

GOB001 –

Interviewee: Judy Flynn, Hotel Life

Interviewed by: Owen Burns

Transcribed by: Del Cunningham

Owen: Where were you living?

Judy: At the Chalet.

Owen: So you were the publicans?

Judy: Yes, we had the Chalet from 1973 to 1976.

Owen: What was your husband's name?

Judy: Maurie.

Owen: How many years were you there?

Judy: Three years.

Owen: So that was your whole association with Eungella?

Judy: Yes. I had 6 children who went to the school here.

Owen: And went to Mirani after that I take it, took the bus down the range?

Judy: Yes. Only a couple of them because we moved and some of them started to go to Finch Hatton State School for their later years of Primary School, but they all went to Mirani High School.

Owen: I guess the good stories would have been the range incidences that you would have seen, because you would have privy to all that I imagine.

Judy: Yes, but we had some really funny things happen at the Hotel. We had one occasion, in those days the pubs went 11 to 1 on a Sunday (or they were supposed to), but when the doors closed there were always a few locals stayed on and in those days also the only phone to Eungella on the weekend was at the Hotel. There were no other phones on Eungella and this Sunday it was a beautiful sunny afternoon and we got a phone call from the Mercury. "Have you had any rain up there Maurie?" "No it's a beautiful day" says Maurie. Maurie went back into the bar and said to the fellows, "That was the Mercury wanting to know if we had any rain." The locals said to wait an hour or so and phone them back and tell them we've had some rain. So he rang an hour later and said "We've had a cloud burst up here. It just poured for an hour, it's just falling out of the sky, there is water everywhere." The next day on the front page of the Mercury the headlines read CLOUDBURST AT EUNGELLA. The phone never stopped ringing "Where was the rain at your place Flynnie?" That was one of the funniest thing I had seen happen. Just goes to show that you can tell fibs and they believe you.

Owen: You didn't have to get the front page did you?

Judy: Well in those days you never thought of that. Another day a couple of fellows after the session decided they would streak from the pub to the milk shed.

Owen: Where was the milk shed?

Judy: When you come up the Range you just keep going straight ahead, Harold Petersen had it. They weren't young fellows, they were fellows in their 50s. When they got out to the gateway of the pub, it was such a cloudy day, they couldn't even see their feet never mind anything else. And there was another Sunday too, a really cold day, but beautifully sunny. Mick Lovi came up to the pub just as it was starting to fill because we had Smorgasbord on Sundays. He had this big sack bag and dropped this big rock python out of it. It was huge and feet long and because it was so cold it just laid there in the sun. It stayed there for the whole hour session and it just lay there all the time. People had their photos taken with it and when the session was finished he put it back into the sack bag and took it home.

Owen: Did you have hang gliding back then as well?

Judy: No. That came after us.

Owen: So you wouldn't have had the pool either?

Judy: No, just the pub. It was in very bad repair and still is. They just glossed over it. They've just painted over most of it.

Owen: You would have had accommodation upstairs?

Judy: Yes, we had accommodation there were holes in some of the rooms and you could look from one room to the other which I don't think some of the guests knew about. Because it was an old hotel. It's years old and a lot of it was rotted with wood rot, it was not in good repair. When Hannay took over from us he just painted over it or sprayed some stuff over the walls. When it rained the light fittings would fill up with water and when we had Cabarets once a fortnight they would go through the floorboards. We were replacing floorboards after every Cabaret we had. But they were the days, we had 100, 120, 200 at the Cabarets every fortnight. They would come from the Dam and Comerfords would come from Turrawulla and they were big fellows. If you stood out the front of the pub you could see the pub rocking, the whole building was moving because there were so many big fellows. They were great nights. We used to finish at 12 o'clock half past 12. It started at 8 then not like it does now starting at 12. We had a band come up from Mackay once a fortnight and people would book tables and we had good Cabarets and 150 or so on Sunday for the Smorgasbords, and then we had wet weather. And it rained from Oct 73 to March 74 I think we got 223 inches of rain, it just never stopped and because Gargett and Mirani bridges would go under water you got no customers. If it wasn't for the half a dozen locals who had a few beers, we would have gone under. We just about did anyway because we had 73/74 & 75/76 the two Christmas periods, just never stopped raining. Just rained and rained non stop. We just took it in our stride.

Owen: That's the beauty of Eungella.

Judy: Yes that is the beauty of Eungella.

Owen: Did you have any other family up here?

Judy: No, just Maurie and I and the six kids.

Owen: I take it all the six kids lived upstairs with you guys?

Judy: We had old Mrs Pearce working for us at the time and she was deaf and used to say they were wonderful children. But I used to think if she could hear, she wouldn't really believe it. They used to put socks on their feet and slide up and down if we didn't have visitors. We had a couple of pigs up the back and one of them got out and went up the stairs. There were about 20 stairs up the back of that pub and this pig went upstairs and was walking around in the visitor section upstairs. They were wild days I can tell you. And Flacky had the shop at that time and he used to say if he got any new lollies in he would just give a couple to the Flynn kids and by that afternoon, they would be sold out, all the kids used to buy them.

