

## DRYBLOWER MURPHY – CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Interviewee Ken Murphy  
Date: 27 September 1979

Tape One of Two  
Side A

- Father was raised in Gippsland Lakes – loved boat building, and sailing swimming and diving. Family were monumental construction. 1880's when banks bust; Dad came to WA from Victoria. Went to Southern Cross and walked from York. Fossicked with a group of others. Then Kalgoorlie. Went to Bulong NE of Kalgoorlie. Bulong mine called Esmeralda- they struck it rich!
- Dry blow a large shaker and blow and pan it off with water. They sold it.
- Dad went to England with a few of his friends. London Gaiety society. A Tenor lost more than half of his money in shares. Went to Kent met my mother. Her name was Selby- Lownes. A wealthy family. My eldest brother Harry was born there. He joined up in World War 1
- Dad came to Australia and came back again and lost two little boys in Red sea on journey. Another born and I was the last.
- Father was a funny man and loved kids. He wrote poetry and my favourite one is "Why cant the kids stay young?" World's worst writer. No one could read his writing apart from my mother. He was not a boozier.
- He wrote for Sunday Times in 1898. Also wrote for Kalgoorlie Miner and Sydney Bulletin. He befriended MacCullum Smith. He put out some funny ones.
- They farmed at Burrakin.
- Interviewer then took over relating stories that Ken had told him about his father wearing bowling hat and cane and suit. Jokes in Shaftsbury Hotel. Knew everyone and was known as "Dry". Their family life. Dad wearing dressing gown and reciting poems. Ken's small dog – neighbour poisoned dog and father took two Sunday Times and hit him. Spent time diving off Como jetty.
- Perhaps he was hypocritical –with children- whole family went to Adelaide and Dry blower stayed here. Marriage was not very successful. Ernie related incidents about marriage. He could never sit still for very long. Not a conventional family man.
- "My son My Son" written in Shaftsbury after a bender. Ernie would get one page of poem in long hand and try to get him to finish. He used a big basin not an ink well .A depressing scene but wrote great poems.

END OF SIDE A

Side B

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## TAPE TWO OF TWO

### Side A

- Ken recalls his favourite poems. He wrote My Son when Harry went off to war. Harry was tall.
- Died in March 1939, cancer, needle on the floor. Mum looked after him in a flat. Moved to two storey house. One day when no one was there he got dressed in a dark suit and his bowler and stick, going to have his last ride in a tram. He fell dead on a footpath on the way to the tram! He loved the ferries. I was born in the Raffles Hotel. Dad loved the ferries. Dad went from Mendis street jetty to the Raffles. Journey went to Como jetty then to Mill point jetty then Barrack street, then Dad would walk to Sunday Times building.
- Dad whistled all day and stay with children.
- He wrote for 40 years lots of poetry. He wrote when he felt like it. He was strict with children and never swore. Every one knew him.
- Percy Buttons.
- Many friends visited him at home. Lots of letters from Eastern states.
- Bulong – describes journey there in a ute. Coen there. Found old Esmerelda pit. Part was mud. Had found gold in that mud.
- Ken relates how he was lowered by windlass to bottom of shaft – large as a ballroom- light a match. Found old newspapers, an old beam with a rope tied to it. Lowered a bit further and took some samples and then went back up. Describes state of rope after he was back.
- Main memories of father – always strict – Mum likes his poetry. Always was out at concerts. Loved Shaftesbury theatre. Taken to stage door at His Majesty's Theatre. He loved comic opera, Gilbert and Sullivan. Played the piano a bit.
- In London he wrote for a paper there. Always going back and forward to England.
- Dad and a friend Sam Jacobson started the White City a pleasure bar. A bit crooked. The Ugly Men's Association started as a charity. A group of businessmen.
- Dad loved the Royal Show – dancing Duck. Dad nearly murdered someone over it. A red hot plate to make it move!
- Dad was a bit on the fat side and would have weighed a bit. A difficult man. His poetry made him popular. Talked so fast. Loved orphans.
- Gives a hard copy of a poem to Interviewer. Lots of typed poems to borrow.
- Ernie Clark the messenger boy?
- Mother died 1958 whilst he was still in army- she was 84. Dad was 72 when he died.
- Father did not keep a catalogue of his poems. He would make up words sometimes. I was married when he died. His cancer was in the stomach. Lots of pain.

End of Side A

## Side B

- 1989 went to Sunday Times
- Used to talk about Kalgoorlie and mining areas.
- He organised camel races in Coolgardie.
- Walk from York to Southern Cross – walked for 8 miles a day.
- He was there when the water came through. Dry Blower was not happy that CY O'Connor committed suicide. Dad didn't think it would work.
- Dry blower would have been a labour man.
- Poem "Teach them to shoot." Related that all boys should be able to shoot a rifle.
- His hobbies, not many. Children his greatest love. Wouldn't like to shoot animals. Go to rifle galleries.
- Ken did write some poems under name KAYEN. He then recited one of his poems "Armistice Day."

## End of Interview