

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

1989

I, ANNIE WHICAMENA KELLY give my  
permission to .....

to use this interview, or part of this interview, for  
research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of  
these if required) and for copies to be lodged in  
the.....

.....  
for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed ANNIE W KELLY

Date 3RD SEPTEMBER 1989

Interviewer SHAY KELLY

A SUMMARY OF THE LIFE OF MRS. ANNIE WHILAMENA KELLY  
WHO IS OF ABORIGINAL DESCENT  
FROM 1909 TO 1989

Mrs. Annie Whilamena Kelly's story is that of an Aboriginal woman who was brought up by her Grandmother, Mrs. Sarah Wright, who was born in 1838 and lived for 104 years of the 200 year occupation of Australia. She was born 50 years (second generation) after the invasion of Aboriginal soil by Europeans. As mentioned in Annie's story her Mother suffered a nervous breakdown. She was ten years of age and she was not to live with her Mother again and the strongest influence over her from that time was her grandmother. The ambitions of her grandmother who after only two generations of civilisation was to ensure that Annie adapt to European society without too much pressure from either society.

Annie achieved this by marrying an Aboriginal man, Richard Kelly, who had the very same ambitions as herself and they moved out of their tribal area between the New England Tablelands and Kempsey to Newcastle.

They did not have Aboriginal predecessors to advise them of all the pitfalls that would eventually effect their adjustment to the European society. All they could think of was that their four children would have every opportunity that they could offer.

The traditional lifestyle of an Aboriginal women was to share the caring and nurturing of her children with extended female members of her family, but ~~because~~ Annie left her tribal area for reasons not only to ensure her children achieve an education that would enable them to find skilled employment but to also take them away from the negative environment in Aboriginal Reserves and towns back in the 1940's. Unfortunately, these environments have not changed in 50 years, in fact, they have worsened along with European society with the effects of drugs along with alcohol.

From the time she was 35 years of age she has lived in "white" society in Newcastle without the daily support of her Aboriginal extended family and because she was very conscious of her Aboriginality she did not blend at all within the "white" society. This was to finally take its toll when her children who grew up under her positive influence that they must make their own way in society.

Those four skilled young people who were taken from their natural Aboriginal tribal environment were now young adults and were following their natural instincts in socialising in a "white" environment and that was to prove unsuccessful. They had to return to their own people on the Reserves and they proved to be misfits in that society as well.

Meanwhile at 54 years of age Annie became widowed which meant greater isolation for an Aboriginal woman in white society.

The progressive decisions by Annie and her husband to leave their people and try to adjust to a European society has proven to be an immense sacrifice to her health and now Annie can only hope that her future generations will continue with the enormous adjustment that has to be made by Aboriginal people to this European society.

Maybe with the growth of the country the Aboriginal people will not have to leave their tribal environment which must give them a certain amount of strength to survive in itself as over the past 200 years they have had to PROVE to this European society their own cultural affinity with this land.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
AUSTRALIAN HISTORY  
1989 PART-TIME OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

My name is Miss Shay Kelly. The party that I'm about to interview is my Mother, Mrs. Annie Whilamena Kelly who is of Aboriginal descent. The interview is for my Australian History Course which I am doing at the Newcastle University as part of the 1989 Part-Time Open Foundation Course. It is Saturday, 7.30 p.m., 3rd June 1989 and the interview is being conducted at Unit 12A, 148 Teralba Road, Adamstown, 2289.

\*\*\*\*

It is lovely to be here with you this evening, Mum. I know you turned 80 years of age this year - you were born 9 February 1909.

Q. Would you tell me where you were born?

A. I was born at Callaghan Swamps near Inglebar, 1909 and my father and my grandfather worked amongst cattle for a wealthy grazier at Callaghan Swamps at Inglebar.

Q. Soon after you were born, Mum, I believe you were taken to Nowendoc - would you tell me where Nowendoc is?

A. I don't remember going to Nowendoc as I was very young. I can't remember Inglebar until Aunty Ella (second sister) was born and that was when my Mother took me back to Inglebar and showed me where they lived. What was the question you asked me now?

Q. When you went to live at Nowendoc it was at a very early age and you did all your schooling at Nowendoc, didn't you?

A. Yes, well as I grew up my Father and Mother took a selection at Nowendoc, so many acres of land, and that is where I went to school at Nowendoc.

- Q. You had three sisters and one brother and you all went to school until you were fifteen years of age. I believe your brother, John, was the first Aboriginal to receive the Intermediate Certificate in New South Wales (in Australia). You really must be very proud of him.
- A. I couldn't believe it either. I thought it was only Nowendoc, but it was Australia. When I found out it was Australia, I was more pleased about it.
- Q. You must have had a marvellous teacher (Mrs. Kinnear).
- A. We did. She loved them (the Aboriginal people). Yes. She loved Aunty Mary (youngest sister). She took Aunty Mary into live with her as a companion (a cattle station near Gloucester).
- Q. Nowendoc is at the back of Taree. It is beautiful country?
- A. It is a long way from Taree but it is closer to Gloucester. There is Nowendoc, then Gloucester at the foot of the hill where poor Ernie (Wright) was buried, but Taree is miles and miles back this way, back towards Wingham, you know, going back towards Kempsey on the railway.
- Q. You're Father's people came from there, didn't they? (Where?) From Nowendoc?
- A. He came from Callaghan's Swamps, Inglebar (he spent most of his life at Nowendoc, didn't he?) After he got married. He got married at Inglebar. There were three weddings. There was Dad's, and his sister, Aunty Annie and Uncle Jack, his brother. They had three weddings (on the same day).

Then they all left Inglebar to build at Nowendoc to have their children and for them to go to school.

Q. The three brothers were given a selection each, weren't they Mum (they took up selections). There was your Uncle Henry.

A. That's what took them down there. It was land that was opened up and they wanted people to take land, so Dad took up one selection, Uncle Henry took the other and Uncle Jack took up the other one. But they lost it all because they couldn't get work and they didn't have the money to pay, the little money they had to pay to keep it going.

