

Mining the Past

Uncovering Gwalia and Leonora



An Oral History Project:

Verbatim transcript of an interview with

Betty Moor (nee Mackay)

1935-

&

Margo Hunter (nee Mackay)

1938-

Recalling their family's life in Gwalia and Leonora

**Interviewer: Crienda Fitzgerald
Date of Interview 5 July 2005
Transcriber: Jo Draffin**

NOTE TO READER

Readers of this oral history should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of the spoken word and reflects informal conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Gwalia/Leonora Project historians are not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein: these are for the reader to judge.



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I, M. Hunter (please PRINT) have read (or 'had read to me' if that would be appropriate) and understood all of the information above, and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this research on the understanding that [tick one]

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Signature of Participant Margaret Hunter Date 19-9-2005

Signature of Researcher [Signature] Date 19-9-2005

Participant's copy [☐]

Researcher's copy [☐]



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CONSENT FORM

I, BETTY MOOR (please PRINT) have read (or 'had read to me' if that would be appropriate) and understood all of the information above, and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this research on the understanding that [tick one]

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Signature of Participant E. a. Moor (Betty Moor) Date 16th Sept, 2005

Signature of Researcher Pam Sharpe Date 16/9/05

Participant's copy ☐

Researcher's copy ☐



Betty Moor & Margo Hunter (nee Mackay), Gwalia, c.1946



Betty Moor & Marg Hunter (nee Mackay), c.2005

Family and Working Life in the North Eastern Goldfields: A Social History of Gwalia and Leonora (WA) 1890-1990

* Interviewee: **Betty Moor & Margo Hunter**

* Interviewer: **Criena Fitzgerald**

* Date: **05/07/2005**

This is Criena Fitzgerald interviewing Margo and Betty for the Gwalia Oral History Project, 5th of the 7th, 2005. And we'll start with Betty first, if you could give me your full name and date of birth.

BETTY MOOR Elizabeth Ann Moor, I was born on the 12th of February 1935 and my maiden name was Mackay.

CF Okay ... Margaret.

MARGO HUNTER My name is Margaret Mary Hunter and I was born in Menzies in February 1938. My maiden name was Mackay and I was better known in the goldfields as Margo.

CF Brilliant ... okay. Okay ... I'd like you both to tell me a little bit about your parents ... their full names and their occupations.

BETTY MOOR Our Dad was Hugh Mackay, M-a-c-k-a-y. He was a native of Scotland and immigrated with he was 21 years old. He arrived in Australia in 1926 and he was delegated to go and work on south west farms for a couple of years and after that time was up he went to the goldfields ... namely Gwalia and he met my Mum and they were married in 1933 and I was born in 1935.

CF And what was your Mum ... what's her full name?

BETTY MOOR Her name was Flora May Robertson.

CF And what was she doing in Gwalia?

BETTY MOOR At the time she was working in one of the stores ... she was bookkeeper and a drapery assistant.

CF And her parents ... had they lived in Gwalia all their lives?

BETTY MOOR No ... they had actually had two families. They were from South Australia and they came across ... it was in connection with the railways ... I think it was the Trans Railway that bought Grandpop over ... I never knew grandfather. But he was a railway man and when they got to Western Australia he was on the railway line that was going north from Kalgoorlie through Kookynie terminating in Leonora and they lived for a few years at a railway house in Kookynie. Then my mother and I think her sister were born there.

CF Mm ... Now you said they met and ... in Gwalia ... did they marry in Gwalia?

MARGO HUNTER Yes they did ... yes they married in a little Methodist Church in Gwalia in 1933.



Hugh Mackay and Flo Robertson wedding, 16/3/1933

CF And why did they stay in Gwalia?

MARGO HUNTER Because dad had got a job there they stayed for a long, long time and they had to eventually move for they saw that it was going to be necessary to move when the mine that was the centre of all the ...

CF But I thought you were born in

MARGO HUNTER Yes, Menzies.

CF So I'm just saying when they first married.

MARGO HUNTER Okay ... alright so delete that bit then?

CF No that's fine ... we'll leave it ... we won't type it up. But I want you

MARGO HUNTER Move in sequence. I can carry on if you like. Dad was working in a butcher shop when he met Mum ...

CF In Gwalia?

MARGO HUNTER Yes ...

CF For the co-op?

MARGO HUNTER Yes ... for the co-op.

CF And who was running that at the time?

MARGO HUNTER I'm not sure but I think it was a Mr Dench, do you know?

BETTY MOOR I think it was

BETTY MOOR Yes ... I think it was ... yes there probably would have been more than one manager ... mm

MARGO HUNTER I think Dench.

CF And ... so he was working there.

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

CF Why did he move to Menzies?

MARGO HUNTER Well because he wanted to have his own business and an opportunity came up to buy a butcher shop in Menzies which was thriving

at the time he thought. But typical of lots of mining towns, not long after Dad bought in there, several of the mines closed down and the people left in droves and unfortunately left owing Dad quite a lot of money and they never, ever did pay him. So they fortunately were able to go back to Dad's job at the co-op and our house which they had rented out. They hadn't sold the house so they were able to go back.

CF So ... to start with ... how long did that job last in Gwalia before he moved to Menzies or before he decided to move to Menzies?

BETTY MOOR Okay then, well he was working there when he and Mum married so that was in 1933 ... I was born in 1935 and Marg in 1938. But it must have been sometime in 1937 that he went to Menzies.

CF And when did he move back to Gwalia? How old were you?

BETTY MOOR Well I would have been about three ... our youngest brother was born about 1940 in Gwalia so ...



Flo Mackay with her four children, (L-R) Betty, Alan, Jan & Margo, c.1941

MARGO HUNTER It must have been a very short stay ... mm

CF Describe your house for me in Gwalia what was it made of.

MARGO HUNTER Was it you or me?

CF Either of you ... Betty you start.

BETTY MOOR It was corrugated iron externally on the roof and all walls. Inside it was clad in stamped steel which was one of the rare things in those

times because most of the other homes had calcimine and hessian but our house was just a little bit grander I'd say although we didn't think so at the time, but we knew that we had proper tin walls. Our neighbours had walls that were bagged ... whitewash bagged, but all were quite comfortable.

