

Timed Summary

Interview with Margot Miles

OH NTRS 226

Interviewer: Francis Good

Date: 20.10.1994

Note: Key words shown in bold.

START TIME	SUMMARY
Tape 1	
0.00	Margot Sylvia Miles provides details of her family background. She was born in 1910 at Geelong in Victoria. Her father was in the war and her mother moved to Adelaide . Margot worked at John Martins making school uniforms but only worked two days a week during the Depression and applied for a job as a housekeeper in Tennant Creek . She was given £10 to get to Alice Springs and travelled there on the Ghan .
2.12	The Ghan had old fashioned carriages with no sleeping arrangements and there were many stops including Port Augusta and Oodnadatta where passengers could get a meal; there was no food on the train. She was driven from Alice Springs to Tennant Creek through beautiful country but there were no made roads. They stopped at Barrow Creek for a meal. Her new boss was Alec Scott .
5.07	Margot explains her working life at Tennant Creek. She was paid £2/10/- a week found and she thought that was a fortune. On her first day she helped to cook the breakfast at the hotel. The hotel had three bedrooms, a billiard room and a kitchen. There was no refrigeration and they used Coolgardie safes draped in hessian. There were no butchers but a man shot cattle and they cooked it immediately using salt to make corned beef which could last up to six months. They used bush cooks who knew what to do.
7.55	She worked at the hotel for between 10-15 years. There were only a few single women and hundreds of men; most of the men were old prospectors aged 50-60. The pub was owned by Jack Noble who came from Derby in Western Australia where he used to break horses. Alec Scott managed the hotel for him. They made their money by carrying parcels and everything to stations. They used horses for transport. Jack owned the pub for seven years and then sold it to Ken Milne , a bookmaker for £25,000.
8.50	Jack Scott was a bookmaker and moved back to Palmerston Roads ; he was a heavy drinker. Alec Scott returned to Derby. Alec was a Communist and used to preach to her about it; he got all the communist papers and would give them to her to read. The Tennant Creek Hotel had a very large ladies' toilet and they used it shelter women from their husbands when they beat them up; they brought their children and camped the night in the toilet.
14.17	Margot describes life in Tennant Creek. There was a large dance hall where big dances and balls were held and this was very good for the women as there few women and many men. Everyone in the town helped each other when they were in need.

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15.30	She explains that after working in the hotel she went to work in the paper shop run by Liz Traynor . The papers were delivered by plane at night and she began work at 4.00 am and finished at 5.00 pm. Jack Noble had spent his money and asked her for a loan but she refused as she knew she would never get it back. There was a small wallaby at Honeymoon Ridge that she believes was killed by prospectors for food. There were also many rabbits that they ate. The wallabies haven't been seen for 20 years.
18.05	Margot describes her job as cook for the mines at Noble's Nob and other mines. She worked with Kit Fisher and made enough money to build a new house in Tennant Creek. There were good facilities at Noble's Nob including big refrigeration and big stoves; she had to cook three meals a day for 300 men – these were in post war years. Most of the workers were new Australians, and they were not miners but surface workers. The miners used to pinch the gold but it was not regarded as a crime among the miners.
20.51	Some of the prospectors chased gold all their life, they loved the search, always expecting the big find. The good prospectors had very good living quarters. There is no longer any prospecting as it is all held by leases. The old prospectors could no longer work and there were no pensions and five of them lived on the verandah of the hotel. They were respected and looked after. When they died she bought plaques for them in the cemetery. The cost was about \$1,000 but she respected them and thought it was worth it. Alec Scott made sure they were looked after.
24.27	Margot explains that she stayed in Tennant Creek because of the people. It was always a happy place and people helped each other all the time, and everyone knew each other. She ran the pensioners' bookstall and talked to many tourists there. She loved Tennant Creek from the moment she arrived, the naturalness of it, the beautiful sunsets and the wild state. She has left three times but always got homesick and returned. She has her burial plot there.
	End Tape.