Frank Rodwell

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Interviewed by Klaus Hueneke
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At Frank's home in Cooma

Corrected Nov/Dec 1987 K.H.

I haven't got much on my card about Frank, but he worked on the Snowy - started with the Snowy in the early 50s, and worked in the security section. He is still with the Snowy Mountains Authority, so he is a long-time employee now, and in the last few years has become very interested in the history of the SMA, especially the SMA's buildings, streets and houses in Cooma and he has also gone out to try and find where some of the camps were in the mountains. Camps like Wuthering Heights and Guthega.

KH: Would you just correct or just amplify some of the things I have already said.

FR: Well, I didn't actually start with the Snowy Authority until January of 1955. But I came to Cooma originally in September of 1950. That was the first time. I came up from Victoria to have a look at the place, because we were going to move up here, and start manufacturing concrete blocks, building blocks. This was a new product, made with what we now wash up our dishes with. A by-product of the oil companies, put into the cement and frothed up and that made a lightweight concrete brick. Because the government was spending a lot of money in Cooma, we came up to get our share of it. At least, we thought we were going to. But about all I got out of that was the muscles in my arms, and the experience. We made those concrete blocks and the concrete piers to go underneath the Snowy houses. We contracted to the Snowy Authority. They did buy some of the concrete blocks. You will find those in the Powder Magazine over the other side of Polo Flat. A lot of the houses around, private houses, are built out of concrete blocks. The piers are under most of the E-type houses, and some of the Pazottis, too, I guess, because I can recall the foreman for Pazottis who lived in the next street, cant think of his name just offhand now, he came down

He spoke Italian and French. We spoke English. My brother spoke some French, and apart from understanding that he wanted to buy something, we didn't quite know what - he finished up - we gave him brochures and he went away and came back a few months later being able to speak English, and placed quite a few orders with us. We made concrete blocks for several years, until a lot of our equipment wore out. It was pretty hard for us because we had to compete with the pressed concrete blocks that were made a lot cheaper. They did not have the expensive equipment, and they used about half as much cement as we did with our concrete blocks. And while ours were the best ones made, and they certainly passed the building regulation, the other ones were cheaper and people were prepared to buy those, even if they were able to break them across their knee. And they were not waterproof, but still , that is in the past. So it was pretty hard for us to compete, and we didn't make a great deal of money. And so, when the going got tough, I joined the Snowy Authority in January 18, 1955, as a trainee ganger. And I have never heard of another one ever being put on by the Authority. They took me up to Perisher and I worked there, in another gang, as a trainee ganger. A good lurk - I was getting a ganger's money and didn't have the responsibility of telling the fellows what to do. Of course, I was only 22.

KH: What does a ganger do?

FR: A ganger is generally in charge of a group of workmen, ranging in numbers from about 6 to say, 15, or 16. So you were a ganger under 12, or a ganger over 12. And you were responsible for those men, telling them what type of work they were supposed to do. At that stage, we were working on the aqueducts, channelling the water from every little streamlet from as high an altitude as we could, back into the Guthega Dam. We worked mainly on the Perisher Creek aqueduct. There was one on the other side of the Snowy River. I have a feeling that that was a fairly big structure and was probably put in by the contractors themselves. We

didn't work on that one. And we were putting in the pipes. They were fibro pipes, about 10 feet long.

KH: Is that the aqueduct that starts at the back of Smiggins Holes, over the hill?

FR: Yes. That is one that comes through Wragges Creek, and that was a separate contract, that one, a small contract - drove that tunnel through from Wragges Creek, and that came back into the Perisher Creek tunnel. That was a fairly big tunnel, and that was already established when I arrived on the scene. We were doing the small creeks that run down between the branch road that goes up to Smiggin Holes and Guthega, Guthega Dam, all those little creeks that came down there were captured in a small concrete structure and piped into these four inch pipes which ran into the big - what would it be - probably a three or four foot ......a fairly big pipe, like it was buried. You can still find it down there.

KH: It goes across on a bridge across Perisher Creek, I think.

FR: Yes, you can see it quite plainly there, and it is ......further up, the structure across Perisher Creek, I suppose.

KH: Where did you sleep when you were working on that gang?

FR: We were at Perisher Camp, which is a tongue of land that juts out, points down towards Guthega. You can see the pipeline from the top of Guthega from Perisher Camp. It sort of overlooks the Snowy River. And if you are coming up from Island Bend, past the Munyang power station, it is the tongue of land that juts out on the right hand side, opposite where the quarry used to be. And you can still see that quarry.

KH: Oh, yes.

FR: Do you know where Smiggin Holes got its name from?

KH: Something to do with cattle licking the salt.

FR: That is right. Well, a smiggin is a salt lick. Did I tell you that before, or did you read that somewhere?

KH: I have read it.

FR: I mentioned it in the Snowy Magazine when somebody told me about it. That was the first I had ever heard of it. So that the holes that were left by the horses, or the cattle, the hooves of the cattle, that were the holes around the smiggins, and that became the Smiggin Holes. Anyway, I thought that would be - - -

KH: A Scottish derivation, I believe?

FR: Yes, it was. Other camps that were still established at that time, the next one up towards Guthega, down fairly close to the Snowy River, was the Adit Camp. That was where the Norwegian contractors, some of the Norwegian contractors, were camped, and where they drove the adit into the - about the middle of the tunnel, so that they were able to work on four faces, that is one at either end of the tunnel, that was the Guthega end; the Munyang end; and then two ends where they went in the adit and worked in opposite directions to meet up. So that they were able to work on four faces instead of two.

KH: That is where you can see the spoils that have come out of that.

FR: Yes, you can still look down there and straight on the opposite side of river, is the remains of the old camp. I went down there sometime earlier this year, and it was so overgrown that I could not even stand up to see, to take a photograph. I got one photograph by climbing up a tree. And the only thing that you could still recognise was the spoil dump on the other side of the Snowy River.

KH: They must have had a path up to - I mean, if they went down into the valley from the camp and up the other side each morning or afternoon - - -

FR: They walked, yes.

KH: That seems very steep on the other side there.

FR: They went down across the footbridge and up the other side. They were still working there when I first went to Perisher. And then further up was the Guthega Camp. And I don't remember very much about that. Not that we got up that far all

the time, because we were working on the aqueduct. But surprisingly there was snakes around. This was January, January/February, and most of the new Australians, of course, were scared stiff of the snakes. Not to mention that I wasn't myself, they were even more so. But the mention or a sight of a snake they were likely to take off at high speed, they weren't prepared to kill the things.

KH: What were they? Yellow-bellied black snakes or copperheads, or - - -

FR: Yes, they were just the ordinary black snake. They were nothing too much to be worried about, and generally pretty docile. But they would come out in the sun, and I really never expected to find snakes at that altitude. But I heard another story today, when I was talking to Hollywood George about it. He was in the camp down at Munyang. And he got into bed there, one night, there were two blokes to a tent down there in those days. And he got into bed and was lying down, and he said he felt something move in his bed. And he said, "Jesus, there is something in the bed." And the other fellow said, "Oh shut up and go to sleep." And after a while it moved again a little bit more violently, and he sort of said ....and he jumped up, lit the kerosene light to see what it was, pulled the blankets back in time to see the snake getting out of the tent. And he killed it, he has got a photograph down in his shop there as proof.

KH: It is a wonder he did not get bitten. That was Hollywood George. What is his real name?

FR: I haven't the faintest idea. It is too hard to pronounce, so everybody called him Hollywood George. He started with the Snowy in about 51 or 52. He started at Jindabyne, I know. He was at what we called the Balts Camp out there. There were two camps at Jindabyne in the early days. And one was the Australian and the other was for the wogs, and as most of the new Australian were from the Baltic countries, it was known as the Balts Camp. And each morning when the train arrived in Cooma,

there would be an Authority representative there, generally one of the wages bosses or supervisors, because so many of the people who arrived there couldn't speak English. And he would generally say, "Aussies on that bus, wogs on that bus." They were sent to different camps. Three Mile out of Kiandra, that was an Aussie camp.

KH: Oh, the one at Three Mile Dam?

FR: Yes.

KH: That was an Aussie camp.

FR: Because Jock Wilson, he has just written me a little bit of a story about Three Mile, and I will put it in the magazine sometime early next year. And he said that he arrived with Bob Dries & Wopper Dries early in the morning, and Dan Murphy, the supervisor, was there. And usual, "Now, all you Aussies on this bus, wogs on that one." Jock had just come out from Scotland, and he looked at Wopper, and he said, "Well, I think I am with you." And he joined the Aussie bus.

KH: The camps at Jindabyne, there was one down by the river.

FR: Yes.

KH: And there was one where the fitness camp is now; is that right.

FR: On the side of the hill. I think there was one on the Cooma side as well, a smaller one, a survey camp. There were several camps out there, and I have not been able, as yet, to establish exactly where they were, because they are under the water now. But one of the early camps was out towards where the fitness camp is. Am I talking too much?

KH: No, it would be awful if you didn't say anything. Ok, and did you sleep in tents in those early camps?

FR: No, they had snow huts there at that stage, and they also had some barracks. If you could you would get into a barrack, because they were considered a bit warmer. I was in a snow hut. I arrived at Island Bend, and I don't recall how the devil I

got there, I must have gone out in a Land Rover of some sort, but I don't recall who took me there. And I was picked up at Island Bend and delivered to the Perisher office, which was - at that stage, they had a stores office, and another small office where the quarry is, on the side of the road, the quarry that I mentioned earlier. And I was picked up there by Alec Lukowski, better known as King Farouk. And he drove me up to the camp, and he explained a few things, like what was going on, and what was expected. One of the first things that I saw on that road that I still vividly remember, were low high tension wires crossing just above Perisher Camp. I think the power line probably still crosses about there, but it was the sign that was hanging there. It said, 'Achtung." It was the first time that I had ever seen that, and I guess it was something that any nationality understood. It didn't say "Danger" it just said, 'Achtung.' We went down into the camp, and I was allotted my room. And then I went out to work on the aqueduct lines with one of the other gangs.

KH: Did you work there through the winter?

FR: No, I worked there for that January, February. My wife was expecting the first baby, and I wanted to get back into Cooma, of course, to be around at the time for the firstborn to arrive. And the only way I could get back into Cooma was to transfer back as a labourer. A bad move that, I should have stayed where I was. I had to come back in and worked on the Cooma North roads, around the housing area, Arana Avenue, I recall quite well, also up into Minowa, those areas up there. Spalding, the rock had come from Bunyan - the Bunyan gravel - breaking up those big rocks with a 14 pound hammer. And it was hot, bloody hot at that stage. Aub Casson was the foreman, a well-known footballer and cricket player.

KH: Did you get back in to the mountains again to work?

FR: Yes, I stopped in here for a while. During that time I was working on those roads, I can recall one new Australian who was a bloody good worker. He just didn't stop, even though it

was so bloody hot, and you could perspire. And his shirt was actually white with salt from the sweat. He was sweating like a horse. People just don't work like that any more. I wasn't a bad worker myself, but by golly, he was good. A bloody sight better than me. Yes, after a while I was transferred back out to Perisher and worked at White's River, that is up above Munyang. We worked on an aqueduct there that - - -

KH: Oh, did you work on that, putting that in?

FR: Yes. It brought the water back from those streams and dropped it into the surge tank at the top of the Penstocks above Munyang. I wasn't there for all that long before they gave me a gang of 6 Italians, and transferred us down to Bundilla. Bundilla was the camp on the Alpine Way. I couldn't say how far out of Jindabyne it was, it must have been 20 miles. The road wasn't on the left hand side of that valley, it was along the valley floor. You would come up over the first major rise before you get to where the Ski Tube is now. You can still see some of the road where it branches and runs down into the gully itself. There are a couple of houses down there now. It went via Bullocks Hut. You have heard of Bullocks Hut, Bullocks flat?

KH: Yes.

FR: Bullocks Hut belonged to Dr Bullock from Sydney. His son was actually in practice here in Cooma for a while.

KH: Oh, is that right? Yes, Bullocks Hut is right next to the Ski Tube bridge now.

FR: We had to keep that road - road, it was a bloody track, a muddy track - it went straight through the creeks, the soil was black. After rain, trying to get hippos and beavers through and the supply trucks, of course they would just cut straight through, and we made corduroy roads, and our gang was employed to keep that road open.

KH: Corduroy Roads, that is logs, is it? Logs, one next to the other.

FR: Yes, when you try to cut straight logs out of that timber that they grow up there, which grows like a dog's hind leg, that wasn't easy either. We used rock from the bottom of the creeks because the trucks got bogged in that. And just about every truck that came through would virtually wreck the road and you would have to go through and rebuild it again. Trying to drain it - we used to get the water off it. It seemed to rain incessantly in that place. It was probably the most miserable camp that I was in at any time.

KH: How long did you spend there?

FR: I was there until about June, July. I was certainly there in June, because I can recall on the shortest day, the sun disappeared over the Ram's Head Range at a quarter past three, and as soon as the sun disappeared, we started to freeze. It was a real cold hole. We were not allowed to have heaters first off because we were fractionally under the 4000 foot elevation, and if you were over 4000 feet, you were allowed to have kerosene heaters, under, you didn't. And I have my plates freeze together beside my bed there. We had to supply our own eating utensils. That was, knife, fork spoon, cup, plates.

KH: Because in a frost hollow, it could be colder at a low elevation than up on a slope.

FR: It was bloody cold down there. It was all right for moving transport first thing in the morning, because everything was frozen, and you could drive over the bogs. But from about 11 o'clock when it thawed, until after you knocked off, you slipped and slid everywhere. It was that miserable.

KH: So the first Alpine Way was a bit of a quagmire at times.

FR: Oh yes. It must have taken longer because it was a real nightmare. I saw two bulldozers bogged in the one hole at one stage. One came to get the other one out and he finished up

bogged, and we only had one more bulldozer in the area, and they had to bring it about 10 miles, and walk it at that. And I can remember the supervisor speaking to the operator, and he said, "If you get that one bloody bogged, you have all got the sack. I will sack the whole lot, all the operators who were bogged." They got them out, but by golly, they were well and truly bogged in a real sea of soupy mud.

KH: So this track that you were talking about must have followed the first bridle trail up the Crackenback River, up the Thredbo River.

FR: Well, that would be about all it was.

KH: It sounds like a modified bridle track.

FR: Yes. The trucks had gone as for Bullocks, of course, and beyond that there was two-wheel ruts, but they cut a new section up into where our camp was. So it couldn't have gone any further because the river itself ran down. So we were out beyond where any vehicle had gone previously, where Bundilla camp was.

KH: What were you doing there? What was the camp for?

FR: Constructing the Alpine Way. We were building the Alpine Way.

KH: Further up the hill.

FR: No, we built it from - not from the Jindabyne end, but from that hill back where you first look down into the valley. You come up a fairly steep hill, over the crest, and you can look down to where the Ski Tube goes in. So from there, or a little bit beyond that, we came up - you know that big gravel quarry that they are digging out at the present moment, do you know it, at the top of the hill there? They have widened it considerably.

KH: Right, yes.

FR: And they are widening the road at the moment, from down about the bottom of that hill, I can recall there were cattle grids, and so on, there, that the Authority had put in. And we built that road. It was only as an access road. It was not a permanent road. It was there so that we could get materials

across to the Geehi side of the Murray, for the construction work over there, which was due to take off in the early 60s, it started over there. And they - of course, they had the area open on the other side. They had a similar road gang working out of - was it Geehi Camp? No, what was the name of the camp? Yes, Geehi camp. And Tom Groggin camp, that was a tent camp. And they had another camp at Leather Barrel, they were pushing the road - - -

KH: Leather Barrel, where the road crosses the creek there.

FR: Yes, there. A camp there. And so rather than cart the men long distances, they would have a camp there, fairly close to where the work was going on. And they were terribly wet and muddy, not very happy camps.

KH: Cold too. Leather Barrel is wet and shady and on the shady side of the mountain.

FR: And then further up, as you get towards Dead Horse Gap, that is on the other side, that is where they had the Siberia Camp, named so for obvious reasons.

KH: It is a wonder it didn't become Siberia Gap, rather than Dead Horse Gap.

