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GERALDTON REGIONAL LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

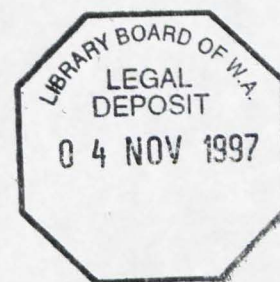
synopsis of an interview with

ALICE NANNUP

b 1911

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Interviewer : Carol Cahill
Date of interview : 10 November 1989
Duration : 3 x 60 tapes
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SYNOPSIS

Project : **Geraldton Oral History Project**
Interviewee : Alice Nannup
Interviewer : Carol Cahill
Date : 10 November 1989
Duration : 3 x 60 tapes

TAPE ONE SIDE A

- 00.00 Alice Isobel Nannup born 17.10.1911, on Abydoss Station out of Port Hedland. Mr and Mrs Val Hester in charge of station at that time.
- 02.00 Father's name Thomas Asset, mother's name Dot.
Had one sister Ella, one brother who died, 2 stepbrothers and 1 stepsister.
- 03.00 Left Abydoss Station when about nine with mother. Mother left father. Moved to Melona Station. Father's Station was Kangen.
- 04.00 Relates fond memories of growing up on the station. Had a marvellous father and a lovely mother. Mother was wonderful cook, cooking both bush tucker and European foods.
Describes wood collecting using homemade cart made by father.
Had a pet goat named Toego and the children used to ride the goat for fun.
Learned to ride a horse at six years of age. Was a tomboy and wore safari suits. No other children on the station to play with. Helped father with his work and built a big stockyard.
- 06.00 Got water from well. There was a creek that ran through the station. Never swam in the creek.
- 07.00 There was an island nearby where they grew their garden of fruit trees and vegetables.
- 08.00 Had a severe cyclone, lost some stock and their island garden was washed away. Few days earlier Father had asked Tommy, their Aboriginal employee, to make rain. Describes Tommy's rain making acts.
- 11.00 Describes how she helped her father and mother with their work. Children did the milking. Mother made butter. Had lots of goats - all had names.
- 12.00 Did their shopping at Roebourne -a 3 day trip from the station. Father sent for their stores from Perth.
- 13.00 Describes their house and the station. Had an open fire outside and cooked in iron pots. Mother made beautiful cakes, bread and brownies and Alice always had marble or rainbow cakes for her birthday.
- 14.00 Alice's mother was born on Pilbara station and was reared by and worked

for Mr and Mrs Hester as house girl. Schooled at Bindoon while on holidays.

- 15.00 Alice was a baby when they left Hester's station and went to live on her father's station. When she was 9 years old she left home and went to Melona and spent about 2 years there before she was taken away from her mother and sent down south. Mother worked in the kitchen at Melona and warned her children to hide under the bed when the scouts came looking for half caste kids to take away. Looking back Alice realised how cunning these scouts were.
- 16.00 Mr and Mrs Campbell who were retiring from Melona station and going to Perth to live promised to take the children down with them and educate them and send them back home again, but this did not eventuate. Instead they were kept for a year at Bidginup [?] - a big farm they were managing while the owners went on holiday to Singapore.
- 18.00 Mr Burridge, a farmer, was scouting for children to go to school. He went to Bidginup and spoke to the Campbells who agreed to him taking the children away to school. Alice's mother jumped at the idea, rather than let the Aboriginal Affairs take them away. Doris Dunn and Herbert Todd were the other two children involved.
- 19.00 Alice said goodbye to her mother, now working at Croydon Station, and never saw her again. Alice was about 11 years old then. Travelled by boat with the Campbells. Had a big send off party for the Campbells at [?] Creek and spent the night there sleeping under the stars while the others slept in the Hotel.
- 20.00 Alice's father sold his Station when he heard Alice was leaving and unknown to the Campbells travelled on the same boat but he was not allowed to come near Alice. The trip took 8 days and Alice was sick throughout the trip. She slept on the cabin floor and had to sit on deck all day. They were really lonely and unhappy and cried all day and longed to be back with their parents in familiar surroundings. We had to eat our meals on deck outside the kitchen. Her father brought them fruit. The ship's name was Karen [?] and sailed from Roebourne to Fremantle. Doris was about 9 years old and Herbert was about the same age as Alice - their mothers were back in Melona and Roebourne respectively.
- 23.00 After medicals, they docked in Fremantle and went by train to Belmont and stayed at Belmont Hotel. Mr and Mrs Ball were the proprietors and their son used to work at Melona station. The children slept in little wooden bunks used by drunks. They ate their porridge in the pantry then went out to play. An older boy, who later ran Clontarf orphanage, used to take them down to the Swan River to swim and play. They stayed out all day and fed themselves with money they found at the Belmont Race Course.

