

Pat Freebody

**PAT FREEBODY**

**INTERVIEWED BY KLAUS HUENEKE**

**5 July 1984**

Pat comes from an old Monaro family and lives near Cooma. His father was quite involved with Charles Carter and I think Pat knows a fair bit about the part of the mountains between Thredbo and the lower Snowy River.

PF: As far as I know Charles Carter came to that area about 1898, as near as I know it was around that time.

KH: As early as that.

PF: But quite a young man at the time, obviously.

KH: Did he come from Melbourne do you know?

PF: I think somewhere in the Ballarat/*Clunes*, somewhere north west of Melbourne.

KH: Was he ever married?

PF: No he never married.

KH: Did he go to the mountains for a reason, like some guys become hermits because they're jilted for some reason.

PF: Well if there ever was a reason he didn't reveal to anyone I don't think. My father and uncle <sup>told me</sup> that they lived in peaceful coexistence with him for about 4 or 5 years, but then he became a pretty self-centred type, had his own ideas about different things. He had an obsession for catching wild horses. What he done with those, sew their head in a bag, leave their nose out and their eyes covered up and leave them loose in the paddocks. Of course they'd walk to the heads of the river and fall in the river, that's where they'd ~~stay~~. So that was their first dispute with him, *it was over that.*

KH: What did he do, put a canvas bag over their head - they couldn't feed?

PF: They could feed, there was a hole around their mouth, but they couldn't see, the thing was tied tightly around their necks. He'd have as many as 15 or 20 like that. He'd set trap yards - stock would come through and they'd be salt hungry, they'd go to salt, so he'd put salt, they'd follow the smell of the salt, get trapped in the yards. He'd

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catch up to 15 or 20 like that. Of course they'd walk down looking for water, fall in the river, couldn't get out. My father told me once that there was 7 drowned in the river, the Ingegoodbee River.

KH: This is the old site, what is known as Freebody's hut side?

PF: Well no, it was on this side of the river, the left bank of the river where they lived at that <sup>time</sup> where the Freebody brothers lived. The old hut on the other side, what they call Freebody's hut these days, Carter lived there, at that time. Him and a mate of his, I think a fellow named Bryant from Delegate. So they complained that they didn't like polluted water where they were picking up the water for their hut, where they were living. He resented any intrusion at all like that, he had a self-centred way, that's the way he wanted it done, that's the way it would be done.

KH: Was he squatting there or was he on their land?

PF: He had some rights there, he had a lease I think. Actually where the hut was I think was on freehold land, he had a small freehold block where the old hut was, he had title to that at the time. So eventually - well I'm a little bit before myself. My father and uncle - if you've got a bit of time ...

KH: Yes, plenty of time.

PF: Well you see, in those years, in the 1890s, there was very very severe depression in the country and employment was almost nil, it was starvation level for people those days, it was very very hard times. The only source of income was probably snaring possums, possum skins was a reasonable price in the winter time.

KH: There was a bad drought about that time.

PF: It was very bad, economic conditions and pastoral conditions were shocking those years. So they went further afield from the local area around Dalgety, where they were reared, they went further afield out near the Victorian border where there was ample forest and plenty of wild possums, *and eked out an existence there.*

KH: This is your father?

PF: Father and uncle, Jack and Paddy - my father was Paddy.

KH: What does Paddy stand for?

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PF: Patrick - I'm the same myself. So they went further afield out there to these areas where there was plenty of possums. Not many people ventured that far from town. They lived in this old hut, I think it was originally owned by Rawsons, they were the original settlers there, but had left the place, abandoned it.

KH: How far up is this from the junction of <sup>the</sup> Ingegoodbee and the Snowy?

PF: It's a fair way. It's almost inside of what they call Freebody's hut now, on the opposite side of the river.

KH: Did you find the old site?

PF: I couldn't find it, I did see it once when I was a boy of about 15, but it was barely visible then. Any signs of the old chimney was all that was there, it was burnt in fires years ago. So the leases around them was owned by either McKay brothers from Delegate or O'Rourkes from over the other side, on the side towards the Black Mountain.

KH: Currago way?

PF: No, on the other side in Victoria.

KH: Oh, those O'Rourkes.

PF: Yes, they were similar people, they might have been related I think, similar with pastoral interests. So they picked up a job of minding cattle, mustering in the summer time, in the winter time they chased the possum again, that was a way of existence then.

KH: There was no Barry Way then, so they had bridle tracks?

PF: The last of the bridle track commenced at Ingebyra, have you been there?

KH: Yes.

PF: If anyone ever showed you the old Ingebyra school, you emerge there, coming from the mountains.

KH: You come out on the Jacobs River where it almost comes on to the Snowy?

PF: Yes.

KH: There's a ridge there called Jacobs Ladder.

PF: Yes, that was the old road. Well that was after the turn of the century, I heard my father say it was after peace was declared after the Boer War. Things started to improve a little bit, as they usually do

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after a war, there's usually a little bit of an upsurge in the economy. In those days not as dramatic as last time, but in a small young country, yes, it was noticeable.

KH: This is 1903.

PF: I think 1901 the war actually ended - I'm open to correction on that. They started to take a few cattle as payment for their work, trying to build up a bit of a herd of their own, not in a big way. But this dispute with Carter started round about 1905, 1906. They wasn't on speaking terms, mostly over the treatment of horses. He was an eccentric man, he'd do the most unusual things, no one could forecast what he'd do next.

KH: Was he dangerous?

PF: A lot of people insisted he was. He lived there as a hermit, in those years, he never really went short of beef, they said he always had beef. There was all sorts of stories about how he got it.

KH: What sort of stories?

PF: ... see something running that he liked, yes, with a rifle. Oh there had been different cattle had been found shot and part of the meat taken - who done it, of course, no one knew, he was a prime suspect.

KH: There would have been others in the hills, ekeing out an existence in a similar way?

PF: Not many that stayed there for any length of time. There was fellows passing through, some would stay there a month or two looking for possums from the Omeo side or from the other part of Victoria, from around Black Mountain. Some would drift in there for a while and then go again, so of course, it's open to conjecture as to who was in it. But Charlie was a prime suspect, by a lot of them. There was a fellow named Dave Spencer, who was with me father and Jack. He was looking after cattle for McGuffickes at Moonbah, and Alf Bale was working with them, I think he was with O'Rourkes at the time, he was a friend of my father's. All these four fellows lived there at the old hut on the left bank of the Ingegoodbee River. In the summer of 1907-1908, I think it was, there was a horse - they used to have their horses running in a little paddock there. Wild stallions used to jump the fence and come in and attack the horses. The geldings would chase them down to the hut. You'd have to go out sometimes in the night to shut them up. Every wild stallion was a prime target for a rifle because he was a menace to

