



Gawler Oral History Project

Your Memory Our History

Transcript of discussion with Iris Crouch (part 2), 3 June 2017

Interviewed by Rod McKenzie

Rod: Iris, we got up to talking about, probably about when you were 20 and then you were starting to talk about some of your life after 20, and I would expect that to include children and also when you came here. So, you want to start talking about your children?

Iris: Well we were married in 43. Errol was born in 44 and he is now 72. 73 this month on 17th June. Adrian came along in 46 and of course he has been gone now for 2 months. And he was born 1st November 1946.

Rod: Where were you living then?

Iris: We were still at Merriton. my home was near the border line of Merriton and Wandearah, and the Crouch's were nearer Redhill. And of course I was born at Crystal Brook, Glen was born at Crystal Brook. The boys were born at Crystal Brook. One of the local women here, Betty Jacobs mother was the matron of the Crystal Brook hospital and delivered me. So there is a link there. And the boys of course were so many years later. But we were on the farm at Stockport. The Crouch's. And lived together until they sold the farm and then Glen and I and the boys came to, after the Crouch seniors died, and Glen and I and the boys came down to Stockport. And of course we lived there then until in 87 Glen suddenly took ill. We went to the doctor in Riverton and he never came home. That was on the Friday night, Saturday I spent the day with him at the Riverton Hospital. Sunday morning at half past 6 in the morning I got a phone call to say he had died. He had a clot and he was not quite 70. He would have been 71 on the 2nd October and it's so strange that he and Adrian, so much alike in looks, Adrian was 70, Glen wasn't quite 70.

Rod: So, you talked about what your daily routine was when you were a teenager, but what was your daily routine when you were married and had kids?

Iris: The same thing. I was out in the paddock helping. Grandma looked after the kids while I was outside, and, often times Glen and I would be out in the paddock Glen and I, and he'd

be delivering a lamb there, and I would be delivering a lamb here. That was our work. We were together. And I used to drive the truck while he and, if we could get help, he and the helper would be up on the back of the truck and I'd be dropping.

Rod: Throwing hay or picking up hay?

Iris: Picking up hay. And of course they did the harvesting. I never did that. I have driven the tractor ... once ... and I was never asked to do it again. The truck had broken down and we had to feed the sheep of course. And so course I had to drive the tractor while Glen fed the sheep from the trailer. And so that is what happened there. But I was never asked to do it again ... although it would not have been hard. Because it was the same as a truck actually.

Rod: How much older than you was Glen?

Iris: About 4 years. But we went to School together. I was 8 and I fell in love with him. Always did love him,... and he had other girls .. of course .. but he was very popular ... sport and everything else. I was only thinking of him the other day at football. He was born a cripple. His feet were like that. Ruined every pair of boots and shoes he ever bought.... because of the twisted feet never stopped him from running.

Rod: So he could still play sport.

Iris: Cricket, football, badminton. We used to go to Merriton Hall for badminton. And we lived there until we moved to Stocky. Then of course at Stockport went on playing badminton. But he didn't play football any more then.

Rod: So what age was he approximately when he gave up football?

Iris: Oh dear! Now you've asked! In his 30's I suppose. He and his brother Rex, Rex was older then Glen. He had a brother and sister older than him. He was always respected as a sportsman. Same with cricket. He used to play with the team for what do they call it? ... the cricket they play in Adelaide? ... it was a country thing ... but anyhow he played in Adelaide.

Rod: But if you didn't play sport in the country and you were not a policeman or teacher then you didn't get accepted at all did you?

Iris: Well everybody did the same thing. Everybody joined in the sports.

Rod: And you went to church then.

Iris: Oh yes. I was going to tell you ... Ken Edwards and David Tapler will tell you ... they were talking to me here one day ... not that long ago. How long had I been associated with the Church? And I said, "all my life". And then I said; "its a bit longer than that". And I happened to notice them sort of looking at one another then all of a sudden they burst out laughing... "her mother was pregnant". So, mum was a Wandearah girl, and of course she use to walk to church from where they lived and it would have been ... 4 miles I suppose... around the road if they couldn't get through the fence and cut across paddocks. I think

they did that more often than going around the roads. Of course I started school, and dad had to leave the farm for four years ... his brother took over there, and I don't know, and of course now it's too late to find out ... because their family is gone ... and they are gone ... so I don't know whether Uncle Pete rented the farm or whether they worked on shares. I don't know how they worked that out. Anyhow Uncle Pete took over, and we went to Crystal Brook and lived and that's where both my brother and I started schooling.