FR: Well, Dead Horse Gap, nobody really knows why it was called Dead Horse. But the story that I have heard that sounds plausible, was that after a heavy snow fall one winter, the locals that came up from Jindabyne looking for wild horses, the brumbies were up in that area, they found a horse hanging in a tree, it had actually got caught up in the tree when it was crossing onto the snow drifts, and died there. There was the carcass hanging in the tree, right up on that Gap.

KH: So you would have also seen the old Dead Horse Gap Hut in your time - it would have still been there.

FR: Well, I guess I could have done, but I don't recall it offhand now. I can remember Siberia being there. I remember Donny Paxti being in Siberia, and that was getting on towards the sealing of the road, I suppose.

KH: Was that camp right on the saddle?

FR: No, Siberia was further down. It would have been perhaps - - -

KH.. On the Murray side.

FR: Murray side, three quarters of a mile, half a mile. Something like that. I couldn't even find that spot now. I can recall being there. It was up on the high side of the road. But the undergrowth has come back and it has grown and you just cannot see these places now.

KH: So how long did you work on the Alpine Way?

FR: Not a very long time, about 3 or 4 months.

KH: This is all still in 1955, isn't it?

FR: Still '55.

KH" You had a pretty eventful year, by the sound of it.

FR: Yes, well, finding my way around. You could change jobs then. It was not all that difficult. And there were plenty of blokes, if they didn't like the job they were on, they would snatch it and go off and work for a contractor or just go back into Cooma and get another start with the Snowy, and they would start somewhere else. But there was plenty of employment. I wanted to get out of Bundilla because it was so cold and miserable. And to go down to get your breakfast with your cold plate - you would get out of bed, you would put your clothes on and they were damn near stiff. You shiver your way down to breakfast; you would get in the queue; you would get your bacon and eggs put on your plate and by the time you got to your table - I have done this - tipped my plate upside down like that, and your food sticks to it, greasy. And the cook there was Dutch and he had a habit of putting paprika into everything. And this odd flavour that I wasn't used to. I can still tell you what was on the sandwiches. We had three sandwiches, every day. You would have three sandwiches, one would be liverwurst - I would give the liverwurst away and eat the bread with sugar on it, and I would still get indigestion. The other one would be salami, and the

third would be cheese. And you had a piece of plain cake and you had a piece of fruit. And that was the lunch you had every day.

KH: Bad luck if you didn't like salami or liverwurst.

FR: I didn't. You could kill a brown dog with some of that stuff. And everything they cooked up had a red tinge about it, even the fat that he cooked in had that red tinge in it. I don't know what it was but I can still remember it. I remember it quite vividly. I still get indigestion thinking about it. Anyway, I didn't like that camp.

KH: You didn't have heated plates either, by the sound of it.

FR: Well, the Snowy did relent towards the time I left, they did bring in the heaters. That was the first time that I had ever seen those black chimney-shaped heaters that stood about 2 feet 6 high, kerosene font in the bottom. And you lifted up a section at the top, it must have hinged over - - -

KH: Round. Was it round?

FR: Yes, it would have hinged over exposing the wick. And the trick was to keep the wick trimmed very, very neatly. They had a dreadful reputation those heaters. You could sit and watch them for hours, and they worked beautifully. And you would turn your back for ten minutes and they would put out more soot than a factory chimney. I came back to my room one evening after watching the movies. The amenities section would bring around a Land rover with a generator in the back, and they would put on a movie show for us once a week. And it was greatly looked forward to, that one night when you could go to the movies. And I watched the two movies and came back , probably around about 10, 10.30 or something like that. Opened up my room and went to step inside and it was dark. And I thought, that's funny, I am sure I had left my light on. And with that, I could see that there was smoke drifting past. And that heater that I had left on had turned out so much soot, that the entire room was like the Black Hole of Calcutta. Everything was black. The curtains, the

blankets, my pillow, the walls, bloody mess.

KH: Is it greasy, that sort of fat, black stuff, or dry?

FR: Yes, you know, it had a greasy feel to it. In one of the other camps, I recall, one fellow woke up in the morning, and he had left the heater on, and it had turned out soot, and he looked in the mirror and he thought he was looking at Al Jolson. All he could see was his eyes and his mouth. It is a wonder he did not die of asphyxiation.

KH: The fumes from those things when they are out must be awful, or if they are not working properly.

FR: As I said, the trick was to keep that wick trimmed, newly trimmed and level.

KH: About this high?

FR: Yes, about that high.

KH: And round?

FR: Yes. You will see them in the - - -

KH: Yes. I have seen them around.

FR: Bloody things. Anyway, that is the only thing we had to heat our barracks.

KH: But you were in barracks there? At Bundilla.

FR: Well, when I say barracks, no, it was snow huts. they were all snow huts.

KH: Individual ones?

FR: Yes, eight by eight. In which you had a bed, a straw palliasse.

KH: That is a mattress.

FR: Sideboard, lowboy cupboard, and a tallboy. That was all. I don't think I even had a tallboy in that one. I think I only had a lowboy. I wanted to get out of that camp. It was wet and miserable. So I applied for a transfer on to the tournapulls, they were looking for tournapull drivers.

KH: Sorry, which drivers?

FR: Tournapulls. The tournapulls were the earthmoving equipment, the scoops, the scraper, made by Le Tourneau, electrically

driven, electrically steered. The scoop at the back, the big wheels at the front, odd sort of a machine, killed a lot of people. And nobody wanted to work on them because they were considered too dangerous.

KH: They were for scooping up earth and putting it onto trucks?

FR: No, no.

KH: Just pushing it around.

FR: No, picking it up and then dumping it again when they got to their destination, so that they were able to scoop up a load of soil, generally by being pushed with a bulldozer, and the scoop would load inside a belly loader, it would drop the piece in the front when it was full, lift up the bowl, drive it off to where they wanted it, lift up the scoop on the front of it and then with electric motors and wire ropes it would push the loaded soil out and by lifting the bowl up to whatever height, you could spread it to a reasonable degree of accuracy to whatever thickness you required.

KH: They are still around, but much better now.

FR: Yes.

KH: Those big yellow things. With a big belly, a big bellyful of dirt.

FR: Yes.

KH: Then these were the forerunners, then, by the sound of it. These were the first ones.

FR: No, these were the second lot.

The first lot they got were called - no, I've forgotten what they called them. They had a special name, it was an AC something or other. But it has just slipped my mind at the moment what they were called. And they brought those ones up from Yallourn where they had been used for taking off the overburden. And they drove them up, they didn't bring them on trucks. And they lost one at the top of the hill at Lakes Entrance, just before you turn at that sharp turn at the top and come down ... the

plateau. And the accident happened because they were steered by hand, with hand clutches or hand brakes. And when you were travelling, you pulled the brake this way, it would steer this way, but when it was going downhill the opposite effect occurred. And when the fellow got to this point and he suddenly was going downhill, he put on the brake and it was the wrong one, and it veered across the road and went straight over the edge. And the driver left his seat in a sitting jump. because he could not have stood up, and he cleared the wheel on the side, which would have been, I suppose, 4 feet away. It would have been a fair sort of a jump sideways, anyway. He left the machine and got off, and it cleared all the timber, went straight down and landed in the sea water down below. They did recover it, but I don't think it ever got to Cooma.

KH: So it was a bit like flying an aeroplane?

FR: I guess so. But it was a big, heavy thing, and they were not very safe. They got rid of that and they bought the next lot, Le Tourneaus, and they were electrically steered. It had a little button, you hung on to a straight bar and there was a little button that you steered. And as you pulled the button up, so it would steer in that direction. You would pull the button up and let it go, and they sort of came around when you steered them, left or right, they came around in a series of jerks. They were a great machine. They worked very well. Anyway, I transferred on to those. But before I got there, I was being ferried out to Boloiro Road Camp, which is on the Adaminaby Road, and travelling with Roy Stevens, who was a foreman. And he was an ex grader operator. And he talked me out of going on to the tournapulls, because he wanted a grader driver. And whether he took a liking to me or whether he took pity on me, I don't know which, but I didn't care what I drove, and so I was given the job of driving a grader. And it was the first time I had ever got on to a grader, it was on the Adaminaby Road. And we were responsible for levelling off the dirt after it had been dumped by the

tournapulls, or the dozers, or the dump trucks, but mainly it was the tournapulls who were working out there. And they were quite quick. And so I worked there for quite a while. We built what is now the Snowy Mountains Highway. It skirted the Eucumbene Dam, because the Eucumbene Dam had not started to fill at that stage. But the old highway went through the Adaminaby Valley, up through the township of old Adaminaby, and that was going to be flooded. So the Authority built the road which skirted it, and went through New Adaminaby. New Adaminaby was just starting to be built and we worked on that section. Now before it was completed, I was transferred to the airstrip. That was the first contract ever done by the Snowy Authority.

KH: Which airstrip was that?

FR: The main Cooma airstrip.

KH: Oh, really?

FR: The main Cooma aerodrome. It was thrown open to contract by the government amd because the Snowy Authority had all the equipment here, had the men here, they were able to undercut the price considerably. I don't know what the figures are, but I guess we would have them on record. And so they took the tournapull drivers; they took most of the best operators out there, because they wanted to show that they could do this sort of work. And there was a thought, at that stage, that they would go into that type of work. This was long before SMEC was ever envisaged, of course. And we constructed the airstrip. And I worked out there, and I could recall from when I moved there, that it must have been about the end of winter 55, and into the spring.

KH: But, of course, the airstrip was of considerable benefit to the SMA, wasn't it?

FR: Oh yes. Prior to that Canberra was the nearest airport. And anybody flying in, even flying between Sydney and Cooma - and you must remember that the head office for the Snowy Authority was in Sydney until about 1953, or I think it might have even been longer than that. I think it was about '57 before they,

the staff - all moved down to Cooma. And so there was a lot of travel backwards and forwards. And travelling by car, of course, it took you all day, because the gravel road from Cooma to Canberra was woeful. It would be the worst piece of road, I think, I was ever on in my life. It was so bad, that in places the drivers had got off the main piece of road and drove alongside.

KH: This is in 56, 57?

FR: Yes. It was an awful piece of road. It had been awful for a long time, too. There were big, big rocks, and big potholes in it, awful. The vehicles they had first off were Ford Pilots, and they had headlights that stuck up on pillars, and the road was so rough that it shook the lights off. It shook the grille out of one, one of the Ford Pilots, the grille fell out. Anyway, getting back to the airstrip. We worked on that - it was a no-nonsense job. Bob Driese was out there bellowing and roaring all the time and you could not stand around anywhere. You had to be working. If your regular piece of equipment had broken down you were put onto something else. And we broke the shorthaul earthmoving record there several times in one week with the tournapulls, because they were new pieces of machinery. And they were pretty good. Anyway, getting on towards the finish of that, doing the surface, the final surfacing of the strip, we were allowed three eighths of an inch error in 10 feet with the graders. And they had the boning rods out to take the levels all the way across - too high or too low, you would take a little more off. And that is the maximum amount of error that we were permitted.

KH: 10 feet in distance?

FR: Yes. Three eighths of an inch.

KH: From level? Three eighths variation from being dead level.

FR: And so most of it was better than that, anyway. That was the maximum that we were allowed, in the contract. They had a bit of trouble with the gravel they put on. It did not adhere properly and they lost quite a bit of time and money on it. But

even so, they still were able to finish the contract and the profit that was made was shared up with those who worked there, on a ratio of how long you had been on the job. So we all got bonus for working there. It was opened towards the end of 1956. You went from camp to camp without being able to remember much about what you did or what the time was. It was all a job and you generally remember where it was cold and when it snowed, but what particular year or month it may have been [was hard to remember]

KH: Did you work much overtime?

FR: Yes, we had a regular overtime. You had one hour every day excepting Friday, and you worked every second Saturday. And that was a regular eight-hour day. And so there was the regular overtime. And of course, the tax was not near as high and the incentive was much greater, but you are not talking politics now, are you?

KH: Now? No.

FR: I was talking to Hollywood George today, and it is one of the things that he said. If the Snowy started now and paid the type of money in comparison to other wages that they were paying at the time, he would leave his business in Vale Street and be there to sign up as one of the first.

KH: It sounded like it was very good money.

FR: The contractors paid better money. But for continuity of work, the Snowy was always better. And I stayed with the Snowy for that reason. I had a house with the Snowy, and I was looking for the security of the job.

KH: So you had a house in Cooma by then?

FR: Yes, the Snowy Authority - I got a house from them. I was working at the airstrip...and at that stage my wife had our first child, and they provided me with a house. At Number Two Ina (?) Place, in Cooma East. And it was a Cooma prefab. It was not a bad place either. You could see the grass growing through the cracks in the floor, when we were too poor to buy floor coverings for the first year. But it was a roof over our heads,

and that was something that was provided by the Snowy. It was not provided by most other organisations that you worked for. So after I left the - - -

KH: Sorry. What year did you get married?

FR: I was married just before I started with the Snowy.

KHL 54 or so?

FR: Yes.

KH: How many children do you have?

FR: Three, I have got three kids.

KH: Three. Did you actually do an apprenticeship?

FR: Apprenticeship what?

KH: In anything?

FR: No.

KH: How long did you go to school? What age were you when you left school?

FR: I went to the end of - what you call fourth year up here. Or Year 10. So that meant 6 years in primary school; 4 years at high school. I was not all that particularly interested in schoolwork. I was not any dunce. I performed better with certain teachers, teachers that would treat you like a human being were fine. But there was one teacher I didn't like. Unfortunately, she taught English. She also taught French, which I despised. They were the two subjects I failed in. English and French. And to think that a fellow would finish up doing the Snowy Magazine - - -

KH: That is right. That is the big irony. Have you any other christian names apart from Frank?

FR: Middle name Warren, which was my mother's maiden mame.

KH: And when were you born?

FR: On 29 January 1932.

KH: Where were you born?

FR: I was born at the only hospital in the little township of Orbost. That hospital was in Boundary Road.

KH: That seems appropriate that you went up the river.

FR: From one end of the Snowy to the other. Well, I left school - I went to work in my father's garage. He had an engineering works in Orbost. I served petrol, first job; mended tyres and tubes. And at that stage - it wasn't all that long after the war, the Second World War - rubber goods were very hard to get, and I had to repair holes in car tubes that you could stick your fist in, because you could not buy the things. They were still driving some pretty old cars. By golly, I wish I had grabbed hold of some of them at the time. There was one T Ford I can recall. There were still plenty of Chev 4s and Dodges and Erskines, Rugbys; no Bugattis or Rolls Royces, but pretty good old motor cars around at the time. I worked there for a couple of years, and my older brother read where the Snowy Authority was starting up in Cooma, and the government was going to spend at that stage, I think, the figure was 250 million pounds. And so we came up to get a two hundred and fiftieth of it.

KH: Right.

FR: I was only 18 when I first came up here. My brother was four and a half years older. And we went into a new field, went in cold, worked hard, deserved to make a lot of money. But because of the competition and because, as I said, the material that we were turning out complied with the local government building regulation, we were unaware of that. The council were not pushing it, in fact we found later that the building inspector was taking bribes, and so it was very hard for us to compete.

KH: What did he do after your little business folded?

FR: He stayed on there for a while. And then he went back to his trade. He was a qualified builder and carpenter, and moved down to Merimbula and helped build the church down there, built a few things about; went up to Gosford and settled in up there.

KH: He didn't stay with the Snowy?

FR: No, he never joined the Snowy. A pity really, that if we both had joined the Snowy when we first went there, we

would have been in right on the ground floor, and there was no doubt that we could have worked our way up to - because the money was good and the job was certainly secure. And it is a great pity that we don't have another organisation like that in Australia right now, that would take on the adventurers, the ones who were prepared to work to get ahead, to have a go. And there were so many people who came here for that very reason, just to have a go. It was an adventure. Even the migrants who were coming out - you speak to so many of the Italians who read about this new frontier out here. And they came out. They didn't come for life, they had no intention of coming for life. They came out here to sample some of that adventure. And they meant to make a few quid and go back home again. And they are still here in droves. There were not very many of them that did go back. They liked the life, the freedom, and of course, then everybody did get a fair go.

