

JIM NANKERVIS - Interviewed by Klaus Hueneke, 4 March 1982.

This is an interview with Jimmy Nankervis who now lives in Corryong on the 4 March 1982. Jimmy Nankervis and the whole Nankervis family used to have a property up at Tom Groggin and he and his father and perhaps their forefathers used to take stock up towards Dead Horse Gap and in to the Cascades and possibly elsewhere. He's also a friend of Errol Scammel and some of the other people that I've already interviewed.

KH: You're a McGufficke, are you?

MRS N: Yes.

KH: How are you connected to the McGufficks<sup>e</sup>?

MRS N: I'm Norman's daughter.

KH: Are there are a number of you, brothers and sisters?

MRS N: Yes, there was 13 in the family altogether. We're fairly well scattered. My sisters live in and around Jindabyne, I've got a brother at Muswellbrook, one up in the Northern Territory somewhere, another one over at Talbingo, one's dead and the other chap works on the Snowy Mountains Council in Cooma.

KH: Who's the oldest McGufficke now?

MRS N: A cousin of dad's would be the oldest - Jim McGufficke.

KH: Is he over Jindabyne way?

MRS N: Yes. He lives at <sup>Glen Mike</sup> out on the Dalgety Road.

KH: Did he used to use the mountains?

MRS N: Oh yes, he and his brother both - spent a fair bit of time out in the mountains. I don't know that Jim has spent as much ...

JN: Bill used to do the mountain work.

MRS N: The father did a lot of mountain work, he's been dead for years.

KH: Your father did a lot too didn't he?

MRS N: Yes, he was out there for many years.

KH: Did you see that book "I Should Have Listened to Grandpa"?

MRS N: Yes.

KH: With the interview with him in it?

MRS N: Yes. I haven't got the book actually, I bought it and a friend of mine said he was very interested in it so I gave it to him, I haven't got another one. It was very good actually. The family seemed very pleased with it. I didn't get a chance to read it really - dad had a couple of copies over there.

KH: Did you ever go to the mountains yourself?

MRS N: No. I've been through. We rode through from Jindabyne coming through Pretty Plain and right down through that way to Corryong, years and years ago - near 40 years I suppose. I've been backwards and forwards through

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the mountains a lot by car since the road went in.

KH: Did you ever go to Cascades and the Tin Mines.

MRS N: No I've never been out to any of those places at all.

KH: And the ride across <sup>to</sup> Pretty Plain, did you have pack saddles?

MRS N: Well Pretty Plain is the only area I've been to in the mountains, we rode out there, it was long before there was a road, if there's a road there now, I don't know.

KH: No, there's no road to Pretty Plain.

MRS N: We were coming to a rodeo over here at Corryong. It was all very interesting, then we rode back through Groggin and back up that way and came to Jindabyne again.

KH: You did a big circle.

MRS N: That is about the only time I've been in the mountains at all.

KH: Was there a bridle track up from Tom Groggin up to Dead Horse Gap?

MRS N: It was quite a good track, right down, right down the Geehi Wall, it was a very good bridle track.

KH: That was before there was a road into Geehi.

MRS N: Yes.

KH: Yes I've heard stories about people on the Geehi Walls, apparently that was pretty tough going sometimes, it used to get very slippery or something, when it rained.

MRS N: Yes it was pretty slippery, you had to have a pretty good horse to get down there. You <sup>^</sup>saddle had to be well and truly anchored I can tell you or you would have found yourself up on your horses neck.

KH: Were there any huts along there 40 years ago?

MRS N: The only hut that we knew of was the Geehi Hut.

KH: That was the first hut down there was it?

JN: There was one at Back Creek, that's four mile in from Khancoban. I don't know who originally put it there, Goldsworthys' used it in our time. Tyrell's - they had the huts built at Geehi, they selected a portion of that and they had to live on it so many months of the year and spend so much money on it. He used to take his wife in there and she used to pack the kid along on a cushion on the front of the saddle. The hut was in there then - well, we got Geehi in 1932, so that hut had been there a good while and it did have an iron roof on it.

KH: This is on Back *Creek*?

JN: No this is getting into Geehi - Back *Creek* was a slab hut with a bit of bark and a bit of shingle roof - it was there for a long time, it

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was there after the Snowy started. Old Major Clews, he took up the residence, made himself a super hut in there, he built himself, out of stone and mud and cement.

KH: Yes, I've been in there.

JN: You've been in there! Well that's were the old hut used to be, practically right beside where the Major put his.

KH: What was that called, that area in there?

JN: Back Creek they called it, or Black Creek - it's on the map, some maps as Black Creek. It was always known to us as Back Creek and it was taken up as a selection at one time. When we first went in there, there was fences there.

KH: There's a lot of very old fruit trees planted there a long time ago.

JN: Yeah, they were over there when I first went there and that was about 1935 or '36.

KH: The building with the big stone walls, Major Clews put that there, and then he started to add one that was made of mud walls?

JN: That's right.

KH: But he built both?

JN: Yes, Major did that.

KH: Do you remember much about him?

JN: Quite a bit. He was one of the original surveyors for the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

KH: He had something to do with Cabramurra or something like that?

JN: He did all the surveying, all this side, all this side of the divide, he did all that - he was always lost.

KH: That's good for a surveyor!

JN: He'd send his men home - he used to have a very loose set of false teeth and he used to have to hold his mouth shut to keep his teeth in, because he always talked funny. He had a terribly good memory. As far as I know he was an Englishman, I'm not sure but I think he was an Englishman.

MRS N: Yes he was English.

KH: In the English Army, that's where the Major came from?

MRS N: Yes, that's where the Major came in.

JN: That was his title, he just wasn't nick-named it.

MRS N: He spoke very well, I think he probably was educated in England.

JN: He used to walk practically everywhere, he'd never ride, he'd send his men off with all the provisions, <sup>the theodolites and</sup> mapping materials, and all this and he used to walk and he'd put a pin mark on the map and 'I'll be there at 10 o'clock.' This is how he used to get about and this is how he did all his

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mapping. A couple of times he got lost and never turned up over night. Of course they'd come to us for a bit of help because we had horses and knew the country. We had everything organised, they had a big camp there at Back Creek, there must have been 30 men there, they had walkie-talkies everywhere - 'all right, well we'll go', everybody has got their own provisions - 'hope we can find him well' and all this rot you know. 'Where <sup>are</sup> you going, where you going?' somebody says. 'Oh, Major Clews is lost'. 'Oh, is he?' he said and he walked in - had them all in a panic.

KH: He then retired there did he?

JN: Yes, he was a married man.

KH: Oh was he?

JN: Yes.

KH: Did his wife live out there with him?

JN: Yes. His daughter came there once. We always drove our cattle out that way, my brother and I and another chap. We were going out there one day, it was raining like anything - of course we got up to the Wall and we were riding along eating our dinner in the wet, sitting in the saddle and all of a sudden the lead of the cattle took off, down through the scrub, sent the dogs round them - 'wonder what's wrong'. Anyway we were just riding along the track and after a while hear a bit of a scuffle and here's old Major planted in behind a tree - saw the cattle coming so he just stood there quiet. 'What are you doing down here Major?'. 'Oh, too many people back there, too many people'. When we got down into the hut a car came out and it was his daughter who had come to get him to give her away at her wedding. There was too many people there for him, he wasn't stopping - he went for a walk.

KH: Was he a very tall man?

JN: No he wasn't a very big man. He <sup>had</sup> an extra good memory - country that we had known all our lives - lots of times he'd ask you something about it and you could tell him something and he'd remember it. He'd pick up odd scenes, he'd see a tree with some fungus or something growing on it. This is how we used to tell people <sup>where</sup> we'd meet them and things like this, up at such and such a tree or round at somebody's rocks - well old Major used to notice all those landmarks, he'd always have them marked on his map - 'What's that cross or what's all that scribbling there for?'. 'Just one of my marks'.

KH: He only came to the mountains with the Snowy Scheme didn't he?

JN: Yes as far as I know.

KH: So all his knowledge was accumulated after 1950 or something.

JN: I don't know when the Snowy really started. They didn't come up

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into our area until later than that.

KH: I know Guthega dam was one of the first dams, that was in the early 50s I think.

JN: I think it was '54 when they first started coming around here, the surveyors. Major Clews didn't come here until later than that, I reckon it would be '58 before he got here - I'm only guessing, I'm not sure.

KH: He was an elderly man then wasn't he?

JN: He was an old man yes.

KH: He would have been in his late 50s or something then.

JN: Oh yes, could have been more.

KH: He lived in a caravan towards the end didn't he?

JN: Yes, the Snowy looked after him, they used to run his mail and his tucker and things into him, or somebody used to - some of his old mates on the Snowy. Then he got a bit old and had a bit of trouble, they brought him back to Khancoban and put him in a caravan in a caravan park. He seemed quite happy there, he didn't have his kangaroos and all this sort of thing. When he was out there, he used to feed the kangaroos, they'd be waiting at the door when he woke up of a morning. Jackasses would be sitting on the <sup>pole</sup> outside waiting.

KH: What was the hut like that was there before Major Clews?

JN: It was only an old slab hut, had a bark roof, portion of it was bark and a portion was shingles - long shingles - most of them were only short ones and interlapped but they were a bit like boards on a side of a house, they just run full length, from the top down.

KH: There was never a homestead there?

JN: Not since I went there.

KH: There looked like there could have been, so much activity has been there. You used to drive your cattle through there did you, that was on your stock route.

JN: That was our stock route, yes.

KH: Up the back there and on to the ridge?

JN: There was a track, have you been in there on that track?

KH: No, I haven't been on the Geehi Walls yet.

JN: That was the original track, they followed it, followed the stock route exactly, they just run the dozer along, filled the gutters in, they altered the <sup>w</sup>all, they wandered about <sup>on</sup> it.

KH: Put a zig-zag up there didn't they?

JN: Yeah. They came up about a third of the way, followed the old track more or less, then they veered to the left, we used to go up a gully



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on the right, it used to get very slippery.

KH: When was that first hut built on the Geehi Flats, right down this end, it was used by the Youth Hostels.

JN: The stone one - that was just before the road went in, in '52.

KH: Across <sup>to</sup> Dead Horse Gap?

JN: No, it only went to Geehi - <sup>Bannon</sup> and <sup>Glen</sup> were the contractors that put that in, for the State Rivers and Don Benson built that hut.

KH: Was he a stockman?

JN: Yes. He built that hut, packed all that cement and everything in there on pack horses before the road was put in.

KH: He would have gone in on your old route.

JN: Yes. Then he built Keeble Lodge.

KH: That's the one that's also known as Nankervis'.