- 27.00 Alice's father got permission to take the children to the Museum and Zoo. Later he was refused permission by Mrs Campbell to take the children out again.
- 28.00 In 1923 the children were taken to the Aboriginal Affairs office and saw Mr Nevill who discussed schooling for them and their future. In 1925 after just one year's schooling in Pijinup [?], they were sent to Palanup [?] where there was no school. At Pijinup they had to milk 16 cows each morning before they went to school. Doris was the little house-girl so she did not have to do any milking. They had a horse called Dinah [?] who took them to school in a sulky.

Tape 1 Side 2

- 00.00 There were 9 children at school in Pijinup. Mr and Mrs Burridge were lovely people and Alice became good friends with their children Wes and Grace. There were 3 or 4 Burridge families, MacFarlanes and Hollands. Mr and Mrs Campbell looked after Alice till 1925. When there was no school at Palanup the children were sent to Mogumber.
- 01.00 Recalls Grace's 9th birthday party at Pijinup - the food, games and dancing the polka with an old gentleman. It was Alice's happiest night she ever had as the children were all fretting for their families.
- 03.00 Had their first Christmas there - very cold. The Burridge boys threw Alice into a dam and she had to go home (4 miles away) in wet clothes - the boys thought it was a great joke.
- 04.00 Alice studied up to grade 3 and loved poetry. Recites her favourite poem "Rainbow fairies" by Grimms Fairy Tales. Teacher Miss Martin taught her the poem and all other subjects. Miss Martin left to get married and Miss Flynn took over. Songs "Good morning merry sunshine"- Alice sings a few lines. No piano just a tuning fork. Recalls her school days.
- 08.00 Alice was very upset when her father was refused permission to see her at Easter. However he sent her flowers and easter eggs. Campbells' son Melville came down for a holiday and suggested a treat for the kids. So the Campbells and Holthouse (ie Mrs Campbell's sister and brother-in-law) took Alice and the other children to a pantomime and heard Dame Nellie Melba sing.
- 10.00 Shortly after, the children were taken away from the Campbells and sent to Mogumber. The year there was no school, the children worked in Campbells' garden, milked cows, fetched the mail etc. Doris' accident - fell off the horse. Campbells had a horse and sulky - no car.
- 13.00 Bush tucker - shot wild turkey and goannas also ate witchetty grubs. Went

hunting with her mother - had two kangaroo dogs, beautiful quiet horses and chooks. One dog got bitten by a snake and died and the other got kicked by a horse and bled to death.

- 16.00 Parents separation and Alice leaving home.
- 17.00 Tin miners paid Alice a shilling to fan them while they were eating. Chinaman Jimmy was the cook. Her father bought her a mouth organ. Visited Mr and Mrs Sullivan the mailmen to say goodbye and spent the night with them.
- 19.00 Father gave mother two horses, buggy and stores when they left. He was heartbroken when they left. Met father again when he was passing through to Mogumber. He informed Alice he was selling his farm, as home was never the same without Alice. Alice's father may have been 20 or 30 years old when she was born.
- 21.00 Campbells told Alice she had to go to Mogumber to school as there were no schools in their town. Alice tells of her journey to the Mission settlement. Describes her 2-year stay at Mogumber school.
- 25.00 Travels to her first job at Williams. When she got to Collie she was starving - guard brought her water and station master got her sandwiches, cake and tea. Describes her journey and met on arrival by policeman Mr Larsen.

Tape 2 Side A

- 00.00 Meeting with Mrs Larsen (nee Ryan) - an invalid in a wheelchair. Didn't make Alice very welcome - worked there from September 1927 till Mrs Larsen's death on New Years Eve 1928 at 44 years of age. Mrs Larsen suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. They had one little girl who died. Taught Alice a lot - dressmaking and cooking. The Larsens were like parents to Alice. Mr Larsen got shot in the stomach by a wanted man. Alice also had to do the washing and ironing. She was paid 5 shillings a week - she banked 2 shillings and 6 pence and kept the rest for pocket money to buy lollies. Mrs Larsen had Mass and Holy Communion in her home every Friday morning.
- 07.00 Moved to North Perth with the Larsens and lived next door to their nephew Henry (Lofty) who was a detective. The Larsens were beautiful people. Lofty was an Inspector in Geraldton during the War years.
- 08.00 Alice did a lot of beautiful embroidery. She never ever had any time off while she was with the Larsens and nearly had a nervous breakdown because it was all too much for Alice especially when Mrs Larsen's niece Miss Ryan came over to live with them and put pressure on Alice. Explains incident with Mrs Larsen's niece involving the Police. Policewoman wanted

to flog Alice but Mrs Larsen said she would do the reprimanding. Alice then told the Larsens she wanted to leave.