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anyone with tame horses there. Well this fellow one day, Dave Spencer, went and shot a horse. It was really harassing their horses. Charlie Carter and a fellow named Bryant from Delegate, rode on and found the horse. He said 'He's a good sort of a horse, what I should do is go home and get a brand to put on him and claim him for mine, and say Dave Spencer shot him'. Of course that's an inditable offence that could have landed you inside Goulburn for six months or twelve months perhaps in those days. So someone tipped them off that this was what he was likely to do, so they burnt it, put a fire over the horse. The next time they had a troublesome stallion, a pretty good type of a horse, it was breaking into the paddock and chasing their horses. So my uncle, he went around and waited for him on the way out, he'd always go out about daylight, out of the paddock, and shot him on the way out. So ready for all emergencies, he skinned the horse and took the skin, but Carter still claimed the horse was his, yet he had no skin, no brand on it, the skin was there, but with no brand. So they hid the skin in the bush. The next thing the police arrive and say 'You shot Carter's horse, you're charged with shooting him'. Alf Bale and Dave Spencer stayed behind and .... my father and uncle to be charged with the shooting of this horse that belonged to Charles Carter. My father said they were out about 2 miles away from the hut when the police and Charlie Carter arrived. There was one cartridge left for that rifle on the morning my uncle shot the horse, just one, there was none left at the hut, not a one. They went to the hut and it was locked up, there was a chain around the door, no one could get in apparently without coming down a chimney. He said as soon as he looked up, the rifle, an old Winchester 32.20 was on the wall with the hammer back. He said there's something wrong here, someone has handled that rifle since I touched it, I'd never leave it that way. The police said ... there would be cartridges in it, you say you've got none. He goes over and opens the breach for the lever and out flew a cartridge, it flew in under a bench. He said 'There you are, you've got cartridges!'. Right, what could you do, they'd been planted in the rifle. But they made one mistake, Dave Spencer picked up the cartridge and took a look at the end of it, it was a 25.20 instead of a 32.20, they'd put the wrong calibre in it. They'll go off all right, but they'll burst the case, they are seven thou smaller. So that was a mistake on someone trying for a conviction, and that was very very strong evidence that someone had

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planted them there. They said 'Oh no, we've understand fire arms all our life, we'd never put a too smaller cartridge in, never'. Then they said the horse was a black. There was one bit of skin left that Jack, when he was skinning it, left a bit of skin on, right at the back where the *crupper* staple would be, there was a black streak on him and they said he must be a black. Instead of that he was yellow bay when they produced the skin. Well the case was thrown out of court. They were acquitted, that he was a wild horse. My father was particularly a good friend of a lawyer in Cooma named Felix Mitchell, a pretty clever lawyer, and he had a brother, a barrister. He said 'I'll bring me brother up to defend the case, he'll have more weight than I will'. So between the two of them, Felix Mitchell and his brother Mark, they defended them and they were acquitted, walked out with a clean sheet.

KH: So Carter must have charged them?

PF: Carter charged them with shooting his horse.

KH: How would Carter get that sort of money to pay for a court case?

PF: It was quite considerable and this is part of the story. He did have a few stock, he used to get a few horses and sell them, he used to accumulate a bit of money that way. I think he used to have a few stock of his own at that stage. But it was quite costly. Then he started another action, he went to lawyers over it and he claimed that this judge had been bribed and he took action against this particular judge for rejecting his case. Of course, butting your head against a stone wall, he expended all his money. He was declared bankrupt and shot through, he went to Queensland.

KH: Oh, he did go to Queensland?

PF: Well at least everyone said he went to Queensland, and he returned only in the '30s to say that he'd been in Queensland and no one had any reason to doubt where he went. But he cleared out and left a lot of debts. So the old block of ground, my father and uncle bought it from the official receiver you see, because it's assets and it was up for sale to whoever would like to buy it. That's what he held a grudge against them, for taking over his land. But they bought it from the official receiver, technically it wasn't his to sell. But he carried on the grudge for many years, and many fellows seen him in the bush, got tangled with him - there's not many of them alive today that could tell

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you anything about him much. Of course, you see, that's a long while ago. He returned in 1933 I think, ironically, almost like the story of Butch Cassidy, he came back driving a T-Ford.

KH: So he'd made some money somewhere.

PF: The stories are that he went to Queensland to some of those mining towns and he might have got a few quid that way, but who knows. But he had one thing in mind, digging about the bush looking for gold, he didn't want pennyweights of gold, he wanted hundredweights of it, he wanted to take on the government, he wanted to take on this judge - I think the judge was actually dead at that time. He was butting his head against a stone wall. But in the meantime he sort of self-started himself as a doctor, he imagined he was a doctor. He got even to Macquarie Street and rented premises and got a plate made. Of course he never got any further. Then he came home and he'd write to the paper to say how many times he cured himself of cancer. He claimed he could cure cancer. But there was two things beat him, catarrh and tuberculosis, he couldn't cure that. He said 'As far as cancer was concerned', he used to say, 'it's a funny thing some old woman didn't discover that'. But he wrote a book then, got it published...

KH: That was after he came back he got that published.

PF: Yes.

KH: I've got a copy of that book.

PF: Have you. Well it's a weird thing.

KH: On all of the solutions to the problems of the world.

PF: Oh yes, that's right. He was a fanatical reader. My father said that he'd sit up reading half the night, he'd spend hours reading with an old kerosene lamp. He said he wasn't a fellow that was well educated, but most of his books were extracts of others, he said mostly it was copies from someone else. He said he had a book written by every ratbag that was going to cure the economy - you know what economists are like, there's not hardly two of them that have the same argument about how to cure a country.

KH: Did he have all those books ... when he came back.

PF: He had a lot when he came back, he had quite a few before he left I understand.

KH: Where did he go when he came back, at first?

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PF: At first he went to - south of Moonbah, at a place called Grosses Plain, he went to live there with an old bloke named Charlie Finn.

KH: I've heard of Charlie Finn.

PF: Well the ~~Crows~~ knew him in the day, he was quite a character. I think he wouldn't hear a funny story about the area without mentioning Charlie Finn.

KH: I don't know what I remember about him.

PF: You'd probably hear plenty. Well they lived together there for quite a few years, it must have been I suppose, from about '33, '34, until Charlie died about 1939, Charlie Finn. At that time there was a mining syndicate operating, or looking for tin at the old Tin mine, they built some huts there. I don't know, the war broke out and things went wrong, and they abandoned them, the mining company just left them, and Charlie moves out and moves in to the mining camp. There he went digging around trying to find his hundredweights of gold that he never found. I suppose from about 1940 until he died, about early '50s.

KH: 1952 I think it was.

PF: It must have been the summer of '52/'53, November that's right, it would be '52. That's where the era ended. I understand he was a fellow in his 80s, no one was quite sure how old I think.

KH: He'd have to be in his late 70s at least because if he came to the mountains in 1898, he was probably in his early 20s by then.

PF: He was pretty young then I understand, he could have been 20-22.

KH: So he was probably born in the late 1870s or something like that, so he would have just been on 80 or so in 1952.

PF: Well Arthur Smart was a friend of my father and uncle. He come one time - I think this is going way back to the earlier days, around 1904, 1905, or 1907, whenever it was. He said he told him that one day, he said "I seen Jack Freebody riding down the Omeo track and I put the rifle on him, but he said, "he rode round a bit of scrub, I wasn't sure of a shot from there."

KH: That's what he said, because I've heard so many different versions of that.

PF: That's the version - of course they only repeat what Arthur Smart came and told them. Arthur was a friend of theirs. He said be on the guard, I think he's dangerous.

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KH: This is what Charlie Carter said to Arthur Smart?

PF: Yes.

KH: It wasn't that there were both Jack and Paddy there, and that he had one of them in the sights of his rifle and he wouldn't shoot him because the other one would get away to tell the police.

PF: Well I never heard that before until I read it in that book. These stories, they don't lose anything in the retelling. As I say I've heard this story told when I was about 16. My father told it, sat down and talked seriously to a fellow from over on the Corryong side, a fellow named Don Benson.

KH: You knew Don Benson?

PF: I knew him well, he's dead now, been dead quite a few years.

KH: His wife is still alive I think.

PF: Is she, I never knew.

KH: He has been of considerable interest to me because he had a lot to do with the building of the river stone huts, on the Geehi.

PF: Yes, he was on the Geehi for years.

KH: And I think he was also involved in the building of Cascade hut.

