, you know, which was just fantastic.

I: See yes, because she needed it, she found it. She found something that was her.

**END OF RECORDING.**

**NEXT RECORDING:**

I: This is where we pack our fresh grapes, we have two cool rooms, we used to clean them up in the shed. But now we pack them in the field, we have trolleys; we have scales, um, now they just come into the field. They pick and pack and they come home clean! That's because all the trellising is high, and they just pick it all clean. We have a lot of backpackers too; we have so many people this time of year...

F: Your daughter was saying too, there are huge (amount of) backpackers here, so you're fortunate to have access to that.

I: Yes, at one time we can have up to fifty people working for us, so it's quite a big job, just that on it's own.

F: So these are the cool rooms, these are all packed and ready to go...

I: Yes.

F: Would these be your orders?

I: Yes, these are our orders, for um, well...they'll come to us and want to buy...

F: I know it's got nothing to do with being creative, so I probably won't use it, but it's just interesting to show my son and all.

**END OF RECORDING**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- Facilitator: ... talking about us in a way, how you came to do your art, what it means to you, the value of it to you. What's the hardest challenge about living out here? How does your family respond to all of this? Are they supportive? What activity takes up most of your time here if it's not farming or painting - that sort of thing? So you can just ramble.
- Interviewee: Yes. That's fine, easy.
- Facilitator: So how did you come?
- Interviewee: Okay, to come to Lake Rowan was a move from Melbourne. So it was a ...
- Facilitator: Okay so you knew the country.
- Interviewee: Twenty years ago. So everybody had bets on that we'd last only a few, but we did come to an area where we really liked the people, the surrounds and the farmers. I am an artist. That is, in Melbourne I worked as an art teacher and then I was working in commercial art and then I was working as a solo painter and exhibiting at Eltham, at the Wiregrass Gallery there.
- For the change to come up here I then needed to understand how as an artist I relate to farmers and the people who are coming and going, collecting their post and chatting to us. So I was still exhibiting in Melbourne and I would put on previews of my Melbourne shows here in my studio so they would come and see my work, which was expressing all different themes. They weren't related quite to country at that point. It was a way in which they were seeing art that they wouldn't perhaps have had a chance to see.
- Facilitator: And getting you linking in with them.
- Interviewee: Yes, and out of that I was then invited of course to join all the committees that a little community has. I found as an artist, to go in amongst them - I thought what we do is we are connected to our heart and soul and therefore why not bring colour to committee meetings. So many a meeting I would go to and I would roll up with lovely - no, no at this point it was lovely tablecloths and vases of flowers. It was like a bridge between CWA and that honouring of coming together. Because I found everything was a fairly bit stark and bare and a bit soulless. It was like committed, and this is hard grind. I thought, we're together, lets be joyful. But that's an artist who thinks a little bit to the left side or a bit broader.
- I would create beautiful spaces for people to run the everyday meeting and I like to believe that it actually slightly shifted people's adventurousism or just to simply, oh you know - creating an environment, artistically with colour.
- Facilitator: And literally add colour.
- Interviewee: Yeah exactly.
- Facilitator: Literally too, so a talking point and things like that.
- Interviewee: Exactly. I've had to stop - I've had to leave the shearers, blah, blah, blah and come to this meeting, this committee for the community. Oh, there's something beautiful to look at, I must be - it creates the words like that.
- Facilitator: And who are you?
- Interviewee: Yeah.
- Facilitator: And oh, you're there and then they can wave and toot and become - yeah it's a good entry into the community.
- Interviewee: I thought so. Especially, you have to roll your sleeves up and show that you're willing to be amongst the group.
- Facilitator: Yeah, the CFA and things like that.
- Interviewee: Yes and the hall committees and the community. Through that I suddenly thought oh dear, how living here, am I coping, because I feel overwhelmed? With suddenly a bigger area to exist in, drier conditions, a whole learning curve of much more sufficiency. That was overtaking all my time in the studio because suddenly I'm

thinking - I'm not doing my art, I'm here in an old farmhouse with my husband and we need to maintain or repair, always fixing.

I thought I'm going to have to bring the art into the garden and I'm going to have to think. So friends who came and visited us, I encouraged them to find scrap metal and one who was a sculptor to turn things into, as they saw country. Then I started doing drawings and paintings from expressions. Like *A [Three] Pig High and Night* is a painting I did of when my husband was working at a piggery and he said, it's so cold, I've watched the pigs and they're actually stacking themselves up, sleeping on top of each other to keep warm.

Any of the expressions I heard farmers using, I visualised and did a slightly characterised painting. Then I said to friends, look how about, I can't come to Melbourne anymore and I feel I'm losing that, but why can't Melbourne come to me, or Lake Rowan? Hence I had art weekends which were people, friends and associates who were artists to come and give workshops and friends coming up from Melbourne camping.

Then up at the hall we had dance performance 'cause up here in Benalla I met dancers and we did dance performances around themes. All of the locals of the area suddenly were involved by coming to workshops in watercolours, mosaics or watching artists at work. They were talking with artists and then in the evening, an evening performance.

Facilitator: Excellent stuff.

Interviewee: Oh it was superb. It meant that the locals also included that whole lovely aspect of country afternoon teas, which I can't get enough of. We had some in the house here, some in the hall and in a marquee. It raised money for the community.

My friends - we were having a great time. We covered our costs. It wasn't like a funded one, which it could have been. I could have approached and had it funded, but at the same time it was more something special to take that pressure off applications and funding and things like that.

Facilitator: There are so many people who just sit there and do this all the time.

Interviewee: Yeah. I've just said, let's just do it. It's always been, oh when are we going to have the next one. They're hard work and yet they're really worthwhile. It's a complete takeover of the area. The locals come in and help prepare and it's great.

Facilitator: So the value of art to you is more putting back into the community or is it more for you?

Interviewee: Sharing it. I love it when I'm amongst it, when it's happening and just the buzz of people talking art or being amongst artists. Even looking at my art and just saying, oh how amazing that you see the world that way, or see my world this way.

Facilitator: It hasn't been a survival thing for you has it?

Interviewee: In my heart and soul it has. I mean I would be like a dry husk if I didn't continue with my art. Like someone said today to me when I was at work as a cleaner - to keep the bread and butter going - you're so gifted, or you're so talented. I said, because I have a gift I've got to use it. I don't care which way I use it. To be an artist sits comfortably with me. I can be an artist in anything I do. I'll bring colour, lateral thinking, spontaneity and little bit of boldness. So it doesn't matter, the artist - yeah that's...

Facilitator: Very much Rosalie Gascoigne said that, when someone said to her apparently what are we put on earth for? She said you're put on earth to meet your own potential. I mean you have to.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: You are there for a reason and you've got to meet it. That was her sort of thing, which was very...

Interviewee: Otherwise I think you build up such a tension - I'm sure it would affect your health, I really do.

Facilitator: I've got - I think this is particular to farmers and that's why it's interesting to me. Women are not visible, they follow the husband. I've got a neighbour who sits on the [unclear] all night. She picks up bits and pieces for the tractor from the local town. The husband said, look - she said the other day, I want to do an IT course in Ararat. He said no you're not going to do that, you know I'll divorce you.

This sort of idea it's a very male culture. So the women are not allowed to have this expression of me sort of factor. She's just - she's sick. She's always having problems and stuff like this. Part of this research in a way is to show...

Interviewee: To inspire.

Facilitator: ...is to inspire, to make these and hopefully men or whatever it is, say listen, just because she's cooking a cake or whatever, it's her survival. Whether it's a garden - you know in the drought it's the first thing to go. Forget them woman, forget it, the animals are in there eating or whatever. But she's just put so much into that as her expression and it's not recognised and it's the first thing to go. It's really just highlighting this recognition and I think it does come out as I said, evolution - a very strong evolutionary thing which grows from play and ritual, and because it's good people continue it. So that's yeah exactly what you're saying. It's just vital but not really recognised, - particularly in farming, male. But you don't have that issue. Your family supports you.

Interviewee: We don't have children and Michael my husband has grown very tolerant and supportive. At times it's hard to live with me. I would hate to live with me. Whenever I get a bit cranky I think, well wait a minute, what would it be like to be living with me? Mm okay, a bit of give and take there.

Facilitator: He works?

Interviewee: Well he has worked on and off. Since we moved from the city the work hasn't been easy. He's worked on farms and he's even gone back to Melbourne to work. So it hasn't been sort of - yeah, it's been a bit demoralising. We get by. I don't think we could go back to Melbourne. Country life is an experience for us. It is an experience.

Facilitator: And you both love it?

Interviewee: I would say that aspects I love. That's what I'm saying, I was missing...

Facilitator: But he loves it? I mean you...

Interviewee: Oh he loves it, but he's - I think we will be moving into a town in another say five or six years. We'll move into Wangaratta or something like that, just because of the facilities and living out here. So that's, yeah.

Facilitator: I wonder how that - that will be interesting how that affects your art and stuff.

Interviewee: I'd make sure I have a lot of contacts. I've been going in and teaching art in all the rural areas, adult education. I've presented myself and said, look here I am and this is what I can offer. I've had a long run of art teaching. In the studio here - I mean after school for the local kids. They all get off the bus and they come into the studio and it's wonderful. In that generation - they're all growing up now, they're becoming teenagers. Then I found when my mother moved over the road and needed care, that that then curtailed a lot of my exhibition work. My mother and father gave me puppets when I was young and I've had puppets all my life, and even in education, puppetry. I thought crikey, I'm stuck here with - and now I am limited with this care, and I started to make the puppets again at the table again with her. It was a bond, and then suddenly the puppets have taken off now and people know me more now as a puppeteer. Because then I would do shows up there at the annual concerts.

Facilitator: Fabulous.

Interviewee: Yeah at the annual concerts and after school things. Then it just radiated out from Lake Rowan to the next town. Oh we hear you do that. I say, I don't do kids parties. I do do a celebration of 90 year olds. I've done a few commissioned puppet shows to celebrate the life of some aged man or woman, and I do their life.

Facilitator: The puppet looks like them does it?

Interviewee: Yes, I get them to send me the photographs and do the images.

Facilitator: Fantastic. So they become little people in your studio sort of thing?

Interviewee: Yeah, like a cameo. Then I do a fair bit of travelling now obviously with the puppetry - the local libraries that we go to.

Facilitator: Not a horse and cart one?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: I can imagine you - I've got a picture of you sitting on - all these puppets sort of thing. You open up the van and here's Punch and Judy by the roadside. I mean I can see it, hopping on your way into Wangaratta.

Interviewee: My car has been amazing. I had a car in which I designed a puppet theatre to fit in it. It was a small Barina and then out it would come. It would fold out like a book and it would be just, you know. I liked the troubadour style and I do a lot from Rushworth up to Mansfield, Mt Beauty. I've been around as the puppeteer and where I will go to festivals and fairs and they sort of commission you to do...

Facilitator: So your inspiration is?

Interviewee: I don't know, living.

Facilitator: It's not the landscape really is it?

Interviewee: No, no it isn't. It would be - no matter where I was.

Facilitator: You create something, an event.

Interviewee: Yes. And include people, because to me actually, I'm more of a people artist. That is, I really like engaging people.

Facilitator: A social artist.

Interviewee: Yeah, because I've had the people come here for the mosaic workshops, the locals. They have then gone back and put the mosaics and done for their gardens. Because again, it's very dry landscape in many ways and I was losing colour in my garden, and I'm not a great gardener. So I thought I've got to use mosaics and do borders and add colour to a garden. Then I only have to sweep it, I don't have to water it. That got other people going, oh I'd love to have some mosaics in my garden when it goes all flat and dry and husky, whatever.

Facilitator: You'd love this story. As a response to that ad, I got a call from Halls Gap from a lady who said oh everyone thinks I'm mad. I said you're exactly the person I want to talk to. You know why? She said well my husband's sick and it's all pretty hard and the only thing that's kept me sane is I mosaic the water tanks on the farm.

Interviewee: Oh how wonderful.

Facilitator: She said everyone brings me their broken cutlery and crockery and I've got a little yellow brick road and I've got all little scenes on it. I'm dying to go down and see it. And that is, she wouldn't consider herself an artist. She said, look it's just something I do. I just can't - I had to keep myself sane. So I'm dying to go down and see her. It's a good idea isn't it?

Interviewee: Oh that would be great.

Facilitator: I think it's a fabulous idea. So when you said mosaics.

Interviewee: Yes, oh no, it's really a bit like between patchwork and jigsaws is mosaicing as far as a rhythm and it working and finding a shape. It becomes almost contemplative as you work with it.

Facilitator: One of my definitions between craft and art is that craft you know the end result really, 'cause you've got a pattern. People tend to think mosaic is a craft. But she doesn't know what she's doing, she doesn't know what it's going to end up like, so it goes in an art category, which is terrific.

Interviewee: Yah, oh fantastic.

Facilitator: Terribly interesting stuff. I guess I'm also finding a little bit that people without kids - people with kids put their creativity into kids.

Interviewee: Yes of course.

Facilitator: So you find the creative comes only after the kids have left. You don't find many young 20s, 30s doing anything on the farm that's creative other than the kids.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Which is interesting I thought. But we'll see at the end of two years if that still is the [over speaking]. So what activity outside your work takes up the most time? 'Cause you don't have a farm, as most farming women would be. Your mum and carer did you say?

Interviewee: Yes, although mum's now deceased this year so that has changed. Which is good, 93, amazing and wonderful, an inspiration.

Facilitator: And still independent, basically?

Interviewee: No they had to - Gracie had to then move into a - because of dementia she did need the security of full time care. Out of that I was visiting her in Benalla from here a lot. Someone said if you're coming in here so often, why don't you apply for one of the jobs that are going? I said what? I've only been an art teacher and a fairly you know, these are my special areas, what do you mean? Work as a kitchen hand and as a cleaner. I thought I don't know whether I could do that. That's such a big leap, a different set of skills.

[Over speaking]

Facilitator: It is where you sort of don't have to think about anything.

Interviewee: Yeah. When I'm there I go in and I dress up as though I'm at the Hilton and then I have an animal's tail sticking out the back.

Facilitator: Oh you don't.

Interviewee: Oh yeah and I make it special, because it's not institutional. Put on the music and get the lovely coloured serviettes that I can see around. Again I'm just - it's the art of living it's the art of in the moment, cherishing the fact that this is what we have here, where ever we are. So there I spoil them, and myself - it helps me, because it can be depressing working in aged care.

When I come back home, I have had a joyous time. Exhausted but joyous as opposed to you know, I think - and I can bring out a different response. Artistically I can bring out a different response in people and even the staff, because if they say what's she wearing this time? They look for the epaulettes made out of Brillo pads. They're sort of things like that.

Facilitator: I mean it's so much where art should be, isn't it?

Interviewee: I believe this. 'Cause the whole theory of fame, like oh fame and it's such a thing. You may have it and then you're yesterday's fame, and it's a very transitory thing. Success is a different story. I stand tall and say, I am successful because I'm living as an artist in wherever I am and the experiences I have are rich. I mean, everyone says, oh yeah that's so twee and new age. It's taken me a while to get to that point. I've earned my income as an artist through art education in many, many ways and then when it came up to here, into the country area, much more isolated, I still found I could go and do that skill. But now I'm really much more able to just do the cleaning and the waitressing, but do it as an artist and sort of perform...

Facilitator: How fabulous.

Interviewee: ... and make the experience an event.

Facilitator: For you and for them.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Facilitator: I mean it could be boring, but why not make it not boring. I mean you've got to do it anyway.

Interviewee: Yeah. I went into management and explained where I was coming from. I said to them, you watch me on occupational health safety, you watch me professionally and I will deliver, 'cause I'm just motivated. I said when you see me dressing in this way, know that inside there's also balance. It's because they have such institutional regulated life within aged care, in institutions such as homes.

Facilitator: When are you working next?

Interviewee: Friday. So I work in there this week Friday, yeah.

Facilitator: I'd love to take a shot of you working.

Interviewee: I wore a Christmas tree on my head on Sunday night. Anyway, it's enough. Yes, just not dividing my life as a worker and then an artist - 'cause I've got a studio space.

Facilitator: No boundaries.

Interviewee: Yes. Because I think that's really sad, the art for me has got to come off the walls and be a living expression. And because of that I'm well, because of that my wellness is important to me, my vitality. If I just said, art only happens in the studio and anything else I'm doing is in the way - we all face this dilemma. Oh well when I get this amount of housework done and that, then I can go over to the studio. I know I have had work that's come my way from Arts Victoria as an artist performer, festivals at Shep and Rushworth and that. It's legitimised a bit more of my time in the studio. I can say well look now I have a priority with this job, which is a paid art job. It does give you a little bit more balance - legitimacy. I can say to my husband, look I've got to get to the studio. So I'm over there and I'll do that later.

Facilitator: So you've had no - he hasn't sort of said this is ridiculous?

Interviewee: Sometimes...

Facilitator: You've got credibility from the reaction from people I guess.

Interviewee: I think there's the fact of the incredibility of the locals and the jobs that I've got have allowed him to feel it's much more.

Facilitator: Okay, so his wife's not completely a nutter.



Interviewee: Or that she's being indulgent in something that isn't bringing in good finances and that. It's always a juggle.

Facilitator: I had my - like I'd go and bring back corrugated - trailers of corrugated iron and all this stuff and we'd be at the gate and opening it, and the neighbour would drive up and much the same time. They'd say oh you're on your way to the tip? And my husband would say we've just come back from the tip. This type of thing was a bit of a joke and then once I started studying, it was still a bit this - and we've got other things to do. But then once I got credibility - I got an APA Scholarship to do this sort of thing - so oh now you're earning some money or something, it's sort of like - though he wasn't happy with it, it doesn't sit well being off the farm or doing your own thing. But yeah, artists seem to need legitimacy a bit to be accepted.

Interviewee: Yes it does that. From everybody, yes it does. I mean a lot of people ask me, what are you doing now? Sometimes I think, oh crikey I've got to now come up with - 'cause if I'm saying nothing, then it's sort of.

Facilitator: Oh no, I wouldn't have thought that or say that. They'd say, well what's going to happen this Christmas, or Easter? Or what bunny are you going to do, or marbling eggs for the old people or whatever you'll end up doing.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Because that's your teacher coming out of you too isn't it?

Interviewee: Of course.

Facilitator: Teaching and making an event for the classroom, which you did every - I was an art teacher there for a while. I used to dread - I used to have days where you had five Grade 1s or something. I was their mummy and painting. I mean it just didn't suit me, but it obviously suits you. But it was terribly tiring, amusing in an artistic way a group of people I find. I couldn't do it. I'm much a solo thing. My tree - no one sees it, like you can't see it, it's at the back of the property and it's just for me, sort of. I don't care. I don't want to sell anything. I'm not a person who wants to sell or anything like that. It's just my survival, let alone to getting out there and coping with - and I'm not going to be under the guide of a curator who determines what's happening. I mean it's nothing to do - and part of this evolution - the study when I've been doing it is this sense of for yourself before it becomes something else - communicating with other people, very much your own sort of satisfaction.

Interviewee: Oh there are periods of [unclear] and the whole...

Facilitator: [Inaudible] and the whole - John Dewey and all the educators and philosophers agree with this sort of - when you can sort of - and I always put it down - I mean time flies. When suddenly you're reading a book or a garden, or you've got - that's when you've been in the moment and been creative I think.

Interviewee: Yes, yes of course.

Facilitator: It's been for me, like - you are active - for me it's a journey of just a lot of reading. Books are my company only that I have really, and it's just that sort of - I'm very private. I'm not an out there, I couldn't get in front of people or anything like this. It just doesn't get recognised this artistic thing, and if I can do my little bit representing those women who are, and what they're doing - I find I've got, like you, this is my place. It's a lovely time - but it takes a long time to get here as you say. I was in advertising for a long time in Melbourne, in St Kilda Road with people called Clemengers and it's so different. The pressure and it was never you in it. Well as a teacher there's never you, you're always out there looking after and finally it's just like so...

Interviewee: You're delivering.

Facilitator: ... yeah. It's a luxury. I mean it's heaven at the moment for me. But you're in heaven too because you just can't stop making something an event because it would just be so boring for you if you didn't.

Interviewee: Two dimensional it would be.

Facilitator: It's like cooking I guess. You can cook the same thing every night and it feeds them. I'd rather do a recipe that I don't know every night so it amuses me, because I can't stand cooking.

Interviewee: Yes, that's right. You transcend it.

Facilitator: Do you like cooking? It's interesting...

Interviewee: I like eating very much. Michael's a really good cook which flavours and balances. I like the presentation, to have a beautiful table and different courses. It can be a scrambled egg, but my scrambled eggs, the way it's all presented.

Facilitator: Plated up.

Interviewee: Yes, that's the word, plated up.

Facilitator: Would you normally be working now?

Interviewee: This morning I worked. I'm working part time.

Facilitator: Right, but art. I mean in the studio?

Interviewee: Oh yes because the Christmas tree concert's on next week and I have drawn some cartoony kind of sheep and cats and that, all wearing Christmas bits and I've got to paint them up. Then the kids are going to put glitter on them or something for their annual Christmas concert that's happening Monday week or something. So yes, in the studio, this is for me, I would be painting these posters.

Facilitator: Well we can go and do that in a minute.

Interviewee: Oh sure Hun, no you can have a look at those.

Facilitator: I'll just stick around. I'd love to follow you for a few days because you do - it's out on the move really.

Interviewee: Out on the hoof.

Facilitator: Out on the hoof.

Interviewee: I will explain, sorry if I may. The locals are running a rock and roll pass, and so to participate in it - and Michael's knees don't work too well, so I went with a dance partner. His name is Rocky - that's him there. He is actually a rocking - I call him a rocking horse. He's not that tall. The next model is going to be taller. Because he's on a swivel, so therefore - and he's a puppet, he's jointed.

Facilitator: I thought it was a person with head gear on.

Interviewee: No, no it's got a fake arm, a lovely fake arm. So you could dance - so all of us women who go to these things and there aren't enough fellows. And yeah, you can dance with another woman anytime, but I always end up dancing with a male partner and I'm really bored with that. So I take my own male dance partner, be it a full length puppet. I've taken them into Benalla to the old time dance and danced with me - you know the vaudeville thing, elastic bands on the puppet and you do the whole thing. But this one swivels, so that I could rock and roll. I can go under his arm and we can do this and then he...

Facilitator: Is he in the shed?

Interviewee: No, he's at the aged care house as Rudolf, because we just had our Christmas concert in at the aged care. I took him in as Rudolf as course and danced with him again because there's a lot more women. They all said to me after the party, you know I've had more fun with Rudy than I have with my husband.

Facilitator: See we're all children anyway aren't we, really?

Interviewee: So he's going to be going up to the Christmas tree concert.

Facilitator: He looks pretty smart in this gear though.

Interviewee: Oh I love the - yes everyone...

Facilitator: The leather jacket.

Interviewee: The leather jacket's a beauty.

Facilitator: I thought it was a person next to you when you put a mask on.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: That's amazing. I need to know all these events and come up and tape them, don't I? Follow you and do a full story on you as such.

Interviewee: Well I mean I'll just present this and share it with you and that's whichever way you use it. They're all threads.

Facilitator: But there's just one picture or one theme, it does not describe you at all.

Interviewee: I once had an exhibition in Melbourne and there was a guy who was a psychiatrist and he said, gee I'd like to analyse you, multiple personalities is just where I'd begin. That's alright that's fine, that's life.

Facilitator: So where do you think this came from? I mean the puppet side of it, you said started with your mum.

Interviewee: Only child.

Facilitator: Right.

Interviewee: Therefore there was all this imagining and parents that gave me every encouragement with my art and everything artistic. So lateral thinkers. Everything you did, you built it yourself or you made it yourself. So that's it, that's how it happened. Then the art was my communication. As a solo person, an individual growing up, the art would - people talked through the art. Oh tell me, what are you doing and that, and then went and engaged. I also found it as a tool of engagement. I knew very young what I was doing, that I was using my drawing, painting and puppetry as a vehicle.

Facilitator: Maybe your puppets as your friends.

Interviewee: Oh, they've grown up. They've been to Paris with me last year. I'll introduce you to [Voila] the Koala. Come on, I know, come on.

Facilitator: You don't talk to them around the house do you?

Interviewee: Well, puppeteers will eventually confess that we live with them. I don't know where you want the light?

Facilitator: No, just whatever. I just - don't even...

Interviewee: He says, I'm a star. I've been to Paris. Have you been to Paris? I have been to the Eiffel Tower, [Voila]. So there he is.

Facilitator: Okay, there he is.

Interviewee: The Eiffel Tower. It's so good we're going back again. Yes we are.

Facilitator: What did you do over there?

Interviewee: Well, I carried this puppet around and I just did spontaneous performance. Like when Michael was in a queue and there were people waiting to get their hire car I brought out the puppets and just entertained people. It's sort of like being a troubadour wherever I am. Does that make sense?

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: So we're going back - even at the hotel, we left the puppet there and he wrote a letter to the cleaners in French, didn't you? Oui. No.

Facilitator: So they really are company for you aren't they?

Interviewee: Yeah, they're like all alter egos because even when Michael picks up this puppet, I can see aspects of Michael through the puppet. It's sort of, (a) we don't have children and (b) we don't have pets, which is a real big gap.

Facilitator: Unusual and you've got all this space too.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: It's unusual you don't have pets.

Interviewee: Because we travel and we go away a lot, we just really [unclear] and you my darling, you're very, very sleepy aren't you? Come on ...oh,...stop yawning. Oh you're... Come, waking up.

Facilitator: The kids must adore this.

Interviewee: Oh yes, and the oldies.

Facilitator: Even the rough boys you know.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Just so beautiful. Another twitch...

Interviewee: Oh yes.

Facilitator: So you've observed animals obviously.

Interviewee: Oh sure.

Facilitator: And yet you don't have any.

Interviewee: When I was painting animals I would get into the psyche of the animal, does that make sense? Like if I'm painting - when I was doing wildlife paintings I would work at - I would think, what would I be climbing up now, what would I do? So I tried to get inside the animal thing and yeah you do observe and just say well...

Facilitator: Maybe you've had many lives too, you've been a koala. You're very funny.

Interviewee: Yeah, I just...bear. I know. It was a joke. It was a poor joke, yes.

Facilitator: How amazing.

Interviewee: So they're actually travelling again with us. Because then people from overseas like this.

Facilitator: So you'll take them - oh so you're working over there?

Interviewee: No, we've got family over there and an illness at the moment. So we're forced to go back over.

Facilitator: And this will humour them?

Interviewee: Oh certainly.

Facilitator: And you'll give them messages.

Interviewee: Yes and they write to him. I send him - he sends photos of himself doing all sorts of things to people overseas. Then they always sort of - I've had letters to him. It's just taken off. There are puppets in the studio too.

Facilitator: Why hasn't someone just snapped you up as I don't know, commercialised you or something, isn't it a bit?

Interviewee: Look the work that I did with the festivals in Shepparton were mega, they were huge. They are really gruelling and weeks and months of work to lead up to performance and puppets for those big outdoor events - the scale of the things are really huge. It is something I do but you've got to have a lot of people to work with. Because I'm such a - I work, I give it 150 per cent but there's a lot of recovery time. So I...

Facilitator: [Over speaking]. You know, after working towards a thing and at the end of it just absolutely...

Interviewee: And you're on a high and it lasts beautifully. But I am fairly choosy, that is that I'll pace myself and I knock back things, I do, because I can't be everywhere.

Facilitator: And this will be you for life, sort of in a lot of ways? You'll move back closer sort of thing, but you know.

Interviewee: Oh for sure, why not?

Facilitator: It's in you. You're not made an artist you always were an artist sort of thing.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: Now where's a spot that best describes you?

Interviewee: Do you want to see the studio.

[Interruption]

Interviewee: That's so true.

Facilitator: Is that the spot?

Interviewee: Well yes, I'm ...

[Inaudible]

Facilitator: Australian farmer sort of really isn't it?

Interviewee: But the art is storing it really well and that hasn't been a life.

Facilitator: So these sheds were here when you came?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: So that was handy wasn't it?

Interviewee: The studio we built. It was a hay shed. So the studio was converted. At the moment it's a...

Facilitator: Repository.

Interviewee: Can't even say it, thank you. That's it, at the moment. Then it gets emptied out and changed, so it has a different personality. But at the moment it's like oh, end of the year.

Facilitator: An exhaustion feel - about it.

Interviewee: But in the happiest way. So be prepared.

Facilitator: No excuses, no excuses.

Interviewee: Oh look I'm just sort of priming you.

Facilitator: Oh my God.

Interviewee: You said that when you came here. You got out of the car and said, oh my God. So you're a religious person.

Facilitator: No, that was because of my trip, oh my God.

Interviewee: Well this is a different trip. Are you sure?

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: This is a different...

Facilitator: Oh my God.

Interviewee: Well welcome, because whenever I come in here I greet all - everybody. This is all - I mean this was the coat that Rocky wore, you know and this is the cane from the other thing. That's the collection which, you know, gets used in theatre pieces and it's just - I know where everything is. Trust me. No one else does, but if you asked me where's the scissors, I'd put my hand on them straight away.

Facilitator: This is inside your head you know. I'm having a view of what's inside your head.

Interviewee: Yeah it's very - you know it is okay, I'll just say yes. You know, you definitely - but I can embrace it. See everything I look at is a potential, or has been used for something and I can think yeah, we'll use that in such and such or they were part of

the story. But I don't know whether it's for publication. You'd have to sort of hone in on some little detail, because it's too much.

Facilitator: Your favourite - go and say hello to your favourite.

Interviewee: Oh okay, Jesus.

Facilitator: That's unfair, sorry everyone, sorry.

Interviewee: The lighting might be too dark here.

Facilitator: No, if it's on the side with you coming - with it coming in on the side.

Interviewee: Well I'm just coming here...

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- F: I heard you had done a rock wall I thought it was nice, the two stories.
- I: Well, when we got married, well I had garden on this side, and we had all these storms and from the weather all the dirt (would) come in and bury my vegetables, swept all the way up. And I thought if I put a stonewall there, you see, the wind hitting the wall keeps the dirt back, it didn't build on the wall at all. And so that's what I did. And I always intended on finishing it you see, and I had six children, I milked cows and grew all me own vegetables and I'd done that sort of in between, and when the children had all gone and I didn't seem to get time to do anymore. I intended to get that finished but it hurts me every time I see it, but I've got a crook back and to stand and do it I can't do it.
- F: Right, did I hear a story about a mother-in-law and putting the fence in between the mother-in-law and you?
- I: No, the fence was there, but I'm German descent and of course she hated the Germans you see, because she's English. She'd come from England you see, and my parents well they were born in South Australia but the grandparents were from Germany. But, the son, there were different women he wanted to marry. Well, I might tell you – when he was going to school he rode a pony and had to bring the team in, you see, we worked with horses at that stage, and he brought the team in and then would go to school, but the horses would all come home and his pony and he, didn't. And they didn't find him for hours, it would have been in the bush and what they think, the pony must have been behind a tree and hit him off. And they found him lying in the sun, bleeding badly from his ear and he had a fractured skull, lying in the sun, and no hospitals and that those days either. See they founded this land, they cleared a lot of it, and of course he was deaf – he was eighteen years older than I was when we got married, but he was...
- F: So how old were you when he fell?
- I: Oh, I wouldn't have been born.
- F: Okay, and then your mother continued to farm on her own?
- I: Oh, that wasn't my mother, that was his mother. See the husband too, and then there were two boys. See what happened why they were so against the Germans – their first son went to war, and he got killed in Egypt, and I suppose they think it was a German that killed him. The father wasn't like that, it was only her and the young son, and they didn't want German blood to come onto their farm. And yet, you know I helped them at different times when they were in trouble when I was a girl, they needed help. They were always real nice to you but you weren't supposed to be...
- F: Marry them...
- I: Well the father liked me, and I think that made it worse. And of course, he wanted to marry different women because in the will it was that when he got married he'd get the stone house. And the other young son when he came home he got land across the road. Well, whenever he had a lady in want, the mother would say 'Oh no, you'd break my heart if you brought her here', well it would have meant well I suppose she would have been the working girl then, I don't know, worked in there, and of course he said when he was going to marry me, of course he wouldn't get the house and of course he wanted a built home to put me in. He said 'I'll build a couple of rooms alongside the house'. She said 'no you don't! You've got to go way down that bush, You're not allowed to come anywhere here', he said 'well if I'm not allowed to build a house here, I'm moving away from the home. That's settled'. You see, he worked for his father all his life, and he'd done the farming, they would have had no one to do it. He never told me until years after we were married, I didn't know, and the funny part was we only had the bedroom and the kitchen, and back and front verandah, and I had six children – there was eight of us here before those rooms were built.
- F: And she still didn't let you into the main house?

- I: She never once offered to have one of the children over there. No, oh yes she let the children in, she used to make a fuss of the children and that, she never ever showed that she didn't like me or anything. I used her dairy, her separator, and I've had my cream and that then, and I had to wash in her wash-house and we had to bathe over there, but one night when I was having the bath – those days you only used to bath once a week, years ago, I don't know whether you did, it's different now. You see, in our days, when I was a child, we only had our weekly bath. Anyway, she came in and I was expecting my last child, and she came in and I was standing there stark naked and here she went crook at me for wasting so much water. Here they called that wasting water when we had a bath, and I never put one drop in, my husband always got the bath ready for me, and said I can go now and have a bath. (laughs)
- F: Isn't that gorgeous.
- I: Yes. And I never knew until years afterwards he told me all about it.
- F: When she died?
- I: Oh of course,
- F: She died then, did she?
- I: Well, I'd looked after her several times when she'd been sick and had been in the hospital and she didn't want to be in the hospital. And the other son and daughter in law wouldn't take her.
- F: What age did you marry?
- I: I was 24 and he was 42.
- F: Oh gee. Sorry, to go back to the hospital.
- I: And the young doctor in the hospital said 'an old person always likes to be in their own home'. I said 'well if she comes and stays in my house, I'll look after her.' And of course she agreed to that.
- F: So she stayed here, in this room?
- I: No, we had a room built on the verandah there. See when I got girls when I went to hospital – when we got help they got that room to look after the children.
- F: And the main house was empty then?
- I: Yes the main house,
- F: With her living here?
- I: Yes, and I had her for weeks until she was well enough to go home. But the second time she was here, I think she wouldn't get up anymore, and I said to the doctor 'she won't get up anymore' and I always had to go to make sure she was up and alright. And this one morning I took breakfast in for her, and this one morning I went in and she was thinking aloud, and things she said about me, I stood there and I didn't know what to do, I thought should I go in there and give her this breakfast or go home and leave her without breakfast. And then I thought 'oh well, I'll go and give her her breakfast.' I gave her her breakfast and everything and then I told her what she was saying and she said 'no I wasn't, you only thought I was.' She always used to talk aloud when she was thinking, another time I went past her when I used to go down to the garden down there, and she was talking – and what she'd say about you – it was awful!
- F: So you never got to live in the main house?
- I: No.
- F: Your son lives there now? Does anyone live there?
- I: No, the house has all fallen down. No, the last time she came, the youngest one David was only just a toddler, and I started that stonewall down there. And I was building down there and the eldest girl was out of school and she came down and she said 'Mum, Grandma kicked David and he's crying and he fell down, and he's crying'. I never ever spoke to her, and I was never nasty to her, but if my blood didn't boil this day when Dorothy said she'd come and kicked David I said, 'Grandma, I've asked you to come here, now I'm asking you to go home. Once a patient can kick, they can look after themselves.' (laughs) And five o'clock the next morning I heard her pack up all the things, and I said 'you can come and have your meals here until you've got something in the house', she had to get the sons to get something for her and that, but she made sure she was always here for a meal until she had something. (laughs) but not once did she offer a room or anything.
- F: What a measly old woman.
- I: Yeah. And then she started again not getting up and everything. And I went to the doctor – he straight away got on the telephone – she was down Horsham way. The brother sold the

farm once the mother was gone, he never told the brother – you see the land wasn't supposed to go out of the Gregor name, he would have bought it back, but he never said anything, we only learnt it from other people that he sold it. So anyway, the doctor rang Harold – he was living down in Horsham and said he's got to take his turn too, to look after the mother. And after a few days he came, and she didn't want to go down there, because I think they didn't want her, I think they had a row or something, but she went down there and that and...

F: She died there?

I: Well, they put her in a room with a polished floor and a mat on it. She slipped on the floor and broke her hip. Well she ended up in the hospital. She had her last days in the hospital. William and Margaret went down to Hamilton to some young people's thing and they called in on her, and she was real happy she said she was coming home again and everything, a couple of days later we heard she was dead and the funeral is at such and such a time. So that was the end of her. Then my husband said to me 'I don't feel like moving over there, we've got everything here' I said 'I don't either!'

F: With eight kids here?

I: With six.

F: Oh so that's when he built this for you, did he?

I: No, we had a builder come and build that. See, it's never been much, the boys went and slept in there, you see that end was shut, and it used to be my sewing room. But William slept in there, and the girls slept in there, and the others slept in there. But of course once the boys got going they got their own farm and they left, they never had much use but the girls when they came home well they always...

F: My interest is in women and the way they express themselves, their creativeness. Did you have much time to be creative when you were married with six kids? Where was your time, where was the 'me' time for you? Where was your time, the space that you loved to do?

I: Oh, well, you see I didn't have much time, but I always worked the garden, dug all the garden. I dug all my garden here, and I dug all that.

F: And what did you garden mean to you?

I: Everything.

F: Why?

I: I don't know. I still grow, you know it's getting that way, if I've got a job and I walk half way over and I've got to stand a while so I can go a bit further. I don't want to leave here until I can't sort of come back because everything goes backwards while you're away. You see, the boys can still come and do it but they can't be looking after it, and then I've got chooks.

F: So, you just love your garden?

I: Oh yes, I love me garden. Well I grew up and I was the boy. I was a second child and I was a girl that was supposed to be a boy, and I was the boy. I stacked hay, I worked on the haystack, and I shepherded the sheep and cows and horses and whatnot. One day, my dad wasn't good in mechanical stuff, and he couldn't get the thing to work, and he sent me to Walter – he was working a paddock. He was sewing (seeds), he sent me to watch the horses, they've got eight horses, while Walter went and fixed the thing. He was a long while away anyway, and I thought Walter said he wanted to finish that paddock, and I said to the horses, 'right, go.' He had this big team of horses and I was driving them around the paddock to get them around the corn.

F: So you were plowing the paddock?

I: It was sewing.

F: How many horses were you handling?

I: I think there was eight of them, maybe six. And they weren't in twos, they were one big line, and to get them around the corner you had to know how far to go to turn them.

F: And how old were you at this time? You would have been thirty?

I: Oh, I don't know. I would have been in my teens. Anyway, I went a few rounds and I was just getting ready to come down the headland and Walter came back and said 'Ruby I'm glad you've done that, because I wanted to get this paddock finished' and I never heard a word, I don't know to this very day whether my dad knew that I did it. Because I reckon he would have blew his head off if I had been doing that, because I would have had an accident driving all those horses. Because Walter wouldn't have said anything, and I never said anything.



F: You said you had a sewing machine in here. What did sewing mean to you? Was it something you just had to do?

I: No, I used to just make little things for the children. I wasn't a sewer either, all my girls can sew. I used to just knit their socks and that.

F: So it was just something you had to do?

I: No, I didn't have to do it, I'd do it when I had a bit of time. If I was sitting, perhaps after tea or something like that. I've been doing now, since I've been old, you know they make these patches and sew them together and that, but I kept making mistakes all the time and you never see it until you've gone past it after a while, and you've got to undo and undo. Finally, I didn't anymore, but you might as well come and have a look at it.

F: I'll take this, and maybe I can take a photo of it. So what do you think of country women now Ruby? What do you think of their roles now in farming and where it's going?

I: Some are real farmers now, and others don't do a thing on the farm. Some of them help their husbands and drive the machines. See I never drove a tractor or car or anything. I never wanted to drive a car.

F: So this is what you made? (laughs)

I: Yeah. I made these patches, I had this wool. So I made them first, and then I thought I'll put them together.

F: Could I take a picture with you there? A picture together? Because, just as a record of it. And can I look at your garden?

I: All right, yes. But I sewed it together like you would with a sewing machine.

F: But hand-sewing?

I: Yes, hand sewing. I had cotton underneath and I worked just like a sewing machine. I didn't know how to put it together. The last isn't quite as good anymore, I couldn't see or something

F: It's lovely. It's very even. Did you design it?

I: Well I started sewing it together, and I was in here this morning and I thought 'well,' you see that patch should've been here, and another different patch here but that's what I had and I sewed it together before I looked how they'd fit first. You see, I've got three here, and it's a bit off, but I'll give it to some poor person that hasn't got anything.

F: Any taste. Any pattern sense.

I: Well...

F: And you garden, can we look at your rock wall?

I: Oh yes, but what about a cup of tea or something?

F: Oh, only if you're having it. Because I've sort of got to get to see Nina as well.

I: I'll only make you one if you'd like one.

F: Only if you were going to have one, but otherwise just a glass of water might be nice.

I: Well, I can't even give you real cold water because I don't keep cold water.

F: Can I take a picture of you in your kitchen?

I: Well you can (laughs)

F: It's just...I'm taking pictures for women in the country. What they're doing.

I: I see.

F: So I'll take a picture of you with your garden, and with the shed...ah with the wall. These are lovely, Sophie Phillips did them.

I: Yeah, they were in the...

F: Weekly times.

I: Well, William must have brought them. I don't get the Weekly Times; it's somehow come in. William might have put it down here with my mail. He gets my mail.

F: He sees you every day? Does he drop in every day?

I: No, I get in touch with him morning and evening; if he's not there I do with John. See I've got another son.

F: So you're well looked after.

I: Oh yes, they won't go to bed unless I...I'm inside at night, they always see to it. Sorry, it's not cold; I can't get on with cold water.

F: No, it's terrific. (moving outside) Because you're known for your rock walls and your garden, aren't you? Everybody knows you for your rock wall and your garden.

I: I suppose they do, when they come. I made this, I sewed this one, it's just about time to sew another.

F: It's lovely when they're old, because they've got stories to tell. And you've got your chooks still?

I: Yeah, I've got the chooks; I supply the two boys with eggs. Because they've got dogs it seems like... and also you've got to have them locked up at night because of the foxes. John had a yard there, but the foxes always used to climb over or dig in. But my little tank thing there was an old leaking tank and it's got a tin pot over it and they can't dig in. There's my pussycat! This is Leo, Leo the leopard. I'll show you grandchildren nursing my other pussy... These are little Queenslanders, I just better grab my walking stick.

F: And you're just happy here being on your own?

I: Yeah well you know that I was terrible frightened person, I said I'd never live on my own. Funny thing, I've never been frightened, I've got different.

F: Where will we start? This is lovely. Look at the little pots over here, did you plant them all? Did you pot them all?

I: Oh yes, they really want re-potting; the pots are all falling to pieces.

F: I'll take a picture of you and your cat. That's a great shot with the cat!

I: (talking to the cat)

F: That's terrific! Good. Did you make this Ruby? Did you do this?

I: Yes, that used to have all stuff around it, it gradually rotted down and it's fallen to pieces.

F: And what were these things for?

I: Oh it used to have little cactuses in...

F: Was that a tree full of...

I: Yeah it had things all hanging around like they sort of do now.

F: But that's art Ruby! That's art.

I: (laughs) It's just what's left now.

F: Could I take one with you near the walls? Is this the main wall or is it round the front there?

I: If we go out we'll have a look. This is the last wall I made. I started up the other end but I thought I could do it here.

F: And did you enjoy doing the wall, by the end?

I: Oh yes, I used to. Stone by stone.

F: Just a mighty effort, look at the corners there. (talking to the cat) Come on up on the wall, you want to get your photo taken.

I: (talking to cat) Come on, you want to get on me do you?

F: Oh that's lovely, Ruby. Good company for you though

I: Oh yes.

F: We go down and see the...oh look. Gorgeous! The march flies are a problem aren't they?

I: Aren't they awful.

F: The house is very neat. It's just terrific condition.

I: Well, the windows have been blown around a bit. Blew some out and off when we had the storm.

F: So what would your average day be now? As compared to a day in the olden days?

I: I suppose it'd be very much the same as it is now, the weather. But we used to have terrible dust storms then.

F: Right. Can we go up onto the wall near here or is that too far to go?

I: Oh no.

F: Do you walk every day? You've got to be careful you don't trip on the cat.

I: Oh yes, he sometimes runs and grabs me neck!

F: And you just love it here?

I: Yeah, I like it.

F: Oh this is beautiful! Did you learn how to do it?

I: No! I didn't even know anything about cement. I was going to make the front part higher, along the front. It never drifted up against the wall, the earth always kept back from the wall.

F: Could I have a photo of you in here?

I: Gosh you'll have too many photos.

F: Never too many photos. Did you plant that cactus?

I: Yes, I did.

F: Chook chook chook! (talking to the chickens)

I: (talking to the cat)  
F: Is he a stray? Is the cat a stray?  
I: No, it was given to me by the neighbour when my other one went away.  
F: (taking photos) One, two, three, and you too Ruby. Stay there I'll take one from a different angle. Well, none of us can take the heat. That's a lovely shot with the chooks in the background and everything. Beautiful, let me show you. So that was all I wanted to do, was come and meet you and see your wall.  
I: They've been collapsing a bit with not a lot of water.  
F: Right. Do you watch a lot of TV and things like that?  
I: I'm not much on TV.  
F: These are dreadful aren't they? Do they go away in April? The march flies, do they go away in April?  
I: They always come late in March but then I think they are still here. They're horrible. Why and what they're for I don't know.  
F: So what would you do on an average day? I'll take a shot just there, with the cats in the background like a tiger. Just a minute, I'll take another one here. If you could face me, Ruby. Terrific.  
I: I think he's jealous; I haven't been playing with him much because I can't be sitting down to nurse him. If I'm working, well, he doesn't like that. The other one I had, he was about that size, and it went away.  
F: All right. Do you do a lot of gardening now? (tape muffled)  
I: Oh, not much. A lot of vegetables and things.  
F: Oh yes. (tape muffled) I just don't want to hold you up too much.  
I: (tape muffled) ...ten years. And of course, and now it's starting to sort of...  
F: Gosh, blimey.  
I: It seems towards evening they're worsening. Oh, when that storm was on, that big lid from that tank landed up on my birdcages, and that came from the corner of that house.  
F: Oh look at it, it's all fallen in. And she lived here with you lot living in the other house. My goodness.  
I: Yes, there was four or five bedrooms in that house.  
F: And that's your tomatoes and your parsley?  
I: That's one tomato plant in there.  
F: Do you bottle them and do things like that? (tape muffled) I'll take a photo of you, just over here. Are you getting a bit tired?  
I: No, no it's all right.  
(tape muffled)  
I: Now, you walk up that track. You don't know, you can't see them...they were beautiful but they always come out when it's hot. They don't last long.  
F: They're huge aren't they? One-day lilies, are they?  
I: I forget what they call them, it's got some flashy name.  
F: I mean, it was a beautiful house in it's day wasn't it  
I: Yeah. When that storm was on it started ripping it up top. See first of all, the first room, two rooms they built, started off the place.  
F: Yeah, I'll just take a shot. It's just fantastic. And they lived in that one area over there?  
I: Well that was the boy's room on this side, they had three boys. And then there was a passage, and the parents lived further up. Here's one...  
F: Oh and you're looking after it then, I thought it wasn't being looked after anymore, this is what you used to have.  
I: Oh yes, I come here every morning, and perhaps in the evening. I had broccoli here last year, and they don't come again but they shot out from the roots and got new plants all along the bottom.  
F: If you could just face me again Ruby, and that's your son on the tractor in the background. Looks good. Terrific.  
I: He's making a dust.  
F: He said 'I don't know if she'll let you, I don't know if she'll see you.' And you've got grapes there as well, do you ever make wine?  
I: No my father used to. My father used to make grape jam.  
F: Grape jam yes?

I: These are peaches, beautiful peaches, they ripen before Christmas, and there's the apricots, they ripen before Christmas. A tree just come up there when I had peas growing there.

F: That's a lovely patch.

I: Yes, figs. Poor old fig tree over there, used to be all orange trees there.

F: Do you go out here? So what's the answer to long life? Could I ask how old you are?

I: Beg your pardon?

F: Could I ask how old you are?

I: ...I'm ninety-two, and I'll be ninety-three next month.

F: And so what is the answer to a good life? Everybody asks you that I know, but what is the answer to a good life?

I: I don't know, working. Not sitting around. Keep exercising.

F: No drinking?

I: No. I don't drink.

F: So exercise, work.

I: Yeah. Always keep going. See my sister is ninety-five and she's in the home in Willora, and my brother is ninety-one, and he'll be ninety-two. There was four of us but the youngest sister died when she was eighty-two. I don't know what happened to her or not, but, I had seen her... and she said she's got a bad back and she wanted it operated and I said 'that's so dangerous', and she said 'you might as well be dead if you can't work'. And, I don't know, they said she fell out of bed and she had a chip on her hip and they said she got on alright, and the next day she was dead.

F: Now, part of the University where I'm doing my PhD, I have to get permission from you to photograph and tape you, do you understand what I'm saying? So this form here is; I hereby give Julie Bennett, PhD candidate, my permission to publish the photographs taken of me, for the purpose of the exhibition of my thesis – I need to take photos of women around Victoria – and it's just that I can use your full name, your given name or a pseudonym that I can use, and it just, it's not, the University says that I have to. The University of Ballarat says that I have to get this to talk to you. You know what I mean? I have to get permission to talk to you? So, I need your address here, what's your address?

I: Of Box Hall, Lascelles.

F: (spelling it)

I: L, a, s, c, e, l, l, e, s.

F: And it's Ruby, Macgregor?

I: Not Mac, just Gregor.

F: O. R? Of Box Hall, Lascelles. And do you mind if I call you Ruby?

I: Yes, you can call me Ruby; they don't call me anything else around here.

F: You're not on the computer are you? (Laughs)

I: No. No I'm not.

F: And today's date is...27<sup>th</sup> I think.

I: Yes, tomorrow would be the last day wouldn't it? Of this year.

F: If you could just sign here, and here.

I: Should I just put Gregor or R.M?

F: I don't mind. Whichever you normally sign. What it does is makes it aware that I came here and you were photographed.

I: Now, what am I supposed to do?

F: Just in there. And I'll talk to your son about it if you'd like, just to say that I did it. If I can find him. The sort of women I've been meeting – I've been traveling all around Victoria – I've been to Shepparton, Wangaratta, St Arnauds, Ballarat, and I'm going over to Yea to a woman who knits, and she's knitting a coral reef, but all in knitting.

I: Oh yes.

F: And she puts that into galleries. So my study is about country women, old and young, how they're surviving through their gardens and their work.

I: I've had no trouble to survive! (laughs)

**END OF RECORDING**  
**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

Facilitator: If you grow up...

Interviewee: Like Susan [sister] says she doesn't enjoy being in the kitchen and baking, they all just throw a sponge or some scones together – they've grown up doing it – we didn't.

F: So you're new on the farm. You married a farmer?

I: I married a butcher, who decided he wanted to go farming, because all his family had farms, all his cousins were left farms. Everybody expect Les was left a farm. I think they'd nearly all sold their farms and Les was the only one that desperately wanted one. So he was a butcher, we went farming, but Sue and I were born in England, we used to live North-Downs, down to the South-Downs sometimes...it's like Calgoa, talk about Antipode, it really is.

F: So you're Calgoa area here? Is this area Calgoa?

I: No, Calgoa is where Sue is, up the Murray.

F: Oh sorry, up there, right.

I: Yeah, this is probably...

F: So the girls ended up both in country – the both of you.

I: Yes, we moved to Bright, we discovered Bright years and years ago, with our horses. Mum went back to England with my brother to nurse my sick man, and Dad and Sue and I moved up to Bright, and that's where the horses are – and that's where she met her husband and I met my husband. And then course, Les decided he wanted to go farming, so we've certainly moved around.

F: So how many years have you been here?

I: 28 years on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May. Everything, good, bad, indifferent happens on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Even the UHF Radio is number 11. Everything in our life seems to be number 11! Our youngest son's birth certificate was filled in for the 11<sup>th</sup> and he took a bit longer and they had to change it to the 12<sup>th</sup>.

F: (laughs)

I: Married on the 11<sup>th</sup>...oldest son on the 11<sup>th</sup>, it just goes on forever.

F: You deliberately do it now though, put things on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

I: I don't think we do. It just seems to happen.

F: So yes, so my...(tape cuts)

I: I did start helping him. Came home at the end of the day with the kid and dinner and everything and he'd sit down and do his book work. And, he wasn't getting paid for it. Um, I don't think he really likes working with his wife. Some husbands can work with their wives and some can't, I think. And, so, I've got my landscaping business, and now this crafty stuff...

F: So you intended to probably work together, but then just found you couldn't?

I: I did help quite a bit but I just found I couldn't do it all, because I had two boys getting off the school bus at half past 3, quarter to four and had to be back for that, and um, I think basically it wasn't really my forte. Like, stand in the gateway of the yards, this way, they will not chase you. Just draught them off. Next minute arms up in the air, flapping around, hair goes blue, apparently the one coming towards me would chase me. That particular day the dogs and I went home, and he says we all went home with our tails between our legs. We all walked home.

F: So you said to yourself...

I: I find that you've got 'yard man' and ...It's a bit like Mr. Walk and Mr. Wheeler with driving or being a pedestrian; Round the house they're gorgeous, but they get out on the farm and they have different personalities sometimes. So they're Jekyll and Hyde.

F: That's what interests me, this unique environment of living and working in your environment. I think women through sociology...(tape cuts)

F: ...I've heard this quite a bit.

I: (laughs) I'm always at the wrong place at the right time.  
 F: Well I think, what I've found...(tape cuts) ...Yes, I use my artwork, I started...  
 I: So you trained to do art?  
 F: Well I did originally, yes, so I went back to something that gave me purpose, quite a bit...

I: You had something to go back to. I didn't. 'Cos I left school, um, and I went in to work in a bank, and then I worked in another bank, and I moved to Bright and I got another job in the bank up there. I didn't have a...

F: So no creative background at all?

I: No, but Dad was a frustrated artist, he was always making things, painting things, gluing things. He started off as a carpenter, and ended up getting caught up with the war – he had to go to war – so I didn't have a profession or an actual training to go back to.

F: Okay, so how did all of this come about?

I: We had a nursery in England, and gardening was always there, then we got married and had children and horsies, couldn't always just jump on a horse. Whenever we wanted to. Yeah, so I did a lot of gardening and started up my own landscaping business, also worked in a nursery for a few years until it closed down. And that's what I was doing, and then I suddenly got this thing probably from being out in the weather in the wet, and I was on one of my trips to England and suddenly I couldn't move. And I'm on cortisone now; I'm only just coming off it. The pain's been there for three years, the cortisone keeps the pain away, and they're weaning me off it. And I came back from England having spent most of my wonderful holiday on pain killers, um, I've got a lot of relations back then and it was great we got around a bit, um, couldn't do my landscaping anymore. It wasn't even physically I couldn't do it – the thought of doing it made me internally ill. I just could not cope.

F: Okay.

I: So I stopped doing it. I still do a bit of advisory; I go buying with the girl I used to work with. And we started a little shop up in Calgoa, thinking there won't be a lot of gardening up here with the stage four, um, but they are, and the more we garden using drought tolerant methods, the more it seems to be picking them up again. And now they've gone back to stage three. I think three? But people have picked up more with their garden; you can see it going down the street, and the next street too. And they're coming in always wanting potting mix. Marvelous soil up there, a tiny bit of rain goes along way – the soil's really fertile.

F: You wouldn't think so would you; the soil's so sandy.

I: The thing is too, it's iron stone – where we come from in England we have the iron stone and the green sand, so we've got alkaline as well as acidic soil. And we know from growing up in the nursery what grew well there in certain areas, this is what will grow up there. And I suddenly couldn't do it, and you find yourself sitting around and it gets a bit frustrating at times

F: Yes,

I: You can't keep reading...

F: So...

I: Suddenly Sue started knitting a scarf and I thought 'I'll knit a scarf!' and my friend's in Glendale – we've got two gardening clubs, one in Yea and one in Glendale – and some of them started up a craft club and it's every Tuesday. So I went down to that, but I don't like following patterns as such, I like doing it from in my head, so I started knitting – so you didn't get there to Calgoa at all did you? – So I started knitting these owls and queer animals and sticking them on boards, and making leaves, then it became a sort of fix. So at the moment the fix is making cards, and doing teapot cosies because they're having a stall down here and they need teapot cosies.

F: Right...

I: um, but the girl I worked with in the Nursery, I came back from Calgoa and I said 'I've got to do something else' and she said 'buy something up at Calgoa' – because Sue and Robin was already up there – she said 'buy something up at Calgoa' and I said 'um, yeah I think I'll start a shop' so we bought an old shed up there – well a good shed, a farm shed, excuse me? (talking to child) ...tape cuts.

Scarecrows, but it wasn't your scarecrows, I put the 'et cetera' on, which absolutely irritates Susan – 'Calgoa Scarecrows Et Cetera' – in full. (laughs) But it's just because we're sort of a bit daggy now, so I'm making scarecrows and we're actually selling them

- around here as well as up there. Sometimes people will see them and buy them, and sometimes they'll order them. And I actually bumped into a lady from the Children's Hospital before Christmas and she wants me to make one for them, but we've got to get back to each other and we did, but we've both just been too busy so we've put it off until after Easter now. But um, they've become quite popular, but it's also the recycling we do. And I can see something and, well the girls at crafts a couple of them work at the Oglen OpShop and they're always bringing home weird things – 'what can you do with this?' 'Oh I can do that' so it's just sort of looking at an object and thinking I can do this or that, and if it doesn't work you do it some different way and no one knows you made a mistake because it's weird anyway. Um, and it just became – I had to do something. Then hubby decided I'd lost my nerve, and my old horse died ten, twelve years ago, um, I needed a horse. Okay I had lots of time for this, so he borrowed a horse finally, and Candy's in the back paddock, and I ride her sometimes. I've got my nerve back, pretty much. Her mum grew up in New Zealand as a racehorse so she comes up from Yarra Glen and rides her.
- F: Right. So what are your scarecrows to you? What meaning do you, or value do you place on your scarecrows or your craft – not a craft because you're not a craft really...
- I: It's not craft because I've not trained to do anything; it's just all fiddling around. I don't know, they represent an outlet in a way – because the block of land back there that I bought, my husband wanted nothing to do with it. I came back really ill and he's not a carer, so his reaction was, and this is the only way he could cope with it I think – he was going to retire and go around Australia on his own, so I needed to have something of my own, I felt.
- F: And you didn't want to go?
- I: He wanted to go by himself.
- F: Oh.
- I: He can't handle sick people.
- F: Okay.
- I: Okay. Very good with sick animals, and if they get really bad he shoots them, but I suppose he couldn't shoot me (laughs). So it's a real joke in the family, but I think...he also felt 'Oh poor mum, came over from England, never wanted to, always been very bitter' um, made it a bit hard for all of us, he didn't want me to get like my mother, and she used to cling to my dad. And I don't think he wanted me to cling, when he knew I wasn't well, and I think he knew that I needed something of my own.
- F: So he was supportive of what you do?
- I: Yeah, he said to me, start a business up the Mallee, and then swore later on that he hadn't suggested it, but he had. He's very supportive but um, yeah I think he felt that I needed to have some kind of independence because I wasn't earning money anymore, and I was feeling a bit useless.
- F: So you only had value to yourself if you worked and got money?
- I: Yeah, well. It's always been – you need to work to be earning money – I think the whole family's a bit like that. Anyway, so I bought the block of land, and after gardening for everybody for years, and mum and dad and Nan and granddad selling the nursery in England which I would have loved to have stayed in, and I still go back to my – my aunt still got the cottage over there, that was going to be left to me but she wasn't married so she was left the cottage, my mum let her have it, then she married and the step daughter will get it. But that doesn't matter, so I've got somewhere to go back, and my cousin – my uncle's daughter – I go back there a lot. But, being really into gardens and horses, but doing other people's gardens for years, and even the places we've lived – this garden isn't what it was, because it was my stuff that was in it, and I've taken a lot of it out, um, and I can't look after it like I used to, physically I can't get out without getting sore, et cetera.
- F: But now you've got this other outlet, maybe...
- I: It's mine. Does that sound selfish? Les and I own a house in Yea to retire to, bluestone house that we lease out. He now goes to Snake Island every two weeks, taking Kathy two and from, that's a real outlet for him – doing what he loves, it just gets him away from the concern of running the farms sometimes. And he can only get on the phone on one spot of Snake Island, and I go to Calgoa. That block of land and the shed's mine, totally mine. The business is Susan and mine, fifty/fifty. But the block's mine. It's my garden! And I can do what I like...
- F: And he doesn't mind your independence? He's actually encouraged it?