CF Who were your neighbours?

MARGO HUNTER Our neighbours on one side were a family called Hunt H U N T. And on the other side various ones ... I'm trying to think ... I remember ... I'm just trying to think who they were. Was it Cramptons?

BETTY MOOR No, no ... Crump ... I think Crump on one side ... on the other side and Commins.

CF Okay ... tell me about ... you said your house was pressed tin. Where was your house? Where was it located?

BETTY MOOR In the main street ... between Leonora and Gwalia ... on a corner almost ... it was the second one from the corner and there was a little bit of road and a creek before the next block of houses going down towards the school.

CF And what was that creek called?

BETTY MOOR It didn't have a name.

MARGO HUNTER Just a creek

BETTY MOOR ... and it only filled after heavy rain.

CF Tell me ... did the house ... inside ... what was the kitchen like?

MARGO HUNTER Fairly big, all of us had to live there. Mum had a big scrubbed pine table and there was six of us and we had a stool against the

window and two or three of us sat on that and there was a stove a Metters stove, little stove and a dresser ... kitchenette I think they called them in those days and a safe ... little flywire safe and she had a few chairs.

CF Did you ever have a refrigerator?

BETTY MOOR Not until almost the end of our time up there and it was a kerosene one.

CF So not really until 1940's?

MARGO HUNTER Almost the 1950s.

BETTY MOOR The late 1940's.

CF What did you use for refrigeration?

MARGO HUNTER They had a Coolgardie Cooler out on the back veranda. I've described that in my little thing that I gave to Patrick. It was a Coolgardie Cooler and they used to wet the bags so that the air could get through ... they wound up part of the corrugated iron so that the breeze could come in and keep the cool damp bags cool.

CF And because of that ... did your Mum shop everyday?

BETTY MOOR No ... she hardly ever went to the shops the grocer used to call.

CF Daily?

BETTY MOOR Weekly. But Dad worked, right next to the co-op store so if she wanted anything brought home she'd just say ... please bring home some butter or some vegetables and he would bring the meat and everything that we needed when he came home.

CF Did you have a bathroom?

BETTY MOOR Sort of ... it was a little partitioned off room off the back veranda.

CF With a bath?

MARGO HUNTER Yes

BETTY MOOR ... had a bath ... a bath heater ... chip heater.

CF Did you need to use that?

MARGO HUNTER Oh in the winter did we ever.

CF What about in the summer? Was the water hot?

BETTY MOOR Absolutely red hot coming ... the pipes were all laid on top of the ground and it was so hot.

CF So what did that mean? Could you have a shower or bath in summer?

BETTY MOOR You could yes we certainly did but you had to run it a little while before it got tolerable.

CF Was the house plumbed ... what sort of water did you drink?

MARGO HUNTER Well it had a very sophisticated reticulation scheme from a decent sort of a water supply but it came on the top of the ground.

CF Could you drink that water?

MARGO HUNTER You could but it was very hard but when it was cool it was quite nice but it was hard and mineralised.

CF Because a lot of people I've talked to say you got condenser water from the mine.

MARGO HUNTER Yes that right.

CF Did you?

BETTY MOOR Dad didn't work on the mine so we weren't entitled to get it but we had rainwater tanks.

MARGO HUNTER Yes I was just going to say that.

BETTY MOOR Yes. One fairly big one and then later on we had a little one just outback near the porch.

CF So it was only people whose family worked on the mine who could collect condenser water.

BETTY MOOR Apparently.

CF Tell me what your mother cooked. What sort of food did you eat?

BETTY MOOR Pretty plain but pretty good.

CF But what was it?

BETTY MOOR Mostly meat and vegies.

CF Were vegetables easy to come by?

BETTY MOOR The staples were. You could always get potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, beans most of the time. Some people even grew some vegies but we didn't. Tomatoes ... some people grew tomatoes.

MARGO HUNTER You could buy fruit ... I remember Mum picking it up by the box ... it came from Kalgoorlie didn't it?

BETTY MOOR No, from Bairds in Perth.

CF On the train?

BETTY MOOR Yes ... she'd get half a case of oranges in ... in those two section wooden crates, half a case of apples. And she had to hide them when she got them home because the smell of the beautiful apples, we would hunt them down and get through them. So if it wasn't under the bed or on top of the wardrobe Mum had to get Dad to take them down to the shop to hide them.

CF And what age were you when you started school.

BETTY MOOR The year children turned six, that was the standard rule and that was 1940.

CF Do you remember ... 'cause you started school in 1940 ... do you remember the war?

BETTY MOOR Sorry, 1941.

CF Okay so you started school 1941?

BETTY MOOR Yes and I was nearly six.

CF Do you remember how the town was affected by war? Do you remember the war?

BETTY MOOR Vaguely. There were some relatives whose boys went off to war and didn't come home and there was a lot of sadness. One of whom was one of our cousins, a Robertson and he was a little older than I am and he died, got killed.

MARGO HUNTER And I remember at school that we did have what they called the air raid shelter.

BETTY MOOR Air raid trenches.

MARGO HUNTER Air raid trenches ...

BETTY MOOR Yes I remember the boys in the older class had to dig those. Yes because it looked a bit scary when the Japs were coming to the coast of Western Australia. It was just a little bit frightening they dug trenches in nearly all the state schools anyway.

CF What about ... blackouts or rations?

MARGO HUNTER Yes we did have rationing, butter, sugar, clothing, tea, I think. Because we used to take our little book down to the shop and Mum would need a pound of butter and you'd have to take the book.

CF And were there any blackouts?

MARGO HUNTER No not that I remember.

BETTY MOOR However on a couple of our holidays we went to South Fremantle. Remember the blackouts and the search lights there, they were coming from Rottnest.

CF Tell me ... because Gwalia's a mining town ... was it noisy?

MARGO HUNTER Not invasively so ... you had the steady thump of the mine battery going and you only noticed it when it stopped.