- 16.00 Mrs Larsen advertised for a replacement, interviewed and took on a tall 19-year old girl who left without notice in a day.
- 19.00 Alice read Mrs Larsen's letter praising her which pleased Alice. Alice continued working for Mrs Larsen till she died in Alice's arms. Dr Cohen advised Mrs Larsen to get a nurse, but she didn't want anyone else except Alice. She was buried in Karrakatta. Miss Ryan went back to Sydney.
- 24.00 After the funeral Mr Larsen took Alice back to the Girls' Home in Bennett Street, East Perth.
On about the 14th/15th January 1929 Alice got a job on the farm in Wyalkatchem where she stayed till 1931. Alice was employed to do all the housework and cleaning while Mrs Cashmore [?] did the cooking. However one of the children took ill and Mrs Cashmore travelled down to Perth with all the children and left Alice to do the cooking and look after the farmers. Mrs Cashmore's father was a doctor in Albany.
- 26.00 Alice got ill with mumps and measles and went back to the Girls' home in Perth for 3 months before returning to the farm.
- 27.00 Cashmore's farm was called Avon Park. Alice sewed bags in the paddock. Every second Thursday she went into Wyalkatchem driving 11 miles in the sulky to get the stores and mail etc. On alternate Thursdays Alice worked in the fields on a tractor or drove a team of horses. Alice was paid 5 shillings a week and her keep. Alice was paid by the farmers who employed her through Aboriginal Affairs Department. Wyalkatchem was a prejudiced town.

Tape 2 Side B

- 00.00 Alice relates incident at Railway Station on her return from Perth when she missed meeting Mr Cashmore. She stayed the night with the Spencers and the Police took her out to the farm the next morning.
- 03.00 The Cashmores were good to her and she had holidays with them. Jimmy Cashmore (9 years old) chopped Alice's finger because she would not make a gun for him out of some board. The Cashmore boys used to play tricks on Alice. Used to trap rabbits for their skins with the boys. Snake caught in rabbit trap. Incident with snake that killed two chickens and got away. Relates another incident Mrs Cashmore had with snake and other confrontations with snakes. Snakes were plentiful on the farm.
- 14.00 Alice tells about her time in Mogumber - a terrible place. Girls and boys were housed separately - describes food and school. Alice schooled for 3 years only - just one teacher. Alice was taught sewing and cooking while

the boys worked in the garden or with sheep. Alice made shirts and dungaree pants for the farm workers. Every Saturday the girls had to clean the sewing machines and were paid with a small bar of chocolate. The clothes were sent to Forest River at Wyndham. Church Sister Hand went up to Forest River. Mogumber was both a Church of England and Catholic Mission. Alice was there from 1925 to 1927. Alice was posted at the second boss's house just prior to going out to work. There was just Eva the housemaid and Alice was the cook and worked in the kitchen. Most of the girls were of mixed blood - all spoke English but they knew their own language too. Alice can't speak it any more, but can understand when she hears it spoken. Alice's language is Nammel[?] - same name as her tribe from up north.

- 25.00 Alice describes some of the rules at Mogumber and the harsh discipline -tar and feathering, shaving head, solitary confinement on just bread and water. Treated like animals.

Tape 3 Side A

- 00.00 Alice describes a typical day and her daily duties at Mogumber. No leisure time - girls fought with each other.
- 03.00 After Wyalkatchem Alice went to recuperate from the mumps and measles at the Girls Home and then worked for Mrs Nevill in Darlington because her maid Maggie ran away. Alice got on well with their children. She returned to work for the Nevill's again for 6 to 8 months but because of the pressure she left and went to Leonora.
- 05.00 At Leonora she went to work at [?] Valley station some 60 miles out in the bush, with two other girls Mary Stack [?] and Jessie Parkot [?] both from Mogumber. Very tough place to work, very dry and isolated. She worked for Mr and Mrs Mail [?] who had 3 grown up children - 2 daughters and a son. The Mails had a white maid who left and then Alice was given the housemaid's job - cap and apron job. Describes her duties - very hard work. The Mails were great entertainers. On Sundays they were given 2 or 3 hours to go out for a walk - it was the only time they had off.
- 09.00 Alice was put to work in the laundry after Jessie's arrival who took over as housemaid. However Jessie proved unsatisfactory and Alice was returned to her housemaid duties, much to Jessie's annoyance.
- 13.00 Alice took over the dry cleaning and ironing - with a petrol iron. Describes washing day with Sunlight soap and bleach called "Dad" - dry boiled the bed linen. Washed at 5.00 am before the dust started to blow. Polished floors, cleaned silver on Saturday mornings.
- 18.00 Gives a description of the station - just an ordinary homestead with an outhouse at the back about a quarter mile away. Went for walks on their 3

hours off - beautiful scenery - Devil's marbles - hills - rocks.
Worked at Leonora station for about 7 months, then the 3 girls ran away.