I: No he's actually encouraged it. He's been really good. I think he felt I needed it. I think he thought I wasn't going to be independent because my mum wasn't, and I think he felt I needed that. So we both, I go off to Calgoa, he goes off to Snake Island, we see each other for two or three weeks and then we're both off in different directions again.

F: So...

I: And it works really well.

F: So the value to you...

I: Is independence.

F: Your art is your independence?

I: Yeah I'd say so. Mm.

F: And by chance you're making money now. Sort of. So independence not as a monetary thing but as a physical, emotional – and it's mine.

I: It's not a financial independence as yet, but the way it's going it could be. Um...

F: Mm. So it's an emotional independence.

I: Mm...

F: Would you say, or...?

I: Do we all need to have independence?

F: Well I...

I: I always thought ...(tape cuts)...I mean what he earns is his, it's not mine, I'm just here. But then he tells my girlfriends how much he misses me, and when, like yesterday I got home from Yea and someone came in for dinner, lunch, because someone knows us, so you know, so you're there to do all that, and feeding the shearers. First time we fed the shearers we were up at Benalla, and we hadn't had sheep before. And, um, he did – he doesn't usually panic but he did get in a bit of a tizz – 'you've got to do this for the shearers, you've got to do that for the shearers' – I was terrified! And at that stage I was still supposed to get an unsliced loaf and slice it into sandwich slices. And I put my foot down at this stage and said – if I'm to feed the shearers I'm buying ready sliced bread. I mean this is crazy.

F: Oh, he didn't want ready sliced bread? Why didn't he like ready sliced bread? (laughs)

I: Because his mum didn't have ready sliced bread.

F: Oh, it's a lovely story of...

I: Isn't it. I mean we lived at Mansfield for a while – no phone, and he didn't particularly like my mum, she didn't particularly like him, dad was okay, he would get a long with everybody, but I wasn't even supposed to write to her even once a week. And I let it get like that, it was my fault, I let it get like that, um, but I think it was Mum and Les, it was a tearing thing, she's my daughter – she's my wife. And I was the one that copped it a bit I think.

F: But this, this...(tape cuts)

I: Anyway, one chap when Les wasn't there, got a woman to join. And it was the principle of the thing. Anyway they crept and crawled until they got him back. (laughs)

F: So you think things are changing? Would you say women are quite a vibrant part of the farming area?

I: Around here, but then as I say, most of the farmer's wives around here married into farming. Um, not all of them but most of them. They've got their own career, they were independent before they were married and um, they help on the farms but not stacks. And I think I was the second last one to stop feeding the shearers around here. Would you like some of your cake with that?

F: Not for me...(tape cuts)...When I said to friend two years ago – poor thing

I: Well gardening was, for years

F: Traditionally it is, with women...

I: Yeah. And landscaping, I mean doing my own place, they laugh at me at Calgoa, I get out in the dirtiest clothes, I look like a moving scarecrow, and I just lose myself. And I'll hear a voice – 'Wendy, it's lunch time' it's the lady next door, but yeah, the gardening, the horsies, definitely at the moment it's become the scare crows because I needed something that I could do. When suddenly gardening and horsies weren't...

F: ...possible

I: I needed something I could do. Excuse me...(tape cuts) and, they kept us at the exhibition buildings for three nights, and then we went out to Williamstown Hostel, which became Altona Hostel, anyway, and then we moved into Altona. But, women, it was backward



here in those days, the way treated women, I think women during the war in England where we lived the planes actually flew up the railway lines from the south coast from the channel, to London, we were on the railway line to London. And any bombs they hadn't used they'd drop on the railway line coming back. They all worked there, the women all worked, and I know when the men came back from the war, some women up north had sort of stopped working and stayed home again, but we came from an area where everybody used to share everything. The male, the female, and we came over here and suddenly the women weren't allowed in the pubs, and they had six o'clock closing, and they all used to run around with these funny little Gladstone bags after they'd been to work (laughs) but women, really, we found...

F: And what about the country women?

I: We didn't know the country women as much for the first five or six years. Then the country people out in Porpunkah were farmers wives, and they did seem to be pretty independent because they'd grown up on farms, um, I think they perhaps knew their place – let's put it that way – I don't know. And they'd all feed, like my husband's mother used to, make the food for the football and the cricket and that sort of stuff. Mind you, when I offered to help, my help wasn't needed because they had their own – they complained they couldn't get people to help, but if a young one came in and tried to help, it was a bit the same when we lived at Mansfield, I think they all felt a bit threatened, these women, because they all had their roles; their role at home and their role in the community, um, yeah but we just found it – I remember when I was about 11, my dad saying 'gee, they don't treat the women as equal here as they did back home' as they called England. Very different.

F: I think it's gradually changing now because you're getting educated women coming in to farming, you know, and they just won't – by what I've heard. (tape cuts) I just have to...if that was understood that it...(tape cuts)

I: His wife was a lovely lady, almost deaf at this stage, and we knew that he wasn't the most pleasant person to her, anyway, and we used to deliver her plants and she used to stand up for herself. Anyway he decided he'd come in one day because he wanted to help, he wanted vegetable seedlings, vegetables are different that's not the same as flowers (imitating the man) and he saw what she wanted to take home, and he started to grumble. And I said to him, 'look, that is food for her soul,' as you just said – 'and if your wife's happy, you'll be happy, and if she's not happy, no one in the family's happy'. He sort of looked at me, he used to come in and buy flower seedlings and everything for her after that.

F: Really?

I: I said 'you have got to realize' um, and she was a lovely lady, and once again in CWA used to exhibit the show, beautiful cookery, beautiful embroidery. They know that's a craft but they think it's just a part of growing up and knowing how to darn the socks and cook the scones.

F: Well I'm saying that it has enormous value; I'm saying that it should be acknowledged.

I: Yeah, I think the women, most of them are smart enough to know it, most of them aren't always game enough to stand up for it, in a way. Because women are smart, let's face it – women are smart.

F: Well...

I: We just let you think you're smarter, feller!

**END OF RECORDING  
END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

Interviewee: ...live by themselves.

Facilitator: Yes.

I: Whereas traditionally, a woman couldn't get a bank loan, she couldn't run a business by herself or anything, she needed a male to do that, therefore she needed a male for supporting. Now you've got that freedom to do that by yourself, it's not an issue. And a lot of women, particularly if their marriage has broken up they're choosing not to re-marry because they can be independent, they're allowed to be independent.

F: So your story, you were born on the land?

I: Um, yes. I was born in 1959 and went to a local primary school and high school.

F: In Minyip?

I: Yeah, then went up to Warracknabeel, I used to have an hour on the bus each morning and an hour at night. Then I went up and did some courses at Longrenong. I did wool classes at craft school and at about 1980 I took off overseas for a bit, did some agricultural exchange out in America and um, yeah, Dad got crook in 1995 and by that stage I was 35 and I was actually considering buying a fruit block because I used to do a lot of work up there at Redcliffs. I had a lot of friends up there, I used to go up and spend two months in the Summer and another in the Winter up there after cropping, then I'd do another 9 months of wool classes then I'd just come back here and I'd help with the cropping and the harvest and be off again.

F: Yeah.

I: So for all intensive purposes I was absent from the area for about fifteen years.

F: Yeah.

I: And now as I said it's been really interesting having bought this business in town because I'm meeting these people that I haven't seen since I went to school with them! (laughs) and it's just, it's just interesting to do that.

F: So your mum said everyone thought you'd be the boy, the one that comes back and works the farm, even though you're obviously a woman, you know.

I: Oh Dad never had an issue with it. No.

F: So your Dad took you out did he? You were the one that wanted to go out with him and do the farming?

I: Um, I was a little... it's a bit interesting there because my sister and Dad were closer than what my Dad and I were. But Dad had a very scientific brain, in fact my Dad would not have been a farmer if he had been given the opportunity to go and get tertiary education in Physics or Chemistry he would have been right into it.

F: So he was a farmer's son was he

I: He was a farmer's son and was expected to go on the farm so that's what he did. But towards the end of the war there were a huge amount of technical and electronic discoveries, post war, um... what would that sort of be... yeah, just with radios and TVs and all that sort of stuff, he was right into that, he just wanted to know all about that. Now, he died just before PCs became a...

F: Okay, before they became available...?

I: Yeah. He would have loved that. Yeah.

F: Okay. So you just naturally took on the farm?

I: Yeah. Yeah, I'm the sort of person that's evolved a lot through my life. I was at wool class part time for 29 years and, well, I had a hip replacement and my body wore out a bit so I thought I better find something easier to do, so I took up bus-driving and now I bought this other business as well in the town...

F: Plus the farm?

I: Yeah, then you run the farm on the weekends. It's only 800 acres, so it's not huge.

F: Right. So how did the creative come? And what sort of meaning is it to you?

- I: Um, it's a form of escapism. When I'm doing it, it takes me completely away from everything else that you've got to think about all the time. And my brain gets pretty busy thinking all the time with this business because I'm still learning how to run it, and um, I used to do a lot of my thinking – before I bought this business I did maintenance up at a pig shed, up the road there, and I'd just be welding up stuff and shoveling up pig shit and getting cold knees from kneeling on wet concrete while I'm welding up pig grating! (laughs) That sort of thing. And I would get a lot of thinking done doing that. Yeah. But um, I just find the creativity, it just comes out of you, it becomes an urge and you just have to act on it. If you don't act on it, you just feel very uncomfortable.
- F: Does your environment help trigger this?
- I: Yeah. Because I'll see things in the environment and I'll use it. It's an interesting thing, because I started off in floral art, seriously probably about 20 years ago. When I was a little kid we used to go down to our grandma's place when we were young, and she had a next-door neighbour called Mrs. Colthurst. And Mrs. Colthurst was into floral art, or flower arranging as it was known then. Anyway, I saw some of the things that she had in her house and wow! I was fascinated. And I use to go over there when I was about 10 and she used to show me how to make artificial flowers and all this sort of stuff, and I just got really interested in it. And then there was a floral art group down in Matoa so I sort of joined that and started...
- F: So that was your first creative venture into flower arranging as such?
- I: Yeah. And then I started to do a few welding sculptures because I could weld. So you'd see something, an old piece of metal lying on the ground and you'd say 'oh that looks like a sheep's head' or something, or 'it looks like a foot' and you'd see a whole lot of other stuff and weld something to go along with that. So I started doing the welding sculptures and then after that the farm art competition came in.
- F: And you heard about that?
- I: Well that came from New Zealand. One of the people on the Wimmera Machinery Field Days Committee went to the New Zealand Field Days, this would have been 1991 or 1992.
- F: Right, the Wimmera Field Day
- I: Yeah, she went to...
- F: It wasn't there this year when I went...
- I: No, no. There was a bit of a barny about the Field Day. It's very much a boy's club, and a boy's club didn't seem to think it was much value, and we all said we've got better things to do than let's say – give up two weeks of our time each year with no thanks, so we all went our separate ways.
- F: Oh okay.
- I: And um...
- F: But its original value was hooking you in by this woman, was it?
- I: Yeah, she came along and I've never really done much in fashion and design and all that, I was never particularly interested in it, whereas now I'm quite interested. What annoys me is when you see the fashioners and the designers show all their good stuff, but they also show the things that *don't* work. (laughs)
- F: They do.
- I: And I would never do that. I think it's just because they have to have a collection, so they might have 12 or 15 pieces going on the catwalk, so of course you're going to have some that don't work real well, whereas in the farm art you just have your one piece.
- F: Yeah, because people tend to judge your worst one rather than your best one.
- I: Exactly.
- F: All right. And then you're just so good at it. Amelia just says you're the best.
- I: Just had a knack at it.
- F: Yeah.
- I: Now Amelia's background that was interesting because she did studies in Costume Design. So she knew a whole heap of stuff about evolvment of all the different sorts of clothing that people wore and the period styles and all the rest of it...
- F: Oh okay.
- I: Yeah, so she knows all about that stuff, whereas I sort of...
- F: Doesn't make her the winner now though, does it?

- I: No, it just comes out of my head this stuff that I make. Occasionally I might see – well there you are there's a mandarin and I'd think 'Okay, that's an interesting shape, and it's like that, and it's round, now what can I do with that?'
- F: Okay.
- I: Yeah, if I was going to do that with floral art I'd be starting off just by doing things like that, and working on that now, and now you've got a different shape (laughs) and you can just move on from them, and you can just stack them up, and you're just starting to get an interesting thing. Now you say, okay what if I put them on a piece of wire and made a circle of them. Yeah, you can just look at things and start to – oh there's a biscuit shape there, think of all the things you can do with them! And then you're walking around the paddock and you find a whole heap of sticks, and you saw what I did with them out there, just getarnéed them together...
- F: So it's innately in you?
- I: It just comes. I can't help it. And I used to have the problem, when I was wool-classing – another hobby I have is shooting – and I have a pretty good collection of rifles there...
- F: Yeah.
- I: So that's okay, so I used to take a couple of rifles and a whole heap of stuff and we'd get in the back of the ute and go out into a woolshed, way out woop-woop and at night time I'd shoot a few rabbits, shoot a few roos, depends on what I wanted to get, and um, oh at the same time you'd find this fence post and you'd go 'Oh!' and you'd get it and take it back and put it in the back of the ute, and the next day they'd look at you and they'd say 'Oh I think we'll leave her alone!' (laughs) They'd see what I had in the back of the ute, a couple of dead roosts chopped up and some fence posts! (laughs)
- F: I find that, because I'm actually finding things like we all do now, it's quite a thing, but if you've got a ute full of bail twine or something you get on with the farmers rather than the farmer's wives. They're sort of keen to...do you find that? Do you get on with the farmers?
- I: Yes.
- F: For some reason they can talk with you...because you're not about to talk about...
- I: Babies, or families or what the grandkids are up to. Yeah.
- F: So if you didn't have your art, what would you, what do you think would happen?
- I: Oh I'd just lead a boring mundane life I'm sure.
- F: Well you wouldn't really, because you'd have your farm work and your other work and things like that. So what do you think your art work does for you? Sort of?
- I: Oh it just adds another sort of facet to your life. And my life has very many facets on it. And the other thing I do is I'm, in the last couple of years I've been involved with relief work in Teheran, and Burma
- F: Oh yeah.
- I: As you know Burma is a very close country – I'll give you one of my brochures here. It's an agricultural project we're coming up with, you just take that home and read it.
- F: Okay.
- I: But that's just a completely different facet of my life, doing that. And as I said Burma's a close country and they have a pretty crappy government – everything's falling down – it sort of reminds you of the Soviet Republic when you go over there
- F: So how many times do you go over there?
- I: I go there once a year at the moment for about three weeks.
- F: So how did you get involved with that?
- I: It was through the church, I belong to a local church, and this guy one day came along and he was doing some niche mission work – niche relief work – and we just got to meet these people because they happened to be Christians and they were living in Burma, and...
- F: So you're religious?
- I: Yeah, I'm Christian. And the Burmese, well most of them are Buddhist. And the Buddhist and the Christians get on fine, but the Military regime they are just a law of their own, so the Buddhist's get a hard time and the Christian's get an even worse time. So it's really difficult for them to get ahead, so have a read of the brochure.
- F: Yeah.
- I: So we've got a couple of agricultural projects going on over there, um, our group supports the Children's Home, yeah, some other mission work because...
- F: Yeah?

- I: I just can't explain some of the cultural problems that are going on over there, I mean it would just take me two hours to explain it to you because it's just so totally different to anything you've experienced in Australia. But yeah, they have very serious problems over there and their farming is pretty much subsistent farming so if their crops are bare they're pretty much looking down the barrel of starvation.
- F: So your role?
- I: Um, we're doing some support work, we're trying to get some projects up and running to help them help themselves. Like a small loans project for buying livestock.
- F: So you're not manually doing things for them?
- I: Ah, no. No. Um, that's because it would be very difficult. Within this group called Asia Focus that I work in, there's also another group of people that do some work in Sumatra, Thailand and Cambodia, but they are more open places. If you turn up there with a whole heap of stuff and say 'right we're going to build you guys a school, or we're going to help you set up computers or set up a health centre or something' that's okay, but in Burma you have to work very quietly because you'll arouse the suspicions of the authorities and then they will come along and make life very hard for the people you're trying to help.
- F: Okay.
- I: So there's a lot of trust between us them, and a lot of trust for people just to give us some money to support our projects because it's not tax deductible like the big ones are, but then you see there's none of the bigger welfare – aid agencies – are allowed into Burma anyway, and you'd remember the big problem they had after Cyclone Argus that nobody was allowed in from the outside, so that's another story within itself.
- F: Alright. Just getting back to farming and you. Um, how did the local men see you? I mean did you have a problem, I mean because the culture as we know is all so male, how do you fit in? I mean, do they...are they accepting you?
- I: I think they very much respect me now. Um, as soon as I bought the business in there. I mean you're there as a chemical retailer, so you'd want to. Yeah, but I'm very glad I knew what I was doing about chemicals before I started the business otherwise it would be absolute bedlam! Because you wouldn't – I've got about 110 products in the shop there, and I know what about 90 per cent of them do.
- F: Yeah.
- I: So if someone comes in and says 'I want 100 litres of this' and it's something you put on at 40 mls a hectare you can question them and say 'Are you sure you need 100 litres or you only need 10 litres?'
- F: Yeah. But you're being such a capable woman, you don't think they're intimidated or they think it's odd, or they don't sort of, make any comments?
- I: No, it's sort of interesting because they seem to – I mean, I don't really know what they say behind my back, and I couldn't really care less! (laughs)
- F: Yeah, but you know. It is unusual.
- I: Ah, well, yes, yes. Well that sign there says a little about it. And it the same when I took up wool classes and it was the same when I started driving buses. Because I just one day got up into a bus and starting driving it, full of people.
- F: You had a bus license though?
- I: I had a bus license. Um, yeah, then I could sort of feel the blokes thinking...
- F: But you loved it! You sort of loved it as a compliment. I mean if you're anything vaguely like me you quite like it – standing up to them and being capable.
- I: Yeah.
- F: It's a compliment that you can do...
- I: Yeah, and you feel quite, not a problem doing it, and actually because all my life I have worked with men in the work place. And all my life I have got along better with men as a group than I have with women. Because a lot of women just talk about things that I'm just not even remotely interested in.
- F: So it was your dad's influence a bit – your dad, capable...?
- I: Oh Mum was very capable too.
- F: Was she out there doing things too?
- I: Yeah, yeah. She used to get out there and do things. She was a concert pianist – classical pianist, that was what her training was – and then she said she just met...she went to Western Australia, to her friend's 80<sup>th</sup> and she met dad through the friend because the friend was dad's cousin, so it was a little bit of a connection there.

F: Oh okay. So you're not part of a um, sorry I'm just trying to get the thing about woman and keep you in the picture, because it's very much obviously what you're capable of and what you're about. So you're not joining in in women's things? With your art it's quite solo?

I: Very much solo. But if I meet someone we'll have a very good discussion.

F: Like Amelia is saying on it.

I: Yeah. I don't belong to a group – I did belong to a floral art group, but the problem is I'm just so busy with my life now and I told them the only time I could do it was a Saturday morning and they didn't want to do that because they had kid's things on or whatever. So it's just more or less sort of fallen by the wayside, because they just wanted to meet in day time during the week some time and I said 'I just cannot do that because I'm working full time'.

F: Yeah.

I: I work about 60 hours a week.

F: And as you said in your email, and we're probably repeating ourselves a bit, it seems that if you're so busy, why do art? Why do creative stuff if you could just sit down and cope, and rest sort of thing?

I: Oh people would say 'why not just sit down and watch TV? Why do that than watch TV?' I don't find TV stimulating. I need to do something that's original, something that no one's ever done before.

F: Oh, you like that aspect of it. Okay.

I: Yeah. Interpretive things in a different way that no ones ever done it before.

F: Okay.

I: Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

F: Okay. So that's getting a bit closer to what art means to you, doesn't it? Creative allows you the ability to be different.

I: Yeah, yeah. And I like to do things that I know no one ever done before. (laughs)

F: It's funny isn't it? I mean it's good, it's good. So now, so it's flower arranging, and now you're into...

I: Into the... yeah

F: But then you do everything else, you do the Christmas decorations, you just as you say, can't stop doing it? Or...

I: No, it just sort of happens. I'm not into craft at all.

F: What do you see craft as?

I: I see craft as making models of things or scrap booking and this sort of stuff. It's all been done, there's nothing new in it. What I do, it has to be new.

F: Yeah, it's interesting.

I: What I do has to be new. It has to never have been done before, or I won't do it. (laughs)

F: So what's next?

I: I'll show you what I'm working on. At the end of May there's a competition, one of the 'Ag' art people that I'm in competition with, she's a pretty good friend – a girl called Helen Williams, she's up North-East towards Shepparton way, and she and along with local high school that her daughters go to, they're having an event that's the Bra-Awards – bra art, and then you've got to make some sort of wedding garment, and it isn't specified, it's just got to be something that you could wear at a wedding, and it can be made out of absolutely anything. So they've got these two competitions. So I said I've got to have a go at this. So I'll show you this bark bra that I've been making. I've been making it completely out of bark.

F: You love a challenge don't you? You love winning, I bet you love winning. Do you love winning?

I: Um. I'm just quite happy for it to be on there, and be a success and have people appreciate it.

F: Yeah. Okay.

I: And if I come first or second or third I don't care. If I don't get anywhere I'm a little bit disappointed, but if I get a placing I'm happy.

F: How did you go with 'Venus' this week?

I: I don't know yet.

F: Okay.

I: The pre-judging was delayed for a week, and the actual field days, which the pre-judging will have 30 or 40 entries and the judges will cut it down to maybe 15 or 20 so they can make a good catwalk presentation to go out of it. And, then it's next month I can't remember – early next month.

F: Okay. Now tell me what 'Venus' was made out of. The blue and silver things.

I: Do you want to come outside?

F: Yep, we do.

I: Bloody chooks got back in again.

F: (laughs) You just felt like doing that.

I: Oh that's an uninteresting wall, I've got to paint something on it. So I did.

F: (Laughs)

I: That's one of the –

F: Oh okay.

I: And that's all that is, it's just bailing twine wrapped around a wire frame, just tack it together and weld it, and you remember if you got the picture of 'Venus' she's got several of them like that on her.

F: Right. So what was the blue dress part of it then?

I: Just made out of this.

F: Tarpaulin.

I: Yeah, it's just "el cheapo" tarpaulin, it's quite good to work with.

F: I thought it had to be clippings from the farm, particularly from the farm.

I: Yeah but you use these things on the farm to cover up things all the time.

F: But you do in the city, too.

I: Yeah...

F: (laughs) The silver bits.

I: This is the insulation... where's the roll of it, I think I've put it in the other shed. You know the insulation, you put on the inside of it?

F: Oh yeah.

I: You just cut that out and stick it on.

F: Oh okay, so it's just basically the three things – the bail twine, the insulation, sort of thing.

I: Yeah.

F: Keep it like that I like the sun on it.

I: oh I just like the effect when I wound this narrow twine, it's got a real luster to it.

F: Yeah, it does.

I: And I just like that effect, because I've got a whole lot of other bailing twine but they just didn't have this effect.

F: Okay. Um, I know bailing twine. Did um...(tape cuts)

I: ...Oh like this, because you actually put yourself in it, and I've had it for about 12 months but I just haven't had any time to do it.

F: And what's this one for?

I: Um, this will be another Farm Art one,

F: Right, for what competition?

I: The Elmore one.

F: The Elmore one is it? For October is it?

I: Yeah about October, yeah. So you put this on like this.

F: (laughs)

I: (laughs) Hang on I've got to figure out how to get it off...there we are. I have a uh,

F: So what, and then you'll wear...?

I: Yeah I've got this trailing bit now, now where's it gone to. It ties around the middle and sticks out at the end, so I've got another spider coming out the end. So yeah, you just hang onto this, and that's quite comfortable.

F: That's fantastic, that's a great portrait of you. Because it's what you're about.

I: The spider outfit. (laughs)

F: Tilt your head down so I can see the top spider a little bit more. Actually, let me get the sides of the spider. And you can look across (taking photos). I can't see much of you, but that's probably what you want.

I: Yeah, so that's the idea of it.

F: That's fantastic. Because there's really strict rules, aren't there? And it started in New Zealand didn't it?

I: Yeah it did, and it just came to Australia. And actually the Australians are now, sort of, all of us are cleaning up the New Zealanders when we go over there.

F: So it's only Victoria and New Zealand? Do you think there's anywhere else in Australia?

I: A couple of South Australians, a couple of Western Australians, New South Wales people. ... (tape cuts)

F: ... Oh I hope you don't mind, it's just... fantastic.

I: Yeah, and you see what that's made out of.

F: (laughs)

I: That's just a red container,...

F: Pardon?

I: you know, that you put on the sheep...

F: Oh yes, yes. In the plastic. It's not plastic or anything?

I: No, no, it's just so long as it's something that you'll find on a farm.

F: So this is your studio?

I: Oh, sort of. I've got another one over there. This is where I do my welding and things, and some of the time... I'll show you the other one. Sometimes when I've done the welding I take it here and finish it off.

F: So if... if something... (tape cuts)... And this is your bicycle here too?

I: Ah, yeah. I'm a bit rushed for time so sometimes I'll go for a bit of a ride over, ... and I should with the welding stuff.

F: Oh I'll have to take, I'll do that on the way back. (dog barks) Hello! You've got an armchair here...

I: I've got two armchairs. If I stand around that side there, and you take them there, it just looks better. Like that.

F: I don't want my car in it.

I: That's okay. Actually, do my floral art in it. I'll just put this stuff in there. This is my dress I'm making out of the plastic. But I built that shed to do my floral art in.

F: Right.

I: All this plastic wrap... just comes round...

F: Oh this is your wedding dress? Okay.

I: Yeah, all this just sort of comes round, you've got pellets of chemical drums that you've got to forklift off.

F: So they've just been wrapped around.

I: Yeah, and this is just what holds it together.

F: Okay. This is good.

I: So this is my wedding... sort of working on that.

F: Now how can we sort of get you with the head at the top? Now it's got some quite nice lighting here in the shed.

I: I can turn the light on.

F: No, I don't know whether that would help at all.

I: And that's just the trail bits that are on it.

F: And they've got a model that you've got for it?

I: Yeah, they'll supply the models.

F: Right. That is terrific.

I: Yeah, it's a two piece thing that does up here.

F: ... the bodice.

I: Yeah, I've got to stick that together properly so you've got the bodice here, a little wire bra to support everything, and then just the skirt part comes off the bottom. Trails back...

F: And this is your bark bra?

I: This is the famous bark bra, yeah. Look at that. (laughs) Actually, and this part will go underneath it.

F: Oh that's fantastic.

I: Just to take it off. I'll just put it together there so it holds together okay. So that will go there, like that.

F: If you just come into the light, turn the thing a bit to the light. Sort of, little bit like that yes.



I: And that's just chips and crystals, a couple of bullet cases ... And a bit more guitar made sticks.

F: I just love it. Because it's often that it's when you get home that you see what's in your picture a little bit.

I: Yeah. I'm quite pleased with the way that's turned out.

F: Actually that's great. Turn it around a little bit.

I: I'll pull out the tail.

F: It's just the simplicity of using the one medium...

I: Yeah, I just enjoy the challenge of it. But it's come out, it's come out fine. And you've got these bits here on your shoulders you see?

F: And how will you clean it up a bit? It's a bit dusty on the inside...

I: I don't really know that I can clean it up very well, because I think the dust is a bit in the plastic, because originally it was wrapped around...

F: And you just sprayed it before you did it, hmm.

I: Yeah. So, I don't really think that I uh, I might be able to wipe a little bit of it off. It's just the static electricity that makes it stick.

F: We'll just have just a couple of looking in. It's just nice light coming from there. Now you can look at me still, now I don't like posed pictures, I must say, so whatever you're doing. Oh, and that's your prizes over there.

I: Oh yeah they're real old ones. That's just the insulation was.

F: Oh, that's what 'Venus' was.

I: Yeah she had some of that in her. And then I do a little there, a bit more of the Tatami work. And that's just a very simple designed thing, but you could use that with a host of arrangements.

F: Have you made any dresses out of that? Like, armour dresses?

I: Yes, I have.

F: It sort of lends itself to a coat of armour.

I: Yeah. I can show you one of them, I've got one of them out in a case out the back there.

F: This is a great shed. I guess you know where everything is.

I: Um, it's sort of something that I do, and some of it she likes, and some of it if she doesn't like, she soon tells me. I don't really care what she thinks. (laughs)

F: She's still pretty fit though?

I: Yeah, she has some um, yeah. How would you sort of way, when we were kids we were never allowed to listen to pop music. Beatles were absolutely out.

F: Right.

I: Now that sort of stuff, that just went on all of the time. She was strictly Classical, and any sort of modern music is absolute and utter crap. And you just sort of got used to it, so you just went off and did your own thing. And that's what I still do now. Yeah. And I don't take too much notice of what she says sometimes.

F: And this gives you space to do what you like, I can just imagine you'd see things all the time.

I: Yeah.

F: So no time for cooking cakes and things like that?

I: Um, I used to do a bit of baking many years ago but I don't have time.

F: Yeah.

I: I remember the time of the 'depots' and you used to have to cook with a wood fire, and I could cook really well on them because I used to...

F: Where do you think you get all this energy from? Like...

I: Well there's a bit of problems with my body now, I'm wearing out, it's all full of arthritis.

F: I've got to take this shed.

I: We call it the lighthouse.

F: Lovely company these animals, aren't they?

I: Yeah, this one's getting really old now.

F: Careful we don't run over it....(tape cuts)...It got fourth in New Zealand?

I: Fourth, yep. ...He got a...well he had an old border collie dog, and every time, well not every time, well once a week, he's wait until the bus came along he ran out under the back wheels.

F: And what's this here, a little spider?

I: Oh yeah, my little farm animals. So that was the end of the dog, anyway...(tape cuts)

F: ...So New Zealand's *the* thing to win?  
 I: Um, well it is sort of, with this. Yeah. But I don't know, it might be that Australia is the thing to win.  
 F: At Elmore?  
 I: Yes. Because there's a lot of winners at Elmore that go to win in New Zealand  
 F: Right.

I: Yeah, So that was a dress part.  
 F: And that's just made of...  
 I: Yeah a bit of fruit-tree prunings, a bit of bird netting, unfortunately they were all dried oranges. But a lot of entries at Elmore, there.  
 F: (laughs) Were they bright orange when you did it?  
 I: Yeah but they got weevils in them, they eat it. So, that's it. And then I just had polished bits of wood that I've sliced.  
 F: No, I haven't seen the sheep-shit one....(tape cuts)... You could have an amazing exhibition somewhere with them all...between you and Amelia. ...But a photo is nothing like seeing it,  
 I: That's a top mark with a bra on it, that's the neck. A couple of pictures of it...  
 F: Yeah, because you have to really be on a farm to do it.  
 I: Yeah, or have a farm that you can sort of access stuff off.  
 F: But unless you sort of have...(tape cuts)  
 I: ...the dress, there we go, hang on that's upside down. So we've got the sheep-shit dress.  
 F: Just a minute. Yeah I know Amelia loves sheep shit too.  
 I: Yeah it's quite good stuff to work with. Once you've treated it, it doesn't smell anymore. You put a sealer on it. And this was the jacket.  
 F: Oh that's funny.  
 I: You know on that clear concrete. It's supposed to do up around the back, like that. (laughs)  
 F: That's terrific – and it's all just sheep shit.  
 I: Yeah, all strung together.  
 F: That is fabulous.  
 I: Not that it makes a perfect thing to wear, there's quite a lot of weight in it actually.  
 F: That is just fabulous. Just a minute taking a photo on the top. ...(tape cuts)  
 I: ...And I can see it all in here, not a problem.  
 F: Right, you can't write in 3D, I love it.  
 I: No, and I went to have – they had a thing – it was really worthwhile seeing. But some of the sketches that those designers did, they were just artists in their own right. Never mind creating garments for women to wear, they could just sketch out the whole thing. And I can't do that. Amelia can sketch, but I can't, it's just in my head and that's it.  
 F: I know. The one that Amelia did with the whips...(tape cuts)...and do you think the sheep will fall apart?  
 I: Oh I think it will. There, that's the one in New Zealand. Here, grabbed a few. That's made out of dog's biscuits.  
 F: So you don't have anything on digital? You don't have any copies of it? ...(tape cuts)...The black stuff on it? Might I at one stage get a loan of this book and take a copy of it?  
 I: Yeah.  
 F: That came up really well.  
 I: Yeah, well Amelia's more technical.  
 F: No, I like your way. Um, okay.  
 I: They had one there a while ago, and she wanted a whole series of seminars on Climate change and I said 'Really?'. And you know what the government's like with climate change; it's the big thing within the department, the big thing within the Women's groups was climate change. And everyone was sort of saying 'Well, hey, we have lots of other things that are far more important than this theory' – I mean the climate's changed all the time. And what's new? It's about managing about how to go along with changes, but there are other changes that are affecting us far more at the moment.  
 F: What are they? As far as you're concerned?  
 I: For farming, for us, it's just a cost-price squeeze, and it's just hit us really hard this time this year. Because our costs have just gone up again, and we're only getting \$130 for barley, if you're lucky, and only \$80 or \$90 for a tonne of hay. And it's costing you, in

some cases more to produce it, and you'll find I think in this area, you'll find a bit of a swing back to sheep.

F: That always happens, one minute you can't sell them for \$60, and now we're bringing in \$150 a lamb!

I: That's right. But the problem is, around this area, and in some places, you've got more than 30 years now, that some people have not been running sheep, since this big get out thing, with no till, or mid-cross wedge which they buy on chemicals, which means they can farm much bigger areas than what they could traditionally, that's what the fathers and sons have been buying and the sons have said 'I don't want to bother with sheep, it's much easier cropping' – um, now you've got the cross to squeeze in the cropping, and since they don't have any of the facilities for shearing it's already going to cost you \$100 grand to put that up, and they don't have any...

F: Your basic herd...

I: And they don't have any idea about running sheep. So I mean, they'll have ewes dying and they'll have lambs that should be marked.

F: Never pull in the dourper, they're small lambs, high accelerated growth rate... they're just...

I: Yeah goats don't eat quite as much a sheep either. They're probably 80 or 90 per cent a sheep, and they graze as much.

F: Yeah, and this is just through your observation?

I: Very much. I'll take you to a sheep paddock and I'll take you to a goat paddock and you'll see who's been grazing what. It's very interesting. Um, sheep make...(tape cuts)

F: I'll get this wall too.

I: Oh, this has got all my solar panels on the top there did you see them

F: No, there's too much to look at when I got here. So you have solar panels on the sheds?

I: I put – I got a 2 kilowatt grid on this, now there's a whole other garage and it's all fallen down now, from last year,

F: Right,

I: It was about 22,000 I think.

F: Oh okay.

I: So it cost me about \$13, I think.

F: And what do you run off it?

I: It goes into the house there, and into the power grid. And the excess gets credited to me.

F: And it does work?

I: And then in the winter time I'll be using more power than what'll be going in because of the angle of the sun and the shortness of the day.

F: Okay. Stay there.

I: So, at the moment...

F: So you shoot the kangaroos and chop them up?

I: ...And you get about \$150 in credit.

F: So that's good, it's worked for you.

I: Yes. So this...lots of paintings and stuff. She's ah...(tape cuts)

F: ...just like your chopper.

I: This is where I chop up my kangaroos! (laughs)

F: Oh do you?

I: Or rabbits or sheep, or whatever I've got. (tape cuts)...all boxes and everything around here

F: Oh and she does them for...?

I: Yeah, all sorts of things.

F: So this happened because of what? One day you just...

I: Oh, one day I just thought it needs fixing up, something done with it. This is solar-base, you know the good stuff, and I've just put in those tubes of water colour paint in there – and you can make anything like that – because you've got your primary colours, because you've got yellow and blue and red, and they're in the primary colour bases, and you just keep on adding and tinting and mixing, and um, there you go. It's good. When the drought started years ago...(tape cuts)

F: ...Sometimes you can just pick up and do...

I: I mean some nights I get up and just think 'oh, I might go out and do a bit of shooting tonight' and you couldn't do that in the city, you're too restricted.

F: Can you just stand in the doorway? I know it's sunny ... Yeah, you can't just go out and shoot your neighbours can you?

I: No...you might feel like it, but you're not allowed to.

F: (Laughs) So it's sort of a wonderland – I just see it as a wonderland.

I: Yeah there's a bit of everything in here.

F: I like what you're doing with the fish here or whatever you've been doing. So self-sufficient, in that ...?

I: Well, we used to milk the cow, we used to do hand outs, but as soon as the water ran out the garden felt a bit of heat. It's not too bad at the minute, we've only got a fig tree and an apple tree, that's all we've got left. And we had every fruit tree imaginable.

F: Would you consider yourself in drought now

I: Um, no

F: Because there's no drought relief either now, is there? That's all stopped now

I: Well it bloody ought to have been because people were just taking advantage of it. And then those people that went off...(tape cuts)

F: ... What a fantastic tree

I: Um, it was all filled up with fruit trees and that, and they've all died, and now that we're on pipe water I've kept these other ones alive and that. Yeah I think they'll come back, the fruit.

F: Yeah, well you've got a lot of lemons on that.

I: Here?

F: No, not that, that's the fig tree, the other one behind you.

I: Um, that's an orange tree.

F: Oranges, yeah.

I: Um, it's got about 5 oranges. Because what happened last year, as soon as we watered and mulched and that stuff they were absolutely profuse with flowers – they were white with the flowers. And I thought 'okay. What are we going to do here?' but the next day we had 4 days of 105 degrees at the start of November which cooked all of the legume crops...

F: Right...

I: all the...(tape cuts)...and I was coming back on the bus and I said 'I'll be there in 10'. (tape cuts)

F: ...did you, your creative is your day? Like, what, working compared to your percentage of doing something creative?

I: I'd like to do an hour a day, but now that I've got my business it's more like an hour every two days, on the weekend.

F: (tape cuts)...now?

I: no one. Not on Saturday morning unless someone rings me. I had one guy ring me and he wanted to pick up some colphouricos and I said 'you're a little bit late mate, a guy came in and picked up the last two bags this morning, I won't get any in the shop til Monday'.

F: Oh okay.

I: Yeah, and um, like you need one in the shop there.

F: What an excuse!

I: Before it came with the shop. Yeah. So the forklift came with the shop.. I just bought that.

F: So you had to get a license.

I: Yeah. Cos you have to have a ticket to do it. But nah, it's had a bit of neglect you see, because the people that sold the place – their marriage broke up, and it was...(tape cuts)...it's the way I am I can't do anything about it, and it's better that we end it here, and just remained friends, because I could never cow tow to any man, and the problem is, is if you marry one – because of the nature of the male and the female roles, you have to submit to that, or if you don't, there will be trouble. There is the odd relationship where you see the woman wears the pants, but I don't think that's right either.

F: Yeah it's hard. And that's why I think it's going to...it's hard for...(tape cuts)

**END OF RECORDING  
END OF TRANSCRIPTION.**

## Rosemary Kingsmill

Horsham, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010

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Facilitator: But really, how your art began, and what does it mean to you? I guess is the sort of things that I'm interested in.

Interviewee: Where did you come from?

F: I was from Melbourne originally, but my um...(tape cuts)

I: ...Men as well as women.

F: Yeah, I'm sure. And there's a lot of farmers sculpturing the land every day.

I: I have a friend, who's way out and... was it, two years ago, he's leased the land and gone to Art school. And he's in his 60s, because that's always what he wanted to do.

F: And he's a farmer?

I: And so you know, it's not restricted, there's a lot of men out there farming that they're only doing it because they've had to do it, not because they want to do it – their heart's not in it.

F: But that may be so of any man –

I: Yes.

F: I tend to think that women have that added pressure of tradition, and the culture, to contend with.

I: Yes.

F: I guess. No? You don't think

I: Actually over the years I think it's both. I think women have a better way, or they have the drive more to find their own place, where men are more stuck, even if they want something that's outside the boundaries, they actually can't do it until the family – I'm talking about farmers – it's usually until they die or whatever, and then they're free to sell the farm, lease it, go do their own stuff. But I feel more sorry for them...

F: Than the women, because the women somehow adapt...

I: Because women adapt – men don't. Men are really stuck in that line, and they can't get out. Very few can.

F: And do you think women can get out? Do you think they are getting out, and...

I: Oh, well, I think...

F: Do you see a lot of traditional women that are frustrated...?

I: Um, I see some, but they would be traditional wherever they are. And others I see quietly do their own thing – some are more loud about it. So you know, I think that it doesn't matter where we come from – I come from Melbourne – and I see it in Melbourne just as much as in the country.

F: Do you think the country environment adds anything more? Either the ability to be able to explore yourself more?

I: I think we're very lucky being isolated. I think it's the isolation that allows us the freedom to then go and do our thing. And we have to draw on our own self and discover ourselves to be able to do that and survive. And I think in many ways we had more opportunities in the country, isolation, than people crowded in suburbs – mundane, caught up, no space – so I think that the isolation is the thing that makes the art. Or helps, anyway. I think that that's a very good...

F: So you draw from isolation? You draw from your environment? From the colours?

I: Yes.

F: Whereas what have you got in the city? You've got none of that stimulation have you, from a natural source.

I: Well, I don't know what I'd be – I'm sure in the city you'd find your stimulation somewhere, and draw on that, unless you're sort of there and grow up – I mean the isolation in the city might be... I think that it's not so much where you are, maybe it's the isolation.

F: It doesn't matter whether you're in the city or the country, it's whether you're isolated and lonely.

I: Yes, for some people can draw out and send them on a path – on a journey.

F: So, your art to you – the value of it? What does it mean to you, your art

I: Well my art is me. There's no separation, there's no...um yes. It's just me. And um, I suppose I express myself in one way in some things, and then I express myself – but it's still my art, it's still me; how I plant the veggie garden, how I do the washing, how I....it's there. And I've been known to rearrange the washing line because the colours weren't right. Because that day I needed colours a certain way, that was sort of a day that – yeah. And so, maybe I just can't say this is my art or this is 'this' because it's all me.

F: And without your art you wouldn't be you.

I: Sorry?

F: Without your art, you wouldn't be you.

I: Yes. The way I dress, the clothes I make...

F: It's all an aesthetic judgment, an aesthetic combination.

I: Yes, the whole time. And I'm really grateful I came up from Melbourne – became very isolated and didn't fit in. It's been a long journey, I've always been creative, probably from the day I was born. But then, being isolated just bought...

F: No training?

I: I went to Art School back in the '70s. I was a PIT in Melbourne.

F: P.I.T?

I: I don't know what it's called now – um, Preston Art...Phillip's Institute at the time – now it's changed, I don't know what it is now – it's probably La Trobe University. So yes, I've had art training.

F: I asked my supervisor...

I: And I must admit, because I went down every week from Horsham, I had two children at the time and I thought 'I've got to go to art school...'. I was very disappointed. It was – and I found it was because I was older, learnt a lot about myself, and the isolation, it gave me a different attitude and a different outlook to – I was probably one of the oldest at the time, um – and so...I thought it was more about theory and words, rather than doing.

F: But now you've changed your mind, it's about doing?

I: It's about doing. Always has been about doing.

F: So the theory is justifying your doing, but who cares?

I: Yes! And that's exactly it! And that gets me so angry because it's like we were being – we had to talk about your work and explain it and explain it, and it does not allow the person who's come to view to be part of it. And to take away their image of what you've done, and be part of your work. Okay, a few guidelines maybe – this is the direction I'm going – or...but to actually put into words doesn't allow any give and take, and that's what art's about – it's about a give and take.

F: I find because a lot of the studies are looking at the philosophers,

I: Yes,

F: and it seems as if they've taken over art and very little is sort of the artist speaking. I just read Mary Kelly – I don't know if you know her...?

I: Yes.

F: She wrote a book on it – and I don't know maybe you do get a lot of artists writing about their feelings but it tends to be 'what is art?'; 'the instinct of art' – I've read so many of these books.

I 2: Hello?

F: Hello. Hiya Max!

I 2: I'm Rosemary's par-owned...

I: maniac.

F: Lovely to have company – I love company...Yes and I feel as if the philosophers tend to make us think that we have to know what it all is, rather than that which I'm saying it comes – it's an evolutionary need to survive, an instinct that we need to create. And that's enough, in a way. Um, but yes too much is written and not enough done.

I: Yes.

F: But you seem to value the viewer a lot...?

I: Well, what is art without a viewer?

F: Well, it could be a sense of your own um, aesthetic needs to do it.

I: But then you become the viewer.  
F: Oh, I see, so there's no viewer of it – I've been looking when you said viewer as an audience.  
I: Ah yes, the audience. But there's always a viewer, be it an outside or yourself  
F: ...internally.  
I: and without that, there's no art. Or that's how I see it anyway.  
F: I think a lot of people agree with that. There's a lot written about it, which is what you're saying you know, is it necessary to...  
I: It's not necessary.  
F: Do you think artists are born? When you said you...  
I: I'll put it this way – I think we're all born artists. Some develop, some find their form in different ways, and sometimes there's a lot of stuff that's done that we don't call art. But to me, if someone's been creative, it's all part of it. So I think yes we are all born, but then it's the developing of it and how we develop. I had a sister who was extremely talented – but never developed it.  
F: But never wanted to, maybe?  
I: No, she had another agenda.  
F: But that's fine.  
I: Oh yes...  
F: But that's what I'm saying, do you think she was born to be an artist though? She wasn't, otherwise she would have been. Do you know what I mean? We all have our journey, we all have our path.  
I: Um...yes, yes.  
F: We either have the opportunity – I think we all have anyway, we all do it. But some are lucky enough as you say to have this sort of – tool box.  
I: It doesn't mean that you have to go and do whatever, but um, yes. Anyway.  
F: So how did your art get? So you came out here...and how did your art get...? You started off with what particular medium to get here  
I: I started off as a painter, in my youth. I always made my own clothes, always a dress designer and made my own coats in the '50s and '60s. Always. Worked in the gallery, worked in community art for quite a number of years. Worked in commercial pottery – small commercial pottery – for 12 years. And now I work with felt, a felt artist. So that's sort of the area – sculpture is what I was mainly interested in, and that's sort of with clothes – clothes are mainly sculpture. Um, yes. And felt I find a really interesting medium that's just at the beginning of being explored and developed, which is quite a fascinating thing. And probably I'd do a lot, or an exhibit from time to time, and do stuff. Um...  
F: So your flags and things like this is fantastic to get those out.  
I: Did you see those? Yes, I've done a couple of years ago I did a big felt tent that was in behind the um, council and the water board. I was making a statement about what they didn't do about the water.  
F: So you want to be a political artist. You have something to say?  
I: Oh I think I've always been on the political side.  
F: You remind of – I've never met her – you remind me...(tape cuts)  
I: ...what are you going to do with this isolation, how am I going to manage it? How am I going to preserve fruit all day? That's a fantastic thing – make jams. Wonderful.  
F: But that's the only art that some women can do.  
I: That's not the only art – it's *their* art.  
F: It is, yes I'm saying that's  
I: Yes!  
F: That's the way they can...they find comfort within the boundaries of what they can do, but then somehow they manage to do it – it will be interesting to see what the CWA do today with the cakes, it will be just amazing I'm sure, and it's so necessary for them to have that.  
I: Yes, but I wouldn't...don't put it down. It's really a very important – and it is an art form. I did it when I was at art college I did a thing on the CWA and their art forms, which is really quite fascinating. And I was really quite impressed. The dedication that it took some of the women – you look at their bottles of fruit, they are absolutely beautiful art pieces, you look at their crocheting – absolutely beautiful art pieces. So much of that is gone, even now. Um,

F: ...you loved those. Crocheted the reef,  
I: Yes.  
F: It's a um...(tape cuts)  
I: It's full of life and energy. Training will kill that. Because training says, 'this is the right way to do it; this is the right way, you don't go out of this'. And I think that's when I went to art school I found so negative. Because there were rights and wrongs, and...  
F: It's really what has gone past that they're...not what has gone ahead.  
I: Yes.  
F: They can only tell what's 'right' from experience of past, and the appreciation.  
I: There's no allowing for that open. Because once you've been put a doubt in your mind that something's not right, or that this is the way to do it, I mean, there are people that always break out of that, but the majority say 'I've got to go down this line' which is a theme that comes back to maybe the same as everyone else. Having to conform.  
F: But I don't think...yes, or a traditional institutional artist as such, I mean I think it is because they are reflecting on it that they do go ahead rather than conform, I mean it's the nature of them.  
I: And as I say – it's people like Corinne, she would not have fitted in!  
F: Oh no. But it's...and those dresses! I mean...  
I: Yes, she just...  
F: Stunning stuff. I just can't understand why no one's seen it and can see what you can do. And I guess...  
I: Well maybe, you're not always after that.  
F: Well it's nice to get recognition of communicating with someone, and someone's sort of getting some sense.  
I: I suppose it's knowing your own value – and being happy with your own value.  
F: It's nice if someone else can see that value too though.  
I: Yes, yes.  
F: It's just amazing. She was just amazing.  
I: She is.  
F: She said it's just a drive, she just can't not do it. It's just manic, it's sort of like, compulsive to her. She can't not – as you say, and me, even your shoes here are red with the red of the ribbon, you can just see it automatically, everything is just sort of designed and spaced.  
I: It's all just natural – what you do. How you do it.  
F: So the future for you? To stay here?  
I: I don't know what the future holds – yes.  
F: Immediate future?  
I: Immediate future?  
F: Your work is felt – the medium, your felt work?  
I: Yes. Just doing.  
F: Being left alone.  
I: Whatever. I mean it's good to go and see what's happening. I do a bit of teaching in fibre forums. So you're sort of meeting people from other textile areas, from within Australia and overseas, but yes, you come back.  
F: University isn't it? It's just a huge university isn't it. You know how you see birdlife, how they...  
I: Yes, it is. And I suppose as I get older the need for drive maybe isn't there as much. I don't know. I look at life differently, enough people have died, enough things have happened that you...  
F: Not tired? Not getting tired?  
I: No, it's not tired, but it's a...  
F: Peace?  
I: You have different values. Life is transitory. You know, when we're gone – we're gone. You know, when I die someone will come along – pile up my stuff, put it to the op shop if I haven't put them in the bottom of the rubbish heap and turned into mulch, which a lot of stuff goes to.  
F: Scarecrow ...  
I: Um, yes. Do I want to leave something behind? I don't know. Pieces all over the place in places.  
F: Nothing's worse than having to um...(tape cuts)



I: ...or more opportunities.

F: Well look at Corrine. She just picks up a piece of bark and she's got a bark bra! She's got this fantastic bra that she's just done. She walks out and she says 'this is our art – this is our art store'.

I: Yes.

F: Just go and gather what we need from the store today and she just goes out and gathers what she finds.

I: yes.

F: You don't have to go very far to find your tools and your material. I just had this thing there for a while to do um...(tape cuts)

I: ...different artists see isolation in different ways too. I mean the busiest city would say they're isolated – don't fit in.

F: I was looking at a group in America – women coming out of prisons in a very male culture, there's a big art program for them, you know so expressing themselves has been amazing. So out of that isolation of prison or something has come this art.

I: Yes. Well there was this interesting thing, I don't know what program it was I think it was either SBS or ABC, and First World War I think...England...some big manor house was turned into a hospital for men, and the mother – this chap that was telling the story and was showing this beautiful embroidery. And she got all these men in hospital embroidering, and they made this amazing patchwork. And it was on their regiment shields and different things. That was just amazing. And that sort of came out of that sort of isolation of those men, it was fine work, it was beautiful work. That was just recently – just quite amazing.

F: I'll have to look that up. It's quite interesting there's a book that's just come out about homeless men in gardens. They're doing these amazing gardens in America or something.

I: Yes. Yes.

F: I just read this amazing book on the beginning of cotton...and the factories where the women used to go and they weren't allowed to talk and it was loud, and the fumes, and it was quiet 72 hours of the week or something, and the girls as a religious release they made the Laos magazine on poetry, and they started writing this magazine on poetry and stories out of this.

I: Yeah. What comes out of things is quite amazing. Kay around the corner – she um, the most traditional, straight farmer's wife, she writes the most amazing poetry.

F: Oh okay.

I: Are you up the road? She's only been married ten years but it's her second marriage and she's 75. She came down from the Blue Mountains, she'd been an art teacher and head of TAFE and so she's came down to the Wimmera isolated and turned a shed into a studio and drawing and print.

F: Is this the underground house or something

I: Pardon?

F: She's got an underground house?

I: Yes, yes.

F: Oh I must get there.

I: Yeah, so you know, she's not a farmer's wife, nothing comes near it. When Kay is a farmer's wife, she ticks every box. Even to ironing pants with a seam down it. And he poetry is just fantastic.

F: Do you reckon she'd be available to talk to

I: I don't know.

F: Do you know her well, at all

I: Oh yes. So um, but you know people will have different ways of dealing or coping...I don't know if this has been any use to you at all.

F: No it is, it is. (tape cuts)

I: ... You know, then there's the person that does the same scene and I would call that high art, but then the others are craft people.

F: It's necessary, it's necessary. Well, I'm defining craft as that you know the end result, that you nearly know the pattern and it has an ending.

I: You know how crocheting is art – you can have painting – I mean people think art is painting...

F: No.

I: ...and it's not.

F: No, I'm saying it's aesthetic expression.

I: Photography – your snapshot is just...

F: Yeah. That is art. And then I'm saying then art goes to a capital 'A' Art which is recognized by galleries, or even people communicating to people and such.

I: But see I think sometimes I see 'that' as *that*.

F: As your craft?

I: I think sometimes...

F: Your craft can lead this way into 'that'.

I: No I think it's the other way round – I think that sometimes I think that art is actually, that arrow goes that way, because there is – you find some people's work, they've made a name for themselves, they do not go past. They don't extend it anymore.

F: Well I think Tim Storrier with his flame sought to do that. You know, his things like this. And you know, once they took commercial success...

I: And that to me becomes craft.

F: Yes. You got where I am. And I'm saying here, your utilities, where you've just got your aprons – utility. There's no craft involved, you're not adding to it, so it's just the process.

I: But then you can find some...

F: But that goes back to here because you then recycle you have...(tape cuts)

I: ...Yeah, *but* in some people's work they might just make aprons, but that's what they do with them.

F: Oh well that could become art.

I: And then *that* can become art.

F: Yes. It can become art.

I: But I reckon we get caught up with what's going on with this high Art that's in galleries and we don't see...

F: But you have to categorise it somehow. You've got to...

I: I know. But so many get to that point and they just stay at it. There's no stretch and there's no development, because they know it's a saleable item, they know that their work is recognized.

F: So what could you...? (tape cuts)

I: ...and we're working on something, you'll go somewhere and you'll open up that book, and I have not seen that. I have not read that book, and it comes back to that thing there's no new idea, it's all creation – it's all been done before. You look at some of the most beautiful carvings...some of the um...

F: It might just be that the meaning being different makes it creative, though. The meaning that you had...

I: What I'm saying is you look at some of them and they could have been done today. They're modern but they're...

F: They're still saying something –

I: Yes.

F: They're still saying the same language which is still communicating.

I: Yes, yes.

F: I was like that with um...(tape cuts)

I: The money. So I've not had money to spend on things.

F: Books in libraries cost nothing.

I: So, yeah. It's sort of...and I suppose I've worked in a gallery for years, as a curator. I think I got working on the other side...I think you get a bit browned off. You see...not with all people, but in a lot of ways, it's shallow, it's a game. Who gets in there and who doesn't...and who...yeah.

F: Marketing.

I: Yeah. Pardon?

F: Marketers have taken over creative – or greed.

I: Oh no I think the art world has done it very nicely for themselves.

F: It's nonsense when things like these come up and you read about them.

I: Yes. So...but then get together with a group of people and it's not formalized you just work together as a group and I think that's really inspiring. And, the last couple of years teaching in this group – I hate teaching – but seeing people inspired and seeing them take something that you've given and run with it...

F: They get it. They just get it.

I: And I just felt inspired by that. I feel as though that's probably where I have achieved. And if I can stress to them that what I'm teaching is only one way – it's not the only way – you can achieve the same in many, many ways.

F: Of course...mm.

I: Never felt the same way twice. That's my challenge. Develop. Keep on developing yourself, keep on coming up with new ways, new...yeah.

F: You've got it in...(tape cuts)

I: In high school. Because I hadn't been able to achieve that when I was younger. And then...

F: It was a disappointment?

I: Yes.

F: Yeah, you don't think you know, knowing the history of art...?

I: Oh I enjoyed the history of art. Yes. I'm just...I can't quite...

F: It depends on your teacher. Like if you'd been the teacher, you're not inhibiting these women who are coming and learning from you – it depends on your teacher.

I: Yes it does.

F: And where they're part...the acknowledgement you know? There's everything! That's not good, bad or anything, it's just fantastic that you're out there!

I: It's guidance, rather than

F: Mentoring. Yeah.

I: yes. It's that 'come along this track and see what they're doing for a while', 'go down that track or this track'. Go and get that experience.

F: Yeah, to have a very generous teacher.

I: Mm. And I've – I think I really probably think that having a few life experiences...

F: You can't be a good artist without a life experience behind you.

I: It adds to your work, it adds to your body.

F: It's like trying to be a psychologist without experience.

I: Mm. Otherwise it's hollow...it's not hollow, it's just missing...an 'essence' I think.

F: Mm.

I: Yeah.

F: I think we're on the same...(tape cuts)

## END OF RECORDING

### TRANSCRIPT OF SECOND RECORDING:

I: My house is my art as well.

F: So how did you...did you buy a block of land?

I: I came out of a marriage with a little bit of money, and I didn't want to rent because I knew I wouldn't get out of the cycle, and I found this house for \$12,000.

F: Oh it was a house?

I: It was a house. Derelict, no windows, ceiling's gone, no power, no hot water...no water full stop. I carted water for ages, and so I've done it all. Slept without windows and doors and ceilings for years and still...oh come in.

F: Do we get to see it? ...Oh that's...so you still don't have electricity by choice?

I: No. Well...money. I've got a power cooler down there, but for \$20,000 or a lot more you can put power on. So this was the big kitchen, there was a big sink there. They were a family, they lived here. And this was the laundry and the separator room. So...the old copper I couldn't get that out. And I wash up outside.

F: So your head is here. This is inside your head?

I: Mm. This is...

F: We can read what you're thinking and who you are.

I: Put all this up – hammer, hammer, hammer. Took down...

F: All recycled stuff that you've found?

I: Not all...

F: Right. Fabulous. Oh you're still renovating!

I: Yes. I'm up there.

F: Oh look at it.

I: I'm shifting my bedroom into there. That was the best room of the house.

F: It was? And this is the last room to do.

I: Yes. Not bad for 25 years. I've got to do it before I'm 70. I've got five years left.

F: What do your children think of you?

I: They know I'm mad. I'm the oldest hippy they know, they say. That's a gown that um...won a big prize at the Fringe Festival.

F: So it's made out of?

I: Felt.

F: Oh okay. So you use your felt apart from – oh well I guess it's flags and...

I: Sorry?

F: Your felt becomes flags and dresses and?

I: Yes, it's all...

F: Utility things – well I guess it's not utility things.

I: Creative. I call them sculptures.

F: Okay. You're a felt sculpturist at the moment.

I: Yeah. Felt artist.

F: I love the door, with the Beville...

I: That was given to me. (tape cuts) .... This is for an exhibition.

F: And the lightness is just the way you stretch it out?

I: Yes, cobweb. That's that one on it, I think it doesn't look very good there, but it was part of an exhibition. That's another one...that's a water fairy.

F: So what do you love about the felt? I mean...

I: Well it's tactile, it's soft. That's the silk – I like the silk. I love the way that...it becomes very, very paintable. It's got that paintable finish when you've...