Rod: Alright, so going back to the boys, what was home life like? You used to work, but was there electricity, water?

Iris: Oh yes.

Rod: the water was tank or pipe?

Iris: it came from Beetaloo. It was mains water. And of course we had underground tanks. Everybody had at least one underground tank ... half as big as this room.

Rod: Underground to keep it cool?

Iris: To store it ... hundreds of gallons of course. Rain water tanks front and back of every house, and so forth. There was always plenty of rain water. I hate tap water. You didn't drink tap water.

Rod: So Glen died and then what did you do after that?

Iris: Well, we were retiring. We had sold the farm and we had bought the house in Riverton, and we were going to Riverton to live but of course he never got there. He had seen the house. He'd been through it a couple of times but that's all. It was all so sudden and all so quick that I had to go on my own.

Rod: So, how long did you live there for?

Iris: 12 years. I've been here 17. And I've been tied up with both churches. Merriton church of course. And the Merriton School, the kids never went to Merriton school because it was before they were born. And then at Riverton, Stockport ... we were there first. We were there I don't know how many years. That was hard work because I worked out on the farm there ... in the cowyard in the pig sty, and anywhere else I was needed the sheepyards. truck driving.

Rod: So you went to Riverton to live.

Iris: And I was on my own.

Rod: So you were on your own then.

Iris: yes.

Rod: So, what sort of place was at Riverton?

Iris: It was a town. A house. Lovely home. Of course the boys went to school there. And when they got older, they went to high school there. I get a bit hazy about, but I think they were both prefects. And i've got an idea that Errol was head prefect. They both did very well at high school. Errol became a high school teacher and of course still is. In his spare time. Although he is 73 this month.

Rod: what subjects did he teach?

Iris: Oh dear! Now you've asked.

Rod: what was his interest?

Iris: Woodwork. he made that table. I can't tell you what else.

Rod: That's fine. So, they were still at school when Glen died. So you must have had them fairly late in life.

Iris: No, not really. They were not in school when he died. He died in 87, that's say 30 years ago ... and they are in their 70's.

Iris: They had kids then. He was thinking about leaving the school almost by then. No, both the boys have had pretty good health. Adrian was in ETSA here. Of course he retired. And all of a sudden, like his father, whizzbang wallop, he developed leukemia. He had some weeks in Calvary Hospital ... came home ... then all of a sudden ... back again ... and in weeks he was gone. But he suffered hell whilst dying, and I'll never do it again. I don't advise anybody to do it ... is to be with their loved one and watch them die. It's horrible.

Rod: I must confess that when Jan died I was present but I was asleep, because I had had a busy day, and so I think she died one o'clock in the morning. Her daughter and myself had been in the room, and both of us were asleep ... and we both woke up ... is she still alive or not? no, so we had to call staff. So, we were present but not not watching.

Iris: well Adrian's breathing ... that's how it went ... just slower and slower and slower. It wasn't the breathing that got me, it was his body ... that seemed to disappear .. and his feet is something I will never forget. His feet were up like that. Stiff as boards. When I lay down my feet drop. But anyhow he is at peace. But it's Errol he rang again the other night .. he rang for mother's day.. and they have got three children .. two boys and a girl. And Adrian had No! two girls and a boy Errol's got. And of course they've got children and the eldest of thiers seven great grand children. The eldest one started school started high school last year I should say. But of course I suppose when you are ninety you have got to expect older grand children and great grand children.

Rod: I must confess I always felt sorry for my mother ... she died at ninety two

Iris: oh! I've beaten her (laughter)

Rod: But someone where I was working said she must have lots of great grand children .. but at that stage she had none. And unfortunately since she had died, my son's had two, my daughter has had two, my step daughter ...one's had two and one's had one.

