

Valentine McGuinness interviewed by Ann McGrath in the Australia 1938 oral history project [sound recording].

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Abstract: McGuinness speaks of his family background; family experiences; his parentage: his father an Irish immigrant, his mother an Aboriginal woman; family homes in the bush; his father's prospecting; the death of father and consequences for family; having to live in an Aboriginal reserve; employment experiences; apprenticeships; wives and family; meeting Xavier Herbert and Herbert's work for Aboriginal people; his homes; treatment of Aboriginal people in 1930s; his education; Aboriginal trust fund; religion; his lifestyle in 1930s; Darwin in the 1930s ; boxing ; memories of the 1930s.

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Session 1

At time 00:00:00

Summary: Introduction. Valentine was born in 1910. His mother is described as a 'full blood' Australian Aboriginal woman and his father was born on an Irish ship in New York harbour and was raised in Dublin. His father came to Darwin around 1904 and married his mother soon after. His father was a fettler on the railways. Fettlers camps were named after the distance they were out of town such as 10 mile, 22 mile, 88 mile and so on.

Keywords: Valentine McGinness, Valentine McGinness, Amy McGrath, Darwin, Aboriginal Australian, Dublin, Ireland, Knuckey Lagoon, fettler, Stephen Joseph McGinness, Lucy, Alngindabu, Alyandabu, Kungarakany

Transcript: Ann McGrath

This is Val McGinness in Darwin being interviewed by Ann McGrath for the 1938 Oral History Project.

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Okay, so what year were you born in Val?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

1910.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah. And where did your um, where were your parents born?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh well my mother was fullblood Aboriginal.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And my father's from ah Dublin in Ireland.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yes. And was ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Although ah I don't know what part of Dublin he was reared up, but he was actually born on board an Irish ship in New York Harbour. So ah had he been born on shore he'd have been an American.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Being born on the Irish ship, he remained an Irishman, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah, ah was brought up in ire-, in ah, yeah in Dublin, in Ireland.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Now what year he came out here I do not know. But ah approximately I'd say around about 1904 ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I think he married my mother. I'm not quite sure about that but ah, ah I've only just gone back on the children's ages—the, the children born before me.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah I'd say approximately 1904, 1905, or more like 1904. For the simple reason that ah, ah—do you want to hear all this?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, this is very interesting.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

For the simple reason that he was a fettler on the railways here.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah they didn't have any names for these places, they just called them ah the ah, the milepost. Like ah Knuckey Lagoon out here was called a 10-mile.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And then there was a 22-mile ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

and a 34-mile, and a 46-mile, 88-mile, all those places were fettlers' camps, see. Ah they might've had official names—I r-, I really don't know—but ah that's all, people used to refer to 'em as 20-mile, 30-mile or whatever it was, you see. So ah he was working at this place, the 34-mile. Now the ah Railways Department had a, they used to build ah, they built beautiful little houses for their workers. They all had a brick fireplace, and brick chimneys. And ah this, one particular night they had a, had a bit of a party. Old man was pretty, pretty fond of ah square gin, see. Used to buy it in big square blackened bottles. Ah I think it was ah, the brand was AVH, I think it was made in Holland.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

At time 00:02:40

Summary: While working at 34 mile camp his father had a party. On his way home a drunken party guest stumbled onto the railway tracks. Val explains that at night locomotives in the NT travelled without headlights to avoid dazzling animals. In the moonlight the train driver saw the man slumped on the tracks, jumped off the train to try and move him but failed and the man on the tracks was cut into 3 pieces. All the railway workers involved, including his father, were sacked over the incident.

Keywords: Railway worker, fettler, place names, railway housing, AVH, square bottle gin, party, gin, railway accident

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Brewed in Holland, or distilled in Holland. Anyway, they had a party this particular night. I th-, I, this particular night they invited a fellow from over the other s-, over, over across the railway. He wasn't a fettler he was just a visitor, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So they invited him over and they all got gloriously drunk. And anyway, this fellow decided to go back to his camp. So ah he had to go down a little bit of a, cutting into the railway and across. But he never made it, he fell across the railway line and a train come along and cut him in three.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh dear.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah the ah story goes that ah this old engine driver, it was, happened to be moonlight. See there they had no headlights on the locomotives here then, for the simple reason that ah the lights used to dazzle the animals al-, on the line then they wouldn't get off, you see. But if a, if a train was to come along in the dark the animals would get off the line. So this driver, he could see this object across the line and he applied his brakes. And he could see that the engine was not going to stop—or the whole train for that matter—was not going to stop in time. So he jumped off the locomotive and ran ahead of it, and just tried to pull that fellow off but the engine beat him. So he had to, had to jump out of the road and the engine chopped the other bloke in three pieces, you see. Anyway, ah there was a terrible

ah uproar over that. Everybod-, everyone involved was sacked, including my father.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
And ah so ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
And what was your father doing? He was ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
On the railway, yeah.

At time 00:05:20

Summary: After his father's sacking, his parents along with his maternal aunt and uncle Murranda Frank, a Kungarakan speaker, packed up a dray and with a herd of goats, 3 horses, and chickens and headed to the gold diggings at Bynoe Harbour. His mother and her sister-in-law herded the goats but along the way two of her best milkers went missing.

Keywords: Bynoe Harbour, Kungarakan, Aboriginal language, goats, horses, Polly, Tommy, Gilbert, horse drawn vehicle, King Murranda, billabong

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
On the railway, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
he was still a fettler, was he?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Ah was a fettler, yeah. So ah w-, ah it appears ah, it happened that we hadn't—when I say we, I'm talking about my mother and my father, I wasn't there at the time.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes.