F: You don't paint it? Do you?

I: No, no. But when it's very...it's just sort of set colours and when you felt it together and shrink it you just get these amazing things happen.

F: Oh look at the map you've done – sort of a mappy idea. That's a nice idea.

I: That was the roof of that. It was recycled and I embroidered all the birds that come to my water hole. That was on there. And it's all on the creek.

F: It's all felt?

I: Yes. It got really wet, that was up for a fortnight.

F: So you knew from that it must be...

I: Yes, yes.

F: What gallery's this?

I: Oh that's not, that's just out in Horsham, in the street.

F: So what made you get into felt?

I: Um, I didn't want to get my hands dirty again. I saw potential that this is an area, a very very ancient art that we're relearning, but it's got potential to go a very long way. It's only just in the beginning of...and you can make something quite solid – that was after a week, I love what happened to it. It's beautiful. I like the development, I love seeing what's going to happen.

F: So you work in collaboration really; you don't know what'll happen in a way...so...

I: Oh! Exactly. And I have an idea of it, because I've worked for so long with it, so I've got a bit of an idea, but then what actually comes out – is sort of...this was a new series, this work in the flat was a first time, this is just a couple left over from this exhibition. And that was about the wetlands, and this is what happens when the water's in the creek – you get the colours and the shades, and everything, and then as it dries up, and then dry. Trees dry, and there's another water one.

F: So the colours that you determine? The range of colours?

I: It's like um, before I start I'll get out my palette, I'll get out my fibres, the colours that I want. I'm working in strong colours here. So I'll get out my colours, what I want, and I'll put them into piles, just like you would with a palette.

F: You've made it like that?

I: Yes...

F: You've made it and dyed it?  
 I: Yes. I buy it – because I'm lazy – I buy it in slivers, and then over dye.  
 F: And that is made...what is felt?  
 I: Felt is just fleece. Sheep. That's strong. That's corridor.  
 F: Would you be interested in this woman that dyes with mushrooms and...  
 I: Oh yes. I did a lot of natural dye, um, years ago.  
 F: But you're over that, you don't want to get your hands dirty.  
 I: Yeah. But, these colours are expressing what I wanted, what I needed.  
 F: So you have themes? Like this is your water...  
 I: Yeah, well I've been asked to have an exhibition – or part of an exhibition on this theme or that theme.  
 F: Oh they give you themes do they?  
 I: Well...yes. This has been sort of part of a group in the themes, and this was on wetlands. So that was...  
 F: Are you working on something at the moment? ... Well I guess the flag.  
 I: Well these are the ones that I've just finished and that was on the environment...the elements. That's that, and that's that big one that has got the map.  
 F: No, don't take it out – don't take it out.  
 I: I'll just show you some clothes; one extreme to the other. (laughs) That's a scarf  
 F: It leads itself to maps and things – the texture sort of is something honest or something, something about it that is very mappy.

**END OF RECORDING**  
**END OF TRANSCRIPTION.**

Facilitator: Um, and...what it um, how it...what it means to you, I guess. And how the environment affects you and things like that.

Interviewee: Okay.

F: So how did you get to be up here with it all

I: Well the short version is that I'm actually English, and I've been living in Australia since 2001, but I was here beforehand just as a traveler and I fell in love with the country. My partner and I we just completely loved the place and the effect that it had on people as well, how people behave in relation to each other as well. And we came back, we traveled for four and a half months all around Australia on a motorbike, we went away we came back, we got trail bikes and explored quite remote areas, and spent another four and a half months all through the top end, the Kimberleys...

F: Oh right.

I: Yeah! Really quite wild.

F: So that's your bike out the front?

I: That's my bike. And after that we decided to move to Australia, and I did a post-graduate course here, and we moved eventually. But how I ended up here! (laughs) We ended up buying a house about fifteen minutes away from here, in a smaller town...

F: What was the name of it?

I: It's called Serviceton on the border between Victoria and South Australia, and we bought the house because we were living in a motor-home and traveling and working, and we decided we needed somewhere because we're big book collectors, and we ended up finding this incredibly cheap house. Then I heard about shows and performances that were happening in Nati so – by 'Y Space' – Errol Dart's company and I came to the show and I was totally impressed – that's my background, theatre, so um, I ended up working with people here and ended up working here more and more and started up a company called *Transvision Arts*, and then moved here, actually you may know her – Sheree Pilkington – she teaches at Ballarat Uni, she teaches Event Management. She lived in this house and I ended up living here with her and she ended up moving to Ballarat to be with her partner. Yeah, and we started *Transvision Arts*, and since then *Transvision Arts* has sort of become a little more on the backburner and I do other projects with the theatre.

F: And this is solely within this town's theatre, is it?

I: Um, yeah, well these are actually based in Horsham. We are their company in residence at the Wesley Performing Art's Centre. Um, and so, there are quite a lot of people here who are – like Mary French – she's the visual artist, that also dabbles very much in Performing Arts because she makes puppets and masks and things like that and she's in the company. Hannah French, her daughter also was a visual artist, and Greg Pritchard, another visual artist who's also interested in Performance and Writing – he's a writer. And Gillian Pierce. And so we've kind of got all these people, there's kind of an Internationally known Companies in Natimuk. So there's a lot of people doing their own thing and we gathered everybody together and said what can we do as a group of people. And that's how 'Thieves' was launched a year ago. And that was our first show, our first creative development as a puppet show, there's one here, the puppet's there. I write it based on a devised theatre process with the group, doing improvisations and things like that. So yeah, I'm going to do another version of it next year.

F: And so that's full time?

I: Um, nothing's full time. No artist runs full time. Everything's project based and we write funding applications for some projects. We're planning for a year or three ahead because you know basically there's a certain amount of funding that we can apply for with these organizations. The whole thing's a bit of a gamble, you have to write the application and you may or may not be lucky or have the right thing at the right time or be articulate enough. So um, yeah, this one we applied for funding...

F: Poligot, well that's famous in Melbourne isn't it?

I: Poligot, Sue Giles the director, she was in... we got a little bit of funding from the Malthouse Theatre to get her to come up and work with us.

F: In-house artist? Just a visit?

I: She came up about three times...

F: Okay.

I: So it was really helpful, she's a great person and a great inspiration. And um, and that was through Malthouse Theatre and got Regional Arts funding as well.

F: And you do all the Administration do you, as well?

I: Yeah.

F: Must be a nightmare making... I don't know I've never really... gosh, it just seems too daunting to me to ever think of writing things.

I: Yeah, it's a necessary evil at this point

F: So you write the plays

I: This one? I wrote through a devised process. I wrote the original play, which was for the Malthouse, which was a 20-minute piece. And then we wanted to kind of develop the idea and use life-size puppets, and um, so what happens is I go into rehearsal with an improvisation task and I record the process and the result of that and then I bring that away and listen to it and take out what works for the big story and I hand it back to the cast and they work on it. So it's a really quite a big collaboration. Yeah. I really like that method because you get the best from your performers, and... we've got all different skills, like nobody is really a trained actor, so people bring different things. We've got a lot of directors... we've all got *great ideas* (whispers) but not necessarily, you can't actually do it. (laughs) So um, it's very, very interesting. We've got lots of little things in the process in Thieves theatres. Kind of a bag of things to do, different performance pieces and some are conceptual and some are more drama based, narrative based. But this was quite interesting because the original kernel of the story came from a project I was working with Youth-In-Action, with kids and youth in drought, and they were talking about how the drought which has been 12 years or whatever here impacts on people. And one girl was saying how her father had to kill her horse, he had to put it down because he couldn't afford the Vet bill. So that was the beginning of what became 'Sky Juice' which then became 'The Storm'.

F: And that was just through conversation?

I: Yeah that was just through a drama project that I worked with them, yeah.

F: And it just came out through conversation?

I: Yeah, they do anonymous feed back, so they have questions they can answer then they give their stories then I draw a story to present drama back to them – the theatre back to them, yeah.

F: As we talk I'll take photos. Oh well you don't really have a um, a storeroom sort of, a studio do you?

I: Um, not really, I have a room full of costumes next door.

F: Did you make the costumes?

I: No. (laughs) You know, there are certain things I get made.

F: So apart from a writer you're a producer?

I: Yeah, I write, I produce, I perform sometimes. Um, yeah. Administrator. The whole thing.

F: Okay, so what do you think the environment brings to your work, and brings to you?

I: (laughs) It's a continual question, the question of living here. And why someone, you know, you're 34, you're into the theatre, making performance and you're living out here?

F: And English...

I: And English, yeah. But I think this place is um, very compelling landscape to live in, and even though I keep having to review it – I do an annual review of how I feel about it.

F: Oh do you?

I: Yeah.

F: You give yourself a performance sort of?

I: Yeah! (in a joking voice) 'Okay, sit down with yourself, have a conversation'. Yeah, I think with me um, there's a certain element of 'nowness' here. What I mean by that is, Dennis Potter – he's a playwright and screenwriter and talks about 'nowness'. It's really about not forgetting the past, but it's about um...

F: Well it goes on from 'The Power of Now' idea sort of, that book...or?

I: Um, I didn't like that book (laughs)

F: Okay! Well.

I: It's not so much that, but having the capacity just to be. Just moments. I find that here I can do that.

F: So do you think it's a form of meditation?

I: It's a form of meditation, but just without having to try to actually sit down. It's just a present, just being here. In terms of creativity the 'nowness' or the access to it is really necessary to um, to build resilience and to keep resilient in what is a very hard area to make a living out of. And you know, to keep working, um...it's sort of a resource. So I've got to go away and work in Melbourne or overseas or what-have-you and I come back here and it's...

F: So you work in the area too?

I: I work in Horsham and the region as well.

F: Doing like your...?

I: Yep.

F: Okay. So it is your passion as well as your work, I mean?

I: Yes, absolutely.

F: So you're not going out and having to get a job to subsidize it?

I: No.

F: So it's completely full on writing and theatre, and improvisation and all that?

I: Yeah. It's um, I suppose, it's not so much a passion as a requirement of my existence. It's not something which is – it underlies everything. It's like you with your barbwire art you needed to make it – and here it's not a case of whether you make it or not, or whether you're passionate about it or not, you just have to make it.

F: Well that's very much what Rob and Rosemary were saying.

I: Yeah.

F: I mean I've only really got two questions, which are What value do you put on your art, and um, How did you begin sort of thing, and she said 'My art is me.' Like there's no question. Like, take my art away and I don't exist. So it seems, and likewise talking to this woman Corrine, she sort of said it's sort of addictive. I can't help it.

I: You can't not.

F: She can't help but see something there that I've got to make into something, you know. So she walks outside of her farm every day and she sees something and it's sort of like she's out into an Art storeroom or something.

I: It is. It's a beautiful thing. I love living here, you've got this great architecture of the silos, which to me are just amazing.

F: They're stunning aren't they?

I: They're stunning. They're evocative, they, you know, you can think about them as spaceships or venues, you know, and they change with the light and different sounds when they've got different things in them. You know, for me like a farmer, or this place that we live in – a farmer's the most creative people, you know they may not call themselves artists...

F: Absolutely, they sculpt the land everyday, they're out there ploughing.

I: Absolutely. Yeah.

F: Do you know an artist James Dowling, he lives on a property? He does mounds of Mallee roots like nests.

I: Oh!

F: And he's a farmer.

I: Oh yes, okay.

F: So yes I agree with you. And in fact the...(tape cuts)

I: You know the thing is, is that they have their tools. You know, I sit here and it's like 'Farm TV' you know. (laughs) I have here the farmer comes...

F: Oh yes, it's like a scene – you look through your window and he's got his job, he's got his theatre that he's acting. Today's chapter is clean the silos or empty the silos.

I: That's right. And also the tools he chooses to use at a certain time is like an artist. You know, whether you're choosing to use a metaphor or a synonym, or a brush, you know and he's using his objects as new toys trapped in today or whatever. And then he goes out and basically paints his landscape around us.



F: So do you write about that? Have you written plays or anything like that?

I: I mean it has very much informed this 'Stormglass' but it informs... I wrote poetry and short stories, you know, it permeates you. You can't escape it. You're sitting here and watching this world around you. It totally inspired this puppet – this is the guy next door (whispers) he doesn't know it. He didn't come to the show, but you know. I watched him, he's a tall – a beautiful tall man, slightly slumped over, very gangly, and yeah, he's sort of rugged he sort of looks weathered and yeah, he inspired this character 'Muzzer'. Not the characteristics but the puppet.

F: Yeah.

I: So yeah.

F: So, your art to you, the value put on it is?

I: The value... there isn't. You can't value it. (laughs) Do you know what I mean?

F: And what would you do if you didn't have it?

I: Um, in terms of, without saying – it's not religious, but in terms of a spiritual side I suppose it's a salvation. If I don't do it I don't have a meaning of life. I'm not a religious person in the sense of Christian, Jew, whatever, but if I don't... you know, it's the thing that I can attach my existence to. And I do it for myself, primarily but I'm a performing artist, I like audiences, which is a difficult thing out here, you know. First thing is I don't really have audiences! (laughs)

F: Well you could go out there and perform (laughs)

I: Yeah, maybe a bird! (jokes) I don't really have a problem. So there are downsides to living here, for sure. You know, audiences or having performers to work... (tape cuts)

F: And what do farmers and people like this think?

I: Well Natimuk is pretty special in this way, as I can tell you, it's history with people making art and performance art in our area. So you know, I did the landmark Lake Show which is not up here, um, it was a big community arts project with the Nati Fringe Festival, and it's all gathered stories all about the lake which is just over there which is now dry. And gathered stories from all the ladies and chaps around here and made a fictional story made from all those stories and a Greek myth and got community actors to do it, it was a radio show with images and things, and one of the main characters is a farmer. He's a farmer living out here, so there's starting to be – well very much so – a crossing over, because of people like Mary French and Gillian Pierce and Greg Pritchard, who just have worked hard to cultivate a good relationship or a communicable relationship between people. You know, the ring ins; the goats; that's the mountain climbers; and the arty-farty's – people like me – and then there's the locals; people who've lived here, you know families that have been buried in the cemetery down the road for three generations.

F: So do you tour at all?

I: Um this play here is going to be touring, but so far we haven't toured anything. We're not a company in a sense that, you know everybody has their different other creative endeavors or companies. So this 'Thieves' is a new idea, but this play will tour.

F: So hence the word 'Thieves' like you've been snatched away from all your areas.

I: Yeah, it's just going to be 'Thieves' and um, because our practices are so diverse and we're using the group to explore our own questions and our own artistic enquiry. So um you know, Greg might use the group to create a visual art installation or what have you.

F: So the schools around here?

I: No.

F: They don't? They don't encourage, you're not part of ...?

I: No. There isn't the culture of that yet. I mean, I go to work in schools and a few other people go to work in schools, particularly I use – because I use forum theatre, which is to explore social issues through performance. So I'm often called in to do body image work, um, teenage pregnancy which is one of the first jobs I had here. So this work – what I love about this area is that you wouldn't believe it considering all this farmland, it's actually not farming that employs most people – it's actually Health. And um, so in terms of social benefits of performance and theatre making and creativity it's starting to be really recognized so like Warracknabeel had a festival for healthy living, which I was an artist on with Mary French and we worked with that community for two years to make art events with their schools, and primary school groups and things.

F: What kind of therapies? I've been talking with, I've been up in... (tape cuts)

I: ...And that which we do, and then there's sort of in the middle area as well. So at the moment I'm doing something called House Project in Horsham, which is working with women who've experienced domestic violence. We're going to renovate an entire house as a performance art installation. So I'm working with a colleague and we're both working with a group to come up with the sounds and to renovate the house, which will be very interesting. It's a very powerful process, it's only been going on for a few months but already it's been quite intense. (laughs)

F: Immediately when you said...(tape cuts)

I: Oh there's so much. So much possibilities, and they've already come up with so many great ideas. So my work is sort of, both ends of the spectrum – there's community art which is connecting with people and the stories from over here, which is really important for me as a ring-in from overseas you know, is that in order to feel that I'm part of this community and part of this land I need to know the story and that's a really beautiful way to discover stories and a really good way of doing that is to go 'we're going to do this story, we're going to do this play, we're going to do this radio show! And we'd love to talk with you' so it's a good way to find out stories that way. For example this little garage here used to be the petrol station for this area, so everyone would come in here and you'd go round the other side

F: Oh, yeah the pump...

I: and this was the place to get fuel. It was the first one before Nati was even here. And you know, there's a massive wine cellar under this house, there's stories all around us. Um, yeah so it's sort of, it allows me access into the culture of this place. You know, it's quite cynical really – someone said 'oh Australia doesn't have culture, it has agriculture' (laughs) and I think um, if you're not cynical about it, actually in this area there's probably quite a large percent true but that's not a negative thing.

F: Why can't it have both?

I: Oh it absolutely has both.

F: So England's not your home? You're here, at the moment?

I: I'm Australian. Yeah.

F: Oh okay.

I: Yeah. I'm here, I'm definitely here.

F: Well it's a huge change. This sort of town is so Australian as you say, compared to England.

I: Yeah, yeah. I think being here is sort of affirming as well, to have space to roam around in as well. Yeah.

F: But you're so...it's so rich in vibrant people out here. As I said I've only seen two people this morning...(tape cuts)

I: (laughs) I do like puppets, but...that's right, I was talking about – the land's full of contradictions for me. You know, we do this creative growing and feeding people and the essential things, on the other hand you can see a collection of pesticides and herbicides and being on the, on the front of that practice. So sometimes I can't go on my regular walk or run, or cycle because it stinks and it hangs or whatever, and it's contradictions about control.

F: Do they know they've got a spy next door?

I: (laughs) they've got a spy...

F: You know...

I: Um, yeah. No, they don't.

F: ...(tape cuts)

I: We present other people's work that we like, um, so there's lots of little creative things going on amongst my employees and friends, so that keeps us sustained.

F: So loneliness isn't an issue?

I: Oh loneliness is, of course it's an issue, I mean loneliness...

F: Whether you're here or there. Country or city or anything...

I: Oh absolutely, and I think loneliness has got a bit of a negative wrap actually. Um...

F: Good thing?

I: It can be a very good source um, where you have to...

F: I think that's where Rosemary is coming from, the loneliness brings out so much where you have to nurture and not be lonely in a way.

- I: Well it gives one – me – the time. Sort of there's no distractions here except the birds. How would you not...?
- F: Aw, look at that. It's a privilege that they come and use your garden.
- I: Oh absolutely. I try and create a situation where they are very – they all drink in different ways and bathe in different ways so there's different options for different birds. (laughs) the trough over there is for the native honey-coloured, and they dive bomb.
- F: So you've got a few helping ramps for them
- I: And they like to dive, they just sit on the side of the fence and dive in it. And the parrots just like to stand there, um so there's all this going on out there. Like television.
- F: There's Andy Goldsworthy who...(tape cuts)
- I: ...The land inspires work directly. There's the stuff which kind of permeates through and becomes the sort of subject matter of the play like 'Stormglass', there's other which allows me the space – this land allows me the space to work so it doesn't actually inform it directly but without it I wouldn't be able to do the work; and then there's the direct relationship between the land and myself and so for example at the end of this road there's a um, wet-wind salt lake, so I've been very much inspired – that's Miter Lake over there. So I get, so I see this lake virtually every single day, and the Mallalukah Forest particularly fascinates me, so um, I'm working on a performance that will take place...
- F: On the lake...
- I: Not on the lake, in the Mallalukah Forest, which surrounds the lake, which is this incredibly mysterious place. These masks, which were made for the Lake Show which weren't actually used but were inspired by the landscape, and so I'm taking the masks back to the landscape which inspired them.
- F: And who were these made by?
- I: These were actually made by a local artist, whose name's Frank Tagglebou. And these were made for the Madder Lake Show, which I directed, which is a big community art show for the Fringe about five years ago. Yeah. And these are gourds, just locally made gourds. Yeah...
- F: So you know Jill's work do you?
- I: Yeah, absolutely, of course. I mean, yeah, the lake...
- F: Part of what?
- I: Part of being here is not being here. I have to ensure I go away in order to know where I'm flying from. And it's not escape, only this year I realized 'oh I'm escaping, stop escaping!' And I thought, no it's bullshit, I'm actually escaping in order to know where I'm from. Which is really quite different. So I went to Indonesia and got a residency with Asia Link and worked in Indonesia for a few months. Every other time I go back to the UK and I'm going back this year to Turkey and to England, but that's part of living here, is not being here. And it's such a beautiful thing to come back. It's extraordinary. Even if the mice have infested the house anyway.
- F: It's a problem here by the sounds of it.
- I: And this year particularly. My mum has this thing, she came to visit me this year, which was great, just her, she spent a month here. And initially of course she said 'Oh what are you doing here? How are you getting your needs met?' and rah-dee-rah, and then we had conversations about how the place if you choose – where you choose to live, the external landscape is often a reflection of your internal landscape. And um, I'm like well what do people think – oh it's big, flat, not very much going on, and highly agriculturalised, is that my internal landscape? Oh my god! – and actually no, it's so...the thing is here it's the expansiveness, it's the massive sky, the extremeness of the weather I love. It's this huge cinematographic land. It allows visions, big visions. It allows me to look far and look really close. And in Australian flora and fauna I find you have to look really close, because the flowers are really tiny, so you have to look at the microscopic and you've got these massive skies. And the gum trees, I'm a complete gum nut! So it is a reflection of my internal landscape, I'm very...
- F: You're very happy with that...Oh god your poor mother, she must have...
- I: No but she...the thing is when my father came another time – both came, and my Aunt, and said 'we can see why you're here'. Once they've been here for a while and just sort of shaken off the dust of living in the city and busy places, come here and actually you can just 'be' a lot easier. The problem with being is that you have to know how you're being.

And that's been my journey, because I've lived here in Nati for quite a while, but living here I have to really turn to myself as a creative person, just to kind of keep tapping back in to see how I want to be. And that's an ongoing journey, you have your moments where you think 'oh I can't stand this I need to see people, I need to...' um, but the longer I'm here the easier it is to make time and space, and the landscape work for me. As long as I have my little moments of going away and coming back. So yeah, it's been a journey for sure.

F: Mm.

I: Yeah, because I've lived in North London, and I've never been so isolated in my life, in a block of flats with 400 people. Isolation – you know, I feel connected to those little birdies there, or the farmer, we don't have big conversations, you know we talk about the weather or the fact that the pipelines have come in and what that means, but you know, stuff like that, I think isolation is when you want something that you don't have. And I think I'm okay, you know, at the moment. Ask me tomorrow, and it might be a different thing.

F: Well you're obviously finding enormous company in the people that you work with too, I would imagine. Stimulation. You could be going off out of farm and be with bland people...

I: No, with Nati it is an unusual place – the rock has drawn people, a lot of people from the city. People from the city tend to desire a community more because they...

F: Oh and they'll probably evolve out of that.

I: Yeah, and in doing so they want to bring a gift, which is their art or something, to their community that they work in. And that's what's happened here and why I was drawn to it. And with my art...

F: As long as someone doesn't take your bike away from you.

I: My motorbike - that would be terrible! I've got a bicycle that I use to collect my mail.

F: (laughs)

I: Um, this show that we did, before we became *Thieves* which was actually Greg and myself, this was inspired by the Winwin Lake, and we spent – well I spent lots of time there and we spent a whole day investigating the place and filming and imagery and so on, and it inspired this show, which is called 'Lit from Within' which is um, a big white inflatable space and we use projections inside the space, moving inside the space – movable projections, photographs, using the landscape as the backdrop and the character in the show.

F: Right. So most of your work has been inspired by your surroundings?

I: Yeah, kind of. And the people. And that's the Nati Fringe, over there. So the Nati Fringe runs every other year, and um...

F: Is it this year?

I: Um no. It's next year. Every odd year. Um...yeah that's called the Hay and Thespian Mardi-gra.

F: Is that you?

I: Yeah. So I practise, you can imagine me practicing my stilt walking down the street down here.

F: What a gorgeous shot that would be!

I: (laughs) Or you know, practicing I do a whole lot of other things, like the poi come out and I go and practise out there. All sorts of things. (laughs)

F: Go on, give us a practise, come on.

I: We should go outside, next to the silo.

F: Yeah that would be a good shot. So you're a performer, a ballet dancer, a singer...

I: Yeah, I'm not really a singer, no. Yeah, definitely. I performed yesterday at the Gallery, the Art Gallery. I dressed up as the ringmaster because they've got a circus exhibition, cross-dressing – and I haven't cross-dressed enough this year.

F: (laughs) Why not?

I: I know! It's a terrible thing to not...

F: (walking outside, taking photos)

I: Now I know what it's like, so I can sit in there...

F: And you know what it smells like...(tape cuts)

I: ...Fascinating, like liminality like performances and experiences you go through a process and come out different at the end. You know, performance traditionally, has very much been about that. Um, so, I was very much interested when I went to Indonesia in the trance

dances that they have there, trance dances – and in the past I have done quite a lot of whirling-dervish type dancing. Um, so at the Fringe Festival I made all the skirts and did a workshop on Whirling, in the Sufi tradition, and then they did a performance – the people who had done the workshop. There was also – the connections from where I’m from, the skirts were made out of the old bedding from the Wimmera Base Hospital. So it had this circle of life connection, I’ll show you...um. So the point is that Nati Fringe gives us a place where we can play with our creative ideas, so anything we have, we just go ‘oh I want to do something’ and we just go ‘yeah alright then’ and you just have to make it happen.

F: And what’s in the...can I come in the room? (tape cuts)...

I: (outside) ...And this is Bruce in camouflage, Bruce – he’s just normal.

F: (laughs)

I: And the story of Cordelia who’s a cow with black spots for one day, because in Indonesia they want to talk about cows, they also want to talk about pigs. Um, and yeah. This is about Cordelia, it’s a body image performance for kids, she doesn’t like her black spots because she thinks she looks like a sheep, so she jumps around the rainbow and she gets colourful spots. However, the humans think she’s a rainbow cow. But it’s okay, because Bruce comes to the rescue, like this, even though she’s been horrible to him the whole story, and then she goes back to being herself, which is totally acceptable to be.

F: Kids love that, hey? And it all comes in a suitcase. Lovely concept. (tape cuts)...as well, you have to be I guess.

I: Yeah, I do like sewing.

F: A bit of machine work...

I: There is a machine, yeah. So I’m going to Turkey – I’m going to Conyah to do some more training – whirling – and yeah...

F: And you go as an artist in residence or something like that?

I: My brother lives there so I’m just going to go stay with him. I’ll be an artist in residence at his house! (laughs)

F: (laughs) You are an artist in residence, I think. Okay. This is fantastic stuff. Do you know of any other...

**END OF RECORDING  
END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

Julie Bennett: Yep. Alright, have you got any questions from all that stuff I sent yesterday? The papers and stuff like that?

Amelia McIntyre: No, I don't think so.

Julie Bennett: You understand...

Amelia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: ...vaguely what I'm doing. [Laughs]

Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs] So why are you doing - you've gone back to school or have you been a student...

Julie Bennett: Well we moved up to the country from Melbourne quite some time ago. We've always had properties and it was a big change for me. My family always had a part time farm at Lancefield and things like that early on. It was just through my own experience I guess. I wasn't a person who was a cooker and a cleaner and a preserver at all and I'd come from a history of pretty well art, I guess, in advertising.

Amelia McIntyre: That'd be interesting.

Julie Bennett: Well that was in Melbourne for sort of 20 years and then you go up there and things. It was just literally what the paper said. I just had to start expressing myself so I looked around at what I could find. I wasn't close to shops, we're about an hour away from a major town so I started pulling down fences or using the angle grinder to cut up the 44 gallon drums and cut them into squares and stitch them up with bale twine. I mean I just started using my environment and I did say to friends that if it wasn't for this I just wouldn't survive out here.

Amelia McIntyre: No, I can understand that too.

Julie Bennett: So though I didn't play the normal role of most of my neighbours I guess, it was a bit lonely in that way...

Amelia McIntyre: But did you find they accepted you, even though you were different?

Julie Bennett: Well the farmers themselves, not the wives necessarily, the farmers, like the next door neighbour got really involved with finding the barbed wire for me because he was a - oh I got some more for you.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, I found that sort of thing too.

Julie Bennett: Have you? Yeah, it's the men that sort of relate to me in a lot of ways than the women.

Amelia McIntyre: Although I found that the women have also been very accepting. I think quite often country eccentricity, if you call it that, which quite often artwork can be if it's not the traditional form, is looked upon as something that's accepted. I have found that anyway. I've always said that we're an eccentric family and we've been supported in that. Like with the costumes, I've had gentlemen bring me in their sets of tails and tell me about their glory days of dancing. These shed lamp shades here someone brought in because they were going to take them to the tip. We're lucky. We're on the tip route so we get lots of things brought here because they know that Amelia can use them. What's she going to do with them?

Julie Bennett: Yeah, I mean the tip is my favourite place.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes. So I've found that there's been an acceptance of what I do and in some ways I think there's a pride in what I do by the town as well. They'll put things in the paper and I'll be surprised sometimes because oh, here's something. [Laughs] They've just accepted us. My husband's a generational St Arnaudite or whatever you want to call it.

I came in and married him. He's much older than I am. He's just turned 62, I've just turned 40. So there was a bit of an acceptance issue there when I first came here.

Julie Bennett: From where? Where did you come from?

Amelia McIntyre: I came from another tiny little redneck town, Wedderburn, which is just across there.

Julie Bennett: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: This is Annabella and this is...

Julie Bennett: Hi Annabella, Julie.

Amelia McIntyre: ...Sylvia over here. Sylvia's our 17 year old.

Julie Bennett: You can all get behind mum. I'll just be taking photos randomly as mum - just very, very relaxed photos. It's just what's called documentary, they're not set or anything like that.

Sylvia McIntyre: [Unclear] standing [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: I've always been involved - I got involved in everything that I could because I think it's important that the children are part of the community. With what I've done it's always just been accepted as being a bit mad.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: We've always done different things.

Julie Bennett: So how did you come to start, like you came from a small town?

Amelia McIntyre: We originally came up from the Dandenong Ranges. We lived at Emerald. Mum was offered out of the blue to run our museum and coffee shop over in Wedderburn and mum had always done craft and things so I think it's just hereditary, my great grandmother [unclear] just picked things up [unclear].

Julie Bennett: So it's within the family? So it wasn't training or anything like this?

Amelia McIntyre: No, this lot are brilliant. They're all incredibly talented with what they do.

Julie Bennett: Well you probably don't have a computer and TV as a normal day.

Amelia McIntyre: We do. [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: I can tell you, it's the worse thing.

Amelia McIntyre: Shane's quite talented too. I needed a tommy gun. Did that get taken back or did it get hired out the other day or is it still there?

Sylvia McIntyre: No, it's gone I think.

Amelia McIntyre: So he carved me one out of a veranda post with a chainsaw. So if I've needed things that I can't do he's had the ability to do it. He's always said he can't but he can. So it's just...

Julie Bennett: Eight children?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, just the eight.

Julie Bennett: Just the eight?

Amelia McIntyre: Just the eight. Shane said he wanted a large family. I said I'd never get married and never had children. I was married by the time I was 21. Ridiculous. [Laughs]

Julie Bennett: You said you'd never have children?

Amelia McIntyre: Never get married, never have children. I'd be independent. But having an older husband who desperately wanted children has been wonderful because I've been allowed to do what I want to a large extent.

Julie Bennett: In what way did the children...

Amelia McIntyre: If I haven't been - because I'll prioritise things probably in the wrong way - to me housework isn't of major importance, he'll do the dishes and he'll do the cooking. He'll do what needs to be done.

Julie Bennett: He's not a masseur as well is he? I mean he'd be ideal then wouldn't he?

Amelia McIntyre: He's very chauvinistic in a lot of ways. He's had to have a lot of training [laughs] but I've been very lucky in that way because I have the best of both worlds.

Julie Bennett: So you get a great support for what you do?

Amelia McIntyre: Sometimes I don't but I don't blame him because I'll spend a couple of weeks working on a project and I'll work 'til I drop because I've got this, it's got to come out.

Julie Bennett: So when you say a project is it for a person or is it...

Amelia McIntyre: Some are just crafts but this is my love, this is what I do.

Julie Bennett: Do you exhibit or is it a very personal sort of...

Amelia McIntyre: I have been asked to but I've just never really got around to it because something's happened, another baby or something and I don't know enough of the ins and outs to how to go about these sorts of things also.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: Now what I do is called Farm Art or what else do they call it Sylvia?

Sylvia McIntyre: Ag Art.

Amelia McIntyre: Ag Art.

Julie Bennett: You're proud of mum?

Sylvia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: You're just so used to it, it doesn't matter.

Amelia McIntyre: I think they're so used to it.

Julie Bennett: [Unclear]?

Amelia McIntyre: Oh yeah, she's done very well.

Julie Bennett: They're all following on from you okay.

Amelia McIntyre: Well it's really hard to keep up with them sometimes. What it involves is making wearable art from things you find on a farm and it's using two sections, avant-garde and designer and [unclear].

Julie Bennett: So where did you concept from?

Amelia McIntyre: These are from the field days.

Julie Bennett: Just from field days? You went to field days, you saw people doing...

Amelia McIntyre: No, I actually read about it in a magazine and rang up and said can I enter please. They said the entries have closed but yes you can.

Julie Bennett: So were you doing it beforehand?

Amelia McIntyre: Not this, I was just doing everything else. I've done rug making, embroidery, patchwork, decoupage, weaving, what else?

Julie Bennett: Stay near mum. Don't [unclear] mum because it's nice to think that children support you.

Amelia McIntyre: This is Thaddeus.

Julie Bennett: Thaddeus? Dusty Raiyn and Thaddeus.

Amelia McIntyre: Who have we got? We've got Laura-Anne, Broderick, everyone calls him Roderick but it's Broderick, Sylvia, Eleanor, Ambrose, Thaddeus, Annabella and Dusty Raiyn.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: I made a garment that...

Julie Bennett: So you entered the competition. You weren't too late?

Amelia McIntyre: No they let me do it because they were worried they wouldn't have enough entries. I actually won that competition then went on further.

Julie Bennett: So the first competition you won, yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: Then went into the nationals and went over to New Zealand because you go to New Zealand when you've won. This fell to pieces but that was the first one I did. This is made out of an inner tube of a tractor tyre and wiring [unclear]. The boots and all are made.

Julie Bennett: This is a stalk from an indicator lens from an old ute. It's called *Honey, why won't the tractor start?* or *Wimmera Woman Warrior* and this is a ute panel and there's all wiring and feathers and nuts and beans and legumes and things.

Julie Bennett: This is all tractor tyres?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: The top as well?

Amelia McIntyre: No the inner tube of it. This is my eldest daughter Laura-Anne.

Julie Bennett: Yeah, and the boots, gumboots, you made those as well?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: That's bale twine stitching it up is it?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: How fabulous. A little bit of...

Amelia McIntyre: This is *Medusa*. *Medusa* went to New Zealand and they actually used her for their advertising that went all over the place.

Julie Bennett: Okay, let me take a shot of that. That's really...

Amelia McIntyre: That was...



Julie Bennett: Stay in there with mum. Stay, because you're part of the story really because mum has time. She loves her art so much that she can do it all. It's just amazing actually.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible]. [Laughs] So this is all stripped wiring here and this is mig wire and it was coiled and this is a plastic chemical container that's been melted and moulded.

Julie Bennett: You melted it and moulded it?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, rubber bonnet underneath. This is Sylvia modelling this. The boots are made out of tarp, tape and toilet paper. This is all stripped rubber and then there's sheep poo detail on it.

Julie Bennett: Amazing.

Amelia McIntyre: Now this is another one. This is *Elvis*. This is my...

Julie Bennett: Do you have a spare one of these?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes. This is *Elvis*. This is my nephew modelling this and that's the back. This was made out of wool bales and that's all beans and nuts and peas and things, lentils and stuff. [Unclear] do that one again.

Julie Bennett: So you're not following on from - this is all new, like there's not a history of all of this wearable art that you sort of see the idea and standard to follow?

Amelia McIntyre: Once I saw what was there - I've got an ego - [laughs] I can do better which I did for a long time.

Julie Bennett: Well you have to, yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: But then we've got people who have come up who have different ideas. I actually didn't compete last year. It was the first year I hadn't. I just couldn't. I had so much in my head and I just couldn't get it out and it was really hard so I know what I'm doing.

Female: This was a robot I did.

Amelia McIntyre: Broderick had it on.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, Broderick, one of my boys was wearing that. That's a chemical mix drum and it's an old toolbox and there's a...

Julie Bennett: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: ...wheel and this is all from a sprayer, the orchard sprayer and I had a little battery in there and it all lit up, all here lit up. It was fine because every day that he was on stage, it went for three days, he'd light up and we'd turn him off and all the rest.

Julie Bennett: On the third day we'd won an award and I made him stand on stage and then suddenly Laura-Anne started bashing him up and pushed him off stage and I was thinking, oh no what's happening.

Julie Bennett: It became a comedy act.

Amelia McIntyre: I went out the back and it had caught on fire and he couldn't see because he could only see a little bit out of here. It had a car horn so it tooted and [inaudible]. [Laughs] My wiring was a bit dodgy so I'd actually electrified all of that. He hadn't been hurt because he wasn't actually touching it because it's all insulated inside.

Julie Bennett: Yeah, and you've still got all these?

Amelia McIntyre: They were trying to put him out and I had to go out and pull all the battery wires off and that's [inaudible] trying to put him out.

Julie Bennett: Aren't they lovely stories though along the way on how you started and the stories every day? It's just fantastic.

Amelia McIntyre: So this one - I was saying this is *Medusa*, it's got all little snake heads and things on them. They've all got names. This is [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: The coils have all got names?

Amelia McIntyre: No, all these costumes but these have all got snake heads on them.

Julie Bennett: You've got that one here I guess?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: So we'll have a look at later?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. This is *Ancestry*.

Julie Bennett: Is it a big thing? Do lots of people do this?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Is it?

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear].  
Julie Bennett: Solely from farm stuff?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.  
Julie Bennett: So people knit bale twine and make a whole dress?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, that's too ordinary. [Inaudible]. This is [unclear] again. This is from the skin out.  
Julie Bennett: When do you have the show?  
Amelia McIntyre: They have one at Wimmera but they've given it a break at the moment. I don't know if they're having it again this year. That's always March. The first Tuesday, Wednesday in March, the Wednesday, Thursday. Then Elmore's the first, no the second Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in March.  
Female: October mum.  
Amelia McIntyre: October, sorry.  
Julie Bennett: So Elmore is in October?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yep.  
Julie Bennett: The first...  
Amelia McIntyre: Is it the first or second?  
Female: I don't know.  
Amelia McIntyre: It's the first or second Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in October.  
Julie Bennett: Well you'll be able to give me this anyway.  
Amelia McIntyre: Then there's Bairnsdale and a whole heap of different places. There's Tasmania and all.  
Julie Bennett: Right.  
Amelia McIntyre: So I've worked in all the majors.  
Julie Bennett: So are you making something for March?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes I am at the moment then I'm redoing something for New Zealand.  
Julie Bennett: So sorry.  
Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible] *Ancestry*.  
Julie Bennett: Isn't it gorgeous? That's bale twine, the blue?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, so this is a chemise and the pantaloons and the boots and then it's the petticoat and then it goes [unclear].  
Julie Bennett: How gorgeous.  
Amelia McIntyre: They've all got little written up bits. This is *Viva*. *Viva* won the national - this was the second competition I entered and she won the nationals and went to New Zealand.  
Julie Bennett: Right, this is the one you mentioned on the phone I think [inaudible] and that's made out of - what's all of this? Feathers or no...  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, an old rooster.  
Julie Bennett: And old rooster's in there too? A dead old rooster?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, this bit. Well Sylvia actually mummified a rooster head and legs and used it in one of hers. She learnt mummification at school.  
Julie Bennett: Do people at school think you're okay?  
Sylvia McIntyre: No...  
Julie Bennett: Or they know mum and think oh well, of course?  
Sylvia McIntyre: Yes.  
Amelia McIntyre: Sylvia's been very lucky. She's worked very hard. She got a scholarship to Monivae so she's been there for three years in Hamilton and Eleanor...  
Sylvia McIntyre: This is my third year mum.  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah and Eleanor goes there next year.  
Sylvia McIntyre: This year.  
Eleanor McIntyre: This year.  
Amelia McIntyre: Oh sorry. It's Christmas isn't it? She had irrigation rises and a colander and...  
Female: Sheep poo.  
Amelia McIntyre: ...wheel trims and sheep poo and all sorts of things for her...  
Julie Bennett: So...  
Amelia McIntyre: So that's the back of that, *Medusa*.  
Julie Bennett: Aren't they gorgeous? [Inaudible]  
Amelia McIntyre: This is *No flies on me* because this is...

Julie Bennett: So this is not the New Zealand one, this is the one that you won to go to New Zealand?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah that went up and so did Medusa, she went as well.

Sylvia McIntyre: She won at Tasmania to go to New Zealand didn't she?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: This is fly wire and sheep poo and what have we got? Old [unclear] filter. Red beans, white beans, chick peas, sheep poo, wool bale thread which I unpicked and recycled, corn, different size washers, lentils, wiring loom, tie wire.

The headpiece is made from wool bale, fencing wire, fly wire, lentils and corn and the footwear was made from inner tube and the fan was made from a flat filter and red beans and that's...

Julie Bennett: Do you do a profile on each one you've done?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Which is lovely.

Amelia McIntyre: You have to, to hand to the judges. That's [*Bacchus*]. We did [*Bacchus*]...

Julie Bennett: So hence how you know that woman with the mask is it? The masks around here? Mel? Is it Mel someone?

Amelia McIntyre: No...

Julie Bennett: Said she does masks? Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: That mustn't have been me. This is *Elemental*.

Julie Bennett: Now who's this?

Amelia McIntyre: That's Thaddeus [inaudible]. That's *Elemental*. I'm learning how to do...

Julie Bennett: What are these little [unclear]?

Amelia McIntyre: That's part of *Elemental* actually. They're made out of chemical drums and all different bits of plastic off the farm. Her wings which are up there, I learnt how to do welding. I did a welding course.

A factory in Inglewood that does all wire work let me use their welders there so they've got the...

Julie Bennett: So you don't have any arc welding or anything here?

Amelia McIntyre: We do.

Julie Bennett: You do, yeah. Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: So they were huge and you've got the different elements. You've got water,...

Julie Bennett: Water, fire...

Amelia McIntyre: ...earth and air for that one and that was a rubber suit made again out of inner tubes.

Female: That was lovely to wear.

Amelia McIntyre: There, that's bicycle tubes.

Julie Bennett: You were? Who was wearing that?

Amelia McIntyre: Sylvia wore it initially and then they have professional models at Elmore.

Julie Bennett: I bet you loved that one. How did you get them to drag them in to do all of this? Hard is it?

Amelia McIntyre: No, they're happy to do it. That's *Viva*. That's a bit of the *Viva* one.

Julie Bennett: Oh my gosh. How fabulous. So you're winning this all the time or are there better people than you?

Amelia McIntyre: No, not all the time. Yeah, there are better people than me, sometimes, but I always place. I've never been placed outside of the top three.

Julie Bennett: This has just grown? Like...

Amelia McIntyre: Just something that's out there. This is a woollen - this is *Woolly* [unclear] and it's an electrical loom from an old ute that was woven and then I - I asked someone for some sheep tails and we got these lamb tails with this bag of awful smelly lamb tails. I tanned them. Sylvia [unclear] disgusted.

Sylvia McIntyre: [Unclear] lamb tails. They're hard to skin.

Julie Bennett: But it only needs a little bit of that skin though on it? Isn't really, at the back?

Amelia McIntyre: This is *Guardian of the Farm*. I chopped up a copper hot water service for him and then I had to acid etch it to get it clean and I should have worn

gloves and I couldn't use my hands for two weeks afterwards. It was absolutely awful.

Julie Bennett: The black ones again are the tyres?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, because I like using them.

Julie Bennett: Inner tyres?

Amelia McIntyre: But the poor guy put that on and then he sweated and he got stuck...

Julie Bennett: Stuck on.

Amelia McIntyre: ...on him and he was claustrophobic and we were all laughing in hysterics because it was very funny. [Laughs]

Julie Bennett: The designs for the costumes, where do they come from? Right, so you're not following any sort of patterns...

Amelia McIntyre: No.

Julie Bennett: ...or anything like that. Do they have themes every year?

Amelia McIntyre: No.

Julie Bennett: No? Just whatever you like?

Amelia McIntyre: Yep. Well you've got to be either avant-garde or designer usually. That's [*Bacchus*] and the [unclear].

Thaddeus McIntyre: There's me.

Amelia McIntyre: That's Eleanor but she's grown up more now. We used bird netting and tarp tape and sheep horns and vineyard bits and pieces and cow horns and things.

Sylvia McIntyre: I had to get those sheep horns from a sale yard.

Julie Bennett: So now I know why you have eight children.

Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs] [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: So you they can cover all - have you got a picture of you all together as a group?

Amelia McIntyre: There are a few ring-ins there.

Julie Bennett: This is the whole family?

Amelia McIntyre: No, there's a few ring-ins there. That's a ring-in and that's a ring-in because we ran out of - there were designs from the children and me and...

Julie Bennett: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven of you.

Sylvia McIntyre: That was before Dusty Raiyn...

Amelia McIntyre: Before Dusty Raiyn was born because that was when Annabella was a baby. So you see, these are some of the other people's designs here.

Sylvia McIntyre: Oh that [*Bacchus*] one was really...

Julie Bennett: Is there anyone local that you sort of are doing it with or competitive a little bit with who's really...

Amelia McIntyre: I'm very competitive with Corinne Heinz, she's an incredible woman.

Julie Bennett: She's the one you mentioned on the phone too I think.

Amelia McIntyre: She's been the one - I haven't been able to get hold of her and she's up at [Minyard] and then there's, what's the other one?

Julie Bennett: [Minyard], I know.

Sylvia McIntyre: Nola Wallis.

Amelia McIntyre: Nola Wallis and she's up at...

Sylvia McIntyre: Kaniva.

Julie Bennett: ...Kaniva. That's right. They're both incredible.

Julie Bennett: So she's your - stay there, I'm just taking photos from a distance.

Amelia McIntyre: Those two are. I like to put a little story with mine like *Future Farmer*. We're becoming more mechanised all the time, what will become of our farmers in the future? *Future Farmer* has some unique features. It comes with an inbuilt duck caller, dog whistler, it's lit up with lights, red for safety, clear for lighting the task at hand. This farmer works in all weather and doesn't need to smoke [unclear] GPS.

Julie Bennett: So I always do a blurb for them.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: Sylvia's incredible. She did this all out of dust masks. I don't think I've got a view of it here.

Julie Bennett: Isn't that fabulous?

Sylvia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: That was out of your head?  
 Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah.  
 Amelia McIntyre: They all do. Annabella has been drawing...  
 Julie Bennett: Here's another one. I'll take...  
 Amelia McIntyre: This is Eleanor. [Unclear].  
 Female: Are you going to work?  
 Julie Bennett: It's lovely that you're home from school so that I can take these photos with your mum.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Eleanor's done well with hers as well.  
 Annabella McIntyre: Not particularly.  
 Amelia McIntyre: You have.  
 Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, you have.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Shane's done things like [Unclear] *Warrior* which was a - he based his on a terracotta warrior coming to life.  
 Female: Is there a picture [unclear]?  
 Amelia McIntyre: No [inaudible]. That is designed by the - Shane made him. Eleanor did *Crop Circle Maker* which was an alien one which was really cool.  
 Thaddeus McIntyre: That was the one that I modelled mum.  
 Eleanor McIntyre: I did one for Annabella and...  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yes, you did a gorgeous one for Annabella.  
 Eleanor McIntyre: I have learnt [inaudible].  
 Amelia McIntyre: It might be an idea.  
 Julie Bennett: Stay there because I love the family involvement. I mean it's just fantastic. I'm just clicking away all through an hour or two so don't worry...  
 Amelia McIntyre: Now this is *Misty Moon Maiden* which the [unclear] wasn't working.  
 Female: I have better pictures of her in my camera.  
 Amelia McIntyre: This is one I did with - it was an experiment covering up the head so it looks more like artwork.  
 Female: I'm going to go and grab my camera.  
 Julie Bennett: So what's on the - what was...  
 Amelia McIntyre: I melted, what do you call it?  
 Female: Bird netting.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Bird netting and then made it into a crescent moon.  
 Julie Bennett: Bird netting?  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, you know the...  
 Julie Bennett: Not the stuff on the vines? That stuff?  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.  
 Julie Bennett: That plasticity - that you covered those in, okay.  
 Amelia McIntyre: All here, this is all woven [unclear] and then there was a lot of wire all wound up with silver stars on it.  
 Julie Bennett: How gorgeous.  
 Amelia McIntyre: She had a bee smoker so when she puffed it, it was in a cloud of smoke but then health and safety wouldn't let us do it.  
 Julie Bennett: I love this. This is a great idea.  
 Amelia McIntyre: It is. I don't know if I've got the rest of that here.  
 Julie Bennett: Have you used that again, the idea of masks, because it works so well?  
 Sylvia McIntyre: Not really.  
 Amelia McIntyre: No. This is Sylvia again.  
 Julie Bennett: So for art at school, like...  
 Sylvia McIntyre: I don't do art at school.  
 Amelia McIntyre: No, she's going to law.  
 Julie Bennett: You're going to law?  
 Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, that's what I want to do. But, I don't know...  
 Julie Bennett: Because you do this all the time it just doesn't interest you sort of I guess.  
 Sylvia McIntyre: I don't like art at school. They try and make you do stuff and I like to do my own thing.  
 Julie Bennett: Yeah.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Because the kids will come to me and say I want to make this and I'll say to them - what do I say? Draw a picture.  
 Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: Then they draw a picture, well, how are you going to do that and you make them think and they work it out themselves. They come up with some really innovative ways of doing things.

Julie Bennett: So you don't teach though do you? They just come and...

Amelia McIntyre: No, but I have done workshops [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Have you? Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: So this is Sylvia wearing one of mine. This is called *On Your Bike*.

Julie Bennett: [Laughs]

Amelia McIntyre: Although it looks simple it was quite difficult to make.

Female: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Did you do that?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, that's one of her artworks.

Female: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Oh, you helped her?

Female: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: Annabella's been drawing pictures for this since she could first draw.

Julie Bennett: Can I take a picture of that too with you? Stay there and I'll take a picture from back here. Proudly show it. Ready, one, two, three.

Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs]

Julie Bennett: Oh you moved.

Female: [Unclear] another one.

Julie Bennett: Another one, another one.

Amelia McIntyre: [Coughs]

Julie Bennett: [Inaudible] put you in the picture too.

Amelia McIntyre: [Coughs]

Julie Bennett: Now proudly show me again. Ready, one, two, three. Fantastic. So what value, what personal meaning do you place on your work?

Amelia McIntyre: A lot because people might think oh yes, it's just junk but it's more than that. It's the time and effort that's gone into it. It's the ability to take something that is perceived as nothing and make it into a form of art. All too often people are lauded for doing, I think, recognisable art when I say it like painting or ceramics or something and this is something totally different. Well I think it's totally different anyway.

Julie Bennett: So how important is the environment to your art then?

Amelia McIntyre: Extremely. I wouldn't be able to do it without that. You just have to look out in the paddocks and get ideas. Like *Future Farmer* here, that's...

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: Yes there is a star there.

Julie Bennett: Oh there is a star. What's that star made out of? Let me see, it looks like - is that cardboard? Yes it is.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, that's your horsy. I don't know what happened [unclear].

Julie Bennett: So the art to you is what?

Amelia McIntyre: It's an escape mechanism I suppose.

Julie Bennett: From what?

Amelia McIntyre: It's an escape from drought which has played such a devastating role, particularly in this area. I think it's caused a lot of depression and I think you pick that up. If the whole town's feeling depressed I think everyone picks it up to some extent.

Amelia McIntyre: This is a release mode. It's a release from household tasks. It's a relief from darling children and everyday tasks. It's a chance to go outside the perceived norm and do something for yourself which I think is very important.

Amelia McIntyre: I think all too often as a mum you can get involved in mum things and lose yourself whereas this gives you a chance to involve the children. If I'm doing something over here, all too often they'll be here too.

Amelia McIntyre: It can be annoying sometimes because they're pinching what you want to use or pinching your ideas or coming up with ideas you want to pinch.

Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs]

Julie Bennett: So how much time would you spend on the me factor compared to the farming and the family factor?

Amelia McIntyre: I'm selfish. I spend a lot of time here and we've had to use what I do out there so supplement our income. Not that I get a great deal from it because we're in a rural setting and parties and things tend to go by the wayside when people haven't got a lot of spare cash.

Julie Bennett: So you do costumes for parties is the other income?

Amelia McIntyre: I do all sorts of things, yeah. But it's a hobby. I do a lot of school things. I do a lot of drama groups. What else do we do costumes for? Christmas procession...

Female: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: We do our own floats and things like that so we're always involved in doing something. The dance studio, I do costumes for them. Just before Christmas they asked me could I do a Miss Piggy head and I had a day and a night to do that.

Julie Bennett: It worked. I managed to get that done.

Amelia McIntyre: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: I had to think from scratch. Like how am I going to do it? I ended up using a lampshade, a cane lampshade and snouted it and worked it out like that. People - especially if you're able to do things - so you get calls for all weird and wonderful things.

Julie Bennett: A uni student a few years ago came and asked me to do a [unclear] for them so I could make it poo.

Sylvia McIntyre: What do you work as?

Julie Bennett: Down at the roadhouse.

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah the junction one?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Sylvia McIntyre: Here's the front of yours Sylvia.

Thaddeus McIntyre: It's not a very - there's more.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible]

Amelia McIntyre: So that's Sylvia's because she won the junior section and that's the front view of it there. [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: So what were the whites - oh they were just cords from...

Amelia McIntyre: Packing strap.

Sylvia McIntyre: It was packaging strap.

Julie Bennett: So they're fairly disciplined? It has to be off the farm?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. But then again, what isn't? It has to be found on or manufactured or found on a farm.

Julie Bennett: Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: They're getting a bit tighter at Elmore now. They don't like you using any materials or things like that. This is one of Corinne's.

Julie Bennett: Okay, it's very busy isn't it?

Sylvia McIntyre: All old bark.

Julie Bennett: Old bark on it, okay.

Sylvia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: This is Thaddeus's. He did *Princess in Training* and he made this [unclear] for Annabella because she wanted to be a princess. [Unclear] got a front view of it.

Julie Bennett: This is good that you have this [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: So do you send them overseas or...

Amelia McIntyre: To New Zealand we have. But this was [unclear]. He did a beautiful dress - I haven't got a front picture of it. It was a lovely little princess dress and he made a bouquet of flowers and he had a little thing in her hair. He did it all himself. He glued it all together and then he worked out how to do the back and how to do the flowers. [Inaudible] Thaddeus.

Julie Bennett: So what does your husband do?

Amelia McIntyre: Well he's working off farm at the moment. He's building silos with Broderick but we don't know how much longer that will be.

Julie Bennett: Right, so you don't run any stock at the moment?

Amelia McIntyre: No, what we've got around the house. See Sylvia's looking at this. She wants to do something similar to this.

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, I'm going to do it.

Julie Bennett: So it's still in your head? Not quite out there yet.

Amelia McIntyre: She's drawn pictures and drawn pictures and...

Julie Bennett: So this is an inspiration, these sorts of Woman's Day things. I mean...

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: Sometimes. Yes, you'll get...

Julie Bennett: I mean Cher's not wearing that as a dress up, that's her dress isn't it, like, you know?

Amelia McIntyre: Then we'll work out how to change things. But we'll be looking at like Victoria's Secret things on television and I was sketching wings and things.

Julie Bennett: Why don't you take this overseas?

Amelia McIntyre: We're doing it in New Zealand and that's sort of as far as we go with that at the moment.

Julie Bennett: Is there something overseas that is similar to this?

Amelia McIntyre: No, they have talked about taking it to America but it hasn't gone any further than that. I mean New Zealand has but I don't know - they have recycled art.

Julie Bennett: Yeah, but not for necessarily Farm Art as you say.

Amelia McIntyre: No.

Julie Bennett: So you don't think anyone overseas...

Amelia McIntyre: Not that we know of.

Julie Bennett: I mean this is very uniquely Australian isn't it?

Amelia McIntyre: Well it actually started in New Zealand and then came to Australia. Wimmera pinched it and got into trouble and they changed its name whereas Elmore became affiliated with them and a whole lot of other shows and things are as well.

They hold the nationals there. Quite often at different shows you'll have the first year of it and then the second tier is Elmore and then on the last day of their competition because it's a three day competition they will then have the nationals.

So they'll have the best from there and the best from around the state all compete. Well, interstate too isn't it?

Julie Bennett: So Queensland do it? People say from Queensland...

Amelia McIntyre: South Australia, Tassie and Victoria are the main ones that are doing it.

Julie Bennett: Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: We haven't got an awful - we should have more photos of things but we never get around to it.

Julie Bennett: If we could look at some of your - I don't know, the helmet parts or the...

Amelia McIntyre: Have a look down - bring that out there - I think there's some there Sylvia. This is Corinne again. She did *Madame Breakdown*. It was so fantastic. She died her tongue blue and all. She always models her stuff.

Julie Bennett: So one, no you've got two entries in that have you? So the prize money's quite high. Is it \$4000?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, that's spread over.

Julie Bennett: Spread over, okay.

Amelia McIntyre: There's \$500 [unclear]. So they actually cut them - they put more categories in so the prize money actually went down. There was like \$1000 for first and then it sort of went down as they got more categories. This is - what's this - *Loretta* wasn't it? Now *Loretta* was in the elegant one and she's made out of the cover that the wool bales come in that I died with ink that they use for stencils and then this little netting, fly screen, and I embroidered it with threads pulled out of shade cloth. This was all smashed up CD discs. They didn't place this at Elmore because they told me that they don't use CDs on a farm which I thought was ridiculous because how could a farm operate without one.

Julie Bennett: Well...



Amelia McIntyre: And sheep poo. So it's an off the shoulder one. Then they had a sort of purse which has been made out of weed mat and that sort of thing. These shoes I'm really proud of because these were the first real Farm Art shoes. Before this a lot of people had just used flat things or they'd use shoes they'd covered which I couldn't do. This is made out of an old chair and stool legs and rubber and [unclear] wearable.

Julie Bennett: So when it's out of an old chair that warrants being a farm thing does it?

Amelia McIntyre: Well it was from a farm, yeah. So you can see how it's been cut - oh no, this was the chemical drum this one.

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah...

Amelia McIntyre: That was a chemical drum sorry. We tried using a chemical drum and it was moulded and then these are stool legs.

Julie Bennett: So you've stitched all that too?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, it's roses. That's why it's called *Loretta*, little flowers.

Sylvia McIntyre: That's the head thing for it.

Amelia McIntyre: That's the headpiece for it.

Julie Bennett: Okay.

Female: Dusty...

Thaddeus McIntyre: She was named after Dusty because Dusty Raiyn [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: Oh yes, but that wasn't why she got named that but that was that Loretta, little flower. So that was in one of the elegant or design sections.

Julie Bennett: So who has time to do cooking and all this? Your husband?

Amelia McIntyre: I do most of it but when I get stuck - when I was doing this - because I've got a horrible thing of leaving everything to the last minute. That's sort of an added - you'll get it finished then. You have to get it finished.

Julie Bennett: So how many hours would that have taken, say?

Amelia McIntyre: It would have taken - I was doing another one at the same time so it probably would have taken two weeks. As much time as we could devote to it but this one was - then I had to add extra bits because it was a bit too see through. You could see a bit too much on it.

Julie Bennett: So you use - you don't have a size or you use your daughter as your [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: I usually use Sylvia. I use Eleanor as well but they prefer models to be size, what is it, size 8, 10 or 12. So that was an off the shoulder one and it glittered as they walked.

Julie Bennett: It's won prizes in other sections, in other competitions.

Amelia McIntyre: So you're not sort of preserving them? Like...

Julie Bennett: They're all in the caravan or in the workshop. [Unclear] workshop.

Amelia McIntyre: So they're all in good nick?

Julie Bennett: Oh yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: In case someone wants to do a big retrospective...