JN: Keeble Lodge is down the bottom of Bears Flat, on the western side of the river.

KH: A low flat building with an iron <sup>roof?</sup>

JN: Yes and leaks like anything. Keeble Lodge - a bloke by the name of Keeble - on the Hydro Electric Scheme - he used to go in there fishing. Don Benson used to pack him in. Don had a farm up the top end of Khancoban where Galbraiths are now and it was originally Jack Reids - a selection by old Jack Reid. Don bought that and then tourists in the mountains started to get a bit of a go on so he packed quite a lot of horses. He started packing parties about here into the bush, taking them into Geehi for fishing trips, then he'd come to Groggin and then he'd go round to the Tin Mine and then out to the Pilot and down to Ingeegoodbee and back over Kosciusko and out round Grey Mare.

KH: Did he - Don Benson - is he still alive?

JN: No.

KH: I haven't heard much about him.

JN: Never heard of him?

KH: No.

JN: He was a Gippslander and came here and worked for Sasella's Bros. out at Bringenbrong.

KH: He built the <sup>lowest</sup> hut first, know<sup>n</sup> as the ....?

JN: The Commission Hut, he built it for the Water Commission, that's how that road come to get there in the first place, the Water Commission. They had to put that track in there in the first place.

KH: Then he built Keeble's?

JN: Yeah he built Keeble's and then he built another one, Waterfall

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Farm Syndicate - Waterfall Farm right up the top into Khancoban, it's run by a syndicate, doctors and so forth. The Water Commission Hut is on the Round Flat, Keeble Lodge is on Bears Flat and this other Syndicate Hut, as we always called it, was built across from Keeble Lodge, in the scrub.

KH: It is now.

JN: That would be right, blackberries probably right over it.

It was hard to get at when we were there even, it was a very bad crossing in the river, and the blackberries have grown.

KH: I was there a few years ago, part of it has collapsed now.

JN: Has it?

KH: Near the fire place, one of the end walls has come down, it was very hard to find. What did you call that?

JN: The Syndicate Hut.

KH: What else was it know<sup>n</sup> by?

JN: I don't know - Waterfall Farm for a syndicate - that's all we ever knew it by. There used to be an old wooden one there, it just fell down, rotted away. All the timber out in that area never lasts very long. It had a verandah on it and a little paling fence around it, round the edge of the verandah - it was alright for somebody to go for a fortnight.

KH: The old wooden hut?

JN: Yeah.

KH: That would have been one of the first huts up there?

JN: It was there when I first went there, but it belonged to this syndicate crowd, this Waterfall Farm.

KH: Was that area all freehold?

JN: In Geehi?

KH: Yeah.

JN: Oh No. There's 1540 acres freehold there but where the Water Commission hut was on a lease, we paid for the lease, just a grazing lease and the Syndicate Hut was on the same grazing lease which took in the Bogong Creek. The Bogong Creek is there at the foot of the wall and runs way back round and back into the Snowy Mountains. We had that as a grazing lease and Jack Reid had a - no, Tyrells, Harry Tyrell, he had the bottom portion, where our hut is now and up<sup>a</sup> round the hill going up the river, John Reid, he had a selection there - not a very big one, about 180 acres or so. He had a hut there, one of those where the slabs stood up and down.

KH: John Reid?

JN: Jack Reid.

KH: Whereabouts is that in relation to the land strip?



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JN: It would be a mile and a half up the river.

KH: On the left hand side going up the river?

JN: You cross the road there, at the bridge, don't go over the bridge, just go from the airstrip, straight on up that flat, we put a cut in around the flat, we used to drive up there when we had it.

KH: Is the hut known by anything else?

JN: No.

KH: Is there another hut there?

JN: Barlee had one up there, he called it Rippling Waters.

KH: Was that near Reids?

JN: Just above.

KH: Was Barlee a dingo trapper?

JN: He was a bit of everything old Herb - no, not really.

KH: The site of his hut is still marked on some of the old maps.

JN: Roaring Waters not Rippling Waters - Roaring Waters he called that. There was a sign up there, somebody cut a sign on a piece of board with a pocket knife - it was hanging up in a tree the last time I was there. It was very temporary, his building. It only had that malthoid on it for a roof and the walls, packed netting in and built the frame and put the netting over it and just run the malthoid over the top of it - she was a very temporary building.

KH: Jack Reids was more substantial?

JN: Oh yes, Jack Reids was only a small - only about 8' wide and about 16' long perhaps - only a small one.

KH: Was it one of the first huts then, Jack Reids?

JN: Yes, it was there - there was Jack Reid and Harry Tyrell ..

KH: Do you know when Jack Reids was built?

JN: No it was there when I first went in - in fact it was an old hut then.

KH: The first time you went there was in the 30s was it?

JN: 1935.

KH: None of the river stone huts were there in '35?

JN: Oh no.

KH: Which was the first one, <sup>of</sup> the river stone huts?

JN: The Water Commission was the first one.

KH: On Round Flat?

JN: Yes. And then Keeble Lodge, that was designed by Mr Keeble and it was no good. The roof leaked and the chimney smoked. My aunt in Bringerbrong was in that syndicate who built that. There was three or four people - Harry <sup>Cagin</sup> and my aunt, Flo Nankervis, Arthur Keeble, and Eric Robbins. <sup>from Myrtleford</sup>

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Then old Ned Nicholson, I shouldn't say that, he was Mr Nicholson from down at Corowa, the top end of Bears Flat, just a temporary one - it got burnt in '39. Then they built it up again and everybody used to raid it and all sorts of things. I don't know whether they put a bomb in it or not, but it collapsed. Then they built it way up on Geehi Creek, you've got to have a map to find it, they built it there and they had a little Flying Fox that they used to go over Geehi Creek to the hut. Built right on the edge of the stream, they cut the tea tree down to build the hut there.

KH: Is that known as Dr Forbes now?

JN: It's a river/stone hut.

KH: Sounds like Dr Forbes - it's locked, still locked to this day.

JN: Yes it's locked.

KH: People from Melbourne came there.

JN: I could be mixed up but Ned Nicholson was the bloke that <sup>paid</sup> to get that built.

KH: Well apparently they actually have wooden boards that they can put across the river when they're in residence or something like that.

JN: There is a shelter building beside it which anybody can go down and use, and camp in - it's open on one side, it's got a door on it, it's quite all right for you to go and have a couple of days fishing.

KH: It's on the Hannels Spur side of the river?

JN: Yes that's right.

KH: The highest hut, the highest river stone hut?

JN: Yes. That should be Nicholsons hut.

KH: It's known as Dr Forbes' now I think. Do you know when that was built?

JN: It would be the last one that was built.

KH: So when was the Water Commission hut built?

JN: Well that was before the road went in and I think the road went in in 1954.

KH: So that hut went in in the 1940s some time? No one's been able to tell me - I haven't met many people who know much about the river/stone huts, I'm trying to work out when they were built. Is there any other events that you can remember that you can associate it with?

JN: No, but I've got a brother who used to live out there with me, he's got a better memory than me.

KH: Was it after the War?

JN: Oh yes.

KH: So some time between '45 and '52.

JN: Keeble's hut was built after they'd finished the <sup>Kiewa</sup> Hydro Electric Scheme

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KH: I'll look that up.

JN: They brought the doors and the windows out of buildings - huts from the <sup>Kiewa</sup> village. That could have been very close to the end of the War years, because you couldn't buy anything, you couldn't buy iron or glass windows or anything like that.

KH: It's a very substantial place that one.

So it was this Don Benson character, he was the builder, he developed the craft of building with river/stones!

JN: We built our own, the one up the bottom end of the airstrip.

KH: Oh that's yours is it?

JN: That's ours.

KH: I know that hut.

JN: We built it.

KH: Was that the last one built?

JN: No, Nicholsons was built after that.

KH: So it was Commission Hut on Round Flat, then the Syndicate on Bear Flat ...

JN: No, it's Keeb/e Lodge on Bears Flat.

KH: The Syndicate one was across the river amongst the tea trees, was the next one. Then Keeb/es on Bears Flat, then yours at the end of the airstrip and then Dr Forbes or Nicholsons.

J.N. : Mr Nicholson was a C<sup>o</sup>rewa man, used to come up there and use our hut. It always seemed that we'd be mustering at the time he was there and taking cattle up Hannells Spur on to Townsend and he said 'where would you let me build a hut'. So Dad said 'Yes you can build <sup>a</sup> hut there, at your expense, we're not putting it up for you'. We knew nothing about Mr Nicholson but we found out that when the War started that he owned a heap of islands up there with rubber plantations on 'em and of course the Japs got them for a start - they took that. He came in and I said to him 'You come up here a bit low Mr Nicholson' - 'Oh yes' he said 'It is a bit low'. The chap that brought him in - Don Benson - no it wasn't Don Benson then - that was early War years, said 'Oh he's not going too bad, he still fattens a thousand lambs' and all this sort of thing. But he's been dead for some years now and his in-laws or sons, they've been coming up there. But it's always been known to us as Nicholsons hut.

KH: Why did you build yours as well at the end of the landing strip?

JN: Well, we only had that old wooden one there, that's all we had.

KH: It's a bit of a shelter now?

JN: <sup>They</sup> pulled the walls out of it. But that was the original <sup>Tyrell</sup> hut up on the bank, that was the original hut, everything that was in it

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was the original, the iron and the slabs and the stones out of the fireplace.

KH: What was <sup>Tyrell's</sup> christian name?

JN: Harry <sup>Tyrell</sup>.

KH: He was one of the first people in there?

JN: He was a selector there - him and John Reid.

KH: That was a slab hut?

JN: Yes.

KH: Were you involved in the building of that river/stone hut?

JN: Oh yeah.

KH: You and a team of others or ...

JN: Don Benson came out and give us a start and he said 'No it's too hard to work with stones, they're too big'. All those other huts were smaller stones. He collected his stones with a horse and slide made out of a fork and stick, that <sup>is</sup> how he carted his stones. When we built ours we had the road in there, we had to cross all the rivers, went to the foot of the ~~Wall~~ and we had to make a track then up to where we built our hut. We had an old Chev Blitz, from the Army, we carted everything in there with it. There was oodles of stones there, about where we built the hut. Don Benson come and give us a hand, we picked all these stones for the bottom of the foundation of the hut, squared her all up and put them all in and then put another row on top and oh it was the weekend, we'd had it. So we all went home and when we come back they'd all fell apart. The stones had a moss on them and the cement - as soon as it dried the cement just left the stone. So every stone that's in that building came out underneath the water. We'd strip off of an evening - four of us there - and go in and pick all these stones out and throw them on the old Blitz and that would be the next days work.