Transcript: Event
Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Ah they had a herd of goats, they had three horses and a dray, and chooks. So my old man decided he was gonna go to Bynoe Harbour. And it was a big Chinese working there, all, huge thing it was, they had machinery of all description. And ah my father was, intended to go there and get a job, work for the Chinese, you see. So they packed up everything on, on the dray. He had three horses, ah Gilbert, Collie and Comidon. This was the three horses. So the old man drove the dray and ah I, my mother—who's fullblood Aboriginal, she had a brother there too. He was ah, he was the king of the tribe. A, a man called ah, his white name was Frank and his Aboriginal name was Murrunda.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Uh huh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So he went along with them. And ah it was very slow going, you know, they had to ah, the kids rode the dray, and the old man drove the dray. Or Murrunda, my, my uncle. One of the two. And ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What language did he speak?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Who?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Your uncle?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah Kumurikan.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah, ah I suppose they took it in turns—him and the old man—driving the dray. See one had to ride saddle and the other one drove the two horses and the dray. And my mother and her sister a-, was it her sister or sister-in-law? That's right, her sister-in-law it was. That was Uncle Murrunda's wife. Ah those two women drove the goats, and you can imagine how slow it was. I don't know how long it took them from ah the 34-mile to this particular point. Was only 8 miles from ah Bynoe Harbour. I-, ah wouldn't be 8 miles by ah direct route, but winding in and out of those hills and trees I suppose w-, you know, w-, ah you'd end up ah, ah travelling about 8 miles to get there, see. So there was a beautiful big billabong, and ah old man decided to camp there and wait for mum and her sister-in-law to come along, see. And eventually they, they caught up. Ah she ah, she said ah, 'Well we haven't got far to go now.' No, but she said, in the morning she says, 'Don't,' she said, 'Pack up but don't go.'

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

She said, 'I lost two of my best milkers.' But she said, 'I've got an idea where they, where I lost 'em,' so she said, 'I'll, me and my sister-in-law will double back in the morning, early in the morning and see if we can locate them.' Which they did. Old man packed up ready to move and ah sat there and waited for my mother to return. Anyway, she eventually got back and she found the two goats exactly where she thought she'd lost them. Must have been a few bushes there and they just got tangled up in the bushes, you see, and they went away without 'em. But w-, where, approximately where she found the goats, here was this upturned tree from a cyclone or heavy wind. And hanging on the roots was this lump of pegmatite with this black stuff in it. And she had an idea that it was valuable. She'd seen it before somewhere. And ah she brought it along, see, to show it to the old man. And when I say old man, he wasn't old then of course. But ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How old would he have been?

At time 00:09:09

Summary: While searching for her lost goats his mother Lucy found a piece of pegmatite hanging from the roots of an upturned tree. His uncle recognised the rock as containing tin. Around 1906 his father established the Lucy Tin mine where his mother found the goats. He was born on 14 February 1910 and named Valentine Bynoe, after the day and Harbour.

Keywords: Pegmatite, tin, Lucy Tin mine, St Valentine's Day, Bynoe Harbour

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How old would he have been?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh now you've got me. Ah I'll give you some idea shortly.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Just some idea, you know.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Ah where was I, yeah. 'Oh,' he said, 'I see you've got your goats.' She said, 'Yeah, but,' she said, 'What's this?' And she showed him this stone. He said, 'I'm blowed if I know what it is.' He'd never seen it in his life before, you see. And my uncle, he had been working for the Chinese before that and he knew what it was. He said, 'Hey Mac,' he used to call my old man Mac. He said, 'Mac,' he said, 'That's tin.' 'Yeah?' 'Tin, where'd you get it? Oh beautiful stone, see.' 'Right where I found the goats.' 'All right,' he said, 'We're not going to Bynoe Harbour, we're going back there,' see. So they doubled back about a mile and that's where the tin mine is today. I'll show you some of that stone.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yeah, good.

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well anyway, they doubled back to, that's where the Lucy Mine is today. Now that was approximately 1906.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Might have been a little later, I'm not quite sure about that. But ah then came 1910, ah when the mine was firmly established and working. That's when I was born.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And I was named Bynoe on account of being born in Bynoe Harbour.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right. Your name's Valentine Bynoe ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, 14 February, St Valentine's Day.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah Bynoe Harbour, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right. And what other brothers and sisters were born by that stage?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well when we left the 34-mile there was an older brother, or an older half-brother.

At time 00:11:30

Summary: The birth of his older siblings Bernard, John and Margaret. His mother was called Lucy and she was also known as Alngindabu. His parents were married in the Catholic Church and his older siblings went to a Catholic school in Darwin. He and his younger brother Joe remained with his parents until 1917. The circumstances around his father's death in 1917.

Keywords: Family, mother, half brother, siblings, Lucy McGuinness, Dr Strangman, Dr Jones, numiuk, head elder, Alyandabu, train, leg, tumour, Packard Street hospital, blood poisoning

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well when we left the 34-mile there was an older brother, or an older half-brother.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Bernard.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And there was a, an older full brother and sister.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right. So Bernard ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
half-brother?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
And there was John, Margaret. Ah I really don't know but I, I, I've got an idea that ah Margaret was about four years old then.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes, and that's in 1910 is it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh no that's in 19-, ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah, about 1906 I think ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
When the mine was discovered?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Right. And why was it called the Lucy Mine?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Oh for my mother. Her name was Lucy and ah the Aboriginal name was Alngindabu.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Uh huh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
So ah they didn't call her Lucy Alngindabu, they called her Lucy McGinness because they were married in a Catholic church.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Were they?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

