

Transcription DOB001

Interview with Sue Noakes [nee Howie]

Interviewer – Owen Burns

Transcribed - GC Yates

Owen I am interviewing Sue or Susan, and your last name is?

Sue It's Noakes now but it was Howie.

Owen And you are the daughter of?

Sue Maurie & June Howie

Owen Who resided out at?

Sue Broken River, I can't really say I was born on Eungella, it was in hospital, so I was born in Mackay.

Owen You weren't fortunate enough to be born on the range?

Sue I believe, and I was told, very close to but no, I'm sure there were plenty of those born on the range.

Owen Yes one of the Doolan boys was born on the range.

Sue At that stage Mum & Dad, Maurie & June Howie, had bought the farm at Broken River.

Owen They only owned just the one side didn't they? They didn't own the Smith's did they?

Sue No they didn't at that stage Gran Smith still owned the opposite side so that was the oats Paddock on the bottom and then up around Andy Herron and then down to the back areas and that was Gran -Irene Beryl Smith; she used to help Dad and they combined the herd at that stage Gran had originally been milking by herself after Grandad Smith passed away, so then she actually ended up combining the herd and they would milk together. Then over a period of time Dad then bought out her side and she just kept and maintained the house which you actually live in now, which is fairly amazing isn't it?

Owen And did you demolish the dairy, or when did that happen?

Sue Mum and Dad were always improving the dairy. Making sure that when they first got married, they were married very young.^[ed] Dad had come up from Bee Creek way.

Owen Are we talking about the nineteen sixties?

Sue I was born in sixty one, this is a part of the history that Dad would have to fill in more than me. I know they had been there only a couple of years prior to that.

Mum was nineteen when she had me so they married and I was born twelve months later. They had the farm just before they had me and Gran Howie later on moved out, they sold off the farm and she came out and lived in a caravan, which was very cute, up the road from the main house which had a little attachment built on to it but she still slept in her caravan; so a little Scottish lady sleeping up 'a Grans' I used to say I was going up 'a Grans' whenever I got sick and tired of Mum & Dad

Owen So there was only one house down there when you were born?

Sue Yes there was only one house, quite a small house at that particular time and then Mum & Dad gradually built on to that and made it into, not a substantial house, but certainly quite a large house. At that stage there was no inside toilet there was just a drop toilet out the back. Then Dad bought home a little cubby house which was probably a lot more palatial than any other cubby house in the street. At that time of my growing up, I was born in sixty one, and over the road with the National Parks were the Loins's ^[ed] Les Loins^[ed] and his crew, Alan Loins^[ed] was my mate and we mucked around in the National Park for most of the time. Those were the times when we would disappear off for a day and then return in the afternoon. One of the key things that I remember growing up is Sunday School, trying to run away from Mum every Sunday not to go to Sunday School, but Sunday School was always before church and it was at the back of the church where all the kids would have Sunday School.

Owen That's this one here at Eungella?

Sue Yes that was up at Eungella and I remember we used to have functions up at the hall, there would be balls, dances, there would be dress ups like fancy dress, always doing fancy dress. We would have shows where we would have singing, people would be acting out scenes; tennis I remember I was put under the chair and left at the tennis match once.

Owen Where was the tennis court then?

Sue At that stage they used to go out to Crediton next to the hall, and then they built the tennis courts opposite the hall here, where they could then play at night-time. And skiing out at the dam, everyone went skiing out at Eungella Dam that was a period of time when there was so much social activity. School and I suppose because school was such a part of the community, I remember Mrs Lovi always out of all my teachers I think she was the one that's always stuck in my mind. It's always amazing when I come back to functions like this, and even today and Mrs Lovi doesn't look any different to when I saw her as a grade one and two teacher. So we used to come in and there was a huge amount of pine trees at the top where we used to hide in, down the bottom of the oval was this huge gully and in this gully we would do cubby houses out of grass. I was just talking to Peter Burgess and he spent most of his school life burying me in the gully along with Max Norman & Kent Norman always used to bury me; and Peter Woodland would try and save me.

Owen Good you remember the crucial things!

Sue Crucial things in the memory! Watermelon at break up days We had recorders we'd go out and file down between the actual school which is now the undercover area, that was not undercover area, so it was just a paved bitumen area, and every morning we got out with our recorders and play God Save The Queen.