Q. I believe your Mother suffered a nervous breakdown, Mum, and she left you at a very early age. How old were you?

A. I was ten years old - eight or nine. I was eight years older than John. John was just born. I suppose he must have been either 6 months or 6 weeks old.

Q. So you lived with your grandparents.

A. Our grandparents, Sarah Wright and Henry Wright.

Q. What did Henry do for a living when he was at Nowendoc, Mum?

A. Grandfather Henry Wright, he worked for Mr. Laurie, a cattle station owner and he done all his work among the cattle, doctoring cattle, drafting cattle, looking after cattle and sending cattle to the stations and taking them to Gloucester for selling here in Newcastle and Sydney for Mr. Laurie.



Q. Grannie Sarah - did she work at the station at all?

A. No - she stayed at home and looked after the children. She use to make all of her own bread, home cooking. Every second day grandfather would kill a bullock and bring it home and hang it up in the fireplace. It was the only way to keep meat in those days - in the fireplace.

Q. Why the fireplace?

A. To preserve it. Some salted in it's own brine. I can see him doing it now.

Q. Grannie Sarah had about 10 children in the house, didn't she?

A. Just with our kids she did. All her children were grown up. Sally was grown up - she was the eldest. Edna was her daughter. Edna was about six. Grannie had Edna, poor Ernie. She had Tom Allen, then she had us five kids.

(She must have been a wonderful women). Then she raised us up and looked after us and sent us to school. (You loved her very much). My Aunties (the mothers) went to work. They were working on stations.

Q. You adored Grannie Sarah, didn't you Mum?

A. Oh! She was a sweetie. She was the sweetest. She never said a nasty word to you. She was one of those grannies who treated all her children alike. She had a way of asking you to do things, you would do it and you would love doing it.

That's how it was for me and I done everything I could possibly do for her because you know what happened to my mother. My father was working at Gloucester for Mackay. She had Aunty Bella's boy and Aunty Jessie's boy because they were all born and there was Edna. She had eight kids and she looked after them. There was never a nasty word or fights or anything.

Q. I believe at one time, Mum, it was the practice by the Government to take children away from their parents. I believe they came for you and your brother and sisters. Would you tell us about that?

A. Well, the only thing I knew was that (what was the feller's name) (Smithers). He was taking all the dark kids and the other orphan kids too. He did a whole lot of it in Armidale, Uralla and then he came to Nowendoc - 40 miles away from Walcha to get us kids. We didn't have our parents and we were living with our old grandmother and they all met him and said, "don't you come in that gate". (This is Uncle Henry, Uncle Jack and Grannie). "Don't you come in that gate". I was there, standing on the hill. I said I'm not going with that man - in my mind - and that was it.

Q. Uncle Henry, Uncle Jack were black trackers at the Police station and Uncle Jim Morris. They heard that this man was coming to take the kids and they stopped this man from taking them?

A. He (Smithers) had a row with them at the Police Station and he went down to 'Glen Kinchie' and stood at the gate and they told him, "don't you come in that gate or on the property". I was standing on the hill.



(You were very lucky, Mum, because a lot of the children were taken from the area, from their grandparents). I heard there, among my Uncles and Aunties, how the children were treated that were taken away and that was why they went on and stopped all that. They're not taking our children. We went to school. We had to walk all the way to school, but we went to school (every day). (Absenteeism must have been one of the reasons for taking children from their parents).

- Q. I bet you were made to go every day too, which was good (because Grannie would want you to have an education).
- A. Uncle Henry was good - he was a single man. He helped Grannie and Grandfather. He was a darling and he has all them lovely kids now and he's not there with them.
- Q. You left school at fifteen, Mum, and then you went to work at Walcha. Would you tell me about your first job at Walcha? What you did there?
- A. Yes, I went to work. I was helping Grannie with all the little ones living at 'Glen Kinchie'. Uncle Jack and Auntie Janey was coming to Walcha and they were driving up to Walcha in the buggy. I think it was Auntie Janey. Anyway I was in the buggy with Uncle Jack and when we got to Walcha, it was about 5.00 o'clock, sunset. We drove about 40 miles from Nowendoc to Walcha and we went straight out to the Reserve where Grandfather Joe was, an old black, everyone called him Grandfather Joe and when I got there they said there was a job in town and asked whether I would like to take this job in town. I went in the next day and they wanted a dark girl and I was there for six years and that was at Seccles.

- Q. Did they own a shop, Mum - how was it?
- A. He was a saddler, He made saddles, harness and things like that. Didn't I show you where I worked when we went to Walcha (you did). I showed you where I worked.
- Q. And you worked with that family for six years. You liked the lady of the house?
- A. I liked them all because they were good to me (you must have enjoyed it - six years). They treated me lovely, too.
- Q. I believe that it was his parents or her parents that owned a sheep station outside of Walcha?
- A. It was their son, Russell. He had a lovely little sheep station. He married a lovely school teacher from Uralla and he had four children - two girls and two boys. They had a lovely brick house at the station. They called it 'Mayfield'. I use to go out there on Sundays. If I didn't go to the Reserve at Walcha - out among the Koories - I would go out and stay with them for the evening. But I had a happy life there and I still had a happy one when I left there and went to Armidale. I went to another station in Armidale - Booralong, not Booralong, yes Booralong. I was there for three years. Me and Mary Widdis. I was the cook/laundress and she was the housemaid/waitress. Her brother was the milkman, Ernie. We were there for three years and while I was working there I met your Father and we went out for two or three years because he lived down on the Macleay River and I lived up in the New England. He use to come up for all the sports just to see me - the Show, rodeos and all this sort of thing.

- Q. Both of you belonged to the Dungutti tribe? Is that right?
- A. Aboriginal tribe - Dungutti and there was the Kummuri. Grannie was Dungutti and Grandfather was Kummuri. All the blackfellers had their own names. Dorrigo had their own. I've forgotten Mums. Mum had one too because she came from the Dorrigo side. Grannie and Grandfather knew their tribe. Grandfather came from Tamworth and Grannie came from Inglebar and that's how they had their different names - the Kummeri and Dungutti - and that's the blacks' tribe - names of the blacks.
- Q. So, what year did you get married?
- A. I was 23-24 years when I got married.
- Q. Did you live in Armidale when you married - where did you get married? (Bellbrook Reserve by a Seventh Day Adventist - Pastor Rosendorf).
- A. I lived in Armidale. I worked in Walcha. I use to go to Armidale for all my weekends and I left there and I went to Booralong and I worked <sup>there</sup> for three years and I would go to Armidale for my weekends.
- Q. Who was your best friend in Armidale?
- A. Mary (Widdis). They were all my friends, who was related to my Grannie. All the Widdises - I've forgotten the names. (Nellie). She married a Smith. Nellie was Grannie Jessies eldest daughter. You know all the Smiths, Aunty Nellie's children.