BETTY MOOR We didn't have the noise of traffic

MARGO HUNTER No ... very quiet in that way.

CF Do you remember any accidents in the mine? During your time.

BETTY MOOR There was a particularly nasty one where the skip went to the bottom of the shaft was one of the most horrific ones.

CF Tell me what you remember about it.

BETTY MOOR I think the children were from our school ... they were migrants ... a family of migrants and the father was supposed to have been a well educated, possibly a doctor from Ukraine or one of those European countries. And he was ... I think it was he who was smashed to a pulp. And another one escaped with his leg chopped straight off, he survived.¹

CF How did you know that there'd been an accident?

BETTY MOOR Well they blew the whistle. The mine whistle was the indicator of all things happening and we knew there'd been a fatality.

CF What did it sound like?

BETTY MOOR Three sharp loud long whistles and then the next thing that we were aware was the ambulance, which was kept in Leonora, used to be ready

MARGO HUNTER And Doctor speeding by

¹ See interview with Anna Januskewicz Michael Januskewicz had his leg amputated underground, he was the only survivor of the accident.

BETTY MOOR Also there was a mine ambulance too so I'm not sure which ambulance it was but it was quite noisy and the doctor came flying out so that would have been Doctor Moor in at that particular rescue. And then the ambulance would have been tearing by.²

CF Do you remember what happened to those children? Did they leave Gwalia?

BETTY MOOR Yes I'm not sure there was a couple, there were a couple of families with children but this one the family that lived not far away, down the road from us. They had at least two children. I can't even think of their names ... but it was either Polish or Ukrainian.

CF You didn't find out?

BETTY MOOR We don't know they left fairly soon after that.

CF Do you know how long they'd been in Gwalia itself?

BETTY MOOR Not very long

MARGO HUNTER No ... not long.

BETTY MOOR We had several influxes of people from Europe they were Baltic people, we used to call them the Balts. They came from Poland, Ukraine, lots of Ukrainians.

CF When would that have been? Because there was a ... some migrants came after the war ... so was this before the war?

BETTY MOOR Must have been after the war. Because I wouldn't have remembered much before.

² See interview with Dr Harry Moor.

CF Tell me about school ... what subjects did you study?

BETTY MOOR It was a pretty good school.

CF Why was that?

BETTY MOOR Because at my time And Marg can tell something different because she had various headmasters but all the time I was there I only had one main headmaster. And he retired or was transferred. Then another for a short time only very briefly and then I left school. But we had a bit of a disciplinarian called Mr Wauchope now he may crop up amongst other interviewees because he was a very good educator and a disciplinarian. If you behaved yourself he treated you nicely but if you didn't you got the cuts.³

CF Did you get the cuts?

BETTY MOOR Never. But then again in between us there's a brother who was not quite so well behaved, he got cuts and not only from that headmaster either he just played up. He didn't really want to be at school so he played up.

CF What did your parents feel about getting the cane?

BETTY MOOR "You deserved it son". They never belted him cruelly ... but he used to play up. He was a mischievous boy so if you're going to play up then you're going to get the cuts.

CF Tell me what sort of ... because I've interviewed a lot of boys ...

BETTY MOOR Mm

CF What sort of recreational things did girls do?

³ See interviews with Stella Varischetti, Cyril Linto and Don Evans.

MARGO HUNTER Well at school they wanted us to play, as they called it basketball. We played tennis, we played softball. I was lucky enough to play hockey and they also had interschool sports every year.

CF And what school did you both go to?

BETTY MOOR Gwalia State School.

CF But you also went to the Convent for music?

BETTY MOOR I went after school, twice a week to learn music.

CF Where was that school?

BETTY MOOR That was in Leonora, a couple of streets off the main street ... I can't think of the name of it.

CF Was there a difference between Leonora and Gwalia?

BETTY MOOR Quite

CF Tell me why.

BETTY MOOR Friendly rivalry because a lot of the business people lived and worked and went to school in Leonora and it was more of a settled town, a service town whereas people who worked on the mines lived out at Gwalia and most of them lived out there close to the mine.

MARGO HUNTER We didn't go to Leonora very often it was only for music or to go to the football.

CF And who did you barrack for?

MARGO HUNTER Naturally ... Gwalia

BETTY MOOR It was quite friendly rivalry.

MARGO HUNTER With red and white uniforms.

BETTY MOOR Yes quite serious.

CF Tell me then about school ... what subjects did you study?

BETTY MOOR Basic things such as mental arithmetic ... arithmetic ... wasn't called maths it was just called arithmetic. English grammar and English ... I think it was called literature. Then there was spelling and that was fairly solid. Reading, geography, history, drawing or art. And then later on as the post primary children went into the early years of the secondary schooling we were put on to correspondence lessons with the Western Australia correspondence school of the air.

CF Where did you do that?

BETTY MOOR We did it under the supervision of the headmaster at the Gwalia school. We used to get papers in and had to fill them in and hand them back at the end of the fortnight. I did right through in three subjects and got my Junior doing that because they weren't in the syllabus for the primary school.

CF What was it like to stay motivated to do that?

BETTY MOOR Absolute love of learning and keenness and I really, really wanted to be a teacher.

CF How many of you would have done correspondence together?

BETTY MOOR About four or five of my group.

CF And why ... did you go on to be a teacher?

BETTY MOOR No ... things were ... I can understand it now but when I was a young girl just about to leave school and I passed my Junior subjects, very, very delighted about that and found that Mum didn't want us to go away and we would have had to board in Kalgoorlie to go to the nearest high school it was 160 miles away. So I wasn't able to go away because it was a big expense and there were four of us and only one wage. But within weeks of leaving school the person who supervised some of the junior subjects was the local Road Board secretary and he came out to see Dad to see if I'd be interested in working in the Council when I left school. And I'd left school so when I finished the exam could I go and work for him because his deputy was going on long service leave and he needed someone to help him. So Dad came home all delighted. "Do you want to go aand work for Cuthy"? And his name was Doug Cuthbertson. And I said "Oh, be all right.

CF What were your parents' views on education for girls?