That would've been one of the first marriages of its kind, wouldn't it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, just about. Well there might've been others but ah, ah as far as we can ascertain they were married in a Catholic church and ah, ah see ah Bernard—that's the half-brother—ah John and Margaret were sent to the ah convent here in Darwin, when they were old enough to come to school.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, m'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And myself and Joe, the youngest one—jo-, Joe was born in 1914 when the war broke out.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, right.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah we, we remained with ah bilpo ... ah right up until, oh I forget now, around about 1917 I think ah the old man he, he got a tumour on his leg here. And ah it gradually worse and worse. Anyway, eventually took him into ah, do you know where the railway crosses the river now? Near the dam?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well that used to be ah, you'll, you'll notice a big water tank up on the side of the hill.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That used to be the filling station for the locomotives.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well that's the place we used to go and meet the train. As close as we could get to the railway, see. So ah, ah took him into there, put him on the train and sent him into hospital. Now the hospital used to be located in Packard Street. You know where that is?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, m'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

You know about that hospital do you?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was that earlier than the ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, Packard Street Hospital. Was it just near the cliff ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, right on the edge of the cliff it was, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

There's no beach there, just a sheer cliff straight down like that. So ah I believe ah, I don't know h-, which doctor it was now. Whether it was Dr Strangin or Dr Jones that operated on him. And ah they took this thing out, whatever it was. Some growth he had in there. And sewed him up and ah he ah, they allowed him to walk around too soon, and all the stitching busted and he became septic and killed him. He died as a result, you see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Dreadful.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah anyway, by this time my sister had married—or just before he came to hospital she'd married, and ah my brother-in-law, he was, more or less took over the Lucy Mine, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What year did your dad die about?

At time 00:15:30

Summary: When his father died, the family moved to Darwin and his sister and her husband took over the Lucy tin mine. He reflects on the diverse range of bush foods they ate while working the tin mine. His father was known as Namiuk - an Aboriginal elder. He describes the house, the store house and their water supply and that his mother was an excellent cook. His father made a fireplace and oven from ant bed.

Keywords: Bush food, plums, yams, goannas, snakes, possums, turtles, flour, sugar, tea, tinned meat, kangaroo, buffalo, bread, water tanks, billabong, ant beds, bread, camp oven

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What year did your dad die about?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

About 19-, between 1917 and 1918, I just can't remember. But ah we came to Darwin around about, yeah must've been either late 1917 or early 1918 because ah it was around about nearly Christmastime when we came to live in Darwin.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And prior to that you'd been living out on the mine in the bush?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And were you eating a lot of bush food?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh everything possible. All very rich too, was plums, yams, goannas, snakes, possums, turtles.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Lovely.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And did, was your father um sort of accepted by the Aborigines?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah, yeah, oh yeah. Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was he given a skin name or anything like that?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you have skin names?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, I can't remember that but ah they addressed him as Numjuk, that means the head in, the head ah elder. Anybody that's ah, ah, that's a head of a tribe or something like that, they call them numjuk, you see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And you had some sort of ah a lean-to camp, what sort of camp did you have?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, we had ah excellent houses. He was a pretty good builder, old bush timber, but we used bark, ah

gable roofed. And ah we had one, one shed. Ah it was only a small thing, it would be about as big as this room. And ah it had a galvanised iron roof on it.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But ah that's where we kept all the stores, you see, all the food stuffs. That was locked up in there. And ah the rain that was caught off that iron roof was put into a tank, and that's what we had for water. There was no water there, he-, dry country. And in the dry weather they had to cart the water from the billabongs up to the house, in, in ah o-, they had a little tank up there, brought it up in the dray you see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah but after the wet this ah 1000-gallon tank, as it were, used to last nearly the whole year. But only for cooking and baking, and my mother was an excellent baker. She made the most beautiful bread I ever tasted I think. Cakes and things, ah she was an excellent cook all round really.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

So you always kept supplies of flour and sugar?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, we got flour, and sugar and tea in bulk. And ah, oh lot of tinned meat too, too, ah canned meat too but mainly lived on kangaroos and buffalo, or fresh meat.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did she make the bread with yeast or ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, yeast bread. Y-, oh beau-, really beautiful, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm, in a camp oven or something, or ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, the old man used to make a, made a real oven out of a, out of ant bed, you know?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah n-, normally he made a fireplace with a, with a grate on top to, for cooking, and underneath was this ah oven, see. And used to just build a fire in it, and when it was hot they'd rake the coals out and put the bread in, see. Really beautiful.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you kids collect the ant bed?

At time 00:19:30

Summary: He recalls the vast magnetic ant beds in the district. The ant beds face north and south. He tells a story about kidding a visitor that they would stick to a magnetic ant bed if they got too close.

Keywords: Magnetic ants, ant beds, jokes, cartoon

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you kids collect the ant bed?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you kids collect the ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I wouldn't remember back that far.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, oh there was stacks of it out there, there's millions and millions of, bloomin' yards of it. There's no, no shortage of ant beds. That's the home of the magnetic, you know, you heard of the magnetic ant bed ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's the home of them out there, oh you ought to see them. Huge things. And they're there in the thousands and thousands. And they all grow in ah, in the river bed too, they don't grow outside.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And they're all in a line aren't ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, all pointing north and south, yeah. Magnetic they call 'em, that's why they call 'em magnetic, because they're pointing north and south. We had ah, had some friends come over here one time ah not so very long ago, and told her, she said ah, she goes, 'I heard so much about these magnetic ant beds ah,' she said, 'I want to get a photo, see, before I go back to Queensland.' I said, 'Yeah. Well,' I said, 'When you go out,' I said, 'Don't go too close.' 'What's the matter?' 'Well,' I said, 'Why do you think them magnetic ant beds for? They'll, they'll draw you in.' I said, 'You'll get stuck on one, you'll never come off, see.' And ah, ah she half-believed me too for a while.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah my grandson, he, he's only eighteen now but he got onto the, onto the joke too like, and he drew a picture of this woman standing up taking a picture of this big ant bed. And ah another one he drew where she's stuck on the ant bed with a camera in her hand.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh dear me.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Poor soul, she went back, when she went back to Queensland she only lived there for a while and died of a heart attack.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh, well she had a good holiday first by the sounds of it, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well anyway, that's as far as what now, how ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

You're in Darwin, we got up to Darwin when you're about seven years old ... ?