Q. When you married Dad, did you stay at Booralong? Where did you first go to live?

A. No, we went straight to Bellbrook (that's a Reserve on the Macleay River at Kempsey). No, Bellbrook is 40 miles from Kempsey. We lived on the Reserve there. We built our own little shack. That's where Judy, Dick and Reg were born.

Q. How long did you stay there?

A. We stayed there until Judy was ready to go to school then we came back to Walcha and had you.

Q. And I was born on the Reserve at Walcha?

A. You were born on the Reserve at Walcha. Judy was four years old then.

Q. Tell me about the time, Mum, where you took me down to the swamp and you went looking for the snake weed and I was bitten by the snake.

A. Oh, when we were living in the tent? (yes).

Q. Tell me about that?

A. Oh! That was a disaster, that was. I went and cut your foot with a razor. We went to the creek and a snake came up between me and Sadie(Shay) and I looked down and I thought I could see blood on Sadie(Shay) and I ran up to the house and I got this blade and I cut it and I sucked her foot because I thought the snake did bite. The doctor said that it

couldn't have got you because you would have been dead. Because I didn't do the cut right or the right operation right. That was the tiger snake, that was.

Q. That was their (tiger snakes) swamp area. I believe Grannie use to go and get the weed to make the ointment. Tell me about that? Why were you looking for snake weed, Mum?

A. You could get that snake weed anywhere in Walcha. We learned to get that in Inglebar, that's where I was taught. There was a lot growing around Walcha.

Q. And you use to use that for all <sup>^</sup>sort of different problems?

A. I use to cook it. Get the olive oil and cook it in the oil and buy the bees' wax so you could thicken it like ointment. That was all the ointment we use to use, for anything! We never bought any ointments from chemists. Grannie had all the different wild things in the bush that she use to make things out of. She use to - there was a tree now - but I've forgotten the name of the tree - she use to get us the leaves and boil it and give it to us to cure these boils (it did cure them). Yes it cured them and it took marks off us too, where the people had marks. I had terrible marks. You seen the marks on me, didn't you. They've all gone.

Q. At what age did you take us away from Walcha, Mum? I was born there, at what age did you take us away from there?

A. I think it was six months. I don't think you were five months old. Your Father wanted to get out of there. He only stayed there because we were waiting for you. He went to Tobin's camp on the new road that they were putting



through to Port Macquarie. Well, they put him there so they could get him to fix up the horses because he had his crook foot and he couldn't do any work but he had to look after all the horses. But as soon as you were born we packed up and came back to Armidale to live (how long were we there?) - three (months) years.

Q. And what made you decide to come to Newcastle to live?

A. Well, we didn't decide to come to Newcastle then. You was ready and the others were ready and you were old enough to travel and Uncle Fred and Aunty Aggy was living in Port Macquarie and they had a nice house so your father said pack up and we'll got to Port Macquarie. So we put old Bonny in the sulky and away we went. It took us a week to go down. But we just went down, we camped all the way down, we fished and oh! it was great. You were a few months old.

Q. Did you like Port Macquarie?

A. Yes, I liked Port Macquarie. We lived there for three years.

I remember a flood there, Mum (you remember that flood). I remember a flood. I can remember us all on the bed, high on the bed and the water was coming in. I'm glad you told me what age I was. I must have been about three (you must have been). I remember that water.

A. I was lying on the bed and I looked under and all that water was coming under our bed. We'll have to go. We lived on the river see - on the Hasting river. In the flood time it use to come up into the creek. We didn't know that.



They always advised, "you want to shift". The Postmaster said the water will come up right past that shed. So we packed up and went out to Uncle Fred and Aunty Aggy for a few days and then Dad said "come on, we're going," we packed up and it took a week for us to come down to Newcastle.

Q. You came to Newcastle because one of your first cousins lived down here?

A. Marge (Smith). I always use to write to her (and Aunty Mary too) - for year and years we wrote. We went to school together and we use to write to each other. This time she wrote to me and said, that we're going - Jack wants to go back to his people. They had five kids then - Alice was the oldest. She said the house is here if you want it. Well that was right in our hands. So we packed up and jumped in the sulky and it took us a week to come down - but that's the old house!

Q. Four children in a sulky - wonderful!!!

A. Yes, we all sat there - comfortable. Three would sit on the floor and one sat up in the middle. You took it in turns all the way, coming from Port Macquarie to Newcastle.

Q. What was the name of your horse?

A. Bonny!!

Q. How long had you had Bonny?

A. I couldn't tell you. They bred Bonny (in Bellbrook). Your Uncle Bill had a mare. She had a foal and that was Bonny.

Dad broke her into the sulky. "Come on, we'll go, we've got to take the kids somewhere they can go to school because its no good there (Bellbrook). (Where did we go?) We went to Port Macquarie first. You didn't go to school at Port. I don't think Reg and Dick did either. Fred and Aggy's kids were only young, but by the time we came down here the other three were ready to go to school, but you weren't.

Q. Tell me the story about when you got to Hamilton railway gates in the horse and sulky?

A. On the first day we came through Newcastle. Oh, it was a good road all the way down - it was a good trip, all the way. Old Bonny was travelling like a 'bonny' and everybody use to look at us coming down the road - seeing us driving the sulky as everyone had cars (much laughter) and coming into Hamilton we cross the .... - Dad didn't know where he was...he got lost...I don't know where I'm going...we'll just have to go...anyway old Bonny just sailed down the street as though she was at home. Anyway we got to a certain place - all those big trees there, you know (Maitland Road near Tighes Hill Technical College) and there is that turn where you turn to the railway line, Bonny turned in there, trotted down the Hamilton street, there she was...she got to where the tramline was running across and she didn't stop for the tram and Dad couldn't stop her. She must have said, "I'm going, I'm boss here and the dam dram had to stop (much laughter) and they had to let us go through (that's the law Mother, they have to stop for the animals). She must have known that fact. Oh! your Father, I've never seen him so white (much laughter), but he couldn't do anything. I was thinking, "what am I going to do with these kids in this sulky - I can't jump out!?"