KH: Did you ever have any pets, like a cat or a dog, in any of the camps, I mean, in the mountains?

FR: Well, we were not permitted to have animals in the camp. You can imagine, if there was a cat or a dog around, somebody would take food out from the mess and they would feed it. So you would have more flies around. That was one of the fairly strict rules. Mind you, rules were made to be broken, and some bugger would have a dog, and there would be a cat hanging around, or whatever, and nobody would want to do the things in. But they were certainly discouraged. And I don't think anybody ever owned the animals that were there. Nobody and everybody, sort of owned them.

KH: So it was discouraged from the SMA's - not so much from the Park Trust?

FR: No. Well, I don't think I was aware that the Park even existed at that stage. My first recollection of the National Park was the superintendent, and I cannot remember his name at the moment, but he played football for Jindabyne.

KH: Was that Neville Gare?

FR: Neville Gare, it was, yes. And he was the first park officer that I knew at all. And certainly he did not have the pull, or anything like the power of the clowns we have got at the present moment.

KH: So things were fairly quiet on that score?

FR: Oh yes. The Snowy Authority ruled supreme then. Whatever the Snowy Authority wanted to do, they did. The first time that I heard that the Authority were prevented from doing anything was the construction of the Kosciusko Dam. And that was never completed. They never went ahead with it. But that was a dam to be built at Spencer's Creek, and there was to be a pipeline running from there to the power station below, and the water from there was to spill into Guthega. And because the Park would not permit them to dig a channel and cover it, it was in the fragile area, they would have had to tunnel underground. That was too expensive, the construction of the dam itself was too expensive because one of the abutments would have had to have been frozen all the time. The base material wasn't satisfactory, and so that part of the project was abandoned. But if you have a look at the early references to the Scheme and where the power stations were going to be, you will be surprised to see there were so many underground power stations. I guess this was because of the proximity of the Second World War, thinking of security.

KH: Otherwise, you think they would have put ....

(end of tape)

KH: Yes, that is right. I have not really thought very much about that, but they are. I suppose it is very expensive to put them underground. Because you have got to put your access tunnels in - into the ground.

FR: Yes. Well, there was to be a power station below Island Bend now, way down there they were going to drop water down through a station - it was smaller. And they - you see, the Snowy Authority was evolving, and methods were becoming better, better ways of building things. The equipment they were getting was bigger. The generating equipment was bigger and better.

KH: I have seen that Spencer's Creek Dam, the one you mentioned, the Kosciusko one. I have seen it on the maps. But I did not realise that they were also going to have an underground power station with it.

FR: There was another one below Windy Creek.

KH: They were going to?

FR: Yes. The power station was way below ground. And of course, the water would fall and be discharged into the tunnel, the trans-mountain tunnel from Island Bend to Geehi Dam.

KH: So there were quite a few major shifts in the way the thing was going?

FR: Oh, golly, yes. Sure. You see, to begin with, the Eucumbene Dam was not built where it was originally designed to go. It was further upstream, about where Teal Island is now, where the power line goes across it. That area. And the Public Works Department had started work there, they had started stripping. They had a camp in there and everything. And somebody in the design section came up with a better proposal, and that moved the dam further downstream, made it higher, built the coffer-dam, alongside it. And there is another coffer-dam not far from Old Adaminaby. So what they actually did was fill that valley completely. They couldn't fill it any further or they would have to have had more coffer-dams around. But they filled it as full as it would go. That meant that they could hold a lot more water in their main storage. They had to relocate the tunnel that took water

from Eucumbene across to Tumut Ponds, to bring it around further. I think the Snowy, the Snowy-Geehi tunnel, they were able to dig that at a higher level. I think they were originally going to have it lower down to have the water come in from Jindabyne. I would have to look at the original maps. I think I've got one here somewhere.........the original concept.

KH: Oh yes, I have got that at home.

FR: There is a section here - says exactly what they were going to build. But it is good to know that at least they were prepared to admit that there were better ways of doing things, than the original design.

KH: It was also the Tumut River/Murrumbidgee System was quite separate from the Murray/Snowy, at first, too, I believe.

FR: Yes. By raising the level of the Snowy-Geehi tunnel, they were able to utilise the Eucumbene as the one major storage area.

KH: Right. I also heard that the Department of Public Works was rather slow in putting that first Eucumbene Dam in. And that is partly why the SMA took over.

FR: Slow, they were pitifully slow. They were there for life. They were building permanent houses. They sort of had tip trucks and wheelbarrows and goodness knows how long they would have taken. But Sir William, a tremendous driving force, he knew the value of getting the work done quickly. The sooner you could have the dam built, the sooner you could start storing water. And water was money. And he wanted the dam built in four years. He knew it was a big contract. The Public Works Department said it was impossible, it couldn't be done. And the Authority went out to worldwide contract. And they threw the contract open, and it was taken by Kaiser Walsh, and Perini/Raymond, the American consortium, and they actually built that dam in 23 months. So they built it in less than half the time that the Public Works Department said it was impossible. They made a lot of money and the Authority were able to save so much more, because they could

start storing the water. They were actually storing the water before the dam was finished. They started to store the water in that - I was at the opening. And that must have been 1957. I had my uniform - I was in the security section then. And it rained, it rained all day, and we had all these dignitaries coming, and they had to drive down, and on to the wall of the dam, which was - it wasn't completed, of course, and it was very, very muddy and very, very slippery. And we were parking these cars, and our waterproof capes came to just below our knees and we were saturated. I think Senator Spooner was the Minister who opened it at the time, and he made a comment about if it continued raining like that they would have it full in no time.

KH: Is that what happened?

FR: True.

KH: Right. Although the spillway, I don't think, has ever had water on it.

FR: Yes, it has, yes. The spillway was designed by Ivor Pinkerton, just up the road here a little bit. And it was put in much later than the construction of the dam. The dam wall had been finished for years before they put the spillway in. The spillway went in round about 1967 and the bridge over it. It was always going to go in, of course. But it was one of the jobs that was not necessary, because the dam was no way near full. But as it was getting up towards that, they put that spillway in. And it certainly is designed to spill there in the case of an emergency. And that is all. Hopefully, it will never spill. But they did have the lake filled right up. In fact, they had gabions in the channel of the spillway to retain a bit more water. But it has spilt; they did release water over it and - - -

KH: Because now it has got a fence across it, I notice.

FR: Yes, well - - -

KH: I suppose it will just - and it goes right into midair.

FR: Yes, well, that was it. All they do is divert it away from the dam, and it will spill back down into the Snowy River.

Or that is Eucumbene River, there, isn't it?

KH: Yes, but the chute just sort of goes out into midair.

FR: That is the bit there that does not channel down the face, and undermine it. It shoots it out like a ski jump.

KH: Oh, I see.

FR: It dissipates the effect of rushing water. And let us hope that it never reaches that stage. In fact, all the spillways that we have got are there only as a safety measure. Even Blowering - the water in Blowering comes under the control of the Water Resources Commission. But when they release it for irrigation, we have a generator in at Blowering, and we generate power because it is available, with the release of water, you might as well generate.

KH: Yes, I have only seen that overflow once. I was there a couple of years ago over the spillway.

FR: Yes, I have seen it. It is the one that is more likely to spill, than any other, apart from the one at Khancoban, which, of course, is a regulating pond, it is not a dam for holding water for the sake of holding it or utilising it. That is there to regulate the flow of water from the Murray One and Two power stations, which comes back into the system. And if you did not have a dam there, each time we generated and released water, you would have a tremendous surge of water going down the river, and you would have it flooding, and then you would have it dry, and then you would have it flooding again. And so we release it into the Khancoban pondage, and it runs from there in a regular flow so that it maintains a regular height in the river.

KH: Coming back to pets, do you think many pets got away from the camps?

FR: Not so much from the camps, but from townships. Island Bend, for instance. I would say that the feral cats that are in the area would have emanated from Island Bend almost certainly. Dogs, you talk about dogs interbreeding with dingos, but I don't know of any. They may well have come from places like Adaminaby

or the properties around Adaminaby. People who had pets - I had a dog when I was at Eucumbene. It was a cross between a cattle dog and a bulldog. It looked like a boxer and it was all yellow. I don't think I ever saw a dog that could get beaten up by so many other animals, including the cat up the road, to think that the dog would run home when a cat had beaten it up - what a useless dog he was.

KH: So you think it was mainly from the townships?

FR: Yes.

KH: Island Bend, Cabramurra, Khancoban.

FR: They certainly had dogs. You will see in one of our films, you will see Alfie Millett's (Mewetts ?) cocker spaniel. Yes, there were dogs around. But there was a rule that they did not - that is how I came to get the dog that I had. A bloke, a Yugoslav fellow had one,and he was not allowed to have it in the camp. so he brought it down to me.

KH: Did you see many kittens? Most of the camps, I think, had a bit of a rubbish dump, and someone told me that that was often the place where you would find - like still today - where you would find stray cats.

FR: I don't recall any cats being there. But at Cumberland Camp near T3 power station now, it was a survey camp, an early camp in the Talbingo area, they had rubbish dump there, and that was inhabited by native cats.

KH: The spotted ones?

FR: Yes. I never saw them, but other people did. I had a look there. Other native animals that you rarely see, water rats - I watched water rats playing in a pond upstream from where the Blowering Dam is now. So their habitat would have been destroyed by Blowering Dam, but with the rising of the water, I guess, they would re-establish themselves. It is quite possible that they are still around. But I had binoculars. I did quite a bit of bird watching in those times,and I wondered what the movement was, and I was able to see them. I didn't move from where I was

because I had never seen water rats before. But that is what they were.

KH: Did you see any platypus?

FR: Oh yes. You see - you know platypus is fairly common compared to the water rat. I have only ever seen that one family of water rats. And platypus, you see those all over the place. I have caught them on a fishing line in the Murrumbidgee River. They are still in the Murray River over near Khancoban.

KH: They like running water. They would not do any good in the dams, would they?

FR: I don't know. I don't know of them being in the dam, they have to rely on a food supply, and it might be a bit hard to compete with - out in the muddy waters. I don't know. I have not seen any in Eucumbene.

KH: And their tunnels start in the water and go into the bank and then up to where it is dry. So in a dam, with the fluctuating water level, it probably would not be much good to them.

FR: No, it would not be much good for them. But they are certainly in the Murrumbidgee.

KH: Did you have a garden anywhere?

FR: Yes, I did. I always had a garden.

KH: But not in the small camps, I guess.

FR: Not in the small camps, because there was no - well, you were fed everything and ; your house wasn't there. I had a house in Cooma. I transferred from Cooma in 1960 to Eucumbene. I was there for four and a half years. And that is at about the 4000 foot level.

KH: The main camp at Eucumbene.

FR: Yes.

KH: You were there for four and a half years.

FR: Yes.

KH: With your wife and children?

FR: Yes. Security - I was the security officer there, the only one we had there. At that stage, there was a special com-

monwealth police officer, but attached to the Snowy Authority, and I was the only policeman in the camp. And you can imagine, a camp of that size, I suppose there would be 500 wages blokes there and there was a township of a fair size, and several hundred people. We had a shopping centre, which included a butcher's shop, general store, post office. There was - how many teachers at our school, there would have been two or three teachers at the primary school. The nearest state policeman was at Jindabyne. If you ever got into any trouble and had to rely on him, you could back it in, it would take him an hour to get there. He must have washed the car, polished his shoes and had a meal before he left. He made jolly sure that the time he got there that whatever trouble there would have been was well and truly defused. But we sure had some trouble at times.

KH: You told me a story before, about broken bottles, or something.

FR: Yes. I was called down to the wet canteen, fairly late, it would have been after closing time, which was 10 o'clock. I know I was in bed. And I went down and there was a brawl on,and I looked in the window before I went in. There was two great big blokes in there a lot bigger than me, and they were going hammer and tongs, and they were literally covered from head to foot in blood. One bloke only had the remnants of a singlet left hanging on his top part. Anyway, I took a deep breath and went in and separated them, and one fellow had had a broken midi glass rammed into the left side of his face and it cut him from under the jaw bone up past his ear in a circle, as though a small shark had attached itself to his cheek. And he was jabbed all around in that jagged cut. It came under his eye and back down past the corner of his mouth again. And they were fighting with the chairs and broken billiard cues and boots. They were fair dinkum. Anyway, I separated them, had a look at this fellow's face and said, "Well that is going to have be stitched. I had better go and ring the nursing sister." And while I was calling her on

the telephone, they got stuck into it again, and I had to go and break it up again. And I got the fellow with the cut face into the car and took him down to the nursing sister, who was pretty used to that sort of thing. And she just cleaned him up and I held the jagged pieces together while she sewed him. She didn't bother calling the doctor. And I can still recall her putting in one stitch under the jawline, and she said, "Rather than deaden that, this is just the same, having the needle stuck into you, whether it is to deaden the thing or whether I am putting the stitch in." And that fellow was gritting his teeth and I felt it myself. You can imagine, sticking one of those curved needles in, straight through the meat of the cut on both sides and then tying it shut. He didn't get any deadening - anyway, I took him back up to the camp, and he went down and had a look in the mirror, apparently, and was so annoyed with what he saw and how he had been cut about, that he got a cane cutting knife and went looking for the bloke who had cut his face. And he found this fellow in his room, and he was with an Italian bloke. And they opened up the door and saw him with the knife and he took a swing at them and they slammed the door shut and locked and bolted it from the inside. And while he was pounding on the door, they went out the window and came running up to my place again. And I had to get out of bed again, went back down to the camp. I told my wife to ring the police at Jindabyne; to ring the admin officer who was in charge of the whole area, the camp area, a fellow called John Henderson, and let him know where I had gone. And I went straight down, down to the camp. Of course, we weren't armed. We didn't have any more than an identification card on us, which, in a situation like that is absolutely useless. I didn't put on my cap, because they all knew who I was anyway. But I went down into the camp, and that was a bit hair-raising, when you had to stick your head around the side of a barrack, when you were looking for somebody who was supposed to be wielding a cane cutting knife, and there was still people around, this

was getting on towards half past one in the morning, I suppose. And I can still remember C.D. [Don] Reid, when I spoke to him, I said, "Did you see a bloke with a knife?" He said, "Bloody oath, I did. I said, 'What are you doing with that?' and he hit me straight me across the cheeks of the arse with this, with a backhander," he said, "and I didn't ask him any more questions." Anyway, I found the fellow, finally, in his room, and I sat down and talked to him. I didn't go crook, sympathised with him a bit, and he finished up in tears. Big, burly bloke and all that. But the fact that he had been cut up - I didn't get the cane cutting knife either. I asked him where it was, and I never did find it. I don't know what he did with it. And after settling everything down and getting these people back into their rooms, I went back to my vehicle, and there I found the admin officer who had called two of the biggest blokes in the area - it was ..Aub....Gatehouse and Normie Grant, I recall, and they were sitting in the vehicle outside the camp. They didn't come in. And so was the bloody policeman. He had arrived, and they were sitting outside the camp. They did not come down to help me one little bit. And when they saw that the situation had been defused, they came down. John Henderson I recall, spoke to the fellow who had caused the bit of trouble and started to bounce him a bit, and the fellow bounced back, and I had to quieten it all down all over again. Anyway, there were brawls like that. That was one of bad ones, but there were plenty more.

KH: Did the guy stay on? Did the guy that - - -

FR: Yes, they did. Actually, they were the best of mates. They were two Liverpool Irishmen.

KH: Oh, they were Irish?

FR: Yes. Two Liverpool Irishmen. And, of course, I was pretty annoyed about this business of being called out twice in the one night and having to get the police over. And I made the suggestion that something should be done about them. But the next day, they were buddies again.

KH: It was probably the influence of alcohol, I suppose.

FR: Oh yes. I don't know whatever caused the thing - but one of them said something that upset the other bloke, and he just broke the glass in one movement, he just broke the glass and rammed it into the bloke's face.

KH: They would not necessarily have political differences like some of the other nationalities,

FR: No, it was some personal thing. One of them was an ex-policeman, I found out later on. Anyway, they stayed on. They didn't stay on for any great length of time. There were so many of these blokes who would push off and go off to another camp.