At time 00:21:22

Summary: After his father died his mother moved back to Darwin. He and his brother were removed from her care placed in Kahlin Compound. He discusses the reasons for their removal and remarks that Aboriginal people accepted half caste children as their own. The children were poorly fed in the compound and forced to steal food to survive.

Keywords: Full blood, half caste, Kahlin Compound and Half Caste Home

Transcript: Ann McGrath

You're in Darwin, we got up to Darwin when you're about seven years old ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well what happened was ah, ah, see the Aboriginal Department would not allow a fullblood Aboriginal woman to have children—half-caste children especially—on her own without the father, see. So ah they shunted us into the ah Aboriginal reserve then, Kahlin Compound they called it. And ah, oh we d-, we didn't, we didn't half realise what was going on, you know.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah I, I never, I, I never found out until years and years after what actually happened to us, you see.

Ah, you know, after we grew up, you know, I could see, 'Oh yeah that's ah w-, we weren't the only ones,' they, all half-caste children were collected and taken away from their parents. And ah strange as it may seem, the Aboriginals regarded half-caste children as black.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, they look, even if ah, see my, my mother never had a, never had a black husband, but supposing that she was married to a—there, there was a lot of Aboriginal women married to Aboriginal men, then ah they had half-caste children, the white men, see. But the black father accepted them as their own. Oh yes, looked after them, oh yeah, just like they were very proud of them. And ah, but anyway, in this case we were shunted into the thing and ah well you talk about really bad conditions, you know. Ah we, we were hungry most of the time, we were growing up, you know. Not only me but several other boys from different locations, different loca-, localities. We were all in the same boat sort of thing and we were ah m-, well we were more or less forced to steal on account of the h-, being hungry. So we used to go down to the ah, ah, see where Mindil Beach is now ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yeah?

At time 00:23:49

Summary: The children would sneak out of the compound and steal mangoes and coconuts from the Chinese market gardens.

Keywords: Mindil Beach, mango trees, Chinese Garden, coconut trees, Bullocky Point, Telford Hotel, pineapples

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

on the other side where that cliff is there used to be a grove of mango trees. It was a huge Chinese garden down there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes, yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And up on this side of the creek—where, where the ah casino is now—there was a grove of coconut trees from there right up to Bullocky Point. So we used to go down, if we couldn't get a coconut or if we couldn't get mangoes, mangoes were out of season, we used to go down and get coconuts. And ah, oh some of the trees were really high and we couldn't climb them. Used to have to wait till they ripen and fall off, you know, that sort of thing.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
How did you get out of the compound?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Oh sneak out.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you get through a fence or something?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was there a fence or ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah, fence all around but we used to get out. There was holes in it like a, you know, like a ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

rabbits or cats or things getting out of the fence.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. But anyway, ah we'd go around, go into the Government Botanical Gardens where it is now, and ah right along where the, you know where that Garden Road goes past the cemetery there?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Now there was a grove of coconuts from, from the beach almost, right along there until it got to the cemetery. And they were huge, tall things too, but very fortunately there was that many of them we didn't have to wait long for a, for a ripe coconut, you know. It probably ah, ah, every day you could go down there and you'd find a coconut had fallen, see, or maybe two. And oh boy oh boy we used to, we used to eat these coconuts. And we'd eventually come round to where the, you know where the Telprit Hotel is now, well across there there was another big Chinese garden. And ah on the opposite side ah, like what, what street would that be? Ah Smith Street, yeah. There was, all along the edge of the hill they had ah, um pineapples growing there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And of course we used to wrap these pineapples too, you know, we'd be trying, trying to see or put. We just couldn't help it, we were hungry. Simple reason that they gave us a slice of bread for breakfast. It might've been smeared with jam, a bit of plum jam. And you had to scrounge around to get a ah, an old milk can or a meat can or something to, to get a cup of tea. And ah you were allowed one spoon of sugar and that's all you had. That cup of tea and that slice of bread, that was breakfast. And ah lunchtime, or midday meal was, see what the a-, working Aboriginals—men and women—they were allowed to have meat ah, we, I think we used to get a little bit of meat but ah what they used to do, the,

the rejected stuff from the butchers.

Sometimes there'd, you know, there'd be some of the, the, the meat left over that they couldn't sell the next day, well that was shunted down to the Aboriginals. I think, I think they had to pay a price for it, but it wasn't full price sort of thing, you know, because ah, ah the butchers couldn't sell it at full price they let the Aboriginals have it for ah, for half price say. But anyway, now they used to put this meat on to boil. You know how the, the gravy rises up above the water, see? Lunchtime would come, we were allowed to put our l-, slice of bread on top of that and soak up all that gravy.

At time 00:26:15

Summary: The children were mostly fed on bread and gravy as any meat was reserved for working Aboriginal adults. He muses that despite the poor food they grew up healthy and attributes that to the food they stole outside the compound. He tells a story about stealing sugar cane from a Chinese market garden.