Iris: Actually you have got about two or three families. And they are all happy?

Rod: On some days yes.

iris: Have you ever had a lifetime of " oh! I'm fit and happy today ?" Everyday? No! I bet any money anybody would like that you do not every day have a happy day. There is always something to confuse the day.... or upset it.

Rod: So you came here seventeen years ago. So, into this unit? So this unit would have been brand new

Iris: Adrian saw it advertised for sale. I don't know how long they've been here longer than that. I can remember coming here when all down here was the cream factory. So that's going back a good many years ... of course we were at Stockport then .. had cows. They use to have a truck that use to come from here up home to Stocky and pick up the cream. There were gallons ... wouldn't mind a penny for every gallon of cream that came from our farm... let alone everybody else's. There was the butter factory. And that was in this area just here.

Rod: So they knocked that down to build the units.

Iris: Just when ... I'm not sure. But a good many years back ... cause as I've said ... I've been here 17 years.... and it was a number of years before that.

Rod: So when you came in here someone had owned it before?

Iris: yes. Can't remember who, but I know there was a young couple living next door. An English lady there now. Vera and I don't see much of one another. Stella Fox lives next door. And she's been all over South Australia. Names are one thing I have forgotten. I could see you in the street, know who you are, speak with you, but if somebody had walked past and said; "Iris who are you speaking to?" I wouldn't be able to tell you what your name is. It's one thing and it bothers the life out of me. I'll wake in the night and I'll go a, b, c, d, e, f, g, until I oh! it's awful.

Rod: I have a nasty habit of talking to people and then Maureen says, "who are you talking to?" and I don't know their name.

Iris: Hurray (laughter). I've got a mate.

Rod: So, it's not that I've forgotten their name, it's just that I never asked them their name.

Iris: I know their name. Some of them I've known all my life ... but to put a name on a person is something that has been wiped. Why? I have no idea.

Rod: So when you first came in here did you have a car?

Iris: Yes, I have had a car for years.

Rod: So you had a car while you were here?

Iris: At Stockport I had a car. We had a car at Stocky. I've been driving cars before I was even married ... that's 74 years ago.

Rod: So, what time did you stop driving?

Iris: I was 92 ... about three years ago. Up here on 12th Street, that used to bother the life out of me. And to go from here to get up onto the street and you are striking traffic like that it's better to stop home.(laughter).

Rod: Unfortunately there's also a ford there.

Iris: it's very awkward there because you drop down. The ceiling is not high enough. it'd be steeper than this.

Rod: One of the guys use to take a full size bus through that ford. I can not imagine taking a full size bus. It's idiotic.

Iris: But of course when you are out in the country you don't take notice

Iris: But of course when you are out in the country you don't take notice of fords or dips or anything else. In fact going from home to Merriton itself to Church we had two or three billabongs to go under. Quite a big dip and down and up ... and of course in the winter times and often times they would be more or less flooded. Course it would be a back up from the river Broughton and often you'd get so far and you would have to turn around and go home again.

Rod: So how might have Gawler changed since you first got here?

Iris: I don't know that it has changed such a great deal. I've noticed the church has changed. That's gone down to glory. All the spaces that there are in these churches now. I went out with Rita to Winsor Sunday before last. Anyhow there was 6 besides Rita and I. It is only a little church. But I love going out there. I use to go out there on my own and play the organ for them. Winsor was one. I haven't played at Mallala. I've got a cousin who preaches there ...Edna Monday. Well she did. She doesn't any more because she's down there. And her sisters, her two sisters ... they're down there, and they're only brother, he's down there. They've all gone. And this is what I'm finding, that so many of the people that I have been closely connected with not only relations but friends ... they've all gone. God has taken them. And they ... a lot of them have been younger than me.

Rod:Yes, unfortunately one of the challenges of getting older is ... it would be lovely if everyone lived as old as you do but ..

Iris: Really speaking I am one of them ... and I will say this .. and if it sounds bragging ... too bad ... I am one of the luckiest women alive. I really am. I can still sit at the organ and play for an hour and not worry about a note of music. I don't need books .. that way. If it wasn't for my broken back which happened down there ... I tripped and sat down heavily on my backside. Don't do it. Because it hurts.