PF: That was his brother I think, Rob. I'm not sure, Rob could still be alive, I'm not sure of that. But I remember Don was the fellow my father talked to about it for a long time, one day. One rainy day when we were doing nothing else and I listened the story out, I was about 16 or 17 at the time. But the old hut there that they call Freebodys hut now, that's not the old hut they lived in. The remains of it is along side of it, it went up in smoke, on the 21 December 1944, I was the one that done it.

KH: Did you!

PF: There's a photo there.

KH: That's 1949 when that was taken.

PF: That was put up as a saddlery shed, that shed. The old hut is down here, there's the remains of an old fire place there.

KH: I've never been to that site. There's a new hut there now, and I think the Park want to pull it down, or they already have.

PF: They probably have pulled it down, I don't know what's going on.

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KH: Would there be any fruit trees around where Carter had his hut?

PF: I don't think so, I don't think there's any - that's the Tin mine huts where he lived.

KH: Yeah later on, but I mean in the early days.

PF: No, most of those sort of things all vanished in bush fires that went through there. There were fires nearly every other year there.

KH: Fences too.

PF: There was a few wooden fences put up but they didn't last. They only survived one or two years and the fires would take them.

KH: Do you know what happened to Carter's old T-Model Ford?

PF: I'm not quite sure what happened to that, I think it stayed around Charlie Finn's old place until Charlie died, and it stayed there and sunk into the ground. Some of the souvenir hunters, in the war days, in the first post war days, I think it disappeared by pieces.

KH: Whose property was Finn's place on, whose property is it now?

PF: At the present time I think Westons own it, I think Eric Weston and Sons own it.

KH: Not the Golbys?

PF: No not the Golbys, I'm not sure. Max Woodhouse, a mate of mine, owned it at one time and I think he sold all that end to Weston, so it would be included in the sale, so I think Westons would be the owners at present.

KH: Did that fire trail, the one that goes across the Jacobs River and on to the Tin mines, did it go through Charlie Finn's place, the one that was put in by the SMA later on, I think.

PF: I couldn't say exactly where that is. You see the turnoff for ... is this side of Grosses Plain, on the Jindabyne side of Grosses Plain, it turns to the right to go out to Finn's place.

KH: So it wouldn't be so far down.

PF: No, not really that far. I'll guarantee if you walk around there now and you interview a dozen people you'll get a dozen different versions of what happened. There's fellows who remember Carter, I don't know - Jimmy Nankervis at Corryong.

KH: Yes I've interviewed Jimmy.

PF: He knew him as a young fellow and the old fellow would be pretty old.

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KH: Dave Pendergast knew a bit about him.

PF: Dave would see a bit of him from time to time.

KH: But Dave was very reluctant to tell me. The Pendergasts seem to be very reluctant for some reason. But the other guy, on the GungaKlin, a fellow from Berridale, Dick Power, he had a few stories. The main one, I think, was Lindsay Willis, who's dead now.

PF: Yes Lindsay died last year some time. Lindsay, he's a bit of a - I'd have to say he's a friend of mine, but not notorious for accuracy, and most certainly Dick Power wasn't. Any one would only talk to Dick for 10 minutes and know that Dick was not reliable. He would tell you a story all right.

KH: Yes he tells a good story.

PF: It would be a good story, it would be well coloured up, good folklore story, but the truth in it - the percentage would be down to about 5 or 10 percent. That's my opinion of him, others might tell you differently. He had a brother Tom too, he'd know a bit about this place. He's over here in a home at Queanbeyan I understand these days. An ex-soldier, I don't know whether it's a repat. They were out there together with my uncle, as a matter of fact they worked - where did I see this hut - they actually worked on the building of that I think, Tom and Dick Power.

KH: Was there ever, in your family records, a record of that trial, or any newspaper cutting reference to it?

PF: I've been searching for it, and can't find out, I don't know whether the authorities keep any records that long, I doubt it. I asked a lawyer of mine, a friend, and he said he'd look into it, but apparently he never worried about it.

KH: Your father, or someone in the family would have kept anything on it, I would have thought.

PF: You would have thought so, but that was in 1908. When he came back apparently - he went away to Queensland and there couldn't be any deeds found for that block of ground, apparently he carried them with him.

KH: I suppose he'd take all his personal stuff with him.

PF: He was required to hand that over, under the law, but never handed it over. You know it's as late as 1944 that they caught up with him to hand over that deed, and he still had it.

KH: The long arm of the law.

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- PF: Yes, they caught up with him then.
- KH: Do you know if he got much gold at all?
- PF: I couldn't say, I don't think so, he obviously never got as large an amount as he wanted or he would have started another law suit. But a few fellows who know a bit about geology tell me that he was the <sup>most</sup> brainless man out looking for minerals, you'll ever see. They'd say he'd try and look under the concrete path, he'd go in the most unlikely places, he had no idea where to look for it, or the rock formation or anything else. They say he knew nothing about it, people who saw him in action. They were people who had no axe to grind, they just said he knew nothing about it. It would be a down right fluke if he found anything. The days of detectors wasn't in then, or he might have had a bit of luck, I doubt it though.
- KH: Do you remember any of his cures for cancer?
- PF: I've heard a lot of stories about them, I think most of them consisted of pulverised blue stone and <sup>salamoniac</sup> .... and a concoction of some of the soldering fluids and a few of those sort of things, acids.
- KH: He was keen on poultices wasn't he?
- PF: Yes. I think they were much milder, then he'd put on himself, to what he recommended for others. There's a fellow around Corryong, I think he's still there, a fellow named Ernie MacIntosh.
- KH: I haven't met him.
- PF: He'd have first hand knowledge of one of those poultices. They persuaded him to try it on a boil one day.
- KH: What happened?
- PF: They say he was out on the flat with his pants off at the time, well they reckon it was the fastest .... was ever run to the creek to try and wash it off. Don Benson used to tell that yarn for fun, he reckoned it was one of the funniest things he's ever seen.
- KH: He was there at the time?
- PF: He was there when it happened, yes.
- KH: And what was that poultice made of?
- PF: I don't think anyone was real sure. This fellow was a little bit slow witted and they talked him into it, with disastrous results.
- KH: Did you ever visit Carter?
- PF: I never did. I saw him around many times.
- KH: Yes, because he used to come into town.

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- PF: That's right. He had the idea that you mustn't rub your teeth together. He used to buy those school rubbers and chew them.
- KH: Because keeping your teeth together would grind them down or something?
- PF: Something like that, yes. Other times he couldn't have thought that was the reason because he'd get horseshoe nails and chew them.
- KH: That would be even worse, that would be like putting a file in your mouth.
- PF: He doesn't sound like a fellow with a lot of intelligence to me.
- KH: Or it was wrongly applied. Yes, he was quite fanatical, I wonder why he was so fanatical.
- PF: Have you talked to Bill McGuffick, Douglas McGuffick?
- KH: No.
- PF: He'd know quite a bit about him, he's a fellow in his 70s, a Moonbah grazier. He would be a fellow worth interviewing on him, because he saw more of him than I did. He had running stock in the mountains at the same time, and as a young fellow, Bill was always on for a joke - oh a nice fellow, but he'd always see the funny side of many things and he could tell you some great stories on Carter, really some good ones.
- KH: It seems as though, in some ways, he provided a lot of entertainment for the locals.
- PF: Well he did in a way.
- KH: Everybody remembers him in some way or another, and it sounds like he was the only one of that ilk in the mountains, all the others were local families who had been there for a long time.
- PF: That's right. He drifted in there somewhere from over Ballarat way originally. Dad said that he found one time, looking through the old hut, after he'd vacated it and went away, he found tucked in the lining of the hut a letter addressed to him from some of his folks. It said in it that he must have done very well in the time that he was there to have so much property and so many stock. He said as far as he knew, at the time, he had about a dozen head of cattle and about 20 or 30 horses in about a 50 acre block of ground. So he must

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have coloured the story a little bit, back to them, that he'd done very well. Perhaps he might have left home and said I'll make my fortune, and he probably liked to tell them that he had.