Keywords: Bread, jam, tea, sugar, sugar cane, Chinese market gardens, meat, Telford Hotel, knife, bamboo hats, guns, sleeping weeds, sundown, ghosts, cemetery

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Sometimes there'd, you know, there'd be some of the, the, the meat left over that they couldn't sell the next day, well that was shunted down to the Aboriginals. I think, I think they had to pay a price for it, but it wasn't full price sort of thing, you know, because ah, ah the butchers couldn't sell it at full price they let the Aboriginals have it for ah, for half price say. But anyway, now they used to put this meat on to boil. You know how the, the gravy rises up above the water, see? Lunchtime would come, we were allowed to put our l-, slice of bread on top of that and soak up all that gravy.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And a cup of tea, that was midday meal you see. And ah, oh boy we loved that gravy, it was something, you know. Something different.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Anyway, supertime came it was the same thing, one slice of bread. Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh, no fruit?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Sometimes, sometimes you'd get a piece of meat. Not always. And of course as I said, the, the meat was for the working Aboriginals. So was one of the reasons why we used to have to go out and steal. It's amazing how ah, how one grew up so big and strong after all those ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm, it's a very unhealthy diet, isn't it? Just, it's a bit unhealthy just um bread ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, but I think it was due to the fact that we were eating all this other s-, other stuff outside, but that sustained us really. Anyway, ah, hang on ah, I, I don't know how many times I've told this story. One pa-, particular time we was around this garden just below Telpritt Hotel there, and ah, oh this fellow, the-, these Chinese had a beautiful crop of ah sugar cane.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh would've got some sugar cane from there, who was gonna go in? Well I suppose I was the hungriest of the lot, I volunteered to go in see, through the fence. And they gave me an old butcher's knife it was, and oh boy oh boy you could have rode on the blade like that, you know, up and down and it wouldn't have cut you, see. But anyway, ah I got in and I chose a beautiful big stalk and I thought, 'Oh this'll do.' And I'm hacking away, hacking away and this knife wouldn't make an impression on it, see.

So I sort of cut a ring around it, you know, and I thought to myself, 'Well it should, should break off,' see. And you could hear the Chinese working out there, they were attending their ah cabbages and one thing and another, talking away. And with their big bamboo hats on, you know. And ah there must've been, must've always had a gun handy there somewhere. So ah I said, 'Oh,' I got sick of this, this blunt knife so I, I bent this stalk, or cane over like that and it went, 'Pop,' like that, see. Oh made a terrible big noise. All of a sudden the Chinamen were going, [indecipherable]. I said, 'Oh my goodness.'

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

'They're after us,' see. So I dropped the cane and I made a dive through the fence. And I yelled out to my friends, I said, 'Chinamen's after us,' see. And they all, the, just outside the fence there's a beautiful lawn where there was ah sleeping weeds, you know, the sleeping weeds? You touch 'em and they go to sleep.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Do they?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Oh it was a beautiful lawn. Anyway, I said to myself, 'My best bet,' because the Chinamen were too close, I just dived under this thing, you see. And here's this beautiful lawn going like that, and all of a sudden it was mook-, like that, and that was me under there. Anyway, the Chinaman was ah, his attention was ah fixed on the fellows running away, he never saw me, see. And this was pretty late in the afternoon, about four o'clock. Oh my goodness me was it hot. Ah including my younger brother and all the other boys, they cleared out and left me. So ah I'm sitting down there all crouched up, and I'm sweating and I'm praying and crying. And I couldn't hear the Chinamen anymore so I thought, 'Well they must've gone,' see. So I sneaked out, what was ah, what really was happening was ah it was starting to get a bit late. Sundown, see. So I thought to myself, 'I'll have to make a dash for it because ah, ah it's ah, if I leave it too late,' I said, 'Not the Chinamen, the ghosts will get me,' see, because we were right alongside the cemetery. So I got out and I o-, ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

the Chinamen never saw me, the ghosts never got me. I got home anyway.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh no. Did you get into trouble for arriving back late?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, ah no one knew, except my mates. Well my brother was howlin', he's howling. They said, 'What's wrong? What are you crying for, Joe?' 'Oh,' he said, 'They must've shot my brother, he's not home yet.'

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And he's howling his heart out till he, till I arrived, you see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah, ah wasn't very long after that I ran away. Actually, see my brother-in-law abandoned the mine ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

At time 00:32:34

Summary: He ran away from the compound and went to live with his sister and brother in law, a blacksmith and wheelwright, who had moved to Darwin after abandoning the tin mine. Around 1927 he served his time as an apprentice blacksmith and wheelwright in 1927. When cars came in he retrained as a mechanic. He went to Queensland around 1937 and in 1940 he enlisted in the army in Cairns. Initially he was not called up but eventually he worked with the Allied Works Council Mechanical workshops in Cairns.

Keywords: Black smith, wheel wright, farrier, Model T Ford, farrier, mechanic, Cairns, Allied Works, Mechanical workshops

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

and him and my sister come to live in Darwin. And he, he started off a blacksmithing business. Blacksmith wheelwrighting and, or general contractor. So ah I went and lived with them and ah served me time as a blacksmith and wheelwright with him.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah, oh jack of all trades. I, I graduated as a blacksmith and wheelwright in 1927.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But then the Model T Fords were pushing the horses out, there was no more buggies and horses, see. So blacksmiths and wheelwrights were nothing. See you, the blacksmith and wheelwright, that's ah, when they say wheelwright, you make wheels and ah repair wheels and one thing another. And ah, and shoe horses. That's ah, that's ah what they call a farrier's job, really. And ah we could do all that. But anyway, ah as I said, the Model T Fords came in and pushed the horses out. So we had to ah sort of change me occupation. I became a mechanic then after that.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

[indecipherable]. mechanic.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Who taught you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Who taught you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh various, and ah I went to Queensland in 19-, that's right, 1938 or early '39. That's right, I went to Dunmarra in, in 1938. And nin-, in '37 or '38, can't remember now. But then I went to Queensland and ah, oh it was during the war, was it during the war? That's right. Ah I enlisted in the army in Cairns.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah that was 19-, 1940? Yeah 1940. Ah so ah the-, I passed all me exams, and they never called me up.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah I'm getting desperate, you know, because I had a wife and kids and ah—two boys—and I had nothing to live on, see. There was no welfare or anything like that those days, you see. So I went up to the army's headquarters and I asked them, I said, 'Why, why haven't been inducted?' You know,

because I passed all, 'Oh,' they said, 'We can't,' they said, 'We can't take you into the army.' They said, 'You're a motor mechanic.' I said, 'Yeah, what's that about?' 'Oh,' they said, 'We want all the motor mechanics here.' Well I said, 'Give us a job.'