Describes their plans and then their journey through the bush in bad weather.

Tape 3 Side B

- 00.00 Alice relates their eventful journey on the run and the help they got along the way and finally their interview with the Police who drove them to Leonora and left them with some old Aboriginal people.
- 04.00 They all found work - Jessie got a job at the Hadfield dairy, Mary found work at the Boarding House and Alice got a job at the White House Hotel as a pantry maid with Rosie.
- 05.00 Alice always kept in touch with the Cashmores who asked her to return to them, so with Mr Nevill's approval Alice went back to Wyalkatchem for just a few months before she got married.
- 06.00 Alice's fiance in Mogumber had found a job at Meekatharra but had to have a wife to go up there, so they got married. Alice's fiance was the brother of her best friend and first met him in Perth. Alice's wedding dress came from Russia. It was the wedding dress of a lady whose husband was rabbit trapping at Cashmore's Avon Park farm. When she heard Alice was getting married, she gave her the dress and veil. The flowers came from a previous wedding - Sister Fenton's wedding. A nurse who married a Lannigan from Mogumber.
- 08.00 Alice married Charles William Nannup - born at Mundaring who was only 17 months older than Alice. They married on 22 April 1932 in Mogumber. A week later they set off by train to Meekatharra and arrived Geraldton on 30 April 1932. Charles worked at Yalo [?] station for a short time only, as he couldn't get on with the boss, before going across to another station where her eldest son was born.
- 10.00 Five months later they moved to Wiluna and worked for a butcher looking after cattle and sheep out in the bush. The Aborigines were a bit primitive out there - a young Aborigine boxer working with her husband was murdered because he refused to drink with them.
- 12.00 Alice became nervous and so they both left and went to Geraldton in January 1934 and have lived there ever since.
Alice had 13 children altogether - 10 are still living ie 7 girls and 3 boys.
She has 38 grandchildren and 40 greats.
- 13.00 Tells of their arrival in Geraldton and their jobs there with Mr Rowan fumigating rabbits for a short time. Charles loved his drink.

- 14.00 Later Charles got work at Okagee [?] near Northampton woodcutting for the condenser which condensed the seawater for the railway engines. Worked here for a long time and went as far as Northern Gully but didn't get paid as their Yugoslav boss ran off with all the money. They were starving and traded honey for some food from the neighbouring farmer. They lived out in the bush in a tent - had only 2 children then.
- 18.00 They caught the train to Geraldton and lived near the Baptist Church in Quarry Street from 1934 to 1939. Their 4 year old daughter had an accident there and died. They next moved to the Reserve in Banksia Street on 14 March 1939.
- 19.00 There was only about 4000 people in Geraldton then and just 15 Aborigines in all who lived on the ridge in Quarry Street. The Aborigines were not allowed into licensed premises or dance halls and were not too popular with the town folk.
- 22.00 Alice knew how to dance. Mr Neal taught her how to dance at Mogumber and they used to have dances once a fortnight - garden waltz, Canadian barn dance, square dance etc. An old aboriginal fellow from the Mission provided the music - he played the accordion. Had dances at a friend's place just over the hill in Geraldton.
- 24.00 Alice's husband was born at Mundaring and his father was a lumberjack - a very nice chap Bill Nannup - a thorough gentleman. He was an American negro. Alice never met him but she knew his brother, her husband's uncle, Albert Nannup. Charles mother was very fair, and her name was Ella Ring. Alice never met her. She was from Katanning. Charles had a brother Thomas and sister Dorothy. Charles died on the 3rd April 1988 - his brain cells perished from alcohol. After they brought in citizenship rights, alcohol became freely available to Aborigines as they were then allowed into the hotels and things changed for the worse.
- 27.00 Alice had to struggle to get where she is today. They were not accepted when they first came to Geraldton. They had to prove themselves and she has proved herself. Looking back on her life, Alice has no regrets and is happy. When they first arrived Geraldton, they went into town to do the shopping and took her children to the matinee. Her children used to get a rough time, fighting and names calling and they were very unhappy occasions because all are equal in God's eyes. Her children used to come home from school very unhappy but Alice told them to stay there and eventually they would wear them down. They are now accepted and have so many friends in town today it's unbelievable.

END OF INTERVIEW