KH: I think Hubert Golby told me he had a sister.

PF: Yes, they located a sister when he died.

KH: You don't remember anything about her?

PF: Only what the policeman at Jindabyne told me at the time, he said they've located some relatives of old Carter, I think he said a cousin and a sister. A younger sister to him, and I think he said a cousin still living. That was over, I think, somewhere north-west of Melbourne.

KH: Because he was visited by a reporter from the Melbourne Herald I think, because Hubert Golby had the cutting. This guy wrote Carter up in quite glowing terms, but then he only had the impression of a few days. And there were a number of bushwalkers I think - this is in the '40s, just before he died - who met him. There were a lot of interested people walking through to the Pilot at that time.

PF: Yes, Bill McGufficke would probably give you one of the most accurate reports on him today.

KH: He had stock up there did he?

PF: Yes they had stock there.

KH: Is he the son of the old McGufficke who died a couple of years ago?

PF: Norman, no, he's a cousin to Norman.

KH: I haven't worked the McGuffickes out.

PF: I know them all. His father was John McGufficke, his grandfather was William, they all run stock in those mountains for years. Dave Spencer, that I talk about, was their stockman in those early days. But as I say, Dave Spencer died in 1944, his son is now dead, I think if he talked to him about this story, then it's gone with him. He had a couple of sisters, I don't know whether they ever talked to their father about these things or not. My Uncle Jack never married. Alf Bale died in France in 1916. They were the actors in the story. I am the only one of Paddy Freebody's family, there were 2 or 3 stillborn children, I'm the only survivor.

KH: Of the Freebodys?

PF: Of Patrick William Freebody, I'm Patrick P. myself.

KH: Where were you born?

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PF: Actually in Sydney, lived all my life at Moonbah, the other side of Jindabyne.

KH: When was that?

PF: December '27. But these other fellows that live here in Canberra, first cousins of mine. There's one over here at Campbell, another one up on the Mugga Way, different social status to me. You might see it around town, Freebody's Motors, used to deal with Toyotas, he was an uncle of mine, a brother to dad and Jack, W.B.

KH: Your family have had a long association with the mountains, is that right?

PF: Well they did, they didn't recommend it to me, they said it's a place to stay out of. If you don't want to be an old man at 40 stay out.

KH: The very high country you mean?

PF: Yes. They said bush riding is alright if there's nothing else to do, but there's easier ways of making a living. If you don't want to be an old man at 40 stay out of the mountains, that was my advice.

KH: Some of them got injured didn't they. Old Leo Barry I think told some stories that I heard - is it one of the Woodhouses, I'm not sure, that someone broke a leg somewhere and lay in the bush for some period of time before he was found.

PF: Charlie Woodhouse - a horse turned over on him and I think he had some internal rupture or something. He lay out there all night, he never recovered from it. I think they got him away to hospital, actually to Sydney, but I think he died the following year, he just never recovered from it. They probably didn't have the skills then of today, but they could do nothing much for him.

KH: There was another guy who did break his leg and he was brought back in, and an old couple at the end of the Barry Way somewhere applied a splint and he was alright. I can't remember his name.

PF: Dave Spencer, that was the fellow in the story. Well it happened to him I know. A horse turned over on him and broke his leg, they did get him in, someone carried him in.

KH: Yes that's right, he was carried in.

PF: There could be others, it's happened to many of course, many injuries. Old Charlie Carter himself had many many injuries. Anyone who saw him in late years, he had one cheek knocked in, the bone had



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been pushed in. That was a horse's hoof. He blindfolded it with a chaff bag, they can see through it - if you hold it up to the sunlight you can see through it yourself. He walked up to it and that's where he collected it. Uncle Jack told me that he got there, he said he was inside the hut and didn't know where he was - during the days when they were reasonably friendly with him. He said the horse was in the yard, he said he thought it was damn near dead with starvation. He said it must have been 3 or 4 days it was shut up there. He said he must have staggered away after getting kicked and lost all track of time. He recovered.

KH: Did he go into a hospital?

PF: I think he might have come in and the doctors had a look at it and wanted to do this and do that with it. He said he could treat it himself and away he went again, he recovered. He was seeing double for several weeks after that, it must have been pretty severe concussion I think. Another time he went out over the Snowy River, on the Delegate side. He'd gone to chase horses over there. He was telling my father about that. He said, "I didn't have much to eat, I only had 3 days tucker, so I set up camp." He said he went out chasing this mob of wild horses and the next thing he remembered he's on his back and the old mare is standing over him, twisted up in some sticks. From the look of things he was nearly starved to death. He got up, got himself into the saddle and back and he never touched the tucker, he couldn't understand it. He'd lost 3 days, he must have been 3 days unconscious. They couldn't work it out, they said they knew the day that he went over the river, and there was a lapse of 3 days, and he came back and insisted that he'd never had a meal. A good saving on tucker he said. So it's a damn wonder he never stayed there years before he died.

KH: I mean if something serious happened to you and you were a loner, that would be it. Well that's how he died in the end, didn't he.

PF: They say he died of a coronary in the end.

KH: He had enough food out there, he didn't die of starvation.

PF: There wasn't too much there. My uncle and Snowy Golby found him, Uncle Jim Pendergast, he was my mother's brother. Him and Snowy Golby found him - Snowy is still alive. Most fellows would say they hadn't see him for a while and they'd just check up. Well they rode over and could see there was something wrong, they found him dead.

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KH: I heard the story of them bringing him out, from Bruce Lang.

PF: Where's he now, Wollongong?

KH: He's gone up to Queensland now I think.

PF: He was in the police at the time, and went into dry cleaning works in Wollongong afterwards. I haven't heard of him in years.

KH: He told me a bit about bringing the body out.

PF: Pinky Harris was with him.

KH: Did Pinky Harris compose a poem about ....

PF: Almost certainly would, he wrote a poem about almost everything that went in that area.

KH: Did he! He's still alive isn't he.

PF: Oh yes. He's married to a cousin of mine, Gladys Pendergast.

KH: Is it worthwhile reading his poetry?

PF: Well that's a matter of opinion. Some of it would be rated 'R'.

KH: Some of it might be liable I suppose.

PF: I don't know about that, but it's quite amusing I tell you, you'd have to know some of the characters in it to fully appreciate it, but it is funny.

KH: Is he an approachable sort of guy.

PF: Oh yes. He had an accident a few years ago, he lost a leg, he doesn't do much now, only hang around home and up to the pub. Anyone in Jindabyne would point him out to you, where he lives. Mind you he's a little bit like Dick Power, he'd colour the story a bit.

KH: He might lead me on a bit.

PF: Yes. Anyhow you'll probably interview fellows that will say the same thing about me.

KH: I don't actually ask people very much about other people, not *people* while they're still alive.

PF: But you can mostly tell a fellow, like Dick Power, putting a bit on.

KH: Someone told me an incredible story about some Russian guy, on the lower Snowy, he came through that country and was suspected for this and that. Do you know anything about that story?

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PF: Yes. Actually he was a fellow that was robbing huts out there and living off the land and stealing what he wanted from unoccupied stockmen's huts. Would that be the fellow, a fellow named Harrist(?).

KH: I don't know his name.