Anyway, we got across and we were right and we thanked Bonny for that - she just took over (much laughter). We went right around that day instead of going past the Dogs (Hamilton). We went up the damn hill where we went around the tram and through Broadmeadow (along the old highway) and we had that long hill (from Adamstown) but old Bonny brought us up the hill like she was dragging something light.

Q. Mum, there was something the kids said together - they liked it so much - you always told me that story - what did they say?

A. When we crossed the railway line there, where I said Bonny turned in - well when we got over that there you all said, "WE NOT GOING BACK TO PORT MACQUARIE" and they all said it together.

Q. They must have liked the train or they must have liked all the activity - I don't what impressed them?

A. Maybe it was old Bonny taking over (much laughter). Oh dear! - it was good though and I liked it myself. I didn't know it was going to be like that.

Q. Was that the first time you had seen a tram, I suppose it would have been?

A. Oh no! I'd seen trams lots of times cause we use to come down for Christmas when Uncle John was a baby.

- Q. You would come down to Newcastle, Maitland or where?
- A. Maitland, Newcastle - come right down here and go to the beach. The first place I saw the beach was down here in Newcastle.
- Q. All that sand, did you think anything of the sand?
- A. Oh no! No, it was the water I liked.
- Q. What did you like about the water?
- A. The stories my Father use to talk about. Don't go near the water because it will carry you out and I was scared, I was scared of the water.
- Q. Did Marge and Fred know you were coming?
- A. Oh! It was Marge and Jack - it was them that got us to Newcastle because when we wrote - we use to write to each other every week from the time we left school. I don't know how many kids she had - of all the kids you were the baby then. When I got this letter she said, we were leaving Newcastle and she said the house was here if you want it and that was just all I wanted as I use to write to her every week and that was it.
- Q. Did you like the house when you saw it? It was a big house.
- A. It was a big house, but we would have liked anything because we wanted to be in Newcastle. It was comfortable. It had everying in it - stove, open fire - the only thing was we had to carry water - but you know what they done, the Water

Board done - they went and put the water in for us. They put a pipe in with a tap on it right in front of our house. (Yes I remember that).

Q. There were a lot of fruit and grape vines around that house at the back. Did Jack and Marge put them in?

A. The people that owned that place - they put them in there - Hannington, wasn't it?

Q. When did you find out that Dad qualified for an invalid pension? How did you find that out?

A. Doctors.

Q. Was that soon after he came to Newcastle?

A. See, his leg, he had one small leg from polio (he had polio as a child). The doctors were amazed that his leg grew the same length seeing that it happened so young.

Q. It was turned at the ankle?

A. His ankle was twisted because the weak leg was the leg that carried all the weight. That's why it twisted - that's what the doctor said anyway.

Q. He could support his family with the invalid pension but he did go out to work as well, didn't he. Would you tell us how he worked?

A. Cutting props in the bush out there. Him and another old pensioner, Tommy Sidebottom.

Q. And where did those props go to, Mum?

A. To the man who brought the props to take them to the ...See in the mines they had to have props, so all these props that they cut in the bush all went into the mines. They use to have to cut a 100 props to get a pound, a quid, but that was a lot of money in those days.

Q. He did that for years, didn't he?

A. Mmm, him and Tommy Sidebottom. It was easy with Tommy Sidebottom - then something happened - he suffered with his heart so he had to give it away, but anyway we struggled and we struggled until we bought this little house over there. It was Tommy Sidebottom who got us that house because he knew that woman. She had a big family and her husband was killed on the train at Broadmeadow - he was crushed. So she just packed up. She knew Tommy Sidebottom and Tommy Sidebottom said I've got a family to take this house.

Q. And what is the address of this house?

A. 12 Vena Street, Glendale, 2285.

Q. And how long have you lived there for?

A. How long, you tell me?

We moved there in 1956 (how old were you). I was about 13 years. (You were going to high school).



Q. And you have lived there ever since?

A. And I've been there ever since. I own the place now. I was told I'm going to have a mansion built there. So I'm waiting for this mansion and that's coming up too. I don't want a mansion, I want a palace. Palaces are for coloured people, mansions for whites. I want a palace (much laughter). That's another story.

At this point Mother would like to talk about Bonny, the family's horse.

I'm talking about Bonny, our horse that brought us to Newcastle. Dad (her husband) turned her out to retire (she use to escape a lot, didn't she). Yes, she use to get out of the paddock and she was found in the Pound Yard. Years after she was found in the Pound and that made us all happy because she was bought by a baker. A baker bought her out of the Pound Yard and she was the horse that he wanted because she would stand wherever he wanted her to while he was delivering bread. So that's where our dear old Bonny finished up - in a baker's cart.

That's a nice story Mother!

Also, I would like you to meet my daughter-in-law - Violet Priest and here she is if you would like to speak.

Violet Priest: Hullo Annie, hullo Shay - it's nice to be with you to-night.

\*\*\*\*\* - SIDE TWO - Interview continued Sunday, 4th June 1989

Q. Mum, when we were talking about the selections yesterday, we didn't name them. Would you tell me the names of the men that owned the selections?

A. My Father, Billy Wright - our home was called 'Fauna Vale' and that land was at Nowendoc in the New England Tablelands.

Q. And the names of Uncle Jacks and Uncle Henry's?

A. Uncle Henry's (Wright) home was named 'Glen Kinchie' (and Cedar Vale) and Uncle Jack's (Wright) was named Cedar Valley.

Q. And what did they do on the properties, Mum?

A. Well they worked for other people, clearing their county or clearing for other people as contracts for other people - station owners.