KH: That's quite a big hut, how long did it take you to build it?

JN: Three months I think - on and off. We had our cattle work and other things to do as well. We didn't change our men, I wasn't there much of the time. I got there and finished up putting the floor in and the roof on. I only had a few days on the stone there. My brother and <sup>[Hughie]</sup> Gable, Syd Dragoulis and Don Benson, they were the main blokes that did the work on it.

KH: They're very high walls under the gables aren't they?

JN: Oh yes - health regulation.

KH: Did you have scaffolding or something?

JN: We used to use the truck - work off the truck. Everything was done by hand, no trowels, you can't use trowels <sup>or</sup> anything.

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KH: Did you wear gloves?  
 JN: Some of the time, you used to blister between the fingers in gloves.  
 KH: The cement would dry out your hands wouldn't it?  
 JN: Yeah it did. We had some lotion we used to use. <sup>Finger nails wore back to the quick</sup> One bloke would place the stones and one bloke would <sup>keep</sup> the cement - it was just wet, just damp. A trowel was no good, too many corners, didn't have round trowels. If you ever look at that, there's no straight wall in it.  
 KH: I must have a look.  
 JN: You can't put a line on it.  
 I don't know where those Geehi title maps are, I've got an idea Scammels had a selection in there - they did, Tom Scammel.  
 KH: Errol's father?  
 JN: No he'd be an uncle. Errol's father was Rob. Yeah Tom Scammel - that's across the river from Jack Reids. Once the river goes up above the bridge there and turns the corner, there's a little thin flat up each side, the river nearly runs straight up through the middle of the flat and Tom Scammels was on Townsend side and Jack Reids was on our side.  
 KH: Where Nicholson's huts is?  
 JN: Yes that was Tom Scammel's side.  
 [Looking at maps]  
 KH: That looks like the base of a map that I've seen before, an old Lands Department one.  
 JN: This would be a lease - G.W. Nankervis and there's H. Nankervis - they use <sup>d</sup> to trade as Nankervis Bros. There was G.W., A.J. and H.  
 KH: This is all the country above Dead Horse Gap.  
 JN: Yes. That couldn't be very old because I've got my name on that. Be the first surveyor, 1943. Peter <sup>Firth</sup> was a surveyor first with the Snowy Scheme because he used to get us to go with him - no fires alight - because he always had to go in front so we could see what it was like and I'd be coming along behind dropping wet matches.  
 KH: Yes, they used to like burning off in those days.  
 JN: I reckon the mountains were - well there's no reckon about it - they were in better order when the stockmen used them than what they are now. They'd send people from Sydney and down the coast - environment and naturalists - the cattle are causing this and the sheep are causing that and <sup>s</sup>forth. But since the cattle and the sheep have gone there's more things causing trouble than what there was while the stock was there.  
 KH: There's certainly a lot of <sup>s</sup>crubs that have come up again - and trees too.

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JN: Oh yes, but that snow grass, it's evidently got to be pulled out - I won't say burnt - but it's got to be eaten off or pulled out, they don't eat it off anyhow, they grab snow grass and give it a pull and it pulls out down the bottom. You get a place that's been shut up for a couple of years, we had a little paddock out there, it was fenced in, and nothing was in it for three years, and that nearly all died, and outside where the horses were running, where they used to eat it off, it used to be green every year. The place that was fenced off and this is what we used to show them all. There used to be an <sup>old</sup> kangaroo come there now and again, which was a bit high for him, they didn't get up that high - that was there at Dead Horse - which is not high - 5,180 feet I think they got up on that side.  
 KH: Yes about that. Just to go back to the river/stone huts, this Benson guy, Don Benson, he started on that hut right down the bottom on Round Flat and he just started to build, he just learned it by trial and error did he?  
 JN: Yes, that's all.  
 KH: Where did he get the idea from, do you know?  
 JN: Over near Bright I think, there's a lot of stone huts at Bright. He used to take people out there fishing from Bright.  
 KH: They also use river/stone over that way?  
 JN: Yes same sort of thing. I'd say that some of those people he took in there put the idea into his head which was quite good at the time, well it's still good because the timber out there won't last. River/stones will stop there forever, white ants won't touch it. If your cement is mixed up right, well it should be right forever.  
 KH: I like that one on that flat, the Round Flat one, the Commissioner, I think it's one of the nicest - inside anyway - outside too. It's got the big reinforced corners, <sup>big</sup> pillars.  
 JN: I think he had to draw that to plan. The others you just guess - just a guess job the others.  
 KH: Was he <sup>paid</sup> to build those huts?  
 JN: Oh yes, too right.  
 KH: Do you know how much he was <sup>paid</sup> ?  
 JN: No.  
 KH: And he packed the cement in?  
 JN: Yes, packed everything in.  
 KH: It seems that yours must have been built just before the road was put in.  
 JN: No we had the road into Geehi when we put ours in, it didn't go



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any further, just to the foot of the wall. Bannen and Glen pushed that road down round onto that Round Flat, they had their camp there and they used that Water Commission Hut, then they built the shed, they had workshops, they had a power unit of their own that they run off a little short-wheel based Landrover. They used to do all their own maintenance work and they pushed that road in there with a little TD9 International tractor, which is only a small one and then they got another contract that went up the Bogong Creek and back down on to the Flat at the top of the airstrip. Then they got another contract that went way up the river, up to Olsens Lookout.

KH: What was their name again, those two?

JN: Bannen and Glen - Roy Bannen and Doug Glen - Doug Glen is still alive, he's got a little farm down here at Sandy Creek.

KH: But the main road, the big road that then went via Scammels Lookout, that was put in later wasn't it?

JN: Yes, I don't know who did that, whether they did that or not.

KH: It was an SMA one wasn't it?

JN: Could have been. I think - oh that big contractor bloke - Theiss Bros. - I think they might have put that road up from Olsens. There was a young Theiss killed up there working on it - yeah they did. Bannen and Glen put the road through then to Groggin and they used our quarters there. We were there for about three years, hardly cooked a meal, they had a cook with them.

KH: Very nice.

JN: Oh yeah. Fresh bread every day, they used to run backwards and forwards every day, they had walkie-talkies. Then they put the road from there up to the Leather Barrel.

KH: Did they, right up to the gap?

JN: No only to Leather Barrel - half way up the hill the other side. Slugger McMahon I think was the bloke on the TD24 International tractor -

went from there to Dead Horse in about five days. She was a good operator, he had a big machine and he only had to push a track through. We travelled it as soon as he put it through, in the Landrover.

KH: At the same time they were pushing the other way!

JN: Yes, they were coming out the other side - a bloke by the name of - I'm not sure of his name now.

KH: That was '56 by then wasn't it - '55 or '56. So your hut at the end of the land strip was built about '53 by the sound of it.

JN: Yes, early in the 50s anyway. If you look round there, probably you'd see a date carved in something, in the cement.

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KH: I wish more of the people who had built huts had done that.

JN: Well there is, it's on there somewhere.

KH: Is it?

JN: Yes, where I just couldn't tell you but it's on there.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1.

KH: It's been a bit hard to track down these few riverstone huts, they're very unusual in the mountains - there's definitely no others apart from that - all the other<sup>s</sup> are timber or iron.

JN: Well iron is actually the quickest and cheapest way to build one. We packed the iron in to Groggin and then we packed the iron from Kossie Gap down to Dead Horse for the Dead Horse hut.

KH: Did you, but you weren't involved in the building of Dead Horse were you? That would have been before your time.

JN: No, my father was. I think a chap by the name of Turner started it and he didn't last long - he only got the post up or something, the timber wasn't good enough - it's all snow gum timber. I don't know whether you were ever in it - it was the crooked<sup>de</sup> timber you've ever seen. A chap by the name of Osmond finished building it. He was an old chap, one of those old handy bush blokes - he'd look along a stick and give it a hit here and a trim up somewhere else and up would go the rafter - there'd be bulges and twists in it. But he put it up - we put the verandah on it afterwards for a storeroom and we fenced in - we had three paddocks there - I was a labourer. It was very handy that hut - the Dead Horse hut because we joined all those Monaro fellows.

KH: You could go in four directions from there couldn't you?

JN: Yes, well we used to get our supplies from Jindabyne.

KH: Did you?

JN: Oh yes, it was close.

KH: Of course, it would be a long trek up to Dead Horse from here wouldn't it.

JN: Old Harry Blewitt used to have a store there at Jindabyne, this is back before Jindabyne was shifted, way back in the 40s. While the rationing was on - I was up there all the rationing period - tobacco, sugar, tea, everything was rationed. We'd ride across to the Chalet when George Day was

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manager of the Chalet. If George didn't know what we wanted there, we'd hop on the phone, if it was working, if it wasn't much he'd send it up on the Chalet bus we call it - the truck used to bring the goods up. We'd go up there at <sup>Christ</sup>mas time or a bit after <sup>Christ</sup>mas and we'd take 12-14 pack horses and we'd pack our whole summer supply in at once - salt, chaff, oats, everything in one go. Perhaps 3-4 days. Send the order into Harry Blewitt and he had a half ton Ford truck - he used to put enough load on that half ton Ford truck to load 12 horses, which is near enough to a ton. He'd put two bags of oats on, two bags of chaff on each horse and the salt, we used to buy the blocks because it was a bit easier to handle.

KH: And that was taken up the Summit Road?

JN: Up to Kossie Gap - I don't know what you fellows call it!

KH: It's known as Rawsons Pass now.

JN: Yeah well that's what it is on the map.

KH: You call that Kossie Gap?

JN: Yes - it's Kossie Gap.

KH: And then down the bridle track - your horse would meet the truck there?

JN: Yeah we'd go up there, nothing to tie them to up there - we used to take a pack-load of wood up with us when we went so we could boil the quart and have a cup of tea before we'd put the packs on. We'd get all the packs ready and then have a cup of tea and load up and go. It was only - oh six mile we used to reckon it was - used to take us an hour and a half. Good travelling, nothing much went wrong, you'd do it in an hour and a half, back down to Dead Horse.

KH: An hour and a half - with a whole chain of horses and so on.

JN: If he brought all - which we didn't like him to do - bring all horse feed one day, you were in trouble, because you had to lead your pack horses because they charge up and grab the corner of a <sup>n</sup> oat bag and tear a hole in it and then of course all the oats would run out. Then of course the pack gets lop-sided and then the bag <sup>goes</sup> underneath the pack horse, so we used to plait their tails, just an ordinary three plait and tie it up with twine and then thread the holder all the way through it and tie it up as short as you could get them with the horses nose up the other horses behind. We'd hook three together, the <sup>track</sup> was too uneven to hook any more than three and the poor fellow that went down into a sharp dip like this and come up the other side, he'd nearly be off his feet by the time the one on this side was on top and that one was on top. They couldn't reach the bags, they used to try, they'd try their hardest to grab hold of a bag of

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chaff or a bag of oats.