BETTY MOOR Definitely to learn as much as you could ... they were most supportive. Dad was very well educated. He'd been to a Grammar School in Invergordon, Scotland and they specialised in music education. He was very good at several instruments and he was an excellent person with regards to grammar, very, very well informed.

MARGO HUNTER Mum was always very interested in education and went to the P&C meetings

BETTY MOOR Yes she was supportive – a wonderful Mother.

MARGO HUNTER Yes

CF So it was just cost do you feel?

BETTY MOOR Concern about letting young girls go away at that time I think. The cost would have been unashamedly the main thing because there were four of us and I would have had to board. And I think with the wisdom of parents she probably did the right thing because Kalgoorlie was a big place and we'd only ever lived in a small place and felt particularly sheltered and safe.

CF You talked about the sports you played at school. A lot of the boys would go out bush shooting and that sort of thing. What about girls?

BETTY MOOR We used to go on picnics.

MARGO HUNTER Yes

BETTY MOOR To fairly close places, either ride or walk and go for the day and take frying pans and billies and tinned goods.



Picnic time, 1935, (L-R) Flo Mackay with Betty, Grandmother Robertson,
Uncle Ern, Hugh Mackay

MARGO HUNTER Or climb Mount Leonora.

BETTY MOOR I think I had a photo once of Val and I with our bikes and the bag hanging on and the frying pan sticking out. We cooked our chops ... we'd get some chops from Dad. We'd spend all day

MARGO HUNTER We'd go down all day ... as long as we were home by sun down. We'd spend time down at Halfway Creek, that was another popular place to go, or climb Mount Leonora.

BETTY MOOR Yes that was another

MARGO HUNTER A lot of us visited our friends.

CF Just girls together or girls and boys?

BETTY MOOR No until later. When I was became a teenager I got involved with a nice young group of other teenagers and we used to go and have barbeques in the bush. When one of them had a vehicle, several of them had cars, but only this one particular person did not drink, so Mum used to feel safe and let us both go with this person.

CF Who was it?

BETTY MOOR Should I name him? Bob ... excuse me ... Bob Parkinson. He wasn't my boyfriend.

CF That's alright. Could you girls swim.

BETTY MOOR Oh absolutely ... yes we were very fortunate to have a lovely swimming pool. That was like an oasis in the desert.

CF Do you remember it being built?

BETTY MOOR Vaguely. It was an after the war project or even while some of the men were still ... I think ... some of the men were ... or while the

mine was on down time. It was a project that they got going towards the end of the 1940's ... so.

CF Who taught you to swim?

BETTY MOOR Our Dad used to take us to South Beach, South Fremantle wasn't it?

MARGO HUNTER Yes that's right.

BETTY MOOR He'd take us down the jetty there and he taught us to dog paddle and I've got a little story in my recollections about how he used to throw us off that jetty and say "You're all right, I'll come in after you if you're not" and he'd throw us of, once he was sure we could paddle.

CF How often did you go away for holidays?

BETTY MOOR Every second year with us.

CF Every second year?

BETTY MOOR Yes ... every second year.

CF And just to South Fremantle or elsewhere?

BETTY MOOR No we went to Rockingham and shared a house with a person we knew.

CF Was this usual for most people from Gwalia or particular people?

BETTY MOOR Well everybody seemed to get away once a year.

MARGO HUNTER Mostly to Esperance they used to go

BETTY MOOR Mm

MARGO HUNTER Then we were lucky ... my sister and I used to think we were very lucky. We would go down to a place called Yundaga, just out of Menzies ...

BETTY MOOR But they were only a couple of times.

MARGO HUNTER Just overnight trips on the train ... mm

CF So you caught the train from Gwalia ...

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

CF To Yundaga ... and what was there ... what was ...

MARGO HUNTER Nothing.

BETTY MOOR It was a little place out of Menzies. We used to go there because our Dad played in a dance band and we'd go and stay at an old lady's house. We thought that was a holiday.

CF So what was the dance band playing ... called that he played in?

BETTY MOOR It didn't have a name, just Hughie's Dance Band. Dad played the drums and he used to go circulating around the country playing. He'd work all day as a butcher, come home have a bath get dressed up and go and play until midnight. He played at all the local balls and dances.

CF Did your Mum go?

BETTY MOOR Sometimes ... but when she had all of us to stay home with ... it didn't happen very often.

MARGO HUNTER Though sometimes they'd get one of our older cousins to stay with us ... one of the Robertson's.

CF So it was called Hughie's Dance Band.

BETTY MOOR No it wasn't called anything, not in my memory anyway.

MARGO HUNTER I've got a good photograph there ... it's a little card] ... Hugh Mackay's Dance Band.

CF Have you?

BETTY MOOR It wasn't known as that ... people when they were ... in my day it wasn't ... just go and ask Hughie can he play? And he had a connection of other instrumentalists, pianists, saxophonists. Anybody that could play ... he would know them and he'd have practices at our place. Marg and I used to look through the window and watch them and hear them when they ran through the dance pieces.

MARGO HUNTER We used to have some lovely musical evenings.

CF Tell me about that ... what did you do?

MARGO HUNTER Well when a lot of friends came ... they'd have music, and mum made supper.

BETTY MOOR Yes friends, not always relatives was it Marg?

MARGO HUNTER Friends, music lovers and most of them could play ... most of them could sing and they were special. Especially New Years Eve of course.

BETTY MOOR Any Scot within miles would come. Dad didn't have bagpipes in Gwalia but he went to play with a band, bagpipe band in

Kalgoorlie, but he played Scottish music on ... whoever could play the piano at the time ... and the violin or anything. And New Years Eve was on from ... anyone that was passing by would hear the music. We'd have a house full stay over night. Just stay where they fell and wake up in the morning and there'd be bodies who'd slept the night there and strangers out the back on a bed under the trees and they'd get up and go home, not much worse for wear. It was a rip roaring type of thing up there, New Years Eve up there.

CF You just said that people would sleep out under the trees. Did you sleep out under the trees in summer?

MARGO HUNTER A lot of people did.

