

23rd May 2009

Maurie Howie and his cousin Frank came to Eungella to dig up Maurie's brother's ashes from the grave at the local church. They had dug down a couple of feet and there was a big thick slab of cement over the area. He was looking for someone with a backhoe or similar to lift off the cement so he can find the container with the ashes in it. Maurie found some records and most of the boys were just buried in a cardboard box, and if that was the case we would never find it, but we looked up the records and Jack was put in either a zincalium or copper container. He was cremated 62 years ago and in hindsight it would have been better if we had spread the ashes around, but that wasn't done in those days. Pete Maguire drove Tony Murray's backhoe and they successfully removed the concrete. They could not find any container, just some ashes. Maurie & Frank had lunch and the following conversation ensued.

Maurie When Dave & Andy Herron were first on that block they were falling the scrub and at that time old Pat used to lived down there near the diggings.

Neil at Pat's Camp

Maurie, Yes, that's right Pat's Camp and the kids used to walk to school and they would come up the hill yabba, yabba, yabba. Dave and Andy were sitting there having smoko one morning and Andy said "What's that? It must black fellows." All they could hear was yabba yabba yabba. Then all the Patullo kids would come over the hill on their way to school, they weren't black at all. The first four had nicknames.

Maurie Tell Frank how you used to light the fire to boil the billy.

Frank. How did you light the fire, rub two sticks together.

Neil . No, much more dangerous than that. Eungella weather being what it is, you always had to have a bit of woof juice with you.

Frank a bit of petrol.

Maurie. He used to light the petrol with the spark off the car.

Neil. Off the spark of the car or the chainsaw. It was good if you never had a match. Still if I go mustering I boil the old quart pot. I still have the quart pot, saddle bag and the horn saw hanging off my saddle.

Frank. You run cattle?

Neil. Yes I have had a big lease over the back for 40 – 50 years and they have taken it off me for National Park now. But we're still probably shifting cattle off for the next five years, maybe ten. They even pay me to fix the tracks up now. You will have to come with me one day Maurie.

Maurie. Yes I will be in that.

Frank. How many cattle did you run?

Neil. About 600.

Frank. Just breeders?

Neil. Yes only breeders. We would pull the steers off and sell them and keep any of the decent heifers.

Frank. Where would you sell your steers?

Neil. At a sale at Nebo or Sarina. I have had every kind of bull you could mention over the years. I started off with Hereford bulls, then Brahman bulls, then Brangus for a while we had Charbrays. I now have 2 brahman, 1 brangus and 2 simbra Simintal/Brahman cross. Hopefully at the end of the year we will have caught a few, though you will never clean the cows out of there. There are always plenty of wild ones. When the wild ones get mixed up with the quiet ones, we can sometimes catch them. We trap a few as well.

Maurie. We used to run a dairy show at Finch Hatton and one of the fellows could rattle off dams and sires. One day he was rattling off the names of the parentage of his cows and Neil's brother Russell was standing beside me looking a bit out of it and he said "The only bull we ever had was out of Massey Creek by Hard Riding" and this guy nodded his head, but didn't really understand.

Neil. The amount of years we mustered that country and threw bulls and the rest of it, the amount of accidents were not many. There was no access, only by horse in those days.

Maurie. In the old days, you even had to lead your horse part of the way as it was too steep to ride up it.

Frank. Could you get trucks in there?

Neil. No most of them we would drove out. If you were mustering and picked up an old bull, you had to keep him in the mob and teach him to drive before you could bring him home. But now, I'm going to have a muster there in the next couple of months, but I have all the tracks organized and we can cart all the weaners away. Troy and Daryl

have a track down there to where the old Massey hut was and I can take my truck down there and almost to the junction. I can put a couple in the back of my ute and cart them down to the truck. Then when we clean all the rubbishy things up, we can go and muster then, it is easy. The dogs are great to have.

Frank. Dogs are an important part of your mustering.

Neil. Very important Frank. Yes I have 5 dogs and a pup coming up.

Maurie. Remember old Tom. He used to pull the branches off as he drove past in the back of the ute. You would get home with the ute full of branches because Tom was pulling them off as he went.

Neil. Old Tom, he could catch a bull that dog. When he started off he used to hang on the nose, but as he got a bit older he got knocked around a bit so he would grab them on the knuckle just above the hamstring and you would see a big old bull go into a gully you might see his head come up the other side, next thing he would go down into the gully again because the dog would have him by the hind leg. He was a big old dog that fellow. Got him off Tommy Croyden, that's how he got the name Tom.

Maurie. We had a habit of that. I had a couple of bulls I got off Eddie McEvoy and they were called Eddie.

Neil. Yes I got a big red dog off the McEvoy's and called him Ned.

Frank. Can you get trucks in there to take hay. How do you do your weaning?

Neil. Well when we wean, we trap most of the weaners and bring them home and feed them here. If we trap a heap of weaners I will bring them home in the truck and feed them here in the yard. All the steers stay home and we take the better heifers back and everything else is sold. We have never taken any photos of some of the bulls we have had in the back of my ute. Some were really massive. How we drove around and got them where we did, I'll never know. Even if I had a four wheel truck I could not get any closer than the truck does now. The country is so rugged and unless you got in there with a big dozer to widen the tracks, you can't get in there. We were restricted to narrow tracks by the Forestry Dept - a maximum of 3 metres.

Frank. Do you trap on water?

Neil. No molasses. You can't trap on water over there because there is water everywhere and this year it is worse than ever. I carry the molasses in the back of the ute in 44 gallon plastic drums. They really love their molasses. Even those big scrub bulls will allow themselves to be trapped on molasses. I just have a couple of spears and they are only narrow. Not like the old days when we used to have timber spears

which were 10ft. long and they had to walk a long way in. With the shorter spears, the cattle can see the molasses there and they are at it before they know.

Maurie. When you are trapping, you have to be there every day don't you?

Neil. Yes. You have to check it every day.

Maurie. Is the old humpy still there?

Neil. Not the original one. It's long gone. It was long gone before George Bosel died, because he lit the fire that demolished it.

Maurie. That makes sense. I was talking to someone the other day about George and his fires.

Neil. Yes when old George was around there were no fire hazards. The grass was always burnt long before there was a problem.

Maurie. The only time he ever blew it. One time Eddie McEvoy was coming over to muster Bee Creek and we used to work in together and we must have been on my block that week and George had been out and burnt the horse paddock and Eddie arrived with all the horses – no grass. One of the boys had to ride home and bring the truck full of hay for the horses. You could see George leave home, a puff of smoke wherever he went.

Neil. When he used to drove butcher cattle. Young John Clark used to go with him and anyway Betty would be looking down the valley and would see a puff of smoke and she would say that Geroge and John are on their way and will be home in about 2 hours. The funniest one was he came up past the Mango Factory when Bill Brommel had a bit of a dairy farm there and George is riding along dropping matches and when he got up to Elephant Grass corner he looked back and could see no smoke! He's thinking to himself "What's the go?" Bill then came around the corner with a wet bag. He had been putting them out as soon as George lit them. Bill wouldn't have had any feed for his cows.

Maurie. George was devastated when the old wax match disappeared because you could throw them for a long way, whereas the wooden ones, you had to get off the horse, light it and then get back on the horse again.

Neil. And they are getting worse. If you try to light a cigarette you need four or five matches. Though not too many people use matches these days. The gas lighter has taken over.