KH: You couldn't put them in a saddle bag of course, the saddle bag wasn't big enough.

JN: We'd pack up to six horses for four months, which was quite a lot of feed.

KH: You'd have twelve horses in the team, bringing the supplies down.

JN: Yeah. We did have more - we had 20 horses, 20 pack horses at a time. My brother and I used to work 20 from Khancoban to Groggin - they're alright <sup>if</sup> nothing goes wrong, but if you're packing salt in loose bags, which we didn't, some of those old pack horses would get as cunning as can be, and the first spike they see on a tree they'll charge at it and tear a hole in the bag.

KH: That's why you went for the block salt rather than the loose salt.

JN: Then we built green hide bags during ... we had no wireless, nothing in the winter months, you had to fill in your own time, we only had the old kerosene lamp that hung on the wall with a reflector on the back ... we used to save our own hides and things and during the winter months we used to make green hide bags. Some for packing wire and some for packing loose salt in, they were all different shapes and sizes - well they could run into anything or run into one another if it was in a green hide bag, it didn't hurt anything.

KH: Apparently George used to make wire frames.

JN: That's right, he had steel frames in his. He was a bit flasher than us though, he used to get his hides tanned by somebody in Sydney. He'd get his hides off us and he'd take them to Sydney and get them tanned in that nice pretty green or red and then of course he had a beautiful workshop. He had everything, we didn't have nothing, he had everything down there. He'd cut all this lacing <sup>out of the green hide</sup> ... or this cured hide and he'd lace them all up - oh he had beautiful equipment old George.

KH: There's still a couple hanging at Herb Hains - at Herb Hain's shed.

JN: Yes Herb would <sup>have</sup> it's a wonder George still hasn't got some.

KH: Well he didn't show me anything.

JN: George used to do a lot of plaiting ...

MRS N: Would you like a cup of tea?

KH: Yes please, lovely.

JN: He'd never give many things away, he'd give you a rope now and again. He used to come across with us chasing horses, he was there by himself all the War years, the place was closed.

KH: During the War? Was it? He was just a caretaker.



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JN: He was looking after the Chalet and the Hotel then. He was living at the Chalet and of course he'd get lonely there, he'd come across to us to Dead Horse - oh well, better go and see where the horses are. He was a one for a bit of fun, but he had good gear old George.

KH: He was on a reasonable wage too by the time the 40s came along. At first I don't think he did so well.

JN: When I first went over there the Chalet was just an old tin building just like an old workshop, an old shed - but it got burnt down. I was there when they built it, we used to get our stuff from George when they were building that - our food stuffs. We used to make our own bread, we used to buy dry yeast in a little tin - you'd put one tablespoon to two quarts of water and then let that stand for half an hour or something until it went all bubbly and then you'd put a teaspoon or a tablespoon of sugar in it, a little bit of flour in the bottom of a kerosene tin - we used to buy our kerosene in those old square tins then - we'd have a special tin for setting the yeast and the bread in - a full days job. You'd start about 7 in the morning and you could go away for a few hours during the day, if you had it well covered so the flies couldn't get at it, then you'd come home of an evening and you'd hope that you could get the bread and cook <sup>ed</sup> before the other fellows come home - put the tea on.

KH: So one person would come home early?

JN: You'd have to be home by four o'clock to cook the bread.

KH: That would be eaten that night?

JN: Oh no, that would last us about five days. We had two camp ovens - we had a 12 inch and we had a 22 inch, which was a big fellow. We used to have a Cerebos salt tin that we put in the middle with the top and the bottom cut out him, because he used to stop bowing in the middle, so we used to put this Cerebos salt tin in the middle so the heat would go up through the middle.

KH: Cerebos salt - I think I've seen those - in a rubbish dump.

JN: They used to be in round tins about that round and so high, just the right height for the camp oven he was to sit inside.

Yeah we used to make our own bread, well our meat was a big problem - tin meat. For a while we had the sheep run up the plain, up the Boggy Plain - no refrigerator or nothing like this so if you wanted a sheep, they used to shepherd them all day and <sup>yard</sup> them of a night - you go up "Right we've come for a sheep". "Oh right-o". Old Mick Pender used to be in charge of them, you come across old Mick I suppose did you, over there at Jindabyne.

KH: No, I've talked to Dave.

JN: Dave's Mick's brother. Mick is living out where Joyce's father

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JN: Joyce's father died a few months back and Mick's caretaker there.

KH: Is he an approachable sort of guy - have a yarn?

JN: Oh yeah. Well they used to have sheep just up the Boggy Plain and we'd go up there of an afternoon, wait until they were getting the sheep in and old Mick would go and kill a sheep, so we'd have a cup of tea while he was killing a sheep and of course by the time the sun had gone down up there, it was starting to cool off, throw the sheep on top of the pack horse and home we'd go. Then you'd have to salt half of it practically straight away because you couldn't keep it fresh - you'd cook a quarter and hope that the weather stopped cool long enough to eat it and then cook the next quarter. We used to salt it with just ordinary stock salt .... put it in one of those salt bags that had gone real hard with the salt, the flies would never touch it, cover it over with an old chaff bag as well.

KH: And the rock salt was alright to salt ...

JN: This was cattle salt, the loose ... oh yeah, it's all we used to use. It was alright.

KH: You never smoked any meat or anything like that.

JN: Yes we smoked meat and left it there and used it the next year - hang it up the chimney - it had got too smokey. People had been in through the winter as well.

KH: Ski tourers I suppose?

JN: Yes they used to ski down there to the hut, stop a while and ski back again, that was from the Chalet - old Tommy Mitchell, George Day - a lot of people used to tell us that they'd been there.

KH: Ski down the Ramshead Range, have lunch there and head back.

JN: Oh stop the night, it's not that far but you'd have to be fairly fit, you've got a long way to climb back up from Dead Horse.

KH: I've done that a few times, mainly walking. What about the materials for Dead Horse Hut, did you say you brought those up from here or from the Jindabyne side?

JN: The Jindabyne.

KH: Up the Crackenback River, up the Thredbo?

JN: No from up on top, up at Kossie Gap.

KH: Oh I see, the same way as everything else. All the fencing wire and all that would come that way too wouldn't it.

JN: Yes.

(Tea Break)



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KH: You were at Dead Horse for nine seasons in a row.

JN: Yes. Our easiest source of supply was to go across to the Chalet and ring up and say we want a couple of loaves of bread on Wednesday and half a sheep, a couple of pound of butter. Every Wednesday we'd ride across to the Chalet, have a cup of tea with the girls, a beer with George. Sometimes we'd stop the night, all depends what was on, if he had something on for the night we'd stop. It didn't matter how you were, what you were dressed in or anything else.

KH: That's nice. I don't believe the Kosciusko Hotel was quite that loose.

JN: Oh no, we were George's guests.

KH: And you provided the cattle for the rodeo.

JN: Yes.

KH: Was that an annual event?

JN: It only lasted two years.

KH: And he built that big corral thing for the rodeo?

JN: Yes, and also, he had his own horses and things, he used to have a couple of milking cows there too, he used to keep them there, nice and handy. He had a dog team, did he show you the dogs?

KH: He showed me photographs and told me about them and some of the things that happened with the dog team. I'd heard of Ray Adams and his involvement with dogs and things but I didn't know that it was mainly George who was behind it all.

JN: Yes it was George. George got these dogs.

KH: But George also went brumby hunting wouldn't he and break in horses?

JN: He used to come over to us, that's where he used to go brumby chasing.

KH: Down in the Big Boggy.

JN: Yes and Dead Horse Hill, out to the Lookout - the Lookout got to<sup>b</sup> scrubby.

KH: Did you ever go out to that trap that's up at the top of Wombat Gully?

JN: The horse trap?

KH: Yes, near Teddys Hut or what's now the ruin of Teddys Hut.

JN: It was never finished.

KH: The hut wasn't?

JN: No, it was never finished. They built that there - Teddy and <sup>Brov?</sup> you wouldn't know <sup>Brov?</sup>, he's Neville McGuffick<sup>e</sup>, he was Laurie McGuffick's son. Teddy is Norman McGuffick's son and Brov was Laurie's son. They were out there looking after George Taylor's cattle when they built that.

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If the weather got bad they used to have to come down to us because everything would get wet in their tent.

KH: They wouldn't go back to Cascade?

JN: No. They wanted somebody to talk <sup>you</sup> see. There's nobody at Cascade to talk to. Cascade Hut used to leak anyway.

KH: It still had bark on it then?

JN: Yes and the chimney used to smoke.

KH: Did you put the iron on Cascades?

JN: No, Dooley Pender did it up, only a few years ago.

KH: Like in the 60s?

JN: After they put the road through.

KH: But while the grazing was still on .

JN: They still had a lease there - wait till I think whose cattle he had, it wasn't George Taylor<sup>5</sup>, he'd gone - I can't think whose cattle he had. But he did the hut up, made it quite good. The chimney had fallen down and the bark had rotted off the roof. We've got photos out there, when they built that hut - they're the only ones we can find.

KH: I've got one or two of Cascade but I'd be interested to see some more.

JN: Well we can show you the mode of transport and everything. Yes a bloke by the name or Rob Benson, Tom Bennetts and <sup>Tins</sup> McNamara, they built that hut.

KH: Is that the same Benson that built the riverstone huts?

JN: No, a brother. He was Rob this bloke. Rob worked for us for many years out at the farm here, just a handy bush carpenter. They went out and they built that hut.

KH: That was when you were just starting to go up the mountains wasn't it? About '35 or '36 I think when the Cascade was built.

JN: There was no hut there the first year that I went there, it was only an old wooden mustering paddock of about an acre. It's still there I think, up the back of the hut. We used to have to keep putting a log or two on top of it and so forth, to muster and hold the horses in it - that's where we used to hold our horses. And when they built that hut, they fenced in that paddock.

KH: Up at Teddys, you would remember the old brumby traps or the new one.

JN: No, the old was there, just across the creek.

KH: In amongst the dead timber.

JN: I can tell you lots of things about that.

KH: Oh go on.