Julie Bennett: [Unclear] done before. We went to the Swan Hill Field Days and we had 30 costumes there that we'd made as a family.

Amelia McIntyre: As a family?

Julie Bennett: I mean I had mine and Sylvia had hers and there was one of Shane's and there was one of Thaddeus's and that sort of thing.

Amelia McIntyre: So in that corner there you'll see some of the bits and pieces, some of the shields or spears and things.

Julie Bennett: Yes, and the little butterflies and stuff?

Amelia McIntyre: Oh no, they're...

Female: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Okay.

Thaddeus McIntyre: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: No that was something else.

Sylvia McIntyre: No that's something else. I don't know what that...

Amelia McIntyre: This one took so long because you had to pierce everything and strip everything and I had a punch made out of an old metal chair leg so I could get all the bits the same size.

That took so long to make because the whole rubber cat suit was made out of - it was done on the same principle and it just took forever to make. Go and grab one of the boxes Thaddeus and Sylvia out of the caravan, out of that caravan.

Sylvia McIntyre: Which one do you want?

Amelia McIntyre: Out there.

Thaddeus McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Female: Oh yeah, the material one, there is.

Thaddeus McIntyre: Oh well if you can get in there.

Amelia McIntyre: If you can get in there because dad said he's cleared out a mattress so it should be easier.

Julie Bennett: So your husband totally supports you?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah he does. He's had to.

Julie Bennett: And what do you think is the hardest thing living out here in this sort of environment for you? I mean you probably don't see it as a hard environment if you're doing this stuff all day.

Amelia McIntyre: No I don't and I'd like to take this further. I don't know how to go with the next step. Because I can do just about - it sounds egotistical but I can just about do anything I set my mind to and I don't know where to go or how to access any help to go further with what I do.

Julie Bennett: Because you can't follow...

Amelia McIntyre: No because...

Julie Bennett: What about plays and acts or and theatre?

Amelia McIntyre: ...we don't have money and time. Yeah I do costumes for all that sort of thing locally. I probably do it in a 100 km radius for costumes and things which is also a form of artwork because we do...

Interviewee: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, we don't just do patterns, we do like heads and masks and head gear and foot wear and all sorts of things.

Julie Bennett: So you don't know where to take it?

Amelia McIntyre: I don't. With sort of thing...

Julie Bennett: I guess the Weekly Times has done a story on it, have they, on things like that?

Amelia McIntyre: I think they have at different stages of - different people have found different interests with what we do.

Julie Bennett: It's a hard one. So you're well known obviously in the area?

Amelia McIntyre: Pardon?

Julie Bennett: You're well known obviously throughout the area to come in and...

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, people if they don't know how to do something they'll come and ask me. I had someone ring up out of the blue the other day asking how to make - [unclear] how to make? I can't remember now but they just rang up and said we know that you do creative crafts, can you help me with such and such and I said yeah, this is what you do.

Julie Bennett: So from what area though sort of?

Amelia McIntyre: They were local.

Julie Bennett: Just locals?

Amelia McIntyre: They'd only just moved to the area. You're awake. Get up. Very good. Congratulations.

Julie Bennett: Do you get involved in this?

Amelia McIntyre: Yep, he does modelling for it.

Julie Bennett: Right, but not working, not art wise or anything?

Amelia McIntyre: He is very artistic too but he's going through a teenage difficult stage at the moment.

Julie Bennett: I've got a 15 year old. How old are you?

Ambrose McIntyre: Fourteen.

Amelia McIntyre: Fourteen. He and Sylvia are both type 1 diabetics and he's only been diagnosed recently so he's found it a bit hard.

Dusty Raiyn McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, you were on the truck weren't you? You were a hula girl on the truck. We do great big...

Female: Floats.

Amelia McIntyre: ...floats every year at Christmas.

Julie Bennett: Just the family or the town?

Amelia McIntyre: The town does a procession and we do [unclear].

Julie Bennett: I'm surprised you wouldn't be in Moomba or something. You know, come down and show people...

Amelia McIntyre: No, I've never thought of something like that.

Julie Bennett: ...what the country can do.

Amelia McIntyre: Our theme this year was International Christmas so we...

Julie Bennett: What's this?

Amelia McIntyre: This is some of the stuff we've done. This is *Goddess on Top*.

Female: [Unclear] and I think it's [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: *Elemental* is down the bottom.

Female: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear].

Female: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: Right, put it down.

Female: [Unclear]. Is it [unclear] or Annabella?

Amelia McIntyre: That's Goddess [inaudible]. This one did crumble and get mouse eaten and stuff. [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Isn't that gorgeous?

Female: [Unclear] mum. [Inaudible].

Thaddeus McIntyre: My one used to still fit me but it doesn't anymore.

Amelia McIntyre: That's his little...

Female: [Unclear] costume.

Julie Bennett: You haven't worn that one though have you?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes he was [unclear].

Thaddeus McIntyre: That was ages ago.

Amelia McIntyre: You can see these are some of the basic shoes when we were first starting [unclear]. Then they weave up the legs.

Female: What were they for? Were they *Elemental*?

Julie Bennett: So you're training really was through your mother and your family, your grandmothers and things like that?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, my family, great grandmother, I never knew my grandmother. But I don't know, mum did spinning and [unclear] bits and pieces. I don't think she actually trained. I think you pick up a lot of this stuff on osmosis, just because you've been around it.

Julie Bennett: Like the computer stuff, osmosis? Yep.

Amelia McIntyre: That's some of *Elemental*'s.

Julie Bennett: What's that made out of? The yellow and the...

Amelia McIntyre: Buckets.

Julie Bennett: Buckets. Just buckets.

Amelia McIntyre: Three buckets there. [Unclear]. See that's *Elemental* because her wings were so heavy I had to design something to go over her shoulders and then the wings fit on here and they've got a range of movement then. That I put on after just...

Female: Something else that was going on there I think.

Amelia McIntyre: Give a bit of padding for - because for your own kid you can say if it hurts bad luck but when you're using other people you can't do that.

[Inaudible]

Amelia McIntyre: So yeah, that was done the same way. Just everything was [unclear]. [Unclear] fit Sylvia [unclear].

Dusty Raiyn McIntyre: Fit Sylvia.

Amelia McIntyre: Do they?

Julie Bennett: So they'll perish eventually I guess?

Amelia McIntyre: Pardon?

Julie Bennett: Perish eventually.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. [Unclear] white powder on it, you've got to wash them. Our washing machine doesn't particularly wash but it does the job. Then I coat it with a cleaner to keep it all shiny.

Julie Bennett: So you'll use them again or do you tend to only use them...

Amelia McIntyre: No I only use for one competition generally although that did go in another one. But we've done retrospective things and that. We've been asked to show them at different places. We went to the Melbourne Show one year.

Julie Bennett: So you do go in the Melbourne Show?

Amelia McIntyre: Well no, only one year. They did a - Elmore, no sorry it wasn't Elmore - Wimmera was asked to do something so they took I think about four of my things down and a couple of other people's. It was good because it was the first time we'd been to a show and we had [unclear] free tickets and we had somewhere we could park the pusher and had a little room where we could leave stuff so it was excellent.

Julie Bennett: Alright.

Female: [Unclear] Melbourne Show.

Julie Bennett: Is that an iPhone or iPod?

Amelia McIntyre: iPod.

Julie Bennett: Do you go to sleep with the earpieces in too?

Thaddeus McIntyre: I made this.

Julie Bennett: You made that?

Thaddeus McIntyre: No mum made this [unclear] Sylvia [unclear] she can use it if she's making Farm Art.

Julie Bennett: Okay, as a model, like a...

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, [unclear] sticking tape [unclear] except she complained because I did it too tight and made her tummy stick out and she couldn't breathe properly.

Julie Bennett: Is she going to be doing it though? Did you say she's not...

Amelia McIntyre: Well she [unclear] away so I need - because she's a good size 10 so I use that then to model things. I can pin stuff to it.

Julie Bennett: Okay. So the scholarship's fantastic. Otherwise she wouldn't go?

Amelia McIntyre: No. Same as Eleanor. We've been very blessed.

Julie Bennett: So both of them have got scholarships there?

Amelia McIntyre: Sylvia's had three years, this is her last year and Eleanor has two years which will get her through year 12 stuff. It was partly because [unclear] because they've both done so well, especially Sylvia. They could see that they...

Julie Bennett: They could do things.

Amelia McIntyre: They got general excellence scholarship [unclear].

Interviewee: One year mum [unclear] some sheep poo for Sylvia...

Amelia McIntyre: To school. Sylvia asked for sheep poo because she was actually doing some things for a competition and she was doing it in the boarding house so she would [unclear] and the boarding master said it was the first time in the history of Monivae that anyone had ever sent sheep poo down. It was Valentines Day a few years ago and Shane's not romantic. He came and he said to me I've got something you really will like and he pulled out of his pocket the most beautiful shiny sheep turd you've ever seen and nice and black and shiny. I was wrapped, oh wow, and there was someone else in the house and they were going, you two are just so bizarre. You've got to get sheep poo off a stubbled paddock so it doesn't smell and we can use it - I use it for making jewellery and all sorts of things. Not many people have a thing made of sheep poo.

Julie Bennett: Absolutely not. It's like finding a four leaf clover or something.

Amelia McIntyre: It's not smelly and...

Julie Bennett: Really bright and...

Amelia McIntyre: Bright.

Julie Bennett: Like a paper mache. Let me take a picture of the sheep poo.

Amelia McIntyre: I don't know. It's just right.

Julie Bennett: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: You have to get it off her.  
Julie Bennett: [Unclear] want you looking up like that. That was terrific. Let me get the light at the back. Want to look up [unclear]?  
Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs]  
Julie Bennett: It is. You're going to miss your sister when she goes won't you?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes.  
Julie Bennett: So they're off at the end of the month?  
Amelia McIntyre: First of Feb they're back.  
Julie Bennett: First of Feb.  
Amelia McIntyre: Eleanor started up something about Annabella is her minion.  
Julie Bennett: What does that mean?  
Amelia McIntyre: That's her - a minion's like a slave for the big sister.  
Annabella McIntyre: But she does stuff for me.  
Amelia McIntyre: Eleanor is the minion master.  
Julie Bennett: This is something you've created?  
Amelia McIntyre: They have. They're all very creative.  
Julie Bennett: As a [unclear]. I mean a minion [unclear].  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes, Eleanor made up all the rules. A minion master has to look after their minion but a minion has to what a minion master tells them to do.  
Thaddeus McIntyre: Different minion masters have different rules. Like Sylvia - Eleanor says that she can't have two minions except Sylvia has two.  
Sylvia McIntyre: Yes I have two. Thaddeus is my brother and my minion. They do what I say. I mean Dusty and Thaddeus are my minions.  
Julie Bennett: How do you rate who's the top minion who does most things, sort of thing?  
Interviewee: Eleanor.  
Amelia McIntyre: Eleanor.  
Julie Bennett: So how did she get to that position?  
Amelia McIntyre: She just said she was.  
Thaddeus McIntyre: She invented. She's like I'm minion master and Annabella is my minion and she has to do what I say and I'll look after her.  
Annabella McIntyre: Minion masters have to be older than the minion.  
Interviewee: If you want be [unclear] minion you have to [unclear].  
Amelia McIntyre: This is some of the jewellery I've made. This is out of peppercorns.  
Julie Bennett: Out of peppercorns.  
Amelia McIntyre: Then there was this but [unclear] come apart. It had...  
Female: Sheep poo.  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes, a great big thing here with all sheep poo and all gloss. It was out of nuts and things.  
Julie Bennett: Right and you get it off the farm or through the tip?  
Amelia McIntyre: Off the farm generally. That bit goes down there. This was for a competition for Farm Art jewellery.  
Julie Bennett: So this sheep poo is a bit of your signature is it?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, now everyone else is starting to use it.  
Julie Bennett: Are they?  
Amelia McIntyre: It's quite interesting. I'll start using things and then suddenly everyone's using it. Like the next year Nola had used fly screen and now it's a basic thing that we use.  
Julie Bennett: Well it's a great compliment. I mean it's hard to take sometimes but if you're finished with it and people continue it then it's...  
Amelia McIntyre: So that's [unclear]. That was part of the copper hot water service that I cut up and used for, what's it called?  
Sylvia McIntyre: *Guardian*.  
Amelia McIntyre: *Guardian of the Farm*.  
Julie Bennett: All this equipment you've bought and stuff?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes.  
Julie Bennett: Out of the winnings and stuff?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. Well Shane actually bought me the other sewing machine, the good one, but it's not working at the moment. It's been over-used. That was [unclear].

Interviewee: That's Loretta.  
 Amelia McIntyre: That's Loretta. I was just doing little roses and things.  
 Julie Bennett: You would have loved one woman I went to that was up at Shepparton. I just did the Goulburn Valley and she moved up there about 20 years ago and she wanted to get involved with the community and she was a puppeteer a bit.  
 What she did, just the nature of bringing art into the community, is her mother was in an old age home in Shepparton and she died but they said because she went every day they said look, you may as well - why don't you get a job to help subsidise the income from the farm sort of thing. So for three hours every week she'd go and make a cleaning job but what's fascinating and fantastic is instead of just going and cleaning she said I wanted to make it an event. So I'd put on a tail, I put on my hat with my rooster on the top, I do this and I dress up and the oldies just love it. If there's a 90 year old who's got a birthday party or a party, a birthday at 90, she'll do a puppet and put on a little show for them. So you're actually bringing...

Amelia McIntyre: This is the old people's home. I do costumes for them regularly, especially for this lady.

Julie Bennett: It just brings art into the community and makes an event. Why go and just clean if you can make it fun?

Amelia McIntyre: I don't charge for these sorts of things. I don't charge for an awful lot of things which is why I don't make much money because I think it's more important that people have the opportunity to express themselves and be involved in these sorts of things.

Julie Bennett: Right, just near those, sorry Amelia, just near your tapes. I love all those tapes [unclear]. There's probably a story in that is there?

Amelia McIntyre: There is certainly. I love collecting old sewing boxes and I so often find [unclear] and really weird things in them. [Unclear], there're lots of tape measures and things and it's as if you're absorbing that knowledge and that history perhaps.

Julie Bennett: It's got a sort of - yeah, it's layered in its experiences rather than something new that's not embedded with memory.

Amelia McIntyre: This is one of my favourite tools in here. Listen to this one. [Unclear] it just feels so right. These sorts of things I use. They're ancient but they've just got that patina of age and they get used for so many different things.

Julie Bennett: And they're oyster...

Amelia McIntyre: That is an oyster one. That's an [unclear] and that's for sewing.

Julie Bennett: Think how many hands have graced that...

Amelia McIntyre: That's right...

Julie Bennett: ...and hours spent.

Amelia McIntyre: ...and how old and what they've done.

Julie Bennett: They're treasured things aren't they these sorts of things?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Yep I agree.

Amelia McIntyre: I get all sorts of bits and pieces given to me. Things that, as I said, that people don't know what to do with.

Julie Bennett: [Unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] costumes, these are some of [unclear] costumes for schools and dress ups there. That's my boy Broderick. [Unclear] theatre productions.

Julie Bennett: Right, I'll take a...

Amelia McIntyre: That's the girls when they were doing dancing and that sort of thing. [Unclear] and cobwebs galore because they just love it in here.

Julie Bennett: So how do you find other people out here with the droughts - how do you think they cope? I mean...

Amelia McIntyre: This season gave everyone good hope that it was going to be a better year, better season but we got rains at the wrong time and we got frost. So we had that burst of wow we're going to do well this year back to oh shit. It's made it hard that way. But people still...

Julie Bennett: So how do you find the women around here are coping?

Amelia McIntyre: We're coping. As long as their menfolk aren't out the back with a gun or whatever which has happened in this area...

Julie Bennett: Really?

Amelia McIntyre: ...they're doing alright. They're managing.

Julie Bennett: Are they doing it through creative like you or what do you think locals are doing?

Amelia McIntyre: People don't do it to the extent that I do because they're sensible I suppose but I think even with cooking and just doing something for themselves or something even for their families I think helps.

Julie Bennett: Because a big part of my PhD is that the cake making is equally important as what you're doing.

Amelia McIntyre: It is, most definitely and you'll know some of them that are renowned for the work that they do for the shearers, the meals they provide for the shearers.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: Broderick's been working in the shed for the last - or since he was - he's 18 now - since he was about 14 he's been doing part time work in the shed. They'll always talk about the ones who give them a good meal in comparison to the ones that'll give them a meal allowance and you've got to take your...

Julie Bennett: Would you know of any particularly that I could take, when the season comes or whatever?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, Glenda O'Meara. She's the godmother to...

Julie Bennett: Glenda O'Meara. Is that someone that you might be able to contact and I can sort of, when she's doing the shearing...

Amelia McIntyre: Another would be - who's Lizzie's mum? Simpson. What's her name? What's her first name? What's Lizzie's mum's name? Ambrose?

Ambrose McIntyre: What?

Amelia McIntyre: What's Lizzie Simpson's mum's name?

Ambrose McIntyre: What?

Amelia McIntyre: What's Lizzie Simpson's mum's name?

Ambrose McIntyre: Fiona.

Amelia McIntyre: Fiona Simpson. She came out from England for a year and she ended up marrying one of our local boys. She was a vet nurse and she works part time now as a vet nurse here too.

Everyone always talks about what she does for the shearing shed and Glenda, they're two of the best known ones in the area because they both - they'll do morning tea and afternoon tea and go the full...

Julie Bennett: They're the sort of things that I'm really fascinated with because they're not acknowledged as being an aesthetic expression in survival technique.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, but it is. It really, really is I think.

Julie Bennett: Yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: Glenda came late to farm life. She'd be in her 60s and she's only recently got remarried for the second time and it's such a love match and it's so wonderful to see them both together.

Her husband had never married. It was his first marriage and they're like a couple of teenagers really. It's just so lovely. She'd always worked for other farmer's wives and for her to be a farmer's wife now is just amazing. She's learnt to drive tractors and trucks and she's just so lovely. She really is. It's a shame she couldn't have done that for her first marriage really.

Julie Bennett: Yeah. So who else around would you know that does unusual, you know, if you understand where I am coming from...

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, I'm just trying to...

Julie Bennett: I had one person who does the [unclear] church's flowers. Like amazing stuff up at Dookie. She's known for that sort of thing.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes we've got Joan Supple in town.

Julie Bennett: What's her name?

Amelia McIntyre: Joan Supple.

Julie Bennett: Jane?

Amelia McIntyre: Joan.

Julie Bennett: Joan Supple.  
Amelia McIntyre: She does the church flowers. She cleans the church. She is just an incredible person. She's not a farmer's wife though but she is our secretary for the show and she's been doing it for about 40 years.

Annabella McIntyre: And she has a shop.  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, she has a shop over in Charlton but she's from here. Just the stuff she does and the dedication she has to the community is absolutely astounding. It really is.

Julie Bennett: I am trying to limit it to people on land because I think they've got extra pressures by living in a business and...  
Amelia McIntyre: I'll have to get in contact with Corinne Heinz for you because she just does everything. She really, really does.

Julie Bennett: Right.  
Amelia McIntyre: She's a secretary to 40 odd different organisations both in South Australia and Victoria. She runs her own farm.

Julie Bennett: Her husband died I think, was it, or did you say...  
Amelia McIntyre: I don't think she ever had a husband.  
Julie Bennett: Okay.  
Amelia McIntyre: She looks after her mum who's in her 90s but when I say that, I mean her mum was off to Honolulu or somewhere when I last talked.

Julie Bennett: So she has a good life, yes.  
Amelia McIntyre: So Corinne travels the world too. She also works part time at a piggery. She also drives school buses. What else does she do? She wins awards all over the place for her flower decorations. She's an award winner for her shooting. She's fantastic in Farm Art. She does welded sculptures.

Interviewee: She's really, really good.  
Amelia McIntyre: She wins for her sculptures.  
Julie Bennett: Okay, love to meet her. Love to meet her.  
Amelia McIntyre: She's just...  
Julie Bennett: What are you going to wish for? What could you wish for? You've got everything here. You don't have to wish for anything. She'd be good.

Amelia McIntyre: She's just incredible. She really is.  
Julie Bennett: Just bringing you into unusual things if you could maybe think about this area, because I do want to cover all of Victoria and if you're in the hub of this it would be great, one woman actually opposite our property, her husband used to bring in the very sick lambs and things.  
Now we all look after lambs but I went over to the farm one day and it's fairly derelict. She didn't have hot water. The only hot water was in the polypipe warmed up in summer. No toilet. It was fairly dilapidated. They were mind a property so it wasn't theirs.  
I said how do you survive here? She said come with me. So we went to the shearing shed and in the shearing shed were 50 lambs and sheep and I thought oh that's great but every one had a collar and a name and she'd written a story about it.

Amelia McIntyre: Oh fantastic.  
Julie Bennett: [Unclear]. So it became an installation in a way. So I call that an aesthetic expression. She was writing about the sheep. She could tell when all the lambs were born and all this and it was her family.  
Anyway they had to sell - the owner sold the property and she in fact shot the whole 50 one day.  
But I can understand that.

Amelia McIntyre: Thank you for that. Because when I say to people she just doesn't want them to go off on a truck or be [unclear]. They were her family basically.  
Julie Bennett: That's right.  
Amelia McIntyre: Anyway, at the final exhibition I do for my studies I'll get the collars in with a photo of her. Likewise I'd love to maybe, when we do it, a photo of you with one of your home things just to - that's the exhibition part.  
Julie Bennett: Would you like a cuppa, a cold drink or something?  
Amelia McIntyre: Just water if you've got one. But that's the unusual way that I feel that the person who really had very little education, she wouldn't have thought



herself creative but I considered she was doing art. She was doing sort of art.

Amelia McIntyre: She's also a survivor as well by the sounds of it.

Julie Bennett: She survived through it. She would sort of die if she didn't and that's where my expression came a couple of years ago, I'd die without this art, and I find people using the same thing even though I haven't sort of mentioned to them as a survival thing.

Amelia McIntyre: I quite understand that because I've been through some hard times just with emotions and mentally and different things as sometimes things get on top of you. I found that at one stage I couldn't do anything which was probably about the time I couldn't do anything last year because I was just out of that.

That was what affected me most that I'd lost my creativity. That I couldn't do anything and it was like I was mourning the fact that I couldn't do anything and for me that was harder than the fact that I was not able to cope with kids or housework and things but that I couldn't do what I needed to do.

That I had that blank in there because normally it was just a swirl of things I'd do so I've got 100 things started and not being able to do anything. I couldn't even come over here for a while. It was heartbreaking to me and I knew that I was getting better when I just started doing things again.

Julie Bennett: Well through my study I'm looking at evolution and aesthetic expression is a form of evolutionary survival.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, it is.

Julie Bennett: It started with clay, with tribes or whatever in play and then ritual and that's how it sort of did. So we say it's not important, that country women doing cakes isn't important and we sort of, not laugh at them, but we tend to go oh, you know.

But in fact this is how these women have survived within the hierarchy of the male - a very male, extra male environment where the woman's place is in the home.

Amelia McIntyre: You really need to talk to Corinne. As I said, she's just incredible.

Julie Bennett: So that's a big chunk. So I'm marrying up the evolutionary need of aesthetics with the harsh environment of farming women and the history of the male gender orientated and how they express themselves.

They're only just coming out of the kitchen into the environment. You've come out, you know.

Amelia McIntyre: I have been lucky I think because Shane was much older than I was and he got over the fact that - I think sometimes the men can be jealous of what the women are doing or what they're producing.

He either was over that or got over it fairly quickly. Sometimes he still gets narky because as I said I'll be spending too much time out here and I should be doing something because there's a pile of washing six feet high and six feet wide.

But as I say, you know where the washing machine is, you can do it, the kids can do it and they've learnt that you have to help sometimes.

To me this is important and they've learnt that too and I think that's important that they've learnt some things that are important mightn't be perceived by others to be important but to their family members they are.

Do you know what I mean?

Julie Bennett: Yeah.

Amelia McIntyre: I think that's important that they learn that important things aren't just what are perceived by society to be important, like homework, school and things like that. Sometimes other things are as important or more important for different reasons.

Julie Bennett: Well mental health with art is a big - obviously a lot has been written about that. Up at Shepparton once again they have women gather in groups. You've probably heard of it.

The Government gives \$500 to say you and if you want to get a group of women together...

Amelia McIntyre: No I haven't.  
Julie Bennett: ...and you make a recipe book or - to get women together, not as just a social thing but for an expression as such. It's acknowledged because they found with women's health that mental problems, unless women were having some sort of expression outlet. Not only socially as I said, as an aesthetic thing. Because we've all got to meet our own potential.

Amelia McIntyre: Well that's right.  
Julie Bennett: That's what we're put on here to do.  
Amelia McIntyre: I find that I sort of skirt a lot of - a lot goes on my community - I'm involved in a large extent but I'm still skirting it. I've been involved with CWA, I've done my school council bit, and I've done the kindergarten council duties.  
We used to have Passion Play here which would involve most of the town which is now defunct. We had a huge big set that was permanent and you'd have a cast of hundreds and it was absolutely incredible to get people all over the state come and do it.  
So I was involved in that when it was going. Quite often I'll hire out costumes and they'll expect me to provide people in them. So the children have all been involved in that.  
Shane gets dragged along and it's just that if I'm doing something I expect, I suppose, my family to be involved as well. I don't know if it's an expectation or just a progression. If I'm doing something it's sort of one for all. I suppose we're musketeer like that.

Julie Bennett: It's quite lovely though that the girls get out now into boarding and have some - because you're a fairly strong character, you know,...

Amelia McIntyre: [Laughs]  
Julie Bennett: ...and they have a right to have...  
Amelia McIntyre: They do.  
Julie Bennett: ...an expression that isn't following mum or what mum thinks is right.  
Amelia McIntyre: That's right. I was just heading off that way. I have an expectation for them to be involved because I think it's important that they learn to be involved in their community and what's going on but I also encourage them to be individuals or I try to.  
Which is why if they're making something I can see that's not going to work but I won't necessarily say anything not because I'm setting them up to fail but I want them to work out how to do things and they do, it's astounding what they can do.  
It's just amazing what my kids can do. [Unclear] on so many different levels.

Julie Bennett: You're stopping at eight children?  
Amelia McIntyre: I'm getting old and I'm getting fatter all the time but I never say no.  
[Laughs] I've also suffered a lot of ill health and I've always found that if I'm in hospital or something I'll be doing something. I need something to do.  
Whether it's embroidery, hooking, rug wise, patchwork and it always gives you some ways to meet or talk to other people as well.

Julie Bennett: Yes, art is an entry into social contact. Well that's what this woman does with puppets. She actually takes them overseas with her so she'll sit on the plane and she's got [unclear] the koala and [unclear] sits there talking to the person next door.  
[Unclear] is on the shelf in the kitchen with the Eiffel Tower and [unclear] is at the Eiffel Tower.

Amelia McIntyre: That's fantastic.  
Julie Bennett: So she doesn't have children so these are obviously, as she admits, her children but it's a greyish connection for farming people because of the isolation and that sort of thing.

Amelia McIntyre: That's one of the patchworks I did for Shane that's over there.  
Julie Bennett: Down on the ground?  
Amelia McIntyre: Then I did a...  
Julie Bennett: Is this you up here too?

Amelia McIntyre: No I found that in an op shop in Minyip and they told me it was two ethnic to sell so they gave it to me.

Julie Bennett: Okay. Terrific.

Amelia McIntyre: Someone had moved somewhere and that was one of her things and I just - it's all hand done. It's absolutely amazing. The amount of work.

Julie Bennett: Fabulous.

Amelia McIntyre: Each of the panels is hand done and it's been put together with a machine.

Julie Bennett: I'm actually...

Amelia McIntyre: And over there that rug was made out of - someone gave me a heap of blanket off cuts so I sew them together and one of the girls loves wool so. I've still got another big box up there to do with stuff in it.

Julie Bennett: Right.

Amelia McIntyre: Oh yes, your quilt's over there and Broderick's to get finished.

Julie Bennett: So from my point of view it is if you're a core and I'm finding this when I went to, say Wangaratta even, people know. I mean it's no use in a way me ringing the local - you know who's in the hub and who's surviving through this means so it's great if these people, somehow - I can't contact people directly. It's part of my ethics thing. I'm not to be looking as if I'm coercing people.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, no, I'll call those friends.

Julie Bennett: So you're not far from me really to be able to come up and see these people and I've got a year-and-a-half to do it before I start writing it up.

Amelia McIntyre: If you go that way through [unclear], straight up the main street and over the railway line, just before you get to the hospital, just over the railway line, there's a woman that has done the most amazing stuff in her garden. She's done all plastic flowers and...

Julie Bennett: On the left hand side as you're going out? There's a place with lots of bits and pieces before...

Amelia McIntyre: If you're going towards Donald...

Julie Bennett: Okay, I didn't get that far.

Amelia McIntyre: Go straight up the main street.

Julie Bennett: I had coffee at the bakery there.

Amelia McIntyre: You go straight up the main street and it's just right through town, you go over the railway crossing and you'll see the hospital. Well they're just over the railway crossing. She looks after her grandson whose mum fed him two minute noodles so he's now a jockey. [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: She's got full time care of him now. He's a bit of a tearaway and I think that's...

Amelia McIntyre: How she...

Julie Bennett: She comes from a family background but her husband's retired now. But that's how she's dealt with that. She does really amazing bizarre things in their garden.

Amelia McIntyre: I'm trying to, because...

Julie Bennett: Yeah I'm just thinking [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: I'll have a look. I mean I've taken shots as I've come up. There have been fabulous Santas in the gardens made out of bales, round bales and the [unclear] and things and they're selling hay and stuff.

Julie Bennett: So these sorts of things are all expressions of country.

Amelia McIntyre: They're ones on motorbikes.

Annabella McIntyre: No, that was around the holidays.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, but...

Annabella McIntyre: I took one of a little Santa on a motorbike. I've seen that one.

Julie Bennett: As we were in Port Campbell, when we were near there, we were going towards Cobden and we went and looked at the gateway about three times. I don't know the story behind it or anything but it's a farming property and they had a rocket, a machine gun placement.

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear].

Interviewee: Yeah, a whole heap of things and when you looked at them closely they were made out of all farm bits and pieces. They were really great. They had like heaps of them spread everywhere.

Annabella McIntyre: They had animals in there that looked real. Like it emus, camels and...

Julie Bennett: It's fabulous stuff.

Amelia McIntyre: We went and had a look. I mean we drove around, because it was a great big area to the gate and we sort of drove around there a few times just to have a look at what they'd done. It was absolutely amazing. I don't know the story behind it.

We've got a local man that's made - what's he out of - [unclear] and things, out of bits and pieces which is quite amusing.

Julie Bennett: I'm not saying men don't have it too.

Amelia McIntyre: No, no, but his are hilarious. You'll go out and it's a road in the middle of nowhere and you'll suddenly see [unclear] and different bits and pieces that he's made and double take.

Julie Bennett: Any other little things like this that you've got that...

Amelia McIntyre: All the rest were just one offs.

Julie Bennett: The one offs. Okay. That's fantastic.

Amelia McIntyre: Because I've put a lot of our work on different entry forms and things.

Julie Bennett: Alright, so I've got to look at this show in March. First Tuesday and Wednesday.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, that's if they're going to do it. They didn't last year and I haven't heard if they're doing it or not because they've got a new committee.

Julie Bennett: Okay, can I sort of keep contact with you on that...

Amelia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: ...so I can go and see all that?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes. I'm waiting to find out about that.

Julie Bennett: You do use email obviously now.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: So if you could keep in contact with me about these people?

Amelia McIntyre: Elmore's amazing what they do.

Julie Bennett: This is in October though?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.

Julie Bennett: Okay. In October and it's called farm and wearable - what's it called?

Amelia McIntyre: Farm Art.

Julie Bennett: Farm Art.

Amelia McIntyre: I think they call it Farm Art there or is it Ag Art? Farm or Ag Art, they call it at different places [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Alright.

Amelia McIntyre: Depends if they're licensed or not.

Julie Bennett: Okay. Alright and that would cover this sort of area a bit. I've got a lot of people in Hopetoun too which is quite a creative area and then heading up to Mildura in March.

Amelia McIntyre: They do some interesting things up there too.

Julie Bennett: Do they? You don't know any sort of contacts up there a bit?

Amelia McIntyre: No but I've just been up and seen different things at different times when we've been travelling.

Julie Bennett: But these are really quite unusual what you're doing. Like a woman I also met is a doll maker.

Amelia McIntyre: Oh yes, I've made dolls. [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: She does the actual moulding like the faces with the eyelashes and the eyes that move...

Amelia McIntyre: Fantastic.

Julie Bennett: ...and the dresses and the dolls which have got all the - you look through them and they show scenes of Italy and things.

Amelia McIntyre: Wow. [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: Apparently they were an old sort of doll that children use.

Amelia McIntyre: That sounds amazing.

Julie Bennett: There's a little thing and you look through it and you see the Eiffel Tower or something through the neck of the doll she had.

Amelia McIntyre: Sounds fantastic.

Julie Bennett: She makes all clothes out of drapes or whatever she can find in op shops and she's got a whole container full of these moulds. Different size moulds and things that she's brought from overseas.

Amelia McIntyre: Isn't that incredible?

Julie Bennett: She just does that herself and her husband - likewise, her husband takes the gas cylinders, you know the gas cylinders, cuts the tops off and puts legs on and makes a little burner, a little oven out of them.

Amelia McIntyre: Broderick, my boy who's 18 made me that last year, this heater.

Julie Bennett: This here?

Amelia McIntyre: That's made out of brake drums off trucks.

Julie Bennett: Fabulous.

Amelia McIntyre: That's what I mean, my lot are creative. I needed a heater and he went and made it.

Julie Bennett: You've done so much for your children to do this you know. You make me embarrassed to think that...

Amelia McIntyre: But like Eleanor makes - she still does dolls clothes but hers are like designer doll clothes. They all can make clothes if they want to and they have.

Julie Bennett: They can all use the machines and things?

Annabella McIntyre: We make a lot of garden things.

Amelia McIntyre: Annabella doesn't use the machine yet but she wants to. She'll sit in my lap and use it. But all the rest do. Thaddeus does and the girls have got their own sewing machines.

Annabella McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: Although Sylvia's not too keen on it.

Julie Bennett: I mean you really - they're not reacting against all this are they with you?

Amelia McIntyre: No.

Julie Bennett: I mean they're not sort of saying I'm sick of mum and...

Amelia McIntyre: No that's why I'll let them do it at their own pace when they want to do things.

Julie Bennett: It's amazing to have them all interested and not one of them sort of feel a bit, you know, oh they're better, and intimidated a little bit.

Amelia McIntyre: No because they do things - because we do so much here, I might be soldering or welding or - Broderick and I both did a welding course together so we've got that bond together. Annabella might be in with the jewels making things. Thaddeus is into beanie kids, he might be making costumes for his beanie kids.

Someone else will be into the foam carving and moulding something. So they'll all do different things and if we don't know how to do something we'll find out how to do it. We'll ask someone. We'll look it up or read a book.

So there's always some way to expand your knowledge. Well we've got - people have been horrified because they've come here and the children will be using power tools from an early age without supervision.

We've shown them how to use it. They haven't as of yet done anything major. I think the worst thing was when they were playing with lead one day and it had rained overnight and the mould had filled up with water and then Broderick poured more hot lead in and it exploded.

Julie Bennett: That'll spark.

Amelia McIntyre: All the water vaporised and he got really bad burns. But they use the wood lathe and...

Julie Bennett: They're never going to do that again are they?

Amelia McIntyre: No. They use the wood lathe and I don't know...

Julie Bennett: So you've got other areas here with lathes and things?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, out the back in the workshop. [Inaudible]. This is my shed.

Julie Bennett: Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: My husband and sister-in-law built this for me. [Unclear]. We need extra because I've run out of room. My caravan out here is full of - I do weaving and all sorts of things so my caravan out there is full of material and farm art.

Julie Bennett: I might take a photo of that.  
Amelia McIntyre: It's got farm art and [unclear] in it at the moment. Probably [unclear].  
[Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: You've got a couple of caravans have you? Is there another one I saw?  
Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible]. The other one [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Okay. Oh my God.  
Amelia McIntyre: That's what I mean, yes. Most of that material has been given to me.  
Julie Bennett: Sorry, I'll take another one just at the entrance here.  
Amelia McIntyre: This is the original garden storage that we put in and when I first started doing sewing and stuff Shane put an extra room and a little attic for me. But our house is like the Tardis. Did you ever watch Dr Who?

Julie Bennett: No.  
Amelia McIntyre: The Tardis is small on the outside and big on the inside but our house looks big on the outside but it shrank inside. So Broderick moved over here.

Julie Bennett: Okay, so he sleeps over here?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.  
Julie Bennett: Okay, but that's fun for him too isn't it?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. [Inaudible].  
Julie Bennett: Right. You know Rosalie Gascoigne's work I guess don't you?  
Amelia McIntyre: No.  
Julie Bennett: Do you know an artist called Rosalie Gascoigne?  
Amelia McIntyre: No.  
Julie Bennett: It's all sort of gathering of road signs and things. So whose is this here, this sort of shed?  
Amelia McIntyre: This is Broderick and Shane's shed but they complain [inaudible]. [Inaudible] my stuff there.

Julie Bennett: Right. That's fabulous stuff. Just waiting for an - like those - what are those wooden things up there? The...  
Amelia McIntyre: They're actually from the Passion Plays and I've got plans for those.  
Julie Bennett: So you know where everything is?  
Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible] use my stuff because it's good stuff. You shouldn't be just using it. [Inaudible] which I'll use. [Coughing]

Julie Bennett: Are you right?  
Amelia McIntyre: We had hooping cough go through the family just before Christmas. We're all worried but we're not contagious but we're going to cough for months yet. So [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Right.  
Amelia McIntyre: So [unclear].  
Julie Bennett: Just anything. Those...  
Amelia McIntyre: I use all these sorts of things. [Unclear]. I've particularly been getting old petrol caps and radiator caps and I want to drill those and use them for headpieces.

Julie Bennett: Headpieces? Hats and things?  
Amelia McIntyre: I want to do - what I'm working on now is that wire and I'm going to put these on it. You can put more weight on a head quite often than you can on a body if you balance it correctly.  
There's a rule, you can't leave models bleed and you can't have them too heavy because otherwise they'll collapse. So some of these things I won't be able to use for a while. [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: So this is interesting. All little hats and things you suddenly start seeing everywhere don't you?  
Amelia McIntyre: One of the girls was doing Australian history at school so we took up a trailer load of soil so they could go gold panning so those pans are there.

Julie Bennett: What a wonderland. What an absolute wonderland.  
Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] a tip really. There's all rubbish out the back that we keep saying we're going to do something with.

Julie Bennett: There's a torch in there I think. Is that a torch in the car? How wonderful. Your sort of head is everywhere other than in your head a bit. You know

what I mean? It's all out there. You've let it out. I mean it's very good for your mental health this. Isn't it? Wouldn't you say? Don't you think?  
Without, as you say, this sort of expression...

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] even with the bricks there, I wanted to build an extra couple of rooms on there so [unclear] but it's been too - not conducive for that in this season. They were all given to us.  
We had a float for fairies that Eleanor made me that out of. A little [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Yes. Gee. What a wonderland.

Amelia McIntyre: There's just stuff everywhere.

Julie Bennett: You get time for housework, how boring.

Amelia McIntyre: Not a lot. The girls are good when they're home and the boys help. They have to.

Julie Bennett: You don't need a tip do you because it's all here.

Amelia McIntyre: That's right. I've got peacocks and guinea fowls so we're always picking up the feathers that we use as well.

Julie Bennett: Of course. You don't have foxes or anything here?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes [inaudible]. I like doing up - I do up [unclear] chairs.

Julie Bennett: You like doing up chairs?

Amelia McIntyre: Yes. [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Terrific. Maybe just amongst the costumes in here, I mean where's a position where you say best describes you?

Amelia McIntyre: Probably sitting on that chair.

Julie Bennett: Like we've been doing. Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: Because all my stuff is in reach then. Now I'm going to go to the loo but I'm just showing you in here.

Julie Bennett: Okay. Then I'll...

Amelia McIntyre: I do everything.

Annabella McIntyre: Heaps of the animals mum's made.

Julie Bennett: Some of the animals.

Annabella McIntyre: Yeah that's [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Looks like a fish.

Amelia McIntyre: These are our fish.

Annabella McIntyre: And a dragon.

Amelia McIntyre: I made a dragon for Thaddeus because he wanted a dragon.

Julie Bennett: Amelia, can I just have a - here we go - just your head poking near the fish. That looks quite nice here. The end.

Amelia McIntyre: This is Thaddeus asked for a dragon and I was like, how do I make a dragon. So that was his head.

Julie Bennett: Just another one just because it looks really nice with the fish head sort of thing.

Amelia McIntyre: That was the dragon I made him for school.

Annabella McIntyre: I dressed up as a fish.

Julie Bennett: You dressed up as a fish did you?

Amelia McIntyre: We've got western animals...

Julie Bennett: This must be a quite good little business for dress ups though. I mean people hiring...

Amelia McIntyre: I charge \$20 an adult and \$10 for kids and \$7 if something for school so I don't make much money.

Julie Bennett: All your hats and things like that over there.

Amelia McIntyre: Yep. Westerns and...

Julie Bennett: Just one with the - just with those hats in the background there I might, with you sort of nearby.

Amelia McIntyre: I just started putting everything up in boxes so I can find everything.

Julie Bennett: Rather than trim it down it's a matter of build another shed.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: [Laughs] Look at all these little ballet dresses. Do you often just come and dress up because you feel like it?

Annabella McIntyre: No.

Amelia McIntyre: They're not allowed to too much because they tend to leave everything on the floor.

Annabella McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: It just is...

Amelia McIntyre: One of the drama groups closed down so they gave us all their stuff. When Passion Play closed down I became a custodian of their things. In Broderick's shed I just showed you, up the top is full of all the Passion Play costumes and more material and bits and pieces.

Julie Bennett: Which is your favourite costume? Do you have one?

Annabella McIntyre: They're all just really fantastic really. Like mum made these ones. The broccoli...

Julie Bennett: The broccoli. [Laughs]

Annabella McIntyre: Mushroom, carrot.

Julie Bennett: What's the yellow one? Pineapple [unclear].

Annabella McIntyre: No, corn...

Julie Bennett: Corn, of course.

Annabella McIntyre: ...on the cob.

Julie Bennett: I'll take a picture of you with those I think because they're - do you want to look at me? That's it. [Inaudible].

Annabella McIntyre: I was the model for most of them because...

Julie Bennett: Because they're made in your size are they?

Annabella McIntyre: Yeah but they're actually bigger than me but they still used me because I was the closest to their size.

Julie Bennett: Okay, because it was a kid's play probably was it?

Annabella McIntyre: Yeah for cooking.

Julie Bennett: The what?

Annabella McIntyre: Cooking.

Julie Bennett: A cooking show. Okay.

Annabella McIntyre: I don't know really.

Julie Bennett: So they're one of your favourites. Yeah but before school I like to [inaudible] and after school the other half really.

Julie Bennett: Okay, and look at all the beads up there. Can we have a picture of you in front of those too? It's fabulous stuff. Your mum is a wonder woman isn't she a bit?

Julie Bennett: The chair with all the studs in it there. Do you want to sit in the chair? I'll take a...

Annabella McIntyre: [Inaudible]. This is the one that [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: She loves being with you doesn't she, this one?

Amelia McIntyre: She likes people.

Julie Bennett: Terrific. Alright.

Amelia McIntyre: I used to have the most magnificent garden. I used to win prizes for what I had in the garden.

Julie Bennett: This garden here?

Amelia McIntyre: Yep, at the show I used to be able to put in 100 variety of herbs, I had nearly 200 rose bushes and there's not much left. Because we're on a gravel hill all the water goes straight through.

Julie Bennett: So what did that mean to you after?

Amelia McIntyre: I didn't like going outside the door for a long time because it was just watching like the cypress trees [unclear]. Just watching things and having to pull things out and putting things back was totally devastating so I think that's when I came in here more.

Amelia McIntyre: I used to collect books. I love reading and I had tens of thousands of books. I read to the children. I haven't as much this year but I generally read to them an hour every night, even the big ones. They'll sit there and listen. We've gone through so many books.

Amelia McIntyre: Shane doesn't read and he got really miffed about my books so I ended up selling most of them except the favourite ones and all the reference books. Then I went into this more and he sort of sometimes says he wishes I had stayed with the books because it was a lot less trouble.



Julie Bennett: I mean they're saying - I mean that's partly - I'd love to get a person with a good garden in a way because they say - it's just not recognised. As soon as the drought the garden goes when really it should be the main thing that stays. Instead of letting cattle in and get some water in for the garden because that's women's sustainability.

Amelia McIntyre: Not only our veggie garden's been very hard for us because that's always been a mainstay for us and it's just hard...

Annabella McIntyre: Thaddeus did make one but then it kind of...

Amelia McIntyre: Yes, the sheep got into it this year.

Julie Bennett: So I'm trying to get it recognised that these things are things that keep women in the country.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Because what happens once women won't...

Amelia McIntyre: That's right. Come and have a look inside. This is our house. I was lucky because I married Shane and he already had this house. It's been here an awful long time.

Julie Bennett: It's a beautiful house obviously. It's beautiful historically.

Amelia McIntyre: It needs a lot of work done on it.

Julie Bennett: But it doesn't matter if it's neat and tidy. I mean that's not where the value lies in anything.

Amelia McIntyre: Eleanor's got a pet goat [unclear]. She thinks it's a dog.

Julie Bennett: Where's the goat?

Amelia McIntyre: She'll be floating around somewhere.

Annabella McIntyre: She's over there I think.

Amelia McIntyre: Cilla, Cilla, Priscilla. She comes rarely when she whistles. [Unclear] this kitchen and make it big enough that we can all be in here.

Julie Bennett: Oh my God.

Amelia McIntyre: It's very original.

Julie Bennett: You've still got your lights on. Isn't that gorgeous? I love those.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: [Laughs] Okay.

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] because it's still got all the original features and things.

Julie Bennett: Yeah, look at that marble fireplace.

Amelia McIntyre: We sent Shane away for a week to Tassie and we painted three rooms, four rooms while he was away. [Inaudible]. We haven't got our pictures back on the wall yet. They're still sitting behind the door.

Julie Bennett: What fabulous rooms. Solid aren't they and the ceilings?

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: How gorgeous.

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] Dusty which was originally part of this room.

Julie Bennett: So it's been - so this is just the kid's...

Amelia McIntyre: Ambrose's mess, yes.

Julie Bennett: And you know where everything is?

Interviewee: No.

Amelia McIntyre: Because the girls are going way to boarding school [unclear] bedroom, we've got the two big girls in here and Annabella so she's going to effectively have her own room once they've gone.

Julie Bennett: She won't know herself will she?

Amelia McIntyre: She'll be able to use all their stuff.

Julie Bennett: That's your bed is it? Let me take you on your bed.

Amelia McIntyre: We've taken all the curtains down and haven't put them back but there are beautiful proportions of the room.

Julie Bennett: You started to renovate did you with the windows and things being...

Amelia McIntyre: No, we painted this room, the other two bedrooms and the lounge room when Shane was away for a week.

Julie Bennett: Look at this lovely bed. Whose bed is that one?

Amelia McIntyre: That's Sylvia's. This is Elly's. She's using it a lot.

Julie Bennett: Let me take you on your bed again.

Amelia McIntyre: So I collect antiques and do them up when we've got time. There are lots that need to be done. I love the mantelpiece in here too.

Julie Bennett: They're magnificent those fireplaces aren't they?  
Amelia McIntyre: I'm just [unclear]. [Unclear] this is a [unclear] that I made for her many years ago and she wants to take it away with her but all the...

Julie Bennett: You made...  
Amelia McIntyre: A lot of the satin's come off so I'm having to repair it for her so she can take it with her because she - it's her [unclear].

Julie Bennett: People won't know her when she goes there with all this gorgeous - the sun's not shining in the house today. That's a little doll's...  
Amelia McIntyre: That's my doll's house but the little girls have been playing with it.  
Julie Bennett: Who's doll's house is it?  
Amelia McIntyre: Mine.  
Julie Bennett: You didn't make it?  
Amelia McIntyre: No.  
Julie Bennett: Thank goodness. Can I have you girls standing in front of the doll's house?

Amelia McIntyre: DustyRaiyn's been playing with that.  
Julie Bennett: Dusty? Yeah? Lovely.  
Amelia McIntyre: And cobwebs galore.  
Julie Bennett: You've got a big enough house haven't you really?  
Amelia McIntyre: Well no, we need another three bedrooms.  
Julie Bennett: From now on with the kids going though...  
Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, they come back.  
Julie Bennett: Oh do you think they will?  
Amelia McIntyre: Yes. They've got holidays and things.  
Julie Bennett: You've got the old [unclear]. I've got one of those.  
Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear].  
Julie Bennett: Exactly the same. I think it's the same. It's not a Kookaburra one is it?  
Amelia McIntyre: So then Shane had his portrait painted. [Unclear]. That's him when he was much younger [unclear].

Julie Bennett: That's you?  
Amelia McIntyre: When I was [unclear] yeah.  
Julie Bennett: Can I have a shot next to that? Go on, that's a great one.  
Amelia McIntyre: A bit of a difference. [Laughs]  
Julie Bennett: No it's not. Well it is a difference. I mean mum was young. Probably not quite your age.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible]. Usually known by Amy. As soon as I left [unclear] loathe and detest it I went to my birth name which was Amelia and never used it again because I hate it so much.  
Julie Bennett: Amy? Amy? Problem from the...  
Amelia McIntyre: French [inaudible].  
Julie Bennett: I love the water tank with those ribbets out there too. I go in for that sort of thing [unclear].

Amelia McIntyre: That is actually a steamer from the Lady Nelson Gold Mine and there used to be a sheet up that high but Shane said many years ago during a storm one night they heard a funny noise and next morning it had fallen down.

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: [Unclear] outside.  
Julie Bennett: What's outside?  
DustyRaiyn McIntyre: [Macka].  
Amelia McIntyre: The cat's outside. [Macka's] outside.  
Julie Bennett: So you brought it in as the original steamer?  
Amelia McIntyre: No, well the year before Shane bought the property - he's been her for [25/35] years or something. [Unclear].  
Julie Bennett: But this wasn't his family or it was?  
Amelia McIntyre: No.  
Julie Bennett: No.  
Amelia McIntyre: No it belonged to the Edwards and they were a major business family I suppose you'd say. They had this place. They had [Pottington] and they had [unclear] so they had three properties. They had the gardens [unclear] the main gardener would live here and then he'd go around once a month and tell the boys what they had to do on the properties.

Old George went bankrupt. [Unclear] 30 years and then people bought it that Shane bought it off. We actually had someone turn up here one day who was the husband of the people who used to live here. He was a very old man.

He said that they used to all sleep out on the veranda. No-one slept inside. So the girls, the women would be one side of the lattice and the men the other side.

He pointed out where horse stables and some things had been so that was interesting.

Julie Bennett: You had this garden beautiful did you?

Amelia McIntyre: It was gorgeous.

Julie Bennett: I'll get some nice photos of you standing there too. Alright, well look thank you for your time. It's just been fantastic. I mean it's just - it just helps because I think this is what it is about, you know.

Though I sort of felt the need to do it I didn't know whether anyone else suffered from the same sorts of...

Amelia McIntyre: I think a lot of us do.

Julie Bennett: ...needs that I did.

Amelia McIntyre: Shane brought that table home not long after we were married and said he wanted it full. He wanted enough children to sit around it and now we've all grown up, it's too small really isn't it? [Unclear].

Julie Bennett: I admire you enormously and how you're bringing them up is fabulous.

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: Come outside. Come outside.

Amelia McIntyre: Do you want Julie outside?

Julie Bennett: Come outside?

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: Yeah.

Annabella McIntyre: She's saying [unclear] like...

Julie Bennett: Can I come outside?

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: Yeah I'll come outside.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: It might be a bit hot in the sun.

Amelia McIntyre: [Unclear] hot. Have you tried it? You better go and try it. It might be in the sun I think.

Julie Bennett: Good luck for your schooling and everything.

Sylvia McIntyre: Thank you.

Julie Bennett: Being a lawyer.

Sylvia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: A very creative lawyer though. You'll see things differently. I mean if you're creative it doesn't matter whether it's a lawyer or anything. You put, obviously a different creative perspective on it.

Amelia McIntyre: I think it'll be too hot. Eleanor is thinking of going into architecture or structural engineering or something like that.

Julie Bennett: Yeah. That's fantastic.

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible] took a year off and never went back. Done a few courses and different things but that's as far as I've got.

Julie Bennett: So the kids don't need other friends a lot when there's all of this?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, we...

Julie Bennett: They have friends over as well?

Amelia McIntyre: Not as much now they've grown up [inaudible].

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: Come outside. I'll show you my new bike.

Julie Bennett: Your new bike?

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: Yes.

Julie Bennett: A new one? I'm sure you got your sisters' bikes passed down to you or is it a new one?

Amelia McIntyre: It's a new one because the boys wrecked everything between the girls [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Do you get sick of hand me downs and things?

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible] and Eleanor, well Sylvia [inaudible]. They do get a lot of stuff [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: I think it is hard though to buy new stuff because as you say the old stuff is nice because someone has sat on it and someone has had tears and laughter and it means so much more. It just somehow has the character.

Amelia McIntyre: Ambrose is the one that's a snob. He expects all brand name stuff.

Julie Bennett: But that's a teenager. That's a teenager isn't it?

Amelia McIntyre: The other teenagers haven't gone through that.

Ambrose McIntyre: Exactly mum. Leave me alone.

Julie Bennett: Boys.

Amelia McIntyre: The others haven't. He's the only one that has to that extent.

Ambrose McIntyre: [Unclear] friends.

Julie Bennett: I buy my son op shop stuff and he won't be in it anymore. Or passed down stuff. Oh well, each to their own. Heavens.

Amelia McIntyre: But Ambrose is right up with his sports and different things and he's...

Interviewee: I am too.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes you're very good too.

Interviewee: [Inaudible].

Amelia McIntyre: What about me.

Julie Bennett: What about me. What's that song? Don't you get enough attention? I bet you get heaps of attention being the youngest.

Amelia McIntyre: She's spoilt rotten.

Julie Bennett: I was only the youngest of four. I can't imagine what the youngest of eight would be like.

Amelia McIntyre: You can't spoil [unclear].

Julie Bennett: [Laughs] Alright guys. Well it's been terrific. Absolutely terrific and...

DustyRaiyn McIntyre: I show you my new bike.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes [inaudible]. Off you go.

Julie Bennett: It'll be such a different experience for you won't it?

Sylvia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: So is it really good?

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, it is, it's really [unclear].

Julie Bennett: Your own space and...

Sylvia McIntyre: Oh not really.

Julie Bennett: What's the main thing that you notice?

Sylvia McIntyre: Well I probably do get more time to myself here because there are like 40 something girls in the boarding house there so it's always [unclear] but it's good because you make friends and there just always there.

Like you've got always got your friends and you're always hanging out after school and getting in trouble for sneaking into each other's dorms and stuff and talking.

Julie Bennett: But you love coming home?

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, when you come home it's really good.

Julie Bennett: All of them are just...

Sylvia McIntyre: I miss them a lot [unclear]. But it's good. It is good.

Julie Bennett: Well you've got your other sister there this year so that'll make a difference too.

Sylvia McIntyre: Yeah, that'll be interesting.

Annabella McIntyre: So there'll only be two girls left.

Julie Bennett: I know.

Sylvia McIntyre: At home. You and Dusty.

Julie Bennett: You'll be the big girl.

Julie Bennett: Okay, well see you guys.

Group: See you.

Julie Bennett: Where's mum gone?

Amelia McIntyre: Running out of water and...

Julie Bennett: It is new. It is new.

Amelia McIntyre: I ended up running out of [unclear] and had to have two, three blood transfusions so I'm still...

Julie Bennett: Can I just take a photo of you with your bike?

Amelia McIntyre: I huff and puff if I walk too far at the moment.

Julie Bennett: There we go. So do you have much to do with the local women sort of in the town a bit or are you fairly solo with your kids?

Amelia McIntyre: No, a bit of both. Well been there and done it so many times now that...

Julie Bennett: You've got a new bike too?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, because a lot of people that have only two or three children that we knew when Laura-Anne was a baby, she's 22 now, so they've grown up. It's hard being friends to an extent with them when you've still got littlies and it's like they're in a different role, a different league now. It's hard to explain.

Julie Bennett: So you find you don't have the same interests?

Amelia McIntyre: We feel like we've still stayed the same whereas other people had a chance to change.

Julie Bennett: You've made, yeah, until they grow up and then you're through it.

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, but I mean we've had babies for 22 years now so it's like...

Julie Bennett: Did you come from a big family?

Amelia McIntyre: No. Neither did Shane. I have two brothers and Shane has a brother and a sister.

Julie Bennett: So any events that come up that you're involved with and need all the kids or anything, I mean it's quite a lovely little story on how the whole family sort of copes a bit and stuff. Is this the goat?

Amelia McIntyre: Yeah. She loves Eleanor.

Sylvia McIntyre: She's Eleanor's goat.

Amelia McIntyre: She sits on Eleanor's lap. Eleanor went and did work experience for a week down at Halls Gap at their wildlife park and she saw a lot of the monkeys and wanted to be a monkey [unclear]. She knew she couldn't so they gave her a goat instead as a little kid and she's raised it. They're best friends. She's like a little dog. They sleep together on the throne. That dog under the car and Cilla, they sleep on the throne on the veranda.

Annabella McIntyre: And my cat sometimes.

Amelia McIntyre: Yes and Sleepy John sometimes.

Annabella McIntyre: My cat.

Amelia McIntyre: Cilla's a lovely goat. She's not quite sure if she's a goat, a dog or a person. At least we've taught her not to hop into people's cars.

Julie Bennett: Who made that bike?

Amelia McIntyre: [Inaudible].

Julie Bennett: That's fantastic. Did Santa bring it or there's no Santa around here?

Amelia McIntyre: Father Christmas brings some things but mum and dad bring the most because [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: I was listening to Steve Hawkins, the evolutionary guy and he was saying how it's dreadful that Father Christmas [unclear] to children and it's just...

Amelia McIntyre: We do have Father Christmas and he does fill their stockings and he'll give them a few things but the rest - and they like it when they get a new brother or sister because everyone gives each other a present for their birthdays so the more I've had the more they...

Julie Bennett: That's hardly justification I'm afraid.

Amelia McIntyre: Laura-Anne spat the dummy. She's 22 and we went away and she knew we wouldn't be there for her birthday and she said it was alright. When she came out and visited us when we came back she was all upset that she didn't get a birthday cake or a happy birthday...

[End of part one audio]

[Beginning of part two audio]

Julie Bennett: So fabulous costumes and stuff.

Amelia McIntyre: Watch that peacock there. They're sitting on eggs out the front [inaudible].

Shane McIntyre: The peacock?

Amelia McIntyre: He's one of the [unclear].

Shane McIntyre: [Unclear] disappeared to. We had nine [inaudible].

Julie Bennett: I'll take a picture of dad. You get near dad and I'll take a picture of dad.

Julie Bennett: There you go. Oh look at that smile.

Amelia McIntyre: Dusty Raiyn is daddy's girl.