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So they said, 'Right,' they put me with the Allied Works Council in the mechanical workshops.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And was that in Queensland?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

In Cairns. So ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

So when did you get married, Val?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well I've been married ah twice, twice hey? How many times did we get married Mon?

At time 00:35:49

Summary: The circumstances around his marriage and divorce from his first wife Isabel Hume. His second wife, Emma Morrisett with whom he had two boys John and Cecil, died from double pneumonia in Cairns. He married his current wife Jan around 1942 after a 27 year long courtship. [Jan can be heard commenting and laughing on the tape]

Keywords: Marriage, Isabel Hume, Emma Morrisett, John McGuinness, Cecil McGuinness, QANTAS, Newcastle Waters, Cloncurry, Batavia, Groote Eylandt Mission, Jan McGinness

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well I've been married ah twice, twice hey? How many times did we get married Mon?

Transcript: Unknown Speaker

Ah three times.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well I was married when I left here, wed to ah a woman, she's living in Newcastle Waters now. We're divorced since.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And we had no children.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. What year was that, do you know?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah what was that?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

That you first got married?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah, oh I remember the date well, 20 December 1930. But ah we had no children and ah we ah, I went to Queensland with a, with a fellow, he wanted me to go down for a trip with him. And I was just going to go down for a trip and, and come back, see. But when I got there he said, 'Look,' he said ah, he said, 'A brother-in-law of mine has, has got a mining project going up in Batavia Goldfields,' that's up the Peninsula.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So he said, 'He wants a, a truckdriver,' he said, 'Will you take it on?' I said, 'Yeah.' So I said to myself, 'Oh I'll ah, I'll take the job and if it's any good I'll, I'll get me wife over.' So, so ah went up there and it's something like this bush here. Ah all the hu-, huts were bark, bark huts, good ones. A few of them had galvanised iron. So I got a heap of bark and some timber, and I was going to build a house for my missus. And ah I made arrangements so as to write to her, I s-, made arrangements to, there was a, there was an air, that's right, there was an air service. Ah qant-, wasn't long after Qantas started off the air service from Newcastle n-, Newcastle, yeah Newcastle Waters to Cloncurry.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So I arranged with, I sent her some money, I said to get on that plane and I said, 'I'll meet you at Cloncurry and we'll go by train to Cairns.' And we'd fly up to butabi-, you see. So ah, ah were, were limited to us ah, our resources were—financial resources I mean—and ah I just had enough to do that. Anyway, the plane came in and she wasn't on board. So I couldn't stay there, I went back.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah more or less sort of parted from there. And then I was living de facto with another woman, we had two sons.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes. What were their names, if you don't mind telling me?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

What?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

The names of your first wife and your second wife?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah my first wife was Isabelle.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah Isabelle Hume.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. And was she part-Aboriginal too?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, yeah. O-, and ah she was brought up on Groote Eylandt.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Groote Eylandt?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Groote Eylandt Mission, yeah. And my de facto wife was Emma Morrissette.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Uh huh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And that's one of the boys there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's the eldest one and that's the youngest one there, John.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah after she died, that fellow was only 22 days old when she died.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah this one was 16 months, 16 and a half months old when his mother died. And then Jain come into the picture. She was tangled up with another bloke, and we were tangled up and ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

When was, when was that, Val?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

When was that? In ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh around about 1940.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Oh no, 1942 when Johnny was born, that's right.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm, '42. Ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And how did your de facto wife die?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah pneumonia, double pneumonia.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Ah yes. Where was that?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

In Cairns.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Uh huh, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah Jan come into the picture, and 'cause we were, I reckon it was the longest courtship, 27 years we ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

we eventually got married.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh no. M'mm. So how many children have you got now?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah well Jain and I never had any but she reared those two boys up, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Two, yep. What were their names?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's John, the youngest one, and the eldest one is Cecil.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

John and Cecil, m'mm. And um so when did you first meet Xavier Herbert?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I've got an idea it was ah around about 1927.

At time 00:40:55

Summary: He first met Xavier Herbert in 1927 when Herbert was the dispenser at Packard Street Hospital and Val worked at Health department. Herbert and his wife later worked at Kahlin Reserve. He and Herbert went by bicycle to Lucy Mine where they found the mineral Tantalite. He was paid 4 pounds a week and lived in a timber house with a stove but with no town water. They had to cart water.

Keywords: Xavier Herbert, Larrakia, wardsman, Superintendent, Matron, Kahlin Compound and Half Caste Home, tantalite, ambulance, Health services, truck, Chevrolet, housing, water carting

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I've got an idea it was ah around about 1927.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I think it was about '27. And ah I didn't know much about Xavier then but he sort of cottoned onto me for some reason.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did he?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. And he was ah, he was the ah—what do they call 'em again—dispenser for the, for the Packard Street now. He w-, that's where I first met him, you see. And ah I ended up being a wardsman there in that hospital in 1928. But I think Xavier was gone from there then. Whether he went over to England or not I don't know, I just can't remember.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But ah off and on we run into one another and eventually he came back and he got the ah superintendency of the Kahlin Reserve. And his wife was ah matron for the, for the half-caste girls, you see. So ah it was then that we had, you know, we associated with one another more, ah more ah closely then. Until this particular time—I can't remember the year exactly but ah, ah I wanted to go out and have a look at this Lucy Mine again, you see, 'cause I hadn't been out there. And ah so ah he said ah, he, well he said, 'I'd like to come with you.' So I said, 'All right, come on let's go,' see. Ah I think we had some holidays or something happened.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