Owen: With all that rain were there any instances of the Range collapsing? The road was gravel wasn't it?

Judy: No it was bitumen. There were a few instances of washouts but they would get them cleared pretty quickly because it was the only way to get the milk out. But then they had to get over Gargett and Mirani because those bridges would be over. There wasn't too many times when we were cut off for any length of time.

Owen: So were they cyclonic rains or just normal rain?

Judy: No, just normal rain.

Owen: I guess you hung out with pretty much everyone up here didn't you?

Judy: There weren't that many people living up here. There was, but they were out on the farms. There's probably more people living up here now.

Owen: What do you reckon the population would have been?

Judy: I'm not sure. But when we came up here we put 5 of our kids in the school and that boosted the numbers like you wouldn't believe.

Owen: So there would have been about 30 in the school?

Judy: No there were more than that. At one stage I think the school got up into the 60s. There were 3 teachers here at one stage. Our eldest one only did 6 months at Eungella and then he went to High School at Mirani.

Owen: I guess 1970 wasn't that far back, but were there problems you had to face, other than the phone, you had power?

Judy: Everything else was the same, we had all wood stove and fires at the pub. We had no trouble with power. We could get stuff from the shop or one of us used to go to town early in the week for supplies otherwise everything had to be taken to the milk factory and the milk truck would bring it up for us.

Owen: Are there any particular people who used to stand out more than anyone, the rowdy locals, like I guess the bar flies. Who were they in those days?

Judy: Well the local drinkers were Harold Petersen, Dave Berry and Alfie Clews, they were the three who worked on the milk truck. They weren't big drinkers, but used to come in and have a couple of beers in the afternoon. There were a lot of the young fellows from Finch Hatton who worked at the Mill they used to come up. We had the first colour TV on Eungella and they used to come up to watch the colour TV.

Owen: A good attraction.

Judy: Yes it was.

Owen: What was the best thing about being the publican?

Judy: The worst thing was the work. The best thing was probably all the people you met. Overseas visitors. People who came from overseas used to look down on the valley and say that it reminded them a lot of Hawaii. They were absolutely amazed by the place. They said you don't believe it until you get up here and see what it's like. And we had good policemen in those days fortunately. We were supposed to be closed at 10 at night, but if it was a good cloudy night and you couldn't see in front of you, you knew the cops down the bottom couldn't see the lights and we knew we were right for an hour or so, but if it was a clear night, we had to turn off all the lights. But they were pretty good. We used to get a few bad people sometimes, some of them were bikies, but there was only one way off the range, so the policeman would be waiting for them at the bottom.

Owen: They were the hardest things to deal with?

Judy: Yes. But they were probably pretty mild compared with what they get up to today. We didn't really have any problems, they were pretty good those days.

Owen: Before Eungella, you came from Mackay?

Judy: Yes and we lived at Netherdale for a couple of years and then lived at Hatton for 11 years or so until the mill closed down. My husband worked in the mill and my six children all worked in the mill, did apprenticeships. When the mill closed we moved to Farleigh and when Maurie retired we went to Walkerston. Maurie passed away 5 years ago and I'm still there. We met some wonderful people up here. It was a wonderful place to live. It really was. The kids loved the school. Most of us have said we would come back up here. My son who came up with me today said he would like to live back here. I would live back here tomorrow if it wasn't so far away from doctors and hospitals and things like that. But unfortunately the people that we knew up here have all moved on too and it wouldn't be the same. They were wonderful people. We had great times.

Owen: I'm glad you remember the good times and not the bad ones.

Judy: There weren't that many bad times. The bad ones were very few and far between the good times were all the time. It was just a wonderful place to live, the kids loved it, it was a different atmosphere. Even the kids sports day. When they took the

Eungella kids down to all the other school, because the dairy farmers didn't work during the day the farmers went to the sports days, whereas the other poor kids fathers had to work. We had the best cheer squad out. Alan Fredrickson can cheer louder than anyone. We had the most fantastic cheer squad.

Owen: Anything else you'd like to share?

Judy: We had two good policeman at the time Col Nicholas and Vaughan Goolie they were really nice guys. Sometimes Vaughan would come up to the pub and put a shirt over his uniform and get in behind the bar. If we had trouble all you had to do was ring the police and they would be here in 2 seconds or they would just wait at the bottom of the range and they would get them on the way down. We had some trouble at the Cabarets sometimes at night, but Maurie would ring Col and tell him and some of these trouble makers would have taken a room for the night and Col would be at the bottom of the hill the next morning and he would find something to book them for. Find something wrong with their car or something. They all got booked going down the range I can tell you.