Julie Bennett: Oh really?  
 Amelia McIntyre: They're both daddy's girls.  
 Shane McIntyre: They are when they're [unclear] little [unclear] then they grow up.  
 Amelia McIntyre: When they're little they all follow dad. Do everything with dad.  
 Julie Bennett: Fascinating. So you've been making silos?  
 Shane McIntyre: They give plenty of cheek. Yes.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Broderick [unclear]. Put that somewhere because you'll have to check that one.  
 Broderick McIntyre: [Inaudible].  
 Shane McIntyre: I'll get the rest of them out. Put some toast on for me.  
 Annabella McIntyre: I'm getting them [unclear].  
 Shane McIntyre: [Inaudible].  
 Julie Bennett: Alright, I'll grab my bag and actually I've got - which I've forgotten about...  
 Amelia McIntyre: Adult costumes and I was like oh yes of course I do and I went home and made them [unclear].  
 Julie Bennett: Right. It's interesting your direction. What your next direction will be.  
 Amelia McIntyre: I don't know. I've done lots of different bits and pieces.  
 Julie Bennett: So you've got the plain language statement and you understand what I'm doing.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yeah.  
 Julie Bennett: So these are just that one of them is that you've basically read the consent - what is it? Consent - I don't know what it is. It's all just paperwork I've got to do for the unit as such.  
 As I said the next - I'll just keep photographing for a year-and-a-half or something and then I'll have an exhibition of about 20 of the major people I've seen with their work hopefully in the Ballarat Gallery. I've had a couple of exhibitions there.  
 Amelia McIntyre: That's fantastic. Are you online with any of the work you've done previously?  
 Julie Bennett: Not really. No I don't - I'm not a real techno. I mean the sort of thing which one of - that was the barbed wire ball, the 12 foot barbed wire ball.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Fantastic.  
 Julie Bennett: I did a welding course like you and did a sphere and then rolled it with the barbed wire from the fences and put it in the paddock.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yes, I wanted to do something like that myself.  
 Julie Bennett: That's 12 feet tall. It's bigger than the ceiling.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yeah, I can imagine. That's fantastic. There must have been a lot of work and effort in that.  
 Julie Bennett: Well it's just...  
 Amelia McIntyre: When you made the sphere, did you make - how - and then you welded all that.  
 Julie Bennett: I welded and tap welded it and then...  
 Amelia McIntyre: How did you get the - did you...  
 Julie Bennett: I did it in halves.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Oh yes, okay.  
 Julie Bennett: I did it in half and then joined it at the front.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Yes, okay and then with the wire how did you just...  
 Julie Bennett: Through a roller.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Okay.  
 Julie Bennett: I did it in - an engineering company helped me because they had the access to the - off the ceiling and then some things to hold it so we just put it through just big huge rollers.  
 Amelia McIntyre: Excellent. How did that affect the barbs?  
 Julie Bennett: The what?  
 Amelia McIntyre: Did you do that with the barbs?  
 Julie Bennett: No, the strength in it was fine with the bars.  
 Amelia McIntyre: No, with the barbs. Did you do that - when you were doing the barbed wire around it did you do that separate?

Julie Bennett: I just walked around it like Maypole and then I got the ute to roll it a little bit and then I'd just move it and roll it a little bit and move it.

Amelia McIntyre: It didn't spring off?

Julie Bennett: No.

Amelia McIntyre: How did you...

Julie Bennett: I loved the medium actually of barbed wire. It sort of clung to each other...

Amelia McIntyre: That was I wondering.

Julie Bennett: A little bit like that and if you did let it go probably yes, it would spiral a bit.

Amelia McIntyre: That would have added to the texture or integrity of it though.

Julie Bennett: Well a little bit, yeah. I fell in love with barbed wire. I just think it's a great thing. The other thing is, the one that I'm doing at the moment and I'll photograph it throughout the seasons again is that.

Amelia McIntyre: Now, where did I see something about this? I saw something about this.

Julie Bennett: It could have been in the Weekly Times or...

Amelia McIntyre: It wasn't. It was somewhere else.

Julie Bennett: So I'll just photograph it...

Amelia McIntyre: I was sent an email of this.

Julie Bennett: ...through it's procession.

Amelia McIntyre: Someone sent me a picture of this.

Julie Bennett: Oh the DC, the department of rural networking?

Amelia McIntyre: No, just someone found it on the internet and sent it to me because they thought I'd be interested in it.

Julie Bennett: So that was up the tree.

Amelia McIntyre: That's fantastic.

Julie Bennett: So I've taken it throughout its whole series of time.

Amelia McIntyre: That's amazing. I love it.

Julie Bennett: No.

Amelia McIntyre: No. Because I think colour works as a good therapy. I find that sometimes I just need to come in and play with different textures and feels of materials and colours and it'll give you a lift. I'll play with the jewels and things and it's just.

Julie Bennett: You're very in touch with your feelings aren't you? I think that probably comes, when you said that you'd had an emotional sort of setback.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- Interviewee: Very very true. But I know that Royce always tells a story that um, one particular who's now since passed on, which is very sad – I didn't like him myself – but um, he rang in here one day and he said, chatting on about things and everything and he said 'is the boss in?' and I said: 'Speaking' and there was absolute silence. Absolute silence. And he said 'Oh, is Royce there?' and I said 'Yes, I'll get him for you' and I thought, and this bloke – and I would do it to anyone, I'm a bit like 'don't mess with me'
- Facilitator: Yeah
- I: But um, Royce has always acknowledged me as being his partner, absolutely.
- F: Outside the farm gate?
- I: Yes, and even inside too. Yesterday we were saying about um, he was thanking me you know, 'thanks for coming' because we had to drive around to try and find this ewe, this rotten ewe, and I just always say to him 'listen, I'm fifty per cent of this' I'm the age A, he knows that.
- F: It's interesting when I've been doing...(tape cuts) ...you know, by the time it changes, as you say...
- I: There won't be any women here.
- F: There won't be any women here.
- I: Not that Bonnie and myself, not the women on farms per se. I was involved with women on farms, back in my working days too, you know the Birchip property group's now taken them over which is simply superb, a lot of women are working with that down there, but we did a lot of expos up at Walpeup that I was involved in getting organized and everything, and it was amazing how many women who, given half an opportunity, would do further education or actually move away from...
- F: There are more people educating in the country per capital than there is in the city.
- I: Yep, absolutely.
- F: So that's their outlet. And I acknowledge that. And working and education, and then I'm hoping, as I said that the aesthetics side is a part when they're not allowed or they can't get access to it.
- I: Now see I think you'll find, if we're looking over and above our own independence and our own individuality, so to speak, if you look at Bonnie, her garden is her life. Absolutely is her life, she just, there isn't a minute of the day that she isn't...
- F: And he did a dam for her, he dug a dam...
- I: He did dig the dam for her indeed, which I was laughing like mad over, he was getting upset about these little um, tadpoles, there was a frog pond.
- F: I've got a dam
- I: Is that the one you mean?
- F: No, I meant the big dams, the ones that actually store water for the garden.
- I: Yes, well that's right. She's had great support indeed. We always laugh about that actually, because I'm frugal over here with mine, I should be...um, but yes she empties that dam, we used to joke about that, Bonnie can empty that dam quick as a flash and Erin came over yesterday because we're on the pipeline so we're supposed to be finished with that, so we've been sneaking around that too.
- F: Yeah she said that.
- I: Um, yes but so Bonnie's got her garden, I've got my miscellaneous bits and pieces, you know, my little craggy things that I do from time to time, plus my study and my self. My self is my outlet to a degree. And when you meet Ruth, she does painting. I'm not sure, you went to see Diane?
- F: Diane, yes. On preserves? I stayed the night there, because...
- I: Oh did you? That was lovely.
- F: Oh yeah, because the pub said 'oh I didn't hear you, so I put five guys in.'
- I: Oh really, she's lovely, Diane.



F: And obviously Helen is now becoming a social coordinate. That's her outlet.  
 I: Yes well she did the same thing, she went back to study too. She did a whole lot of study.  
 F: Yvonne said she was talking about being so shy, and she's loving it.  
 I: Yes, she really does, and that for Helen is her outlet, and it's her self-esteem. And she's always needed to have that self-esteem, and that's where she and I were always different. Because she was, I think what we all saw of Helen for many many years was a façade, and whereas now she's fiscal and she's very much her.  
 F: Very much. Yeah. And she's been in a very male family, whereas you've had daughters, she's surrounded by three males, so I think that might have had an influence.  
 I: Oh yes, absolutely. And I think her early life might have had a bit to do with it too. You know, at the end of the day our earlier life does count in for something.  
 F: Oh absolutely. We are what we were.  
 I: Exactly, yes indeed. And our girls, now they are what they are...  
 F: So it's fascinating seeing these um, different...(tape cuts)  
 I: ...See the thing is though, to me, you've got to be able to, like women, whether they're actually yearning to have something that they're unable to attain, I don't know...  
 F: In what way?  
 I: Well, their own individuality, you know whether or not...  
 F: But they're born to do that, they're born to...that's why we're on earth, to meet our potential.  
 I: Yes, that's right, but not to meet anyone else's potential.  
 F: Oh I know. Yeah.  
 I: See Royce said to me one time, and it was a long time ago, you know that joke about 'once, one day a long time ago I met this wonderful woman and she did this, this and this, but it was a long time ago and it was just for that one day.' Um, but he said to someone one day, 'Anna is my greatest possession' and my eyeballs went *bwoosh!* And we had a big to-do. He was mortified.  
 F: He didn't understand?  
 I: No, he thought he was paying me a compliment.  
 F: Yeah.  
 I: I said 'listen, this is not the way we do things.' And it's changed very very quickly. But talking about the kitchen and stuff, this place always had colour in there, beige. And I was just sick of it, and I've always loved these colours, and I said to Royce 'I really think we'd like to have the kitchen painted, and the lounge' so he said 'okay' so I started sniffing around.  
 F: So you only gave him half-truths, you didn't give him the colour  
 I: No, I didn't tell him the colour. Anyway, so that's all right. So we, all of a sudden and I said 'this is what we're going to do' and he paled, and he sort of said 'okay, if that's what we're going to have, that's what we're going to have', the painter, he was the one, he's standing there, and I can still see him, he's got the brush in the tin saying 'are you sure? Because this is what you're going to have for forever and a day, and you're never going to paint over it again' and I said 'yes, I love it.' And I've still got it.  
 F: It's terrific, what is it mauve?  
 I: It's actually called dried...  
 F: Maroon...  
 I: No it's not a maroon...  
 F: Peach! Plum...  
 I: It's called dried herbs or something, I've forgotten what it's called, but I just simply love it. I just, I really do.  
 F: Oh...  
 I: And everything the paintings and stuff I took them all down, and put them straight back up in the same spot. So everything just all, kind of got a – they said 'oh I can't remember that being up there' and I said 'yep, it was before'  
 F: You'll have on your grave something like 'I didn't want to be put here'  
 I: That's right.  
 F: (laughs) 'I didn't want to be put here!'  
 I: The other day we were saying it, in one of the magazines I read, in Lismore there's a, you can get coffins that are made out of a marvelous recyclable really heavy cardboard. And they're actually, they're painted and everything, they've got seams...

F: You want to paint your own before you go in it?  
 I: I do.  
 F: (laughs) I would love that as a shot! What women are doing in the country, I'd come up for that one.  
 I: I said to Royce, I like the idea, it's environmentally friendly because everything kind of just goes back and everything, and he gets anxious, because my mother lives up here too I mean she died in 1989, and she lives under a tree down the front there.  
 F: Oh you can do that can you?  
 I: Just her ashes, but anyway, I said to Royce, we discussed it all because we didn't know where to put Gran – we're not plot followers, you know...  
 F: You haven't rented your plot yet?  
 I: No, Royce said to me one day 'I'm going to get a plot in Woomelang, I want to be in it' and I said 'Not right now, anyway'. So anyway, we had this big discussion about where Gran was going to go, she had a lovely time here at the farm, wandering around so I decided she could come here. So I asked is it okay with him, and you know, he's a bit uncomfortable about it...  
 F: Oh, God, when I'm gone, I'm gone.  
 I: Yeah, that's what I reckon too, but anyway, so we planted a tree, we planted it at the wrong time, and we scattered the ashes around there and everything, anyway for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and the big drought broke, and I was talking to my sister on the phone – my birthday's in May – and I said Jude, 'you can't believe the weather we're having here it's *unbelievable*' she said 'it's our mother, she wants to be with you' and I said 'much more rain and she will be'  
 F: She'll float away...?  
 I: She'll float away. And then I came home from work one day and the little tree that I planted out there had died, and Royce of course had no idea where Gran was and everything, so I came up from work and he'd ploughed her – he'd worked over it. And I came home and said 'Why have you ploughed over my mother?' and he said 'Oh, I didn't know where she was!', So I had to wait until the grass grew – you know, where it had been disturbed it kind of grew in this special area, so I knew where to replant her again. So she's got birds in her at the moment.  
 F: Oh god,  
 I: So it's all happening, it's all happening indeed.  
 F: Now... (tape cuts)  
 I: I took a whole year to do it, and it wasn't a PhD, absolutely not, but it was my one unit that I did for the whole year, and I did it on Nyallo and I need to get another copy made, because I've only got the one copy left, but it was this little parish here, it's called Nyallo,  
 F: This? The school's one? The primary school?  
 I: Yeah, but what I did, I did it because across the road there, there was a footy ground – and I could not believe there was a football ground and there was a hall and a school up there. And I ended up – and it took me a whole year to do this, I've got a um, what's the top mark?  
 F: Oh a Distinction...  
 I: I got a Distinction, a High Distinction for it. ...Now, what do I put down here, participant...  
 F: Well you've done your email already... (tape cuts)

**END OF FIRST RECORDING  
 BEGINNING OF SECOND RECORDING:**

F: So you're in this environment, right?  
 I: Yes, yes.  
 F: So how do you survive?  
 I: Um, you mean what do I do to entertain myself?  
 F: Well, where's the 'me'? I mean, you're on a tractor; you're helping out... your kids...  
 I: Oh yes, the 'me' factor, well after I did my studies, that was 'me' for a long time – ten years – I mean it wasn't quite ten years, but I mean I graduated and I had a lovely, lovely time. And Royce I have to say was really; underneath all this was his anxiousness of me becoming independent. I think that was a worry, you know, that he was going to...you

know, not that he's had any power over me, he just likes to think that he did, as blokes do, but I think that because I didn't have any money of my own, I think that if all of a sudden I became independent the earth would be ruined for ever and a day. And back in those days you didn't have any HECS fees or anything, you could just study you know, no charge apart from books, and I used to buy books and just devour them all, you know. Loved it, loved it. Meeting different people. And then blow-me-down, I didn't actually graduate, which I've often been a bit disappointed for, but all of a sudden a position came up in the Education Centre at Hopetoun – Adult Community Further Education, and in the Age, which I would read the age every 12 months or every semester, the CAE would put out a brochure with all the stuff and I'd go 'ohh! Look at all this stuff, look at this!' (excited voice) and I loved it and I pawed over it, and so anyway, this ad came in and by the time I got the paper I was passed the date to put an application in. Anyway, I said to Royce 'what do you think if I put in an application?' and he said 'oh, go for it', anyway I rang up the girl who had the position there, and I said 'look I've just found it, is it too late to put an application in?' and she said 'yes, come in, straight away' so I came in and the following couple of days after that I got an interview, and one of the chaps that interviewed me was from the CAE so I was able to tell him that I loved the magazine, and 'have they thought about doing this, have they thought about doing such and such?' you know, and the fact that I'd studied that whole time meant that I got the job. And I came home gasping and Royce was out in the shed and he said 'how'd you go?' and I said 'I got the job!' and his face went white and I could see, our life just changed! And it did for the better. Oh you know, 'my wife, my wife, my wife'...

F: Talking to others?

I: Yes, 'my wife she does adult education' you know, all of a sudden I became an important person; I was really, really great. And we have met the most amazing people through that job, I was there for ten years and...

F: And you got paid!

I: I got paid. But this is the funny thing, not only...

F: Did the money come back into the farm?

I: It did, that's the joke. 'Cause my girlfriend thought that she might go to the opera, and she's off her way to Bendigo now which is a great disappointment to me now but anyway, um, I go to Bendigo, she always has her own money, and we'd go somewhere, and I wouldn't be scratching because I'm a great budgeter but I knew I just couldn't afford that extra bit to do that...

F: What, tractor?

I: (laughs) you know, something to myself. Everything else had to be after harvest farm stuff, and I used to think Hilda used to say 'I've got this' and I'd think 'oh I'll get a job, I'll have my own account' and I said to Royce 'I'll open up an account'. Well, that was worse than even thinking I was going to go back to study – 'We've gone all these years being A. R and H. A, we've been partners and...'

F: Really?

I: Oh yeah it was just incredible. So I said well 'Okay, there goes that little ploy'

F: If someone had said to you 'stick to it'?

I: Oh no but this was the best thing about it because he didn't know how much money was in this account – so my money just went in and I took out as much as I wanted to. And Royce has said 'Gee, Anne shops well, she bought that thing and it only cost so much,' because I'd pay so much in cash, and I'd write the rest out in cheque, you know that's what you did.

F: That's what Yvonne says you know, 'I got it that way'

I: Yes, you have a slush fund, you got to do it, I used to call it my running away from home fund.

F: I love her eggs! She sold all her eggs and she sent herself overseas, did up the house.

I: Yes, absolutely. That's what she does, absolutely. I've never done that.

F: So Sophia of Education gave you independence?

I: I think that um, I've always considered myself to be independent, as far as I think is concerned. Royce has never influenced my thinking – in fact it's been quite the opposite way around –

F: But to be physically independent?

I: Oh to be physically independent yes...

F: Is a threat...

I: Yes

F: You can think all you like, but...

I: Yes, that's right. Just don't do it in public.

F: Yeah.

I: But no, it was just terrific. It really worked out to be the best thing for both of us – me going out to get a job.

F: And your self-esteem

I: Absolutely. Oh I feel great. Absolutely. I met these amazing people,

F: And came home everyday with something to talk about...

I: Absolutely. And that's what expanded Royce's vocabulary and his way of looking at the world. He was fairly conservative in the way he was thinking – a bit narrow...

F: He hadn't traveled?

I: No, never. Not at all. Um, 'if we were supposed to fly we'd have wings' you know, that kind of thought. We did get to Tassie once, we have gone on some trips, we love Australia, and he goes fishing every month.

F: So the study... then where?

I: So the study, the job, and then the last ten years. Because he's retired as well, we both just travel. We just go over and travel, we don't go overseas but we go up to the pointy bit of Australia and travel around, plus our kids are all owning their own joint, so we'll go down to Portland, up to Carey's, and my family. And as I said Royce goes fishing every month, it takes a week to get ready, a week to get up there and a week to get undone...

F: So when you're here, the 'me' time is now?

I: Yes, whenever I want it

F: Whatever you want to do?

I: Mm. (agrees) Absolutely.

F: I guess my study because I'm an Arts student is in the aesthetic expression, which doesn't necessarily mean 'Art' at all. So I guess I'm searching out – a lot of women have work or children, they can't even think about expression at all

I: Oh no, they can't

F: but then as you said before, the women before they start getting out into the paddocks were inside doing the domestics, cooking and cleaning, now women are inside still doing sewing, cooking and embroidery, a lot of them are venturing out into more arty, like me, sort of into the farm areas as such, so I wonder about your expression, do you have a need for it at all?

I: Well, I just, I'm a one-day wonder. I said to my sister one day, you know, 'I'm a three-day wonder' and she said 'how could you last that long?' And you know, I love photography, I'm out there taking photos all the time. I just love photography. I have thousands of photographs, some which I've framed. Our kids are all arty, you know, Tracey's an art teacher, Carey's arty, Jenna's a photographer, so the kids have all followed an art strain. Or creativity, not necessarily painting or, whatever, just whatever takes your fancy. Jenna's very hands on, although she's bottom-on today – she's on the Great Bike ride down at the Otways, she's doing that this time.

F: That's right, they're coming through Hopetoun tonight – at 4 o'clock.

I: So I love doing photography, I've done a bit of mosaic, when I was down at Downer's one day we went for a bit of a drive and there was marvelous work being done with barbed wire, and I said 'oh I want to do that, I want to do things, I want to do it now'

F: Little projects? Mini projects? Yvonne's a big project woman, but you're a mini-project woman?

I: I am. See like Bonnie will take years and years to plant her garden, I want it now. I bought plants the other day and I'm looking at them thinking I'll dig a hole for that later. She would have had that hole dug and planned six months ago. That's why her garden grows and mine doesn't.

F: (laughs)

I: It is!

F: So these little projects, basically creative, by the sound of it, in a way, what do they mean to you?

I: Well the value is that I've actually done something. I've achieved something. It's a sense of achievement; I love a sense of achievement.

- F: It's not because it's part of a group? Because I'm finding a lot of people take their patchwork to a group and the group is everything.
- I: No, I'm not a group person.
- F: So for you, your expression...
- I: Yes, I mean people don't need to know what I'm doing, I don't need to show anyone, but I mean getting back to this barbed-wire ball, I was speaking to my cousins in Melbourne and one chap said to me 'what are you doing?' and I said 'I need some barbed wire, I'm going to make a ball' well that was a heck of a grudge, 'Aunty's going to make a wire ball' so I did. And I'll show you on the way out, and you may laugh, but I know you will laugh with me, not at me.
- F: Right.
- I: Yes, so that's okay. And I'm down at Diana's next time and she...everything Diana does is absolutely perfect. She can draw; she can always draw a perfect circle.
- F: I'm seeing her aren't I?
- I: No, no you're going to Nina. And I'm down at her house, and she and her now-husband – she rang us and said 'Mummy, I thought you and daddy might like to know that me and Addy are sitting on a rock in Maldon drinking champagne with some lovely friends, and a minister and his wife.' And I said 'How lovely for you dear'
- F: She didn't want you there?
- I: Well he's one of nine children, and our kids are everywhere and they said 'We're having drinks between 6 and 8 if you fancy popping down to the theatre' so we did pop down between 6 and 8 to the theatre
- F: (laughs) This is my barbwire ball...
- I: Oh, good on you!
- F: It's 12 feet tall.
- I: Did you do it with great difficulty? ...(tape cuts)...and she starts rolling it up and rolling it up, it's about *that* big and she stashed them, and she couldn't get them back on her bike so she went back in her car, and got them, and she's found two lots, she's got a blue lot and a pink lot, you know, just because they'll come in handy somewhere. You'll need them.
- F: That's what I'm doing at the moment with my bail of twine, I'm wrapping a tree up in blue bail twine, so I bought a cherry picker there, and I've nearly finished it.
- I: Oh, well done. So are you looked at, if you converse with men...(tape cuts) ...because I was interested, I'd say are you ripping it up there or are you doing something now, more so because I didn't give a damn about the sponge cake, I wasn't interested in the slightest, but I was very very keen to know where they were at with their farming practices, and I really enjoyed that. And I don't think I distanced myself away too much from either female or male gender, but the blokes are the same as you're saying they were like 'Oh gee, do you want some more...' you know, I mean it was weird, that I wanted it, I mean 'ho, ho, ho' sort of stuff, but I mean they enjoyed it because they were half contributing to it. It's gorgeous. (tape cuts)...I mean you're going through the same sort of things that I was going through, even when I was just wanting to do my year 12.
- F: Exactly.
- I: You know, I mean it's a threat and stuff, I mean I did the same thing though, I mean not once ever, did this household suffer because I was doing something. Not once, ever. At certain times the books would go away when I was studying, and I'd be there from 12 o'clock 'til 5, and the table would be covered in books because I'd be doing my study and stuff, but at 5 o'clock on the dot it would all be packed away,
- F: So no one knew you had been studying...the guilt you do have...
- I: It was just that I refused to ever have a reason for someone to be able to justify
- F: Someone says 'you were always...'
- I: That's right. Yes, and that never ever happened and the children thought it was marvelous.

#### END OF SECOND RECORDING

- I: You know, things will always be better, and I'm sure – I'm the greatest optimist of all time, really – but I'm still bitter and twisted because it just seems to be you know, 'oh damn it all why can't things be more simple?' you know, if Bonnie and I can figure out how to change the world, why can't a politician?
- F: But it's not only that, it's men. You're talking politics, but let's go right back.

I: Yes it's men, it is. You know Bonnie and I decided, I mean my husband's – god knows what he was doing out in the shed and his garden, which is marvelous, he loves his garden, um, but he and Eric sort of, Eric's very conservative.

F: Eric is?

I: Very, very conservative. And he doesn't travel a great deal but Bonnie will go anywhere at the drop of a hat. Royce was always like that too, but I actually did everything...you know, Farmer's wife come out here...

F: Go back to where you started, go back to the start.

I: Okay. Step one. In 1958, I'm not sure if it was 1958 or '59, it was a long time ago. My cousin Marie, who's over here on the bench. She lived at Sealake and she made her Debut, so we went to her Debutante ball, and low and behold I was taken to supper.

F: You were what?

I: I was taken to Supper. I didn't know it was a life-long commitment, I thought it was just supper. So here we are fifty million years down the track and I'm still here. (laughs)

F: By choice?

I: Oh absolutely. By choice. I absolutely love it here.

F: You love it?

I: Oh absolutely.

F: Okay.

I: I get a little teary, I step out there and look at the paddocks and stuff and it's just brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. And the girls come home, I've got three daughters, and their children love it, coming to the farm, you know, all they want to do is come back to the farm. So does Bonnie's children, and her grandchildren.

F: She loves her son in Perth.

I: Oh yes, two of her children are far too far away. Our's are far enough away.

F: So you love it, irrespective of your situation.

I: Oh absolutely. I mean a situation, you can be... I mean to me it's where you are, within yourself too, it's not just so much I mean you can say okay, my relatives think it's a great joke you know 'oh Anne drives 300 miles to do something' or I get in the car when the kids were little tiny tackers wherever they are, in the back of the station wagon no seatbelts, no road limits, four or five hours later, you know just go. Royce didn't want to go because he's not a Melbourne boy, but that's fine, he didn't care, he goes fishing.

F: Okay, so I'm getting a little bit confused whether you're stuck in this dung hole, or you love it?

I: Oh, I'm not stuck here. I'm not stuck here in the slightest, absolutely not. In fact often I'm not here, because I go to town, I go to the movies, um...

F: Now when you say town...

I: I go to Melbourne. Melbourne's town to me. I go to town because my family live down there, so I'll go to town at the drop of a hat, you know anything happening anywhere I'm down there. And no, I'm definitely not stuck here, I can go whenever I want, but I'm I suppose, at some stage we have to go somewhere, because when you live in an isolated spot like this you need to look at health and that kind of thing, but I'm not doing that at the moment.

F: Even though your husband's just had a fall...or you don't fall, is that what you said?

I: No, you have a fall when you're over 73, before that you go ass-over-everything else. That's what he tells, I'm only repeating, that's not my language. You know I would never use language like that...

F: Well I can immediately see how you express yourself. As soon as you walk in the door can't you? I mean, certainly a man doesn't live in this house, I mean he lives in it, but it has very little...

I: Do you want to see the bathroom?

F: We'll take pictures in a minute

I: Oh good, because our bathroom is just... he's got his room, he's got his room, but you see we have three daughters as I said, so that's sort of, and we had two male dogs but most of our animals have been females, which is a good idea to have it.

F: Right,

I: And the first time my son in law met us here, because I talk a lot and my mother did too, and the first time Jeff walked in here and our three daughters are having a conversation all over the shop, and everyone of us knows exactly where we fit in, and Jeff got up and shook Royce's hand and said 'I don't know how you do it'.

F: (laughs) So it's not a country thing, it's just in your jeans by the sound of it.

I: Yep, and Royce often used to say to me 'you're getting just like your mother' and I said 'thank god for that!' I was fearful that I mightn't. Now will you have coffee? Or tea?

F: No a coffee will be fine thanks. It's a bit far, there's not a coffee within reach, a cappuccino is there?

I: No, there's not.

F: (laughs)

I: Did you stay at the Community Hotel last night?

F: And how's the community? Is it owned by the community?

I: It is. It was the first community owned hotel in Victoria as I understand it.

F: Right.

I: And it's still owned by a group of people who have shares in it, and I'm not sure how it goes with the lease, obviously the leasee has the license to run it, the shares and stuff still go back to the... I don't know quite the history of it, I think it was either going to burn, I mean every pub burns down don't they? Every country pub you read the history of it all and it's burnt down at some point or another.

F: yeah.

I: Um, anyway, it was going to close or something but then the public all got together and said 'we can't let this happen' put in a few bob here and a few bob there and – do you have milk? –

F: Yes please, and no sugar.

I: Um, yes so and it depends entirely on the host,

F: Yes, whether he wants to open and be polite or whether he wants to close. And look it was fine I had a meal there, they served a huge plate of chips with potato and sour cream as well, which I thought was odd, and then there was a little schnitzel or something underneath it. So...

I: We had, Royce and I, one of our daughters lives off the coast of northern New South Wales...(tape cuts)... and we often go to visit them...(tape cuts)... and they're a bit pissed off at the moment

F: Are they?

I: Yeah, and I said to them 'don't worry about it', you know if they still feel as though...(tape cuts) When I came here I had no idea of the rules, and they really are rules...(tape cuts) ...and I just loved being out in the paddocks. You know and I did it before I was married you know I just loved being out.

F: So what are the rules?

I: Oh the rules is washing on Monday. You wash on Monday and I sort of defied everything, you know we could have been out of knickers but I was determined that I wasn't going to wash on Monday I was determined not to do that. And you had babies instantly; you had babies all the time. So they were stuck to the rules, very very quickly

F: And a plate full of home baked...

I: Yes. (laughs) No, no not like that. Have you seen *Priscilla*? Did you see *Priscilla* the play?

F: No...

I: Oh that's okay.

F: But I've been to enough DFA meetings to know...

I: See I've never been in the CWA, but I've never been to CWA. I was asked to join Rotary when they were short on numbers and they thought they'd like to have a few women there, and um, the chap that – very nice chap – came and asked if I'd like to join Rotary

because they thought that I had a lot to offer, which I was grateful for, but I thought 'well you've got nothing to offer me in the slightest' so...

F: So tell me more about the rules.

I: Well there were just things that you did. I mean you got dressed up to go to town, I mean the stockings and the high shoes and you did everything. There were just rules, I mean you went shopping on Fridays or Thursdays depending on whether you went to Woomelang or Hopetoun, and they were. You washed, and ironed and did everything like that; everything was kind of structured. And it was very much structured. And my beautiful beautiful mother in law, poor love, and she was so good to me, I defied everything and she stuck to me through thick and thin, I drank beer, smoked cigarettes, which I don't do now, but she's always...but (laughs) poor Royce, he married this dreadful woman from Melbourne.

F: But do you think this would be you in Melbourne as well?

I: I think so. It is, because...perhaps it's not so much obvious in Melbourne because I would be the same because I...

F: But not so obvious...

I: Well up here it is, because in fact just yesterday I was up in Woomelang in Marler's and a woman I've known forever and a day said 'oh look, you're out of your territory' and I just about stamped my foot down and said 'what do you mean by that?' and she said 'well I thought you were only in Hopetoun' and I said 'no, I'm Woomelang', and she said 'well I just haven't seen you around for a while' and I said 'we just move in different circles' and I'm thinking, I told my little girl and she said 'did you stamp your foot?' and I said 'no' but I did have it up in there air at one stage.

F: But she wasn't saying it from any...

I: No, no no.

F: Everyone has their place.

I: Yes, yes indeed. But I am viewed more as Hopetoun than Woomelang because when the kids started school they went to Hopetoun, not Woomelang, so you follow your children, except at this stage, you know, when they have a terrible habit of packing up and going somewhere else.

F: Okay, so you've come as a young bride...

I: Yes, married the beautiful boy who took me out to supper, and then we lived um, in an old... Woomelang didn't have power, as you see, I'm not sure, Woomelang might have just had power, that was in 1954, but I think they still had generators, and I forget what they call them now, but certainly not on farms, and we wanted to build this house but we couldn't do it until the power came through and that was in '64 so we lived in a really really old house which is about seven miles down from here, and it was just four rooms, no running water, had a tank outside with the key-taps which is a bit tricky – in the middle of the night when you're trying to...

F: You lose the key

I: That's right. Hanging on a piece of wire. So down there, we called it "Leamans" and we had some fabulous times down there, but it was really a bit rough for me. I had a wood fire stove, and we did buy a little two burner gas stove

F: Camping thing...

I: Yes, but you had a griller and it had two little coils on it, and Royce still swears I cooked some of my better meals down there. But we had gas put on, just big cylinders, and we had gaslights, and they're all fourteen foot ceiling things...

F: Oh yes, the cloth things...

I: like a coal kind of thing, but these were actually just lamps and I was pregnant at the time and I'd have to get on a chair and climb up with a match...

F: I can hear that now...

I: And then a beautiful light. Really lovely. And the shower, we had a bucket – it sounds really primitive doesn't it? We were having lots of fun though because we were nineteen

F: Oh you were only nineteen!

I: Yes. See you can do anything when you're nineteen.

F: Jesus. And you're in love are you? With the Marlboro man?

I: Absolutely. No, desperately in love, still am. But the shower was just a little bucket with a rosette on it, which we still use when we go camping, and we heat the water on the gas or the stove, we had that going in the winter time, and ladle it out and lift it up and do a hook



and strip off and get under it, quick as a flash. That's amazing. You don't need to – these people these days saying you can have one-minute showers – so?

F: (laughs) So!

I: But no, it was just...you just do all these things. I had a 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party down there which was just fabulous. And the best thing was the mouse-plagues which you would have heard everywhere about the Mallee. When I first came down to the Mallee I was literally the girl leaping onto the chair and going 'eek'. Within a week I could take off my shoe and whack it, I could do anything. But you have to grind your teeth and sort of, think it's another day towards the end of it – a day of getting through before something better comes along.

F: So what were the bright moments?

I: Oh there are bright moments every day, every day getting up seeing everything. Everything's bright.

F: So you've been actively involved in the farming part of it?

I: Yes, yes. I did all that. Um. That's what you do though; you're a farmer's wife.

F: But you didn't know how to handle space or anything...

I: No, I didn't. I had no idea I don't even know what things were called, but I loved it. And I was interested. This is what I was going to mention to you before about people that weren't born and bred here; see the majority of women, and I'm not sure if you've come across this now – certainly women my age and Bonnie's age not so much Helen's, but our women never ever did anything to farms. Bonnie's mother would never have been out on the farms, you know, women stayed at home and baked and did women's things. Which is pretty to the point I think, whereas by the time Bonnie and I came along, even though she was a few years older than I am, we were encouraged to come out on the farm, you know 'come and give us a hand' and that's what you do. You know, drive the tractor and such. And the best thing that I used to do – we had dogs as everyone does on the farm and everything – but my best thing was to leave the...you know I refused to get yelled at down at the sheep yards and I did just walk home with the dog, with the angry man down at the sheep yards with no dog and no wife to heel or open the gate or...

F: I tell you I can't do it. I just couldn't do it. It still happens...

I: Oh it does.

F: It's not something that happened when you were way back in the early days

I: I'm sure it does, but it would never happen to me, it only ever happened to me once. Things only ever happen to me once...

F: A bit like Bonnie

I: Well I am. But I'm not put on this earth to take this kind of stuff – my mother wouldn't let me do that anyway. So that was always good fun, but I really do think that...

F: But do you think that people who were born on the land did it? So what made you and Bon sort of say...

I: I think that a lot of women, and I know a lot of women my age that were sort of the same age as – their children were the same age as our children, so we sort of had things in common, mother's clubs and stuff like that, I often couldn't speak to them about my daily life because they were doing the cooking and the baking and the stuff like that, and I'm out in the tractor, or I'm out - because I much prefer to be out there. I'm not a gardener, as you can see, not like Bon, that's her passion, her garden. I'm not like that; I don't do that at all. Here's my beloved. Um...

F: Hello, been out in the shed?

I 2: Oh yes...

F: Here's the Romeo that whisked her off one day to the supper after the dance...

I 2: How do you do I'm Royce. Yes.

I: Yes, we've been through the details.

I 2: Yes I'm the Romeo, and she was the innocent one. (laughs)

I: Oh I was just waiting for what word you were going to come out with. (laughs)

F: Sounds as if you've got a mighty force on your hands

I 2: Pardon?

F: You've got a mighty force on your hands.

I 2: Yeah, oh yeah. It worked out all right.

F: For who? Speaking on behalf of your wife?

I: Roycey can you hear what Julie is saying to you?

F: (laughs) Worked out all right you say, for who?

I 2: Yep, everybody.

I: We're sort of going through how I'm not a sort of, stay home, baking person, from the CWA.

I 2: (laughs) Couldn't get her into the CWA, no way, she wouldn't go. I couldn't get her onto the bowling green either. She used to say 'I'm not a bowler, I don't like the thought of bowling' but they used to send her an invitation both from the Woomelang one and the Hopetoun one, because we're right in the middle – saying Mr. and Mrs. And she'd say 'I'm not going in there with those old fuddy-duddies with their long nighties on!'

F: (laughs)

I: I thought that was you who said that.

I 2: No, I said something else.

I: (laughs)

F: So were you frowned on for going?

I: Oh no, no not really. Because I don't think – I really and truly – this could be me with my egotistical attitude, I really don't think that many people would be surprised with anything that I might do, because I just think because I haven't fitted the mould that...I mean I've done everything; I've gone to mother's club, I've done everything. I've done my duties – I've done my duties everywhere. I've never re-negged it, if the kids were there doing something then I was there with them and whatever. But I just didn't go to CWA, like I don't go to flower shows or anything. I don't need other people's company, which I think is to my detriment sometimes. I think that you can get stuck in your own little brain and no matter how much you're reading and how much you're looking at stuff on the computer and the internet, because I do that all the time. Um, I think your direction's terrific and it's lovely to just catch up and have a yarn, you know, but I think that, see I did a um...I studied a lot. I went back to school...

F: Were you happy about that

I 2: Um, after I got used to the idea I was.

F: What year was that?

I 2: (laughs) In all honesty I wasn't very happy about it for a start.

F: Why's that?

I 2: Because she should be home here doing the gardening and doing the washing.

F: I love this. Yeah?

I 2: And she was always here

I: Where was I?

I 2: Home here,

I: Because I was studying...

I 2: Well, here.

I: At the school.

I 2: Yeah, at the school. Oh that was that lot. Then she did a thing down in Bendigo. What was that one?

I: (laughs) I'll do anything to get out of the house, you see? Talking about things, but no that was to do with um, when the children left, and this is something that you're aware of too, it was very very difficult when the kids go, because it's just you and the shed and a bloke. And you always think you've got the children as a sort of buffer – so to speak. You know I can't do that now because I've got the children to take to something, or take care of and then all of a sudden there's you and me kind of thing. But we came to terms with that by me going off to school, and I fitted it in between Tracey doing Year 12, and I hadn't finished Year 12, I had finished form 4 then I worked in a Bank then I came up here. I went to the Debutante ball – it changed my life. (mockingly)

F: (laughs)

I: And...

F: So you went back to do your...

I: I went back because I wanted to do Year 12. So I figured, and Tracey had just finished Year 12 and Carey was still just doing Year 11, so I figured I'd do Year 12 in between Carey and Tracey. So Tracey had left, she'd gone off to Melbourne and Royce and his wisdom – and I agreed with it – she wanted to do teaching and he said 'No, you're not

going to go straight from school to college to school, you need to have a year off because you'll only ever know school, you won't know what the world's all about' which of course is now encouraged, so that's what she did. So then I went into school and did English Literature. I did it with Cherise – Bonnie's daughter actually, she was one of my colleagues, there was four of us, and I figured English Literature was an easy one to do because you just had to write, you just had to study something and write it. And it worked out really well because the teacher was younger than I was but the children had different attitudes to things, you know, even though we're still studying the same set piece we had because of our ages and our experiences we had a different take on things, and I think it helped the kids as well. So I did that, and the following year I did Australian History, and English. I just did those three, I did them up at TAFE in Mildura. I was going to mention about Australian History I did Women in Country schools and I interviewed women from all around here, because I mean, teacher's didn't get away – teachers were... what would you say dearest?

- I 2: Oh teachers? A bit of new blood. They used to come in and...
- F: And all the young farmers would say 'the new teacher's in town'
- I 2: A bit of competition
- F: Really?
- I 2: Who could be the first one to take them to supper (laughs)
- F: I love this supper word. It's like on the Hotel they said on the back 'if you need another towel let us know because when we come to spruce up your room' (laughs)
- I: Lavender oil and...
- F: I thought I hadn't heard that word in a while
- I: Not in that context. Not in a motel room.
- F: So anyway, all the teachers and nurses come into town was it?
- I: Yes, teachers and nurses.
- F: That's where the blood came and now no one's coming in?
- I: No. No one's coming in, and even if they do come in – I'm getting off topic – but the sad thing is often these days that the young farmers will meet a lovely girl somewhere and bring her home to the farm and she doesn't want to be a farmer's wife anymore, they don't want to live on a farm like Bonnie and I have done.
- I 2: Frightened of the Over-draught. (laughs)
- I: Well they probably are frightened of the over-draught too, but...
- F: So what do you put it down to? I mean I see that with Helen's son...
- I: Yes, I just think it's because um, we – to death do you part kind of thing, you know? And um there were times even when we did. I love the story about the couple that divorced because of religion – he thought he was God and I didn't.
- F: (laughs)
- I: Yes. I thought that was cute.
- F: Was that a magnet or something?
- I: Something like that. So I see it, I think that – I think it's heartbreaking because the women they're used to...that generation, and I am generalizing I guess, but Bonnie and I were used to hard-yakka, we didn't expect things to come our way easily, whereas our kids do a lot of the time. The girls they work hard, but they spend hard too. They buy things all the time, but I think the younger ones still, because our kids are 40, nearly 50, so the generation under that you know, ten years younger, they don't want to have to wait for that, they don't want to have to wait for stuff. So the girls that come onto farms are perhaps used to being on a wage and earning and being able to afford material things, and also going to the movies and going to restaurants – al fresco – they don't want to be on a farm, because there are few people around.
- F: So what do you think is going to happen?
- I: I think that they will just – well they're definitely not coming on farms – I think that they'll just be like they are now, and the farms will just get bigger and bigger
- I 2: Company farms will just take over; they're already around us on both sides.
- F: I'm just astounded at your paddock sizes. Like we work on a hundred, and they work on 600 to 10,000 around here.
- I 2: Well there's more and more fences being pulled out, I see that dirt management of the company out here just pulled out fences, there's two blocks up here they're 430 acres each and now they're one paddock.

F: And there's channels now that have been covered up...

I 2: mm. that's right. And they have this GPS steering and they just go straight as a bullet, a mile and a half long that paddock, from this road to that road – 260 and a half, I work in chains and miles you see because I'm old. (laughs) and the GPS systems down there track them and even turn themselves around now at the other end and come back and all that sort of stuff.

F: So they will be company farms?

I: Yes, I can see that happening,

F: ...with women in the towns.

I: Very few women.

I 2: Well there are company farms here. We've had this company farm that I'm talking about for 15 years, at least. And there's another big landowner that has a private company that side – he's a private owned...

F: But there must be the manager still with his wife?

I: Yes, but there's only one manager.

F: With a wife?

I 2: You'd think he's a bachelor. But there was another company that used to be called Glencorp who used to be Brooks-grown, the son of Brooks-grown and he didn't want to be a grown dealer he wanted to be a grown-grower, and he wanted a lease with 25,000 acres, he got \$17,000 and he had all these properties, oh no it was the company before him – they have these properties they call them from the block and the block had to be 5,000 acres. We call a block

I: ...500.

I 2: 480, 640, whatever they are, they're different sizes. This bloke had six or seven of these blocks and one man with a mobile phone and a four-wheel drive run the whole show. This company farmer's got a manager and an assistant manager on, they've got two people on – they replaced what, four families when they bought in and four families left the district pretty well, one didn't but, and I know the same company bought down at Minyip and they broke the bowling club because they put four families who were bowlers had moved to Horsham and the bowling club was eight members short and the bowling club closed down because they bought the property and the people went off to retire.

I: But that's just a natural progression though, because see we sold this farm we've got 20 acres here.

F: Oh you've sold it too?

I: We've sold it years and years ago, because we've only had a thousand acres, which is what Bonnie and Eric have got, but they were leasing a block of land so they had a bit extra that they could play around with, but um we only had the thousand acres, and we finally paid the bloody thing off and we had the choice of buying a block of land over there, which would have put us into debt for another – forever and a day, plus our shoe-ring was old so you'd have to... we really figured it out that we couldn't afford to do that because we would have had to get bigger and bigger machinery, and more debt and everything, so it was just nice having a black line across your bank statement, which had taken forever and ever to get there, so we came up and said 'No, we're not going to do it' and because of that, we were too small ourselves, we couldn't – I mean we could make a living but I mean it was just not...

F: And it was cropping, and sheep?

I: Yeah both.

F: Because I can't see a sheep around...

I: No they're not here anymore, neither are the shearers.

I 2: We've got eleven...

I: Oh yeah, we've got eleven, and two babies...

**END OF THIRD RECORDING**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- Facilitator: So people say, you know, 'How long...'
- Interviewee: Yeah, 'How long did it take you to settle in?' and I just say 'Ten years', and they just laugh.
- F: And how long have you been up here now?
- I: Fifteen. (laughs)
- F: So you've been enjoying yourself for five! The decision of whether you made the right decision is no longer there.
- I: I'm really enjoying myself, it's just all coming together. We came up to semi-retire, but we didn't have the funds. It takes a lot more money to relocate than you think. Um...because of the infrastructure and what have you...so...
- F: So this was all just blank land?
- I: It was just a paddock.
- F: A paddock...right.
- I: We've just got the one acre...on a two thousand acre...
- F: Well you haven't, really (laughs).
- I: Well yeah, that's right.
- F: Why own it if you can only have an acre!
- I: Gray bought the acre about...um... '86 I think, or '84.
- F: Gosh, how did you find it?
- I 2: I fell over it...
- I: He fell over it on a fishing trip.
- F: Okay.
- I: And um, he was offered the one middle acre, which you're not normally, um...but this happened to be the timing for the farmer who needed the money.
- F: But what were they farming around here? Cattle is it?
- I 2: Since 1853.
- F: Hadn't since a cattle for many miles.
- I 2: Yeah, you wouldn't go this way. Peter Faithful's was the last one, you'd see cattle at the 10 mile from Omeo, the house on the right as you came round the bend. A shady green place...
- F: With the white big bin.
- I 2: Yeah.
- F: Okay.
- I: We've only got the calves and the little ones down the bottom...
- F: Okay...just to keep the grass down.
- I 2: This paddock here was originally known as the trap yard, the cattle used to come home to from the mountains, when they were grazing at the tops, anyway Tony could see the writing on the wall and he needed X dollars to pacify his ex-wife.
- F: Writing on the wall being not allowed to have cattle in the...
- I: High plains...yes.
- F: Is that the writing on the wall?
- I 2: Yes.
- I: Have a piece of cake.
- F: Looks delicious, thank you.
- I 2: Yeah, the um, 2002 was the last drive we did up to the tops, and then 2003 was the fires of course, and then everyone got the canons out and refused to let them back on because of the fires. And by that time all their leases had run out anyway and there was an opportunity to say no. They'd condensed us into a lot smaller acreage than before so the pressure was back on the land again, but anyway, Tony allowed...I asked the question...
- F: So you were riding up here, were you?
- I 2: No, I was fishing, came up here on a fishing trip with my son from Scouts – I was a scout-leader and um one of Troy's mates and his father came up here on a fishing trip and I

didn't want to leave the bridge that crosses here, it was a town paradise as far as I was concerned. Anyway, I approached the owner of the land and a couple of days later – a day later actually – I said 'I'm probably getting into a queue a mile long, but if anyone's selling that please let me know' and he said 'Nothing for Sale, Nothing for Sale.' So to cut a long story short, he came and made me an offer the next day.

F: Oh. And you could subdivide in such small...?

I 2: Oh, yes and no.

I: It's on a lifetime lease. ... What are you doing? Apart from...(tape cuts)

I: ...was born of our making, in that when I first came up I didn't know how to crutch a sheep and I didn't wear a flanny, and you know, the local pub – the little Inn down there, the Angler's Rest, the Blue Duck, um was my only socializing on a Friday night, and I was the only woman there that didn't say 'fuck' every five minutes, wear a flanno and crutch sheep, so you find it very difficult. Then you start to try and blend in with them a bit, and I found that very painful, because you're losing yourself but you're not gaining their persona either – because it didn't come naturally. So, I remember a fellow and Gray pulled me out of the dilemma when this fellow came up and said 'What are you talking to that boring woman for?' – I was seen as a fairly boring person because I didn't um...you know, go fishing, go camping the way they did so there was no common denominator. But this woman that was talking to me um, we did a horticultural course together – here in the local town after the fires, they paid for us all to go and do horticulture, to help us regain our gardens because it was all burnt in the fires. And um...so we had a great common interest, I started to find I had a bit of common interest with a few people around. And so I do find – I have found the settling in to be quite different to the way, you know when you make a decision to go out into the country you don't really go into the detail...

F: Isn't that with everything? Like having kids or something? You just never know what that is either, and everyone, you know, go to the country and ride horses and stuff like that....

I: Yeah.

I 2: The romance of it all...

F: No idea.

I 2: The romance of this...

F: And this farmer needs a wife sort of situation. I've never heard the sentence 'What does a wife need?' like...it's never...

I: Well, we went to Europe five years ago, and um...constantly they'd say 'Oh we knew what a bushman looked like, but we didn't know what a bush woman looked like'.

F: Isn't that funny.

I: Well apart from doing the Ellie May and rubbing out one of my teeth and (laughs) doing an Ellie May I didn't know what a bush woman was either! Apart from someone that came and supported and...and um, you know, shared all the ups and downs together. But then I needed to find my footing again. And it was really important for me to find my footing, and together with Gray shifting enormously, we've been able to develop a future together. Rather than it be Gray's dream. When we married our deal was that I'd come and live with him here and share his dream, and he would take me back to Europe to share you know – my dream, which was to live over there for a while. That won't happen I don't think – we went over for five weeks, and this is for life so we can at least say I didn't read the small print.

F: And when you say it's really women's problem that we sort of put ourselves in this position...?

I: Um...it's I think...in my case only, I can't speak for anyone else – but I was very much in love with Gray, I wanted to share his life with him, and um...in a more creative sense, not just go to work, come home, watch the telly, you know, in that way, and because this was his dream to live up here, he brought me up and I thought 'Well I can't see why not, I'm away from the family, but I've got cars' and all this sort of stuff, but now I've got grandchildren haven't I? And I find that very difficult that we're this far. You can't just pop in – I don't want to be a Nan round the corner, but also, I'd like to be more approachable when they need me down there. Often with Grandparenting it's a hidden conscience that you're creating with the kids, it's not a direct 'Put your shoes on' sort of thing. So I sort of miss that a little bit, but um...I'm really happy up here, I've met gorgeous people – Deidre being one of them, and um...Helen Packer whose got the horse-

riding camp down here. But you're not so reliant on um...one of the things I – I just wrote a little bit here, which probably explains a bit of it...

- I 2: I could only see five seconds worth of it...the...I wanted to use the word 'expectations' but Tess lived a life before I met her, and I had a life before we met, and joining those two different lives into a single goal – each of us had different expectations of how we would achieve it. And um...Tess has also had, has been up the top of the tree with restaurants and accommodation places and done well in the City and then moved away to start another business, and that's when we met. So there's a certain amount of um...baggage persona empathy for a woman in that cycle or a man in that cycle, whatever it is, without being man or woman, and then to find, to come here and live the tyranny of distance, the essence of the fact that we have to adjust to the fact that we are the plumber, the baker, the butcher, the candlestick maker, the S.E.C, the electrician, we're it. The both of us. And it's not just me being the plumber and the electrician, Tess has got to be there as the lackey and the help hand in hand, and I've got to be supportive of her in the things that she does, because the two of us being together is what counts – the end result of our partnership is what counts. Rather than the individual. Both of us would live our lives differently if we were on our own, but because we're together we've got to channel it into a single thing.
- F: But as you say at the beginning it was your dream, and we were just there to help you...
- I 2: Well...
- F: And it's fine to do that, when I say I help in the yard, but then it has to be a balance, someone has to say 'Well just a minute – what do you want?'
- I: Yeah.
- F: And that's where I see a fall down just in the media in that silly show – you know, there's been no consideration for what the woman's doing. The Romance again...
- I: And um...
- I 2: Because we found the romantic idea...
- I: The other thing I get absolutely pissed off about with the feminist movement is that unless you are the farmer and turn into an honorary bloke, women that actually go into the man's world are starting to get recognized, but women aren't being recognized for being women, and for the things that they do to help the whole process work. I heard it on the radio the other day and I was ready to toss it up the yard! This woman from the feminist movement saying 'Oh look we are getting further ahead, we are making head way with this now – we have women doctors, we have women engineers, we have...' and I was *screamingly* frustrated! That you have to be in a so-called bloke's...
- F: Have a title...
- I: a bloke's title, before you're recognized
- F: ...for what you've done, for what we've been.
- I 2: But you play...
- I: And who we are.
- I 2: You know, Tess is the one that's taught me, but when the two of us um...while I look after maybe – the pseudo man looks after the mental and the physical part of the relationship, the woman looks after the emotional and the spiritual part of the relationship. And why are households successful? Because a husband and a wife work together to achieve an end-goal – sometimes they're not together, sometimes they're apart, but the bond of marriage is the thing that holds you together supposedly to achieve certain goals. But if you haven't got the bond between each other regardless of the marriage...
- F: Because it hasn't been heard though... I mean you were lucky you got the idea, but there's a lot that are not...
- I: And it's a minority, still.
- F: Who have got the idea...
- I: A big minority.
- F: Yeah.
- I 2: My part is that most women in politics, and powerful positions have become honorary blokes not honorary women. They're women in honorary blokes positions' it's a patriarchal system so to achieve success they go up into those goals and go for those positions.
- F: Well how else do you do it?

I 2: No, I'm not suggesting there's any other way to do it, I'm saying that those women need to bring in the spiritual and emotional effort into that job. If they bring that with them, then we have no problem, but for other women to be out there talking about their success rate because they're now an engineer...

F: But they bring with them a culture, anyway...

I 2: One would hope so.

F: One would hope that Gillard will bring a culture with her, a feminist point of view...

I 2: Well, Tess thinks she will, and I think she won't.

F: (laughs) Yeah.

I 2: She's to me, the way she speaks in the background, the whole lot is very male orientated – patriarchal – perhaps she's succeeded in a man's world.

I: Mm. Well we're not here to discuss...

F: Yeah. Can I just take a photo, while you're there, with that...because um...(tape cuts)

I: ...Or I actually...um...(laughs) I said to Gray it's like a high country grunt, and I used to...

F: So it's a language of it's own up here, a little bit isn't it?

I: It is. Because they only speak when they've got to convey a message, they don't speak unless there's actually something to say.

F: And what do you think about their relationship with their wives, and things?

I 2: Most of them don't have it...

F: Most of them don't have wives here?

I 2: A few of them do...

I: It's a very masculine world, you can see Tony down here is on his own, Ed might as well be on his own – Gordy is on his own...

I 2: Cat's on her own, Helen's on her own...

I: Relationships are very tough up here, and for all sorts of reasons, because the women are expected to get out and the women that are on their own are honorary blokes. They get out there and they can wheel the axes – well I can too, but yeah, they're very um...strong, I think with their whole story of high country women...these girls that get out there and...

F: Well you're talking about pioneering women, really, back again, I mean...

I 2: These places out here you become as tenacious as the ones before, to survive in the country which we love. Pretty much.

F: Yeah. ...(tape cuts)

I: ...Or the need for the art.

F: Well that's where I've got to come in.

I: That's where you've got to start.

F: Why is art, why is the creative expression...what is the value, what does it mean to you?

I: Um...the um...it's the colour. I think I wrote it here in this piece. (reading): My commitment to re-marrying was to share my life with Gray here in Shannonvale for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health. The challenges have been many, my creativity – my savior, the rewards – outstanding. Ah, on arrival to Shannonvale it was obvious to me that if I was to remain a happy, fulfilled human being, I would have to draw heavily on my creativity. As money was short my dream of having a costume exhibition proved to be too difficult, it would not create income and income, at this stage, means survival. We both worked off property until we found our economic feet. I set my sights on creating a garden and an accommodation facility to share this piece of paradise. The garden the creative outlet, the guests with their many stories and fun dispositions is a gift. Socializing is one of our many challenges, set on one acre of poorly pastured land, 800 metres above sea level and on the south side of the range, it set up another series of hurdles. Sub-zero temperatures for three months of the year being the major one. Designing the garden was a great pleasure, without which my stay here would have been far more difficult. I see creativity as all encompassing, life itself is enhanced by looking at it through creative eyes. Especially when applied to working with the environment.

F: So do you think you would have been...creative...

I: That's your bit.

F: Thank you. So do you think, well, it sounds as if you were though, creative before, but what do you think the environment, or was it the isolation, or was it the actual what you saw that was your inspiration, or was it because of your situation, sort of thing?

I: Um, it was need-based.



F: Emotional?

I: Yeah, emotional, need-based. Definitely. I look at the garden now

F: And in the city you say you didn't have that quite as much?

I: No. You had the family support – It wasn't a creative world, I went from costume designing at JCW, through to um owning a café where I was able to create my own food, my own environment, very theatrical. Um, I've always seen life as a set, um...you know, we're the players within it. I've just transferred that over to here, because um the clinical world is very colourless for me. Now I realize everyone has a different level of um...understanding of a creative world, they also have a different need, and I think the more in need you are the more aware you become in a creative world: 'If you put me in a grey box' – I'm not an academic, so to sit me at a computer, day in day out would absolutely cripple me. I end up sick...

F: Doesn't mean you're an academic. Yeah.

I: Um...no but um, I s'pose academia is a very funny title. I have a sister who's exceptionally well read, and she's got many degrees, she can sit at a computer for hours, and that's all fine, but I am far more hands on, outside, um...even in the city I was outside. So, I've just transferred that over to here, but I do see when I go out into the garden, I made a conscious decision to have something beautiful as the end result of my efforts. So, I'm not one that will get fit by going to the gym, or something like that, it's lovely to have...

F: Fitness as a lifestyle. Well you do when opening the gate and closing it.

I: Yeah. So as a woman in the country I've still got a long journey, but that's part of what keeps you young, I think. You know, constantly looking away...

F: Journey as far as emotional?

I: Yes. Um, emotional...um growth. I still haven't reached my potential by any stretch of the imagination. I haven't delved into so many things that I want to delve into, because of um...we, and it was me again making the decision that if we were going to stay up here and live a fulfilling life, we had the idea that we co-shared, now for Gray he was off mountain – he's been off here nine years in the winter, with me here on my own 24/7, while he worked up on the mountain because we didn't have the funds. I lost everything in the '80s, and had to start again in a guest house, and it was just too big, it was bigger than Ben Hur, it was silly stuff but you get carried away with everyone else's advice and ex-husband's advice et cetera.

F: But that's part of your journey isn't it? Getting over...

I: It is part of the journey...

F: ...people's opinions and stuff. Society's opinions.

I: Yeah, yeah. And that is still what I battle with, because I um...I do very much...

F: You'll get used to me doing this, it's just I need a hundred before I get one good one. So...

I: Yeah well I need my glasses off because they just throw light all the time.

F: I just love your hands...I'm trying to get your hands.

I: My old gnarly hands. Do you want a shot of those? (laughs) Have a look at them! Oh how disgusting! That's clean, that's very clean.

F: Is it? I like your nails, your red nails.

I: Oh really? They're shocking!

F: Well it has to be...how could you be anything else. Keep going, so yeah?

I: What we're up to...I'm going to go near the fire, do you mind?

F: No not at all. ...when he was away...

I: Oh yeah, he was away for all those years and no one came near me. No one came to say 'How you going? Do you need anything?'...um, they all want to know us now. It funny we've been in the paper, and our mutual um decision was to um...build this bed and breakfast to allow people to come up here, I always say it's a bit of a cheat really, because I've got people coming up, helping me socialize and then they pay me for it. (laughs) So I see it as an absolutely wonderful thing. So during the summer now, what I was getting at is, I really want Gray home. I came all the way up here to be with him and I resent leaving the family if he's not going to be here. So we had to come up with a mutual idea of surviving up here, he's great with his cooking – he's the chef at the Blue Duck here, and um...so, I do all the cooking here, I think it's really important that we're both here sharing the dream otherwise the whole thing is just useless, we may as well be back amongst the

family. So I'm really happy now that we're traveling at a great rate of knots towards the other two rooms opening, we'll have the three rooms running, he can come home, and we will be fine. Whereas, for the first, we were up here for about four years, and um... we were living in absolutely shocking circumstance, and we didn't have any walls, we were living upstairs, it was minus eight and it was just really terrible. We went to this therapist – he's a neuro-linguistic fellow, and the thing that Gray wanted most was these horses, his Clydies, and um... I wanted windows, and we couldn't come up with um... we weren't arguing about it, but there was just all these blocks all the time about the next step. Anyway, we went to this fellow and it took him about ten minutes, well it was probably only two minutes but it seemed like ten minutes – but this fellow realized that it wasn't Windows 2000 that I wanted, I just wanted glass in the wall (laughs). I just wanted what every other person took totally for granted. So we've come from a very tough beginning. And, I think, I value everything so much more. I never want to do it again, and I would never wish it upon anybody.