Owen That happened until about 'eighty six.

Sue Really? Not so long ago is it? I suppose because we were at Broken River there was always activity always people camped there.

Owen Terrorizing tourists?

Sue I became very good at terrorizing tourists.

Owen Pranks included?

Sue Not really terrorizing but you certainly got to know the people. Obviously swimming in Broken River when it was at flood that was the key thing that you had to do on a tube.

Owen See if you can get from Crystal Cascades down to the Diggings in a couple of minutes?,

Sue Yes! All those key things, I suppose no different to what my Dad used to do before me I suppose, in a different area.

Owen What was your basic daily routine when you were a kid? You had to catch the school bus I imagine.

Sue Yes the daily routine would be, thankfully we didn't live too far from the road so my walk out to wait for the bus. I'm just trying to think of my bus driver. I think I remember my first day and it seemed like it was the longest walk of my life and as I walked down across the little gully, the little bridge and then out to where the milk cans used to sit because at that time the milk was still in the cans.

Owen That was near the bridge wasn't it?

Sue That was near the main branch^[ed] and that used to be my shelter in case it rained, I had to hide in the milk shed. Who were the bus drivers?

Owen I don't know them, they weren't around when I was around.

Sue It was a small bus that used to pick me up, a little bit different to when Mum used to ride a horse to school and so did Dad, I think Dad had to walk because his older brothers used to take the horse. So it was pretty good, quick and easy coming in to the school. We'd start off with parade and then go in to our classrooms; we had a number of classes in one. I think I started out with one, two and three; then four and five & six and seven as all composite classes.

Owen Three teachers?

Sue Yes I'm pretty sure there were three teachers plus a teacher's aid, no I don't think they were called teacher's aid in those days it was just mothers.

Owen Don't tell me it was still Del Cunningham?

Sue No! Didn't Del used to work up in the exchange? Who worked in the exchange?

Owen Mrs Clark?

Sue Mrs Clark was it?, because I used to go up after school and help with the party line in the phone exchange. I remember walking around so at that time the bakery was here just up the road from the school and sometimes if something was happening and I didn't have to go home from school or Mum was at the shop.

Owen Did you hear anything you shouldn't have on the party line?

Sue Oh probably consistently! I didn't realise that it was such a weird thing until we went to visit someone that had just a normal lines and there was no-one else on the line and to me that was like 'wow' is this what real phones are. Party lines were really quite unique in those days; I'm sure we've come across many a conversation we shouldn't have. I always loved it when we were on the phone and they would break in and say there was another phone call coming, it was almost having your own private secretary. I remember moments on the buses, when I smashed one of the kids, one of the guys out at Crediton, over the head with a brush and Mr Lowry put me out of the bus and made me walk part of the way home because I had assaulted someone with a brush. I think he actually liked me but it was too early.

Owen Grade two grade three?

Sue Exactly I couldn't quite work that out. Smuggled home two small kittens once in the school bus from school to home and then managed to stow them away for a couple of days until Mum & Dad found out. I suppose life then when you went back home from school I would then have to go and do farm dues; my job was to look after the poddy calves.

Owen You missed out on that in the mornings?

Sue Yes I did, Mum and Dad did that in the mornings. Occasionally I could have fed the chooks in the morning but from memory it seemed to be more in the afternoon where I fed all the chooks, gathered the eggs, fed all the poddy calves, refilled all the grain. Sometimes on weekends I'd have to get the cows for milking so I'd be sent off on the back of a horse to get the cows, the horse, of course, would buck me as soon as it was out of sight from Dad and I'd have to walk the rest of the way, so that was often. Often a time I was left in the Oats paddock watching the cattle so that they wouldn't disappear. I was pretty much always out with Dad when we were on a horse or going out mustering. We used to have an old Jeep in those days and I learned to drive quite young.

Owen The farm Jeep ?

Sue The farm Jeep yes, and he would always be going "What are you doing?" I'd say I've got to have a snack, so I'd have a snack under my arm wherever we went. I suppose growing up in that area was definitely a freedom although there were duties and chores and all those things that you had to do.

Owen Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Sue No, an only child.

Owen So just the neighbour's?

Sue Yes the neighbours, that was the Loins's^[ed] Les was part of the National parks then, and that was probably the only ones around my age in that area because the Herrons were older than me by that stage.