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- JN: You've heard of Nugget and Dudley and all those fellows?
- KH: Yes.
- JN: Dudley used to put his horses up there on the top and of course every year the stallion kicks the males out of the mob and of course they'll go in ones and twos and the first thing they see they'll go to. So he used to take his old mares up there and put up on the top and these brumby yearlings would go with them. Then of course, bad weather would come and the mares would work off home and the yearlings would go with them.
- KH: That was very clever.
- JN: There was a beautiful yearling up there, we'd had a look at it a couple of times - this was Teddy and I and Brov<sup>(Neville McGufficke)</sup> and Roy Boardman was with me I think this year. <sup>Oh</sup> Well we'll put them in the yard, run them around to the yard'. Dudley's old mares, you could drive them anywhere. Dudley had put these old mares up there to get this yearling, he'd been up a time or two and had a look and the yearling had run away - they'd seen him. Anyway this day we were going to get these horses in the yard and when we got up there Teddy and Brov got them in. They had them in the yard and they had this yearling tied up and they'd let the old mares out and they were just going. We were sitting there, rolled a smoke, sitting down and Teddy said 'Wouldn't it be a lark if old Dudley turned up'. He no sooner said it and Dudley and Nugget turn<sup>ed</sup> up. There was a fight on then, in the slippery snow grass, they couldn't stand up with <sup>their</sup> boots on, so they knocked off and took their boots off and in<sup>to</sup> it again.
- KH: Who was this between?
- JN: Teddy and Brov McGuffick<sup>e</sup> and Dudley and Nugget Pender.
- KH: Oh four of them?
- JN: Yes.
- KH: The McGufficks<sup>e</sup> and Penders.
- JN: And Roy Boardman and I are sitting back looking on,
- KH: You didn't take sides - two against two is fair enough.
- JN: Yeah. Anyway Teddy finished up with the horse.
- KH: This<sup>was</sup> the stockyards at Teddys hut?
- JN: No it was a horse yard that was built.
- KH: The one across the gully.
- JN: The one across that little creek.
- KH: The one with the big wings, wings going right up the hill, about 30 yards long.
- JN: They were longer then, and it had the slip rails on the track.

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- KH: That's right, they're still there lying in the grass. That wasn't built until the early 60s apparently, that horse yard.
- JN: I don't know who built it, I think old Dudley must <sup>have</sup> built it.
- KH: Would a Pierce have been involved with that - a Kerry Pierce?
- JN: Kerry Pierce built a lot of yards up there, but that's going way back into the 20s.
- KH: That's why I <sup>am</sup> mixed up, he probably built the early one.
- JN: Another big one of the Chimneys that Kerry Pierce built too, but it got burnt in the '39 fire.
- KH: That may have happened to the one at Teddys too. Somebody told me there was an old yard there and that the one that's there now was built in the early 60s.
- JN: I don't know who built it to tell you the truth. We used to go out there, we'd got up to Jindabyne and we'd ride up the Boggy Plain and go down into Wombat Gully and down into the Moonbah.
- KH: That was a good way out I guess.
- JN: We never used to go round that way. Those fellows, the Jindabyne blokes was always up there, mainly had sheep there. We'd never go near them, wouldn't go and interfere with their territory. Old Dudley - him and old Straighty, they had yards everywhere.
- KH: Was it very successful, that trap?
- JN: Yeah it worked that one.
- KH: You'd go up Drift Hill way ...?
- JN: Go back out - what range did they call it - they'd come from both ways. You could go out on to the Chimneys, especially if they were horses that had run from the head of Friday Flat Creek say, across and on to the Chimneys and the head of the Boggy Plain - that's the brumbies run across that way. Well if they were out on the Chimneys you could ... no, the last yard you put there you couldn't get them from the Chimneys, that<sup>s</sup> right. You had to fetch them from Friday Flat Creek way back towards the Chimneys. There's some other hill there too, they named it after somebody - oh it doesn't matter. It's actually at the head of Friday Flat Creek - it's on the map.
- KH: Adams Monument?
- JN: It was Adams Lookout.
- KH: Yes that's it.
- JN: There was another big yard about half way between the Dead Horse Hut and the Cascades - it got burnt in the '39 fire - it was a huge yard.
- KH: Up on the Saddle or ...?
- JN: No, where you go through the fence, about a hundred yards back

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towards Dead Horse from where the road goes through the fence now, there's a low gap there - it was in it. Gee it was high, about 10 or 12 feet high.

KH: That one on Teddys Creek is a pretty big one isn't it.

JN: Oh not that big.

KH: Any others down towards the Tin Mines?

JN: There was yeah. There was one in at the Lookout, one at Woodhouses Yards.

KH: Where were they?

JN: Woodhouses Yards is between the Lookout and Surveyors Flat. Do you know where Surveyors Flat is?

KH: No.

JN: Well Surveyors Flat is about three quarters of the way from Cascades to the Tin Mine <sup>Hut</sup>.

KH: Oh yes.

JN: Where the road goes now its altered. Cradle Flat/Surveyors Flat - they were working there with those sluice boxes when I first went in there.

KH: At the Tin Mines?

JN: No, back at Cradle Flat.

KH: What the miners from the Tin Mines or someone else?

JN: They were living in there. They used to walk back to work ...

KH: From the Tin Mine?

JN: Yeah, it would be three mile I suppose. They used to walk and they had sluice boxes made out of mountain ash, they'd made themselves, and they had a nice little stream of water there.

KH: What's the creek - I'll have to get a map out later on and you'll have to show me. Cradle Flat? is it near Stock <sup>Whip</sup> Hill or something?

JN: No, Stock <sup>Whip</sup> Hill is back up on the Divide. Well Cradle Flat is just off the Divide too. Cradle Flat water runs into the Tin Mine Creek.

KH: On the Murray?

JN: No, the other one, where the Tin Mine huts were.

KH: That's the top of the Ingeegoodbee.

JN: Yeah, this water runs into them. Wait a minute, wait till I think - it could run into the Pinch, I think it could run into the Pinch.

KH: It could I suppose around there, they all run in different directions.

JN: The Snowy put a road across from Ingebyra, across through the Jacobs, the Pinch and up over the top of the hill, round the the back of the Lookout, well over the Lookout I suppose, down through Woodhouses yards and then down on to the track, nearly to the Tin Mine huts.

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KH: Cradle Flat is somewhere near the Junction?

JN: Yes, just back a little bit. Don Mowatt put that track where it is now. It used to cross the Divide - you wouldn't know where the Divide is I suppose - it's not long after you get out of the mountain ash, you come into a little clear saddle, that's the Divide. The old horse track used to go down to the left, go down on to Packsaddle Flat - have you seen that on the map, Packsaddle Flat? Don made this road right along the spur, because it was a very boggy creek about as wide as this table with banks on it nearly as high and very boggy. Of course the cattle would get in and the calves would get in and you were always dragging them out. So he made this track along the ridge and then the Snowy followed it when they put it through - the Snowy or the Forestry.

KH: It might have been something to do the the Hume-Snowy Fire - for fighting fires - that track. I mean the Snowy people did go through there too and they had gauging stations all in there.

JN: I think that water must have run into the Pinch - my geography is not too good.

KH: I'll get a map out later on.

JN: <sup>As</sup> long <sup>as its</sup> got all the contours on it.

KH: I think I brought that sheet - the Jacobs River sheet.

This yard was near this Cradle Flat - Woodhouses Yard.

JN: Its the name - well it's called Woodhouses Yards now - I think it's on the map as Woodhouses Yard too. That yard up there was mortise post and rails.

KH: Was it still there when you were there last?

JN: A portion of it is still there.

KH: The one on Teddys Creek is just two logs, two posts and rail ...

JN: Yes I helped them fix it up. Most of them are like that. Our stockyards in Groggin were like that. They didn't last long.

KH: The one on Teddys Creek they must have used mainly the timber from the fire, there's a lot of dead timber in there but I don't think it was the '39 fire. I think it was a fire since then.

JN: Yeah we had one in '54. We had quite a <sup>big</sup> fire in the mountains in '54.

KH: Which were the nine years that you were in the mountains - from '35 to '44 or later.

JN: I went there in 1940.

KH: Up high?

JN: Yeah up high. Old Leo Byatt used to look after the cattle before



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us then - he was an old man.

KH: The first time you went to Dead Horse Gap hut was 1940?

JN: No I went there before that, it would be about '37. I went out there first in '35 but I didn't go up on to the top - well I wasn't very old. We took cattle up to the Springs and then we took another lot up to the Cootapatamba and let them go and old Leo Byatt and a bloke by the name of Texy Weber, they were looking after them at that time. Then in 1940 - the year of the bush fire - I went up there after the bush fire and all the <sup>Banambra</sup> chaps came in - the Gibsons and the Penders and so forth. I went around with them for about a week shooting their cattle - the ones that had their feet burnt and so forth. They said I'd better go and have a look at my own, so I went up on to the top and the old bloke who was up there got crook and went away so I stopped there - that was 1940. Then in 1946 I got hurt chasing horses - you haven't got that on have you?

KH: Yes.

JN: Yeah with George Day and Reg Williams - do you know Reg Williams from Prospect, the bloke who used to make all the cowboy outfits. He come from Adelaide, Prospect, South Australia - R.A. Williams - it's a wonder you haven't seen his catalogue - you seen Williams boots?

KH: Yes.

JN: Well he's the bloke. He come from up central Australia somewhere, that's where he originated from - he and a blackfellow and a lubra used to tan their own hides and started making boots. His sales got that big he shifted in a bit further and a bit further - he was a huge big success. He was an outback cowboy. He's still alive, he's up in Queensland somewhere now. George Day was over here a couple of years ago, to a camp draught and he stopped here and he was telling me he gets a card from Reg every Xmas. I think he said he was up north somewhere. He sold his business.

KH: So you and him and George Day were in there ...

JN: Yeah and Leo Byatt. I was there then until I got hurt in '46 and then I spent months in the hospital, into Sydney.

KH: How did you get hurt?

JN: Well I went one side of a tree and the horse went the other.

KH: How can you do that? *You must have been split?*

JN: That's what happened.

KH: You fell off?

JN: Yeah I fell off when I hit the tree, sure.

KH: That was up there somewhere.

JN: That was way up the head of the Cascade Plain.

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KH: Near Cascade Hut?

JN: Three mile away from there.

KH: Were you by yourself when that happened?