Q. Didn't they run cattle and horses for themselves on their own selections?

A. Yes, they had their own horses and their own cattle. They had their own milking cows, they had their own pigs - as young people when they first got married.

Q. And they lived off the land then?

A. Yes, they lived off the land until it was the war (will I put that in). The war spoilt everything - they were just put back and they had to live the best way they could like the rest of the people and that's just how it was. But they

built their own houses and they cut their own timber, most of the timber they cut and some of the timber came from a man who had a sawmill and they got sheets from the sawmill and the boards to line the houses inside. But our house got burned down, we don't know how, bush fires must have done it.

Q. You have another story too Mum. I think it was Aunty Jessie. She entered a competition where the Daily Telegraph was trying to find a certain print in the way that they print the words, "Daily Telegraph" (the name of the paper).

A. Was it the Daily Telegraph? Her photo was in it. She had her photo taken. It all happened in Tamworth and she won with this beautiful horse, 'Johnny Walker'. Oh! he was the most beautiful chestnut horse and she won this prize, first prize for the Tamworth Show on 'Johnny Walker'.

Q. We have a horsewoman in the family?!?! - wonderful!!

A. They were all horsewomen! They could all ride, because we all had horses, saddles and bridles. That was the only way to get around, you know - horse and buggy. We had everything that everybody else could have in the country.

Q. That story, Mum, about the competition for the Daily Telegraph - tell me about that?

A. Was it the Daily Telegraph? I really don't know, I just know that she was the Aboriginal lady/women that won at the Show and they took her photo and everything and they had her photo in the paper and that photo Aunty Ruby had. It was a beautiful photo but unfortunately, Aunty Ruby had all those

photos - they should have been kept but that house was burned down (Oh Mum! that was a tragedy). Everything was burnt, but anyway that's what happened, but otherwise the history was all there (it was sad). It was very sad to think that, but we have another generation living in a better life and that's why we are in Newcastle today. We came here to be educated like the rest of the people for the rest of the generations, the way of the white people.

Q. I've noticed Mum, that you don't have an accent? I don't think Uncle Jack or Aunty Mary or Aunty Lu had the Aboriginal accent. Is that because of that teacher you had at Nowendoc? Do you think? You must have noticed that you don't have an accent. You've heard other Aboriginal people talk, but you don't have that accent.

A. No, it was a teacher from Inglebar. It came from Granny, Dad, Uncle Jack, Uncle Henry, Aunty Bella, Aunty Jessie and Aunty Sally and all of Granny's family. The teacher's name was Mr. Uren - he was a marvellous teacher and he taught them everything they know, how they spoke, what they done it was taught by Mr. Uren, their schoolteacher at Inglebar. I don't think he was a white man (really), but I wouldn't say that positively, somebody might know what he was but he was a schoolteacher that took an interest. Just like the teachers today among the Aborigines. This was one person and he taught all them how to speak and do things.

Q. Also, Mum, you have another story too, when yourself, Aunty Lu, Aunty Mary, Uncle Jack (Aunty Ella) were christened I believe that the Pastor or the Preacher came from Raymond Terrace?

A. Well, there were several ministers - ministers we called them - came from Raymond Terrace - they use to come up to (Nowendoc) at different times in the month. Mr. Harper, Mr. Terrace. They were the ministers that christened us - christened all us children because they use to come to 'Glen Kinchie', Uncle Henry's place. That's where they'd come and have their prayers and do all his christening and we'd go to his church on the times he'd come to Nowendoc.

Q. An Anglican minister, Mum?

A. That's what he called himself. He was a minister who would go with everybody. He was called the Minister, Mr. Terrace.

Q. Mum, you just said, Mr. Terrace, do you think that could have been Raymond Terrace himself because Raymond Terrace is named after a man and you've just said, Mr. Terrace. Could it have been Raymond Terrace, himself, who came to 'Glen Kinchie'.

A. Yes, could have been. We called him Raymond Terrace, no, Minister Terrace, Reverend Raymond Terrace.

Q. So that could have been Raymond Terrace who would visit the Aboriginal people in Nowendoc.

A. There was Mr. Harper too, he would come up here too from Raymond Terrace and Stroud and all those places.

Q. That was a long way to travel. Would they have come by horseback or horse and sulky?

A. No, no. Just by road (by horse). They use to come through floods.

- Q. He must have felt he was communicating with the Aboriginal people in that area, don't you think?
- A. He did. He was very, very good to the Aboriginal people. He was one of the kind people that we knew in them times, but he didn't come from the New England he came from down in the Hunter Valley.
- Q. Is that why you wanted to come to the Hunter Valley?
- A. No, my Father wanted that. Thats what he done.
- Q. You were told by someone in your early years that someday you would live in a big valley. They must known have known you were coming down to the Hunter Valley.
- A. That's right. I had my fortune told (it came true). What was told in my fortune all came true.
- Q. You couldn't get a bigger valley than the Hunter Valley.
- A. That's right. (it's a beautiful area). At that time I never knew. Although I knew my father worked for J.K. Mackay and he owned a lot of it. So that's where we, are and I'm still in that valley and I've got my family in that valley and they all seem to be happy in that valley, you know, independent.
- Q. When you came to Newcastle in 1945 there were not too many Aboriginal people here, Did you meet very many when you first came?



- A. The only people there was and a lot of them living over there at Waratah - what did they call that area - Platt's Estate. Marge and Jack Smith lived over at Charlestown and they had their house there - Mount Hutton/Charlestown and that's their address and that's where they lived and that's the house we got when they left.....the house at Mount Hutton.
- Q. So in 1945 your life started in the Hunter Valley. You sent your children to Warner's Bay Public School?
- A. My four children went there and then they went on to high school - three of them went to Cook's Hill Intermediate High and one went to Central at Broadmeadow.
- Q. Mum, I want to go back to when you were a young girl living at 'Glen Kinchie'. Will you tell me the story about when you got lost on the pony.
- A. Yes, I caught my Old Bay Horse - the horse I use to ride to go for the cows and I went into the bush and I got lost and I didn't know which way to go. He wanted to go one way and I wanted to go the other and in the finish I let him take his way and he brought me right back home and it was still dark and my grandmother was on the hill 'coo-eeing' out to see where I was - he snorted when she 'coo-ee'd' and she knew I was coming home and that's the kind of horse he was - he was my dear old grandfather's horse that he broke in and use to work and ride on the station.