KH: Were there many fights between nationalities?

FR: Between nationalities, no. It was generally between Yugoslavs. The Yugoslavs fought with the Serbs and the Croatians. They would argue all the bloody time. And from my own experience with the Yugoslavs, they would never hit you in the face, maybe in the back of the head when you were not looking. They had a funny way of fighting. There was an altercation in the same wet canteen at Eucumbene. And they grabbed each other, instead of punching, they sort of clutched each other and pulled them in - and one bloke bit a big piece out of the other fellow's top lip. It looked like they were kissing each other.

KH: My God!

FR: They called me down to the canteen. I went down and I found the piece on the floor. And we put it into a middy glass, and of course, the fellow was there with this big hunk missing out of his top lip. And I grabbed him and the piece of lip, rang the doctor at Berridale, Dr Sheddon it was, and told him I was coming in. And I took this fellow, who was terribly sorry for himself at the time. And when I got it over there, the doctor did not sew that piece back in. He said, "Your lip is very, very pliable, and if you grab hold of it you will see that you can pull up a big piece, and what he did was sort of pull it in. I guess the fellow would have had a cockeyed-looking grin for a

long time. But he had sort of half his top lip was bitten right off. Another time there was a blue down in the camp between Yugoslavs. And I don't know what had upset the bloke, but he was so angry that he could scarcely talk. He was shaking with rage. And he went to his room and got a gun. And fortunately, I had got down to the camp just when this had happened. Now, what had led up to it was some sort of argument between the two. And one bloke had gone to the clothes line and was coming back with his arms full of clothes, and he walked past this other fellow's room. So he saw the opportunity, when this bloke was walking away from him with his arms full, he ran up behind him and kicked him in the back of the knee with the effect of bringing him down. Then they had some more words, and the first fellow went back to his room and got his gun. And he was - I don't know whether he even saw me, but I suppose he did. But he was so angry, that he was sort of jabbering to himself, it was almost gibberish. And he was just shaking with anger. And he came back past me with the gun, and I hit out of his hands as he went past. And it was cocked and had a bullet in it. I don't doubt that he would have shot the bloke. But he was just uncontrollable, not against me, just as well, but angry with this other fellow. And I had a talk to him until he calmed down, got him back in his room.

KH: What was he angry about?

FR: I never found out. something this other fellow had said, I don't know whether it was political or not. But they were arguing all the time. And I used to ask them what it was about, and their only explanation was that, "I'm a Serbian/Croatian," that was it. It seemed to be the Croatians were the ones that would argue. The Serbs were, to my way of seeing it, were really very placid. But the Croatians were the ones who. Similarly, North and South Italians. The northern Italians regarded the southern Italians as dirt farmers, and they were only qualified to hold a shovel in their hand, all they were good for. And they would argue. And their way of arguing, of course,

if you don't understand the language, it seemed to me as though they would be ready to come to blows. But it was just ordinary old family arguments, as far as they were concerned. But it was day after day. We were out on the gangs that they had the six Italians in. Most of them were from the North, but there were a few from the south. As far I was concerned, they were all good workers. But no, they would bloody argue.

KH: There is a similar sort of division in the Germans - the north Germans and the south Germans. There is also a religious difference there. In quite a few of the European countries, I think there is a difference between the northerners and the southerners. There are old sort of animosities.

FR: Oh, I don't know about - the Germans generally stuck together fairly. We didn't have much trouble with them. German fitters - funny thing about the German fitters - always seemed to be the German Germans, they were the - seemed to be the real Hun type German - the fitters.

KH: They were the ones that did everything thoroughly, too?

FR: Oh yes.

KH: Very reliable.

FR: Oh yes. Well, they were reliable. The Italians were pretty reliable, too. But they - you see, your Italian would be a good stonemason, he would be good with a pick and shovel. But the German would be a good driver, a good fitter, plant mechanics, and so on.

KH: And they say the Czechoslovakians were mainly on the hydrology side; is that right?

FR: Yes, I did not have any Czechs either. I can recall French, Portugese.

KH: And the Yugoslavs were - - -

FR: Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, I worked with at times, Czech rarely. Yes, I can recall one Czech fellow we had. Dutch - there were characters amongst them, the same as there are characters with the Australians. I would like to say, too, that

the hardest person to get on with out in the camps was the old Australian. He was ignorant; he wasn't prepared to make any changes; resented these bloody wogs who would come in and live off the smell of a greasy rag. But the opportunities were there just as much for him as for anybody else. And the fact that they were able to get ahead and save their money, whereas he generally drank it - didn't last for all that long. I suppose the old Australians petered out.

KH: But English and the Australians seemed to be mainly on the administrative side, on the office jobs.

FR: Yes, you would frequently find them. Although one of the Latvians, I can recall, Johnny Uts, was in the office for long time. He was another character, Johnny Uts, U-T-S, "Up to Shit." That was what his name was, U-T-S, "Up to Shit", "Johnny Up to Shit." He drank brandy. He finished up, he drank himself to death, but he was a good bloke.

KH: Getting back to things you planted, what sort of things do you remember you planted in the garden at Eucumbene?

FR: The rose, Peace, grew very well at Eucumbene. It grew better there than anywhere else.

KH: A rose, yes.

FR: It was very clayey soil up there. I was mainly a vegetable gardener. And out there, of course, with the frosts, you didn't get much of a chance to grow things like tomatoes and cucumbers. But beans and peas and cabbages, and lettuces, yes.

KH: Did any of the things you planted get away and spread?

FR: No, we ate the bloody lot.

KH: No, shrubs - - -

FR: No, the rose we took with us. Shrubs, yes, I can recall when we moved into that house, somebody had planted a tree next door which suckered into my lawn. It was one of those silver poplar things that sends out suckers. And one of them was growing down near the railway crossing. It was a bugger of a thing. Pussy willows grew fairly well out there too. I didn't

plant any of those. We would have a few flowers in the garden, but they were generally just the annual type things and - - -

KH: There are not many - I have driven through the old camp there, and there are not very many things left, not in comparison to Island Bend.

FR: What about the broom bush?

KH: Yes, gorse is very - the Spanish broom is very strong at Island Bend. But I cannot remember -

FR: It was very strong at Eucumbene.

KH: Was it?

FR: Yes, down in the valley a little bit, but more out at Adaminaby, it was bad at Adaminaby. And the lupins, of course, which were in evidence at Cabramurra and also out at Tooma Dam. I have got rather a liking for lupins, and I think they add a wonderful splash of colour. I don't know what the National Park might think about them, but I think it is beautiful to drive through and see that mass of colour and those beautiful flowers growing there, round about now. They grow towards the end of the November right up through Christmas. And they are growing wild, and whether they are going to do any harm I don't know. But I would much prefer to see lupins growing out there than to see feral cats, or pigs, or foxes. And I was absolutely astounded to see the damage that pigs do. My first introduction was at a level spot that was all dug up and I thought it had been dug with a rotary hoe. It had been so neatly turned over. And somebody said, "No, it's wild pigs." And it was such a big area. I couldn't believe it.

KH: So they were active years ago.

FR: Oh yes. But they are getting worse.

KH: But you remember them from the first years?

FR: Yes, the pigs were certainly there. I have heard of them - yes, from those early days, around about the middle 50s, people had seen pigs. I didn't see any until - I saw my first one at Happy Jack's, and that was not all that long ago, in the 70s.

KH: I am trying to get some information about the state of the country. What are your earliest memories? This is of the higher country. Not the Main Range, but just the Park and country in general, in terms of burning and grazing, what was the condition like? What would you describe the condition of the catchments, like, in those early years, in the 50s?

FR: Yes, well, I went up there probably as early as about 1951, or '52. used to go skiing up there quite a bit. And they were still grazing up there if I rightly, although the Snowy Authority were instrumental in stopping that together with the National Park. There did not seem to be as much of the undergrowth about. Over at Tooma Road, 1956, I can recall them putting through the transmission line, and that was cut by hand with axes, and I don't recall them even having the old Bluestreak chainsaws there. And they went through the stand of Alpine Ash, the ash timber. And I thought what a terrible waste, because I came from an area down in Victoria, well-known for its timber milling, and to see these beautiful trees just cut down and left, sort of cut across my grain a bit. And I remember that probably more so, because I recognised the trees as being of good quality.

KH: So they didn't utilise any of the Alpine Ash that was cut down for the power lines?

FR: No. I was told by a sawmiller in Tumut, that he wanted to go in and bring the timber out, and they would not let him. And so he wrote, he made a song and dance about it. He wrote to the politician. And he told me that he was visited and told to pull his head in; that nobody was going to shift that timber, and that if he continued to make advances that they would put him out of business, which I thought was a bit rough.

KH: That is strong stuff.

FR: I'll say it was.

KH: But why not? Were they afraid that he might cause more damage and soil erosion in the process of removing the logs?

FR: They didn't say, they just said, "NO, you are not getting it."

KH: Because they are huge swathes across the countryside.

FR: That is right, and none of it, none of it was utilised.

KH: And beyond Cabramurra, west of Cabramurra, it is mostly Alpine Ash. We went through a lot of it.

FR: Well, he was the Tumut side, and he was in the sawmilling business, and I have got no idea what his name was. But he told me that himself, personally, because at that stage I was with the Commonwealth Police,and I was fighting for what I thought was a fair go for everybody. And I saw that as being a dreadful waste. And as I had said before, I recognised the quality of timber, and to see it lying there - you can still see it up around Cabramurra - and it is a pity that it couldn't have been utilised one way or another, seeing it was cut down.

KH: What about in the bottoms of the dams? Like, quite a few of the dams flooded timbered country? Was there any - - -

FR: Ok. Say Eucumbene, the big dam, for instance. Now, the timber that was in that area falls into probably three types. I could not tell you the correct names of them, but the blue gum, white gum, and the black sally. And the black sally is of pretty little use, excepting for shade, perhaps. It is not even good for firewood. That is the olivey-green - - -

KH: Yes, I know black sallies, yes.

FR: Now, the white gum, it was the better between the white and the blue gum. White gum was used for firewood. It was also used for fence posts, because it didn't rot. Blue gum did. So most of the timber in that area was already utilised and you had to look for white gum when you were building a fence. In fact, they got to the stage where they were just buying the posts from down the coast at Hain and Co. when they were doing fencing contracts. The local farmers had already cut out most of the good stuff. So nearly all of the timber that went under water at Eucumbene would have been blue gum, or sally. I don't think there was, at that level, there was no alpine ash in that area. It grows further up on the

side above, it grows about four and a half thousand feet, whereas the top water level of Eucumbene is 3,600 ft, or something.

KH: What about in the valley of the Tumut Gorge? Like Talbingo Dam?

FR: Talbingo Dam, well, that is a different type of timber over there again. And again, it is down below the level that the alpine ash, which was the only - well, it was certainly the best quality - I am not all that familiar with the types of timber that grow on the western side of the range. You know, they have got things like Manna gums and messmates and spotted gums, and I am not familiar with those. So what we lost, what timber that went under water, the benefit that we gained from the utilisation of that water further downstream, there is no comparison. Blowering Valley, that was a nice valley. You see, that had been a peaceful, cleared, valley from the time it was first discovered when Hume and Hovell went down through there in 1823. But the Aborigines had been in that area for thousands of years, I guess - one of their great hunting areas, because the kangaroos would come down out of the timbered area onto the grassed area. And that was a nice valley.

KH: Did the Snowy ever make any moves to remove farmhouses and locate them elsewhere? Like, there was the pub down at Talbingo, the old Talbingo, and there was also the homestead there, the big property that the Days were at for a period.

FR: Yes. Talbingo Station, yes.

KH: Was there ever any talk of - like today - - -

FR: No. It was not the sort of house that could be shifted. I can remember being in Talbingo Station, and my memories of that were that the floorboards were hand-hewn with an adze, so were the door - the door jamb - the timber around the door. And so well done that the marks were very, very small. You had to sort of look twice. But it was not made for removal. Too much trouble. Far better to pay the fellow out, and I think the place was probably demolished. I was not there at the time,

and I don't think it just went under water. Most of the places were demolished, and the roofing iron taken and anything that was of use to anybody was taken somewhere else. But the Authority didn't sell them off. I think they allowed the person who owned the property to dispose of them. And the hotel was the same. I was there at the auction sale of the hotel, but that was no great - - - the greatest loss in there was the mural on the wall above the fireplace.

KH: What was on that?

FR: That was drawn by a fellow called Morris, was his surname.

KH: Rufus Morris?

FR: Rufus Morris, who used to do the cartoons for 'It's moments like these, you need Minties.' And the story behind it was that it was a great fishing location for the elite, the fly fisherman, and it was way out in the back blocks of nowhere. And so these characters used to come there, and they would catch trout and drink. After some fair sort of a binge in the hotel, the story is that Rufus Morris was so drunk that he could hardly stand up. They held him up in the air near the wall and with a piece of charcoal out of the fireplace he drew a fly-fisherman chasing a cricket. And the cricket was taking leaps; the fly-fisherman had a landing net, and a wicker creel over his shoulder and a rod in the hand, and he was trying to catch this cricket. The look of astonishment on this cricket's face as he was trying to get away, and the caption underneath was, "The dry fly man." The cartoon has been produced, or reproduced - it was reproduced first on the wall of the wet canteen in Talbingo, the wages wet canteen, and then again in a smaller drawing, which is now framed, in the Country Club at Talbingo - the local watering hole. But the big mural was about - must have been about 5 ft high by about 8 or 10 ft long, I suppose, quite a big one. And not a mark in it that was out of place, or anything. You know, the look on the fellow's face and the little moustache, and everything, it was

very well done.

KH: Did you meet any stockmen in those early times, up the Crackenback Valley, elsewhere in the mountains?

FR: No. I don't recall seeing stockmen anywhere, no, not at all.

KH: Do you remember much evidence of burning, of burning off?

FR: Yes, I fought a fire. I fought one of the bushfires that came down. It started - it must have started down near Talbingo in January of 1965. I don't recall any of the bigger fires prior to that, but there certainly were plenty. We didn't start that fire, we, the Authority. Nobody in the Authority was involved in it, but I think somebody who had been up the river fishing probably started it. It was on the eastern bank and it was burning in a pretty inaccessible place. And it burnt off in the direction of Lobb's Hole, the Ravine, Yarrangobilly, and it also jumped the river. And we fought it on the western side. That was about the first thing I did when I got to Talbingo, was go off and fight that fire. We fought it all night. And we cut it off using rake hoes, and we worked like dogs. I lost a bet over that, too. I bet a bloke that I had bigger blisters than he did. And I had blisters, I know, and they had burst and the blood had run between my fingers back. And I reckoned I had bigger blisters than he did. But he showed me his and I had to concede right on the spot, because, by golly, he had some blisters, blisters was up right the full length of his little finger.

KH: From the heat.

FR: No, from the handle of the rake hoe. The rake hoe is a hoe on one side which is fairly broad, say, around about a foot. And on the opposite side was the tines of a rake, so that you could rake through underbrush and you could use the blade of the hoe to cut small shrubs and so on. And we were in a place where a dozer could not get to. And we cut this trail, firebreak. As the fire

was burning around below us, it was a great incentive to get that firebreak finished, because if were one little bit too slow, the fire would have been underneath us and burnt up on us, and we could not have got out. Anyway, we beat it by, I suppose, not more than 10 minutes. Pretty dramatic stuff at the time, I suppose, and I know we were well and truly buggered after working there. But like, I said, we had to, we worked flat out because we knew we had to beat it. If we didn't, if we had have pulled out, we had time to pull out, but if we had the fire would have got away and it would probably would have burnt Batlow. But we had the opportunity and we took it and we beat it.

KH: Is that the same fire that burned towards Kiandra?

FR: Yes, it burned up through the Ravine. It burned out what was left of the old workshop in the Ravine, including an old waggon and the only calendar that I have - of Cobb and Co's - that I had ever heard of. The calendar was on the wall, the Cobb and Co calendar. That burned out too , so did the water wheel they had down there.

KH: The remains of any timber?