JN: No I was with these other fellows, we were out there, we caught one horse on a place called Harrisons Ridge. They can only go in and out in the one spot. George Day and old Reg and I stopped three parts of the way up - rocky as can be - a lot of scrub. They've only got the one track in and out and of course old Leo went down and cracked the whip a few times and did a bit of co-ee-ing and up they come. By the time they got up to where we were the mares in <sup>feet</sup> had just about had it. Reg nailed one and George nailed one, I helped them tie them up and I said 'You blokes wait here, I'll follow them and they'll come back'. Horses go round in a circle all the time. You start them here and you could chase them all day, I bet they finish up coming back to you. So I was going to be smart and head them off. I reckoned I could hear somebody behind me - I was going down a hill with only scrub on it about this high - like a fool I turned <sup>round</sup> and looked back behind me and when I looked forward, I was going faster than I <sup>thought</sup> and here's this tree in front. I made my mind up I was going that side and the horse was going the other side. That would have been about half past eleven in the morning. When I come to the sun was just going down. Then after a while I could remember where I was. Things <sup>were</sup> pretty blurry and I could see some horsemen. I <sup>co</sup>-eed a few blokes and I couldn't <sup>co</sup>-ee. I thought how am I going to let them know - well I'll walk across there into that clearing, they'll see me. I couldn't walk, so I crawled across and when I got there ...

KH: Where was your horse?

JN: He'd gone home. When I got there they couldn't see me and I could see them looking back too. I thought of my matches, so I pulled my matches out and lit a fire and back they came. Old Reg Williams picked me up and took me home to the Dead Horse - there was a doctor there, a German doctor. He'd ridden far enough from the Chalet to the Dead Horse Hut so he stopped there. He sat up with me for the rest of the night, the next morning they packed me across to the Chalet. That was early March in 1946.

KH: So you got very bad concussion did you?

JN: I must have been out for hours. I had a bone <sup>sitting</sup> out of my skull, a broken jaw, broken knee. I can remember what was going to happen, but couldn't do much about it.

KH: So that layed you up for a while. Did you go back to the mountains

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after that?

JN: Yes. It messed up all the sport and all sorts of things - never played football or anything like that - knocked off riding at rodeos - that used to be the main sport of the bush boys in those days. We'd be mixed up with those fellows up there in the mountains - 'Rodeo at Cooma this weekend, come on in', *shove the jodhpurs in the bag, polish the boots up, have a weekend out.*

KH: Did you ever go brumby running in order to sell the horses?

JN: I used to sell odd ones, but I never went into it. Some blokes go into it commercially but I never did. I was always told not to touch them anyway.

KH: Not to touch the brumbies - were you?

JN: Yes - oh you get hurt, everybody would tell us. That old Leo Byatt, that's how he went out there first, with Kerry Pierce, that's how he got out there, with Kerry Pierce chasing horses. He was there when they built all those yards. That was pretty early - he told me that they built *those yards* before <sup>he</sup> went to the '14/'18 war - the Dead Horse one and the Cascade ones.

KH: Before the First World War?

JN: Yes.

I don't know what year he went away to the War. I could find out, it would be in the book up here. It was 1919 when he came back and went out after these horses and then he stopped there for quite a while and then he spent a lot of his time over at Kiandra there in the gold mining days. Then he looked after cattle up there for some Monaro people.

KH: This Pierce fellow?

JN: Kerry Pierce and <sup>old</sup> Leo Byatt.

KH: What about these miners at the Tin Mines - you must have gone there in '35/'36 when the mine was in operation.

JN: Yeah those miners were there - there was two cricket teams and an umpire, there was 23.

KH: Really, that many people?

JN: There was 23 there. How long since you sent there?

KH: About '78, four years ago.

JN: They had a row of huts, wait till I explain it. You know where the big mess hut is, I think it's still there isn't it?

KH: It's collapsed now, last winter.

JN: That big mess hut was there, and then back there was a workshop and then back behind that there was a big meat house and then there was a great row of huts - 8 or 9 huts - two-man huts with a boardwalk right along

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the front of them - one of them plank walking things - and that other hut that was out - not the Snowy one, the other one that sits out there, was the managers hut. It was the flash one, it had lining in it. But there was 23 blokes there and they had a cricket pitch cut down the flat there, it wouldn't be a 100 yards away from where the huts are. We went there one Sunday morning. We were just riding about, we'd camped at the Cascade over night - there was dad and I and old Leo Byatt. They said 'we might as well go on out to the Tin Mine and see what's out there'. So we went out there and here's all these fellows down the flat playing cricket.

KH: This was a Sunday was it?

JN: Yes. It was a doctor from Bairdsdale who put his money into that - what was his name? It wasn't Haydon, Haydon was Black Mountain wasn't he.

KH: Was it just the one guy who put his money into that?

JN: This is what they told us yes.

KH: It was quite a lot of money I think, thousands of pounds. I have a figure of nine thousand pounds in my head for some reason.

JN: Then they put the road in - the road wasn't all the way in - from Benambra - it was very temporary. Alan MacKenzie had the stores - MacKenzie's Stores used to run from Melbourne right round through Gippsland right back through <sup>Benambra</sup> and Alan MacKenzie used to take provisions out once a fortnight on a certain day. And those people, if it was too wet, they used to walk and carry their stuff, those miners there. In the '39 fire, well it was after <sup>Christ</sup> Amas, it was after '40 actually when the fire burnt a lot of those huts.

KH: All those workmen's hut at the back must have been burnt then.

JN: Yes they were because the next time I went out, there was just the big hut and workshop or storeroom I think they called it - the old meat house was still there and the manager's hut. There was a blacksmith <sup>s</sup> shop way up in the corner, I think were there's a little bit of a yard.

KH: Down the bottom there, below the yard.

JN: Where the sliprail is beside that old building, was there a slip-rail there beside the building where you went into the hut? You come down a rise and went down a sliprail beside the hut.

KH: The sliprail is gone.

JN: Well there'd be nobody using the paddock so I suppose it would be.

KH: Down to the right there was the yard, near some trenches that Charlie Carter had dug and below that there looks like there was an old fireplace. That could have been a hut there.



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JN: There was a blacksmith shop there, there was a huge anvil, I don't know how they got it in there. I reckoned it might have weighed four hundred-weight. By gee it was a big anvil, it would be as high as this table and that wide.

KH: That was over near the yard somewhere - that hut.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1.

TAPE 2, SIDE 3.

KH: Someone did show me one photo, it was the Golbys - Bob Golby and Snowy. I was talking to the Golbys the other day and they had - there was a photographer up from Melbourne and he'd taken photographs of the Tin Mines back in '49. There was the mess shed, the manager's hut and there were just three - those huts that you mentioned, the worker's cottages - there were three of them standing in those photographs, so the rest must have all got burnt in the '39 fire.

JN: There was a couple of them that hadn't been finished, they didn't have the roofson them.

KH: That's right, one of them didn't have a roof on in one of these photos in '49.

JN: In '49! I thought those things got burnt in that '39/'40 fire. Still I'm not sure, that's a long time ago, that's 40 years ago.

KH: So there were 23 men there, including the manager.

JN: Yeah, two cricket teams and an umpire.

KH: Where was their main mining area?

JN: There's two places there, there's a Little Tin Mine Creek and the Old Tin Mine Creek. The Old Tin Mine Creek runs into - I might be back to front! One runs into the Murray ....

KH: The one with the big falls on it further down, the one that runs into the Murray?

JN: Yes that's right, that's the Big Tin Mine, that's right - that goes into the Murray, then you go in about a straight line up towards the Pilot, it would be, not half a mile, a quarter of a mile, a good half hours walk from the hut. This is where they did most of the mining, there's still pipes and things there where they did the sluicing.

KH: That's in the head of the Ingeegoodbee isn't it?

JN: Yeah I suppose it is - what they call the Little Tin Mine.

KH: Is there a shaft there somewhere - a vertical hole?

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JN: There's a hole that goes into a bank but the bank is only about as high as that ceiling.

KH: Somebody mentioned that they'd actually put a shaft down somewhere.

JN: Well they could have. There's quite a long water race there.

KH: Is there!

JN: That one on the Big Tin Mine, where that great four foot wide channel is dug - old Charlie dug that.

KH: Did he! All the rocks stacked up on the sides?

JN: He dug it nearly a mile, a good four foot wide and it was four foot deep - he dug that there one winter.

KH: What did he do that for?

JN: Trying to find the reef or the lodc where that alluvial was coming out. In below that, in that creek below, in the Big Tin Mine is where they got tin and gold both and nobody could find the reef, so he dug round there.

KH: I see, above the workings.

JN: Yes.

KH: On the hillside, looks like the race line.

JN: Yes that's right, that's what that was dug for.

KH: Charlie made that. Yeah I've walked over that.

JN: There was a lot of talk about it when he did it, cattle were going to get in it and all sorts of things - wasn't deep enough to hurt a beast.

KH: It's partly fallen in now, it's not that deep any more.

JN: It fell in pretty quick. Within two years time the banks rotted. But old Charlie did that by himself. He had a shaft there, it wouldn't be fifty yards from the hut and he had a man and a woman from Bairsdale helping him and they were winding the stuff up on a windlass in a bucket. Charlie was a pretty cunning bloke - he could use that hut while he had a miner's lease. While you've got a miner's lease, you've got control of that area that your lease is on and you've got to work it. So he was having trouble with the cattlemen out there, from down the river.

KH: The Freebodys, yeah! I know most of the stories now I think.

JN: Well Charlie was no mug, so he gets a miner's lease and takes in those huts and nobody could shift him.

KH: Very clever. How long did he have that for?

JN: He had it for a good while - I wouldn't know. You could find out if you went to the mining people, they could tell you, but he had it for a good while.

KH: Did he come there very soon after the miners left?

JN: He was there before the miner's came there. Old Charlie came there

back after the first war.

KH: But that was on the lower Ingeegoodbee wasn't it?

JN: He was down at Ingeegoodbee initially and he selected that, he even had the title to it. And of course Freebodys had run it and used it, so they got rid of Charlie and when he came back he had nowhere to go, he was an Englishman, he told us where he was born and educated - he was a very well educated man. He'd come out here to make his living and selected that bit of ground, <sup>of course</sup> he upset somebody and they put him in gaol. Anyway he got this lease there, this miner's lease, and he used that and he paid a man from Bairsdale, he had a woman with him. They must have been there for twelve months and old Charlie, when his brumbies would come home to the Tin Mine, he'd give them a bit of salt, walk and shut the gate and then ride off to Jindabyne. He'd come back with another months supply of tucker. That bloke walked in there and walked back out again, that bloke who was helping Charlie.

KH: He would be there for 12 months!

JN: He'd be there for 12 months.

KH: With his wife?

JN: Well he had a woman there.

KH: This was before '35/'36?

JN: No that would be back in the 40s.

KH: I'm trying to establish when Charlie went back there, when he first started. I don't think he was there before the miners were there in '35/'36, I think he must have come back there after that.

JN: Well I couldn't tell you, it would be '41 or '42 before I ever saw Charlie Carter.

KH: He was there by himself then?