BETTY MOOR Yes we slept on the front veranda.

MARGO HUNTER But Dad and the boys ...

BETTY MOOR And the boys would sleep out there.

MARGO HUNTER But I can remember Dad trying to get a breeze he'd get .. the spare mattress and put it in the passage way between the back door and the front door and leave it all open so he could get some peace and sleep. It was so hot.

CF Because it was so hot ... tell me how did it feel living up there?

MARGO HUNTER Didn't know any different.

CF But you said it was so hot.

BETTY MOOR It was hot, yes hot, hot and if we walked outside without our shoes and we often did it felt as if your feet were burning. You sit on a chair and your clothes were stuck to you. The handle bars on the bike were hot. What else? It was just **hot** but we accepted it as being the norm.

CF What were the sort of things you did to get cool?

MARGO HUNTER Go to the pool.

CF Before the pool?

MARGO HUNTER Go down to the park.

BETTY MOOR Yes there was a lovely park there and they used to have these long armed sprinklers and we'd turn the sprinklers on and twist them around and run around and get wet, with or without bathers, but clothed, sometimes fully clothed. Other times we'd have our shorts or our bathers on and get under the sprinkler.

CF Were you able to get ice? Because you didn't have a refrigerator.

BETTY MOOR Not in our day but I believe there was an iceman in the earlier days ... he used to come around.

CF But not for you?

BETTY MOOR No.

CF What about ice-cream?

BETTY MOOR We used to be able to buy beautiful ice-creams from the shop and they had them in these churns and we were able to get, when we went to the pictures, we could buy an ice-cream. Sometimes Dad would come home with a jug of ice-cream in it for our tea.

MARGO HUNTER And later on when we did get our refrigerator ... Mum used to make our ice-cream.

BETTY MOOR Mm.

CF Tell me about the community itself. Were there many ... you've talked about Ukrainians, who were the majority of people there?

MARGO HUNTER Italians.

BETTY MOOR Italians and Yugoslavs and some British ... English ... lots of English.

MARGO HUNTER And Scottish and yes mm

CF Did you mix with the Italians?

MARGO HUNTER Yes ... mm

CF Was there any tension at all ... any racial tension?

BETTY MOOR Not as such, our parents were very good. They instilled in us to be friendly to people and to be decent and I honestly say I think we were. But there **were** some people who teased each other but personally I was not involved in it, either receiving or giving it.

CF Do you remember it at school though?

MARGO HUNTER No I can't remember there being any.

BETTY MOOR We used to tease the Connie brats. There was a bit of rivalry between the schools and we were the State, I don't know what they called us ...

MARGO HUNTER Statey brats.

BETTY MOOR yes

MARGO HUNTER Statey brats, statey brats and connie brats.

BETTY MOOR But it was only because they went to that school.

CF How many boarding houses were there in the town?

BETTY MOOR In our time ... the main would be Patroni's and next to that was the Mazza's and then Vic's mother, she ran a boarding house.

MARGO HUNTER And then Bailey's

BETTY MOOR Bailey's was a house with a series of little camps down the back and that was in our street. Then there was Mosconi's up the top end where Biggs's lived and that was a fairly big house with a series of little camps which suited the Biggs's when they moved in because they had six boys. But the Mosconi's had already gone.

CF When would they have gone?

BETTY MOOR I was still at school when they left ... and then the Biggs's came ...

MARGO HUNTER yes They came down from Laverton didn't they.

BETTY MOOR Yes. About the mid 1940's ... 1950s early ... end of the 1940's I'd say because some of the Biggs's were born there weren't they.

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

CF And there was the mess up at the mine

BETTY MOOR The mine mess, yes I overlooked that. They catered for the mine young ... mainly the apprentices, or men without families up there.

CF Did you ever go into the boarding house?

MARGO HUNTER I did. I had a friend Pauline Bailey so I was able to go down there and

CF And this was in Bailey's?

MARGO HUNTER Bailey's boarding house yes.

CF And where was that exactly?

MARGO HUNTER That was also situated in the main street.

CF Near anything in ...

MARGO HUNTER Well it was near Williams not far from our cousins the Williams family.

CF I know that the Mazza's and Patroni's had mainly Italian boarders

MARGO HUNTER Mm

CF they did have some non Italians. Did the Bailey's have Italian boarders?

BETTY MOOR Don't know but I think they were mainly English ... young English chaps weren't they.

MARGO HUNTER English and there was Irish wasn't there. Welsh ...

BETTY MOOR Welsh mm.

CF Were there any Afghans in Gwalia?

BETTY MOOR Yes there was one regular visitor. He was Raz Mahomet and he used to be a bit of a travelling salesman. I think they called him a hawker. And he used to come around regularly with lots of goodies for sale. He wore a turban and I think he had at least one camel. Do you remember that?

MARGO HUNTER Yes I do. I think there was only the one.

BETTY MOOR That was the only Afghan person that I ever knew but they'd been right through that area earlier.

CF So there wasn't a place that they lived in particular?

MARGO HUNTER Yes there was. It was a bit of a house, I think. A Mr Dean. See ...

BETTY MOOR An Indian chap owned it and he lived there most of the time. And it was a vacant block next to his place and they used to put the camel in there. Mr Dean (or Din) wore a turbin.

MARGO HUNTER He used to store quite a bit of goods there.

CF Were there any Aboriginal people in the area?

BETTY MOOR Yes but they were out of town in those days. We knew they were there because occasionally they'd come up the lane with their -they'd come looking for tea and sugar, remember?

MARGO HUNTER That's right ... and flour.

BETTY MOOR They came in from what we called the bush and they would ask the 'missus' for any bread, any tea, any flour ...

MARGO HUNTER and sugar.

BETTY MOOR And sugar. And they would bring in clothes props ... which were the mulga branches with the forks in to put the clothes line on. They'd exchange for something like food or tea or whatever ... they would leave a clothes prop. They might even chop wood ... but I don't remember the chopping of the wood. But I believe they did chop a bit of wood in exchange. And they dwelt (being very posh) lived in the outskirts of town and came in from the bush and had corroborees occasionally in the creek that was half way between. I only ever heard one corroboree ... didn't you?