We, we eventually, we, we bicycled out, bicycled all the way out and ah, ah we found ah not tin but we found some tantalite, see. And, oh that's right, I was working for the ah, I was working for the Health Department then. And ah I was driving an ambulance and ah health services, ah they had a big truck—or not a big truck but a ah, a tumshep I think it was, something like that. But anyway ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you get a good wage for that work? Did you get a good salary?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I think it was ah something like £4 a week, I think it was that. Something like that. No-, not a really good one but ah, ah the Aboriginal Department built us a, a house of some sort. And ah, oh it was all right.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What sort of house?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh just a, just a gable roof like that with ah one big room in the middle and two verandahs, that's all it was really. They put a stove in, no water. We had to carry our water on sticks like a Chinaman. I had to ca-, I used to have to carry my water from where the hosp-, old hospital is now right across to Larrakeyah, that's where our houses were.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And of course when the rain came we, we had tanks, you know. And I decided to ah, I was going to

sink a sharp because ah that was one of our, one of our traits, sharp sinking. Nearly, nearly all the wells sank in Darwin, me and my brother-in-law sank them.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

At time 00:44:25

Summary: He sank a well for his house and he and his brother in law sank many other bores around Darwin. Well digging was well paid - 1 pound a day compared to the 2 shillings and sixpence per week he was paid as an apprentice blacksmith. He recalls the cheap price of various groceries at the time and how his small wage would go a long way.

Keywords: Well driller, water bores, peanuts, bread, lemonade, loaf, steak, cinema

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah I don't know whether there's any left, I think they've all been filled in. But ah well that was a good, that was a good work that one. Ah on, when me and my brother-in-law was working on it I ah, ah, he was giving me a, a pound a day. They were quite—and the weekends, big money.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh my goodness. When we was ah, when we were serving our time as apprentices our wages was only 2 shillings and sixpence a week.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah we got our meals of course, free, you see. Was 2 shillings and sixpence a week and oh my goodness, I mean you talk about a ball we used to have with that 2 shillings and sixpence.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah? You could do a lot with it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Peanuts was a penny a packet, lemonade was fourpence a bottle, light bottle. The local bread was fourpence, pound of steak was fourpence. And ah I think ah a pound of butter was a shilling I think, I'm not quite sure. But ah you could have all them for 2 shillings and sixpence. But, you know, we, we never used to have to buy food, as I said.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Only the goodies. Used to buy lemonade and, and buy a packet of, couple of packets of lemonade, tuppence, and a bottle of lemonade out of sixpence. Well we still had 2 shillings, you see. It only cost us sixpence to go to the pictures. So we still had 1 and 6 left.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right. And which apprenticeship was this, was this the um blacksmith?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Blacksmith and wheelwright, yeah. So ah, ah as I said, well we used to have a ball with that 2 shillings and sixpence. But when we got up into the big wages in the later years, as I said, £4 a week, oh my goodness me. I think I ah, after 12 months I ended up with 60 or 70 ...

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

At time 00:46:32

Summary: End of session

Session 2

At time 00:00:00

Summary: Val continues speaking about managing his money. He recalls the case of Robert Shepherd, a decorated WWI veteran, he describes as 'part aboriginal' who, under the Aboriginal Protection Act was denied alcohol and the management of his own affairs. Val and others made representations to Mr Blain, the local member seeking the repeal of the Aboriginal Protection Act.

Keywords: Smoking, Robert Shepherd, Returned Soldier, WWI, alcohol, 'half caste', Adair Macalister Blain, surveyor, exemption, Aboriginal Act, Vince White, Government Gazette

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yep.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
I don't think it was anything ah, anything extravagant, I think we were just spending it on ah necesi-, necessities. Of course I had to smoke those days and had a few drinks too, that might've accounted for it. Nevertheless, we ended up in debt.

Transcript: Event
Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath
And was it okay for you to drink, seeing you were part-Aboriginal? Were there any restrictions?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
That was another, no that was another thing, see. The ah, as I said we came back, came to live in ah the Aboriginal Reserve in 1918.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
The ah returned soldiers just came back from, oh might've been 1919 they came back. And where the, you know, where they h-, the, the road comes down Gilroo's Net now into the gardens?

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Well just above there there's a, there's a cottage, ah I think it was a nurse's quarter or somebody-, something. Doctor's residence or something. Well they had a great bit tent city there, belonged to the returned soldiers, that was in 1919. And amongst them was a fellow called Robert Shepherd. Half-caste chap, mother half-Aboriginal, father was, hi-, his father was a half-caste and—oh that's right, his father was half-caste and his mother was half-caste Aboriginal. And he was a decorated soldier, a returned soldier. And that man couldn't have a drink, see. And that's what sparked the business off. So when all us blokes grew up and realised what was going on, so we decided to ah, ah, we made representation to the ah, then the ah, what do they call them? The member of Parliament. A fellow called Adair Macalister Blain his name was. He was a surveyor. And, 'All right,' he said, 'I'll see what I can do for you,' see. So ah he had to go to Canberra and I think he did stir a few things up. Anyway they, they brought out a ah, an exemption business ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Uh huh.

At time 00:02:13

Summary: In response to Blain's agitation the Federal Government introduced individual exemptions enabling some Aboriginal people the right to manage their own money, drink alcohol and to vote. Val disagreed with this approach. Many Aboriginal people applied for exemptions, some got it and others didn't. Vince White became superintendent after Xavier Herbert and Vince encouraged Val to seek an exemption. Val refused but was given an exemption despite not applying.