JN: Oh yes. Well he wasn't stopping there, he came up from Ingeegoodbee. We were mustering, a bloke by the name of Jack Cox, <sup>give</sup> he was another Gippslander, was working for us at the time and he went out to Goldsworthy's a hand. They had the run of the Tin Mine then. I went out with him for a couple of days and old Charlie turned up. We wondered why Charlie had turned up because it was getting cold, coming towards winter. In a couple of days time, or the day we left we found out because Freebodys had come in to muster, they'd come in to Ingeegoodbee and they'd kicked Charlie out of the hut down there, so Charlie came up to the Tin Mine, but of course the huts were full up there but there was plenty of huts. Charlie stopped up there and the Freebodys came up there the day we left, so Charlie packed up and went again, we don't know where he went then, he headed out towards the Lookout.

KH: So the flooding continued?

JN: Yeah, that would have to be '41 or '42 - it would have to be '42.

KH: Perhaps soon after that he got this Miner's ~~Right~~ <sup>Right</sup> so that he could stay there.

JN: Yes, well Goldsworthys had that run out there - as I say Freebodys run everywhere out there at one time. A bit like us years ago - we had from Geehi to the coast. Well of course, Freebodys was a bit the same and when somebody jumped a claim on them, well evidently they didn't like it. Old Charlie, he died out there - I suppose you've heard that.

KH: Yes, <sup>people</sup> told me about that.

JN: He died there at the Tin Mine huts.

KH: Yes I've got a copy of his book, his cures for cancer and cures for the ills of the world.

JN: Yes we had one too, but our hut got burnt and the books got burnt with it.

KH: Up at Tom Groggin?

JN: Yes. We had a lot of things there that got burnt. Of course they got burnt during the War years too.

KH: Anything special that you remember about Charlie?

JN: No. I've got no word against Charlie, he was a gentleman as far as I was concerned. If you went out there - well you wouldn't see him for twelve months - if you come across him you'd track him somewhere where he'd been walking around. He'd usually have a rough soled boot on one foot or a hob-nailed boot on one foot and an old <sup>m</sup>gumboot on the other curing his cancer or something. You'd ride up to him and he always say 'Good <sup>day</sup>, men' or 'Good <sup>day</sup>, gentlemen' and talk away quite nice and he'd always edge round so he could get a look at the brand on your horse. If you pulled up and he was on that side of you he'd gradually talk and he'd finish up on the other side. Once he saw the brand on your horse, you'd see his face light up - he'd recognise who you were. That's how he used to pick us, who we were.

KH: Whether you were a Freebody, a Pendergast, or a Nankervis!

JN: Yes, everybody used to brand their horses in those days, just like your cattle, everybody branded their cattle. They don't now, they just put an earmark or a tag on them. As soon as he came <sup>a</sup>round and saw a big 'N' on their shoulder <sup>it'd be "Oh there's cattle over at the Big Tin Mine - ah I don't think they'd you"</sup> he knew who everybody's cattle was and where they were and everything. He'd never ever tell you a lie or anything. Somebody reckoned he was a lying old so-and-so.

KH: Most people speak very well of Charlie Carter, very well.

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JN: Oh yeah, I've got nothing against him.

KH: It's just that he didn't get on with the Freebodys, that seemed to be the main problem.

JN: It was the Freebodys that didn't like him in there.

KH: That would lead to suggest that maybe the Freebodys were up to no good some of the time?

JN: Probably.

KH: If they didn't want somebody in there.

JN: Probably.

KH: Charlie would certainly be aware of what was going on wouldn't he?

JN: Oh yeah.

KH: So he would have had the miner's right there until the time he died probably.

JN: Oh yes he had a miner's lease there - he had two or three. See if you ever take a miner's lease and don't work it, somebody can jump the claim on you, you're supposed to work it. Old Charlie, he might have done that, I don't know. Nobody worked that - once that doctor from Bairsdale - I'll think of that blokes name directly - once they left there nobody stopped there, old Charlie used to mess around there, he used to get a little bit of tin, he'd have a little bit of gold. He used to show us what he'd have.

KH: Oh did he, would get some.

JN: Oh yeah, only little bits, those little glass phials about this big, he'd have a few specks of gold or perhaps one of those little canvas bags full of tin that he'd got somewhere. He'd never tell you where he got them, but he'd always have these things. He'd have different types of gold, which I never knew, I thought gold was just gold, it was all the same. A chap Tom Bennets, the bloke that built that Cascade hut, he was with me one day and I was telling him about the different colours of this gold. Of course he's a miner, old Tom, and he said 'I wished I'd had seen it, I could have told you where it come from'. This is why old Carter wouldn't show him I suppose. Those miners evidently know what gold it is, where it come\$from, how long it's been there - I wouldn't - it's just gold to me. He had some there that was nearly black and I said 'Where did you get it', 'Oh it's alluvial', well I could see it was alluvial myself, all he had was alluvial, but he wouldn't tell you where he got it from. There was gold and tin there alright but as I say that old doctor, he was there for a good while and it cost him a lot of money and he went out broke.

KH: Did they get any gold or tin?

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JN: Yeah they did get some.

KH: They were mainly working the Little Tin Mine Creek?

JN: Yes.

KH: With picks and shovels mostly?

JN: Oh yeah.

KH: Cradles and hand-panning, sluicing boxes!

JN: Yes. There was sluice boxes there and there's still a pipe, a 10 or 12 inch <sup>steel</sup> pipe still there unless somebody picked it up and brought it down to the hut.

KH: Was there a nozzle?

JN: No. I'd say they were just running this out into a sluice box probably. It's a long water race they've got there. That's only a little creek there where they were mining.

KH: Which way does the water race head, towards the Pilot?

JN: Yes.

KH: It gets water up higher?

JN: I've never followed it out to see where it went.

KH: I've never explored that. So the old workings on the Big Tin Mine Creek, below Charlie Carter's ditch, that would date back to the turn of the century I think.

JN: One of those old McGregors - Dan McGregor I think he was - he found a big mine in there, a big reef in there about the Lookout and he also told us about the gold in the Tin Mine, but he'd been in hospital for years and years and he had this sample of gold in a chunk of quartz, it must have weighed something like 90 ounces to the ton. So they took him out, after he'd been in hospital a few years and carted him about out there on a stretcher, looking for this lost reef.

KH: Really?

JN: Yes, that was back in about 1940

(Interruption - visitor)

KH: Sometimes I have to go back and see people a second or third time. I didn't know about that event. He told me about the time that his hair turned grey over night, when he fell over this - he was skiing - and he fell over this cliff of rocks. He woke up next morning and all his hair had gone grey.

JN: I was just trying to think who's hut that is. Who's hut is that on the right hand side coming up the road from <sup>Charlottes</sup> Pass.



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KH: Seamans hut?  
 JN: No there's a tin one down on the Snowy River.  
 KH: On Spencers Creek? Not Betts Camp? Adams hut just above Spencers Creek?  
 JN: No this is above <sup>Charlottes</sup> Pass - Foremans hut. That's were the aeroplane crashed in there. It was in the winter time and they said it would only deteriorate and so forth, how can we get it out? George said 'I'll get it out for you' and he took the dogs over and dragged it out.  
 KH: The people were killed?  
 JN: No I don't think so, he just crash landed there in the snow. He took the dogs over and by gee it's steep from there up on to the road. Well he dragged it up, I don't know how many dogs he had. He's got a photo of it somewhere, it's a wonder you didn't see it.  
 KH: Not in the <sup>album</sup> I saw.  
 JN: He had a photo of these dogs hooked on - flat to the board - half way up with their belly in the snow.  
 KH: It's hard enough walking up that hill without a pack.  
 JN: They're terribly strong those dogs.  
 KH: I think he had up to a dozen, between eight and dozen.  
 Did you mainly have cattle up there or sheep?  
 JN: All cattle, we never had sheep at all.  
 KH: Did you do much buying over Jindabyne way?  
 JN: Not in those days, no, we bred all our own. We used to run about 3,000 head.  
 KH: Mostly down at Tom Groggin?  
 JN: We used to use all the leases, we used to go nearly out to Blue Lake.  
 KH: All that high country, this is in the 30s?  
 JN: Up until they started to take them. They took Townsend and Wilkinsons Valley and Kossie and Cootabatamba Valley, the Ramshead and those places. They took them in - about the time they took all the high country up on the top. Our cattle liked the scenery, the higher they get the better they like it. It was above 6,000 feet I think.  
 KH: So you could use some of the lower Ramshead Range but not up high.  
 JN: When Dave Mackay was ranger well it didn't matter much, as long as you knew where they were and wasn't overstocked. Then we got a little bloke from Adaminaby.  
 KH: Not Frank West?  
 JN: No, we had him to finish with.  
 KH: Not Tom Taylor?

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JN: We had Tom Taylor too.  
 KH: Not Jim Pattinson?  
 JN: No, we didn't have him - a little Chinese bloke - Russell.  
 KH: One of the Russells. I only know Leo Russell.  
 JN: He's a half Chinese bloke - it will come - we were always in trouble with that bloke. We used to have old Tom Taylor and Westy - Westy nearly used to live with us.  
 KH: It must have been hard for those blokes - they were your mates in a sort of a way.  
 JN: They were all mates in the bush, you've got to be.  
 KH: On one hand they had to work for their bosses.  
 JN: You don't mind them reporting you if you're doing something wrong and you're really out of bounds, but just for little minor things, well....  
 KH: So by the time the 50s came round you would have been only down towards Cascades wouldn't you?  
 JN: Oh yes, we were out for a few years, about four years. They kicked up a hell of a stink and they had roads all over the place and cattle used to get on the roads, they'd be chasing them and they'd get in behind them and blow the horns and away they'd go - we were in a lot of trouble. So we left for about four years - I think it was 1954 when we went back. We went back for 2 years - had two Coulson boys working for us - Huey and Ken Coulson. The Dead Horse hut was still there then - I don't know what year they burnt that down - some of those park blokes burnt it down to get rid of Frank West - now that sounds good.  
 KH: That does sound good.  
 JN: They tried to get him out of the Dead Horse hut and he wouldn't go.  
 KH: He was virtually living there year round was he?  
 JN: Well he was a ranger and there was still mountain leases then and he was a ranger for the Lands Department. And then they had rangers from the National Park and they didn't like Frank and they didn't want him at Dead Horse. One bloke said, 'Well we'll get him out' and it wasn't long before the chap that used to cart cattle from here to Cooma came back and said to me 'There's only ashes at the Dead Horse, she's smouldering'. <sup>Of course</sup>  
 Frank was down in Groggin.  
 KH: Did you ever ski?  
 JN: I had every opportunity. George Day used to say 'I'll meet you at the top of the Coota atamba Spur first week in September, be my guest for a month or fortnight'. My brother skied a bit, he used to go up there.