MARGO HUNTER No I can't remember.

BETTY MOOR There was a lot of noise and yelling and carrying on. We weren't allowed to go anywhere near there when they were in town. They used to look ferocious but they were very quiet sort of people.

CF Did any of the kids go to your school?

BETTY MOOR Yes. They were rounded up at some stage I'm not sure how that came to be, even when, but I was still at school and they brought in some of these children who were years older than us but educationally they were only in about Grade four or five. And they were older but they had to do work of a lot less formal lessons.

CF And where did they live?

BETTY MOOR Some of them had little houses around the place ... didn't they?

MARGO HUNTER Yes down the road near the block

CF With their families?

BETTY MOOR Yes.

CF And did their parents work on the mines?

BETTY MOOR I don't know. One of the parents of one of the families was a bush tracker and he used to help Dad with getting in the cattle. I think he was a very good slaughterman too. He used to help with slaughtering the meat.⁴

CF Do you remember his name?

BETTY MOOR Yes, are we allowed to say it?

CF Yes it's good because we're trying to have a record of everyone who lived there so if you can give names it's helpful.

BETTY MOOR Yes okay. His name was Bill Ashwin. And Dad used to reassure Mum that, "Never mind if I'm in the bush with Bill Ashwin we will not get lost, we will find our way home".

CF Where did the meat come from that your Dad ...

BETTY MOOR From the stations around about. He used to negotiate with the station owner pastoralists.

MARGO HUNTER And my younger brother and I we were very fortunate ... when Dad was going to possibly order cattle or sheep. Dad would take my young brother and I out with him. This was before I went to school and my brother was very young but Dad used to take us so I was very fortunate to travel out to all these different sheep stations.⁵

CF How did you go? What did you travel in?

⁴ See interview with Verna Vos nee Ashwin.

⁵ Alan MacKay is Betty and Margo's younger brother, see his interview, same collection.

MARGO HUNTER Dad had ... I think it was an old van or a Ute ... I can't remember.

CF Were there many cars around?

BETTY MOOR No.

MARGO HUNTER No.

CF So what were the stations like? Were they very different to residents from ... say Gwalia?

MARGO HUNTER Just trying to think

BETTY MOOR Pretty basic

CF Because in the photographs there certainly was ... there was an enormous orchard.

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

BETTY MOOR Yes well some of them had water and with water anything would grow and some of them produced a lot of beautiful fruit and vegies and lawn and some of them had quite presentable homesteads.

MARGO HUNTER mm

BETTY MOOR But some were only bigger editions of what we had.

MARGO HUNTER I think Chomley's had fruit ... didn't they?

BETTY MOOR Mm I think so.

CF Did you ... was there a hierarchy of people who mixed with ...

BETTY MOOR We thought there were classes of people.

CF Tell me what you thought.

BETTY MOOR Well this is what I think ... at this stage ... but I really don't want to be quoted because it might just be an impression.

CF That's alright.

BETTY MOOR Well I think Marg and I have discussed this. There were several classes of people. My mother used to say there is nobody, you're as good as anybody else and better than most, so that we didn't feel any hang-ups or anything. But there were the mine managers and staff there were the business people, there were the pastoralists, the ordinary miners, the tradespeople and I suppose just everybody else.

CF And did you come under tradespeople?

BETTY MOOR Probably.

CF Did your parents then mix with certain groups? Socialise I mean.

MARGO HUNTER They mostly mixed with everybody I think. Although because Mum had all of us they didn't go out socially with the pastoralists much. But Dad was very close and friends with most of them.

CF Because some people I've talked with have said there were the Shire President, the doctors' wife

BETTY MOOR And the teachers.

CF And the professionals.

BETTY MOOR Yes I forgot about that group ... yeah.

CF And you didn't mix with miners?

BETTY MOOR We weren't miners so I don't ... It didn't worry us because we were friendly with school teachers and doctors kids, as well as everyone else.

CF Yeah ... Did your family mix with miners?

BETTY MOOR Oh yes. We married into a lot of them.

MARGO HUNTER Mm.

CF So they socialised with miners as well.

BETTY MOOR Yes. Definitely.

CF Margo ... tell me when you left school where did you go?

MARGO HUNTER In those days when you left school most people just went into a job. So I was able to go down to ... what they called the block. And there was the Crampton's which Victor

BETTY MOOR Became Mazza's

MARGO HUNTER Yes Victor Mazza's was running at the time.

CF So when you began to work there was it called Crampton's? Or was it called Mazza's

MARGO HUNTER I think it ... no I think it was still called Crampton's.

CF Describe that shop for me.

MARGO HUNTER I remember it being huge. I know it had a veranda in the front and a veranda right around the side where they used to bring their deliveries. It had an office, I remember the office, I worked mainly in the drapery department that was quite big.

CF What was the stock like where you worked in the drapery department?

MARGO HUNTER Oh very good really we sold just about everything that people needed. We had shoes and clothing, material, haberdashery, china.

CF Did it sell wine?

MARGO HUNTER I can't remember.

CF And do you remember any other people who worked there?

MARGO HUNTER Yes I worked with a lovely girl called ... well she was then Agnes Bendotti.

CF Yes. And did she work in the drapery department?

MARGO HUNTER Yes she did.

CF Do you remember how much you got paid?

MARGO HUNTER Oh gosh not very much. I can't ... no.

CF Could you keep that money?

BETTY MOOR Board.

MARGO HUNTER Yes once I paid board to my mother.

CF How much was that?

MARGO HUNTER I can't remember.

CF What about you Betty?

BETTY MOOR Yes I earned a fairly good wage and it was board. As soon as we got it board was allocated I can't remember how much.

CF You said it was a fairly good wage though ... you think it was better than ...

BETTY MOOR I had a much better wage than Marg ever had fortunately for me. It was just the luck of the occupation I think as I worked in an office.

CF How did you get from Gwalia to Leonora?

MARGO HUNTER By bike if it wasn't stolen by our brother.

BETTY MOOR We had a push bike.