Q. What's his name, Mum?

A. The horse, 'Bay Pony' - we just called him 'Bay Pony' and he was a darling. He was quiet. You could fall off and he'd stand still till you got back on his back. We use to shoe him - get hold of his legs and pretend to be shoeing him and he'd just stand there while we were taking out stones. He was just wonderful. Grandfather knew all about it. We had the horse to go around that place to go wherever Grandmother wanted us to go to do our shopping in the bush. We use to go to people's places to buy eggs, others for meat. We were right out in the country. People would give us meat, they'd give us anything, but we would go with the old Bay Pony always and he would bring us home and he always knew the road, he'd take all the shortcuts, because he knew all the roads (much laughter).

Q. You were saying, Mum, that you would go out and get all the cows and calves and you would bring them back - what would you do with them when you brought them back?

A. Well we'd catch him (Bay Pony) and he'd take us out and bring them back. He knew where to find them in the bush, we didn't. He just knew where to go as it was all bush country, but he would bring us back and he'd round them up and he knew what to do and we didn't have give him the reins. He'd round the cattle and he'd put the cows in the paddock and he'd put the calves in the pen where they would stay for the night, so we'd have milk from the cows in the morning. He was broken in for that (Grandfather Harry would have done that). Yes, Grandfather Wright, old Grandfather Wright, my Father's Father.

Q. He was a renowned horseman, wasn't he?

A. Oh yes! He taught Dad (her father) to be a Vet. Later on Dad was a vet for J.K. Mackay at Cangon (Dungog). On all his stations he was a Vet. So that was my Grandfather and my Father's life - they worked for wealthy people and that was Uncle Henry's country where we use to go for these cows. He took up his selection, but he lost it later on because he couldn't get work and that's why they lost their land - they couldn't get work, couldn't get money to pay for their land.

Q. Mum, there was a man in that area at the time that you use to talk about, his name was Jimmy Moonlight.

A. Jimmy Moonlight, no, he didn't live in that area. Jimmy Moonlight lived down on the Macleay River, Lower Creek, but he lived among the Koori people, with the Morrises. See we was the Wrights at Nowendoc and the Morrises lived at Lower Creek and Aunty Ruby (Morris) and Uncle Henry got married, so it sought of brought us altogether, see and that's 'Glen Kinchie'. But Lower Creek is only what I heard about him. But everybody liked Jimmy Moonlight. Jimmy Moonlight was their, what would you say, their 'bread and butter'. He had all the food. He was a storekeeper and he brought all the food and everything in for the Koori's, otherwise they would not have survived. I don't know how they would have lived there only for him.

Q. How did he get around, Mum?

A. I don't know whether he had a horse and cart or what. He didn't walk. He had his own horse and cart. You know, he done it on a pack horse. He use to go to a certain place

and he use to go over the mountains on a pack horse. Aunty Ruby was telling me this. They didn't have carts in them days, they had pack horses and all the food had to be carried on special pack horses and he use to go over the mountains and some place and bring all the food back to Lower Creek and all the people use to buy off him.

Q. What nationality was he, Mum?

A. A Chinaman. He was dark - he was coloured (was he black) Yes. I seen him, but he didn't look like a Chinaman, he looked like an Indian. I'll tell you who he looks like - Uncle Jack (her brother). A little man and dark.

Q. You always mentioned to me that there were Indian peddlers amongst the Koori people. I always thought Jimmy Moonlight was one of those Indian peddlers.

A. He was Indian, but he wasn't Chinaman. They called him Jimmy Moonlight, they thought he was a Chinaman. He might have told him he was a Chinaman because they didn't like the Indians. (From what you say, Uncle Jack has Chinese features, you know that very strong boned features, but he is very dark - was Jimmy Moonlight like that). Yes he looked like that.

Q. Mum, tell me the story about Jimmy Bartholomew. He was brought up with your family, by Grannie Sarah and Grandfather Harry. Tell me about him?

A. I'll tell you all about Jimmy Bartholomew. He lived with our family, he lived with my Mother. He lived with my Mother when we was very young and when my Mother had my

sister, Ella, she was crossing the river at Inglebar and he met us there and helped us across and brought us up to the house and the next morning we went to some friends of his and had breakfast. This is at Inglebar too.

- Q. The name of the family that you had breakfast with, Mum?
- A. There name was, Resi's. (What nationality were they?) They were foreigners. (Were they dark, coloured?) Yes, they had that look, that foreign look. There were a lot of people around Inglebar that had that look and they all liked the Aborigines and the Aborigines liked them. (They liked to live amongst the Aboriginal people?)
- Q. Resi - that's a strange name.
- A. Yes, it's a foreign name, see. I think they might be still around. No, I think they went back to their country.
- Q. Mum, tell me about the Indian peddlers that use to come amongst the Koori people?
- A. When I was a girl, around about my early teens they would come among the Koori's and they had food, they'd bring food, groceries, clothes and they had a horse and van to do all this and they travelled for miles. From Walcha to Nowendoc and from Walcha to Inglebar, anywhere where the Aborigines were, we'd buy food and clothes off these Indians. There was no other way we could buy clothes or food. The only other way was to get it through the mail, once or twice a week, but these Indians would bring it.



Q. They sound like they operated the same way as Jimmy Moonlight who came from the Lower Creek/Macleay area, but you said these people came from Walcha, Mum?

A. They lived in Walcha. Jimmy Moonlight was at Lower Creek and he did the same in Lower Creek as these people did in Walcha.

Q. You liked the people from Walcha, as well as Jimmy Moonlight. Tell me about the times when they came at Christmas time?

A. They use to come at Christmas time and have Christmas with us. Bring things for the children and we'd go down to where they had their camps, near their vans and they use to make us Johnny Cakes and they use to make us nice curry and we had Johnny Cakes and curry. Grandfather would have all his grandchildren there and all around him and they would be serving us Johnny Cakes and curry - wasn't it lovely!! We really enjoyed it! This is in Nowendoc in front of Uncle Henry's home, 'Glen Kinchie'. I remember their names as Peter Meiler and Charlie Lamglosh and they both had stores at Walcha and the store at Walcha was called Peter Meiler's Store.

