

## Timed Summary

Interview with Geoff Cooper

OH 744/1

Interviewer: Lizzie Russell

Date: 4.11.2004

Note: Key words shown in bold.

START TIME	SUMMARY
Disc 1	
0.00	<b>Geoff Cooper</b> provides details of his family background. He was born in <b>Victor Harbour</b> on 14.11.1951 and he grew up at <b>Goolwa</b> . He had a strong sense of family and he was under the care of his grandparents as his father was working in Victoria and his mother moved around a lot; he grew up with his relatives in Victor Harbour; the family was very spread out. He had a normal childhood which included fishing, swimming, playing, and going to school.
2.11	Geoff explains that he has very clear memories of the day he was removed. His grandmother had fought strenuously for him not be taken away and it did not happen until after she died. He was taken away from school in the morning. The headmaster came for him and he was taken away and into the court system. His grandfather was there but he was not allowed to talk to him. Geoff thought it was a game and did not know what was going on. His head was shaved and doused with kerosene, and he was given new clothes.
4.36	He was taken to the courthouse at Goolwa. He was then put in a car with a police officer and another official. He was committed to care and became a <b>ward of the state</b> .
5.55	Geoff describes his time at the <b>Glandore Children's Home</b> where he stayed for about two years. It was exciting and there was always something to do. Glandore was also a holding place for young offenders. He slept in a dormitory for Small boys. The dormitory for Big boys included offenders waiting to go to <b>Magill</b> . Some boys were waiting to be adopted or fostered. A classroom was set up at Glandore and his teacher was <b>Mrs McKinnin</b> . He was healthy most of the time.
8.30	On Sundays they would go to church then wait in the front office in case a sponsor came and took them out for the day; usually no one came for them. At Christmas they got together with the children at <b>Colebrook Home at Eden Hills</b> . One day he was fostered out. He was fitted out with new clothes and taken to <b>Bradbury</b> ; to him it was another adventure as he was getting out of the kids home. He went to a small farm with four other children who had been fostered and they all had duties. There were other Aboriginal children there. He ran away and managed to get 68 km in a day. He was trying to get home but was caught at <b>Tooperang</b> . A farmer spotted him and called the police. He was taken back to the foster home and beaten so badly that he couldn't go to school for a week.
12.39	All the mail that he got was heavily censored by <b>Welfare</b> ; his family wrote to him through Welfare but did not know where he was. He went to <b>Scott Creek Primary</b> which he really enjoyed, he had friends and he played sport. He then went to <b>Oakbank High School</b> . He was allowed to attend because he had been exempted under the Aborigines Act and wasn't considered to be an Aboriginal person.

START TIME	SUMMARY
14.51	The headmaster had right of veto about who went into the school. All his brothers and sisters were in homes as well and had been exempted under the Act.
16.18	He describes being at the Show and his sister recognised him. She was in the <b>Navy</b> and said that they would meet again. She told him to get as much as he could out of life. He didn't see her again until <b>Christmas 1974</b> . He was in the <b>Army</b> then and was travelling from <b>Perth to Melbourne</b> when he stayed with a mate in <b>Adelaide</b> . He caught up with his aunt, his mother and his sister and a group of relatives from <b>Darwin</b> through other Aboriginals whom he met on the bus to the city. He was in his mid 20s at this time.
23.13	He keeps in touch with them but there is no sibling relationship, it is more like adult friends. They will always be there for each other.
25.01	Geoff explains that when he turned 18 he was taken out of care of the Minister. He joined the Army when he was 17½. He was working on maintenance on a highway out of <b>Crafers</b> and loved working outdoors; he had many close mates. The Army was his family and they looked after each other. It gave him a sense of belonging, a sense of discipline and a work ethic. He still keeps in touch with his mates through email.
29.54	He was constantly tested through his basic training because he was an Aboriginal in a white platoon; he took it in his stride when they were trying to provoke him. <b>Vietnam</b> was still going at that time.
33.42	After the Army he worked in the <b>Commonwealth Railways</b> . He needed to get rid of the mentality of being regimented. He worked at <b>Lake Eyre South, Curdiemarka, Beresford and Maree</b> . He enjoyed the solitude, did a lot of reading and got things out of his system.
36.57	Geoff describes his studies and working life. He went to <b>Uni SA</b> and studied <b>Community development</b> in the <b>Aboriginal Task Force</b> , and he was doing social type work as there was a strong need for it. He played football in Darwin but returned to Adelaide because this is where his family is and hasn't returned to Darwin since 1983. He has worked in many country towns in SA. He worked in <b>CES</b> for six years then was head hunted by <b>Debbie Rose</b> to work at <b>Corrections</b> as the first liaison officer in Programs. He moved around a lot and worked in some threatening situations where people have self-harmed.
41.18	He still keeps in touch with most of his old mates. He is currently running a program at <b>Julia Farr</b> . He tries to help people who have suffered and have been through what he has, some in worse situations To many the apology (to Aboriginal people) is important. He has hopes for the next generation, including his daughter who is 13 years old.
50.16	He has to go back to Glandore because of all the abuse that happened there. He has to go back to the school at Goolwa and talk to the Principal to see what happened. He still has a lot of ghosts to get rid of. Every Aboriginal family has been affected by the stolen generation. His wife Lesley is the one who has given him his strength. He is glad that this is all now being exposed to the public, and that the truth can now be told.
	End