FR: And it burned up there so fiercely that it created its own windstorm, it ripped trees out of the ground. It was hard to believe - we heard it roaring, and we heard it roaring on our side of the river, too. And when you have got a fire roaring down on you like that, you always find that little of extra energy to lift your game a bit. It was very fierce up through there.

KH: It burnt all that Mount Tantangara country out.

FR: Yes, yes it did. It burnt right up through there. That was a bad one.

KH: And all round Currango, I suppose.

DE: And I might add, too, that there was not one park ranger in our section, that ever came near us. The Snowy Authority beat that fire.

KH: Well, you were interested in protecting your installations, I suppose, people.

FR: Well, we were interested in protecting Batlow. We knew that if we didn't beat it - - -

KH: Oh, it went that way as well?

FR: It jumped the river, yes. We were on the western side of the river.

KH: The western side of Tumut?

FR: Yes, the Tumut River, in those rough hills - well, it was where Talbingo Dam is now. It was where it sort jumped across there and went up those steep sides. We cut it off. There was a road in there. There was a forestry track, and we burnt back off that to meet the fire. But we had to cut down to the river. And that is what we did, we came down, I don't know how far - perhaps 1000 feet, with a gang. I suppose there were only half a dozen of us in it. But the fire had burned around above us too, and we had one of the members of that gang, standing up there with his rake hoe stopping the rocks that were dislodged from the undergrowth as the fire burned through, because as it burned through the rocks were dislodged and came bounding down. If there was anything too big, and he could see it coming, he would yell out the order to watch out. So we would watch out and get out of the road as the big boulders came down, but anything that was big enough we would stop with the rake hoe.

KH: Did you see much soil erosion, then, in the 50s?

FR: No, look, the Snowy Authority was tremendously conscious of any soil erosion. Now when we were putting those roads in, say through the Alpine Way, later around Tooma, you know, we dozed through and we put the culverts in, and there were crews that came along later on and grassed all that area. I can remember when first went up to Perisher in 55, January 55, seeing these blokes working on the side of the road, pegging in sod with pegs that they had cut from timber. That's a peg driven in small end first with a branch that stuck out the side, so that you had - like the other end of a J curve, pegging down the sod, pegging down willow - hooks of willow, what do you call a small willow

tree that is like a whip? They were weaving that too. And they were very, very conscious of preventing any soil erosion. We were not there to build dams to have them filled up with bloody silt. But I didn't see - there wasn't all that much.

KH: There must have been some at times. I mean, there must have been times when some of the rivers ran rather muddy, when the bulldozers were active - - -

FR: No, I don't - we certainly went across rivers.

KH: You don't remember - the rivers always ran fairly clear?

FR: Sure. We could lie down and drink out of any of them, at any stage. And it was great to be able to drink that water. You see, the highest altitude I was in would have been White's River, up in that gorse country up there, and there we had the benchline cut around that. But I don't recall any - apart from the original damage - no run-off, no soil erosion. At Perisher, the aqueduct bench that was put around, that cut a fair sort of a scar around the side. But, no, it held fairly well. There wasn't much in the way of bad erosion. I have seen plenty worse. The farm where I was reared, born and bred, we had a bad landslide down there after heavy rain, where the whole side of the hill slipped and disappeared. The house - we had a small hut in one section, and it took everything, including the brick chimney. There was not one little bit of the hut, not a brick, not a pier, nothing. It just slipped and took everything with it. And so I know what soil erosion looks like. And there was nothing, nothing that I can recall at any stage that was really bad. Even though, around Island Bend and that area the mud was almost unbelievable. But it did not - I suppose it might have run into the under

.......alongside it, but there was no bad soil erosion. And like I said, the Authority was very, very conscious and aware of this, and they stabilised the roads with willow trees, right in those very early stages.....

(end of tape)

FR: Just past the cemetery and they grew thousands of these willow cuttings. They experimented with different types of grasses that would grow in the upper reaches. They experimented all the time. They tried their very, very best. And I don't think there was an establishment in Australia at the time, even the CSIRO, that was doing any work in that field of growing grasses. So I think the Authority has got to get credit where it is due. They certainly were aware and they certainly tried. I also heard, too, that the Authority were the first, it was the first organisation in Australia to put up advisory speed signs on their roads. They were certainly the first organisation to put seat belts in their vehicles and make them compulsory. You would get the sack if you didn't wear your seat belt. So they were certainly up with the times, and they were trying.

KH: The Snowy, of course, was very concerned about the condition of the catchments and moved fairly quickly to remove grazing above four and a half thousand feet.

FR: Yes, they did that ..... on the grazing.

KH: So there must have been some fair amount of evidence that the country had been abused above that level.

FR: I was not involved with that, but I don't recall ever seeing anything in - yes, I guess the feet of stock may have done damage. But now I come to think of it, I talked to people like old Mr Russell - - -

KH: Which Russell?

FR: Mention a few.

KH: Leo?

FR: Leo Russell, yes, nice bloke.

KH: The guy who died a couple of years ago.

FR: Yes, he did. Well, OK, I talked to him about these sort of things, because I was always interested in the mountains, the Aborigines and the history of it. And he said that his father used to graze the stock up around the Happy Jack's area, and he said they used to go up there each year. They would go up there

for the spring grazing, and when they left before the snows came in Autumn, the last thing that they would do would be set fire to the coarse grasses, burn it off when they left. Then when they went back the following year, there would be nice green shoots. And they controlled the area in that way. He said they had horses up there, too. He said - just as a kid - I suppose Leo must have been in his sixties at that stage. But, he said, when he was a kid, that must have sort of brought us back to the twenties, maybe a bit before. And his father before him had been grazing stock up in that area, cattle, horses. I don't recall them having sheep up there. But certainly they had sheep up there before that, because they had sheep at Kiandra when they discovered the gold in 1860. It was Pollock's sheep that were being grazed.

KH: Yes, that is right.

FR: They certainly had sheep up there. But the Abos used to burn the place, too. You see, the very first recording, I think it was Lhotky who came down - he was - a surveyor who came across - was it Lhotky who came across this side?

KH: He was a naturalist, yes, he came down from Sydney.

FR: Yes. Well, he crossed over and I think he wrote in his journal that the mountains were encased with smoke, where the Aborigines had been burning off when they were harvesting the moths, Bogong moths that they used to get up there. Maybe you could talk to Aub Hosking on that, because he is the great authority around here on the Aborigines. I understand that they found three definite trails from Monaro, where the Aborigines crossed the Monaro and went up into the mountains in the summer, to harvest the moths and feast on them. And they certainly burnt them up there.

KH: The SMA must have been - they must have been concerned enough, because they - I mean they must have been very concerned about the amount of silt that might get into their dams and interfere with the turbines and so on, to push the grazing out, be-

cause they became the big lever to remove graziers, from what I understand. And they were also prepared to pay the Lands Department whatever they lost that they didn't get from the grazing leases.

FR: I didn't know that.

KH: Well, it was not an enormous amount of money, but it was quite substantial.

FR: But, of course, the Authority - lot of respect for were ultra-careful. They weren't prepared to take any risk. And so it was either all or nothing, I suppose. You can't say, "Well, we will half grazing or quarter grazing." Whereas they had grazing - they said, "OK, well, we will have no grazing." And I know that they were instrumental in preventing any grazing up there.

KH: And now, with the dams, can they flush the dams out, do you know? I mean, is there a - if you get silt into the bottom of them - - -

FR: The concrete dams you can.

KH: Not the earth ones?

FR: It would be a little bit difficult.

KH: They have a diversion tunnel still, underneath, don't they?

FR: Yes, they have still got the diversion tunnel round at Eucumbene - yes, they could open up there. But I think the tremendous pressure in some of those tall dams - I think if you opened up the sluice, you might tear your tunnel out. I know they were worried about Talbingo Dam at one stage. During a dispute with one of the unions, the operators were not - had threatened to stop releasing water, or something. And it looked as though they may have had to open the diversion tunnel, or otherwise it would have spilt over the spillway. They didn't want that, you see. And they were very, very apprehensive about it. It didn't get to that stage - the operators were still operating and they were releasing - - -

KH: So the old tunnel, the diversion tunnel, could be

opened from the surface somewhere?

FR: Yes. But the pressure of water - because you have got 162 metres of head of water there - 500 feet of water.

KH: But the concrete ones there is a valve in the bottom that can be opened reasonably safely.

FR: Yes. I don't recall when they opened it last. But I don't think there has been a great deal of sediment in there. Rotting leaves - one thing that I recall from Lake Eucumbene - we used to draw our water from Lake Eucumbene, that at a certain time of the year, something to do with the temperatures, that the water would turn over. This was the way it was explained to me. And the drinking water at home was so bad you would swear that you had half a dozen trout stuck in the waterpipe somewhere and you were drinking the water straight off them - that is what it tasted like. It was all but slimy, and it had an awful - everything you cooked in it. You boiled the spuds in it, they tasted like a trout.

KH: Or a dead trout!

FR: When the water remains a certain temperature on the bottom and fairly cold, in the wintertime the water gets colder on the top. I think then there was some sort of a convection current that would take the water down, and bring up this other water that had been down near the bottom, and we would be getting that into our water supply. And it did - it tasted bloody awful. I understand that tests have been made and there is not much siltation inside the dams at all.

KH: They have done some depth, whatever - - -

FR: I understand they have.

KH: They have. I would like to get some figures on that sort of thing.

FR: You had better talk to people like Frank Milner. He is a fellow who could - - -

KH: Does he still work for the SMA?

FR: Yes, he does. He has worked for them a long time.

KH: Oh, does he?
FR: He has been there longer than I have.
KH: Is that right? And there was a time when, I think, after Talbingo Dam was built and started to fill, there was some earth tremors.
FR: No, that was Eucumbene.
KH: Was it Eucumbene?
FR: Maybe there was - I don't recall any being over at Talbingo. But there certainly was after Eucumbene had been filled. I could give you the exact date, because I wrote something about it when I was doing the history of the Head Office building. I was at Polo Flat at the time, so it was before 1960. It was somewhere, say, 1958, 59, about that period. And I think it was in the first quarter of the year. And there was quite a significant earth tremor, the largest that we have ever felt here. And it came in the daytime. I have a feeling it may have been not long after lunch, I am not sure of that. I was standing on point duty at Polo Flat, and the rumble and the roar that came with it, made me duck. I automatically ducked and lifted my arm and looked up. I didn't know where the noise was coming from. I didn't see anything. And so, I suppose, I assumed that it must have been coming from above, because I recall ducking, lifting my arm and looking up and seeing the power cables whipping backwards and forwards. Don Jones, the sergeant, who was in the little office, shot out of the door like a pea out of a peashooter. And he thought the train had run into the back of a building. He didn't wait to have a look to see whether it was or not. But that was the type of roar. It sounded like a train coming down the track.
KH: This was at Polo Flat?
FR: This was at Polo Flat. The epicentre was downstream from the Eucumbene Dam.
KH: Thank you.
FR: The hotel at Jindabyne was damaged; the hotel at Berridale had a wall cracked; the ceilings split down at Scientific Services

......; bricks fell out of the chimney in Zerros' store, which is on the corner about where the ice creamery is now, the corner of Bombala and Sharp Street, just past the roundabout, that corner there. That was Zerros's - bricks fell into the street there. Other chimneys were cracked. At Head Office, the front part of the building had been completed and - it was in two contracts, and where they had finished one contract and joined into that, they had poured concrete on to a ledge. It was only about an inch wide, maybe it was a bit more. And the building continued. And down in the basement section was the security office. And our bosses were there, Pat O'Dea and George Oliver. And I know that - they have told me since, that they heard the roar; they looked up and saw the wall, the ceiling pulling away from the wall. And they didn't ask any questions either, nor were there any pleasantries of who should leave through the door first.
KH: Can you remember the date of this?
FR: I have it written.
KH: About 1957, 58.
FR: 58 or 9.
KH: January 59. When was Eucumbene Dam finished?
FR: 57, it started filling. So it probably would have been finished not many months after that. But that tremor would certainly be recorded on seismic stations around, because it was quite significant. And somebody said it had something to do with the settling of Bass Strait, which I think was a lot of hogwash. I think it was almost certainly triggered by the additional weight of water in Eucumbene, because it must have been quite a body of water there. And, of course, land keeps on moving, nothing as bad we're got in California. I would not know what force it was. It was not called an earthquake, it was called an earth tremor. But it did frighten everybody. My wife, who was home on her own, with the eldest kid who was - I think I probably had two kids at that stage - the eldest one would have

been out playing somewhere, and would have been say, three or four. I know my wife finished up in tears because she heard the noise and didn't know what it was. Maybe something - a truck had crashed - and her first thought was the safety of the kids. And she went outside and called and he didn't answer. Whether he was frightened by the noise, but he was over the back fence and didn't answer. She got a bit frantic looking for him. So it was a fair amount of noise involved, that rumble and roar, of the earth tremor.

KH: Enough to cause some structural movement.

FR: Oh yes.

KH: Were there any others, later on?

FR: There have been others, but you slept through them and didn't know that they had happened. That was certainly the biggest.

KH: Have there been others that have been documented after the filling of Talbingo Dam or Blowering Dam?

FR: Not that I know of.

KH: I mean, there has been documentation elsewhere in the world apparently, with dams - I mean, it is quite logical, this incredible weight on this part of the crust, must bring - - -

FR: You know, the structure of the earth, as we went through the - driving the tunnels through the mountains, it is not all solid rock through there. You know, you come to your faults, and these faults have been moving for millions and millions of years. What is the age of Australia - about five thousand million years old, isn't it?

KH: I don't know. It is a lot.

FR: It has been moving all that time.

KH: It is very ancient.

FR: And I had the good fortune of being able to go through the tunnels with the geologist who showed me these ......cracks and fissures and the big faults. Some of the faults were so bad, they knew when they were coming because they would drill ahead,

and they knew where they were. And when the drillers would reach that position, they would start to take it very, very carefully, because you have got to realise that in a bad fault, which might be several feet through, with the porous material leading up to the top. If you have got a lake up on the top and you start to get into the porous material underneath, you can get to the stage where you are flooded out. That has happened. We did not have anything like that, apart from one particular section in the Snowy-Island Bend tunnel. And if you have a look on your maps you will see that that is the only tunnel - you have got this dog leg in it. And that dog leg was put in there specifically so that the tunnel could cross the fault at more of a right angle than an oblique angle, so that they were not in the fault for as long. They knew the fault was there, they had to go through it. And they did have terrible trouble, because as soon as you break into it, the material falls out. And as it falls out, it falls out of the roof. And so you have got to stabilise the roof. And they were driving railway track into it with a battering ram, suspended from the ceiling on those steel sets. They set those up to hold the rock. And they had - I don't what the battering ram was made from, but it certainly was a sizeable hunk of timber with a whole shift of blokes hanging on to ....ramming this backwards and forwards on to the railway track to drive that in. And then they suspended that up in the air prop it up. It wasn't the nicest place to work, down there. So when they had the ceiling stabilised, they could dig out from under it, and they dug that with pick and shovel, they didn't get machinery into it. Dig that out, shore it up, put in steel sets as close up as they could again to give support. And so they would go through these faults.

KH: Just to go back to the environment, what is the biggest change you have seen in the environment in terms of tree cover and that sort of thing, over those, now 30 years?

FR: Yes, looking at the early photographs, even of Cooma North, when the Snowy first started, set up the town, you could

see that the trees now are much higher and better looking than they were then. Whether it was a droughty time - but looking across to where the head office building is now and the housing in Cooma North, even the native pines seem to have grown so much better. Whether it is the fact that they have got more water up there from gardens, because you can see the timber, it is fairly sparse in those early photographs. You looked across briar bushes and not very many trees around where - at the top of the hill as you come into Cooma North, looking across where head office is, down towards the cemetery, there were no trees down in that area at all. They were all briar bushes, thousands of those. But up on the hill to the left, up to the ridge, you can see through the trees in some of those early photos. So that, I would say, probably because we have got water in the area, and have left so many of the trees - I spoke with one of the engineers who was involved with the construction of Cooma North, and he was very, very conscious of conservation, even then, the very beginning. And if there was a healthy tree in the road, they went around it. They did not go around it to the extent that the roads are twisty. There weren't all that many very healthy-looking trees. But they didn't build a house to the sacrifice of a tree.