Q. Did they have a family, Mum, did you ever see them?

A. Yes, he had a wife. He brought his wife over. (Was she Indian?) Yes she was Indian. For years and years he had to fight to get her over (from over in India) and they sent Charlie Lamglosh back and he died on his way over. He was a hundred miles from home. He was sick. He was Peter's friend. Peter's wife was over there. The girl must have



been young when he left over there, anyhow they come back. She's like, who was she like, they were both like Theresa (Mum's granddaughter). (Really, our Theresa?)

Q. Mum, let's now talk about your Father, Billy Wright?

A. For seventeen years my Father worked at Tamworth Police station. He was the 'blacktracker' at a little town just out of Tamworth - I just don't know the name, but he was there for seventeen years.

Q. From there, he went into cattle, didn't he?

A. When he left the Police station, he went to work for J.K. Mackay here at Cangon, Dungog and many other places around Gunnedah and in the Hunter Valley. J.K. Mackay had many properties and he worked for him among cattle as a doctor, a Vet, he was, with horses and cattle.

Q. J.K. Mackay liked Koori people, didn't he, Mum? He employed quite a lot of stockmen?

A. That's what this man, this stranger, said. When I was talking to a man on the train coming past Aberdeen (railway). Look, he said, your Father should have been a millionaire cause he worked for J.K. Mackay as a Vet and he done all the doctoring for him on cattle and horses.

Q. He worked for him for years, didn't he, Mum? You lived there at Dungog for time when he was working at Cangon?

A. He worked at many places, we shifted around, you know.

Q. Did you ever meet Mr. Mackay?

A. Y-e-e-s!! One day in particular when I was nine years old. We was living in Dungog, near Cangon Station where my Father lived/worked and on this particular day I went to see Mr. Mackay to find out where my Father was and we had to cross a river. (Who was with you, Mum?) Me and my sister, Lulu, was talking to Mr. Mackay in the orchard and he picked some oranges for us and put them in a bag and helped us back to the river, cause there was a log we had to walk across and he carried the oranges across the log and he saw us across safely and on the other side our Aunty Sally was waiting for us.

Q. On that day, Mum, the message was that your Mother had been taken to hospital, hadn't she?

A. All this happened because my Mother was taken to hospital and we had to be adopted to our Grandmother in Nowendoc. Aunty Sally was in Dungog at the time as they brought a herd of cattle from Nowendoc to Gloucester and it was there that we gave her the message to come and see us children at Cangon with J.K. Mackay.

Q. Mum, you're saying that Aunty Sally and Aunty Jessie were working as stockwomen, helping Grandfather Harry move cattle from Gloucester to Dungog. That's the first time I've heard of Aboriginal women working as stockwomen.

A. Oh! they loved it. They loved it. (It was a way of life for them, wasn't it?)

Q. I think it sounds natural too, because their grandfather was a stockmen, your father was a stockman, so your father's sisters automatically worked in the saddle too. (They loved it!). Did you ever get on, herding the cattle at all yourself, Mum?

A. I use to ride horses, but they wouldn't let us, because we come from Dungog and we wasn't <sup>l</sup>ared up with herds of cattle. (Like Aunty Sally and Aunty Jessie).

They use to have an old Bay horse, called Bay Pony. They use to put all us kids who came from Dungog who didn't know or understand horses that well, on old Bay Pony, if you fell off he'd stop, he'd stay there until you got back on him and he'd go again. (I love Bay Pony, Mother!)

He was Grandfather's favourite horse - coming home from the mail in the afternoon, cause he would have his parcels and he'd have his bottles and of course he'd have a few drinks before he left with the boys at the post office and if he fell off the Bay Pony coming along the road, the old Bay Pony would stay with him, because he couldn't get back on him to ride home. A wonderful story, Mother (much laughter).

Now I'm going to tell you a story about the Bay Pony and myself. I always went for messages for my Grandmother to buy eggs from people about the country. Anyhow, coming home it got dark. I had the eggs, hanging onto the eggs. I wanted to go one way and he wanted to go another way. Anyway, it got so dark I give up and I just let him take his head and he took me straight down the gully and down there he came to a fence and at that fence there was a bog.

We crossed the bog and we walked up the track up the hill and there was a high log and I didn't want to go over the high log. I wanted to go around, but he jumped over the high log with me and I just sat there - I never broke an egg and I never fell off and Grandma was on the hill waiting for us and Grandma called out and he snorted loud to let her know he was coming.

I think Grandma MUST have been on that hill a lot watching for her husband and her grandchildren - I think she was there a lot, Mother, watching!!!

Q. Mum, by the looks of it, Bay Pony was a very important part of the family. Would you like to tell us another story about him?

A. For years he was Grandfather's stockhorse and he used him on the cattle stations at Nowendoc until he was old and retired and he left him for the children to ride and use around the house and for Grannie to get the kiddies to go for messages. So this particular day I met the boys coming home from work and they were amazed to see me on old Bay Pony. They said to me, "how did you catch that horse?" I said, "I just walk up and put the bridle on him with no trouble at all". Then Ken (Morris) told me a story, that it once took six men to put this Bay horse in the yard - where I could walk up and put a bridle on him anywhere in the paddock.

He was Grandfather's horse, and he said, "if we could put a bridle on him we could ride him".