MARGO HUNTER And I used to walk from our house down to the block.

CF Was there, you've called it the block. Was there a different area in Gwalia?

MARGO HUNTER Yeah.

CF So what was the block ... what was on the block?

BETTY MOOR There was a series of shops and the bakery and a barber at one time. It was facing the open cut so it was way down on the mine land wasn't it actually?

MARGO HUNTER Yes and it had quite a few houses.

BETTY MOOR And people lived behind the shops.

MARGO HUNTER Mm

CF You've talked about the open cut. Was it dangerous for kids?

BETTY MOOR Yes but kids used to play there and some nearly didn't make it. There were several near misses with kids getting down after pigeons or just adventure. They could get through the fence, it was fenced but they could get through.

CF And were all the shafts covered.

MARGO HUNTER No.

CF Were there any deaths of children? That you can remember?

BETTY MOOR Not that I know of ... no.

MARGO HUNTER Just lucky I think, mm

BETTY MOOR Probably some escapes we don't even know about.

CF And what about illnesses in the town? Did the polio affect ...

MARGO HUNTER Yes

MARGO HUNTER Yes. I was just trying to think what year that was. I would have been about 14 I think and I can remember we were having sewing lessons and we used to go down to the little area at the hall, had a little room there, this was the first time we ever had a chance to do any sewing lessons.

And I remember them coming out to spray. I don't remember what it was but they had to spray something there. But I myself was very unfortunate when I was four years of age to get diphtheria. Thankfully to a wonderful doctor that saved my life that but that was ... and I remember our neighbour next door to ... he also got the diphtheria.

CF Do you remember going to hospital?

MARGO HUNTER I didn't go to hospital. I went to the Matron's house she looked after me.

CF She was the Matron of the ...

MARGO HUNTER She was a Matron yes. And I didn't go to hospital it was so contagious you see so I went over to live at her house.

CF What was her name?

MARGO HUNTER Yes she was Matron Crump.

CF So was she also the Matron of the hospital as well?

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

CF But she looked after you in her house?

MARGO HUNTER That's right.

CF Full time? Isolated?

BETTY MOOR I think she wasn't working at the time.

MARGO HUNTER Sorry I just can't remember, I just remember her I was only four.

CF But you were isolated from your family and your home.

MARGO HUNTER Yes definitely yes. And as I say I just had a wonderful doctor that ...

CF And with the polio epidemic you remember them coming to spray your class.

MARGO HUNTER Sewing class ... yes.

CF Was anyone affected from polio?

They had to take her away. And if I can remember I may be wrong ... she may have been put in an iron lung at first. But I'm not a 100 percent on that.⁶

CF You said that you worked with Agnes Bendotti, did you mix with her family? Agnes's?

MARGO HUNTER It was just Agnes and her sister Mary who I knew very well. They were bit older than what I was. Yes her mother was a widow.⁷

BETTY MOOR That was a result of a mine accident.

MARGO HUNTER But she was just wonderful to work with we had a lot of fun.

CF In your book I've seen pictures of the Wood Line Picnic. How often were they? Those Wood Line Picnics?

BETTY MOOR I think they were just about every year.

CF And what happened? How did you go on them?

⁶ For an account of her polio, see interview with Helen Hilary.

⁷ See interview with Agnes Bendotti.

MARGO HUNTER Well the thing was this ... what they called the wood line train. You'll have to describe that.

BETTY MOOR It was a rake of trucks that used to haul, they had a wood line camp ... they'd haul the wood in to fire the furnaces to create gas for the mine. And they were raked off the trucks, this truck type thing, I'll find one here to show you a picture in a minute ... of it actually at a picnic ... somewhere. They used to go out into the bush and gather the wood and bring them back. The men used to sit on chaff bags on these open rake things ... that's a picture of the actual little railway line and that's out in one of the cutting camps. I'm just about to find a picture of the things we used to go on.

CF I've seen one in Margo's book there.

BETTY MOOR alright.

CF So you go out on the ...

MARGO HUNTER On the

CF Sitting on the

MARGO HUNTER On these planks with the chaff bags and open posts. Lucky no one ever fell down underneath.

CF And what would you do on that day? At the picnic.

MARGO HUNTER Well our main interest was to see how many wildflowers we could pick, they were knee deep.

BETTY MOOR Have races and we had lunch.

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

BETTY MOOR A bit of sport.

CF And what food did you eat?

MARGO HUNTER Mostly sandwiches and fruit.

BETTY MOOR Mum would make a cake tin full of little cakes.

CF Cool drinks?

MARGO HUNTER Raspberry cordial yes.

CF And was this annual? An annual event?

BETTY MOOR I think it was,. it was pretty regular wasn't it?

MARGO HUNTER Yes

CF So not just for mine workers?

MARGO HUNTER It was for everybody yes. The P&C actually organised it.

CF Where did the people on the wood line live ... exactly?

BETTY MOOR They were mostly single men and mostly migrant chaps.
They lived out there in little huts.

CF What were the huts made of?

BETTY MOOR Probably tin.

CF And were they moved regularly? Do you know?

BETTY MOOR They would have to pick up the little railway lines and move them when the immediate wood supply cut out. They'd have to shift them

CF Were there any women and children?

BETTY MOOR Not that I know of, I don't think so. There are some excellent little photos here I could show you one in a minute. There ... there we are ... you've probably seen that one. Going out on a picnic.

CF So you went out when you were older too?

BETTY MOOR Anybody could go.

CF So it didn't matter what age you were?

BETTY MOOR No. That's a mix bag there of a lot of people. They had these mulga uprights and they are just some chaff bags.. You got in there and hung on. There ... under there would be the sharp wheels.

CF How long did it take to get to that picnic? How far out was it?

BETTY MOOR It seemed to about an hour you'd get out there by lunch time. Someone would light the fire and there's a picture of the wood coming in.

CF You've talked quite a bit about the migrants. Was there a fear of single men?

MARGO HUNTER No.