KH: But you have tried to relocate some of the old camps, too, and found them very difficult.

FR: Yes, I have.

KH: So that speaks for itself in a sense.

FR: Well, as I said, Perisher, the Adit camp, and Guthega itself, they have all grown over and it is terribly hard to even get a photograph in there, because of the way the undergrowth has regenerated. Three Mile, that is an interesting spot, because that was the first camp on what they call the Tumut side, on the western side of the mountains. And three miles from Kiandra, up near the Three Mile Dam, and we have got photos of that camp under construction. And I wanted to go back and stand where the photographer had been and take a photograph - before and after -

as a comparison. And there is still little concrete slabs down. One of them was the concrete floor for the ablution block. The concrete floor with a little bit of a drain around the edge and hessian for protection. And that was all, there was no roof. And you showered by filling a canvas bag - a shower bag - that is a round bag with a shower rose on the bottom, and a tap, and they had that suspended, you wet yourself down, soaped yourself off, then turned the water back on and washed it off. That was your - I don't think they bathed very often. That is what they did, and that concrete floor is still there. And just across the gully there are ....other concrete floors. But the grass has grown right up and there is a few little piers sticking up here and there. But it is hard to actually get a photograph. And when you look for a tree, say you look for a healthy tree, as a comparison, you will see that in the early photograph. And you go and look for that tree, and you don't find it, or you find it dead, and lying down. So the life of those trees is something I think could be looked at. They don't last all that long at all. Obviously within say, 30 years, some of the trees that looked very, very healthy, have died and fallen over of their own accord. They have not been pushed by anything else, and I found a couple of those. In one photograph I could only find one tree that I could recognise. There is plenty of smaller ones coming up, and the grass has certainly grown across, even where the road had come in and not been cared for, you see the quartz sticking up. I often thought I might have a better, closer look at that sometime. The grass has grown over. And the only other thing that I could find to identify the photograph were the old fences that were built by the stockmen who must have been up there 100 years ago, some of those fences are still standing. But the trees certainly change; that did surprise me, to think that, you see, coming from down in Victoria where trees grow for hundreds of years, to find a tree that looked healthy, having died and fallen over in a matter of 30 years. And there was certainly no

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involvement (!?)

.....they were not ringbarked, and it would have been the wind, because these two trees that - two or three trees - that were in that original photograph, have fallen down in the last few months. And they were well and truly dead, the roots had rotted. And some sort of wind had come through and down they went.

KH: In terms of social life, what did you do when you weren't working, sleeping, or eating? Did you go fishing?

FR: Well, you might not class me as being a typical Australian as far as that sort of thing was concerned. I like to keep busy. I generally had a look around the camp area so that I was familiar with what was about. I did not go on huge walks or anything, but I liked to know what was around the camp. And I liked to do handwork. I knitted quite a lot. I had a knitting machine. I wrote, I wrote letters to the family. I did not write historical letters. You must remember, I failed in English........

KH: A blot on your life!

FR: But I found that if you write a letter the way you speak, generally the person on the other end can understand it quite well. And so that was the way I wrote. My mother, who collects everything, from cornflake packets to pieces of string, still has most of the letters that were written. And fortunately, you can go back through them and ....So I generally wrote, played draughts. I played draughts with a fellow called Johnny, who was one of the Italians in my gang. And bloody hell, he was good. He was the best draughts player I had ever seen in my life. Never, in all my time up there and all the people that he played, did I see him beaten. I never saw him beaten. The best I ever did was get a draw. But if he could not beat you, he would force a draw. There is a lot more in playing draughts than just - one thinks that - you can certainly work other set moves later on - but he taught me a lot. The only reason for learning to play draughts, and I might digress and tell you about that. There was a fellow in Cooma who was a good

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draughts player, and he used to take great delight in beating me. And I was going with .....before we were married, I was courting my wife. And this fellow used to come around too, and he used to lord it over me, how good he could play draughts. And he could beat me every time. I had not played draughts much. And so I would play. I bought myself a set of draughts. I took the opportunity of playing anybody I could. And up in the mountains, playing against Johnny, I learned a lot. And I was back home at one weekend, and I was taking my wife out, and this fellow turned up. And he said, "Give me a game of draughts." And I said, "I haven't got time. We are going to the pictures." And he said, "I've got five minutes to beat you." So I set them up and I beat him. And he could not get over it. A great win, very memorable. Anyway, what else did we do? There was not much to do in the outlying camps. Any opportunity - if you worked from - you got up fairly early and you had your breakfast and you washed your things, and you made your bed, at least, I made my bed. And then you went out and worked all day; you came back home again around about 5, had a wash and cleaned up; had a feed. And then you came back into the camp afterwards to chat with the blokes. Perhaps you wrote or read. There was certainly the opportunities for gambling, especially at pay night. It was on one of those pay nights - the only time that I have ever seen the three card trick performed.

KH: The which?

FR: The three card trick. You often hear about the three card trick. The three card trick is done by a smooth operator who must practise and practise - it is a sleight of hand. And he chooses three cards from the pack, say, two red kings, and a black king, so you have got one odd card. And he bends those so that they arch and you have them arched from end to end so that they are up off the table some half an inch or so on the sides. Now, he can pick up those cards. He can pick them up with a thumb, and second finger. He can pick another card with the thumb and first

finger, so that he can actually pick up two cards at the same. But he will shuffle those cards around, using both hands, and slide them around on the table. And the object of the game is to bet on which is the odd card. Now, he can get you in. You can sit there and you can watch - he'll do it slowly, and you can see where that black card goes and see where the odd one is. And you put money on it. OK, he might flick that card over and say, "Right, now you have won," depending on - until he gets enough people in who are betting on it. Then when there is a large enough sum of money sitting on what you think is the black card, - and I was not a gambler, but I sat and watched them - I was a young fellow and I had bloody good eye, and I could see what was going on. But I could not believe what I was seeing. This fellow was so good that even though the money was on the correct card, he would pick up one of the other cards first, and then he would pick up the correct card, the odd one with all the money on it. And with a flick of the wrist, he would flip it over, but he did not flick over the odd card, he would flick over the one he had before, and it would land in that position. And he still had it in the other finger, the card, he would remove it. And he did it so quickly and so smoothly, and he generally had a patter to go with it, of no, it was not that card, it was that one, "You lose, my friend." And he took thirty pounds off one fellow and sixty pounds off another one, back in the days when thirty-four pounds was a fortnight's pay. I saw that happen. That fellow was - he was cool. It was a real education to see that.

KH: So the cards were flat, to have the money sitting on them?

FR: No, they didn't put the money on them, the money in front.

KH: Oh, the money was in front of it.

FR: The money sits in front, yes.

KH: So you have got your three cards.

FR: Yes, three cards in a row.

KH: So you could see inside what they are?

FR: No, you don't inside, it is not that far up. It is only far enough so you could pick it up with your fingers. But he shuffles them around. Sometimes he would do it quickly and you were a bit confused where it might be, but other times, to get you in, he would show you, like that, flick it back down again. And you could be sure, and you would put your money down on the table in front of what these other blokes did - I didn't bet - but it was a real education to me. And that fellow - I reckon he deserved his money, because he had practised, and it was as nice a piece of sleight of hand I think I have ever seen. But there other games. There was poker, there was roulette, there was crown and anchor. Not being a gambler, I certainly watched. I played roulette a little bit. I think I won a few shillings, but that was all. I was not a big-time gambler. But they played card games later on. I saw knives drawn in card games, I saw a knife driven into the table when a bloke attempted to picked up another fellow's hand. After the game was over, that particular hand was over, and the fellow reached across to turn over the bloke's hand to see what he had, and the fellow jammed a knife into the table, and he said, "If you want to see those cards, my friend, you pay." They were fair dinkum with their cards, and they played it hard. But they played a game that I didn't understand, that was manilla, and I never learned to play that. I didn't get beyond penny poker or pontoon.

KH: Was there any betting on the horses?

FR: Not in the small camps. There certainly were in the bigger camps. And later on, when I was with the security section as a patrol officer, you had to be reasonable. If you are too strict on the men in the camp, you will get resentment. If there is a game being run and you know who is running the game, and he is running it honestly, and the blokes are getting a fair go, an SP bookie, OK, we were prepared to let it go. If there was illegal gambling in rooms, of a small nature, we didn't see it. We

were not there, so what. Nobody was getting hurt. Generally, the bloke who ran the game was fully aware of who could afford to lose money and who could not. So that if a family man gambled away all his money, it was an unwritten law, and generally pretty standard, that he was given twenty quid back and told not to come back to bet again because he could not afford to. He was given twenty quid to tide him over. Because you could not afford to take all a bloke's pay and have his wife and kids starve, have nothing to eat, because then they would whinge and bitch about it, and there would be an upheaval. And so, give him twenty quid, don't come back. We did not want to see outside gamblers come in, the big dealers come in and rip our blokes off. They had earned their money, OK if they want to gamble amongst their mates, we did not mind. I was never offered any money or bribe from any of these people. It was understood. They knew that I knew. Similarly, if there was trouble,if somebody knocked something off, somebody was short of a quid, perhaps, and broke into somebody's room, I knew that I could go to the bloke, the SP bloke, and say, "Who are your big losers?" And knowing the people myself, you were quite often able to track down the likely suspect. You had to give and take in a situation like that. There were certainly people who came in who would have been prepared to pay us money. I know that there was a fellow who wanted to start a gambling game over at Blowering,and he offered me something like thirty pounds, or dollars, it was at about the time they were changing - but he was offering me thirty a week. And I said, "No, you ....me for that." He was not a bad sort of a bloke. At least he was honest enough to come and front me straight up. And maybe I should have took it.

KH: Pardon? Maybe you should have taken it, that is right.

FR: Yes, well, I wouldn't be poor all me bloody life.

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(KH stops tape)

KH: Yes, we were talking about gambling and social ac-

tivities, and things that men did whilst - when they were not working.

FR: In the small camps, there was not a great deal to be done. Reading - you see, we did not even have much in the way of light, in your own room. You only had the light, there was no heating in your room. And so you went back into the mess hall, and sat around where you had previously been to have your evening meal.

KH: That was your living room?

FR: Sure, that was the living room. Later on in the towns, and so on. Of course, that was vastly different, where you got into the bigger towns, like Island Bend, Cabramurra and Eucumbene. The entertainment that was brought to those places was better than what is coming into Cooma now. They had livewire people and they had within the Authority an amenities section that arranged for various things. And the individuals who put so much effort into it. The balls that they had at Cabramurra, were affairs that were of tremendous significance. People came from all over, and they dressed up for it. And they decorated the hall, and they did fabulous jobs. There is photographs in the archives of Island Bend - you know, the tinsel that they had around and the innovation and the ideas that were put out by a bloke - John McNalty, and Eddie Collins. Eddie Collins was a cartoonist, and he could, with a brush - you had Disneyland cartoons or Snowy characters..........And I can recall Slim Dusty coming to Eucumbene. I think there was - I have a feeling that one of the big dancing groups from Sydney came down, one of the baretop ones - what would they have had in those days?

KH: Les Girls?

FR: No, these were fair dinkum girls, these ones. I don't think it was Folies Bergeres, that is the one that comes to mind. That would cost to come that far out in to the bush - that would be a pretty big thing.

KH: Yes, that is much more so than just a few prostitutes

coming down.

FR: Oh well, they were around all the time, from the very beginning. But if you want to talk about them. you have to start another ta

KH: I have heard a few stories now, about the prostitutes. Everyone seems to know about them.

FR: Oh yes, I saw them. Of course, that was something else that we didn't condone. You could not afford to have a prostitute come down and infect some of the blokes, say, somebody cooking your meal in the mess. You would not be too happy about him having a dose, I don't think. Okay, if they went back into Cooma, there were plenty of them in Cooma. But to have them around the camps, there were generally problems and fights and whatever.

KH: Was there problems with disease with prostitutes?

FR: Yes, I can tell you of one case.

KH: What, gonorrhoea, or something, was it? I mean, syphilis and gonorrhoea were the dreaded ones.

FR: Well, yes. One of the workmen on Tounama Dam - I don't if this ever came out in publications or not - whether I am speaking out of school - but I know, because the doctor told me.

KH: Well, the names can remain nameless.

FR: Well, I don't know the fellow's name, so it can stay that way. But the fellow was run over by a truck - he had not been listening, and I think it backed over the top of him and did a fair job of squashing him. They found that prior to him being run over, he had vomited, and when they did a check of him, they found that he had VD. He had a definite discharge, and (it was) advanced. So it was probably because of that that he was sick, and because of that that he was run over.

KH: You mean, the autopsy revealed that?

FR: Yes. Apart from that, there was no big hassle. There was no organised prostitution in the camp. They would blow in and out about payday, some times. Not every payday by any stretch of the imagination. Because the story is that the Frenchmen employed prostitutes in the camp. They were waitresses

or cleaners, or whatever during the day, and additional service at night. And of course, they liked to bring their home comforts with them, who knows, it may have been a jolly good thing. The Yanks did not care all that much about it. They referred to them as strawbacks.

KH: Why did they call them strawbacks?

FR: I suppose because they lay on their backs in the straw.

KH: Oh, I see.

FR: They did not, sort of, make a big thing about coming in. They would generally be invited in by somebody they knew, or who had gone off to Sydney the week before and bring some back.

KH: Apparently some of the guys married them, married some.

FR: Yes, well, I don't know of any. Oh yes, I do, but I had better not mention that one. He was a fairly senior bloke. She wasn't a bad girl, either. They split up again afterwards. But she was all right, she was German.

KH: And then I heard of some of them actually coming to one camp with a caravan. And so they brought their bed with them.

FR: No, certainly not in any of the camps I ever - with a caravan. I knew pretty well what was going on. And that is what we were there for. We were the eyes and ears, and we had to sift out what would be condoned perhaps, and what you would turn a blind eye to. Because, of course, the main thing was that we were there to get the job done. You don't cause too many hassles. You could be a real bastard, now that is not going to help any. And people are not going to tell you anything then, so you had to be onside with just about everybody. If somebody was causing too many problems, one way or another you could sack him, get rid of him. And that was contractors or Snowy people. The smooth-running of the whole operation was generally uppermost. And as long as people played fair, abided by the camp rules and regulations, things generally went quite well.

KH: You certainly would not want VD running - going through a camp, would you?

FR: No.

KH: You get one person infected and away it goes.

FR: It could be ......and so for that reason we did not want large numbers of blokes using the same prostitute in the one night. I mean, some of them would service up to 20, 30 blokes. At 50 bucks a time - 20 pounds was the going price, in the early 60s, I recall. But to use a fellow's room - I knew there was a young painter bloke, and the going rate was - if she used his room - he got the first and the last one - and 20 pounds for the use of his room. The first one might have been all right but you turn up the last one.- - -

KH: Gee, oh, not my cup of tea, thank you very much. On another tack, did you or others do much rabbit shooting or fox shooting, or kangaroo shooting, or duck shooting? I am aware that a lot of people from Europe are much more used to going hunting, as it were. And I think a lot of people who came out in the 50s and 60s did and wanted to continue that practice.

FR: I don't think they really liked to have guns in the camp but they were there. There was not all that much shooting up in the mountains, they were more likely to make friends with the foxes than shoot them. Rabbits - they liked to go out and shoot rabbits. And they would generally go and ask some property owner if they could go and shoot them. Duck shooting, no. I went duck shooting at Eucumbene one time. And I shot a couple of the.... I got five wood-duck there in one day. I saw the greatest piece of flying that I have ever seen, when I was out duck shooting, just below the Eucumbene Dam wall. I was watching two black duck flying upstream. They were too high to fire at, much too high. And I was just watching them flying past, and they were flying fairly rapidly. And then out of the - virtually out of the clear blue sky, a falcon came down in a swoop at tremendous speed, and I saw it sort of flash into view with its wings folded back. And it dived at the wood duck and it just missed them, and the ducks

scattered. And they both dropped almost vertically. They came straight down. And they were upstream from where I was. The falcon singled out one duck and it came flying back down the Eucumbene River towards me. Of course, there was very little water in it because the dam was just upstream. And that duck was flying flat out, and a black duck flying flat out can really move. But that falcon was closing on it like you would not believe. It caught up with it just straight in front of me, not more than 20, 30 feet. And as it swooped - as it went to take the duck in its tallons, the duck did almost a right-angled turn, tumble turn, and it came down and hit the water with a terrific whack, just in front of me. It never came up, and I think that it got into the reeds on the side. But by gee, that was a fabulous piece of flying. But anyway, what was the question?