F: You won't let that step go backwards, you know how people say go back and walk three, you don't even want to go back and walk one do you? I know, I know.

I: Not one.

F: Because you've earned it...

I: And...

F: If you ever go back it's just not on.

I: And we've done it creatively – we've done all of this on a shoestring. Absolute shoestring. We've got wood out of the forest, we've lumbered – yesterday, I'm 62 and I was up there on the ladders helping Gray get the corrugated iron up. And I've just oiled the whole of this building, ready, because we're going on a holiday tomorrow, um... they're jobs that most 62 year olds just don't have to do. And I feel privileged in one sense, that I am fit enough, and um... and feeling good, and on the other one I have 'what is it that is getting me doing this stuff?'

F: Because your background isn't farming, or isolated?

I: No, I've got sisters that are living in the city and they've got no purpose.

F: Lunch down at the coffee shop and tennis.

I: Oh it's the coffee shop. So you know, once you value it – and I always say once your eyes are open you can't shut them. Once you've become creative and you're aesthetically connected, you can't shut them. You can't say oh 'close enough's good enough', you know, like I work *really* hard to do very fine things, so something becomes just that little bit more to my liking, or our liking, because we've had to marry our ideas together, because Gray's going to come out here, build a hut, once a year, shoot a rabbit once a week and live the feral, you know, the isolated, idyllic life. Um, but totally unrealistic.

F: But he can do that, but he won't have you here.

I: Nup. And I just said, if you want a woman in your life these are the sorts of things that are really important, and you will reap the benefits. And now you can see he's loving it. He's out there happy as a pig in poop! But it takes that woman's navigation. I think navigation's a really good word, because people say...

F: Because it infers that it's new ground that you have to navigate it yourself, as well.

I: And you're navigating um... through both your ideas to come up with this one um... one end result. And I think of all things that I would love, and I tear up when I think about it because I think um... I really want the world to know not about my experience, but about the reality of life. Many, many people that I – women in particular – that I meet, it's the man that wants to relocate out of the city, and the woman wants to do that with him, but has no reality about what it takes to do it. It's not a bank account, it's not the idyllic fresh water, fresh air. Which we have, and it's a wonderful gift, there are so many trials to get there.

F: And how many give up not knowing the rewards if you stick at it.

I: That's right. And the um... the end result is the woman leaving. The woman has to leave, or lose herself totally. And you see the women that are up here have been born here, there are very few immigrants from the city up this high. You'll find them around Swiss Creek – Swiss Creek is a different social structure all together. There's quite a lot of artistic people that group together and encourage each other. They've got the gallery, and I'm an hour and a half away. And so to join in anything spontaneously is just too hard. I haven't been well, I um... totally ignore it. I had stents put in the heart when I was 48, and I've struggled a shortness of breath ever since, so I get tired pretty early, so to go down to

anything is just – the girls are great, they'll come up and have lunch with me, or um...you know, shout encouragement from a distance, but I can't join in their scarecrow – they have this great annual scarecrow competition, everyone makes their own scarecrow and puts it out the front of their house and they're just all fantastic, then they had this 'bra art' and I *really* wanted to join in that, but I'm so overwhelmed with my load here, and the lack of energy to put into it, I just can't do it. I just can't get there. The only thing I've joined in is this Ag Art competition which is now two years ago, and it was starting to grow only yesterday and it was probably triggering what you'd said on the phone, which was that I must once this building project's done – I must get into this creative. I'd like to go back and paint, you know, just do something on my own. Originally the attic above the hot house was to be a workspace but now it's a guest room. Because we need the money, we haven't got the money behind us. So, a lot of my stuff's gone, but I know it will all be there, it's just a matter of having the space to do it in. This holiday will help, the first one in five years. Keep emptying your pot without filling it again.

F: But likewise some people have got a full pot but because it's farming they can't leave it either. The dairy farmers I've spoken to are just you know, they never go on holidays. So dairy is a hard one.

I: Look, Di Pendergas another one – did Deidre mention Di Pendergas, she's another one, she's a nurse, I think Di must be hitting 70, she's most creative girl, she's out of Benambra, and she's one that's um, has used, she's very creative and used creativity all her life, I remember her doing this amazing weaving out of bits and pieces for a play they were putting on, she's decorated the local hall a thousand times when someone's getting married or something like that you always call on Di.

F: Is she around?

I: It's a wonder Deidre didn't mention her.

F: While I'm over here.

I: I don't know. I can ring her. She's at Benambra. But you never know where she might be, she could be in Omeo, I don't know. It's always better to meet people in their environment.

F: When you...just before when you were getting, when you get emotional about things, is this because you see women not um, not acknowledged? Sort of?

I: Yep.

F: It's in the back of acknowledgement, really, because you've proved they can, and...

I: They can. They really can. But they've got to be allowed, they've got to be valued, trusted, um...feminine skills need to be acknowledged at equal worth. Like I often give the analogy if I stood up in Parliament and my gut feeling tells me we should go this way, we would be absolutely poo-hooed. You've got to have ten years of science experiments before you come up with that particular answer.

F: So there's no weight put on women's um...just their intuition.

I: It's the intuition. And we're certainly not always right, but I think to be yeah...to be allowed to have your say without scientific proof. Because a lot of it is absolute common sense. So I um...I get really frustrated that women still follow men in their dreams, um, I'd say this in front of Gray – because he knows, I get frustrated that I took his dream seriously, but he has not taken mine seriously. I think it's very important. One of the things that I've been able to do here is create a bit of the European um, influence, here, and the thing that I thoroughly enjoy about Europe is the deep culture. And the lack of plastic and you know some of the beautiful old environments that are out there. So my way of dealing with it is influencing Gray to build in a very different way. And very generous in that sense, he has moved over a lot. He doesn't like gardens, he didn't want a garden. It's a me and a garden, so he could see that he wasn't giving anything up by allowing me to do it.

F: It's such an old story.

I: And look, I can't see it changing for many a long time. I really can't. We do these token bits towards um...change, but the actual major – the main social um, change, I think is a long long way away. But the things that you're doing, the major steps that need to be done is from where you're coming from. And that's why I rang because I think there's very few avenues for stories to come through, and be laid out there for people to see and bit by bit, in the...see I think everything starts from the cradle and if you're really going to change women's position in the world – little girls – I've got a granddaughter Kobe, and Nicolette knows my thoughts on it, my daughter knows my thoughts on it – but still Kobe goes to

- archery and he goes to football and Lilly waits while they go to Archery and football, and it's only me jumping up and down to hip hop. She's going to learn to dance! She's been the one waiting for the male to...
- F: You're the only one who's mentioned this waiting. I can't bear waiting. And farmer's wives you know, they'll take a book now with them. I've got...(tape cuts)
- I: ...I'm going to University: Broke the marriage. His ego could not stand it. And Gray still, in that syndrome – if I start to fly, he gets wobbly. As gorgeous and all as he is, it's as obvious as the day is long. We'll have our issues when he comes back to work here because there's certain things that I've got used to. Because I've been here on my own and I won't be pushed down anymore. I won't be held back anymore. But as far as going back and re-educating or something like that I don't feel I'll do that. But if I can just achieve what we're achieving here – I am much more content, but I still have this major thing about – we're still the one that compromises, we're still the one that will wait. Um...we'll feel bad about having fun while they're working. Gray doesn't feel bad when he's having fun and I'm working! Wouldn't even give it a thought! A lot of it comes from us from when we're very young, and I reckon that's where you start, you start with these young girls – not making them special, just giving them rights. Absolute rights, in the home, everywhere. Just to give them the right to be equal. And I can't see anything change...
- F: You don't see younger like your son, you don't see much change there? You can't see it?
- I: No. Because it's not just in the family it's all in the...see little boys are already so needy – Lill is so independent in another way. And so she's willing to compromise because she hasn't got the need for others to be evolved around her, she just goes off and does what she wants to do, as a little thing. But family structure has her um...the youngest she's last – all those programmed things. In three generations – Mum's era, my era, and now Nicolette, who I really thought would see it because I was very open about how I felt, but everything still evolved. I think young boys mature later, and they have that need of mothering and nurturing that bit longer.
- F: ...bit of responsibility out there.
- I: No responsibility, and no 'congratulations you've done a great job' it's always the children all around us here um, don't go near the farm. There's only one that goes near the farm, and his father Barry is unusual in that he let him and congratulated him when he did a good job, but that's one out of hundreds. Where...
- F: So the rest is follow me around and do what I want you to do.
- I: And hold this end – because he's here as well – 'oh just hold this end' because he's up there. What's it? Even the water today, I said to Gray 'Oh gosh we've got no water and I badly need a shower' and he said 'Oh you should have showered last night it was only minus 4 we would have had water'. Not 'I'll fix the pikes'! (laughs) Um...there's stuff there that I just think, we still haven't got that..
- F: So how do you think...creative – well I guess I'm asking you this sort of question – how can I do it? I'm exactly where you are and I would love to be sociologist really, but I'm not, so how can I use my medium to do this. And women are really the strength of a property or a farm, in particular too, they're the ones deciding on the header, and most of that, so outwardly they put on a high heeled shoe for the country fly party or whatever, but basically they're the backbone of the farms, they're running the show.
- I: That's right.
- F: But not acknowledged by the husband, by the government, by the court, by tax, anything like that, and yet you take her away...(tape cuts)...Once again we've let that happen. But you know what happens and they're not interested...I mean...
- I: Because their values are very different to ours, the value is in what the little woman can do for the farm. It's not in just being. We women um...enjoy being with our fellas because of just who they are. Not because they're the...I mean this is my situation – I certainly didn't marry for money – um...it's just a different attitude as to why we're together.
- F: And they think you're together to look after them?
- I: Absolutely. They look after...to look after them in their old age. I mean even Gray and I are home at the moment because the Duck's closed for winter. And um...I get to three meals a day, I now at night – but it's me instigating every move. I have to instigate every move, like it's like pulling a ball and chain, um, to get anything done, and then when it's done all the accolades go to Gray for having achieved it.
- F: So we need to not worry about that. The accolades. Because we know (laughs)

- I: We all know, but when you're step children all see it as Dad's achievements, and Step Mum is just a nagger...
- F: Oh okay...Blended families...
- I: Blended families is another issue. And I adore my two step children, and we have a really good relationship on the surface, but underneath I've heard a couple of things – they think I'm pushing Dad. If Dad wasn't pushed he wouldn't be up until midday. He'd be up at night but the dark doesn't do anything in the country. The minute it turns dark you can't get out there and start building. So um...I work on daylight. But getting back to that question 'What can we do?' the only thing that I've been able to do here is take things into very small portions, and to build on them to where I want them to go. And it be called manipulation, but if Gray wasn't manipulated, think of another word for steering – again it's that navigation between he not losing what he needs to get out of this, to make him a fulfilled human being. Um...and also, for me with it, not just me supporting him. And I'm always correcting Gray about – because we women – it's like managing from behind. If he was on his own he would be living in a half-built shack achieving nothing. I can guarantee it. Because that's how he was, that's how he'll always be. He hasn't got that self-motivation. And I think that's what country women need, to do what they need to do. Um...but when I do things, Gray's rarely thrilled about it in the end, you know, there's credit, but it takes him a while to give me credit. He finds it hard um...for me to be complimented on anything. If anyone compliments me on anything he will always...
- F: Such a similar story.
- I: Look, um...
- F: So how has your creative helped get this...what you're saying, and I know what you're saying – how can we get this to be seen? I guess...because it's a nice subtle way to show it. You know, we're not writing a book on women's lib or something. I'm doing it in a nice subtle sort of – once again an acceptable...
- I: The feminine...I'm a firm believer that there's the masculine and the feminine in all of us, no matter if we're female or male. And the feminine will always bring in that soft, subtle...um...
- F: Well that's why you've got to believe in Gillard a bit. You've just got to.
- I: Well, see I do.
- F: You've just got to, because she is a woman.
- I: I am actually disappointed she got in the way she got in. I think the powerbrokers to be able to, wouldn't you? You know, your Prime Minister out's pretty tough. It would have been nice for her to have been voted in. I hope she is next time. (tape cuts)
- I: ...May I see the world from their own perspective. To see the world like this and ten of us can look at the same world from our own perspective, but women tend to look at it from the other's perspective. They can put themselves into the other person's shoes.
- F: It's good empathy I think.
- I: Empathy. And everyone goes out for what they can get out of it for themselves, or they're not interested. They go 'gee, that'd be great for Ed if we...' it's very similar, a really good example I think is Helen, our darling friend down at the Bundar, who has the horse riding thing, who's just developed um, around the age of 56 or whatever she is, and she's stuck up in the Kimberley and she's stuck up there doing horse riding for friends then she comes back up here and does hers in the summer. So...(tape cuts)...I've been, the first thing that I think of is the first thing is I need to learn more about epilepsy, so I can know what she's going through. So if there's anything that she needs, because she's been found out in the paddock passed out, she's you know...it's been terrible.
- F: Bogan horses?
- I: No...
- F: Bogone?
- I: No that's the other side. This is...
- F: Do you know who that woman is, because she rang me actually? Someone...(tape cuts) I was talking to one of the...(tape cuts)...when you were talking about Saul. What was it again? That line was lovely –
- I: Oh just the fact that every time you expend any creative juices, um...it's like un-knotting your stomach. I have no physical ailments presenting, it's one of the greatest cures, I think, emotionally, and spiritually – I've yet to um...define spirituality. To me it's world connected, you know the old cliché some people call it God, I call it the Universe, and I'm

totally privileged to be part of the universe by creating whether it be things for longevity or purely to expend it, I believe in universal energy being expended for good or bad, and I've just happened to want to be on the good. And um...creatively connecting with other people, I think it's the spiritual and emotional wellbeing – I can only speak for me – my spiritual and emotional wellbeing has definitely been based on being creative. Whether that be cooking a meal or being in the garden. Um...Gray resented the garden for ten years.

F: Taking up water? No?

I: No. Just...um...

F: ...you time?

I: The fact that he didn't like gardens and I insisted on pursuing the garden, if I wanted the garden I had to pursue it. So I had to lug rocks for hours, um...some really, really very heavy work and he would not put one ounce in. And the ten-year mark came up and everyone was saying 'Oh what a great garden' and he started to then do what this fellow's done. And um, pick me up a bag of...

F: ...manure...

I: Or potting mix, or something like that. The first day I remember he looked out the window and he said 'Oh the first tulip's out.' And I went 'Got ya!' (laughs) The ten years hard labor to be accepted for who you are naturally, makes me cross. It might be a progression in one sense, but it's an admission in...

F: That's why women have girlfriends.

I: ...in ten years. Absolutely! We would be dead without our women friends. We would be...you know, *whackers* without our women friends.

F: As another woman from the Mallee said she's done a full, you know 'I've raised the kids, then the kids left home for boarding school' ...(tape cuts)

I: From the male perspective. And maybe that's what we're coming to, but it's still very ingrained in our little boys that they are, the women are sent to help them.

F: It's very hard though...it's hard when you *are* the one that nurtures and feeds them and things. I mean, we are the carers, it's in our genes the same as...

I: And because young boys need more mothering, or seem to rely more on mothering, is that where it's stemming from? That we mother too long?

F: ...too well?

I: Too well, or um...

F: It's lost it's...(tape cuts)

I: Me not sitting and waiting for Gray to come and have breakfast when he's ready. Um...

F: But isn't it a bit of give and take, you're happy to do that if he then, there is some sort of...it's all about balance isn't it really? Balance of colour in a picture, balance of...

I: It's balance. It's definitely balance.

F: You know I'm happy to do that, but then I'd like someone to say 'Just a minute'...

I: Our natural make up goes to believe that we females can grid much better, you know that my focusing of males, we've always acknowledged where they plan well they'll do a job well, they'll finish off well. Whereas we women know that kid over there needs a feed, the washing's over here, the soup's up over here boiling, we can't really let the soup go dry and so we can grid and we plan. And I'm not saying that no man plans, but in our planning we *allow* for creativity because we're safeguarding 'woopses', which I find the most expensive word in the dictionary.

F: What is?

I: Woops. (laughs) You know when someone in our situation, Gray is very much shoot-from-the-hip, non-planning

F: Right.

I: and then, finds that he can't do any more building on his day off because we've run out of petrol because he hasn't planned to put enough petrol for the journey, they're the little small things, but over a long period all these large things come up, so I find I, as the female, plan for next year. Plan for the year after. All negotiable, and it can all go in and out like that, but it's me actually steering the ship.

F: And I'm saying...

I: Without that, Gray would be spot-firing daily. He would have to spot-fire, because in the country you've got far more dramatic responses to 'woops'. 'I've run out of milk' – you can't go an hour – right, so you've got to plan every last detail, and I think what I've enjoyed of late, as things are starting to pull together, is in that planning. Um...to allow us

- to be creative because if you don't, you're constantly surviving. You're on that surviving level all the time. Um...you know, washing in the basin because the water's run out.
- F: Well I call it the little bit of 'me' time, amongst all of this.
- I: Absolutely. And see I demand 'me' time every day. I have just demanded it. 'Me' time, might be with Gray, but it's my choice. I think it's very necessary for anyone, and I mean Gray will go off horse-riding with the boys or, you know, whatever he wants to do, why is it that we feel guilty when we do that? I don't so much now...I go down to Omeo and I'll – if I've got to go for something I'll go and have lunch with the girls and things like that; catch up.
- F: You know pioneering women, you know this drover's wife sitting there six months with four kids under the age of 6, do you think she felt this 'What am I doing here?' Do you think they had the same thing?
- I: When you're on the poverty line, when you're on survival level, was she grateful to be where she was with four healthy children and a husband that was sending money back? It's all perspective. See I judge us every now and again, or I level us with the other members of my family – Gray hasn't got any – and on the one hand...
- F: That's quantity and quality you're talking about...
- I: Yeah. You know depending where society is in general, but to have four healthy children, not die at childbirth, and have a husband sending money home with that, that's her greatest joy.
- F: You just wonder if that's her gut feeling that you and I feel – that someone's got away with something and you get unrecognized and invisible when you really are the one that puts this together. Whether she felt that, you know, whether *she* felt that.
- I: I mean they all had to at varying degrees, but I do believe that...
- F: ...because everybody else is doing it...
- I: Where society sits around you really governs...
- F: The context of which is around you...
- I: Yeah. Governs how you'd feel about those things. This thing here is probably my only...(tape cuts) This here is of a woman coming from the city to the country, um...it's not that creative in shape and form...
- F: You enter things like this?
- I: I entered it, um...
- F: In Elmore? Elmore was it?
- I: No just down at Bairnsdale – it's Ag Art competition. And um...I called it 'Lace to Iron – City to Country'. (reading:) 'The female expression of the life and the land in remote rural Victoria. This example of rural wearable art by Tessa Beckett – which is my name before I married – typifies the spirit of the women both past and present who remained to endure the challenges of nature in isolation, and isolation in high country Eastern Victoria. The style takes us back to the arrival of Tessa's own maternal Grandmother in Victoria's North East in the 1890's. While the fabrics that Tessa's used replaces the laces, cottons and silks of that era, it is perhaps debatable as to which of the two would be more suitable in the life, in the often harsh natural environment, in the high plains in Tessa's similar journey a century later. The corrugated iron of course represents the iron will or the backbone of the broad shoulders of the women protecting their families from bushfires, snakes, drought, flood and snow in the isolation of the forest. Often alone as their partner's work on the land, in the mines and logging camps or ski fields. There's a gentleness also appearing in the lining of the lambs' wool akin to motherhood. The circlet of barbed wire lace of sorts replaces the traditional bustle band and reflects the restrictions that distance, aloneness and the lack of spontaneity impose. Hessian in the main body of the garment is renowned for the myriad of uses on the land, here it displays the notion of the fabric of the community whose strong threads are mutually supportive and sharing. The generous traditional balloon sleeves and bustle represent the abundance of mother earth, fresh water and air, in particular the train carries the rays of the sun, the water droplets, and with it the elements of nitrogen, potassium phosphorous, N. P. K form the foundation of all that grows in response to human endeavor. The dress is accessorized for protection against the elements with the boots and the fly-wire hat. The harshness is contrasted with the rather vulnerable eggs representing fertility. The necklace is an adornment of the female form, interestingly a necklace was Tessa's first purchase after fighting the 2003 fires in an effort to reconnect with her own femininity.' 'Tessa Beckett' – oh this is just about me there...that was (tape cuts)

F: So what you're saying is about stories...  
 I: Oh it does.  
 F: For you...I mean the garden shows where you started and what you – about you. Isn't it?  
 I: Yeah. And they were also saying recently about gardening is like bearing your soul.  
 Garden's out there for people to see...  
 F: Or creativeness, in paintings, or anything...  
 I: Yeah, and I think it is in a way. With the good and the bad you know, like this is a really bad time to see the garden...  
 F: Will we have a look?  
 I: ...trying to protect the house, and I said, 'um...do you think I can have some water for the roses?' and they all, in unison without one missing from them they said 'Fuck the roses!' (laughs)  
 F: Yeah, yeah.  
 I: Classic example of that.

#### END OF FIRST RECORDING

I: ...I'm more confused when women became a threat  
 F: (laughs)  
 I: Um...the natural progression for women was severely broken so it's very hard to pin point where we would have been had that not happened, um...you know, whether we would have had that same, they've done wonders in some areas, and a regression in a lot of others because they haven't defined what being a female is. What the values of being a female is, so they've gone out and tried to get us to turn in...  
 F: To make up and define...to make something up to define us.  
 I: Yeah.  
 F: Rather than...  
 I: And from a masculine perspective – from a male perspective, to be successful you have to be as good as the blokes in those traditional blokey jobs – and that's what makes me cross because we've got so much more to give naturally.  
 F: But that's how males rate their success, so because it has been dictated...(tape cuts)  
 I: ...ah something about, they'd say 'Have you gone mad?' I'd say 'I'd never go that low' (laughs) They just all presume...I just want to be me.  
 F: Well...(tape cuts)  
 I: It's the legacy you leave after you've gone. It's not in the tangible, things just rot, that's just how it is...the spirit of who you are.  
 F: The spirit of your...(tape cuts)

#### END OF SECOND RECORDING

#### END OF TRANSCRIPTION



- F: How did you get to be doing your patchwork?
- I: Well it came from when I came up here. I've never done it until I came up here ten years ago. I met Darryl through our parents, they knew each other, when they were elderly citizens, and we sort of met through...
- F: Whereabouts was this?
- I: Well, Darryl's mother lives in Bendigo now, and my mum was there too. I had gone on a bus trip about two or three years prior and met Darryl's parents on the bus trip. And mum and they were talking and they said that each of them had a lonely son and daughter and so telephone numbers were exchanged and... that's how we met.
- F: So you're not a farm girl, in your past at all?
- I: No, no. I'd done a bit with a friend. His parents had a farm with cattle at Kyneton, but no, I lived in Castlemaine and worked in a sewing factory for 25 years.
- F: Okay. And then you moved up here? Is Darryl from up here?
- I: And then I moved up here, Darryl's been here all his life, yes. So I came up in 2000, and then everything happened. I got engaged, moved up here and got married in the same year. I just gradually met the girls from Hopetoun, I found them very, very friendly people. I went to a patchwork room with them and...
- F: And what made you start the patchwork?
- I: Well I took along me long-stitch and said look I didn't really want to get into patchwork because it was expensive, and well, from that day on I got into the patchwork. It was great going in there, and you know, being with the girls it was like a friendship group, we call it a really good friendship group.
- F: So your husband's a cropper?
- I: Yeah, well up until two years ago we had the sheep and we grew rye corn. But two years ago, we couldn't get water – we couldn't get enough water for the sheep, so he said he was going to sell the sheep and then realized that we might be struggling if we didn't have the sheep and the fat lambs to get extra money so we decided to lease the whole lot. And he still does a bit of work up there, and still does a bit of contract work for the neighbour up the back, yes. I used to raise pet lambs – that was another hobby I had when I came here. I raised up to 29 pet lambs, so they took a bit of time. But most of the time I do like the patchwork and I do a lot of hand embroidery.
- F: Right, okay. So what value do you put on your patchwork now? What does it mean to you?
- I: I just really love doing it, and it's good for my – I've got arthritis too, and it's good for that. I don't know what I'd have if I wasn't doing it, I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't continue doing it. I think everyone of my family members has got a quilt. I've made them all for the nieces.
- F: So apart from the lambs you didn't get involved in the farming?
- I: Oh, well, when I first came up here I was helping Darryl, I'd be out digging melons and bindi eyes. Helping him work the sheep and that.
- F: How did you feel about that?
- I: Oh I did love it, but sometimes it got a bit hard. I got worn out a bit. I'm not one for a lot of sun, the sun seems to knock me around a bit. But no, I really enjoyed it, I love it. I've said this is the best ten years of my life since I've been up here. I feel like I've been here all my life, I just love it up here. Darryl had been here about four or five years by himself – well his uncle lives in the caravan over in the shed there – but his parents, he bought the farm off them and they moved to Bendigo and so he took over.
- F: So you're not lonely?
- I: I'm not lonely, because I just go and read a book. When I first came I read books when I didn't have anything to do, or Darryl was away. Some nights they (the men) don't come home 'til nine o'clock. Yeah, I'd just read a book, get me work done and once I knew the house was tidy I'd fill my time doing whatever. I'd get out in the garden, I'm not as much a garden lover as I am – I like the garden to look tidy...

F: I've seen an amazing garden yesterday with Narelle.  
 I: Oh yes, she loves her gardening and her cake decorating.  
 F: You'd think you were in Queensland, with the tropical sort of garden.  
 I: Well out here I've got to go the opposite. I've built up the garden of course, since I've come, because Darryl didn't worry too much about it once his mum and dad left. I've gradually worked it up, and since we got the new fence I've put a garden all the way around. I don't mind getting out in the garden, but I have to get out in the morning, and what hasn't been done in the morning has to wait once it gets too hot – I don't like that.  
 F: So your main passion is...  
 I: My main passion would be patchwork, and now more of the hand stitching. The embroidery part of the patchwork, rather than the piecing the quilts together because I can sit down at night and do that. I sew and just watch the TV, I don't get some shows, but most of the time I just stitch away and just look at the TV. My one passion would be the patchwork.  
 F: So you'd be lost if you didn't have that?  
 I: If I didn't have that, (agrees) and it's the company as well. We have four days in the month that we go and meet, every Saturday now, it used to be the first Saturday of the month, but now we go in every Saturday and the second Tuesday and the fourth Wednesday, so it caters for others. Sometimes we might only have two there, two or three.  
 F: So it's connected you to the community then?  
 I: Yeah. And like I said, everybody was so friendly when I came, and one of Darryl's aunties that lives in Hopetoun invited us round for tea one day, and when I got in she had all my neighbours there. She'd invited all the neighbours and some of Darryl's family, and everybody brought a plate. Your real country, you know? Everybody brought a plate and had a meal and unfortunately she only passed away about three weeks ago and that's one thing I'll remember her by; having that dinner for me so I could meet everybody.  
 F: So you'll stay here, even though you've leased a lot?  
 I: Oh yeah, because Darryl's still doing a bit of work, and he's got a bulldozer and a front-in loader, and...  
 F: So he'd be doing all the irrigation channels...  
 I: Yeah he's been doing a bit of work for all around here. I think he's gone off – he's been up the back working on getting it back together – and I think he might have went about half an hour ago and gone off to do some work.  
 F: Well it's busy now, filling in all those channels, isn't it?  
 I: Yeah, well there's a lot that he can't do.  
 F: I saw a lot of bulldozers on the way up here.  
 I: Yeah, well I don't know where his bulldozer is... his is down a long the Woomelang way there, somewhere. I think he's more a long the road between Hopetoun and Woomelang where you wouldn't have come.  
 F: I mean, you can instantly see all your patchworks here.  
 What I might do is take some photos, not staged, because you are what your environment is a little bit. And I can see your patchworks in the bedroom got one hanging on the wall and on your bed...  
 I: Both walls in there, and in there. It's just really good.  
 F: So you don't have any daughters?  
 I: No I don't have any children, no.  
 F: So who do you give your quilts to?  
 I: Well, my nieces, and my great-nieces and nephews, and well, my mother in law's got some cushions and a quilt I made.  
 F: And your mother-in-law's around here is she?  
 I: No she's in Bendigo...  
 F: Oh yes, that's right in the home up there. Okay. And they must have been delighted...  
 I: Oh they're not in a home, they just recently moved to Bendigo and bought a house down there. They're not in a home, they've been down there for 15 years.  
 F: They must have been thrilled to get you two together...  
 I: They call me their 'little gem'! (laughs) So I just keep sewing away. I've only got one more to do and then all of the nieces and nephews – they've all got a quilt now. I've got a wedding one to pass over in November.  
 F: You don't sell them? You just give them away?  
 I: I just give them away, for presents, they've got them for Christmas. I've made the great nieces and nephews and given them at Christmas time. And the parents... I'm not sure if the parents

have actually got one. No, they've both got two kids each and the nephews. Then of course, Darryl's three children they've got one, and he's got two more on his sister's side – they've got one, and they've just had a baby so he's got one! (laughs) But if I had them stacked around you probably wouldn't be able to get in that room.

F: Really? So how many would you have all together?

I: Well, I've got four great nieces and nephews, Darryl's got five, and some of them have babies so there's more...(counting)

F: So, fifty?

I: Oh easy, I would have given away. That's the trouble – we have an exhibition every two years for our patchwork and we're having it this August – you make all these and you get rid of them.

F: And you make up your own patterns, or do you follow a pattern?

I: I've got a thing on my computer that the girls gave me for my 60<sup>th</sup> – it's called E.Q6 and you can go in there and you can see blocks. They've got a block library. I've actually just designed a quilt for Darryl's nephew.

F: So you're making up your own patterns?

I: Oh no, only this one. I've picked the block out and put it together, but most of these come with patterns.

F: So it's definitely a craft then...

I: I've got one in there that's hanging on the wall that was a challenge. We have these 'challenge', or 'friendship' quilts within the group. One year we had this challenge where it had to be a certain size, and you had to try a technique you'd never done before. So...I made one that's more of an 'arty' quilt that's not me, and tearing strips off and putting them on so that it made a sunset coming down into the brown hills and the green grass.

F: May I have a look at it?

I: It's hanging on the wall.

...It was called "Girls day out" and it came as a block a month. You get each block – you'd get that one with a couple of other little ones with it.

F: So you didn't make those?

I: Yes, I made all these.

F: So you made them as blocks a month?

I: Yes, for a block every month, I got that piece of fabric and got all these pieces of fabric with it. I had to stitch and make that block.

F: And you were given a design?

I: Yes, given the design and a pattern. When you've got all your blocks done, in the last one it comes with all the material and you put all your borders around and put it together.

F: Oh okay.

I: I actually quilted all this one myself.

F: Is that an option - to quilt them?

I: Oh, you have to quilt them to keep all the fabrics together. Because you've got your back and your wadding and your top piece. Sometimes quilts don't need a lot of quilting, but you've got to quilt them because otherwise they don't go bubbly if you don't.

F: I'll just take a picture of you with your quilt.

I want it as natural as what you normally do.

So when would you have done that one?

I: I can tell you exactly when I did it if I can just look at the label again, I can't remember what year I did that. 2008. 2008 I did that.

F: Do you want to pick the dog up? It looks nice with the dog. (taking photos)

I: Yes, so 2008 that one was done. It takes 12 months, but then it takes possibly another 2 or 3 months once you get it together and get it quilted. That's my pride and joy, I love that one.

F: Can I get a shot of the quilting on the table too? You've got quilting quilting! Did you make those too?

I: No, I actually bought those, but I've been tempted. I've been taught how to make them, but I haven't got around to making any yet. I've got a Christmas one that's just as big as that and it comes down at Christmas time. It only comes down for Christmas time and it's there for about four weeks then I take it back down again.

F: Is that what you put on the back of it?

I: That's the label that I'm putting on the back. That's for my niece. This one here is the one my husband bought me the kit for.

F: So he's supportive of you doing it?

I: Yeah, he doesn't mind. When I'm starting here he helps me pick out colours when I'm doing appliques.

F: So how long did this one take?

I: This one took me a while because I did it with a light and a magnifying glass so that I could get it really fine. It's got little beads stitched on the dress and little corsets and everything.

F: And what would that be used for?

I: I'm going to hang that up and put it in the bedroom. But the other ones... that's got all the quilting on it where the blue is.

F: It's a different style isn't it?

I: Oh yes, different altogether. This one is sort of delicate and the other one is really a bright one, very bright. It's got all different houses over it.

F: And would you have a pattern for it then?

I: Yes. This one I actually bought as a kit. They put in all the materials that you need to (make it) and I bought it as a kit because I loved the colours. The pattern had been done in much darker colours, but the shop that I bought it from had it made with all these pretty bright colours. It's really girly.

F: How amazing. This one's nice too...

I: Yes, that one I made a long time back.

F: Oh, they're everywhere.

I: They were just little patterns I got, little embroidery patterns, and I put them together on the wall myself. It doesn't take much to do that. Put a bit of colours around it, it doesn't take much. And that's another challenge one we did in the group over there.

F: And the throw over on the couch?

I: The throw, we did that we a lady from Bort, she has a patchwork shop over there and she does classes. That one piece of green fabric just there, all of those colours in there was one piece of green fabric and it was the way the fabric went you could cut it up so that it varied the colours. There's all different techniques. That one on the couch there is called 'chenille' – you put four pieces of fabric together there and sew your rows half an inch apart and you cut through the top three and not the bottom one.

F: And it springs up sort of...

I: Yeah, and it looks like the old fabric – the old 'chenille'.

F: That's interesting isn't it?

I: It is. But the...

F: So it's four layers and you just run up and down and then you cut...

I: You cut in between. There is a special little thing...

F: And it's called 'chenille'?

I: Yes. And lots of people make quilts out of them, they make little squares and strip them and sew them together all different ways. Create different colours and put them together like blocks. Some people cut up a shape of a rabbit and strip through it and the rabbit shape is there but it's shaggy. There's a lot of different ways...

F: And you could cut them not so thin so you have a shaggier look?

I: Well you can do it wider, but then you'd probably, it'd fold back and you'd see too much of the underneath colour. If it was too big you probably wouldn't get the same effect, see with that one you can still see the rows on the top, but if it was a bit wider...

F: And you learnt that one as a challenge too?

I: No, that was just something that we did, had a go together. We haven't done it last year, but the year before we had it. Every month we had a little project, someone would bring in a pattern – it might have been a toy – and if you wanted to do it you could do it there together, and if you didn't – well, okay. But each month we had something different. Like I said, every room, you can come through every room and you'll see I've got them hanging on the walls and on the bed. My first quilt is on my queen size bed. Four little potholders were the first thing I did with the patchwork and then I made a great big quilt.

F: Your first one, a double-bed quilt?

I: Well, it's on the queen size bed.

F: But this is lovely that it sort of tells a story doesn't it?

I: Yes it does. Like your coffee shop and your lolly shop, your fashion and your antiques, florist and teddy bear shop, and of course, the patchwork shop in the middle. It's a nice little thing to have the café there with the little cakes and your pot of tea up the top.

F: I like the little sewing machine in the window there...

I: Yes. I thought the corset was great too. Over here you can't see it but it's got an old fashioned pram there too.  
F: It's nice when you keep looking at it and find new things isn't it?  
I: I can come any time and have a bit of a look and I just...  
F: And this is a lovely vista to be looking out over on when you're working... although you don't do it here you sit over there.  
I: Well I sit and look out over there, like I said I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't do me stitcheries. I'd be lost. I would have been a bit lost, I had wondered when I came up here what I was going to do to occupy myself, but I took to this because I'd been a sewer at Giovanni's. You know the company Giovanni?  
F: Oh yes, Giovanni.  
I: Okay, well I worked for them making dressing gowns and stuff and I knew how to use a machine, so I've got one of the great big industrial over-lockers.  
F: Have you got a workroom here at all?  
I: Yeah that's the spare room out the back.  
F: Can we have a look at that?

**END OF SECOND RECORDING**

**END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

Jenny: ...there and they want to crop it as they do with everything else.  
I don't care. That's fine. My pleasure is in making and building. I love it so much.

Julie: I do, I know. Sitting up on a tree binding is just – hours pass and...

Jenny: How wonderful.

Julie: ...the sheep come up and all of that. So I think there's something there that's not recognised.

Jenny: Now do you know where they bound trees in China? Remember we went to China a few years ago? They did them right from the ground with rope no thicker than your finger in reds and browns. They were very ancient and very symbolic. They were bound all the way up and branches and everything. In [unclear] where the silk. That was fascinating.

Julie: I might look at that.

Jenny: Yeah, [unclear] in the court yard were looking at them. So there you go.

Julie: So it's all that and I'm just – it's great. So it's good you understand what I'm getting at...

Jenny: Yes, oh I do.

Julie: ...and whether you think it's true or not.

Jenny: Yeah, I do. I think also when you're working, my brain is going at a million miles an hour all week. I just – everything coming from all directions. So much pressure and stress teaching that I don't think I'll be doing it much longer now.

Julie: I couldn't cope under [over speaking] didn't like it.

Jenny: But that's so stressful, so stressful. But when I come here at the weekend I don't have to, I just...

Julie: What do you teach?

Jenny: Only Grade 1 and 2 but [unclear] some real problems, family, socio-economic. It's probably half social work half teaching. It's a huge undertaking. This is just a huge release.

Julie: Oh terrific.

Jenny: It's manual and physical and very, very good for me. My bones and my back have never been better. I think I'm strengthening all the muscles whereas if I don't do something like this I'll be sedentary and lose the use of the, yeah.

Julie: Is it a nice [unclear]... this is like...

Jenny: An artistic expression.

Julie: ...an evolutionary – it is an evolutionary – it is your need to do it, your survival to do it in a way.

Jenny: Yes, but I think it is a survival.

Julie: But to be acknowledged at it is another thing, isn't it? Don't you think?

Jenny: Yes.

Julie: Someone to say, she's not just mad.

Jenny: Yes.

Julie: She's actually...

Jenny: She's not crazy.

Julie: Yeah. So it really is just a matter of taking photos just as you work. Even if I come over in an afternoon or something and sit and just get – really, of a hundred shots I do I probably get one that might be any good, you know, in a way. So it's just the general feel.

Jenny: Yes, but that's fine.

Julie: To be pouring with rain would probably add to it because it shows...

Jenny: Whatever you need to do is fine.

Julie: Well no, whatever you do, because it's a documentary I really want it to be – I don't want it set or anything that.

Jenny: No, no, it needs to be...

Julie: So if you aren't in the rain I don't want to take you in the rain. But if you do things that are unusual and heat and whatever...

Jenny: Yeah, in the stinking heat and dripping perspiration into the wheelbarrow [over speaking].

Julie: Absolutely, anything. I mean, I'm just recording it. I don't want to put my interpretation at all on it.

Jenny: No, that sounds great. Good on you.

Julie: So I've got two years of doing that really.

Jenny: Two years do to the PhD, that's [over speaking].

Julie: It's three year and I've done this year.

Jenny: I thought it was about seven.

Julie: Well it's part-time and I'm doing it full-time.

Jenny: I really [don't want] to do it. I was thinking if doing it on ADD. There are so many children – I think it's going to be another Stolen Generation where children are drugged because they're unmanageable. I think it's just going to be another case of all these children rising up when they're adults and saying, we're another Stolen – you've taken our – you've drugged us.

Julie: Now what were they saying about ADD the other – on the radio? It's efficiency or...

Jenny: I'd love to do a PhD in that.

Julie: Oh, it's sleep they say, sleep. Not enough sleep or something.

Jenny: I think it's the parenting skills [unclear]. When the parenting skills aren't there the children just can't function in a societal context. That's what I'm thinking anyway. But I haven't...

Julie: Well it might come to you from this, you know. You might sort it all out in your head.

Jenny: Maybe. Maybe, and then I think, oh, I don't know whether I really want to get into seven years of study now. Maybe when I stop working [unclear].

Julie: Three years full-time.

Jenny: Three years full-time. I can do that. You're doing it full-time five days a week, are you?

Julie: Mmm.

Jenny: Ballarat or Melbourne?

Julie: Ballarat. I'm meant to work eight hours a day. I've got a scholarship, a commonwealth scholarship to do it. So I'm lucky. I'm tied in like a contractor. I have four weeks holiday. I'm meant to work 40 hours a week or something.

Jenny: We had a woman here quite a few years ago. She was doing a PhD on Victorian rural women at Melbourne Uni, Latrobe Uni and she was staying – she was a friend of one of our girls. We've got a lot of historical stuff and there are letters from Victorian women to their sisters and to their – there's a bundle [over speaking]...

Julie: So what was her front – what was about it about though?

Jenny: It was about the survival mechanisms of Victorian women in their isolation I think. Something like that, which may be interesting for you to look at.

Julie: Yeah.

Jenny: Now I'm just trying to think of her name.

Julie: That may show up as something that she saw or maybe not.

Jenny: Yeah, it may be too old for you to – you can't use much over about four or five years, can you?

Julie: Yeah, I can always use [over speaking].

Jenny: Unless it's someone like [unclear] but you can't – unless it's a...

Julie: Well if it's in the area. I mean, if it's in Victoria I might...

Jenny: It was, yes, it was. I think Eurambeen – she went to Eurambeen and got a lot of information.

Julie: Would you be able to dig that out do you think?

Jenny: I haven't got a copy of it but I've got...

Julie: Or who she was so I can look up the [over speaking] library.

Jenny: Yes, I'm just thinking now. No, I'd have to ask one of my girls. I can't remember her name.

Julie: Can you do that? That'd be really good.

Jenny: I can do that. Yeah, because it's – and she sat for hours reading all the letters that are in there in the trunk from the 18-somethings.

Julie: Well these letters I'm reading of the colonial women, I mean, the husbands then would stop them from writing and they would just do it undercover and at night and secretly. It was a passion to do it, you know, they needed...

Jenny: Why did they stop them writing?

Julie: Oh I don't know. Because maybe they weren't cooking, I don't know. It wasn't...

Jenny: [Over speaking] considered frivolous or something.

Julie: Oh, I don't know what the reason was that I can recall. All I can sort of think, what I read, was that she said, I can't stop it, it's just my...

Jenny: Yes.

Julie: And when you get people talking like you just did before about how [unclear] what you do here and [unclear].

Jenny: And you too.

Julie: Yes. You know it's evolution nearly in a way.

Jenny: Yes, it's a need.

Julie: It's a need [over speaking] it's more than...

Jenny: Yes it is, it's an expressive need.

Julie: More than just doing a rock wall.

Jenny: Oh yes, probably is, yes. But I haven't really analysed it too deeply. When the kids saw me building the wall in the beginning they all discussed it with each other and said, what's she doing? Heather's gone a bit strange. Why is she building a wall? Is she trying to keep the world out? They were trying to psycho-analyse it. She's keeping the world out. She's keeping herself in. She's doing something. They were trying to read all sorts of things into it. I said, no, I just want to build a wall.

Julie: But they might have been right.

Jenny: Do you think?

Julie: Well [over speaking].

Jenny: Well, maybe. It depends on how deeply you go. Maybe, yeah.

Julie: A lot of people play sport maybe or golf or something, women, you know, in a way. But I'm more interested in the aesthetic side of it in a way.

Jenny: I really want to start painting. I've just made a room into a studio. That's what I aim to do next year if I – but I can't stand bad outside. It'll have to be good if I keep [unclear] everything I've [unclear] ever produced has sort of gone by the way of the fire.

Julie: Yeah, it's enough to maintain that this – but see this – there's an artist called [Rosalee] [unclear]. Have you heard of her? An Australian artist. She just hated housework and hated being inside.

Jenny: That's me, loathe it.

Julie: So she walked around, she picked up bits and pieces and [unclear].

Jenny: I loathe it.

Julie: He says they're a million dollars though.

Jenny: It's like a prison sentence having to do that. Only the bare essentials. No one's going to be looking. I don't care anyway.

Julie: Yeah. So it'd be interesting after I look at a number. If you come across people that you think fit into what I'm looking at, how similar or what the thread through everyone's lives are, whether it is a very isolation or is it a terrible environment at home that they escape or what the thread will be I guess is going to – the research will show up something there I think. They might go and do golf like, say Judy or whatever. But some will be intense about, I think, aesthetic expression.

Jenny: Yes, we – if you take on something like your tree or like this, you have to be intent and you have to be passionate or you're not going to do it. You're not going to finish it unless you're...

Julie: It's really got nothing to do to with anyone else [over speaking]...

Jenny: No, absolutely. I don't – well this is very – this is really necessary. This is a...

Julie: Well, the men could have run up a few strands of wire in 10 minutes but it's not what I want.



Jenny: I love stone walls. I adore stone walls and I would love these to be dry stone walls but having built dry stone, all that section in the dry stone wall and having it knocked down by the sheep and the trees fell on it and it was just – and I thought, no, not going to put all that work in again. They're all curvy, which really annoys a lot of people, the curves.

Julie: Oh okay.

Jenny: I don't care.

Julie: Is that how it happened?

Jenny: No, I made it that way. I like curves.

Julie: So did you know the end result really sort of or were you happy for it to...

Jenny: Evolve? I just thought I'd see how far I could get in the beginning because I was just rebuilding what had fallen down. I hadn't planned this but the further I got the more I loved it and the more I wanted to do. So I became really, really obsessive actually.

Julie: It started from where? Like what...

Jenny: I don't know. Years ago I built the dry stone up there and, I don't know. Just 'cause I thought – well I think I was clearing – the men were clearing [unclear]. I'll try a dry stone wall. I think I saw them down at, with Judy, down at [unclear] I saw them doing it. I thought, well I could have a go at doing that. But it wasn't built well enough. Here comes [Natty] out of the hole. That's a volcano just there and they've had the festival in it [unclear] pulling things out.

Julie: So have you been doing this all school holidays?

Jenny: When the weather permits, yes. But I've only done six or eight feet these holidays, 'cause we've had all these people here. How annoying is that?

Julie: [Over speaking] people.

Jenny: [Unclear] 6000 of them, which was...

Julie: Why'd he do it?

Jenny: Why? [Unclear].

Julie: Oh, you're there paid do they?

Jenny: Oh you bet.

Julie: Oh do they?

Jenny: Yes.

Julie: Okay.

Jenny: So it's just leasing the paddock for the weekend.

Julie: Oh, right. So you've had people pass...

Jenny: Yep, she's been ongoing for a month.

Julie: So maybe that's why you're putting the wall up?

Jenny: Yeah, [unclear]...

Julie: [Over speaking] next space you'll go up another, you know, higher again.

Jenny: Well I don't – I've got – also put a vineyard in in 1992 in that wasted paddock, what they call the brown paddock [over speaking]. So we've got an acre of vines. That's my other passion. We'd make them have a winemaker to make the wine and it's just gorgeous Shiraz. So I've got it – when I stop work I've got to start marketing that 'cause there's hundreds of dozen...

Julie: Already put away are they?

Jenny: Mmm. I can't sell a raffle ticket. I'm hopeless. So that's my next challenge. I like having a challenge but it gets me – takes me out of my comfort zone because I really can't sell things. I'm not – I don't like money...

Julie: That's not your thing.

Jenny: No, it's not. But I have to do it. I can't drink it all. I'll have a jolly good try but...

Julie: Yeah, I can't sell my tree so...

Jenny: No.

Julie: It doesn't interest me.

Jenny: No, but I'll probably need to just to make it pay for itself, because it's pretty expensive to get into the bottle.

#### **END OF TRANSCRIPT**

Revisited Jenny Powne 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Facilitator: ...Yes, sorry. So as you achieved your...

Interviewee: Oh yes, when I started he [husband] sort of raised his eyebrows a bit, then um...now he's sort of looking at me saying 'Oh, it's not too bad, would you like some more rocks?' or 'We'll go to the neighbours'. He rang the neighbour last week to see if we could get a load of rocks...

F: 'Cause that's the hard part isn't it – collecting all your rocks.

I: Well it is, now I have to go into the paddock, I have to go into the crater because all these paddocks are clean now, there's no rocks in our paddocks, which is terrific.

F: Well you've done good work! Everyone's benefited; it's a win-win situation isn't it?!

I: Yes, and now I'm doing the top of the hill and that's fun because I get to go out on my own and I rather enjoy that, being out in the paddock and walking and looking.

F: So now that you've given up work, it's the rock wall you've started on and then you're away I guess?

I: Going away for a month.

F: Are you going to still do it?

I: Oh yes, oh yes. I think they're all horrified that I've started this one, but I only started three weeks ago – they were all horrified; 'Oh no, you're not starting again'

F: Why?

I: Because 'that's all she does!' he tells everyone.

F: So what do you get out of it? Do you get a sense of what?

I: I don't really care what anyone thinks, I really don't. It's not for anyone else's benefit but my own.

F: You don't think it gives you some sense of um...difference...pride...or?

I: Sense of achievement. Yeah...something. Maybe, I mean it's the doing –

F: Well not everyone does it.

I: No, it's gotta be the process more than the product I think. It's the actual process of doing that I'm besotted with – I just love it. I really love it.

F: So what value do you put on it? What is the value to you?

I: Oh, I don't know – I suppose it's soul filling. And I have no desire for ball-dresses or jewelry. For my birthday just give me a load of rocks and some bags of cement. Really! That's all I want.

F: So you're not going to get more involved with the farming?

I: Well, now that's all changed. It's such precision farming, it's all chemicals and big seeders and we have someone come and do all that so it's not really something you can put a hand in. But I help with the cattle and the sheep and those sort of things, when we do them, but that's not very often. So we're both sort of stepping back a little bit, by not cropping ourselves.

F: I think it's fantastic.

I: It is rather wonderful. Yes.

F: There's not many...there's not many...(tape cuts)

I: ...In the district you'll find that it hasn't changed. I think there'll be a few people that don't stay in the kitchen and go home...most seem to, but maybe that's a form of creativity too, and that's um...yeah, maybe it is.

I: The cooking is; it's an art, and a creative art.

**END OF SECOND RECORDING**

**END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

- Interviewee: The Snow Circus um, there's a community-funded project and it was a Circus, this is...
- Facilitator: You'll get used to this, it just stays on.
- I: Yeah, um...
- F: But it's what it means, as I said I've tried to set the scene of this unique environment, and where is you in it, and what...?
- I: Yeah, I hadn't done anything for ages, and it was fantastic. We had to use...weeds or pest plants things like that to build a big cage –
- F: Right, the locusts...
- I: The locusts! The um...we didn't do the locusts we just built the cage, and we had the dimensions and we were using...
- F: And why were you chosen? Because you were doing a lot of art?
- I: Because I had some things in the past...just textiles and stuff, you know, lots of binding and things. And did you know, Catherine Larkins who was running the program, she knew me and Deidre said 'I'll ask Di to come in and help' and so Catherine said that would be good because we work really well together, in a space about this big.
- F: You had the best couple of weeks, apparently...
- I: It was five weeks, I traveled, because Catherine said 'We can't pay you' but they gave me \$100 fuel money. I traveled over three thousand k's, back and forth, back and forth, you know, not that it worried me, when she said 'Can you work out your mileage?' I thought 'Oh yeah!' (laughs) Anyway. But it was just fantastic because it sort of sparked an idea that I've had for quite a while now, you know there's...whenever you go to a public meeting – what are the problems around here? Pest, Plant and Animals. It's always the dogs or the pest plants. And I'm thinking - but so many of our pest plants um, are either... you know they've had such a useful life in their past lives really, because they're herbs, or they're used for construction – or these things, and I think I'd love to have an exhibition somewhere, like in our wall down here, I've got all the new windows on the verandah out here, um...an exhibition of the pest plants, but then what they were used for in the past and how you could use them creatively in the...like now. And this was fantastic because we were using willow – the willow suckles – and at the time, the winter, the new shoots were the most beautiful sort of, terracotta orangey colour. They were just fantastic. We started on the forms, we just made the forms separately, and um...we sort of didn't know how we were going to decorate it, it just sort of grew. And for three days I was driving everyone mad because I had a handful of the shoots with this beautiful colour, and I kept walking around with them, I'd go for drinks or coffee and 'Oh you've got your bloody things' and I thought 'They've got to go somewhere, they've got to go somewhere'. And once we'd got the basic form to a certain stage, it just fitted in, and I said 'There! They've got to go there' And I'll show you what happened, when they had – I'm getting sort of confused now, so they were this beautiful orange – and we were out feeding – well trying to – it didn't work very well, and the um...after the fires the blackberries grew like mad, and a lot of the suckers were making their way onto the roads, and you know the blackberry suckers are those beautiful you know, the burgundy colours and I thought blackberry colours
- F: With the red...
- I: And the orange colour, so I stripped a whole lot of these off and we put them in the spaces. So my contribution was that, and that, and the colour.
- F: Well yours was sort of a concept though, sort of to want to recycle something that was a pest but that was good once.
- I: Yes, to recycle the leaves. And there's, I mean, when I just said that I realized that I've had that up there for about 18 months, like willow, the inner-bark you get a beautiful pink

dye from the inner bark of willow, so um...you know there's all these things that I've dabbled with...

F: But you live amongst it...

I: I live amongst it, and...except for the last three years where the drought just took everything out of the um...like out of the paddocks – it just took all the...they were just so tired, the soil was tired – everything was tired. When the drought started in '97. '98 there was still a beauty in the drought. You know, like the colours and the wind, the way it put all the top soil up against the fences, and you know there was still wildflowers around, you know the ones that survived in the drought, and, um...then when the fires came the same thing – there was just the regeneration that took a long time because we didn't have any rain until, um...the October fires when...you know there was so much beauty in that.

F: So did you do anything with that?

I: Photos. I took photos. Yeah I didn't have any, I didn't have any film when the fire went through – well you couldn't see, we got surrounded by the fire. You know, look for the black beyond the...what not...Yes so I took a lot of photos during the drought and I took photos during the fires, but the actual fire I didn't have film and there was no way I was going to go into Omeo and ask them to send a film up from Bairnsdale, so I didn't take photos as the fire went through. We went through a really bad time, we lost a lot of cattle that Peter had in Omeo. A firestorm that came out of the sky and destroyed...we pitted 231 cows and calves, which was pretty awful. Couldn't take any photos there, but there's photos that others took...um...

F: So how did you handle that? Did your creative help in any way, do you think? In those sorts of times...

I: Um...the, I think...oh...I think what did help, see I couldn't – Vince's brother came through and saw all of this, and Craig who works for us – he saw the devastation, he thought the whole of Benamba had gone up. Um...and you know, people were lost, this is just seeing our cattle, and he fell to bits. Vince was the cattleman and he was trying to prop Bob up and I was handling the whole lot, so my outlet was taking all the photos, and I'd take not just scenes, but the leaves and close ups like that. And so...that would have been outlet taking all the photos – I took stacks of them. And so I had my camera the whole time and then something happened to the camera, somebody borrowed it and I don't know – must have put their finger in the back...

F: But it had done the therapy...

I: It had done the therapy. But then I bought um...a little one, a cheap one, about \$200 or something, one of those stretch ones. So that opened up another area, having the stretch – and then somebody pinched it! So, um, I thought well then I'd finished, because I was getting to the stage 'Oh I wish I had my old camera' because I had got to know it so well, you know how you fiddle with them and, um...and then, I took photos...that's right when it was the Snow Circus I took a fair few photos – oh no...I used the digital camera to take some photos. Oh I talk with my hands a lot and knock glasses over – um...and...the...so when it was stolen I just thought – the photos on it, had run its course, they weren't you know, it doesn't matter.

F: So where is the 'me' in farming for you? Or is that, are you, I mean a lot of women can be involved in the farm...

I: I am involved in the farm.

F: And that's your...

I: Yes. I was born on a farm, um...so farming's in my blood. Also it's nature, the environment. Um...my first book given to me by my neighbour – it was a wildflower book, and animals were my friends when I was a kid. With my Grandparents, and they had all the animals, they had sheep but Grandpa would milk the cows and I'd um...I had one favourite cow and she'd lie down and I'd curl up in her neck and go to sleep. So you know, there's all that connection to the land and the animals, so I've always had that. Also I love deserts, I love desert people. I'm living here, I mean as Vince said – 'You're thriving in this drought'.

F: Oh really?  
 I: Yeah...  
 F: So you mentioned you propped the family up...  
 I: Oh yeah, Vince, we haven't got any kids. Um...the, then...  
 F: But it's funny that the creative came out.  
 I: Straight away.  
 F: At the lowest time – wasn't it.  
 I: Yes. It was just that blackness and the...um, our hayshed – it was actually empty – the fire went through and we're in smoke for nearly five weeks, and the...so it was just smoke and everything was black. And here in the distance was the hayshed and it just looked like a better and better tent. You know, so um...I've always felt that the desert people um...some of them are so proud, and they're so...and some of their artwork is absolutely extraordinary but they survive in the desert. Like I've sort of been to North Africa and places like that, and it was you know, I tend to go back to that, if things get really bad I think well, we can survive because these people can survive every day in the desert, or without a lot around you. You understand what I'm saying? It's almost like a message to say 'Don't worry you'll survive! Here's the tent!'  
 F: (laughs)  
 I: You know, 'there are tents there!'  
 F: Did you take a photo of it?  
 I: Yes I did.  
 F: You've got a photo of it?  
 I: I have a photo of it somewhere...you know, it's just things like that. But then there was the sadness, it was six weeks before we heard a sound out of a calf, and it was six months before we heard a sound out of the cows. The state of it – they went through the shock of the fires – you know, it was a fire *storm* that went through that area. Um...yeah Peter would say it was painful – it was awful  
 F: So the cows just stopped mooing?  
 I: They stopped mooing.  
 F: With stress?  
 I: With stress, and shock.  
 F: So the new bit of life was a little calf mooing?  
 I: Well no it wasn't mooing, the new calf – it was just that we were feeding and they'd just walk and eat and look and move away. And this was months and months and months. And then when you think for a mountain cattleman, their house is their hut, and their garden's their paddock, and their family are their animals. And, you know, to see the effect on the men. They had someone from Fairfax media, but she wanted to interview Vince and myself, and we just couldn't do it. They'd taken six iconic photos that were taken in the past and they wanted to...um...they were doing interviews of people that were involved in these photos, to see where they were and what was happening in their lives and things like that, and um...anyway, there was this girl that came up, she was a filmmaker and we had Craig who was working for us, he was being interviewed because he was with Bob, and John Cooke, and they were in tears six years later. Just because of the...so, what I'm saying is that I've found I've had to hold all of that in. There's, I'm actually – I was on homeopathic drops to make myself cry. After all this time, because I can't cry. And until I cry – I mean one of the great things was looking at my books and thinking, 'Oh! I might be able to do something soon'. Um...  
 F: So maybe you don't need to cry, maybe you need to work.  
 I: Yes. I did cry, the other day – and then (laughs)...talking about this um...Vince did something the other day, he got a bit bossy, he doesn't do it very often but he did, and it was in the bank and I turned around and went '(makes gruffled noise)', and the girls there sort of pulled away, and it's a Pendergas trait – but...  
 F: So he was born in this area too? You've been...  
 I: Yes. 1830s or something.  
 F: This is his house?  
 I: No, no. We bought this. We actually leased the property, and we ended up buying this, the wool/beef crashed – the floor price...  
 F: Whichever one

- I: Yeah, beef had crashed, wool had crashed, and because we're beef and sheep 22 and a half percent interest. (laughs) That's why nothing's been done to the house, because then, that was the '90s, and um...yeah, but it was the....and there was just so many other...there's just a string of sadnesses, just in the area. Too many deaths.
- F: ...the people – the Omeo, who own it...one of the people working there said it's just the most horrific sights of animals in trees and being blown into trees.
- I: See that was Peter Fairthfull's cattle. See what happened was the fire went through, and there were two firestorms...
- F: So what are the dates we're talking?
- I: We're talking about '03, so this was...see we knew the fire was coming, because we knew on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January that we were in trouble, and it didn't hit until the 26<sup>th</sup> here, Omeo had two goes. So we were waiting, we were just waiting for it. Watching the dots on the map – but Peter, the fire went through but there were two fireballs that came from the mountains that came out of the sky, and collided. Just fireballs, and they landed in our paddock and blew the calves, the cows, through...we had our top cows and our top heffer calves in what we thought was the safest paddock, you know there's not much shortest grass and fairly bare paddock. The fireballs came out of the sky and into the paddock and blew the cows and the calves plus the ones in the next paddock through three fences and across the road, to another fence. And um...it was...about 3,000 degrees or something. It killed about 59 straight out, but the rest were...some of them were just brain dead. One – 12 bullets and she was still standing, her brain was just dead. She couldn't die. You know, so there was all this, and the same thing happened with Peter, but his cattle – blew them up in the trees...Peter ended up in Hospital, and Christina – I don't know how she did it. She was half an hour later on the 7:30 Report, I don't know how she did it.
- F: What, you're talking about being interviewed?
- I: Mm. I don't know how she did it.
- F: Is this an unheard of thing to happen, these fire balls? I've never heard of them.
- I: What happens, if you've got a huge build up of litter, and undergrowth with eucalypts you've got oil, and you know the fire starts and what actually happens is they crown. Instead of being fire on the ground, they hit the treetops and they crown and when they crown they create their own huge energy, so they end up in balls like this, and they'll just...
- F: Balls of eucalypts – embers sort of...
- I: And fire. And generate huge heat.
- F: And is that relevant to this area, because of the amazing landscape...?
- I: To forest areas...
- F: And the flat plain...
- I: Well see with the plains, you know how fast they travel – Grampian fast, and it's a similar thing where it's on the ground.
- F: So your head's been with this, for the last ten years?
- I: Yeah, but the other thing...don't...it sounds dreadful...(tape cuts)

**END OF RECORDING  
END OF TRANSCRIPTION**

Facilitator: How did you start?  
Interviewee: I'd always been interested in jewellery making and silversmithing even when I was at school and didn't pursue that.