- Q. Mum, tell us the story about Grandfather Harry and his three daughters.
- A. Aunty Bella, Aunty Jessie and Aunty Sally and they all could ride stockhorses and they helped him to drive cattle to Gloucester for the sales for years (until they married) until they married and Grandfather got too old and lived on the pension.
- Q. I think it would have been an exciting life for them. To be involved with animals, especially with their Father (said Grandfather) whom they respected so much.
- A. My Grandfather was great with cattle and horses too. (He probably taught them all they knew, Mother). He did, I'm sure he did. Because they never got it from anywhere else.
- Q. You mentioned earlier, Mother, about Aunty Jessie winning the prizes down in Tamworth for her horseriding abilities. I'm sure Grandfather would have been very proud of her, don't you think? (Name the horse, Johnny Walker) I wonder where she got that name from - it sounds familiar, doesn't it?
- A. On the bottle, Grandfather's bottle (much laughter)!!!
- Q. Mother, you were just telling me that Grandfather Wright preferred training women to break in horses and cows - would you tell me about that?
- A. Yes, well we use to do it. After we came home from school. We'd go for the cows and we'd put the calves in the pen and next morning, of course, the cow had to be broken in and we



had to bale the cow up, put her in the bale, peg the bale up and tie her legs to the fence and milk her and she would be kicking and going on, but we would keep at her until we quietened her down.

Q. And what about horses?

A. Well, you wouldn't milk a horse, but you would have to break in a horse in the same way. Ride it, jump on its back, bareback, ride on and we use to have to 'mouth' it, put a rope around its neck and put the bridle on to mouth it and we'd race him round and round the yard like the other men use to do it, the boy's use to do it. We done everything the boys use to do and we loved it and the horse loved it with us too - when we got on horses they never bucked!! Like some horses pig-rooted - these horses never pig-rooted with us.

Q. In other words, you're saying and you said to me that women handled the horses and the animals easier than what the men did and the animals recognised that?

A. We did, we found it that way, we never used big sticks on them like the men did (and that's why Grandfather Harry preferred to train women than men?) I suppose that's what it was and we liked it too!

Q. Grannie Sarah use to help a lot too, with the training?

A. No, Grannie Sarah, she was in the kitchen (but you were just saying to me that she and Grandfather use to be out there with the animals, with you). She'd be there, she'd be always there to see what was going on. She would always be



in the kitchen. She'd be there, she'd talk, see, (she'd make sure her girls were being looked after I think). You would have to talk to her and Grandfather too. She'd talk more than Grandfather would (that's what I mean). He was the sort of leader. He had to follow her, but she had to do all the talking, but he was marvellous. What he done for you, well, it was kind and you'd do it for him.

Yes, Mother, I think I can understand what you felt there.

A. Yes, we use to break in cows and horses and that is the honest truth!!

Q. I can't imagine, I can't imagine you in that role at all, Mother, but if you said you did it, then you must have done it?

A. I put the rope on the horses neck - me, Lorna and Dorrie and Girlie, poor Girlie use to do it. Oh, we thought it was great, because, what the boys could do, we could do too. It was just like that, we broke in the cows too.

And that's over 75 years ago, Mother, 75 years ago.

Mother: The last time I went back with Judy and Henry (Mussing). I said, see that hill up there, there was a yard there and that's where we broke in our horses and cows."

Interviewer: I think when you said that to Judy and Henry, I think or they felt that you were there watching the men do it when it was actually you, the women, doing the work.

But, it was all fun to you. It wasn't hard work. It was just a way of life.

Mother:

When we done it, the men weren't there, cause we weren't game to do it and they wouldn't have us do it, we'd break in the cows, milk the cows, go for the calves and anyhow we got ourselves into it and it finished up in the end we had to do it all.

Of course there were times when we couldn't handle an animal and we had a boy that was reared up with us by our Grannie and Grandfather and he helped us and made sure that the horses and cows were broken in and ready to use.

Interviewer:

By the sounds of it Mother, you and the girls had the greatest respect for this young horseman, what was his name?

Mother:

Jimmy Bartholomew - he was always around and we was pleased to have him as he always was a good help.

FOOTNOTE:

In reference to my persistency in asking Mother about the "Daily Telegraph" (DT) competition - she always told me the story of Aunty Jessie and the competition - of how Aunty Jessie's schoolteacher entered her class in a competition when the DT wanted a new way of printing "The Daily Telegraph" and Aunty Jessie won the competition. (Of course I have to confirm this winning, sometime in the future!!! - but as a child I loved the story)

The following additional footnote I felt was necessary because of my study of Aboriginal History and the influence that the Religious Societies had on the progress or maybe non-progress of Aboriginal people.

In one section of the interview Mother mentions that her Mother suffered a nervous breakdown. The breakdown was due to maybe a combination of events such as 'post-natal depression' and her involvement with the Pentecostal Church.

The day Mother mentions she spoke with J.K. Mackay (when she was only nine years old).

As the story goes ....Earlier that day she and her three sisters and brother, John (carried by Mother) were being 'marched' across a hill on there way to the dam to be drowned. Mother's story is that she was going to baptise them. John's story, that he has been told over the years, was that she was going to drown them. As she was marching them across the hill she was distracted with the thought of an invalid child in the Cluly's home (a white family nearby). She wanted to go and see the child and pray for her. She left the five children sitting on the side of the hill and they watched as she walked to the Cluly family who lived nearby. Because of that distraction when she arrived at the Cluly's home they could see in her behavioural pattern that she was not herself and decided to call the Police.

When the Police came to the home my Mother's Mother refused to go with them until she spoke with J.K. Mackay as she wanted to know her husband's whereabouts and she felt he was the only one who would know. We presume she could not cope alone as she was the only Aboriginal woman in the area and she did not want her children to suffer the way she was in her state of depression.

On studying traditional Aboriginal societies the support system was that as a tribe of people there was always women around to support each other. The men were always away performing their traditional roles but with the invasion on this race of people their whole lifestyle was just completely in disarray and due to this Aboriginal women are continuously suffering mental dissolution whilst trying to cope in this European society.

Unfortunately, the mental breakdowns in my Mother's family alone are frightening statistics, for both men and women, and this must apply to Aboriginal families all across Australia. The death of young adults, in some families both parents, are leaving behind young children who are living without their parents for most of their lives.

We are entitled to life!

Well Mother, we have come to the end of our interview and I would like to thank you for your stories and it gives me immense pleasure to know I have them on record for your future generations.

We both must thank my Australian History Lecturer, Mrs. Margaret Henry, for making this project a part of my Australian History Course.

\*\*\*\*

Yes, I have met Margaret and I am very happy to be a part of my daughter's project and I thank you for giving us this opportunity.

Annie W Kelly  
Annie Whilamena Kelly

3rd September 1989