KH: About people going shooting, or hunting, or pig-shooting, for that matter.

FR: Yes, rabbits were about all. Also they did shoot some of the native birds. And I know that some of the people who were virtually looking after themselves in the smaller camps, would eat whatever they could shoot, in the way of native birds. And I was talking to a fellow only last week, who said he went into a camp and found the bloke plucking a kookaburra for his evening meal, that he had shot. And the fellows were eating swallows. I wonder how many swallows you would have to have on your plate before you had a decent feed? Yes, they did, they tried to live off the land. There was another fellow who came out in a rash around his face, and had to go to the doctor. He was in a small camp. And the doctor asked him what he had been eating, and he said he had been eating a fox.

KH: What!

FR: No wonder he had a bloody rash around his face. Fancy chewing on the back end of a fox!

KH: It would be tough, for a start, I would think.

FR: Also at Eucumbene, when I was there, I heard about an

Italian bloke who - you see if you cooked your own meal, you had a meal allowance, if you cooked your own, you got a refund. So you made money on it. And so those who really were scraping the bottom of the barrel as far as saving their money was concerned, they saved everything they could, and would eat bread and cheese, and whatever they could hunt up. And one of those blokes had a fox hanging in the meat safe. And the Aussie blokes, of course, a fox, a stinking fox, God. Anyway they broke into his meatsafe and took it, and disposed of it, because they could not stand seeing it there. So they would, they would eat anything.

KH: But did the SMA have a law about rifles in the camps?

FR: No. It was not encouraged. But I don't recall there being a law to say no, you could not have a rifle in the camp. Because they were certainly there, and I knew about them, so we could not have had them. I think some of the engineers, perhaps, when they went into some of the other camps - I know at one stage at one of the camps where the engineer took the guns because they thought there was going to be trouble. But apart from that, no.

KH: Do you think there was any discrimination between nationalities, as to who would do a particular job? Or was it just whoever - I mean - - -

FR: The best suited to the job, got the job. There may have been a small amount, perhaps, between some of the say, supervisors/foremen, and the so-called wogs - they might have got the shitty end of the stick. But nothing too bad. Because we had - you have got to remember that we had German engineers out there, too. There were German, Dutch. And they certainly treated us all right. Alec Lukovski(?) who was one the best supervisors around, was a White Russian. By golly, he looked after his men. You know, if they did not get their meal break and something to eat, he would be on the radio, and he would let them know. He would look after the blokes. I have heard him on the radio, asking them to send out some tucker for his men who were working.

KH: Some what?

FR: Tucker. And from all those that I worked with, you were judged on your character and the type of work you turned out. Frequently you would find in a camp, there would be what you could refer to as ....

(end of tape)

FR: ....all of the one nationality, but you would often find that, say, the tournapull drivers, they were the elite, or the heavy truck drivers. I was a plant operator. You were of the same ilk, I suppose. It didn't matter what nationality, but because you were togehter on the job, doing that type of job, maybe the foreman would be there too - you generally sat at the one table. And most of the time you had your own place. I suppose a little bit of a pecking order came into it. If you sat in one particular spot, that was regarded as your place. It was not a hard and fast rule. If somebody else was sitting there at the time, well, you went and sat somewhere else. But mostly you went into the mess at about the same time, and those who were first in had their places to go to - maybe a bit like trained seals, you go and sit in the same spot.

KH: Did the SMA take to people making suggestions that could improve work practices; that could make jobs safer; that would, you know, like today to some extent we have unions looking after the workers' interests?

FR: Well, we certainly did.

KH: Was there a union at that time?

FR: There were unions yes, but they were not nearly as obvious, of course. They did have unions right back at the time when I first started - the Australian Workers Union. They would take your money, but you would never, ever see anything done for it. And I know a lot of the Europeans and New Australians who came in, they did not like you to pay over money and you did not get anything for it. There was no evidence of anybody looking after you anywhere. All you saw was the money, and you never saw the blokes again. There was a scheme within the Authority where people were paid for suggestions. And I guess it would probably be still there. I know that a fellow who died last year, I think it was, he was paid a small sum, and he certainly got some recognition, because he invented an easier way of doing a particular

little job. Yes, there were suggestions, yes, and the Authority did pay people. They were very conscious of that. They were prepared to make changes.

KH: ....Mona....Ravenscroft wrote a book called, "Men of the Snowy Mountains," this is an old one that was written in about 1968. And she says a lot of things, but amongst other things she says, "the SMA was a hidebound, rigid, repressive and authoritarian set-up, with employees having no right of appeal. They had to live in a totalitarian state of which Head Office was the capital." Do you think that was a fair comment?

FR: Strong words....Well, you did not have much right of appeal. If you got sacked you were down the road. No, you could - I know that people could put up their case. There was not a union - but I know that, from my own point of view, I have been able to go to the bosses and state my case. I did not get into much trouble in the Snowy. I did what I was asked to do to the best of my ability. If I wanted a transfer, I could go and ask. You got it or you did not. If you played up, OK, you got the sack, and you probably deserved it. There certainly was incentive, but to say that the Authority had hard and fast rules was not right, because there were so many changes that were made at the top level - the top level decisions in design - the fact that they did not build the Eucumbene Dam where it was not originally designed. They changed just about the whole Scheme from one time to another.

KH: That seems inevitable, when something has a time span of 25 years.

FR: There are going to be changes, sure. Mind you, they were pretty strict. And I suppose that is what made a wonderful organisation. I know that Sir William was a pretty hard taskmaster. I have heard from engineers who went off to meetings, where decisions had to be made and problems overcome. And an engineer might, when given a particular task, would say, for instance, "But, you know, that had not been done before. How can we do it? We cannot do." And Sir William would not have a bar

engineer aren't you? you are paid as an engineer aren't you?,
You are taking your money as an engineer. That is your problem, you go out and fix it." And so people actually did things at a higher level than they thought that they were capable of doing themselves - overcame problems that had not been encountered before, purely, as a way of getting back at Sir William, and saying, "Well, there, yes, I can do it, you see." He could drive people. He had a lot of people in there who he would drive. You could reel them off, their names, starting with Sir William, down through Darby Munro, "Sackum", Jack Painter, Allan Black, Woppa Driese , Gordon Bellinger, and he drove people, there was no doubt about it. Even Hartwig, the engineer, who I always found to be a real gentleman, a quiet sort of a fellow, he knew what he was about, and he did not suffer fools at all. And if somebody did the wrong thing - down the road.

KH: What do you think that drove them? I mean, what do you think drove Sir William?

FR: It was part of his make-up I think. He had been like that as an engineer. He had a reputation before he ever was offered the job with the Snowy. He was seconded from the Water Board - I think he had a First World War injury which possibly made him incapacitated for the Second World War. He was with the Water Board, and he was seconded from there to go and build the Cockatoo Floating Dock. And they needed it, and I think they were having trouble with unions on the wharves. And they needed somebody who could drive people and get a job done and get it done quickly, and get it done properly. He had that reputation. He went from there back to the Water Board. When the Snowy job came up, when it was first mooted, when it was first, sort of, in the air, he was summoned to Canberra to meet the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister summoned him to Canberra. I got this from Lady Hudson. And Bill had a fair idea of what he was being called down for. And he took a day off from the Water Board, he did not tell them where he was going, he took a day off. And he came down to Canberra. He was, at that stage, getting somewhere less than two thousand

pounds a year, as a senior engineer. And he thought, "If I am offered the job, I am going to ask for two and a half thousand pounds," which was a pretty fair jump. He was ushered in to meet the Prime Minister, Ben Chifley. He said, "Come in Hudson, sit down." He said, "I want you to take on the Snowy Scheme, and I will pay you five thousand pounds a year." He said, "Well, you've got nothing to say." Nothing more he could do. So he was offered twice what he was going to ask for.

KH: There was a period when it was sort of on slightly shaky legal grounds, wasn't there, in the early piece I think?

FR: It was illegal right from the start.

KH: And do you think that may have contributed to the fact that they - - -

FR: Wanted to make it work?

KH: Well, wanted to make it work and got on with the job in case someone - the gremlins would try and stop it, or - - -

FR: I don't think that they were all that aware of the fact that it was illegal. I think they had an idea that it was, but they were pushing ahead anyway, and hoped to get into it far enough so that it could not stop. I know the Liberal Party was dead against it. That was only because the Labor Party was all for it. Politics has not changed much.

KH: But once Menzies came in again, he was all for it, wasn't he?

FR: No. 1952, he was going to close it down.

KH: Oh, really?

FR: Oh yes. And I think that if we had had a lesser bloke than Sir William, it may well have gone under, becauser Bob Menzies, in one of his great speeches referred to the Snowy Scheme as a dreadful waste of taxpayers' money.

KH: Why? Why did he - - -

FR: Because the Labor Party started it, I suppose.

KH: But did they also disagree with the advantages that they might get through irrigation and through electricity?

FR: Look, I don't think that that really came into it.

KH: But, I mean, once they were in power, it did not matter any more so much, whether the Labor Party started it or not, I would have thought.

FR: No. Well, I think that was one of the things they said they were going to do. You would have get back into the politics of that, because of course, as a young fellow, I wasn't all that into politics at all. But I do recall that that actually happened. But I know that Sir William started up the PR section, and he sold the Snowy Scheme to the general public. He brought people down here from all over the place. School kids came here in droves, busloads of them.

KH: Was that started in about '52?

FR: I don't know how early the PR section started. No, it would have been a little bit later than that. With the construction of Eucumbene Dam - they used to be able to go out there and stand up on the top and look down, and see how it was being built. So the taxpayer understood where his money was going and what it was going to do, and that made a great difference. Not only that, but the politicians understood. And so having the people onside, and having the politicians onside, was a great move on Sir William's part.

KH: An incredible PR organisation, from what I have seen of it.

FR: Oh, it was, yes.

KH: The little plastic models of the Snowy Mountains are still in many schools, I am sure.

FR: Yes, and to take them out on to the job, to see the people working and to feed them in the mess, on bus tours, that lasted, you know, three days, and so much done for them. And it was drummed into them just how good that Snowy Scheme was. We weren't telling any lies, really. It was good. We told them so. So right from that time until the work finished, that PR Scheme was still going. Hot and strong.

KH: Although these days, apparently, out west they are having considerable problems with salt now, the salt rising to the surface - irrigation - especially large scale irrigation raising the water table, the areas are not as fertile as they used to be for growing crops.

FR: Not our fault.

KH: Not the fault of the SMA?

FR: Not a bit.. We don't supply salty water, do we?

KH: No.

FR: We send down very good, clean, pure water, and we send it down at a controlled rate. The problem is that they have not understood it, and there has not been enough research into it. They have used too much water. They have raised the level of the water table, and that is the cause of the salinity. And so the Murray River is becoming a bit like a sewer. There is a strong possibility that we may build another dam yet - the Murray Gates Dam. I know the Commissioner would love to see it built. It was part of the original scheme, and it would be used to flush out the Snowy - flushing out the sewer. It is just downstream from Tom Groggin.

KH: Yes, that is right.

FR: And there would be a power station there, so that as the water was released we could generate some power. It is all a problem of cost, whether they'll do it or not is another thing but if money becomes available, it is the only addition to the Snowy Scheme that I think will be built.

KH: There are not many other possibilities, are there?

FR: Oh, there is a possibility of a pump storage station at Yarrangobilly, pumping water from Talbingo back up into Tantangara, and running it back through a couple of power stations there, back into the Talbingo. But it could - you could run water from Tantangara through one or two power stations into Talbingo, and then through Talbingo into Jounama which is a holding dam, and reverse the proceedure and pump it all the way back up again, using offpeak power, and then releasing the water

during peak load times and generating power from it.

KH: Can they do that with Munyang now, back to Guthega?

FR: No.

KH: They cannot. Is there any part of the mountains where they can?

FR: No.

KH: They cannot do that at all?

FR: No, Talbingo - T3 is the only pump storage station apart from, to a lesser degree, Jindabyne. We can bring water back from the Geehi Dam and spill it into Jindabyne Dam. But it is a way further down. And that was only done during the course of snow melt and run off, when we have an excess of water on the Murray side, more than we can use. We bring the water back and spill it into Jindabyne. Then we can pump it from there. We have got to pump it up about a couple of hundred metres. But then the drop on the other side, is about 800 metres, so you get that extra benefit of going through two power stations, so you recoup a bit. But it is a matter of control, and the Authority at the present moment is going into computerisation where all of this water, depending on the levels and availability of water and requirements of water, the water will be juggled backwards and forwards from our various dams through the tunnels, so that it can be utilised to the best possible - the best of our ability. It will be spot on. And by so doing, we expect to be able to save several millions of dollars each year, by the intricate control of those masses of water. At the present moment it is done by calculation and you will have to have in your dams, certain dams, air space in case of unexpected run-offs, otherwise you would have flooding downstream, or you may even have a dam destroyed if you have got it chock-a-block full. If more water comes in than you can release you could be in trouble. So they have to have a certain amount of airspace in them for safety measure. And the control is very, very intricately done.

KH: How much do we contribute now? How much does the Snowy

Scheme contribute in terms of power to Sydney, in terms of the New South Wales grid?

FR: Not a great deal. About 18%, I think.

KH: 18%. The rest comes from - - -

FR: I am not 100% per cent sure on that. You see the whole Scheme was built for the conservation of water, the conservation and control of water, not for the generation of electricity. That was secondary. The fact that we have the water stored there and can run in through the power stations, as we release it we might as well get that. But we provide offpeak power. We could not provide peakload power for very long. And the comparison is, if every person in Australia, 15 million people, turned on a one-bar radiator for one hour, the amount of electricity that that would consume, if it was supplied by the Snowy Scheme using water, it would take all the water that we have. And so we have to be very careful with the amount of water that we use, we use it offpeak.

KH: That is every person in New South Wales, is it? One bar radiator for an hour, every person in New South Wales?

FR: No, every person in Australia, 15 million.

KH: Oh, right. It would use it all up in an hour.

FR: Yes, use all the water we have. Now, that is a lot of power. At the moment, you see, we provide peak load. The off-peak is generated by the coal burning stations, the thermal stations, they provide the peak load. That is that steady supply that can be calculated. But first thing in the morning they could not provide enough power, when everybody gets out of bed, turns on the electric jug, the stove, the frypan or whatever, and trains are starting to run to get people to work, and the factories are turning on - the use of power, that terrific peak, is provided by us at the turn of a switch.

KH: That is when the turbines go into action.

FR: Yes. And in a matter of a few minutes, we are on line providing that unpolluted power. And for a few hours in the morn-

ing, ...say 2 or 3 at the most, we take off that peak, then it levels off, at lunchtime with all the cooking again, a little bit of a peak, again with the evening meal, again a small peak. But then, perhaps, a cold snap in Sydney and everybody turns on their heaters, the base load can't be provided by the thermal stations and we come into use again. We can also provide power to Victoria....its all interlocked,...New South Wales, ACT + Victoria, are all on the same grid.

KH: Is there much concern within the SMA as to what is happening with the water out in the irrigation areas, and the fact that the Murray has become more saline over the years?

FR: I should imagine there would be. It does not affect the Snowy so much. There is nothing that we can do that will save that. We are here to conserve and release, control the release of the Snow melt. If we were not here, if the Snowy had not been built, every spring in the Snow melt, the rivers would flood. You would have great floods going down the Murrumbidgee, the Murray and the Snowy. And having come from the other end of the Snowy, I know what I am talking about. Because every year they would come down; they would go over the crops, they would cover fences; they would wash down all sorts of things; cut the main road frequently, and you would lose all that crop. Now that [happens to] a much lesser degree. They don't have anywhere near the flooding problem down there, so the water is controlled.