Facilitator: So, school being Melbourne?  
Interviewee: School being Melbourne, you know, you became a nurse or a teacher or whatever and you didn't pursue art type things, so I put that in the background. I trained as a physio teacher.

Facilitator: Okay.  
Interviewee: Yes, so I understand how important play is. But I didn't do any art stuff until I retired and thought - I retired ten years ago and thought, oh, you know, I have done things but I really want to get back and do some art.

Facilitator: So you did art originally?  
Interviewee: No, I didn't.  
Facilitator: No?  
Interviewee: I did physical education.  
Facilitator: Yes, so you've never been in arts before?  
Interviewee: I haven't been in arts before.  
Facilitator: So what made it art?  
Interviewee: I've always made things and I've always enjoyed what other people have done and I have actually - in my job I worked with the National Fitness Council in Life. Be In it. and the Department of Sport and Recreation. Part of their brief was to involve people in recreation and art was sort of on the fringe of recreation.

So I used to run things like ski camps and camps for kids at the beach, but also, occasionally, art camps, and the joy on people's faces when they had participated for a week was all the reward I ever wanted.

Facilitator: Really?  
Interviewee: Oh, absolutely. It was wonderful.  
Facilitator: So through seeing that when you were up here you thought - I'll do it.  
Interviewee: Yes. Yes I knew the joy they got. I enjoyed it as well and look, sure a bit of it is just in me, but just to make and get the joy from making and see other people get the same joy was important.

Facilitator: So you exhibit?  
Interviewee: Only a very little bit. I have just I local bits and pieces and as a student, but not hugely.

Facilitator: Is that an aim or is it just something that has happened?  
Interviewee: No, not necessarily and I am quite happy when it happens because I again enjoy the sharing with the other artists and the getting together.

Facilitator: It is such a big part of this, isn't it, the social interaction?  
Interviewee: The social interaction - the not being in isolation - the making in isolation is fine but to have some interaction with others is important for me.

Facilitator: So the value for you in art is?  
Interviewee: Personal value in the making because I get a great kick out of making something, but I also enjoy seeing what others make and sharing knowledge of materials and new directions and stretching into new territory and putting what I see somebody else do. I think, oh, yes, well now I've seen puppets, okay, what - it might be something I can extend what I am doing into another sphere.

So it is always, it is a growing thing.  
Facilitator: And your family support you on this?

Interviewee: I haven't got a big family and my partner - ex-partner, cum partner again, very complex it is. He has got a good eye for putting things together. He is a stonemason, so I enjoy what he does.

Facilitator: Okay. So he's not a farmer? You are not farmers here; it is a big farm?

Interviewee: We have a farm we have planted trees.

Facilitator: Blue gums, is it?

Interviewee: Well and firewood log trees for timbers and things of that nature.

Facilitator: Okay.

Interviewee: Neither of us were keen on farming animals. We are both vegetarian. We don't believe farming animals is the right thing to do so trees is what we do.

Facilitator: Tree farmer?

Interviewee: Tree farmers, yes we are tree farmers, yes.

Facilitator: So what made you come out here, and work from - tree change?

Interviewee: I was living in Wang, just love the land, being in the space, being in nature, being out in it, being free. Yes, beautiful and being inspired by nature too.

Facilitator: Okay.

Interviewee: Just, well, look at your tree. What a beautiful tree you've wrapped up. That's nature doing its thing. It doesn't matter where it is on its journey. There are - nature is just extraordinary.

Facilitator: By highlighting it?

Interviewee: By highlighting it and you mentioned Andy Goldsworthy earlier.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: Oh, wow, you know, using nature to its utmost, just...

Facilitator: I know, have you seen the book *The Wall*, there is one *The Wall*?

Interviewee: Oh yes, I have.

Facilitator: It goes into the walk and then comes back out, he says.

Interviewee: I have, yes. I actually photocopied something of his today. Oh well, photocopied, I went to the library, but I didn't - that's his creation on the front. It's only a small thing, that's not his book, no.

Facilitator: There's a book on...

Interviewee: No, no.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: But this, the fellow who wrote the book is obviously, you know, a nature enthusiast and environmentalist and so forth. But that was just a beautiful depiction of...

Facilitator: So do you do this sort of art, this sort of ephemeral sort of stuff?

Interviewee: Yes, I do a little bit of that, yes.

Facilitator: A mixture of everything, what as you say, whatever you...

Interviewee: A mixture. Yes whatever I - I love finding things in nature and putting it together. But I can use, you know, rusty bits of metal and sticks and...

Facilitator: So what do you do when you are not doing art? Is it just work or do you work on the farm?

Interviewee: I work on the land, yes, try and keep things going there and work two days at the gallery.

Facilitator: So how much time is for your art, sort of again?

Interviewee: Just at the moment, not enough. I hope next year I can get back and be serious about it. I have just finished my Visual Arts Diploma so I have done my jewellery making and then my visual arts. So I have been a part time student for ten years.

Facilitator: Tell me about it.

Interviewee: Old students.

Facilitator: It's great.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: We are the only ones that are clogging up the university I think.

Interviewee: Well this is why I am so cross about the change in the fees at the TAFE because it's keeping the likes - it's going to keep the likes of me - people who have done their hard yards, have brought up families have worked



now have a chance to choose, mightn't have the money to be able to do the thing they really want to do.

I find that catastrophic and I don't know how you get around - convince the Government that they are going to have more people in their books requiring mental care by doing this, taking this path, and I just don't understand why they are doing it.

Facilitator: So you really believe that? Where did you get that concept, that idea from, sort of do you think personally or is it...

Interviewee: Because personally being able to go to somewhere like the TAFE and get involved in what's doing, be challenged and share ideas was - yes, look, I am sure it saved me at times. I am sure it did and I am sure the others, there are many others that are the same.

You can see what they gain. It's a commitment. It's a place that they are like-minded people. It pushes them - it loses you from your daily problems and allows your mind to be at ease.

Facilitator: We were just discussing that with Helen that, you now when you live in the moment is when something - three hours have gone by

Interviewee: Oh, exactly.

Facilitator: You can either be reading a book or painting or gardening.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: But it is a creative process that you get lost in and time flies and then you know you have been there.

Interviewee: And then you know you have been there.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: And if you haven't got something to get lost in, if you haven't got something that is sometimes pushing you because your problems are too big and they overwhelm you and if you haven't got that outlet and maybe a timetable sometimes, there's - oh yes I've got to go to TAFE today. Even if I don't want to go, I'll go and then you are lost again in this, the relief.

Facilitator: So, art loses you?

Interviewee: Art loses you, yes.

Facilitator: That's a nice thing, isn't it?

Interviewee: Yes, allows you - yes allows - it is a survival thing and it's just the women I see, it's only because there's not many blokes there. Where are the blokes? I don't know. What are they doing?

Facilitator: Well I think because it's a farming area the blokes have their expression in the land. I mean they are sculpturing and they are ploughing, they're burning and they're digging. That's their, you know, that's their male - that's their...

Interviewee: That's their...

Facilitator: That's their expression sort of thing. They...

Interviewee: Mmm...

Facilitator: You know, it's primal. It's sort of primal out there on the land as such.

Interviewee: Does that release enough of their creative - I mean ploughing a paddock?

Facilitator: Yes, I don't know. Well doing the crops or your breeding programs and things like that is a creative, I would have thought. You may not, well not an aesthetic thing I guess.

Interviewee: Yes, but do men need an aesthetic thing to...

Facilitator: Maybe men don't need it. That's what - maybe men don't need it. It's the women that have this aesthetic...

Interviewee: Need?

Facilitator: Yes I've never looked at that actually.

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: That it's more it comes into that nurturing sort of side of things.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: And men maybe being the hunter-gatherer that's, you know, that's their side.

Interviewee: That's enough for them and maybe they are a bit more single-minded in doing the one thing. I think our multi-tasking allows us to switch and pick up things and put them down and yes.

Facilitator: So it'll be interesting to, yes, partly is to make it visible that the women doing the cake or whatever. They need to do it, you know, it's not just nurturing the family or something. It's a natural primal thing that they need to do, is to express themselves through cooking and preserving.

Interviewee: Yes, beautiful art. There's a...

Facilitator: So I'm looking forward to someone who does amazing preserves, like more than just preserving, making that special again.

Interviewee: Oh yes but making it - yes.

Facilitator: Like amazing.

Interviewee: Yes, your show societies would be a good way of catching up with some of those, yes.

Facilitator: Yes, so I'll do that eventually. But I thought, oh look I'll start this way first because I don't think - some women won't be part of a group or won't come in. They are finding survival out there and they won't respond unless you get out there and really knock on their door. I think that, and that's - well that's proved today with this Helen, you know, would never have - she wouldn't have sort of come out, you know, and let me - she just wouldn't have been part of it. It's just not something - she reads or...

Interviewee: Yes, wow.

Facilitator: So it needs someone to ring up and say, oh she's coming, from the - from that shop. I went to art...

Interviewee: Oh Shades of Art, yes.

Facilitator: Yes, she's terrific. You know she said, oh no there's lots of mad people coming in here doing things.

Interviewee: Yes there's people doing...

Facilitator: I didn't even get to TAFE because I had to whizz out here to do her and I lost my way so many times. So, yes, it's I have to get back to...

Interviewee: So there's women doing the mosaics, there's somebody up in the Warbys there doing mosaics and a lady I met...

Facilitator: Well I need these women to come back up again, I think.

Interviewee: Yes. There's a lady and I am not sure whether she grew - I am sure she's been on the land. But I met her for the first time about three months ago, she makes dolls and she dresses them and makes - I couldn't believe there were hundreds of them.

Facilitator: Is she on a property?

Interviewee: She's on a small property now, but she's - I don't know how long she's been there. She's moved from somewhere else and I don't know whether the somewhere else was a farm.

Facilitator: Okay.

Interviewee: But she's in her 70s now. She'd be 75, I think.

Facilitator: Do you think these women would be open to someone coming and photographing them and having to fill forms out and stuff like that?

Interviewee: I think so. I think so. I just went round there. She rang me one day to say, oh she'd been here. I've got a plant that you might like, come and see if it - yes right. I had not met her before and two hours later I had seen her whole doll collection.

Facilitator: Would she be open to me, I mean I can stay up there another night, actually I am thinking, if I can get a lot, you know, more people, I'll stay up here and photograph three or four more.

Interviewee: I imagine she would be delighted. I could ring her. I've only met her the once.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: But I could ring her and say I have this lady who would be interested in chatting with you. She's looking for people who do different things.

Facilitator: Yes, that would be great, because I can't approach people. As I have said it has to come from other people.

Interviewee: It has to come from somebody else. Now, I don't know whether she has - I am sure she must have come off a farm. I am sure she must have come off a farm, but I actually don't know that.

Facilitator: Okay. But this time I am not being that funnelled yet to say, look no one in cities, only country people. At the moment it's a mixture of both really, because it's still isolated outside a regional town on a few acres sort of thing.

Interviewee: Oh it can be hugely isolated.

Facilitator: Yes, and to get a cross section of ages and see that lady down at Benalla who does the dolls houses and she's 100, you know, I'd love to get onto her too.

Interviewee: Oh yes.

Facilitator: So, if I can get three more people I'll stay another day. If you know of any others that - I'm just wondering who is the mosaic one that you said.

Interviewee: Yes, I know, I actually don't know her name, I just know she's up in the Warbys somewhere; I can't put you onto her.

Facilitator: I mean maybe not and I'll come back, but while the opportunity is here I might -have a think. I am sorry, I am taking all...

Interviewee: That's okay, I haven't read anything and yes. No, that's fine.

Facilitator: It's just a heap of paperwork to do, that's fine. Yes, I was even hoping to maybe do a blog next year, so people could follow where I am going around Victoria sort of thing. I have to re-submit it too. So, yes, I'd be here.

Interviewee: And that, that's right. Paperwork complete. More water, or would you like a wine?

Facilitator: I might have a wine. It's been a long day.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

Ann Rowe: Stick them on randomly, that's what I've done. So was this in the paper?  
Julie: That was in the *Weekly Times* too, about a year ago.  
Ann Rowe: Yeah, I thought I'd seen it, yeah.  
Julie: Probably two years ago now, in a way. They've been a great support of what I've done.  
Ann Rowe: You don't know a girl Healey? Her and her husband go overseas and do all things like this.  
Julie: No. She's on a farm nearby?  
Ann Rowe: No, they're overseas at the moment; they get a lot of work over there but they started off here in Victoria.  
Julie: Yeah? No look, I've done five [barbed wire balls], that's it. I'll move - I'm on the trees at this moment, and now I really enjoy the photography aspect of it. I just like getting in the car and touring around and meeting and seeing the stories.  
Ann Rowe: I love touring around, going to all the op-shops because all my quilts are all recycled fabrics and doilies and all things like that from op-shops.  
Julie: So, going back, how did you get involved in - what made - what is inspiring or where did it all come from?  
Ann Rowe: Well, we moved back here. Alan was born here.  
Julie: Oh, gosh.  
Ann Rowe: But then he came to Melbourne and we had our family. We moved here 20 years ago when he got crook.  
Julie: Oh, when he got crook you moved out here?  
Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
Julie: Oh, okay.  
Ann Rowe: Moved back here, this was his grandfather's house.  
Julie: Okay.  
Ann Rowe: We were busy doing it up and then we'd finished doing it up. That was it when we moved up here; we had a lot to do.  
Julie: [Laughs]  
Ann Rowe: I was sort of really lost; what will I do? So I started woodcarving.  
Julie: You hadn't done that before?  
Ann Rowe: No, and it's a lady teacher. She's a really good friend now. So I've been doing it for 20 years, I've made lots of furniture.  
Julie: So is that where your love lies? Or what is it?  
Ann Rowe: No, it's everything.  
Julie: So you had no background in art at all?  
Ann Rowe: No.  
Julie: So you're here, you're about to live in this house up there.  
Ann Rowe: No electricity, no water, no toilet, possums in the roof, beehives in the wall. [Laughs]  
Julie: No children here.  
Ann Rowe: No, although we've got a son back here now. But then, no. We left them all in Melbourne. They wouldn't leave home so we came back here and left them down there.  
Julie: So what made you come out here?  
Ann Rowe: Because Alan was born here.  
Julie: So he's born and then he got sick so you thought this would be the...  
Ann Rowe: Yeah, he wanted to come back. He's always wanted to come back.  
Julie: Right, so you're here.

Ann Rowe: So then I started sewing and then I started knitting and then I started saving oh, I'm going to do mosaics, so I started saving tiles and every time you go to the op-shop, you pick up a bright plate.

Julie: Drop it on the floor.

Ann Rowe: Yeah. I only started it about two years ago. I just saved and saved and saved. Same with everything. I've saved every match that I've ever struck; I've saved every cork from every bottle I've ever opened.

Julie: Because you might need it sometime?

Ann Rowe: Yeah. I'm inspired by you with your tree; I think I'm going to hang corks from a tree. But other things - I haven't really worked that out yet.

Julie: One lady said that there's a tree that people hang their thongs on. The thong tree.

Ann Rowe: Oh, yeah.

Julie: Have you seen that?

Ann Rowe: No, but I've seen a picture of it.

Julie: Yeah, I must go and have a look at that too.

Ann Rowe: I just needed things to do.

Julie: So what value do you put on your art, what value do you put on it? What role does it play for you?

Ann Rowe: Keeps me sane.

Julie: Really? Do you see it like that?

Ann Rowe: Yeah, you do. Sometimes you feel a bit lonely and you just start to do things and you forget about your problems and I just get such a thrill out of when it's finished. Everyone says, oh isn't that lovely, make me one.

Julie: So you show your work?

Ann Rowe: Just mainly to family and friends.

Julie: What do they say of you? I mean, what has it done to your sense of self?

Ann Rowe: Oh, it gives you a real boost, yeah.

Julie: Your husband, is he supportive of it?

Ann Rowe: He thinks I'm a bit mad, with the tank.

Julie: Well, you know you're on track when they say that, don't you? It's sort of like a compliment a little bit, that you're not a normal - the expected woman. Is that part of it, or not, would you say?

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: So he's supportive, but just...

Ann Rowe: Yeah, he is, yeah.

Julie: He brings home stuff for you?

Ann Rowe: We're always out together, so he's never out on his own to bring it home, but no. No, I find it all myself.

Julie: What do you look for? What is it that you see? Like, when I go out, I look for multiples of something. Things that I could get a lot of, like a lot of barbed wire, or a lot of bales.

Ann Rowe: No, I look for doilies and I look for belts because I make bags. This is a doily quilt. It hasn't been put together yet.

Julie: So where did you get the idea of using doilies?

Ann Rowe: I saw a picture in a magazine once and it wasn't like this, it was all coloured and had a few doilies sewn onto it. I just thought, oh...

Julie: What a lovely idea. I haven't seen anything like that.

Ann Rowe: Well, I've got a finished one if you want to see that?

Julie: Yeah, we'll get that out later and we'll take some photos.

Ann Rowe: This is all Japanese material. I'm as passionate about a tablecloth for two dollars. I buy dressing gowns with dragons on the back and I just cut them up and make them into...

Julie: So do you sell them?

Ann Rowe: I've got a few orders lately but I usually just give them...

Julie: From the op-shop, a cushion - a picture.

Ann Rowe: An embroidery and I've made it into a cushion. That was an embroidery and I've made it into a handbag. This bag is full of - I do a market once a year.

Julie: Oh okay, where do you go? Which market?

Ann Rowe: Pomonal. They have a flower show once a year and an art show, and they have big markets so that is just full of...

Julie: Ready to go.

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: When is the market?

Ann Rowe: In September.

Julie: Okay, so that's a fair way...

Ann Rowe: So when I first came here I had no fabric, I had no wool and now I've got a whole wardrobe full of material and a whole wardrobe full of wool. I'll just get the finished quilt and bring it out.

Julie: Just as I am about the tank and the woodcarving. It's all...

Ann Rowe: You're equally passionate about everything.

Julie: Yeah.

Julie: I might just take a photo. As we talk, I might just - it's not. Oh gosh, look at that.

Ann Rowe: It's not etched yet but this is all from the op-shop.

Julie: Oh, I love the dragon.

Ann Rowe: The backing is a quilt from the op-shop but that was on the back of a dressing gown. These were place mats. That's another dressing gown.

Julie: That's stunning. So do you have the best and - the latest one is the best one, I guess. The one you've done...

Ann Rowe: The one I did before this had a black dragon. All of them I tried to put a dragon in the middle but that - they're not usually as big as that.

Julie: Right. If you - stay in it, stay looking at it if you could and then we'll - it gives me something - and if you could maybe look...

Ann Rowe: Anything I buy as a wadding.

Julie: This here, the wadding, this here. So it's all machine, it's all machine stitched?

Ann Rowe: Yep, yep. You're going to be here all day.

Julie: Alright. Oh, I like the cat on it. Puss, puss.

Ann Rowe: Coco.

Julie: That's good, that's terrific. I'll put that - I'll and oh, we'll put that one away?

Ann Rowe: If you could help me fold it.

Julie: Terrific. I actually might get you with the chairs there too. Oh, gosh, can you hold it up just as you were doing it then, Ann, just up high so I can actually get - and I might move - if you move, just to your left so I can get a little bit of the chair in the front and something else that you've been doing. You'll get used to the camera by the end of the day.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, look at that.

Julie: Some of them are just so exquisite.

Ann Rowe: Oh, so they're not squares. You've actually...

Julie: No, I try and do each one a little bit different. Look at these ones.

Ann Rowe: Gorgeous old lace. Cat, cat. Hello. Ann, if you want to just look up?

Julie: [Cat meows] Oh, I know, what's mummy doing? Yeah. Oh, that was a great idea, doilies.

Ann Rowe: I've seen Japanese quilts but I haven't seen the doily ones.

Julie: No.

Ann Rowe: So the inspiration comes from magazines.

Julie: Well, some of it, yeah, but I try to change it and do my own thing, I don't copy.

Ann Rowe: So you don't know what it looks like to begin with, you just keep - you draw it up, or...

Julie: No.

Ann Rowe: No? You just start.

Julie: Yeah. Beautiful.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Julie: I've got enough doilies to do about four more quilts.

Ann Rowe: Okay. The one with the people in it, this little one with the people?

Julie: I've made three or four of them, gollywog ones.

Julie: Gollywog ones, okay, and no training. You didn't go to a hobby class?  
 Ann Rowe: No.  
 Julie: To do the people or anything. Like this is lovely, these little...  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, I didn't - that's actually a panel I bought and I've just quilted around the edge of it.  
 Julie: Oh, okay, and these ones?  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, that's knitting. [Laughs] I've got five grandchildren, so you start off by doing one for every one of them. Oh that's one of the little girls.  
 Julie: Did you make the outfit, did you?  
 Ann Rowe: No - oh yeah I did make that one.  
 Julie: Yeah, okay. You didn't make those, did you?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: Do you?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: Do you sell those? I've seen them - no?  
 Ann Rowe: No, I couldn't put a price on a woodcarving.  
 Julie: I thought - yeah...  
 Ann Rowe: Like, it's a year to do a chair because I only go a couple of hours a week.  
 Julie: Yeah? So...  
 Ann Rowe: So in 20 years I've made...  
 Julie: Put your hand back on it. That was...  
 Ann Rowe: ...about 20 different things. Bed head and do you want to photograph this?  
 Julie: There's a bed head in here too that you did, way back here was it? That one.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: Yeah, have you got that bellows...  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, just come in here on the wall. Might be better if you do it on the wall, where they are.  
 Julie: Oh, okay.  
 [Audio cuts]  
 Ann Rowe: ...I don't like getting my photo taken.  
 Julie: What about this mural?  
 Ann Rowe: I didn't do that one, I was given it, but I've done a couple similar...  
 [Audio cuts]  
 Ann Rowe: ...can't show you these ones and stay in it. It's alright, he's dead, he won't hear us.  
 Julie: He's dead. So how much of the time is spent - like do you have to do any farm work or anything like that?  
 Ann Rowe: No.  
 Julie: That's all.  
 Ann Rowe: No, we haven't got...  
 Julie: Any stock?  
 Ann Rowe: It's all bush.  
 Julie: Okay, so your role I guess is a carer, is it, now?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: And what, you're off to the doctor's frequently and stuff like that?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: He won't be able to hear us, I'm not - we're not...  
 Ann Rowe: No. No, and that's our baby emus.  
 Julie: Oh, you've got some baby emus?  
 Ann Rowe: There's eight or nine babies there. They're in the bush but they come up here quite often.  
 Julie: Oh really.  
 Ann Rowe: We've got 70 acres but it's all bush.  
 Julie: Right, and you love it?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, I do. I was a bit worried when I first came up because I left work and I left Melbourne and all my friends but I just love it, yep.  
 Julie: So this afternoon's your class for chair making and you're doing another set?

Ann Rowe: Another two, so I'll have six.  
 Julie: Of these ones, or of the padded ones.  
 Ann Rowe: The pad - the uh...  
 Julie: Actually, can you just drag that around to...  
 Ann Rowe: I was going to do six of them but then I decided to do one of these, and I thought, well, I'll do two of them. I'll take these off now; they don't look very nice on it.  
 Julie: If you sit in one, sit in one, Ann, and...  
 Ann Rowe: Now I've got two finished, I'm wondering if I'll do eight because I can fit eight around the table.  
 Julie: So that will be your biggest project that you've done, your chairs?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, yep.  
 Julie: Oh, okay. I'll just put - actually I might - you were working on this when I came, were you?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, that's white quilt.  
 Julie: This sort of - though I'm not particularly arranging anything, as I said, it's purely sort of documentary, whatever exists, exists. So your art is your sanity?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: What support do you get, I mean, what is your support? Your children or is it the community? Is it just your art? I mean, is it a lonely sort of...  
 Ann Rowe: The children are very good but I don't get any support from the community as such, I don't need any.  
 Julie: No, right. So it's not a matter of couple of times a week that you all get together as six women or something.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, there is a group that I go to every Tuesday afternoon, yeah. We just sit and do our own thing.  
 Julie: Right. I guess my - why I'm specifically looking at people on the land and away from communities in a way, is because I think it brings out that need. I think it's a really unique situation when women living on farms and properties, a distance from other people. I think it's quite amazing. I've got a neighbour who really has very little expression of her own; she's in a very male sort of farming unit. It's on the heather with the husband, and it's cooking breakfast, lunch and dinner. Run around, get parts for the tractor and can you go and get - she's just like a - you know, she has no expression at all.  
 Ann Rowe: No. See, I didn't when the kiddies were little because I was like that. You were busy running backwards...  
 Julie: Well I think children are different because it is an expression of yourself a bit.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, but you never had a minute to yourself.  
 Julie: Yeah.  
 Ann Rowe: So I really appreciated it when we came up here and I had time to start doing...  
 Julie: What did you come up here thinking you'd do? I mean, you're obviously selling and your husband wants to move up and you think, well, what's going to happen to me? Did you ever think, oh, well I'll get stuck in or you arrived and it inspired you up here, all the...  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah. I didn't have any preconceived ideas, I just go with the flow and after we'd finished doing the house up and doing the gardening, what am I going to do now?  
 Julie: Did the environment...  
 Ann Rowe: Motivate?  
 Julie: Inspire? Not really, it was your psychological state of loneliness and you didn't know anyone in the town or anything like that initially?  
 Ann Rowe: No, but we're only up here a few weeks when I rang about these classes and started up the woodcarving so I started to make friends straight away.  
 Julie: Okay. What a mighty feat, I mean, they'll last forever, won't they?  
 Ann Rowe: Everyone says, you're not using them are you? And I say well, what's the point in making them if you're not going to use them?



Julie: A table's going to be the next thing.  
Ann Rowe: No, because this was grandmother's and we're not going to get rid of this, but you can do tables at the class. Yeah, but it's too big a job.

Julie: And the wood, you select the wood? Or they...  
Ann Rowe: No, it's mahogany, it comes from America and it comes pre-cut into whatever pattern you're going to do so this was in about 12 pieces, you can see where they're joined.

Julie: You joined it or does it come there?  
Ann Rowe: No I didn't actually, the teacher puts them together. You do each piece separate and then she gets them put together and I didn't do the upholstery either. I sanded them and polished them. It's really just the carving.

Julie: So how many people in this area do it, go down and do it with you?  
Ann Rowe: When I started there was about 20 in the class, that was in Stawell, and she's moved back to Pomonal now because she lives out here and there's only two at the moment. Everyone wants to do it and they come and look it, oh yeah, we're going to join up but yes, it's really fallen off, which is a shame.

Julie: What do you put that down to? Just other commitments, or it's just too hard?  
Ann Rowe: It's not too hard, it's pretty expensive.

Julie: Bringing the wood in and then buying the...  
Ann Rowe: Then buying the kit, yeah. I don't really know because everybody that does or has come in the time I've been going has been so enthusiastic like myself.

Julie: Your kids will have this in hundreds of years time, it will be passed on.  
Ann Rowe: How they are going to divide it up, I wonder, but it's not my problem.

Julie: Maybe you could carve an initial on each chair, and in the end...  
Ann Rowe: Well, I've done them all wedding presents, like they've all got stools and mirrors and wine tables. I've carved on the bottom of it their names and the date they got married and the year that I carved it and all that.

Julie: How gorgeous. So where do you see your work going, more chairs?  
Ann Rowe: Where does it go or you just hope something will inspire you, you'll look at another magazine just like all of us, I guess.

Ann Rowe: Well, the woodcarvings, she's got pictures of all the things you can make but I don't know whether I want to - I think I've done 20 years of it, when I finish my chairs I'm not really sure. I want to do new things. Like I want to do those masks, [Meryl] has been out here and she's really inspired me.

Julie: Yeah, they're superb. She's obviously entering competitions and things because she was...

Ann Rowe: I just keep getting new ideas like the op-shop the other day; I picked these up for 40 cents. I'm going to cover them in beads, just because I can, to make them look spectacular.

Julie: Then your grandchildren will say, I want to wear that. It'll be quite a stunning, rich, jewelly thing, won't it?  
Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: But where will you get your beads from? Any way you've been able to find - oh right, you've got them all. [Laughs]

Ann Rowe: These are beads.  
Julie: That's a good idea, isn't it?  
Ann Rowe: I just keep getting - this is another op-shop buy I'm doing. People don't finish things, they buy them and these kits are expensive, and they don't finish them. There's only that much done on it. When it's finished, that will all be covered with embroidery. I can't leave it there for a dollar, I've got to bring it home and do it. I've got boxes of things that I've got to finish.

Julie: Right, see I go to tips.  
Ann Rowe: Yeah...

Julie: Tips and stuff more than...  
Ann Rowe: I go to tips too, yeah, but you're into the...

Julie: More hard - the welding side of things, that doesn't interest you in that heavy sort of...

Ann Rowe: No, but I might get started on smaller things. We've got all the equipment in the shed, I could - I could do.

Julie: Yeah, that's the thing. I mean, my husband had all the MIC welders and everything, I think well - and then he'd get really angry if I took all his tools and didn't bring them back.

At one stage I was collecting the 44 gallon drums and I'd angle grind the tops of them off and then angle grind down, cut them in half and then ride over the ute and flatten them out. Then cut them into squares, angle grind them into squares and then stitch them up with [unclear] quilts. All the beautiful colours on them when they've been rusted.

So like - oh, they're unusual, what are they? What are they?

Ann Rowe: Oh, that one's got it on there, just sitting on...

Julie: Oh, just things like this?

Ann Rowe: Yes. Crocheting cotton and beads and you use wire to knit with, as your knitting needles, it has to be really, really fine.

Julie: You just plonk them on top of anything?

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: Oh, okay, I'll take a few...now if you sit on that chair there, I might line these up in front of you.

Ann Rowe: Well, I'll put a few more little things in.

Julie: Yeah. So where - did you see this in an art...

Ann Rowe: I did go to a class for that.

Julie: So where did you get the tops from of these?

Ann Rowe: You buy them in craft shops, they're not op-shops, and they are not cheap either.

Julie: Oh.

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: So this chair's soon to go.

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: This chair here.

Ann Rowe: So much around, but when I come to find it, I...

Julie: There's all the corks that you did.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, well, that's not all of them.

Julie: So it's going to be a cork tree, do you think?

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: In what way, just hang them off it like a tree in the paddock here?

Ann Rowe: I'll think of other things to add, it won't be just corks.

Julie: What about gardening? You said...

Ann Rowe: Yeah, I like gardening but I can't do much at the moment. I do a lot of succulents, I've got hundreds and hundreds of succulents because I sell those at the market too. So I collect teapots, saucepans, anything I can put a plant in, from the op-shop, put holes in - well, my husband puts the holes in, but I - do you want to have a look at those too?

Julie: Yeah, I do.

Ann Rowe: Anything. Anything that...

Julie: Are they outside?

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: Yeah?

Ann Rowe: I'll just put my shoes on.

Julie: It's amazing how time, as you say, once you get involved and I think this is - that's when you know you're living in the now, is when you get involved and time just flies.

Ann Rowe: That's right, yeah.

Julie: It's like a good book, I suppose, in a way, but particularly art or gardening or something, when you sort of - three hours later you go, oh my God! I think you've actually lived in the now.

Will the emus come over? What time do they come, at dusk I guess, do they?

Ann Rowe: Oh, they might be here every day for a week and then you mightn't see them again for a few weeks. That - that pot is just beautiful, this white one. I saw that at the op-shop one day and I looked in the bottom of it and it had this chip, so I left it there. When I got home I thought, oh, why didn't I get it for a pot plant? I went back and of course, it was gone. A few weeks later I went to a fete and there it was.

Julie: Oh, because someone bought it not realising it had a crack in it.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, that's right, and the lady thought I was buying it to use and she said, oh it's cracked dear, I've got some better ones here if you want them.

Julie: Did you tell her the story?

Ann Rowe: I said, no, no, I want it because of the fish on it, I think it's beautiful.

Julie: Yeah. Can you just go in the back and I'll photograph you with it.

Ann Rowe: This was found at the tip.

Julie: The what, the...

Ann Rowe: This pot.

Julie: Right.

[Cat meows]

Ann Rowe: I'll just have a look at the pot plants here.

Julie: Come on, you're not being left out. Puss, puss. So the grandchildren come up a fair bit?

Ann Rowe: Yes, they do.

Julie: They must love it here. Wonderland.

Ann Rowe: We had Christmas out here, we had another big table and we all sat around. There was 26 of us.

Julie: Did you make that?

Ann Rowe: No.

Julie: Oh, you didn't.

Ann Rowe: No. See, that was a teapot.

Julie: Right.

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: It's a rather nice teapot, isn't it? Oh yes. So you'll sell them with it in, with the...

Ann Rowe: Mmm...

Julie: That's a great idea, isn't it?

Ann Rowe: It's hard to put the bulbs in them when they're on the ground, I think, well if they crack I'll use them on the tank.

Julie: Oh that's... [Laughs]

Ann Rowe: Some little jugs. You want me to put a few nice ones there.

Julie: Yeah, that might be nice.

Ann Rowe: Because there's a lot of ordinary ones.

Julie: Yeah, the ones that you're proud of. Arts had never played a major role in your life at all before then?

Ann Rowe: No.

Julie: You didn't know how exciting it is.

Ann Rowe: I did a bit of sewing and knitting but only because I had to for the children, not because I enjoyed it.

Julie: Hello chook, chook. Those Isaac Brown's are terrific layers, aren't they?

Ann Rowe: They're great. We buy them from the Green Egg chook farm. They get rid of them at 12 months old.

Julie: I know.

Ann Rowe: They are still laying. Four dollars each.

Julie: Where's the Green...

Ann Rowe: It's in Great Western. The Green Egg.

Julie: Okay, because we're looking for a couple and there's a guy in the show who comes from Maryborough who has them too. But okay...

Ann Rowe: They only - they put an ad in the paper once a year; they only get rid of them once a year.

Julie: Okay.

Ann Rowe: I've got some nice white teapots, will I bring them here?

Julie: No, we'll go over there. We'll just do a few of these. Hello chook, chook.

Ann Rowe: That's it, stay there with them. You'll get used to it, it's...  
 Julie: [Laughs] You reckon?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah. Okay, right. So it's all succulents?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah. This was what I first started mosaic, just to practise the glue to use. A lot of the glues I used didn't work, so you can see some of them falling off. But I eventually worked out what to use.  
 Julie: So what are these for other than just shape? Practising things are they?  
 Ann Rowe: You're not going to put succulents in them or anything?  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, I might. I did actually have pot plants standing in them but then I forgot to...  
 Julie: This?  
 Ann Rowe: I bought that at the op-shop.  
 Julie: As it is?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: That's interesting, isn't it?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah. This is all my tiles and broken crockery. It's where I store it all.  
 Julie: You said everyone thinks of you every time they...  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, all my friends have given me broken chipped things. Now they come up and say, oh, that's my plate that I gave you and oh, that's my coffee mug and I even get given antiques because they've got cracks in them that - that's a really good...  
 Julie: Okay, if you go in, I'll stay out and get a bit of the sun on there.  
 Ann Rowe: These mugs.  
 Julie: Okay, will we wander up and have a look at your tank? This is your husband's shed or yours?  
 Ann Rowe: My husband's and my son have both got...  
 Julie: Oh, so your son is up here, you said. Is he living on the property?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, he works in Stawell. He's been back here about eight years.  
 Julie: Okay, is that good?  
 Ann Rowe: Yes, it is.  
 Julie: Comfortable for you?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, and he helps us a lot now, we need help around the place. But we were nearly burnt out four years ago.  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: We actually lost the little house, there's - come down. It's really...  
 Julie: Look at that lovely Lemon [centre]. Isn't that lovely?  
 Ann Rowe: It's just got so tall. We've got 70 acres and 70 of it burnt in the bushfires.  
 Julie: 70 of it burnt, the whole lot burnt basically, except for the house?  
 Ann Rowe: This house.  
 Julie: Were you here?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, we couldn't get out and no one could get in because the trees fell across the road all the way down. The only reason we saved the house, my husband just - with my son - went round and round and round on the tractor with a tank on the back, spraying all the water we had on the house and the ground.  
 Julie: So this was a big wall of flame coming down.  
 Ann Rowe: On four ways - on four sides it was. The whole mountains were on fire. That shed burnt. Trees here burnt. All along behind that shed, all along that garden burnt and it was just this little part that we saved and Alan's mother's house, where he grew up, that burnt. All that's left is a little fireplace in the kitchen.  
 Julie: Oh okay. This...  
 Ann Rowe: Be an interesting photo if you want to take it?  
 Julie: Yeah, anything.  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, it was horrific. These all burnt.  
 Julie: So what was your state - you were just busy preparing and then afterwards I guess you had shock, did you? For years afterwards, probably.  
 Ann Rowe: Still in shock, actually.  
 Julie: Are you?

Ann Rowe: We've got sprinklers set up on the house, on top of the roof, on top of the shed, all down the walls, and that tank: 2,000 gallons. We used all that water.

This was a magnificent old tree and that burnt. This half burnt and then all the way down to the road burnt.

Julie: I guess everybody thought that you'd gone, been lost.

Ann Rowe: I actually picked up the phone, because I thought, this is it and I thought, I've got to say goodbye to my girls. Luckily the phone wasn't connected, it was - the power and everything had gone, the electricity pole was alight. This is all that's left of grandma's house.

The kettle is still on the stove.

Julie: Was it really? You left it exactly as it was?

Ann Rowe: Yep.

Julie: Oh, God. What a story. I mean, but that's what you expect, I mean, with all these trees, in a way, don't you?

Ann Rowe: Well, Alan said he always expected it one day because there were fires in '39 and that came through here too. My grandchildren absolutely love it.

Julie: Oh, playing in it.

Ann Rowe: They come and they [inaudible] put it in...

Julie: Isn't it fantastic with the backdrop of the mountain.

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: The tongs were there?

Ann Rowe: Yeah, and the kettle.

Julie: The kettle was sitting in that thing on top, basically?

Ann Rowe: Yep.

Julie: Oh, that's great, that's a lovely story anyway. It's like a memorial. Okay. 20 years. Look at these lovely old grasses here. What are they?

Ann Rowe: What's it called? Pink flowers it comes up, pink and white flowers. I can't think what they're called...

Julie: You love it here?

Ann Rowe: Yeah, I do.

Julie: Have to look at this tank, dying to see this tank. It's just that, there's another lady down in Laang - L-A-A-N-G, down near Warrnambool, and she's got a shed her husband never was going to pull down, just wouldn't pull it down. She went in there one day and found all this paint, and she said, I can mix up all these colours. She said, I can paint the scene of the farm on the shed now. She said it's really good now, the shed, she wants to keep it. But she said, don't come and photograph it because it's in shade in the afternoon and that's why I mentioned to you - oh look at that.

Ann Rowe: I don't know what it is but I've been told it will grow up to 20 feet and then it will grow three huge, big, flowers out that will hang down.

Something really wacky, that.

Julie: All these old tractors. So does your son use them now or they just now...

Ann Rowe: Yeah, Alan can still work that, he just does us a road, and digs a dam, he just does things around here. That was all stuff that was in the shed that burnt, bits and pieces that were left over.

Julie: Right. So when were those fires?

Ann Rowe: Four years ago.

Julie: Only four years, so it is strong in the memory still.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, and last week there was a big fire at [unclear] Bridge and we could see the smoke and it was just like the fires we had, it just seemed so close.

Julie: There's a nice little - they look good in the teapot.

Ann Rowe: Mmm...

Julie: Some more wheelbarrows.

Ann Rowe: We had a huge woodpile there because we've got a kitchen fire and that burnt in the fires so it was so close.

Julie: Your fruit trees?

Ann Rowe: They all got a bit of damage, but they've all come back. Oh except the lemons, we've lost a lot of lemons and a few oranges. But because there's not much to burn here, the fire went through quickly.

Julie: Right, so that's what saved you though, really, it was fairly clear around the house.

Ann Rowe: There were big trees around the house.

Julie: Oh, gee.

Ann Rowe: But that house you went up to - the wrong...

Julie: Yeah?

Ann Rowe: I don't know how he survived. He came the next day and he said, I had the hose in that hand, and the whisky bottle in that hand.

Julie: Well, they're selling, aren't they?

Ann Rowe: That's why he's going.

Julie: Is it, because of the fires again, he's just not going to risk it. That's a nice shot with the tractor in the front of it, I'll just take - no, stay in it. That's good, that's good. I like the fact that it's sort of - so that's all prepared, ready to go, the tractor, now I guess.

Ann Rowe: We've got a spring down in the bush so every day, Alan goes down and fills it with water and brings it back and puts it into the big tank, which I use on the garden. But he also keeps some for fires too.

Julie: Oh, I love the little things on the top. Your grandchildren must love this, do they?

Ann Rowe: They do, every kiddie that comes here, they can't help themselves, they've got to - it's very rough, and they've got to stand there and do this. I'm just so scared someone is going to cut themselves.

Julie: I love the way you've got the handles in one spot sort of thing. You could nearly have made the whole thing an actual teapot, like put a...

Ann Rowe: Oh yeah, what a great idea.

Julie: Do you know what I mean? Couldn't you?

Ann Rowe: Yes, I could too. I've still got another tank to go, so...

Julie: Here we go, stay there, stay in the picture.

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: Right, so you try and keep the theme happening?

Ann Rowe: I've tried to do a few little things, but there's not a lot.

Julie: Right and the handles - oh and you've got a number on it, too.

Ann Rowe: ...but I haven't finished that yet. This is when I first started to do it and I was testing, my grandson wrote his name but this is the [unclear] and they've fallen off.

Julie: Right, so you know the right glues by now and...

Ann Rowe: Yeah, it's clear silicone. Gutter and roof silicone.

Julie: That's a wasps nest there. They're all handles on there.

Julie: What's that one - oh, lid. Yep.

Ann Rowe: Lids off sugar bowls and things. That's the number that was on the front door of the house that I was born in.

Julie: That's the number of the house, it's not off the house that you were born in?

Ann Rowe: It's off the front door of the house I was born in.

Julie: Oh, one-six-three.

Ann Rowe: I only found it a few years ago in a little box of my father's stuff in the shed and I was, what's in this? Just bits and pieces. Right at the bottom there was the number.

Julie: That's lovely, I'll just take a close - I love these little things on the top.

Ann Rowe: This is the yellow brick road. I'm wishing I had have gone all the way round but I haven't.

Julie: That's just amazing.

Ann Rowe: These were from the house that burnt.

Julie: Oh, your mum's house? Your husband's...

Ann Rowe: My husband's, yeah. That's a beer bottle, and that's a glass plate with a spoon embedded in it.

Julie: In the fires?

Ann Rowe: Yeah.

Julie: Right. So how long has it taken you to do this, to do the shed - to do...

Ann Rowe: It's been about 18 months.

Julie: That's not very long really, is it?  
 Ann Rowe: This is the beach. I've saved those from when my children were little and we went to the beach and found shells and I [inaudible]  
 Julie: Instead of putting them in a box in a cupboard or something, they're actually all out...  
 Ann Rowe: This is a statue a friend gave me  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: ...legs and arms and shoes. He dropped it, he was going to throw it out...  
 Julie: Right. So you haven't advertised for it or anything, just people - word of mouth?  
 Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: There's a piece of dinner set that was my mother's...  
 Julie: Where's it? Oh, you don't know. I just thought...  
 Ann Rowe: ...so much there. That's a gumnut, that's a frog.  
 Julie: Even that little man up the top jumping around, isn't it sweet.  
 Ann Rowe: Look, here's a cancer stick.  
 Julie: Yeah.  
 Ann Rowe: They're drink coasters ... that I dropped and broke.  
 Julie: Maybe you're deliberately dropping bowls?  
 Ann Rowe: [Laughs] Three of them were Mexican.  
 Julie: A kangaroo. So people bring those every time they come up and see you from Melbourne, all the things they've broken during their - and the red, the blue area there, is that symbolic?  
 Ann Rowe: I just liked blue and white so I thought instead of spreading it around, I'll put it all in one area. This was off a tea cosy, in the olden days, they had little figures on proper knitted tea cosies?  
 Julie: Oh, did they?  
 Ann Rowe: From Alan's grandmother.  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: We found it under the house. These stones we picked up from rivers, when the kids we took them...  
 Julie: Oh, this is nice, with the knives and forks.  
 Ann Rowe: They were from the house down there. But to find a plate with cutlery on it...  
 Julie: No, stay there.  
 Ann Rowe: Crockery on it, I was just so excited when I found that plate.  
 Julie: Oh, the plate's got it on...  
 Ann Rowe: The crockery on it, I thought, great, I've got to have that...  
 Julie: Oh, isn't that lovely. That's a gorgeous shot.  
 Ann Rowe: I've got two or three little things that are actually growing...  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: That section.  
 Julie: Right, why? What does that mean to you?  
 Ann Rowe: Just the colours, the pink and the black and the white.  
 Julie: Do you want to look at me?  
 Ann Rowe: No.  
 Julie: You have to, otherwise they won't believe that a woman did it.  
 Ann Rowe: This is the old money, you probably don't remember that.  
 Julie: I do so, the penny and thruppence.  
 Ann Rowe: Thruppence, yes.  
 Julie: Thruppence for the pudding.  
 Ann Rowe: That's the new money next to it.  
 Julie: Right, so you could nearly call this a memory tank, couldn't you?  
 Ann Rowe: These are all buttons and buckles, some beads.  
 Julie: Hedgehogs.  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, you don't want to photograph these.  
 Julie: Oh, they're good, I love them.

Ann Rowe: They're actually mine - old ones. I wanted to put glasses there too, but I couldn't bend the glasses, they were - I'll find a pair eventually that are wire and that I can bend.

Julie: Oh gosh.

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: Oh right, yep.

Ann Rowe: And there's a lot of fridge magnets scattered around.

Julie: So the tank's still in use as well.

Ann Rowe: Oh yeah. That's why I haven't got anything there, I've been told keep it clear so I can go and see how much water's in there and put the hoses in there.

Julie: Oh gee. This is just stunning. The nice thing is that story - you know your teeth, and the crockery and where you found it. What's this, this got a theme here?

Ann Rowe: That's from the bottom there...

Julie: Just bottom's of plants?

Ann Rowe: All the different labels and places where they're made.

Julie: It's nice with the backdrop of the mountains there too, the Grampians.

Ann Rowe: So can I do some work now?

Julie: Yeah.

Ann Rowe: Like I say, I won't put any glue on because you won't be able to tell.

Julie: Well, just face me and - what do you use with your tools? Do you have a bucket of them? You bring out all your plates, what do you do?

Ann Rowe: No, I'll bring it up the back way.

Julie: Will we see you throwing them on the ground?

Ann Rowe: No, they're all done down there.

Julie: Yeah, that would be great.

Ann Rowe: I'll bring it up here, ready to use. I've got it all in a dish, I'll carry it up, that's what I work from.

Julie: Yeah, terrific. No, I'll just keep photographing.

[Audio 2]

Ann Rowe: A little bit of shade just here.

Julie: Oh, right. Makes it round, anyway, gives it dimension - a bit more. So you know what you're going to be doing? You know which area we're sort of looking at.

Ann Rowe: Pick one randomly and I'll put one there and then I'll pick another one up this afternoon and put it there, and then there, and then there. Just, I don't look at it and work it out. I just put the glue on it and put it on.

Julie: Sometimes it ends up with two together, that doesn't matter.

Ann Rowe: You've got another tank to do? Will you do another tank do you think, or you like just doing one-off of things?

Ann Rowe: I've got enough to do another tank and I'd like to do it different but because I can't draw, I can't decide if I'll do patterns like that sort of thing. But you have to have too much of the same thing to do regular patterns. Then I thought I'd do little squares with something in the middle of each square rather than try and do something...

[Engine noise starts up]

Julie: Right.

Ann Rowe: I'd like to do trees and I look around under...

Julie: Yeah, just...yep. You can do it, you don't feel like doing any just...

Ann Rowe: Well, I'll do a little bit.

Julie: You're not in the mood. It's quite a nice shot with your husband doing the proper...

Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]

Julie: Sorry?

Ann Rowe: I'm not feeling...

Julie: Well look, don't do it, that will be fine. Don't worry. I'll just take a few with the gun pretending to put on some stuff.



Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]  
 Julie: Once you...  
 Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]  
 Julie: Is Alan just testing the water pumps, is he? Making sure that they're all going alright?  
 Ann Rowe: No, he'll go down and fill up from the spring and then come back and put them here, and then he'll fill up again...  
 Julie: That's it, look at me, look at me. That's it. Just get...because your husband was on the top there.  
 Ann Rowe: No, you don't have to do that.  
 Julie: Well, out of 100 photos I might get one that looks alright.  
 Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]  
 Julie: Probably if there's a bit more sun a little bit, rather than your face being in the shade.  
 Ann Rowe: [Inaudible]  
 Julie: Yes, that would be fine, and if you sneak in around the back maybe a bit. That's the sort of thing, and then if you look up to me. Hold it. That's it. That's good, no that's fine. We've probably got enough of those. I'll help you take these back, if you like.  
 Ann Rowe: We'd have an open day but our driveway is so narrow that if there are cars coming up while there are cars coming down...  
 Julie: It'd be too hard.  
 Ann Rowe: It's just too hard.  
 Julie: Water in it, hasn't had water in it for 20 years and then after the fires it fills up. Can you see them running?  
 Julie: Oh yeah, look at them. Little baby emus. But they're tame enough, they're not running from him are they?  
 Ann Rowe: Oh, yeah, because he's bitten them. But they come in and they wreck our apple trees.  
 Julie: Amazing, amazing. [Laughs]

[Audio 3]

Ann Rowe: ...material and it's all op-shop.  
 Julie: I might just...  
 Ann Rowe: There's only a few dollars a week to go on extras, so...  
 Julie: So it's gleaned - it's like, yeah. Gleaning and reusing everything.  
 Ann Rowe: Recycling, yeah.  
 Julie: Recycling. Oh, fantastic. Hello, is this your little house?  
 Ann Rowe: I suppose you could call them like puppets?  
 Julie: Right, with the kids - with the grandchildren?  
 Ann Rowe: Yes, the grandchildren.  
 Julie: Oh, okay. Like instead of Lego you find old tops and things.  
 Ann Rowe: Yes, I save everything.  
 Julie: They must love coming up here.  
 Ann Rowe: They do. My father started this, he used to make Christmas decorations when we were little. So I've carried it on.  
 Julie: So every Christmas a new decoration?  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: So you know which year each one was done, nearly?  
 Ann Rowe: That was this year. That was probably the year before and the year before - and all the balls, I made them. They all hang along there.  
 Julie: And you've made them?  
 Ann Rowe: Made every one of them.  
 Julie: Oh. Nice dead - oh you've got one. No. Aren't they amazing?  
 Ann Rowe: Then there are these.  
 Julie: All  
 Ann Rowe: These little Christmas trees.  
 Julie: That's a lovely one. Lovely. Got the chair in it too which is nice  
 Ann Rowe: Pine cones. Another little Christmas tree.

Julie: Oh, now hold up one of those baubles here again, they're lovely.  
This one I like.

Ann Rowe: Mm.

Julie: I like this - you're really good on time - like, little memory things.

Ann Rowe: I went to a class for that, but every time I go to a class I've got to change things. I've got a few friends who say, no that's not right, you shouldn't be doing that and I've got another few friends who say, oh good, you've made it yours because none of the others had bases on them.

Julie: Right.

Ann Rowe: None of the others were as big as that, I had to make mine big.

Julie: I wonder what you would have been if circumstances were different, like you know, what would you have loved to have been now you've found...

Ann Rowe: When I started to get really into craft, I was really - because I left school at 14. I had to. I was really tempted to go to Stawell and do an art course but I didn't have enough confidence and also we only had one vehicle so if I had have been out every day, Alan would have been stranded.  
So I just sort of - oh well, I'll just do my own thing.

Julie: So you were born...

Ann Rowe: In Melbourne.

Julie: In Melbourne, okay. You could do classes I guess, if you were interested in teaching, I guess.

Ann Rowe: No, I'm not. Don't know whether I want to teach, I just thought if I did a course, I'd learn more.

Julie: Right, but there's a freshness that comes from not being part of a course.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, like I say, I like to do it all a little bit different to what the teachers teach.

Julie: I mean, that tank is absolutely...

Ann Rowe: It's the middle of the night, and I think, oh those teeth, I could use them!  
[Laughs]

Julie: Yeah, so nothing was...

Ann Rowe: Nothing was planned.

Julie: I have a definition that craft is something that you know the end of, you know what it's going to look like whereas art is something you don't know what it's going to look like.

Ann Rowe: Yes.

Julie: So when you said just before that you consider yourself doing craft, would you consider yourself craft? You mentioned just before that you...

Ann Rowe: Well, I suppose it's all similar to me, really.

Julie: Okay, you haven't defined which way?

Ann Rowe: No. This is my sister-in-law, she's a photographer. She's just had a big exhibition in Mexico.

Julie: Oh, right.

Ann Rowe: That was about two years ago and all that - Qantas sponsored her and the Australian government. She's been going over to Mexico three times a year for 10 years to buy jewellery and every time she's there she takes pictures of the locals, and she had this big exhibition and it was on in Canberra and in Western Australia.

Julie: Probably taken over from the jewellery, has it?

Ann Rowe: Yes, she's just retired from the jewellery part so she can do more camera, and my younger sister has just taken over the jewellery part so she's going to Mexico two or three times a year and bringing jewellery back.

Julie: So you're on the - you use the net a fair bit.

Ann Rowe: Yeah. Oh, no, just to play games and talk to friends and - this is our bushfire.

Julie: Oh, okay.

Ann Rowe: That was half an hour later.

Julie: So that's what you saw.

Ann Rowe: We thought, oh, nothing. Then it got worse and I said to Alan, I think I might go. He said, you won't make it out the driveway.

Julie: What, from right there?

Ann Rowe: Yeah, because it came...

Julie: Why would he say that?

Ann Rowe: The wind was so strong, and it came that quick, it just came...

Julie: So you didn't take any of the actual flames, sort of thing?

Ann Rowe: No, we were just too frantic. I was throwing buckets of water and I had every towel and sheet in the house wet, draped all around, just in case. This was his mother's house.

Julie: Oh, there it is, that spot.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, see how close we are? You can see where the fire burnt right up to...

Julie: I thought it was shadow, yeah.

Ann Rowe: That's where - because it was wet.

Julie: That was so quick then, from that smoke - just looked...

Ann Rowe: Yep.

Julie: Because that's a fair distance, one would have thought.

Ann Rowe: Wind was just so strong. That's his mother's dinner set, and the saucepans were in that area, that's how we knew what they were. I told you it got burnt.

Julie: I love corrugated iron. It's a hassle though.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, there's copper over there that went aqua in the fire. You'll see a photo of it.

Julie: Yeah, yeah. Oh God.

Ann Rowe: That's the things that were in the shed. You - should have known you then.

Julie: I know, from looking at it. I thought that it was a hay shed that burnt down and I talked to the owner and he said, oh look, have some before Smorgon's gets, you know they buy it 20 dollars a tonne, or whatever it was. So we're arriving back at the farm gate with the trailer and of course, a neighbour pulls up and says, oh, I won't keep you long, I can see you're on the way to the tip and my husband goes...

Ann Rowe: [Laughs]

Julie: They love doing that, don't they? They love having a go at me about these things. Yeah, I love all this stuff. I collected all these logs from fires up at [Warborough] - at the Warborough fires. They have the holes where the wire goes through which aren't burnt and they looked really quite like sculpture.

Ann Rowe: Oh, look at it.

Julie: That's just after the road was cleared but before it was cleared, all these trees had just fallen...

Ann Rowe: Because the growth is terrific again, isn't it?

Julie: Oh, it's so thick now, it's thicker than...

Ann Rowe: I see the next door neighbours got some of these...

Julie: Yeah, well we've got a lot.

Ann Rowe: Got a lot of those.

Julie: Yeah, look, that's just a couple of weeks.

Ann Rowe: Boys or whatever, they love the farm though, don't they?

Julie: Couple of weeks after the fire, they had all shot again.

Ann Rowe: Look at them, they're gorgeous, those colours.

Julie: Yes and that was weeks later, it was still - big tree roots were still smouldering.

Ann Rowe: [laughs] Isn't that gorgeous?

Julie: 12 foot high, cactus, and they just melted like candles. But they've grown again, they're about this high.

Ann Rowe: They must have huge root system there helping it, still. Oh, they look lovely, doesn't it? Looks like bits of sausage, material sausage dog things.

Julie: This is how it was when it was bush, well now that's all wattle and gum trees and you can't walk through it.

Ann Rowe: So you're saying - that's actually an L.O. just this morning about regrowth. About how the eucalyptus, in fact it's best and worst enemy because the fire is great for it...

Ann Rowe: Because we used to be able to walk through there, we can't now.  
 Julie: So regeneration was - sort of beggars for it.  
 Ann Rowe: That's an old ute, with the windscreen melted.  
 Julie: You could have done a sculpture with all these old melted things.  
 Ann Rowe: I still got a lot of stuff over in the paddock, actually.  
 Julie: Well maybe when you feel stronger about the whole thing, it would be nice to do - aren't they lovely? See I love all that.  
 Ann Rowe: See, that's before, and that's a couple of months later.  
 Julie: Yeah.  
 Ann Rowe: It's unreal, the green grass. We've got a lot of equipment over here because they used to have draught horses to pull all this.  
 Julie: Oh, I like those rivet things. Those little rivets on these old water systems and whatever.  
 Ann Rowe: They used to make charcoal in those.  
 Julie: Oh, okay.  
 Ann Rowe: Did you know during the war that they'd use charcoal to run cars when they didn't have petrol?  
 Julie: No. Why aren't we doing that now? Be a good way to put it. Really?  
 Ann Rowe: They're about 10 foot tall. You can't see because of the...  
 Julie: Right.  
 Ann Rowe: Alan's father put whole trees down in them, lit them, covered them up so that they'd smoulder. Stayed there all night - it's just down the bush here - and it'd turn into charcoal and then they'd rake it out the bottom, bag it and sell it to the garages in Stawell and the cars had little burners on their running boards - like this is back in the 30s and 40s. That would burn and create gas and the car would run on gas. History lesson.  
 Julie: I'd say. That's amazing, isn't it?  
 Ann Rowe: It's sort of a real monument there, but Alan keeps talking about maybe bringing them up here where people can see them because they're right in the bush. But we don't know...  
 Julie: There's something quite nice keeping them where they are though. I like that.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, we're like that. We can't quite decide. That's copper, copper shovel.  
 Julie: Oh, look at it!  
 Ann Rowe: Look at the colour it went.  
 Julie: It's still bright?  
 Ann Rowe: Not quite as bright, but...  
 Julie: But still, you can see where...see, these would make magnificent things on a nice sort of polished wooden thing that you make for your class, and just have them standing up.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah.  
 Julie: Gorgeous shape, [unclear] shape, lovely shapes - and to think it was a saucepan or something.  
 Ann Rowe: They're Fowlers for Cola bottle, where all welded together and that was an old meat safe. Bus.  
 Julie: You've still got all these things I guess. You've still got them?  
 Ann Rowe: Yes.  
 Julie: That's lovely, look at the patterns in that. You could just put that on the wall, and it would be nice.  
 Ann Rowe: That's copper too.  
 Julie: You've got that? Still got those?  
 Ann Rowe: Yes, still sitting in that little wheelbarrow thing over by the shed so I wonder you didn't notice it.  
 Julie: I love all that. Look at that.  
 Ann Rowe: Yeah, don't quite know what that...  
 Julie: Well, when you have a garage sale, I'll be up. Oh, they're great. I was just reading a book. Talk about a history lesson, I am reading a book called *Cotton on*. It came out in 2006 about the cotton industry in Lauer in England and the girls, how they worked from nine to nine in all these

amazing sorts of environments, but what a group of women did - they really couldn't talk and things but they started - and I'm using it in my thesis really, that they started doing poems. Poetry as an outlet for themselves, so they'd be there creating poetry and they ended up bringing out little books, little things that they came out of the factories of all their poems and things. As a form of expression under these enormous conditions.