PF: Harrist claimed to be - some said he was Russian. My father said he spoke to him one time, walked up to the hut where he was. He said they tell me I'm Russian - he spoke with a very strong accent - he said I'm actually Estonian. He said they call me Russian but I'm Estonian, he didn't like the comparison apparently. He opened his *cape* like that and he said I carried one revolver here and another one there like this. He was wanted by the police in two states. There was a search party through there, my father and uncle were guiding the police on that expedition, and a couple of black trackers. He often told the stories of that. He was a pretty good bushman, this fellow, they never got close to him. But my father often spoke about - he'd come to the hut one time, after he'd been away from it, and he said he could see someone had been in. So what he done, this fellow - there was a big meat cask there and he tipped the meat out onto the floor, the corned meat and the brine, boiled water and had a bath in the meat cask. He left a note - I don't think I could repeat the words of it, but he was quite well educated by the sound of him. I think he said 'In recent weeks I have suffered from a mystery illness but through harsh treatment in your meat cask I have felt much better'. He said 'You will find that I am a far better psychologist than your obtuse mentality allows you to understand. I will be over all ranges before you return with your pack of hounds. Yours sincerely, Harrist'.

KH: 'st' on the end of it?

PF: I can't say how it spelt it, but he ....

End Side 1

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Side 2

KH: It wouldn't be Harris with an 'st' on the end of it.

PF: Probably an assumed name. I'd say, if I know anything about Baltic states, it would be a different type of name to that. I couldn't associate Harrist with it at all, he might have shortened it.

KH: I heard he made some pretty long journeys across the mountains, from the Victorian side, back into New South Wales.

PF: Yes, eventually he was caught, somebody shot him over there near Corryong.

KH: What time was this, before the last war?

PF: Oh yeah, before the first war, I would say. Some time in between 1908 and 1914. I'd say around 1912, if I had to make a guess. I think he was shot dead by a fellow over on the Murray River near Khancoban, where the village is now I think. He was wanted in two states.

KH: Did he jump ship or something, or is that just hearsay?

PF: No one is quite sure. You might be confused with another fellow, that was an artist, named Gurlich(?).

KH: I haven't heard about him.

PF: My father often talked about him.

KH: What was he up to?

PF: Well I think lived pretty much to himself, lived as a hermit on the Snowy River and between - up and down the Snowy River <sup>about the Pinch Riv</sup>. He said he spoke like someone very well educated, my father often said. He told him the story once. He said he got to talking, he said there was no good you starting to ask him what he was doing there, he'd just shut up. He said one day he was in a talking mood. He told him that he'd worked for the State Department at Washington as a draftsman and he was keen on writing. He started writing ~~one~~ books, writing on various subjects. Apparently he touched a subject that wasn't approved of by his superiors in Washington and that was on free mason, he wrote the book. He said that from then on he was a marked man in Washington, he said he couldn't get a job in the government. Somehow or other I think he must have been wanted for embezzlement or something, he didn't tell that part of the story, but he was wanted in the States. He come to Melbourne, and eventually - probably not his original name - he went under the name Gurlich here. He got a job with the Victorian

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Lands Department as a draftsman. Well he worked there for 5 years, he told my father, so he said I come to work 2 days running and on the steps was this fellow reading a newspaper, the same man, 2 days. The next day he was still there reading the newspaper and another man on the other side. So he said I ducked back in and I heard the voice say 'that's him'. So I walked through the back of the building and I walked out of Melbourne and I come up the Snowy River and here I am. So eventually - he used to go over to Wulgulmerang where there was a post office, a place like Ingebrya, only on the Victorian side. He was living there in a hut during the winter time for a while. He was an artist, really good, look at the landscape, and just a few hits. They said he was amazing what he could do with a brush and pen or even just with a pencil. So he was there one day doing some sketching and someone arrived with a warrant for him - extradition. He said I'll go no where without saying my prayers, so he walks inside. Apparently kneeling at the bunk, but he was dead, he carried cyanide. No one knows his full story, no one ever heard what he was, what he was wanted for, or anything else. But I think he was around the river there for about 5 or 6 years. They reckon some of the scenery he sketched there was fantastic, they reckon you could recognise the place as if looking at it.

KH: Was there much of that sort of thing during the '30s, during the big Depression, when you were a boy, of people coming through and hanging around the mountains or working as stockmen for a while.

PF: Well I can just remember, fellows walked around looking for jobs on pastoral properties, they wanted to work for their food. They were desperate men, there was no work, there was nothing. I just remember two fellows, I remember their names, Healy and Pond was their names, they were Queenslanders who came to our place. Well Norman McGuffick, the old fellow you talk about, they done a few weeks work for him. They were only working for about \$2 a week, that's all people could afford to pay them. But they were pleased to get it, they were trying to hang on until the planting season for cane in Queensland came up. My father put them on, he said he'd give them a fortnight, but I really can't pay you any more. One fellow said that's getting close to when we can get away. My dad said I gave them a quid each for the week and I gave them some corned beef and these fellows thought they had drawn the lottery, they were that pleased for the fortnight. He said

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they were really desperate men. I've heard there was a lot at that time. A lot of fellows turned up, probably with shady backgrounds, nobody knows where they come from or where they went, but they drifted out after a while. It was just a big beyond my time, the real depth of it, 1931, '32, '33, it was starting to recover in '34, well I was 7 years old. I can remember those two fellows, just remember them. One fellow was a bit of a fanatic with kids, he used to play with me. I can just remember him talking that he had a daughter about my age or something like that. I can remember him telling me that, but that's about as much as I remember about him. They were fellows around, in their 20s.

KH: Do you remember any long stock drives, even in recent times, say through from out west, through down the lower Snowy through to Bairnsdale?

PF: There were regular movements of stock from out here at Yaouk through.

KH: The Cochrans would be involved in that.

PF: Yes, Cochran was a dealer, he travelled up northern New South Wales, around those areas, bought stock and brought them back and moved them through to Bairnsdale. This went on until, possibly, until Arthur died. Arthur died some time in the '50s I think, Arthur Cochran.

KH: I haven't interviewed any Cochrans yet, but I'm going to see a lady Audrey Maxwell, she was Audrey Cochran, Mrs Audrey Maxwell. I rang her up the other day and I'm going to see her in a couple of weeks.

PF: Must be her second time married.

KH: I don't know. She has a son who lives in Cooma I think.

PF: Maxwell, was he the fellow who was the wool classing teacher at the tech?

KH: I don't know, could be. She certainly referred to some long stock drives that she was on, I think.

PF: In the '40s, yes, she would be on those. I can remember those. I lived in Gippsland for a couple of years during the '40s and I can remember her going through there with stock. My uncle had a dairy farm at Buchan, I was there with him those days, I was only 16, 17, 18 at the time. It was during the war when manpower was pretty scarce and I worked in the dairy with him.

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KH: How would you have gone through at that time, I mean that was before the Barry Way?

PF: Horseback, rode all the way.

KH: Along the Snowy?

PF: Along the Snowy from the Pinch to the Jacobs, Jacobs to the Pinch, all the way down and up over Ingegoodbee and down through *Suggan Buggan* out through the Black Mountain and onto the road.

KH: So the road follows a similar route to the old bridle track?

PF: Oh no, the road goes on from the Pinch straight on down the Snowy River and crosses what they call the Monaro Gap down into *Suggan Buggan*. The old bridle trail went up and ... it was full of pine and a pretty hard track to travel, not much of a track at all. You could go that way but it was smoother travelling to go up onto the top and go down into *Suggan Buggan*.

KH: You wouldn't go through up the Crackenback and then through the back of the Tin mines and the Pilot?