KH: Although the flooding also has benefits, doesn't it. It puts a new layer of silt over all the flood plains.

FR: Yes. If you want a new layer of silt when you have already got, say, something like 300 feet of silt. That is what they have got on the Snowy River flats. They are amongst the most fertile in the world.

KH: They are. The fertility is not decreasing with more cropping?

FR: No. There is no problem there. It is just that the river keeps on building up, and would, I suppose if left, would continue to build up. But I guess that is another one of the

controls. We are controlling the water up there and we also have been endeavouring to control the water down there. They had to build an embankment back down there - when would that have been - 1934 the big flood came through and cut the embankment, so it would have been prior to that they built an embankment that must have been 5 miles long, a levy bank. It started off at about - it could have been 30, 40 feet high, then tapering down to, say, 5 at the other end. And that was a huge job, and of course had to be paid for by the property owners. I think there was some sort of government subsidy, of course. And I know my father paid off his debt - he was in debt for quite some time. Then the 1934 flood came down and cut through the levy bank and flooded everything again. And so we were trying to control that environment long before the Snowy ever tried to control the environment up here.

KH: It still floods down there, doesn't it?

FR: Oh yes, because we've got all the catchment below Jindabyne.

KH: That is right, at Delegate and all that other - - -

FR: You see there was - I know one of those engineers, or several of the engineers were involved in a proposal to build another dam near Currawong, out from Bombala, on the Snowy River. There was quite a ridge across there which could have been utilised, and build a nice big dam. The water would have backed up to Bombala and would have come back up the McLachlan River, and it could have been pumped from there back into Jindabyne. And from there across the mountains again. It was a proposal. All these things, you know - it is something that might happen again - who knows, 50, 100 years time. The study was done. It is certainly not beyond the realms of possibility, depending on just how badly we need water.

KH: So you would say that the Scheme was worth all the damage it caused, in terms of rivers now running dry in places; in terms of the flooding of farmlands.

FR: Well, I understand that the Murray Cod only spawn at floodtime, when the water rose went across the paddocks, it got warmer and

that is when they became active and they spawned. OK, now, what do you want? Do you want Murray Cod in the river for a few people to catch? Or do you want to feed the population with the ricefields. I don't think it cuts out the complete spawning of the Murray Cod. Perhaps we may have to control that. But we have got to look at the advancements and the benefits. I mean, if we want to stay in the type of environment that we had, we might as well live in a cave. I think we have got to look ahead. OK, there is going to be problems. We've got problems with salinity - - -

KH: Yes. What would you suggest?

FR: Well, doubtless the problem can be - is one that cannot be overcome. When you think of what we overcame to build the Snowy Scheme, surely to goodness there can be benefits by better understanding of the environment down there. OK, we have got a problem with salt in the soil. And I think by using people who know and understand that no problem is too big to overcome, depending on how much they want to spend - and the benefits that we would reap from it. You see, at one stage when the Snowy Scheme was built, it was agreed that a dam would be built to provide water for those people downstream, in South Australia.

KH: Adelaide.

FR: They drag the water supply from the - now, the dam had to be built somewhere, and the politicians in South Australia wanted it built in South Australia, a political move. At Chowilla - that was the place they wanted it done, right or wrong. It was a political move. And they did not understand that to build a dam at Chowilla, which is on a flat area, that the dam wall was only going to be about 15 feet high, or something. I know it was not a very high dam.

KH: Just a weir.

FR: Yes. And the water would spread out over a large area. The fact that that was at that height would have raised the water table, again, they would have salinity all the way around. That

did not matter, they still wanted it. They wanted it in South Australia, and they wanted it at Chowilla, right or wrong. Could not be persuaded. Then it was explained that from evaporation alone they would lose two or three damfuls every year, complete, they would have lost, through evaporation. And still, those meatheaded nitwits down there, just because it was a political move that would bring them the vote, wanted it there. And the geologists had a terrible time convincing them that the best place to build it was back up at Dartmouth. And that was finally where it was built. So, as long as you have got the right people and the right place at the right time, who have that necessary drive, people like Sir William - and I guess he was fortunate to have arrived on the scene at a time when labour was available and ready to work - because you could get the combination just in the right perspective then things would work out properly.

KH: Do you think the Scheme has made a significant contribution to our sense of national identity? Especially in that post war era.

FR: I would say so. I don't think there would be a country in the world in which you could go and mention the Snowy Scheme, that somebody did not know about it, or somebody had somebody who worked there, either a brother or father, or whatever. You can go just about anywhere. And the very name, the Snowy Scheme, is still going. I went to Sydney last week, and the fact that I came from the Snowy Scheme, I was treated like a VIP. I went down to a security seminar at Wormalds. And they really laid on the red carpet for us. They could not do enough because we came from the Snowy.

KH: Do you think it had a lot to do with the new multicultural Australia? I mean, Australia is a very different country now, than 30 years ago, in terms of the number of peoples that live here, the large percentage of migrants who now have children, and so on?

FR: Oh, I think you would have to talk to them. They did

not come to Australia because they knew what Australia was like. I was talking to Leo Loretti yesterday. And he was being interviewed by Vicki....who had come down from the museum. And he said that he wanted to come to Australia. It was either Canada or Australia. And the waiting list to Canada was so long, that he had come to Australia. And so he went to the library to read up about Australia. And the only book they had in the library there was on Flora and Fauna. And I said, well, they didn't have much else Another bloke said he picked three places to go to, he was an eastern European. Canada, Australia and Columbia. He wanted to go to Columbia because he thought that is where they made the pictures - Columbia Pictures! And now he knew nothing about it, the waiting list was too long into Canada, and he finished up in Australia. He said he made the right move. No, it was a gamble, I think. I suppose Australia now is a little bit like America was last century with the number of immigrants that they had. America was the go-ahead place then and Australia was virtually still evolving, wasn't it? What was the population of Australia when the Snowy Scheme started - less than 7 million.

KH: Was it as little as that after the war?

FR: Yes.

KH: So it has doubled in 30 years, 35 years.

FR: Yes. You know, plenty of the people who came here from Europe, came from a city that had more people in it than the whole of Australia.

KH: Do you think that in today's environment, with conservation groups and people lobbying for this and that, that the Scheme could be built, that the Scheme could even get off the ground? If it did not already exist.

FR: No, look, I have got to say no. I have thought about it a number of times. And you have got to have that incentive. And they certainly had the incentive. A lot of the people who came here had absolutely nothing. And so it was an opportunity to make a quid and to get a fair go. Now you can make a quid

virtually without getting out of bed. There is no incentive to go out and work because the rate of taxes on your overtime makes it prohibitive. So nobody is going to bother. Apart from that, you have got the destructive groups, the Greenies, who lie down in front of a bulldozer because it is bulldozing something. They don't really stand for anything, a lot of them. They just go there to be disruptive and to be filmed on TV, like the bloody women - women so-called - down at Parliament House. They are show-offs. They just want to be noticed. And so they paint their hair funny colours, they wear funny clothes, just because they want to be noticed. And to be noticed they go to somewhere where somebody is working in perhaps some controversial manner where the TV cameras are going to be, so that they can be on the news.

KH: But we also have a national park there now, and a much stronger National Parks and Wildlife Service.

FR: No, I don't see that that makes any difference at all. I would think that where you have a proper authority that is capable of thought, and while maybe the National Parks was not very capable of thought - I haven't much time for them. I have found them to be an organisation that was impossible to deal with. But at government level, at top level, I don't think there would any problem at all, with the construction of a dam, at say, Murray Gates. Sure, we would lose Tom Groggin station, a nice looking place. But it is so far from the market that the cost involved in getting their produce to sale, is scarcely worth the bother. It is too remote. And the benefit that we would get from the land that would be inundated at Tom Groggin may well be 100 or perhaps 1000, maybe 10,000-fold in the way of benefit for what we would lose. I have noticed the bird life especially, because that was one of my hobbies, since as long back as I can remember. The first book I ever had was a bird book.

KH: Birds of Australia, was it? Cayley?

FR: No, no, it was Dr Lynch's bird book. And so I was able to identify birds from an early stage. And I understood them. I had a birds egg collection, as most of the kids did in those early years. We did not have toys, we had to make our own entertainment out in the bush. And so I recognized birds, and when I went out into the Eucumbene area on the lake and the water was coming up, there were quite a few water birds around there, which was interesting. And at the same time, I found that the national park had a list of birds in their area which totalled a fantastic 23, I think it was. And some of them were wrong, they had the wrong names for them. And so over the next 2 years, with Dave Jordan, another Snowy bloke who got interested in bird life a bit, we catalogued the birds. We made positive sightings; we noted whether they were nesting; whether they were migratory; where they were. After 2 years, I had the list typed up, and I sent that to the National Park, and it totalled 164 at that stage. I guess there were more, we strongly suspect - there were birds there that should be around that we have not been able to find. The National Park did not even write to me. They never even acknowledged the fact that they got the letter, but they certainly did, because they used that list for around about the next 15 years with my name on the bottom of it. But they never ever acknowledged receiving it. I do not have much time for the National Park, apart from Jim Robson, the only fellow I have been able to talk to. You know Jim?

KH: Well, I don't know him very well. I just see him from time to time.

FR; Well, he was an honest bloke. But the people who it run, the bureaucrats, are a bunch of bone-headed nitwits, in my opinion.

KH: What about Neville Gare? Did you get on with him?

FR: Neville was all right. But he was here in the early days. He did not have that power; he did not get drunk with power like some of the clowns up here have. They seem to be a

protected species, and I know for a fact that some of the people in authority within the Kosciusko National Park have publicly stated that if they had their way they would not allow anybody into the Park. Now, what the bloody hell is a park for?

KH: Did you ever meet Baldur Byles?

FR: Sounds like a complaint, no.

KH: Baldur Byles? No. He was a forester.

FR: No. He compiled some of the very early reports about - - -

FR: Dane Wimbush I knew. He was all right. He was not a bad bloke. He knew the plants and so on. No, it was a bit further up - - -

KH: Dane really worked for the CSIRO.

FR: Yes, that is right, he did, too.

KH: He worked as a scientist. He is in Canberra.

FR: Is he?

KH: Yes, he still has plots over near - up north of Kiandra on that plateau, plots that he goes to where they are doing work on the impact of rabbits.

FR: That is another thing. ... My golly there's ... a lot of rabbits out in the National Park. I noticed this time round; I was really surprised. Particularly around Kiandra, there were rabbits everywhere. That is a great pity.

KH: That is right. I think they seem to be beating the myxomatosis.

FR: Oh yes. Well, the myxomatosis - I was working out near Jindabyne when the full impact of myxomatosis descended on this area, and there were so many rabbits dead and dying in that area that you would smell it. Wherever you went you could smell dead rabbits. There was just an overall stench.

KH: Really? In the 50s.

FR: Yes, it was 1952 or 3. It might have been a bit later, 53, 54. I was working with Harry Grainger, a surveyor. I used to go out and do a bit of chain work for him. He was a friend of

mine, and it was a slack time, so I would go out and work with him, with the road diversion out there. There were dead rabbits lying everywhere.

KH: In terms of the life of the Scheme, I mean, if there is very little siltation; if the catchments are in very good condition and there is very little silt accumulating in the bottom of the dams, and parts of turbines can be replaced, it just can go on for centuries, can't it?

FR: I don't see any reason why it should not. You know, we are going to get advancement in . . . . .

KH: In America and in other parts of the world there have been dams built in areas where there is a very heavy silt load and there have actually been dams that have filled up with silt and they are now practically useless.

FR: Their fault.

KH: Yes. I mean, it is a different - - -

FR: They have utilised the water out of some of the rivers so that the rivers no longer run into the sea. They have run into nothing. We have got rivers here that run into nothing anyway, not even dams, haven't we?

KH: ......

FR: All sorts of advancement. Who knows where we are going to go, whether we will be able to bring iceblocks up from Antarctica and pump water inland. There is all sorts of things that may be feasible in the future that we do not see now. But as the Scheme works, we have a programme of maintaining and updating the equipment. And it will run on and on and on. I am quite sure it will, to produce the power that is required for a long time to come yet. I know the people involved; they give me information for the magazine. And they are looking ahead. I have watched them repair the damage. I know the steps that they take to try and rectify the problems they have got with generation.

KH: Were there any moves to install more turbines?

FR: No.

KH: Or are there any dramatic things that might happen?

FR: No. The only possible - the only thing on the horizon is Murray Gates Dam. Maybe they might put a little generator on the Khancoban Dam, because that water is running away all the time. You see, that is the regulating dam that I explained earlier. And that runs all the time. And it is possible to put a generator on to that, a small one, to provide lighting for the town. There would be plenty enough to provide lighting for the Khancoban township. That is a possibility. A proposal was put up by an engineer who had been working with SMEC for some time. He had been working with the Authority back in the construction days. He went back to SMEC and then was seconded back to the Authority again when one of the engineers went on leave. And he saw the potential there and wrote about it. But anything dramatic - no, nothing on the horizon at all. I cannot see that anything that would happen - excessive snowfalls, runoffs, or anything else, that has not already been foreseen and can be handled and coped with.

KH: Would you say that there is a hell of a lot more fish now than there were before the dams were built?

FR: Different type. Different - well, a lot of different species. But fishing in the smaller creeks you have got a hungrier, smaller, trout. You might catch more of them. When the dams started to fill, especially Eucumbene was covering new water, the fish grew so rapidly because the worms were coming out and they just gorged themselves all the time. And they tell me the odd thing about the trout is that the more food that is available the more it will eat. And it almost got to the stage around the lake - you had to go behind a tree to put the bait on the hook, and fight them off with a stick! You could see them swimming around at the edge. You could see their backs out of the water, they had been feeding in the shallows. But now of course the lake comes up .... they have their moments, sometimes they come on and bite....... and other times ....regardless of what

you do, you don't catch a thing. .... But it stabilizes. We've ... got some pretty big trout in that lake down there.

KH: Does anyone have any figures, do you know, on - - -

FR: No, you would have to talk to the Acclimatisation Society, I think, on that, but not the Snowies - they are not concerned about trout.

KH: No, no, that is right. Of course not. Well, I will finish up soon. Just a couple more. What was your best experience, and what was your worst? Can you single out anything? I mean, it does not matter if you can't.

FR: Oh, you have your wins. I could not say that any experience was - you know, when you are one of the senior blokes, especially on the administrative side, things that you might have done - something that was wrong, and they would parade you before the Commissioner, and states his case. And the Commissioner looks over and says, "I don't think I want to know what Mr Rodwell does before he does it. ... I trust his judgment." That is a win. Bad things - working in the mud at Bundilla - when there was a dose of sickness came through and everybody in the camp was sick and vomiting. That was pretty crook; riding in the back of a vehicle almost begging to bludge a ride back into Cooma with one of the Snowy vehicles; sitting in the back inhaling the exhaust fumes all the way; that was not too good either. I suppose the whole job - seeing the job virtually from start to finish was an achievement. You feel like a winner, and you certainly did with the Snowy Scheme, because we won all the time. That was great, knowing that you were working with not just an organisation that was regarded as good, but an organisation that was regarded as great throughout the world. There might have been a few mistakes made, but in comparison with the wins, they were nothing. And to have played a part - I suppose would have to be regarded as wins. Maybe even taking over the magazine. I did not ask to take over the magazine, I was asked to do it for a short period of time. I have been doing for two years now. I would like my old English

teacher to know that I am doing a magazine. I would regard that as a win.

KH: Is he or she still alive?

FR: I hope she's dead; she is a miserable old bitch, I think. Oh, I think she might be alive. She gave me a lot of trouble in school, when I was an early teenager, growing up in high school where you can be browbeaten by a female who would not call you by your christian name, favouritism of other people. On one occasion when I considered I did not get a fair go. Maybe that is why I chose to become a security officer later, with the Commonwealth Police, and to fight for what I considered to be right and proper, and to give people a fair go. Maybe I have got something to thank the old bitch for!

KH: Yes, that is right. So you have been working on it all this time.

FR: Well, I think every Australian - and I regard those people who worked on the Scheme as Australians whether they came from overseas or not - everybody wants a fair go. And I think they got it here.

KH: OK. That is a good ending.

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