So that's the sort of thing I love and in fact, the black people that usurps slaved to men, they couldn't talk to each other so when the boss came, they'd have music. They'd hum a tune and go, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm and everyone would know the boss was coming. This is where blues music came out of, the cotton factories where they used to sing - instead of using words, because they're not allowed to talk, they used to chant - had these songs. That became the blues music.

Fascinating, I thought.

Ann Rowe: It is.

Julie: Out of, once again, Australian women aren't in dire circumstances but it is a fairly tough environment compared to obviously metro living but these girls in these mills would do these creative things just as a relief for themselves and a sense of self.

Oh, you had Elvis - is that Elvis...

Ann Rowe: Yeah, we burnt at night so there was no one to help us at all because he won't come over in the night.

Julie: Oh, don't they?

Ann Rowe: No.

Julie: So it was all just smouldering, you didn't know whether a spark would start it again.

Ann Rowe: A week later, it was all still burning and that's what he's doing then, during the day, just going up and down the mountain.

Julie: But it could have started again at any time, couldn't it?

Ann Rowe: Well, I was terrified then because...

Julie: Though you were burnt out so you wouldn't have, I guess.

Ann Rowe: Well, my children and little grandchildren came up and it was like this and I'm saying, go and Alan's saying, it can't come back because this is all burned but because there was so much smoke and...

Julie: Yeah, frightening for them.

Ann Rowe: It was like that, every day, and of a night you'd go out and then you'd see red burning everywhere.

Julie: Are you pretty isolated here, are you the only one - oh no, there's a few down there. What about those houses down the road?

Ann Rowe: Yeah, I've got three or four neighbours, yeah, they...

Julie: They were fine, but you were the end of it, were you?

Ann Rowe: No, because it went down that way. They all had watering systems too. The house, when you come in...

Julie: Oh, I love that. I love that...

Ann Rowe: ...is mud brick, so it won't burn. He hasn't got any wood in his house. Two storey house was built for fires but his curtains melted. So nothing happened to the house, but his curtains inside the glass...

Julie: Because of the mud brick.

Ann Rowe: ...they melted. That's how intense it was.

Julie: I don't know if you've been down to [Moistan] area, in the last day or two, have you?

Ann Rowe: No.

Julie: Past Moistan? Someone on the hill's done this huge castle out of...

Ann Rowe: Oh yeah, I saw it in the paper.

Julie: Yeah, what's that?

Ann Rowe: It's just using his hay bales, someone further up country made three trains and this guy saw it and thought oh, I'll do something with my hay bales.

Julie: Oh, okay. So it's not for an event or anything?

Ann Rowe: No.

Julie: I took a few photos, showing the - oh, look at that orchid. What are they, orchids or something? Wild orchid?

Ann Rowe: These are called the undertaker wild orchid and they only come after a fire.

Julie: Oh, nice.

Ann Rowe: So every year we have the little green leaves, but never ever seen the flower. Alan's never seen it either and he's nearly 70 and everybody in the district's had to come up and see them because we had thousands of them. You can see here.

Julie: Yeah.

Ann Rowe: So everybody had to come up and see them.

Julie: What a great name.

Ann Rowe: They're beautiful. Well, red-beak or undertaker.

Julie: So if you burnt that area again though...

Ann Rowe: No, people have tried to burn it and it's not - like just a little fire and it doesn't work. It has to be an intense bushfire to get them to come up.

Julie: Amazing.

Ann Rowe: These are just other flowers we get through the bush.

Julie: That came out, okay.

Ann Rowe: We get these every year, that's a flying duck. Can you see, that's...

Julie: They're gorgeous, yeah, and these orchids look so lovely.

Ann Rowe: Oh, they came up so thick after the fire, they don't come up that thick now.

Julie: That was the grasses that we saw.

Ann Rowe: That's what you asked me where they...

Julie: Yeah.

Ann Rowe: I just can't believe it, how - this desolate and then all these bulbs came up. I actually took that in to the local paper, thinking they'd use it but they didn't.

Julie: Hmm. What's this?

Ann Rowe: Because they had a display in Halls Gap and they took those things around there. They're saying that the lawnmower takes 1500 degrees to melt it and the saucepans take - aluminium takes 660 degrees.

Julie: So it never got that hot?

Ann Rowe: It did, because they melted.

Julie: This one didn't.

Ann Rowe: No, that's -

Julie: Oh, the other saucepans did.

Ann Rowe: Yeah, yeah. That was just a photo they had to...

Julie: Oh, okay.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- Ann Smith: Yeah this couple who live up here, and the woman would be probably late seventies, and her thing is floral arrangement.
- Facilitator: So, for example, they have, naturally they have the Dookie show and so she always puts a lot of entries in that, but she also does beautiful floral arrangements for the church and for weddings in the church, for instance. That's exactly what I'm after really; in that area of not trained in art and doesn't think of herself as an art person. But there is a very famous Australian artist, Rosalie Gascoigne, I don't know if you know her?
- Ann Smith: Yeah.
- Facilitator: Well she started with flower arrangements.
- Ann Smith: She just happened to be connected with Mollison.
- Facilitator: She did have good contacts, but I'm saying she roamed round in isolation not feeling part of it, part of her group.
- Ann Smith: Her story is very interesting, isn't it?
- Facilitator: And she was a huge inspiration for me. I mean, even though I'd been in a design area most of my life, I didn't come across her until after I had been cutting up 44 gallon drums and stitching them together, you know, doing that, and then I came across her and I thought: My God, there's someone like me. Everyone's been sort of saying I'm a bit mad a bit, and then I came across her and she was great company for me when I was starting off.
- Ann Smith: So you met her?
- Facilitator: No, just her books. Books are I guess my people in a lot of ways in the country; they're my friends, because you don't have many people around you that you can, I guess, talk to and identify with.
- Ann Smith: Her work's fantastic.
- Facilitator: Yeah, and as you say, by chance or whatever, she had great contacts. Is it possible, do you think that lady would be open to seeing her? Does she just work every day in it or is it only an occasional thing?
- Ann Smith: No, she wouldn't work every day, no. She's a farmer's wife and although probably it's the sons who are running the farm now, so she would be - you would have to be lucky if she was working on it at the moment. I mean, I could...
- Facilitator: She doesn't have any in the house? Her house isn't visibly sort of...
- Ann Smith: I don't know. I've only been to her house once because - and that was a couple of years ago, because I'd expressed some interest in it. I mean, I was more interested in what she was doing rather than learning to do it myself and then she asked me to come up and she went through some of the stuff that she was doing.
- Facilitator: I mean, I never - I knew it wasn't the sort of thing I wanted to do, but it was interesting to see what she did.
- Facilitator: That's exactly how she's surviving it I would think; we'd have to talk to her, but she's finding her expression not in the cakes or - she's doing it in the flowers.
- Ann Smith: I mean, I could certainly ask her. She's - do you mean for today?
- Facilitator: Well while I'm sort of up here I could.
- Ann Smith: I'll ask her.
- Facilitator: I mean, it's a matter of I can always come back at the Dookie Show and take photos of her arrangements but it's really, I guess in a lot of ways - yes, I mean, maybe she has things at home; she has arrangements that she does or her home expresses a little bit about what the work she does.

Ann Smith: I wouldn't necessarily be optimistic that she would jump at the opportunity. She's a shy-ish sort of lady.

Facilitator: No, I can leave it with you. It doesn't need to be today, I can come back, but I'd leave you with a - I mean, she probably hasn't read the article.

Ann Smith: No and I mean, I didn't even think of people like her when you contacted me.

Facilitator: And I don't think people do, so it would be nice - I'll just grab her name too so that I can refer to it when I...

Ann Smith: Her name's Marie Tracey.

Facilitator: Yes, no, I can always come back. It's been amazing the sort of people - I got a response from the letter from a person in Halls Gap and she said: Everyone thinks I'm mad and her husband's very sick. But what she does is mosaics around water tanks, the farm water tanks; which is just fantastic. I said: The madder the better, because that's really an expression of: God, I've got to get out here and do something and I've got the space to do it.

Ann Smith: I can see better where you're at now and I can see that somebody like Marie would probably fit into your scenario better than someone like me.

Facilitator: Right, but you're in the other category. I don't know how much it means to you, art, I guess - what is the value you put on your art? Where is it?

Ann Smith: I think that - I think of print making, especially print making at Wangaratta - I may or may not have said to you that I retired in the middle of 2006. I didn't do much at all for the first year really and then my best friend, Dianne Glenister, who's the same age as me, was an art teacher a long time ago; lives in Wangaratta and she had been doing bits of courses, you know, some painting, some drawing, print making at Wang TAFE. She, first of all, was asked to do an exhibition at St Leonards winery at Wahgunyah at the end of 2008 - no, the end of 2007, and she talked me into going in with her. So then I had to get going and it took me a while to get going. I mean, I had deliberately when I had retired, said: I'm not going to organise a whole heap of stuff, I'm going to take it easy - which I did. Anyway, when I eventually sort of got started to do something, the print that's up in the corner that's on that dresser was the first thing and I think probably the best thing I did. If you think of best as - which I don't necessarily...

Facilitator: That you're satisfied with.

Ann Smith: Like I've sold more of those than anything else, for example. Anyway, then the following year Dianne suggested that maybe we would do print making at TAFE and we did. We've done it last year and this year one day a week and we're doing it next year. We would do it forever if they let us, but the way they're changing the fees, this will be it. But I would say that that activity, especially the social side of it, because Dianne lives 50 minutes away, so it's one day a week that we spend together working on stuff that we like doing. So it's certainly the most - I would say the best thing that I have done since I retired from teaching.

Facilitator: On a social aspect probably more than...

Ann Smith: No, I wouldn't be - I don't think I would be saying that if we just went and had coffee together or had lunch together, it's because there's something about being in that art room with a printing press, as an ex-art teacher and not having to tell somebody else what to do - not that I don't of course, but no, it's definitely the combination of the two things. We've had some exhibitions, because her - Dianne's daughter, Jacqueline, is a graphic designer. My daughter, Joanna, is now working for NAB but she did a couple of years at the College of the Arts, so she's an arty girl as well. So we've had some exhibitions and that whole kind of package has been a terrifically good thing for both of us.

Facilitator: What's the biggest challenge for living out here would you say?



Ann Smith: Challenge?

Facilitator: There may not be.

Ann Smith: I don't know that I think of it as a challenge.

Facilitator: You love it.

Ann Smith: When we first came it felt isolated, but that's 30 years ago and that was me straight from Sydney and not knowing anybody, whereas now, I'm very happy to be here because it's not far to Shep; it's not that far to Melbourne. I mean, I don't want to be in Melbourne every week anyway, but when I choose to go it's slightly under three hours.

Facilitator: If you're not doing art and you're not on a farm, what do you spend your time on, where do you spend - apart from art; what are you spending your time on?

Ann Smith: That's a good question, what am I spending my time on?

Facilitator: What takes up most of your time in the week?

Ann Smith: Well I do spend quite a reasonable amount of it on art when - during term time. I do the usual stuff of trying to keep a house in order - not that I spend a huge amount of time on that. I read a lot. I'm in a couple of book clubs. I would probably, maybe on average one day a week, meet somebody, you know, one of my friends in Shepparton, either in Shepparton or up at the - we've got a business, the Emporium and the café that opened a couple of years ago, which has been marvellous. That's a good social thing on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, where you go up there about three o'clock and there'll be several people there that you know - well you'll know most of them and they'll know you. It doesn't sound like I do anything.

Facilitator: How does your family respond to your art, are they encouraging?

Ann Smith: Well there's only my husband and myself at home. My daughter is, as I said, arty. She's very interested in it. My son is 23; he's probably not all that interested, but my husband's been very - I hate that word supportive - but supportive in that for example, he's interested in what I do and he - I think he has, even though he's somebody who's not arty himself, he's a collector - well, he has been a Byron seller of stuff and bric-a-brac. He knows lots about Australian antiques and I think through me and through - initially maybe being dragged through galleries, he - like for example, with this friend from Wangaratta, we, maybe two or three times a year go off on what we call moonlight tours, where we go for a few days.

Facilitator: Like, we're going in March to see the Musée d'Orsay exhibition in Canberra. On trips like that, he and Dianne's husband, Mike, who was a maths teacher and then an assistant principal and has recently retired; now what I mean is, the two men are not arty people but they're - and although they'll kind of joke about it and they'll say things like: Well, when we go to Canberra we'll be in the gallery for an hour, what are we going to do then?

Ann Smith: But really, they'll put in - they might not stay as long as Dianne and I would, but - so he's - I think he has an eye and he will not say he likes something if he doesn't like something. But he will acknowledge that something is good if he thinks it's good. So he's good and when we've been setting up exhibitions, usually he and Mike, Dianne's husband, or one or other of them, have come along and helped with all the setting up of exhibitions, for example.

Facilitator: Do you draw inspiration from the landscape here or not particularly?

Ann Smith: Yes, by the way the - my work is the dresser and the landscape, which is based on the view out the back here. My daughter did the other three prints when she was at BCA, she did print making for two years and Dianne Glenister did the painting that's - and she did the two little paintings that are up there. They were part of like a big group that she did of I think three and three with four in the middle. So yes, I tend to work from, generally speaking, real things. I mean, I like drawing but I'm not - I don't feel my drawing is good enough to draw

something and then print it. So that with the dresser and with that, I took digital photographs, manipulated them in Photoshop, adjusted proportions, et cetera and started that way.

Whereas - I think Joanna probably works, she works a bit from pictures as well. So I tend to work from real things, except for in the course when we do monotypes - I've got one here somewhere - this wasn't the one I was going to bring out but I realised I'd moved things around.

Facilitator: Okay.

Ann Smith: So that one there would be in the same category. It was from an old truck up near Porepunkah where we go.

Facilitator: So you show and sell?

Ann Smith: Yeah, when we can. In the print making class I did quite a lot of monotypes, and this kind of thing, where in that case just using bits and pieces of whatever.

That, I think, was inspired by - this one here is a collograph and I stuck bits of banana leaves and parings out of a wood cut, for example, and wool and stuff to make that one

Facilitator: That's lovely.

Ann Smith: That was kind of what took me onto - and I loved doing those. I don't know what it is about them, but I think it's the...

Facilitator: It's lovely and subtle and delicate, fragile.

Ann Smith: Random - obviously not random in the way it's organised, but you're never quite sure what you're going to get and I found that by running it through the press, that was probably a third run through the press because the first ones were too crude really and it was when you knocked quite a bit of the colour off that they became much more interesting.

Facilitator: Do you have a studio here?

Ann Smith: I've got a space downstairs, I'll show you. It's not really a studio, it's sort of me gradually encroaching on a space.

Facilitator: In the garage or something?

Ann Smith: No, we've got a big room downstairs, I'll take you down and show you.

Facilitator: I'd love a photo of you in where you think best expresses you.

Ann Smith: Probably it would be at the printing press in Wangaratta, but we're not going to be going there.

Facilitator: But you do work here, or do you?

Ann Smith: Yeah, I do, yes.

Facilitator: But mainly there?

Ann Smith: Yes and I mean, sometimes it's, you know, if I'm - well, for example, I was cutting that one, I sat right here because that was during winter and in winter it's cold downstairs because we don't have heating downstairs and I would sit here because the sun would be coming in, so that was a nice spot to do it.

I've probably got some digital photos that I took of - or had taken of me just working here.

Facilitator: So the town of Dookie, opening that Emporium was terrific, it's a huge space, isn't it?

Ann Smith: Yeah.

Facilitator: What other people are involved with that?

Ann Smith: Well, it's owned by a couple and the wife, Janie Christophersen is the main mover and shaker. She would be a young woman in her thirties. I think she had a shop, some similar type shop in Northcote or somewhere like that and she's really good.

She's a bit arty herself. I've seen some - she probably doesn't get much time to do anything now, but she does nice drawings; realistic, very detailed, small delicate ones.

Facilitator: What trade goes through here; what sort of business goes through here? Is it college business do you think?

Ann Smith: No, there's not much at the college anymore. I think they have built up a clientele, you know, that people will come out from - it will be locals, but

then people from some of the other towns will make the trip over because there's the Emporium, but there's also the café.

I think the café was sort of an after thought really because Janie and her husband bought - that used to be the post office - he's a builder of some sort, so he was able to fix it up a bit. She has the eye - but he buys and sells too.

Then this other couple set up the café in quite a hardly - well it doesn't look bigger than our kitchen, but it's not that much bigger.

Incidentally, in the back there's another man, Lorenzo, I call him Lorenzo the Magnificent, who's a barber, so he rents the premises and he's in Italy at the moment, but he works as a barber.

My husband and a whole lot of the local men go to him. So it's very - like Janie would have a lot of nous about probably seeing all that, that there's really three businesses in the one premises, and the café is a big drawcard. It's a very nice café.

So there's a café; there's the shop; the barber if you want your hair cut and the pub as well. Now the pub was - the pub used to be nothing much and then maybe five or six years ago, Bernadette Verlin and her husband who live over there, bought the pub; did the pub up; so the pub looks really good and started to serve really nice food.

Then they sold it two or three years ago and the present people have continued that. I'd say that would, for example, not change the menu as often but we would go there to have dinner nearly every Friday night if we're at home. So it's nice food.

By now there would be, especially around Christmas time, there would be groups from say maybe the hospital having their Christmas do.

Facilitator: You've got a hospital here, have you?

Ann Smith: No, no, no, but in Shepparton. People like that might come out to have their Christmas function at the pub.

They have live jazz on every second Sunday lunch at the pub, so people would come out to that.

Then they might wander up the street; have a coffee; have a look in the Emporium.

Facilitator: And get their hair cut?

Ann Smith: Maybe. I haven't actually had my hair cut there. So that business has made a huge difference, because before that, on the weekend, I would be at home doing my thing; other people would be at home doing their thing, whereas now we wander up there.

Facilitator: Does your husband still work?

Ann Smith: No, no.

Facilitator: So you both have retired?

Ann Smith: He had retired a term before I did because he'd been in the Navy years ago and he had then got into buying and selling things and he'd actually had a shop - a shop and two different premises in Dookie that we owned years ago and then he did a bit of school bus run and did the mail run at one stage.

No, he's retired and he also loves being retired. He plays bowls and he plays golf - and that's been very good too, because he doesn't take it too seriously and he enjoys it. It's crowded down there; a lot of people and today he's playing as a woman - I didn't mention that - the women don't have enough players, so he and Kevin, who lives across the road, they play with the women.

Facilitator: It sounds a lovely community, doesn't it?

Ann Smith: Well it is and I've got to know them - you know, I've got to know a lot more people since I've been retired because when I was working David knew everybody and I knew some people; whereas - not that I know everybody now because there's plenty of new people in the town that I don't know at all, but I know a lot more than I did.

Facilitator: Like this lady, do you know of anyone else that might fit into my sort of - I mean, as I said, I can come up another trip.

Ann Smith: There's Norma Sutherland, now she's - this Janie that I'm talking about who is in the shop, she would be her mother - well I don't think they're actually married but like her mother-in-law and she lives out on that side of the town.

She would certainly talk to you, but she is very friendly and she does quite a lot of - she's the sort of person who likes going - if there's a workshop on at the Shep gallery or something, she will go and do that and she's done little workshops on - I think she did one on lino printing, for example at one stage.

I think she does - no not quilting.

Facilitator: You wouldn't say passionate about her art?

Ann Smith: Yes, yes, she would be, yes and in fact she also would probably fit into your category too I think, because she would have done lots of bits and pieces. She has - she might draw as well. I think she used to have some stuff in the Emporium, because Janie - I've got a couple of things hanging up there, probably some I need to take out of there, but when it was open Janie got work from various people.

I'm trying to think who there are. There are definitely other people, because at the show, for example, there are plenty of people who exhibit. Some of them sew, like there's [Margery Shields] who is another quite quiet lady, a younger lady who lives just out of town on that way and she would, in the show, put in very nice sewing.

It might be smocked children's dresses or coat hangers or that kind of thing.

Facilitator: When is the Dookie Show?

Ann Smith: In October, it's the weekend before Melbourne Cup. So there would be plenty of women - [Una Feltman] is another one who lives in the town. Now she, I think she's given up being a dressmaker but she would be an excellent dressmaker. She would have been the sort of person that could make wedding dresses.

Facilitator: Maybe the next time should be up near the show or before the show a little bit and meet them?

Ann Smith: Yeah.

Facilitator: It's nice to see them in their home environment, their space.

Ann Smith: Yes.

Facilitator: And then obviously to follow on with the show.

Ann Smith: Now that I'm thinking in a different way, I'll probably think of others.

Facilitator: Yes. I've got a year. I've got plenty of time to do it, so it's really just - I've done a year already but it's formulating where I'm going and what I'm doing, so it leaves a year of shows. I've done Balmoral down there and that's a vibrant little place, Balmoral, down there, near Hamilton, Horsham, down there.

Ann Smith: When you worked in the arts, what were you doing?

Facilitator: Originally?

Ann Smith: Yes.

Facilitator: I've been in advertising basically.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- Facilitator: ...so yes I saw - I love those expressions. So I've taken focus of those as well, but I don't know if they've been done by women. I have to specialise in just women, otherwise I'll just be...
- Interviewee: Well...
- Facilitator: I think women are the - well not the problem, but my focus is on women because of my own experience, in a way.
- Interviewee: Yes, do you feel that the women get left out on farms?
- Facilitator: Well it's like the history of women on farms is very much the invisible woman...
- Interviewee: Oh yes, oh very much so.
- Facilitator: ...as far as their input. A lot of sociology studies have been done, which comes into my thesis, but it's not a visual - on visual. They're called the invisible farmer all the time. They haven't been recognised as far as passing on land, as far as tax, as far as when they leave the land, what rights they have. It's only a fairly recent thing that they've been starting to be acknowledged.
- Interviewee: I think that it comes into being if that land has already been owned by the farmer - by the male, or the family of the male. In our case, we had not in the bank each, and what we've got is what we've earned each, so it's down the middle. We've seen other people -who are not very far away - who have had the farm in the family and married into it, and if there's a bust up the woman's ta-ta, and that's it.
- Facilitator: Yeah, yeah.
- Interviewee: Yeah, and that's not fair, because she does do...
- Facilitator: It's only been - well she's doing just as much work in lots of ways...
- Interviewee: Yes.
- Facilitator: ...if not educating kids or dropping them off and cooking and cleaning.
- Interviewee: Being mum's taxi.
- Facilitator: Everything - but everything.
- Interviewee: Yes.
- Facilitator: I'm in close contact with a woman called Margaret [Olestone], who's a - I don't know if you've heard of her, she's a sociologist at Melbourne Uni, and she's a spokesperson for rural women in Canberra. She's got this real cause of the invisible woman and that they have to be recognised for the sort of works they're doing. I said but look, women are out there working, now. Has it changed? She said the boundaries might have changed, but the fences are still there. They still work, but they come home, and then do exactly what they have to do anyway.
- Interviewee: Yes, yes.
- Facilitator: The money may go on the next John Deere or something, so it may look as if they're out, and they're venturing out of the property, but in fact it's nothing...
- Interviewee: How much does a woman want? Does a woman got to have all the fandangles in the house; a dishwasher, and this, that and the next thing?
- Facilitator: Yeah. What do you mean? As far as going out and working?
- Interviewee: Yeah, well, you say that the money gets spent on the new tractor...
- Facilitator: Oh, right, yeah.
- Interviewee: ...but a lot of women...
- Facilitator: Want more?
- Interviewee: ...want their fellas to have a new tractor.
- Facilitator: Yep, yep.

Interviewee: So she doesn't begrudge that.

Facilitator: Right, yep. I'm not against - I don't have an opinion. I'm just saying that is the general impression, that the money goes to farm things.

Interviewee: Oh, yes, it does, it does.

Facilitator: Which a woman is happy to - my concern, I guess where I'm coming from, is a lot more the me time of women, the actual personal, self satisfaction time.

Interviewee: Yes, me time, oh yes.

Facilitator: How do they get it? Where do they get it from? Is it...

Interviewee: When you've got kids, you don't.

Facilitator: Well you don't, and I'm finding that expression comes once the kids leave, because all of your energy and...

Interviewee: They can say that.

Facilitator: ...creative expression...

Interviewee: They can say it then.

Facilitator: Yeah, yeah, whereas they don't have time...

Interviewee: I mean, I never went to the hairdresser in all the time I had my kids at home. I remember - when they were little I had to look after them myself.

Facilitator: So you've lived on the land all...

Interviewee: Well we've lived here for what...

Facilitator: 35.

Interviewee: ...35 years, yeah, but we were share farming before that. I used to get in the bathroom and...

Facilitator: Cut your own?

Interviewee: Mm.

Facilitator: Yeah.

Interviewee: There was no one to look after the kids while I went...

Facilitator: So where was your me time, then?

Interviewee: There wasn't any.

Facilitator: There wasn't any.

Interviewee: There wasn't any.

Facilitator: It was your kids, I guess?

Interviewee: I guess it's your kids, yeah, yeah. I guess I did have a bit of time to - I did a bit of tapestry at that time, because I could do it in the lounge room there, and they'd be running outside or doing something. I was never switched off altogether, though. Never, never.

Facilitator: How many kids?

Interviewee: Four.

Facilitator: I met a lady the other day with eight kids at St Arnaud. The youngest was walking age, about three or something. She did some amazing wearable art from farm art. Everything had to be off the farm, and these amazing outfits that she'd go over to New Zealand with and win prizes. It's a Victorian, New Zealand thing, but she would bead on sheep manure as beads. She'd collect really hard - and she'd make beads. Or she'd get the inner tube of a tractor tyre and - the most fantastic stuff, stunning stuff. She had eight kids. So I don't know where it goes, when you've got kids you don't have time for creative, but this woman did.

Interviewee: Oh, I think if it's in you, you do. You know, people say to me - I used to say to people I've just read a book. I don't have any time to read books, and I think to myself, well if you really wanted to read a book, you would read a book. You would sit down, and read a book. It's the same with this woman. She might have had eight kids, and you imagine she hasn't got any time for herself, but she wanted to do that, so she did it.

Facilitator: Yeah, but there's a lot of women who don't have that confidence, or sense of self to be able...

Interviewee: To do it.

Facilitator: ...to do it, you know. It is the husband who runs it and runs her...

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Facilitator: ...and runs the property.

Interviewee: Yeah, that's right, and when you go out, it's do you want to go here? The option is go here or stay home. So you go to get out the front door. I see that a lot. I see that a lot.

Facilitator: Just the two of them - you go everywhere with your husband?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, well not just us, but other families, other couples too.

Facilitator: So why do you say that? Just to get out of...

Interviewee: Just to get outside the house.

Facilitator: Yeah.

Interviewee: When you get there you meet other people, other women and have a talk, yeah.

Facilitator: So how did art come to you? You're doing tapestry, you said? How did it all begin? Even the shed...

Interviewee: Well I'd just been looking...

Facilitator: What made you do that?

Interviewee: I'd been looking at the shed for quite a while. It was pretty drab, I mean it was just a grey cement sheet shed. I kept thinking to myself, that's the only thing left that we haven't built ourselves, because a lot of stuff went in the bushfires of Ash Wednesday. That's the only thing that's left, and look what a drab thing it is.

Facilitator: No pulling it down?

Interviewee: For years - oh no, oh no, no, no thought of that.

Facilitator: Why? Just because it was your original shed, the only thing that survived?

Interviewee: Oh, I don't know why.

Facilitator: You just didn't want to get rid of it?

Interviewee: The shed's there and it served a purpose. I mean I do my washing out there and have the table tennis table out there, and it's just a shed that was there. I never thought about why it was still there. Anyway, I thought to myself I can do a bit better than that, and I had some left over paint so I started painting the bottom. Oh, that looks all right, so I went a bit more.

Facilitator: Yeah? You had no training or anything?

Interviewee: No, no, and I was in Bunnings in Warrnambool one day, and they had little paint pots for \$2 - no they were a dollar. They weren't terribly exciting colours, but I bought a couple, and I thought if I muck it up we'll just paint over it again. Yeah, it just went from there. The kids came home at Christmas time and, oh, Mum, I didn't know you were an artist. I said I didn't think I was either. I haven't had any remarks about - gee what did you do that for? Or, you'd better scrub that off. I mean, it's no...

Facilitator: So your family and husband supported you?

Interviewee: I think they have. Well the first time my daughter saw me doing it she said oh, I didn't think you could do that.

Facilitator: So how did that make you feel?

Interviewee: I just thought well there wasn't too much expertise in it. You just grab a brush and you go like this.

Facilitator: Yes, but with no training, to attempt a tree and windmill and...

Interviewee: No, no, but if you look at it...

Facilitator: You just...

Interviewee: If you've looked at the trees for 35 years - I don't just see a brown tree with leaves on it. I see umpteen different colours in that tree, and while I'm painting I'm looking at the trees to see.

Facilitator: That's terrific, with no training, and no one telling you to look at the tree closely. You just did it.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: Most people have to go to lessons to learn things like that.

Interviewee: Oh, right.

Facilitator: So then you started...

Interviewee: See that's another thing, I wouldn't bother going to lessons.

Facilitator: Why?

Interviewee: I couldn't be bothered. By the time I got to Warrnambool to have lessons I'd be worn out.

Facilitator: So how much time did you spend on it, when you started? How passionate were you?

Interviewee: Oh, a couple of hours a day. When Ken was down in the paddock cutting hay and that, I'd be sitting at home - the minutes he'd go out the door I'd get out there and start painting. Then as long as I had the dinner on the table, that's all that mattered. You can't do much in the afternoon because the wall gets too hot, so I'd knock off then. Yeah, a couple hours a day is enough.

Facilitator: So it became a real passion? As soon as he's out the door I'll get out onto it?

Interviewee: Yeah, well, yeah, so it doesn't interrupt. Yeah.

Facilitator: So then he'd come back of a night and say oh, we've got another tree or another windmill. I'll be in it next.

Interviewee: Oh, well. We used to have dairy cows, and...

Facilitator: It's a big dairy area.

Interviewee: Yes, yes, it's all dairy - jersey cows. I would like to do that, but that's in the hard basket so I won't be able to do that I don't think. Maybe I might. I'd probably need to have a go and then paint over it. If they were Friesian cows you could put a few black and white spots on the thing and call it a cow, but you can't do that with Jerseys.

Facilitator: You want to be true to what you've got around you, do you?

Interviewee: Well we had Jerseys. We had a stud Jersey, but now we've gone out of dairy and just do beef.

Facilitator: So you see this as a bit of a story of your life here?

Interviewee: Of what's around here, yeah.

Facilitator: You don't want to put a black and white cow, you want to be true to what you have around you?

Interviewee: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yeah. I mean we had Friesians too. We had half a herd of Jersey and half a herd of Friesian, but we sold the Friesians early in the piece, a couple of years before the Jerseys, and afterwards Ken said I don't know I bothered milking them. We didn't miss them. He didn't want to sell them, but once he did he didn't care about them.

Facilitator: So what have you got now?

Interviewee: Angus. You haven't got to milk them, and they haven't got horns, they haven't got tits on them to milk, so that sounds all right.

Facilitator: You'd need good fences though.

Interviewee: Oh, yes, tell us about it.

Facilitator: We had Murray Greys for a while a long time ago, which of course is the Australian version of your Angus.

Interviewee: Oh, is it?

Facilitator: The Angus is the original - Murray Grey is your original Australian, they say, the Australian cow, but it comes out of an Angus.

Interviewee: I didn't know that.

Facilitator: Murray Greys base is an Angus. Yeah, but you need good yards and good fences for that.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, well...

Facilitator: There's not much of a return from them, anyway.

Interviewee: No, no, but anyway, we haven't got kids depending on us.

Facilitator: So what's the hardest thing with living out here?

Interviewee: The hardest? Getting out the back door.

Facilitator: What, you mean off the farm or...

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: ...out of the house?

Interviewee: Off the farm - out of the front gate, then.

Facilitator: You mean to life?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Why, because of all the work?

Interviewee: Ken's just as happy to stay here.

Facilitator: Does that mean you stay, if Ken stays?



Interviewee: Well either that or I don't have a life. It's not much of a life without your husband, is it?

Facilitator: You don't go off independently much?

Interviewee: No, not unless it's shopping.

Facilitator: Yeah, so you won't go off to visit on your own, or have classes or anything like that?

Interviewee: No. I couldn't be bothered.

Facilitator: So your whole social...

Interviewee: Different people say to me come to swimming. Well swimming's at nine o'clock in the morning in Warrnambool. I couldn't be bothered going swimming, and then running around Warrnambool with your wet hair, and doing the shopping and then coming home. I couldn't be bothered.

Facilitator: So how much time is spent actually helping out in the...

Interviewee: Not much at all, now.

Facilitator: Not much?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: When you were dairy you were?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah. When we were dairy my job was to feed the calves.

Facilitator: You don't miss that?

Interviewee: I'd get back to the dairy when it was clean up time, so then we'd clean up and have breakfast together. Then he'd go out again and feed up do all the things during the day.

Facilitator: So where do you think your art's going to take you?

Interviewee: Nowhere.

Facilitator: You've stopped that, now? That's it?

Interviewee: No, no, I'll paint that, but I might - the kids said to me at Christmas time - my daughter came down and said mum, you'll have to do it on canvas. Her husband is a bit of an artist and he's done work on canvas, but I don't know whether I'll see myself doing that.

Facilitator: So there's no real drive to express yourself in that form, you don't think?

Interviewee: It was just to cover up the shed?

Interviewee: No, no, it was really just to cover up the shed, yeah. Then it's just grown from there. I've put a few trees on, and the windmill. When the kids - when the grandchildren came I said to them - they hadn't seen anything like that before on a shed.

Facilitator: I don't think many people...

Interviewee: I said can you see a frog? They were looking all over the place for a frog. Oh yeah, I can see a frog. Can you see a koala? Oh yeah, I can see a koala.

Facilitator: So it's fantastic, really, for them.

Interviewee: Yes, it's including them in what there is around. I mean there was a koala just down the road yesterday.

Facilitator: Oh right.

Interviewee: Yeah, up in the tree. I was hanging around the road waiting for Ken to bring some cows across the road. Somebody's got to be at the gate while they're coming across. I was looking around, oh there's a little koala up there.

Facilitator: Then you can put your grandchildren in it...

Interviewee: Well I could do, I could do...

Facilitator: ...and then they can see themselves grow up through the whole shed, really.

Interviewee: ...but I don't know whether I'm clever enough to paint...

Facilitator: As you say, though, you can always paint over it.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Facilitator: Who cares?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: Are you close with your neighbours? Do they see it or anything like that?

Interviewee: No, no.

Facilitator: You're not really close with your neighbour?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: Really?

Interviewee: No. The neighbours down here are two old fellas over 80 with walking sticks and gear. They don't even get out of bed till five o'clock.

Facilitator: So you don't want it anyway, do you? Companionship.

Interviewee: Not their companionship, no.

Facilitator: There's no one else?

Interviewee: No, well the lady down here used to call in, and occasionally I'd see her on the road when she was going past, but she and her husband shifted to Warrnambool 12 months ago. They were a lot older than us.

Facilitator: So you weren't born on the land?

Interviewee: No I was born in Dandenong.

Facilitator: Okay.

Interviewee: My husband was born at Nirranda South, which is on the Great Ocean Road going towards Port Campbell. He's always been a farmer.

Facilitator: Okay, so it came out of that.

Interviewee: Yeah. When we got married we share farmed, and saved our pennies together, and we bought this first block. It was all covered with blackberries and stumps and snakes and goodness knows what. We cleaned all that up and lived in a house that hadn't been lived in for seven years. We painted all that up, and cleaned it up. Then we built this house. I've painted this place about four times since.

Facilitator: You've got a thing about painting.

Interviewee: Didn't we?

Facilitator: So you love it? You love living here.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, I don't think I could live in Warrnambool or a town, just on a pocket handkerchief.

Facilitator: What would he do in town?

Interviewee: Well that's right, that's what he says.

Facilitator: Sit around next to you all the time. You don't want that, do you?

Interviewee: That's what he said. Sometimes he says to me, if he's in the back of the yard there, come out and look at these heifers. So I trundle over there and have a look. I said to him one day, what's it all for? What am I going to do? I mean he really enjoys it and gets into the pedigrees of this, and that, and whatever.

Facilitator: So you love looking after the house, and cooking?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah.

Facilitator: Looking after him?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. He looks after himself too. He's not backward at - he's able to do whatever he has to do, if he has to do it.

Facilitator: At the moment, go for a walk.

Interviewee: Yeah, well...

Facilitator: Health wise...

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah, there's nothing wrong with him.

Facilitator: So he must have got a shock the first day he came back and you're outside madly painting the shed.

Interviewee: Oh well...

Facilitator: Or did you discuss it with him?

Interviewee: No, I'd sort of said to him, you know, I wouldn't mind...

[Audio break]

Facilitator: So what happens when you go to the town?

Interviewee: He thought what the hell's she going to think up next? You know, what's it going to be like...

Facilitator: Why what do you normally - do you normally do strange things?

Interviewee: I always want to do something.

Facilitator: Yeah, but when someone says to the husband I'm going to paint the shed, you'd think of painting it caramel or white or something.

Interviewee: Yeah, no he knew I wanted it to be a picture of some sort. Then I got the blue on it for the sky, and I'd said to somebody while he was around, I think the blue's a bit dark. I might have to put some clouds up there and

start lightening it up a bit. Then he said oh, I like the blue. I still think it's a bit dark, but anyway.

Facilitator: He liked it?

Interviewee: I haven't changed it.

Facilitator: I think it's fabulous that the grandchildren come in and be part of it. You know that'll stay with them forever...

Interviewee: Oh yeah.

Facilitator: ...this huge big - from their height, you know?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's right.

Facilitator: The big trees - Nana painted the shed with the trees from the farm.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, that's right, and there are hay bales out there, too. At the time when they came down, there were hay bales out in the paddock, so they could see what that was all about. We'd cleaned out - all the kids had finally left and I cleaned out there rooms and all their junk from when they were kids, and I said here they are. If you don't want it, leave it there and I'll put it in the rubbish bin. So I got a bit of stuff back to put in the rubbish bin, and there were little ornaments that they'd had in the fish tank, and things like that. I put them around the garden, and I said to the grandkids - when there was nothing to do - I said you go and see if you can find me one of these things. Off they'd run.

Facilitator: Yeah, fabulous stuff. I've been seeing some, I've just...

[Audio break]

Facilitator: Yeah, it needs to be done. She did this all the time?

Interviewee: Oh not every time, but when we go to town and hang around. If he's on the other side of the road, and he knows I'm looking for him, he'll whistle.

Facilitator: What the dog whistle? The proper - like as if he's calling his dog?

Interviewee: Yeah, whatever. Then I just look up and I say, oh okay, he's over there. So then he'll...

Facilitator: Do other people do that in the street? Is it a farming thing? I've never heard that before. I mean, I've heard women say how they get sick of being whistled at in the - you know...

Interviewee: That's only because they can't hear. When there's cattle in the yard and they're mooing and scratching the concrete, if he was to talk to me I couldn't hear.

Facilitator: Right, so he whistles you in the yards, too?

Interviewee: No he doesn't. No, not now he doesn't.

Facilitator: He just whistles you across the street?

Interviewee: Yeah, but that whistling in the yard, that's only because you can't hear. When you get a hundred cows in the yard, they're mooing and carrying on, they don't want to be there and they're scratching their feet on the concrete and making a hell of a racket, you can't hear yourself talk.

Facilitator: So even tomorrow, if you went down the street, tomorrow he'd whistle you across the street if you were on the wrong side - the other side from you?

Interviewee: No, no.

Facilitator: He probably wouldn't do it now?

Interviewee: He probably wouldn't do it now, because we're not time constrained anymore. Yeah.

Facilitator: So it was...

[Audio 2]

Interviewee: ...this thing here today. Creative expression takes many forms. Cake making, which I've done, preserving, which I do, gardening, which I do, and sewing, which I have done when the kids were young. I haven't played the bagpipes. I've done all those things.

Facilitator: I want that to be acknowledged about women on the farm, that...

[Phone rings]

Interviewee: That's my daughter. She's due to have a baby in two or three weeks.

Facilitator: Are you madly knitting?

Interviewee: No mum, you don't knit these days. When she tells us she was pregnant she said and don't you start knitting mum. [Laughs]

Facilitator: Well as I was just saying, the Country Women's Association and things like that, we all sort of think that's a bit - not a joke, but it's very mumsy or something.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Facilitator: When I'm trying to say this is their form of expression, [unclear], this is a sense of.

Interviewee: Well it's their social life.

Facilitator: As well. If it wasn't for the arts or the cake making that gives that social aspect, these women wouldn't be so - they wouldn't survive, maybe. They wouldn't have a sense of me and a position...

Interviewee: No. When the kids were at school I used to make cakes and we had the cake stalls and things like that to raise money. But I just felt why should the school have to raise money? Once you give that money to the school it becomes the property of the Education Department.

Facilitator: Oh was it? What, if you gave the local primary school...

Interviewee: If you gave your local primary school \$100, that then becomes the...

Facilitator: Not for the school budget, doesn't go into the school coffers?

Interviewee: The school might - say the school buys skipping ropes for the kids out of that \$100. So all that \$100 has gone on skipping ropes. Those skipping ropes then become the property of the Education Department. Now if you wanted to take those skipping ropes home, you can't because they're the property of the Education Department. And if the Education Department wanted that school to have 100 skipping ropes, why don't they buy them themselves?

Facilitator: So your cake making goes towards the school...

Interviewee: Yeah. There's my husband.

[Aside conversation]

Facilitator: So you're saying the cake making, that would buy things for the school for your children...

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: That's what you wanted though, isn't it?

Interviewee: Yeah it is.

Facilitator: So why is there a problem with that?

Interviewee: Well once upon a time, we had an old school down here. There were 30 kids at the school our kids went to. The teacher wanted to buy carpet. Now we didn't even have carpet in our own home at that stage. Now why should I make cakes to raise money to buy carpet for the school...

Facilitator: Because your kids are sitting on the floor without carpet, that's why I guess.

Interviewee: Well if it was so important, the Education Department should have paid for it. But it does gel people together, making cakes and having a talk about whatever.

[Aside conversation]

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

- F: Sorry, so when you got married you did what?
- I: Well I had a father who wouldn't let me paint.
- F: So were you a painter before you got married? How did you start the creative aspect of your life?
- I: It's always been there. I had a teacher at school, down at Frankston, and she pleaded with my father to let me follow painting, and do my art. And he just said no. He said 'if you think you're going to do that, there is no way you're going to Melbourne, you are not going to do that, you're staying here and you're going to work in the office.'
- F: Of here? Of the vineyard?
- I: No, this is my father.
- F: Oh, right, okay.
- I: The office of the motor agency. So I was put into my father's office. Mum was there too, they were both working there. Then I got married, and I started again about painting, and Andy said 'no you're not, why are you going to do that?', so once again it didn't happen, and it was before we came down here, so we're probably talking '68, '66, they used to have a competition up there at Henderson Park and so I did a pen and ink, it was, and I went to a friend of mine, knowing that Andy was 'bent on the buck' and I said 'if you buy my painting, I'll give you your money back' and she said 'oh alright'. So she went and bought the painting (laughs) and you could see him light up (Andy) 'oh maybe there's some money in this' – it's the only way. I maneuvered my way into being able to do it. So I thought then it's crazy to continue without some knowledge about it. So I went to the Elsternwick Art School in Melbourne, so I rang her, they had morning, afternoon and evening classes, and I asked her if I came down for a week could I do all sessions for the week.
- F: So you left here?
- I: We were still in (names a town), this is before here. And she said 'well, if you think you can do it, fine then go!'. So I ended up going down there for three different classes over a period of time. I did pure drawing the first time, then I did oils and the last I did the water medium. And at the end of that this guy came to me and said 'you can't learn any more here, but I do suggest you get yourself up to the summer schools'. The first one I went to was New England Uni, and the second was in Toowoomba, so I then followed with that, and at the end of the Toowoomba summer school I thought, I'm ready to go.
- F: And what's your husband saying at this stage?
- I: Well, he's letting it go because I was selling work the whole way, and it was amazing he let me go to the summer schools, I mean, he wasn't all that happy when I started going down to Melbourne but he could see results I suppose, so he let me keep going.
- F: Why did you think they didn't want you to do it? What's your reasoning? Why didn't they want you to go?
- I: I think they want you exactly where they can control you!
- F: They don't like your independence...
- I: No. No, well I don't know about anyone else, but that's the Italian thing.
- F: Well I don't think it's an Italian thing.
- I: You think it's everyone?
- F: Well, I'm seeing that it's particularly, well I hear this all the time really, they're letting the women go and work on farms but only because it's...
- I: It's the money thing. That's the only reason I'm sure he let me go in the first place.
- F: And so, just learn from there? And then kids came from then and you still painted?
- I: Well I got the children before this.
- F: Right.
- I: The boys were probably six or seven about that.
- F: Right, and you're still painting with them?

I: Mm hmm, (agrees).

F: Plus what, working on the farm? So how much time...

I: We moved here, we didn't move here 'til '74. And it was '74 I think, when I had my first exhibition in Mildura. '74? (thinks to herself) Yeah. I'd worked for different people, but I had an exhibition in '74.

F: And he loved that, your husband?

I: He doesn't like any of my work.

F: Oh. But he loved the opening? Did he go to the opening?

I: Yes, but he doesn't get any joy out of it at all.

F: Doesn't feel proud of you or anything?

I: I don't know what he thinks, he's never said anything.

F: Oh okay. (tape cuts)

F: ...Promoted other women...

I: Yeah, but back then there wasn't much. ... We'll sit out there

F: That would be terrific. So how much of farming to your painting?

I: This is where it's all new for me now, because that's all over. I'm living here on my own, so for the first time

F: And you're looking forward to that?

I: Oh yes.

F: But when you started, your kids were small, did you have much time for the painting?

I: No.

F: So you gave it away mainly during...

I: Oh, I usually attack it every now and again. Generally exhibitions I thought – the only way I've ever done it – apart from odd commissions and stuff – if I set a date for an exhibition I tell them all 'just go away' so I've done that over the years.

F: And they just gradually accept that...

I: I just tell them 'go away, this is what I'm doing' and they all know once I've said that to just 'leave her alone'. That's how I've always done it.

F: And does your environment...well obviously, environment is a great part of your work.

I: Yes.

F: Just vineyards or do you go outside of the area?

I: My last exhibition, very sadly, I haven't got a single photo, it was probably one of my best, and that was the dying of the vineyard.

F: Okay, so your art follows you.

I: Yes. Um, what was the one before that, 'Munga'. It was Hong Kong, I'd been back to Hong Kong so it was 'munga', ah, so I combined the two. The one before that, it was straight Hong Kong because I'd been over there again because David was there. So I tend to paint about things, I don't just start painting about nothing.

F: So you can map your mind through your painting?

I: They're still abstract, but they're always related to something – where I've been, something I love.

F: Recording your life.

I: That's 'mungo', that's the 'mungo' exhibition.

F: So, what value do you put on your art?

I: Monetary wise?

F: No, it may not be monetary at all, what importance is art to you?

I: I just wish I could do it forever and ever. Not even have to worry about anything else. But I think I'm just about there now, except for paying bills and yeah, that's all I've got to do here now.

F: Because what does it do for you? What does it make you feel?

I: People have said to me 'aren't you lucky that you've got such a relaxing, easy thing to do'. No, it's not relaxing and easy at all, I generally get uneasy and uptight, but once it goes right, it's the most euphoric feeling you can imagine. To stand in something that you know is right – there's no better feeling on God's earth.

F: Could you have...

I: Your whole innards, you just look at something...and yes. But to get there, it's not a peaceful, easy –

F: So if you didn't have your art you'd.

I: ...all the time I've tried to explain this all the time I see shapes and in my head all the time I arrange shapes. No matter what I'm doing. If I'm sitting out on the tractor with a grape harvester and there is a moon or something I mentally paint. I mentally paint all the time.

F: So it was not the streefullness of farming really that brought out the art at all  
 I: I remember reading something once the easiest way to runaway is to paint, that (laugh) that made me smile when I read it ..there may be a bit of that.  
 (pause)

I don't know how people see that. If I start on a work, I'm generally, I'm half way started on something here – (shows something). This is an exhibition that's on in Mildura right now, but the Australian Wine and Food are having a dinner in the Gallery, so, because there's food and wine there, all artworks have to be taken out of the gallery for the night. So, I said to them, I'll do you a series...you can slide them in...

F: They're yours?  
 I: No. ...You can slide the works in.  
 F: Okay, so you'll do a series that you don't care if people throw wine on it, in fact it might help the painting, mightn't it?  
 I: (laughs) No, no. So, I've got this far. They'll all be different colours, so I've just backgrounded it. So tomorrow morning I'm going to start – it's wine and food – and I'm not pinching it because it's my design anyway – so I'm going to incorporate their logo and the riverboat and grapes and fruit...  
 F: Is this a paid thing? Can you get some money out of this?  
 I: No, this isn't...

#### END OF FIRST RECORDING

I: Went and got me a little thing to stick on the fridge.  
 F: Oh so you don't do any cooking?  
 I: Oh yeah, I do all the cooking, but he went and purchased all the foodstuffs. So he kept it all here, so that when all of a sudden, I had to do it, and I still can't do it. And I'm not interested in doing it. But I have to, because you have to eat.  
 F: Okay. Talking with Kay Sylvester, on the 28<sup>th</sup> in Wemen, just outside of Ballarat. So can we talk a little bit about how you came to be out here?  
 I: I don't know...what, just as it is?  
 F: A little bit of the history. One woman I met went to her niece's debut dance at the local church and came up from Melbourne to support the niece or something like this, and ended up being asked to supper and she's been there for 35 years.  
 I: (laughs) Mine wasn't voluntary like that. I was dragged here.  
 F: Were you born here?  
 I: No, I was born in Mildura.  
 F: Albury, yes.  
 I: No, Mildura. And married, and ended up on a vineyard out at Cardross, which is just out of Mildura towards Redcliffs. And I was out there, and Andy decided to look for land where he could grab his water when he wanted it, because up there you're on irrigation schedules. So you're number one, number two, number three, and you get told what day you've got to water. He wanted to be able to irrigate when he wanted. So he started traveling up by car up the river, and this is the closest place he found. Nangiloc and Colignan all of them had been taken, so he just kept coming up, and this was it. So he told me...  
 F: And had he always been in vines?  
 I: Yes  
 F: In Italy?  
 I: Well, his father came from Italy in '25 or '26, and went sugar cane farming and worked really hard and ended up in Sunraysia and bought a vineyard, and then sent for the family to come out. Andy came out in '29 at the age of four.  
 F: So he didn't take over his father's vineyard?  
 I: No, he bought one. He joined the forces, and that's where he anglicized the name too, because once the Italians joined the war they became total 'dago's' and life was miserable for him in the air force, so his commanding officer said to him 'we can anglicize your name and no one will know the difference' because he's a northerner so he doesn't look Italian at all.  
 F: So what was his name?  
 I: Salvestro. Angelo Salvestro.  
 F: Okay. A hot-blooded Italian. And where did you meet him?

I: At a car club, because I was a car crank. I used to race go-carts and cross-country cars with my father because he was the dealer for Porsche, Jaguar and BMW in Mildura. And he, in his turn had come representing Australia from New Zealand in the Grand Prix. He won the Grand Prix in 1936. So we've got the speed car, that's always been there...now I've lost track

F: So no, he found the plot and he said 'come and live with me' from the car club after he met you?

I: Oh no, we went out and then, well, then mum was driving to Melbourne, um, and had a head-on crash at Bendigo and was killed.

F: And how old were you?

I: Nineteen.

F: Oh god.

I: You don't put this in your...

#### END OF SECOND RECORDING

I: He was the first one, this is when I was floundering around.

F: Is he a local?

I: He was, he was a teacher over at Irymple Tech. and then, it sort of died a bit, and then I got onto this school in Melbourne, and up to the summer schools, um, and Colin here, and an artist that I did the school with in Toowoomba – his name was Robert Greaves.

F: Ah, I know Robert Greaves.

I: Do you?

F: No I don't, but I know his work. He does farm animals and things doesn't he?

I: No, he's abstract.

F: Abstract. I know him though.

I: That was the workshop I went up to there. And so, I kept in contact with him, and he came up...

F: Pastels

I: Huh?

F: Pastels? I'm trying to figure his image.

I: No, it was all acrylic.

F: Oh okay. Sorry, so then you went up to...

I: And so from then on I saw Colin helped me here, and then Robert came up here, and I'd go down and look at shows down in Melbourne with him, um, and so I kept learning through him. We'd go to exhibitions and pull them apart, why that's right, why that's wrong, and I've just been very lucky with the people I ended up crossing paths with. Um, yeah, for years we'd go to an exhibition in Melbourne...

F: Is he alive, Robert Greaves?

I: He died, ah, about 2007. I think. Or 2006, I can't remember. Or even if I was doing something here, and it wasn't working or whatever I could always ring him, and well what's the answer if something wasn't taking or 'if I do this and mix that and that, is that okay?' And he was always on the end of the telephone, if I struck a problem. I'm very lucky there, I've had great mentors.

F: But you're on your own now.

I: Mm.

F: Maybe you can mentor someone locally too, now. Not interested in that sort of thing?

I: Well if anyone at all ever asks...very happy to...but there's no one out here that paints or...no.

F: Do you get down to any of those galleries now, in Melbourne? Albert Rd? The new galleries and things?

I: Up until about two years ago I used to go down a lot, but in the last couple of years I go down quite often, especially for the exhibitions I want to see. Actually on the weekend after next, Antoinette Zima, who up until a few months ago has just been put in this committee of rebuilding the theatre, she was the curator, she and I are going up to Canberra to see the masters.

F: That'll be terrific going together.

I: Yeah. We went over and saw Degarthe because Mildura arts centre has got 'Girl in a Bath' – a beautiful painting and of course all the other galleries overseas won't let their pastels go because they misshape and they lose their pastel. But Mildura had one, it was the only pastel in the whole exhibition. So we went over to see our 'girl', it was very spectacular – being the only pastel



– she was almost sort of mystical and lost in amongst all the oils. So no, we had to go to that. It was a great exhibition, I just loved the little ballerina. So we had a great weekend. Kept getting lost around flipping Canberra. We were there for the night that they have their fireworks for Canberra's birthday. That was mind-boggling.

F: I studied...(tape cuts)...pedophile you know, the Henson sort of stuff, wouldn't you? Little girls in tutus...

I: I think he was definitely on the borderline of strange. I think his fixation with all those working girls – some of the paintings – I thought 'what is it with you?' as I was walking around looking at them, a woman sort of coming off the toilet wiping herself and things, and I thought 'why would you want to paint that? Why do you need to project a woman wiping herself over a toilet?' He really did some very strange stuff. I said it to Julian – an ex-curator – because he's been put up, he's now in charge of Arts and Culture, I said to him, 'what would be the need of a man...' it was the most debasing...he said it was their life then, that's the way it was. Okay. That was his explanation.

F: But it's our life too now, but we don't.

I: I just couldn't. And then of course he had all his brothel section, and, yeah, I just found it interesting. But I'm glad we went. It was a great weekend. And we're about to have a replay – off we're going again. Actually she was trying to book rooms last weekend and all the quotes she was getting were \$1,000 a night. And I said 'what's with Canberra?' and she said 'I don't know, but we're not going that week' so it was cancelled. My little black book – every weekend they're all crossed out with Canberra written on them and then that's all crossed off.

F: And it's because she couldn't find accommodation.

I: And she found out why – Obama was due to come to Canberra that weekend.

F: Oh, okay. Of course.

I: (laughs) So, um. Then it was cancelled but by then she was organizing other things too.

F: Where is she now if she's not at the Mildura Gallery, what does she do?

I: Ah no, they're still based there. But there was a committee consult with architects and so she was promoted.

F: Promoted from being a curator?

I: So that anyone comes on site they go to her.

F: Site Manager.

I: Yeah, so there's a group. Julie and Antoinette, about five of them. Um, yeah. So that was fantastic for her, because she's only a young girl.

F: So why did you respond to Sally's email to help with the study of this? Any reason?

I: Actually it wasn't Sally. Sally rang me after the event, who sent me an email... Karen Wilga, she's the curator there. Once Antoinette was promoted, Karen Wilga has gone as curator. And it was Karen who emailed me.

F: Oh, I didn't know the curator knew, I was hoping to talk to her to tell her it what it was...

I: No, she was the one that emailed me.

F: Okay.

I: And that's when I emailed you, but I really didn't know what you wanted.

F: Yeah but it's generous that you participate really.

I: Well you can try and try to do something and you don't get any response, and I've been down that track too you know?

F: I was at Warrnambool the other day asking Brenda whether she knew people down there, and another person I approached down there, I'm not really meant to approach people with ethics, you're meant to get people to approach you so it doesn't look as though you're coercing people or anything. (tape cuts)

I: ...It's just pathetic. It's where no one can see it – which is even funnier – if it was sitting there you'd think 'well, oh yeah' but it was by total accident- an oleander (plant) – because it had three trunks that I started mucking around with it and um, Andy looked at me and said 'Mum, for God's sakes just let the bloody thing grow'

F: So you were manipulating the trunks and everything into a shape. Has it worked?

I: Well it's still going, because...people came to cut down trees here last year and I took them for a walk and I asked them 'how long do you think it'll be before I can remove the posts?' because I've got the things supported by the posts, I live for the day that the posts can come out and it stands. And I said, 'how long do you think?' and he said 'oh there's a lot of weight on a single stem – probably twenty' (laughs). So I said 'damn!' and off I trotted and bought three more, so now I've planted three to support, so I've got a base, so now I'm training three more up um, just so I can take those posts away and see it stand.

F: So do you cross your mediums much? Are you always a painter? Apart from this sculpture are you always a painter?

I: Yes.

F: Never thought to...I guess you do it in your house anyway and garden.

I: And the pipes and stuff. I'd love to do something freestanding, and now that I've got all the time to do it I may start something. I'm just so wrapped that all of a sudden I'm going to be able to do whatever I feel like doing, I think it will be fantastic.

F: It won't frighten you will it? An empty canvas? A blank canvas with no restrictions?

I: Yeah I think it'll be interesting. And David, over in Singapore said 'Mum, just start doing them and putting them in place on the wall, just get there and do what you like'. He's a great little backstop too, he's a darling heart. I've got two beautiful boys. He said 'just get going and stick 'em to the wall'.

F: You always need one fan don't you (laughs) No matter how strong you look, or confident.

I: (laughs) Oh, he knows the frail shell, really. Alright, well have some dessert.

F: Oh the pear. You're anxious to get to the pear?

**END OF RECORDING**  
**END OF TRANSCRIPTION**