BETTY MOOR No. I think there was an unwritten law ... leave the girls alone. Because we never ever felt when I was growing up, left school,. worked up there for several years. Never ever felt under threat from any of them. I think it would have cost them their jobs. Eventually as some of the

younger girls grew up and got older they actually married into some of these migrant workers.

CF Your related to the Quarti's ?

BETTY MOOR Quarti?

CF Quarti well they must be from Italian decent.

MARGO HUNTER Uncle Joe was a third generation person and Aunty Ol ... Mum's sister born in South Australia I think.

CF Where did Uncle Joe come from?

BETTY MOOR I don't know.

CF I'll get you to say the song then

BETTY MOOR Mm yes

CF We were just talking about your Uncle Joe who married Aunty Ol who's your mothers' older sister. What other work did he do apart from being a winder driver?⁸

BETTY MOOR He used to be the local boot maker. He was always fixing shoes and hammering away. He had a proper set up with a sewing machine and a last and he had all these, I think that was the family trade handed down.

CF But his main job was winder driver?

BETTY MOOR Yes.

CF And he was also in the band.

⁸ Guiseppi or Joe Quarti worked as a winder driver on the Sons of Gwalia Mine from 1914 until 1953.

BETTY MOOR There was a band there but in my time I think it had disbanded. But he used to have a tuba and I actually have heard him play but there wasn't a band as such when I was growing up but I know he did participate in band music.

CF Apart from your Dad's, band though?

BETTY MOOR A different one ... it was a brass band.

CF Okay.

BETTY MOOR But his daughter Melda played in Dad's band. She was a pianist.

CF Was she the Melda married to Vic?

BETTY MOOR Yes.

CF Tell me about Crampton's ... when did it change to Mazza's store?

MARGO HUNTER Well I ... I can't remember ... I only knew it as Mazza's. They changed it over when they brought it up into the main street ... to Tower Street. I only ever knew it as Crampton's.

CF And you only ever worked in it as Crampton's.

MARGO HUNTER That's right.

CF But Agnes worked in it as Mazza's?

MARGO HUNTER No ... Crampton's.

CF When did you leave Gwalia ... Margo?

MARGO HUNTER It was about my 16th birthday. It would have been about 1954 I think.

BETTY MOOR It would have been because I had my 19th.

MARGO HUNTER 19th and I had my 16th birthday in Gwalia so ...

CF And what age had you begun to work?

MARGO HUNTER Just, just a few months before that because ... just for the Christmas so yes it would have been just nearly 16.

CF So you moved when your family moved?

MARGO HUNTER Yes.

CF And did you Betty?

BETTY MOOR No I didn't move when Mum and my two brothers and sister moved. I stayed up there with Dad for about six months because he was still managing the shop and I still had my job and I was waiting to get a transfer to a similar one in Kalgoorlie. And it suited me to stay there for six months. We lived in our house and left about the middle of 1954.

CF Tell me about your job then. What exactly did you do in the Road Board?

BETTY MOOR That was only my first job I used to deliver messages, pay bills, answer the phones, just the general person to run around the town. Get cheques signed, put minutes out for meetings. Things like that. A little bit of typing but I couldn't type at that stage. I did all these relief jobs for six months. My main occupation was as a public servant with the Mines Department

Okay thanks I'll just pause there.

End of recording

REMEMBERING

Elizabeth Moor

First day at school - and tears,
 You can't take your school-case
 Home at lunchtime!
 Happy days, which turned into ten years
 At the Gwalia State School.
 (They were not called Primary Schools then)
 The dedicated teachers, what a job they had -
 What a job they did
 With us, bush kids -
 Who later on would think of them
 Mostly with fondness and gratitude.

The harsh playing fields (rocks and 'boondies')
 My child asked - "Did you have grass ovals, Mum?"
 The tennis court - scene of many great games,
 And practising for the grand march and sets
 For the P & C Balls, what fun they were.
 And annual sports days - the Interschool Sports!
 The fierce competition between the three 'big' schools,
 Gwalia, Leonora and the Convent;
 And the skills of the smaller schools -
 Laverton, Menzies, Mt Margaret Mission -
 How those kids could run! And jump!

Our dear old house -
 It was a real home;
 Mum and Dad, and us kids -
 All six of us, quite comfortable
 In such a small space. It was a lively place,
 We were happy there.
 We never locked up, didn't need a key.
 My child asked - "Did you have your own room, Mum?"
 A shared end of the front verandah -
 Our brothers had the other end,
 Air-conditioned, all year round!

"Could you swim, Mum?" they have all asked -
 Of course we could all swim, we had a swimming pool;
 And what a pool it was - our haven
 In the long, hot summers.
 (Don't ask about chlorination, or rates of application)
 A bucket or bag of the best lime
 Was our defence against all germs.
 Running home on scorching days,
 We'd throw our towels on the rocks in front of us,
 Then jump on them to ease the stinging heat
 Of the ground, coming down the hill.

Leaving school, and that first job;
 In those days we all got jobs -
 Some of us had two!
 Dances, socials and winter Balls,
 The picnics - Oh, the memories!
 And the pictures, too (Not called movies then)
 "The Flicks", We saw them all.
 The basketball games - not netball then,
 And the football matches - what rivalry!
 Our Gwalia boys in red and white
 Versus the blue and white Leonora team.

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REMEMBERING (contd) Elizabeth Moor

Teenage romance - how sweet it was!
But, that was not to be.
Good friends we made - we have some of them still.
Then, came the time to leave -
We were not the last to go.
It was so sad parting
From the hometown and the people
We had always known -
Safe, secure and full of memories,
We cried, we missed each other -
Then started our new lives.

Well, here we are again -
Some of us at least.
Where have all those years gone?
And the people that we loved?
There's lots more I could write,
One day I really will -
Of a wonderful childhood happiness
Of freedom and delight -
But that can wait till another time;
For now, have a most enjoyable
Re-union at the Centenary!

The above prose was written to co-incide with the Centenary Celebrations
held in Leonora-Gwalia 28th-30th September, 1996

The author was born in Leonora and lived in Gwalia until 1954.

ELIZABETH MOOR
(Nee BETTY MACKAY)