PF: No, I didn't go that way myself, because I lived about 10 mile out the other side of Jindabyne, Moonbah.

KH: You were never on any of the big stock drives yourself?

PF: No I never joined in them.

KH: I'm now working on a book, which will be a book of long journeys across the mountains, on foot, on ski, on horseback and on push bike. Do you remember any outstanding rides by individuals, say getting help, or just for the hell of it.

PF: Well I guess for the hell of it, my father reckon he done one of the longest rides. He said he didn't hear of anyone taking a further ride, was from the village at Benambra to Jindabyne.

KH: Benambra, that's in Victoria, I've heard of Benambra.

PF: Oh yes, it's *over* on the main ranges, it's over in Victoria, near Omeo. *I don't know the time he'd leave. It might have been that day, or a bit after midnight.* He said he come to about the old Nine Mile from Jindabyne and they was playing cricket there those days, just in the evening. He said he pulled in and was talking to some of them there and he said he'd come from Benambra. There was a fellow there, I won't name him, he said, "my father did that years ago, from there to Moonbah." Dad said, "alright I'll go to Jindabyne and have tea in Jindabyne to say I've done the longest ride." So he said he had tea in Jindabyne that night.

KH: He would have left midnight the night before.

PF: I reckon he would, it would be very very early I know that.

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KH: So it would be like a 30 hour ride.

PF: Oh no it would <sup>at</sup> be a 30, - 18 hours I suppose. I said "what's the formula for travelling a long way?" He said, "don't canter a horse, let him trot, if you get a level stretch just a leisurely trot. It's the easiest on man and beast," he used to say, "if you want to cover a lot of distance, don't push a horse into a gallop at all, ever."

KH: When would that have been?

PF: I'd say it must have been around the commencement of the First World War, 1912, 1913, just at a guess.

KH: And that was your father?

PF: Yes.

KH: Was there much of that sort of thing?

PF: Not a lot of journeys of that kind, although I've heard of another one - some reckon it was the longest ever, from a place called Wattle Tree, this side of Buchan, through to Moonbah, without unsaddling, which would be a damn long way.

KH: And they usually did these on the one horse?

PF: Ohh there might have been a change. My uncle came through there one time, he came from Wattle Tree through to our place at Moonbah without stopping, but he arrived at daylight, he'd rode all night. I don't know what time the day before he'd left.

KH: But the ride your father did from Benambra, that would have been on the one horse?

PF: That was on the one horse.

KH: He would have taken stock over there or something?

PF: I don't think so, he probably - well he might have done. There was an arrangement that different ones picked up stock. He probably was working for Pendergasts at Omeo at <sup>that</sup> time. He might have been mustering for them and he probably delivered cattle to Omeo and was probably a day late, he had to come back to Jindabyne for something and had to make it in the one day. That would be the likeliest thing to happen. He was perhaps on a tight schedule to meet someone at Jindabyne or something. I never heard him explain why, or whether it was just to prove that it could be done, I don't know.

KH: And who do you reckon was the original man from Snowy River? Was there one?

PF: I don't think there was one, I honestly don't.

KH: That tends to be my belief now.

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PF: I don't think there ever was one. I know a fellow, a pretty reliable fellow, one time said, in the First World War - he's dead now, I can't even think of his name. He claimed to have known Banjo Patterson, he was in the first war, Captain Patterson or something. He said I saw him one night - they said 'have you met Banjo' like this, as a joke. He said we were all in a pub in France. He said tell me this, who was the man from Snowy River and who was Clancy from the overflow. He turned round and looked at him and said 'that was my own imagination', he tapped his head like that, and he said he downed a drink with him and said 'goodnight boys.' I'd say that would be the most accurate description I've heard of it, I don't think it was anyone.

KH: The upper Murrayites are very keen on Jack Riley and some Jindabyne people are very keen on James Spencer.

PF: That's right - James Spencer he must have been a brother to old Dave I think, the fellow that I talk about. But someone suggested at one time that it might have been Dave and Dave was a weird sort of a fellow, he said 'I hope it's not me'.

KH: Then also, I read somewhere, that one of the Cochrans, someone thought it was one of the old Cochrans. So it seems almost like each little community around the mountains has at one stage or another claimed one of their boys as the man from Snowy River.

PF: I have a photo in my book, what they call the Land Annual in 1938, I had a copy of that years ago. There was a photo of a group down somewhere between Wagga and Narrandera and they said the fellow in the centre is Clancy from the overflow. Well you'll see the same thing up there about the man from Snowy River. I don't think he ever really existed really. You see Andrew Patterson was a friend of the Litchfields. He went to the Cooma district, and stayed with old Ted Litchfield, I understand he was a great friend of his.

KH: Who Banjo?

PF: Oh yes. Banjo was a fellow who could be found in the company of the aristocracy and the upper crust, always. He was educated at the University of Sydney, reared over here at Yass, but he always was in the upper crust of social life. I understand he was invited over to watch the polo, that's when he wrote the Geebung Polo Club there at <sup>Pole Flat,</sup> Cooma. I think that's what prompted the idea of Jim Spencer. He went out to Jindabyne and put in a day or two at the old Creef where Jim Spencer lived, and I suppose Jim Spencer related a lot of

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stories <sup>of the mountains to him,</sup> and gave someone the idea that he wrote about the man from Snowy River. He might have done, but I don't think it was meant for anyone in particular. Jim Spencer put in a lifetime in the mountains, but whether he was intended to be the man from Snowy River, and I don't think there were several of them. Tumut fellows, I think they've got one too.

KH: There are five or six that I've heard of. Tom Mitchell, on the Murray side, he was very keen on it being Jack Riley and put it on his headstone.

PF: Yes. I think something about - some years ago there was a Catholic priest named Father Hartigan, he used to write under the name of John O'Brien - 'Around the Boree Log' he wrote, a book of poems, pretty well known in the old bushland of New South Wales. He visited Corryong and took a trip in there to see Jack Riley at Groggin, the days when you had to ride in. Somehow or other he had the idea that he was the man Banjo had in mind. Those poets were fellows - to follow the leader. He had the idea that Riley was the man. I think that helped some of them on that side to think that Riley was intended to be.

KH: Then of course when the film was made in Victoria, it seems as though the people on this side got pretty upperty, so we now have the Man from Snowy River Festival in Cooma.

PF: Most of that film was done the other side of Omeo wasn't it.

KH: Mansfield, through there.

PF: Similar country.

KH: Same sort of traditions of mountain use, involved with a horse, the same era. Yet there it's still going. Here it's become National Park, and down there they are still doing it.

PF: There was a lot of characters I suppose, the stories run on and on and on. The trouble with most of those people are, they leave it too long to relate those stories.

KH: All I can get now is what's been passed down and even if it's been coloured by time, that's all right, that's part of the folklore of the place I suppose. But like with the huts, most of the guys who built these structures, they never wrote down when they built, what they did and what in hell they were there for. So apart from a few scribblings on the rafters in charcoal, apart from that I've only got people's memories. There's a few documents but not very much.

PF: Well my father went there in the '90s...