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KH: What about your father or your parents?  
 JN: No, they didn't have time.  
 KH: What was your father's name?  
 JN: Harry Nankervis.  
 KH: Your mother?  
 JN: She was Effie.  
 KH: Were they the first ones to take stock up to the mountains?  
 JN: Oh no. My father bought Geehi off <sup>Tyre 11/3</sup> about 19 ... Errol Scammel can tell you the exact time they bought it because he was working for them then and I was only about 10 years old. He'd tell you the exact year they bought Geehi and Groggin. I think it was 1935 or '36. They went up to New England Ranges and bought a lot of Hereford cattle. Of course they weren't used to running mountains or used to running streams, they trucked them down here, took a week or so to get them down, then they set off to drive them. Well nobody was used to the mountains and the cattle weren't used to the mountains and instead of them doing from Khancoban to Geehi they only got about a third of the way the first day. All new chums and all the packs fell off the horses, the horses all got sore backs and they all lost their whips and spurs. Then they got half way down the Geehi wall and were there for two days, couldn't get them any further, they had a lot of trouble. They lost a pack horse, he was gone for six months with the packs still on. That was about '36 or '37 when they first took a lot of cattle up on to Kosciusko  
 KH: But they'd gone to the Dead Horse gap before then?  
 JN: No, this is when they first started up in the mountains. They bought Goggin and then they'd had it for twelve months or something like this, found out that during the summer they couldn't handle the cattle there, there was no improvements, just kangaroo grass, natural grasses and they had to go up high. I'm not sure who took them up there in the first place and showed them. But they set off with these cattle by themselves with no bush men or anything with them and they had hells own trouble.  
 KH: This is your ...  
 JN: Relatives, father, uncles - a lot of people, a lot of cattle and a lot of horses and they lost the lot I think.  
 KH: They just couldn't find them again?  
 JN: Oh no, they'd turn round and come back home, come back down to Groggin - they lost them, but didn't lose them for good.  
 KH: Any golden rules about when they went up to the mountains and when they had to come down again.  
 JN: In the latter years yes. When we ran a lot of cattle there we

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used to keep bullocks there until they were three year old. They used to just live underneath the snow line. If you wanted to find your bullocks in the spring time, early spring, you'd go right up under the snow and that's where you'd find them. The grass is dead and as rotten looking as can be, they'd be following the snow up. The bullocks would nearly all go up themselves, so would the cows if they weren't in the paddock. We used to try and keep them behind, so we could mark the calves and things like this. The bullocks would go up, but when they started with the rangers on you weren't allowed there until the 1st December, you had to notify the ranger, give him a fortnights notice that you were going to be at the Coota Patamba Lake at 4 o'clock on Monday the 20th and he's going to be there and count the cattle on. Well if the river gets in flood and you can't get up and have a lot of trouble and you don't get there, well he reports you because you didn't come. Well he'd have to ride from somewhere to get there. Then we had to be off by the end of April, so that was five months which was plenty long enough. We'd go up before <sup>Christ</sup> Xmas and fix up our fences, take the dry cattle up, put out a bit of salt and then we'd go up after Xmas and pack all our own summer supplies, then sit down and do nothing then.

KH: Did you ever stay at Seamans Hut?

JN: Only one night when I got caught in a storm. I tied my horse up to that pole outside - two of us there was - nothing to eat, no firewood, there was nothing there - it was the end of January. We'd been around the back <sup>of</sup> Townsend and it wasn't very late and we were heading home and this storm came along - cripes it blew, rained - they weren't hail stones they were chunks of ice. So we hell for leather across to Seamans Hut. It put holes in our oilskin coats. We put our oilskin coats over the horses when we tied them up and they had holes all through them. Then it got dark and there was only the two of us at the hut - back at Dead Horse there was no one there wondering where we were, so we stopped the night. But we were up and gone early next morning - we was hungry. There was nothing in the hut at all there, there wasn't enough to even light a fire.

KH: Were there any other events, when you came off your horse, when you injured yourself very badly, were there any more things like that that you can remember, that happened to other people or were perished.

JN: Most of them get killed - that's what happens to most people. People would get lost and they'd get word to us that they were lost, last seen at such and such a place, would you go and have a look. We did it for a few years, we'd go and look alright - it was usually spring time when the rivers were in flood or winter time when there was too much snow to get where the people were - we used to find them but they'd be 10-15 mile from where



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they'd tell you they were, but you get nothing for it - I mean you don't mind going and looking for them because you might be in the same spot yourself.

People would go wandering about up there - well once the snow season starts they ought to be left there I reckon. Somebody else is going to lose their life looking for them and this is what goes on.

KH: Did you ever go up <sup>the</sup> Hannells Spur?

JN: Yes we used it for years - we took stock up there. We'd go up and clear it every year before we took our cattle up - even if it took us a week we'd go and clear the track, so you could ride it comfortably and the cattle could walk <sup>a</sup>round. If a great big mountain ash tree fell over you'd have to cut a track round the end of it and all these sorts of things. We'd spend a day, three or four of us go from Geehi, right up to <sup>Byatts</sup> Camp, just on the timber line, over Abbots Range from Townsend - well you had to go up there before you could boil your billy because there was no water. We'd clear the track and set off the next day or the day after with these cattle - it was a big day. Get away at daylight. We used to clear the Coota <sup>p</sup>atamba spur every year. We used to take a draught horse or a horse with a collar and chain ...

KH: From Dead Horse?

JN: No I used to go from Groggin, go up the Coota <sup>p</sup>atamba <sup>S</sup>pur, that's where we used to take most of our cattle.

KH: I'd never heard of that been used.

JN: That was the main route. It follows Leather Barrel up on the left hand side. Coota <sup>p</sup>atamba <sup>S</sup>pur runs from near the top of Kossie right to the Murray River without crossing water. You go out to Groggin, up through Rileys, that's the Coota <sup>p</sup>atamba <sup>S</sup>pur you cross before you go down into the Leather Barrel ..

KH: So the road follows that track part of the way now?

JN: Not much.

KH: Was there much of Riley's hut still there when you were first up there?

JN: It was all there.

KH: Was Riley still around?

JN: No, he died in '24 I think. They've got all his history wrong, I've read it a couple of times. This old Leo Byatt worked for us for years and he was out there somewhere about when old Riley got crook. It was the McGuinness' - there was a Butler in it - but it was the McGuinness' that mainly carried him out. They said he died at Surveyors Creek, well according to them he died at <sup>Hermit's</sup> Creek - who else is going to know.

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KH: Is that in Tom Mitchell's book, I've read that story too.

JN: I haven't read Tom Mitchell's book.

KH: I read that story somewhere. So who do you reckon was the man from Snowy River?

JN: I can't say that you could pin anybody - it could have been anybody at all. I've spoken to old people when I was a kid that knew Banjo Patterson and he used to come up out here, quite a bit and out across the river over here - a lot of people knew him. They reckon he'd just sit down and write a poem at a camp fire of a night - it was no trouble - it wouldn't take <sup>him</sup> a month or 12 months to put a poem together - he'd just sit down and write a poem. We had a chap out there working for us, we'd have 2 or 3 wet days and he'd get a bit bored with nothing to do and he'd sit down and write a poem - make a hell of a good job of it too - about the local country and things up there.

KH: Have you got any of those poems?

JN: No I haven't, as I said, most of these things got burnt.

KH: There's very few poems like that around.

JN: He was a Goldsworthy this bloke.

KH: Was there anybody who made up any songs?

JN: No not that I can think of.

KH: What did you do for entertainment then around the fire, mostly tell yarns, have goes at each other or ...

JN: Well we used to do all our own work, everything, saddle work, plaited our own whips, ropes, we used to make all sorts of things, woodwork.

KH: So even if you were waiting, or if it was wet you'd have plenty of things to do?

JN: Oh yeah, you'd never sit down there twiddling your fingers and wondering what to do. You'd sit there sometimes and burn half the poker away poking at the fire and say that's no good.

KH: Did you grow any vegetables or anything up at Tom Groggin, but not up at Dead Horse?

JN: Yeah they'd grow there, carrots and anything under the ground.

KH: But you did grow anything at Dead Horse?

JN: Yes. Cabbages would grow there if you could keep the dogs from piddling on them - never had any netting or anything to fence them in with. We had a garden there for a while. At Groggin we always had a good garden.

KH: Did you see many emus in your time up there?

JN: Not up high there wasn't. It was very seldom you'd see an emu.

KH: What about towards the Tin Mines?

JN: There was a few out there, they weren't many though, not like



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there has been the last 10 years, they're everywhere.

MRS N: [Looking at paper] ... I knew it mentioned something about a ranger, but there's no name.

JN: Harry Russell it was.

MRS N: Oh damn.

KH: That's how it slips out isn't it.

MRS N: I know the Russ<sup>e</sup>lls as well as anything, it's just that I've been away from over there for so long I've lost touch with a lot of those names.

When you hear them often you remember them.

KH: Do you know Leo Russell?

MRS N: I didn't know him, I only know of him.

[Looking at photos]

JN: Well they cut that bark off the horses - they had two slabs, one each side of the pack saddle and they stood on the boards on top of the pack saddle and cut round the top and then cut round the bottom.

KH: That would give them a length that is enough - the full length in one go.

JN: They're eight foot sheets or eight foot six.

KH: They wouldn't have to do many trips with the horses like that.

JN: It would be pretty heavy.

KH: Yes it would be wet wouldn't it?

JN: Yes that's green.

KH: Did they put it on here green, they didn't cure it in any way?

JN: No just put it on. This is why these great slabs are on there to keep it flat. It buckles up in ridges.

KH: That was quite good for quite a few years?

JN: Oh for years - snow proof and everything.

KH: Gee they're big - if you get a tree with a big girth on it, you'd get an enormous sheet out of one tree wouldn't you.

JN: But he's a big horse.

KH: That would be 5 foot wide that sheet? Six feet may be more.

Some of these sheets on here are more than half the length of the hut. Three on one side and three on the other - six big sheets - three trips with two horses. And the trees are still standing?

JN: They were the last time I was there.

KH: Would that kill them.

JN: Oh yes.

KH: It would be like ring-barking wouldn't it?

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KH: And the trees are just behind the hut? [Cascado Hut]

JN: 200 yards, might be 300 yards - towards the Tin Mine - well off the road, on the old bridle track they were, right beside the bridle track.

KH: That's Rob Benson, brother of Don Benson.

JN: Those two chaps are Tom Bennetts and Tiny Macnamara.

END SIDE 3, TAPE 2.

CONCLUSION.