Owen That'd be John and Heather.

Sue Yes, and I suppose because we had so much social life generally on the weekends with sport or tennis or all those sorts of things you certainly got to know everyone else around the neighbourhood. Oh I remember were they used to have, if anyone went on holidays they'd have slide nights, so when they came back from holidays.

Owen Was that at the hall?

Sue Yes normally at Crediton Hall or the main hall and they'd have a slide night and everybody would come along and watch your holiday snaps.

Owen Would anyone fall asleep?

Sue Consistently! "And here we are and this is what we did" so it was just a travel monologue still quite funny. I suppose it introduced me early on to travel.

Owen Did you have Santa at the Crediton Hall?

Sue Yes,

Owen Didn't have the Easter Bunny surely?

Sue I only remember the Easter Bunny at home.

Owen And the tooth fairy?

Sue I remember the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy.

Owen There were cow teeth underneath the pillow?

Sue Yes all that, I wondered what they were.

There would always be these tracks, little paw prints in white flour but obviously I didn't know it was flour, white snow and the Easter Bunny had arrived. I remember going down from our place along the bridge and then up there's quite a steep hill going over the other side of the bridge going up to Crediton and that was my daredevil bike area, so I used to go flat strap down across the bridge.

Owen On the main road, no timber jinkers at all in the area?

Sue No, I fell off a number of times doing that, fell off the horse three thousand times! I broke my arm here at the school.

Owen How did you do that?

Sue Doing tennis, I fell back on it. I managed to get, and this was probably in grade five or six, it was a thing like a bone disease, just from growth and [it was]^{led} a weird thing and they had to wrap my leg up in foam for six months.

Owen Like polystyrene foam?

Sue Yes, so that no-one knocked it, because if I knocked it it would create a problem.

Owen *So you would have been popular with a foam leg?*

Sue *Yes like a Michelin doll or something, it was just weird, very weird.*

Owen *Everyone wanted to sign it?*

Sue *They did.*

Owen *When you broke your arm did they rush you down to Mackay or wait?*

Sue *There was a moment of time when everyone had to decide if it was worth the travel.*

Owen *So the wait was four hours?*

Sue *Yes basically, and then after the pain hadn't gone away so 'Oh fine we'd better take you down to Mackay'.*

Owen *Did the school take you down, or you had to wait for your Mum?*

Sue *No Mum came in, thankfully, they weren't too far away.*

Owen *I think that's how a lot of injuries from Eungella happened; they happened and then "Oh in a minute...."*

Sue *"....You'll be fine" honestly, we'll give you a night and if it's still worse we'll worry about it then.*

Owen *You would have just seen power come in when you were a kid?*

Sue *Yes.*

Owen *That would have changed things.*

Sue *I definitely remember the change over from the kerosene fridges and then to power and then TV, so we must have got television probably early seventies when TV came.*

Owen *Yes seventy three or so was colour.*

Sue *That's right yes, we got black and white obviously - everyone sat around and just watched this box with the snow – “Was that something”... No that wasn't anything” And then soon after that the toilet came inside and was a flush which was fairly impressive.*

Owen *What else? You would have seen the bitumen come on the road and up the range as well?*

Sue *Yes, and also the road widening.*

Owen *The road out to Broken River even?*

Sue *Absolutely, it was dirt, it was certainly a pretty dangerous one particularly with the timber trucks and also the milk trucks, it was a fairly busy stretch.*

Owen *An industrial road!*

Sue *It was an industrial road, but that was amazing I suppose it stuck so much in my memory that I came back and got married here in Eungella and today's my anniversary! Thirteenth of September eighty five, we got married, I got dressed in Mr and Mrs Keast's house and had the ceremony in the church, which my grandad helped build, and had a horse and cart pull us there, which was kinda cool, and the reception back at the Chalet.*

Owen *The Chalet, an excellent place.*

Sue *As we were sitting there and the minister was about to give grace and he rushed out and the skydivers were just jumping off, it was the start of the competition. And he went out and gave them their final choice of not doing it or blessing them before they jumped. It was certainly a great day, it was a weekend affair, and the wedding just kept on going for three days, which is nice.*

So that's our connection, I suppose, it's a piece of you and a piece of your growing up and you like to re-visit it for those moments. I think that's it. There's probably more...