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KH: When was your father born by the way?  
 PF: 1869, 10th February.  
 KH: And when did he die?  
 PF: 1961, he was 92.  
 KH: My goodness, you mean if I started 25 years ago I could have interviewed him.  
 PF: That's right, he died on the last day of May '61.  
 KH: What about your mother?  
 PF: My mother died about 3 years earlier in '57.  
 KH: What was her name?  
 PF: Pendergast.  
 KH: There was only one child that survived?  
 PF: I'm the only survivor, yes.  
 KH: What did you do after - you had some time in Bairnsdale - what did you do after that?  
 PF: After that I came back to the farm land. It was something that I wasn't particularly interested in but you followed on because of tradition I suppose.  
 KH: These possums your father caught, and his brother, what sort of money did they get at the time?  
 PF: Look I couldn't really tell you that.  
 KH: Was it good money?  
 PF: It's a bit hard to say, changing times. I think a story went one time, at Jindabyne - I think some of the conservationists were agitating for protection on them for a good many years before it happened.  
 KH: Even then?  
 PF: That's right. Well those days, they tell me, there was a policeman was very very unpopular in Jindabyne and he'd harrassed some of these fellows, some of the Pendergasts and a few of them, that's who took the blame for it. There was a few wild fellows in those days. There was a dead possum that had been dead several days, had been thrown through his window one night with a note on it - 'Possums 13/- a dozen, free to bastards like you'.  
 KH: Did they find out who it was?  
 PF: Never.  
 KH: God help him.

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PF: The likeliest fellow to do it couldn't read or write, so that exonerated him.  
 KH: There seemed to be a lot of that, I mean Dick Power still can't read or write. What about cattle duffing, it seems to be one of those topics that people, when I asked them, they either shutup or they go back way in the past so that it's <sup>so</sup> far back that no one can be incarcerated or whatever, or they say it never went on, on the New South Wales side. On the Victorian side you can certainly read about it and you can read about some of the characters, it's been documented a little bit, but on the New South Wales side they say there was almost none of it. I can't believe that.  
 PF: I think it was alive and well, even to the present day. I know it was 15 years ago. I've been away from there for a while.  
 KH: In that period, in the 1910s and '20s, when there was very little fencing, when there was grazing all over the high country, there must have been a lot of stock which just, for various reasons went the wrong way, or got mustered in with someone else's.  
 PF: There was one thing that used to happen, it was something that happened once or twice a year even, for several years. When Cochrans, that we talk about, would buy a lot of cattle from the northern country and bring them through here to Yaouk, and after resting up a few weeks or perhaps holding some for a season there in the better country, they'd drive them on to Bairnsdale to a sale. Well almost always there would be some of them tire out, they'd be sick or something wrong with they and they've got to be turned out of the mob and left. They might cut out anywhere between, well the other side of Adaminby and Black Mountain, a strip of about 100 miles there, anywhere through there. The only thing to do is to leave them, you can't carry on with them, they're sick, they can't follow the mob. Now many times they've turned up. Now I've seen, myself, I've seen three of them that was owned - well one I'm certain of was owned by a Miss Cochran, Arthur Cochran's sister, Ruby - this is going back 30-40 years. We found one of those one time. Well me father and another fellow and myself tied that fellow up and we put a clipper over him. 'L.C.' was the brand, apparently handed on from the old Cochrans. There had been a hot iron run through it like that and it was burnt in such a way that no one would know what brand it was, but you could still trace the old scar, the L.C. It hadn't healed properly, once it healed up you wouldn't

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know what it was, the hair had been sliced in such a way until it was nothing. He was strolling about the lane south of Jindabyne. Alright no one claimed him, we know what had happened, he'd absorbed into a herd somewhere, he'd be sold as a fat steer some time in the future. Oh there are several things. I've seen things, I know myself, I saw them happen, it was out and out cattle thieving, there's no doubt about that. These days you'd say it don't happen, I know it does.

KH: In the past were there any notorious cases that might have actually gone as far as prosecution, is there any cases where it's gone public, where there is documentation somewhere?

PF: I don't know. I think there was a case some time - now this would be way back. I think a couple of fellows out there, prospecting for gold, killed a McGuffick cow one time, and I think some of them come on to them. I think rather than a systematic stealing to improve the numbers in their herd, I think it was only done for the sake of survival, with these two fellows, but they were caught. As far as I know the fellows who carried it out on a big scale, are honoured and respected citizens today - one certainly is anyhow.

KH: There was a charge for a long time, wasn't there, in taking cattle across the border. When did that stop?

PF: Oh that was many many years ago. It was at the border at Willis. There used to be an old hut there and they called it the Customs hut.

KH: At Willis!

PF: It was conducted there, there was a bounty paid on stock as they went through. I don't know when the Australian constitution was drawn up, but when it was I'd say that's when that would fade because section 92 says that trade must be free between states.

KH: There must have been a lot of people seeking alternative ways across the border?

PF: Oh yes, they'd be a lot, of course, there would be other things happen. That was the main road through there at the time, and the authorities maintained someone there to watch them. And they had to carry that money in cash. The Barry brothers at Moonbah was in a big way at the time, they used to take mobs of about 500 through.

KH: Was Leo one of them?

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PF: No, that would be his father and uncles. That was way back, I think it was beyond the '90, the 1880s I think. I often heard my father tell that story about the time when there was a fellow - they had to carry sovereigns those days, to pay so much per head. They liked gold better than anything else, those fellows. The story went out that there was a big mob ready to go and there was a bushranger fellow from the Braidwood area, went through to intercept them on the way and rob them between Moonbah and <sup>the</sup> Willis border.

KH: Very clever.

PF: He called at Dalgety and made some enquiries about it, he said he was trying to catch up with some fellows, he had a droving job, he told these fellows at the pub.

KH: This is the bushranger?

PF: Yes, no one knew him at the time, he just said he knew Barrys was going and he had to be with them. So they give him directions. He shouted for someone and they say he had a roll of notes - £25 notes was the order of the biggest denomination then, they disappeared many many years ago. They tell me they were about - oh it would be hard to say how many, but about that size.

KH: A couple of inches in diameter.

PF: A couple of inches in diameter. He peeled off a 25 and cashed it there and paid for a couple of drinks for fellows, had a bit of a talk to them and carried on. He put the money in his pocket - I think it was on a chain or something in a pocket. About 7 or 8 miles from Dalgety on the Guises Range he was found, the horse had turned over and he broke his neck, he was found dead, but no money on him. He was called the Long Tailor that fellow, they tell me he's buried there at the old Moonbah cemetery. I heard my father say that the horse he was riding was found wandering about the road, knees cut where it had fell, it had been stolen from Royds at Braidwood. Apparently they were land owners in a big way in the day and he was a fellow that had wandered around these hills out here and done a bit of robbing of gold at Majors Creek and places like that. He was called the Long Tailor, he had an Irish name, I can't think of his proper name.

KH: You call that natural justice I suppose, dying like that.

PF: But they say that's where he was aiming for to rob the Barrys of the gold coins before they reached the border.

KH: So the stockmen had to carry a fair amount of money.

Pat Freebody

PF: Yes, they didn't accept cheques or anything like that, it was cash. That faded out with the drawing up of the Australian constitution I suppose. When did that happen, some time in the '90s didn't it.

KH: Well Federation was at the turn of the century.

PF: It was before that apparently.

KH: Parkes and those guys were active just before that. I suppose there was a fair lead up to Federation.

PF: The border was struck in 1870. There's an area out there, my father showed me years ago, they used to call it Seventy. I said why do they call it that. He said well the border struck through there in 1870, it was chiselled into a tree and fire took the 18 and left the 70 and the 70 is there exposed on a tree for years and years, it's known as 70. From there to the Murray to Cape Howe, the surveyors struck that line.

KH: That's right, they put cairns along the way, some of them are still supposed to be there.

PF: Probably some would exist. Over at Delegate river there, it goes through between a house and a garden. <sup>-Mood's old place</sup> The house was in NSW and the garden in Victoria, went straight through his garden.

KH: Do you remember any other bizzare sort of things, unusual deaths? Around Kiandra I've heard of a number of really horrible tales, old guys getting drunk and falling into their fire and knocking themselves unconscious, being found half burnt and things like that.