Rod: I'll try really hard not to. I don't want to.

Iris: Well I've broken the vertebrae, and its grown a little ... "aminals" as the kids use to call them. And it's grown claws and that's why I'm sitting on two hot water bags now ... which they'll have to replace with some more hot water. But that's the only thing that I'm suffering. I still do my own work and that's why all this mess is here because I'm trying to clean up.... the old books and papers and so forth. And I do my own housework. I did have help but she would come through with the carpet sweeper in the middle around there and around there and then out. So, I got fed up with that. I thought I can do that just as easy. (laughter) But I am going to have to have the carpets cleaned. It's been 18 months I suppose since I've had them done last time. I thank God every day for my health. I wouldn't know what a headache is.

Rod: You're very lucky that way.

Iris: And that's one thing ... I bet if you asked ninety nine out of a hundred people every one would say; "Oh! Don't talk to me about headaches".

Rod: I must confess I don't suffer a lot from headaches, but there again I'm a regular blood donor and I'm really conscious of what I put into my mouth. I have to be thoughtful about it, because I give blood every fortnight. I do plasma, and because that's every fortnight I'm very conscious of how I am every fortnight. So that makes me a lot more aware. But I think a lot of headaches come from people being stressed.

Iris: Worry and stress. I use to get headaches long before ... and when ... and before I got glasses. I've been wearing them for 80 years I suppose.

Rod: Well that's the other issue. Some people avoid wearing glasses and suffer from headaches.

Iris: I know which I'd prefer. I wouldn't know what anything else is. I can eat anything. I can "eat the horse and chase the rider" as they say. .. or use to say ... I don't hear it anymore. But ... that was one thing I use to adore was riding horses and the horses. I'd love to ... well I have been on a horse since I have been here. And I can't think who it was took two ponies to Church

Rod: I think that was part of one of the church fairs. They had the animals. Maureen was saying ...

Iris: Oh that was absolute heaven. It took me back god knows how many years. I .. we had our first pony ... it was a white horse she was more than a pony. Pony is only little. One horse I use to ride was 17 hands.

Rod: you would need a ladder

Iris: Always had to look for a fence. was a beautiful horse. And when you kept riding them, and got to know them, horses were like little lambs .. beautiful. Another one Dad had we use to ride and drive. I can remember one time taking mum to fellowship at Merriton. This is

long before I ever married ... was after I left school. Had Ruby in the sulky ... flat out she use to go ... and Mum said something about going fast ... and I said well next time I'm going to take you in the wheelbarrow" what are you talking about?!" Do you know I can remember that as well as anything. I said well, what am I doing ... here are my arms like that, here are the traces like that. it all came from that horses mouth ... and that's how we got to Church ... nearly 4 mile from home to Merriton Church ... where we were married. Of course it used to be church or fellowship with Mum.

Rod: So you used to travel by horse ...

Iris: Horse and cart. yes. More or less. I didn't drive the car then. Mum did occasionally but she was too scared, but dad taught us to drive.

Rod: The roads would have been fairly basic ..

Iris: Oh! wide open and you wouldn't see a soul for 12 months sometimes.

Rod: Yes, but it wasn't very good conditions .. surface

Iris: It was only earth. Dirt roads.

Rod: Dirt roads in a horse and cart.

Iris: Oh No! They were ok. Because there was no rubble or anything like that to make it rough. Use to be quite good. Bidy was white. Ruby was chestnut with pale mane and tail. I can't think of the one that was 17 hands. We had Joker .. was Bay. He was a thick set horse. He was another one I use to ride. I love riding. I loved to go to the races. I'd go to the races every Saturday (laughter) .. Sunday Monday too. (laughter). Just to see the horses and to talk to them, because you can. You can talk to a horse. You can talk to any animal. You have a mob of cows in the cow yard ... "come on Daisy, Daisy come on"! .. and Daisy would walk up and into a bale. Now .. how.

Rod: I have to get back to the Church.

Iris: And what are you doing there?

Rod: We are having birthday celebration for Robert Clothier. He is turning 60 and he is celebrating today though he doesn't turn 60 until 17th this month ... but his two kids this is the only day they've got.