PF: I suppose there's truth in a lot of those things, there's no doubt they'd be like a lot of other stories, they'd be colourings. They say the Chinese that died out there, they say they were buried on the spot and then a few years later dug up and taken away.

KH: Yes, the bones were sent back to China.

PF: But the gold was in the coffin, that's how it went out of the country. No one looked in the coffin for gold. That's how a lot of people believe that gold went out of the country.

KH: They could have put the gold inside the bones too.

PF: Who knows what they done.

KH: They actually sent whole coffins back?

PF: Yes it was only about 5 or 6 years until they took the coffin away. Those days I think it was some belief they had, these Chinese, they had to be buried back in the Yangse or something.

Pat Freebody

KH: A lot of the Chinese apparently went back to China anyway. Came out here by the thousands and went back in very high numbers.

PF: That's what caused the White Australia Policy, the riots at Lambing Flat, over here at Young. After they drove them out of the gold fields they took up shearing and they'd shear for less money than Australians, and of course they were generally - that's what brought the White Australia Policy.

KH: A lot of them seemed to stay back and then later on open little restaurants.

PF: Yes, and laundrys.

KH: There's quite a tradition of Chinese cafés in country towns. When did that start?

PF: Oh quite a while back. They've been around Sydney for as long as I can remember Sydney.

KH: There's one over at Tumut and they seem to be third or fourth generation Australian.

PF: Oh yes, I think so. I suppose in the pioneering days, I've heard a lot of stories about it, particularly from my grandmother. She was a McEvoy, they were some of the pioneers of the area.

KH: That's on your mother's side.

PF: Well get it straight, my mother and father were cousins. So I go back to the pioneers in two ways. The McEvoy's were the first settlers. Jim McEvoy and his wife settled near Dalgety, a place called Błoka in 1837. They say that their eldest child was the first white child born that side of the Snowy River - you've probably heard that. That was reviewed in that old 'Back to Jindabyne Week' a few years ago. They re-enacted that, I think it was a bit far fetched, the way they staged it, because I don't think they crossed the river that day at all, it was on the other side of the river all ready.

KH: This is in the new Jindabyne?

PF: Yes, a few years ago they staged that, back in the '60s, '65 or '66. Oh yes, I've heard quite a few things, some of it will be controversial these days, there's no doubt. I was talking about my cousin, Aub Wilson, John Hunt's grandfather - he's fascinated by a piece of jewellery that I've got. It came to Australia with the old Shields in 1810 and belonged to that woman's grandmother. Aub reckons it's worth



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about \$15,000. If someone comes along with \$15,000 they won't buy it, but I don't say it's not worth it. It's made out of Welsh gold. It's one of the *few* relics of the pioneers.

KH: You haven't had it valued.

PF: No.

KH: When you're desperate perhaps.

PF: I will when I'm desperate. I'll leave it to my daughter now.

KH: Who else is around that I might interview, especially to the grazing era. Ossie Wellsmore?

PF: Oh yes Ossie. He'd be worth talking to. I think you'd want to catch up with him fairly soon too, he's not young. You see the old Ingegoodbee hut, the original one that was burnt in the '40s was built for Billie Wellsmore, an uncle of old Ossie, built by a fellow named Ned Wooligan. If you hear a remark up there, that someone ends up like Wooligan and Wellsmore - he was in debt when he started and he was further in debt when he finished working, that's what that means.

KH: Some of the Wellsmores have done quite well haven't they? What about Angus McPhée, do you know him?

PF: Yes I know Angus.

KH: I interviewed Leo Russell, a couple of times now.

PF: Yes he'd know a bit about this particular Yaouk end.

KH: Yes, and Happy Jacks Plain and all that middle country in Kosciusko.

PF: Angus McPhée, he'd have access to quite a bit of folklore in that end. He lived near Adaminby there for years before he went out there to Ravensworth. The dam put him out of the Adaminby side. He'd be like myself, he'd know quite a lot about what was talked about before his people. They were some of the <sup>very</sup> early ones there.

KH: There's also a Johnny Weston in Queanbeyan. Someone wrote to me and said that I should go and see him.

PF: He's lived most of his life around Kalkite near Jindabyne. He'd know a fair bit about the mountains, that same area that Lindsay and Jack Willis were in.

KH: Like Mawsons hut, Ličhfield country.

PF: That's right, he'd know a lot about that. As far as the other side of Ingebrya, no, I don't think he'd be in that area at all. He's probably picked up a lot of stories, legends a lot of them.

KH: What about on the <sup>Y</sup> side, that back country, Tingaringy  
Byadbo

Pat Freebody

PF: That's right. Those McKay brothers that my father and Jack worked for, they had a son - he's still living, retired and living at Pambula, he'd be a fellow well in his 70s now, Roy McKay. He lives down towards the beach at Pambula, retired. I heard he's slipping in health pretty badly, but he would know quite a bit about that Carter era, from his father and uncle. The other fellow Mack McKay - Mack and Don were the two brothers, Mack McKay had three sons but I don't know where they are. I think they're all living. I think one's down near Campbelltown - one went to England to live I think.

KH: What about across the lower Snowy, up towards Delegate, what they now call the Byadbo wilderness.

PF: Bigedbo - I don't know what the true pronunciation was. I don't know much about the people on that side. Those McKay brothers, yes, I heard of them quite a bit because my father used to work for them and were great life long friends. But other people in that area - you've no doubt heard of Joker Johnson in that area. He was a brother-in-law to Mack McKay. There have been some terrific legends written and told about him. He'd be a fellow - probably any of those over 60 or 70 around Delegate would certainly know him. Out Bonang and out that way, you'll probably find someone there who could tell you a few tales about that area.

KH: I haven't met anyone from there because I haven't followed that up very much. There seems to be a real sort of backwoods, between Delegate and the lower Snowy, there's some really rugged country in there.

PF: That's another thing, these days on the map, you'll see there's a road that runs through Bonang and comes out in Wulgulmerang in Victoria. It goes down over what they call McKillops Bridge. Well my father and Jack always said that when they <sup>first</sup> went there there was a boat there operated by the authorities and the fellow who operated the boat was McKellar, an old Scotsman. These days they call it McKillop but they always said it was McKellar. I'd imagine the bridge was named after McKellar, the boat keeper. The flood took that bridge in '34 and they put another steel one up.

KH: I thought it had gone once or twice.

PF: Only once, the 1934 flood shifted it. They were cutting it up for scrap in 1943. Steel was short they were taking it out on trucks then. The big concrete pier snapped off and she hung on one side.

Pat Freebody

I'll tell you who might be worth talking to about some aspects up there, old Bill Pendergast, have you seen him?

KH: No, is he related to Dave?

PF: Yes, he's a cousin.

KH: Is he the one from Dalgety?

PF: Yes, he lives that way.

KH: His daughter-in-law worked for the Park.

PF: No, he never married. He's a first cousin to me. He'd be worth talking to. You were talking about a lot of verse that was written. The McEvoy's wrote a lot of verse in that area, Bill would probably have some of that.

KH: On paper.

PF: Or a lot of it up here. I know some of it, part of the folklore of Crackenback. There was some event, whether it was a couple of neighbours fighting, or whether it was some joke played on someone, they had to portray it in verse. You would have thought they came from Wales instead of Ireland, but that's where they come from.

KH: There's very little of it published, I never see it in print, even in the newspaper.

PF: You wouldn't, some of it might be 'x' rated, or would have been in the day, it wouldn't be today.

KH: That's given me quite a few more leads actually.

PF: There's probably a few things I've forgotten.

**End Side 2**

**Conclusion of Interview**