Iris: His Aunties are my cousins. Because Robert's mother was Cynthia Kelly ... Leyton Kelly's twin sister I knew them when they were that big because they came from Crystal Brook. And the two sisters Marjorie and Geraldine both married Crouch's.... Glen's first cousins. And of course i grew up with them more or less. Well my father was one of four. They were Sinclairs. And our ancestors came out from the Orkney Islands in 1854. I'd love to have a yarn with Maureen about Scotland. Anyhow they settled at this end of the Range that goes through Riverton. And I've been on that property, and do you know it gives you the creepiest, weirdest feeling to know that the Sinclairs owned that land once. The spirits are there. But that was in 1854 ... well then I supposed they expanded out. I think the

next generation were even married at Riverton. Then of course we went to Merriton and that's only just south of Pirie. Merriton and Wandearah. There's a roadway between ... cuts off Mum's father and his brother who came out from England in the late 1800's ... and their land is there. The brother is there and the Sinclairs' are here. There's only a fence between us. So it was natural that Dad and Mum should meet. Well anyhow Dad was six when his father died at 33. And the father's mother poked her nose in. She was a strict Catholic. And I knew her, I can remember her, she stepped in and ..."you will go to Sacred Heart College in Adelaide" ... but I don't know whether she paid the bill or not. I don't know about that part. And Dad and his brother went to Sacred Heart, the two girls went to Pirie Convent. They must have boarded in Pirie somewhere because they wouldn't be going backwards and forwards from Merriton to there. Anyhow they were brought up strict Catholic. Dad married a strict Protestant. He married a Monday, the Monday's here out at Barabba was ...?... eldest brother. Of course Edna became a local preacher ... I don't know if you have heard of her. She use to preach at Barabba, Mallala. I think Hamley. She was a bit older than me.... couple of years. Then there was Uncle Pete. They went to the west when the kids were getting older, and he married a Wilson ... strict protestant. Auntie Ellie married a Lance Crouch ... strict protestant. Auntie Lou married Thomas Ryan ... strict Catholic. Well we thought he was. They would go ... he had the Blacksmith shop at Wandearah ... opposite the Primary School ... and they use to go .. he kept to his church and Auntie Lou went with him ... and they would go to early morning mass in Crystal Brook of a Sunday morning, then in the afternoon Auntie Lou would be in the Choir, and Uncle Tom in the congregation of the Wandearah Methodist Church. (laughter). So the old girl didn't do as much as she thought she was going to. But Dad never ever tried to teach us Catholicism. It was never mentioned. Well, I'm wrong there. he used to talk about it, but there was no " I wish you would" or "it'd be nice if you did" ... never ever ... and he would come to church or take us to church or Sunday school. of course I started Sunday school in Crystal Brook because that's when we were there then. The Brook school was slightly different to Merriton. I think there was 30 kids at Merriton in its hayday, ... and Crystal brook had a hundred or more. A fairly big school there.? .. and Kelly went there with his sisters. Two girls both marrying brothers who were first cousins of Glen. Another one ... Shirley Lucas.... her father's sister married the eldest Crouch ... Oscar ... up at Jamestown. He was 99 when he died. I don't think I'll make that. Although the young people here have told me .. she always calls me Auntie Iris ... and it's lovely it makes you feel alive .. anyhow she's told me that they're planning my hundredth. (laughter) I've got to live a bit longer yet. If it goes as quickly as the last 5 It'll be here before I'm ready for it. And if god is as good to me in the next 5 years as he has been in the last 55, 65, 75, 95 years I will be able to do it.

Rod: Well that's right. We don't actually have a say in it.

Iris: It's all in his hands. And somebody ... oh I'm going back years now with maoning and groaning .. they had lost a parent ... and "it's so unfair" and its "this" and its "that". Poor old God was really getting the rounds of the kitchen. And I said to them then; "how do we become who we are? I said it's all through God in the first place. Our lives are guided by his hand.

Rod: And on that note I would like to thank you Iris Crouch for this beautiful chat (laughter) and we look forward to others in the future. Thank you very much.

Iris: Thank you.