Keywords: Adair Macaslister Blain, Aboriginal Protection Act, Xavier Herbert, Vince White, British subjects

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Uh huh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

see. Ah you could be exempted from the Aboriginal Act and you could handle your own money. You could do this and you could do that, you could have a drink, anything. You could vote even. But anyway, yes. So anyway, ah I was a bit crooked on this thing. Everybody's applying for exemption. A lot of them got it but a lot of them didn't get it, because they considered them ah too illiterate, wouldn't have been able to handle their own beers. So they, the bigshots reckoned, you know. Anyway, it wasn't Xavier in this time, after Xavier had left this happened. A fellow called Vince White took over from Xavier.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

As the superintendent?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

As the superintendent?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yes. But I was still working there, see. And this Vince White, he was ah, oh I didn't like him. Ah I had several names for him, I wouldn't like to mention 'em here though.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah he said to me one day, he said, 'Hey Val,' he said, 'Why don't you apply for exemption?' I said, 'Exemption, what for?' He said, 'Well,' he said, 'Everybody else is applying.' I said, and I said ah, 'Mr whi-', we used to have to say Mr White. 'Mr White,' I said, 'Look,' I said, 'My father is a Britisher, and according to British law my mother is a British subject. So,' I said, 'I'm a free agent,' see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I said, 'I don't have to be exempted from anything.' 'Oh no,' he said, 'It's, it's different over here.' He said, 'Aboriginal Act,' he said, 'You'll,' he said, 'You'll come under that.' And I said, 'No I don't. According to,' I said, 'You bring it out in the British law,' I said, 'I'm,' I said, 'I'm not, I'm not under obligation to anybody as a matter of fact,' see. Anyway, 'Oh well,' he said, he said, 'You won't,' he said, 'You won't get anywhere,' he said, 'If you don't make app-, application for exemption.' I said, 'Right, let it stay.' I was the only one that never made application. And they k-, all the others kept at me too, they said, 'Why don't you apply?' I said, 'Not a chance in the world.' I said, 'I'm, I'm not a, not something from somewhere else ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

That's right.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

yet.' So ah anyway, they could say that that was right too but they, they wouldn't admit it, see. And later on what they done, they went and put it in the government gazette that I was exempted. Yeah, without making up a ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

See they were afraid you were going to make a fuss about it.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

You were, they were afraid you were going to get publicity ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah mo-, most likely, see. And ah anyway ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Show them up?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, made no difference, didn't make me any better. So ah ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But ah there was a poor old fellow there, an old Englishman he was. And ah I used to be tired of this ev-, every time you went up to, to get your pay, they'd pay you on the fri-, Saturday ah, Friday afternoon, see. And you didn't have much time. You went up there say at about one o'clock, and of course there was a big mob of us there. And ah see all our money went into trusts before that, before they paid us, you see. Even when I was working for that, getting that £4 a week, all that went into trust. And ah if I wanted to ah, supposing that ah, well I had a house, you see. And ah we had to, had to pay so much off the house, it wasn't very much. And if we wanted say cooking utensils or the necessary things for the house—plates, cups, saucers or something—you just couldn't go up and ah say, 'Look I want so much, I want to buy this and buy that.'

You'd have to go up and tell 'em that you wanted this and ah you'd say, you'd a-, you'd go up and sort of browse, you know, in the shops and you'd say, 'Oh well, I'd like that,' you see. So you'd have to go back to the office and say, 'Look, I saw a nice ah dinner set up there, plates and things like that. And ah they're only so much.' I said ah, you, you'd have to say, 'Well I'd like to have them,' see. Anyway, they, they'd, they'd consider it and they'd say, 'Righto, you can have it.' And instead of giving you the money they'd give you an order to go and get that.

At time 00:05:10

Summary: He speaks of the system where Aboriginal people's pay was held in trust by the Government. Should an Aboriginal family want, for example, household equipment, they would browse the shops, identify the desired items, the Trust would then approve the purchase, give the family an order and pay the shop directly. Val challenged the system by requesting cash. After exemption he was able to manage his own money.

Keywords: Pay day, Harry Partridge, Aboriginal Trust Fund, wages theft, Xavier Herbert

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

You'd have to go up and tell 'em that you wanted this and ah you'd say, you'd a-, you'd go up and sort of browse, you know, in the shops and you'd say, 'Oh well, I'd like that,' you see. So you'd have to go back to the office and say, 'Look, I saw a nice ah dinner set up there, plates and things like that. And ah they're only so much.' I said ah, you, you'd have to say, 'Well I'd like to have them,' see. Anyway, they, they'd, they'd consider it and they'd say, 'Righto, you can have it.' And instead of giving you the money they'd give you an order to go and get that.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah they sent the bill to the Aboriginal place and they paid it, but I think it came out of your money of course.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So you weren't allowed to handle the money. And ah they'd allow you a little bit of pocket money. So one day I was really fed up with this thing and I ended up, this poor old m-, Harry Partridge was sitting down there and, 'Yes, so and so, how much money do you want?' 'Oh Mr Partridge I want so much.' 'All right,' he'd say, 'I'll give you so much. Here's your order, go to the cashier and get your money,' see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Come my turn and I said, 'Oh I'm want to give this old coot a bit of a stirring up,' you see.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I was really s-, really mad at it, you know. Not at him but the system, see. So ah I said ah, 'Yes Val,' he said, 'What do you want? How much do you want?' I said, 'I want £5 please, Mr Partridge.' He, he said, '£5?' He said. Was a lot of money, see. He said, 'What are you gonna do with £5?' 'Oh, ' I said ah, 'I've gotta pay for my lessons, Mr Partridge.' 'Lessons?' He said. He said, 'What are you learning?' I said, 'I'm learning to mind my own business.'

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

'Oh all right,' he said, 'You don't have to be cheeky.' He said, 'I'll give you £5,' and he wrote ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

so he, he wrote this l-, or-, order up [indecipherable]. I felt sorry for the poor old soul afterwards, I mean it wasn't his fault really.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

He was only doing his job, you see. But ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

But what happened, a lot of the Aboriginal people didn't know how much money they had ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Nothing at all.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

and then it all went back to the government.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, that's right. M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

I've seen those records from the trust fund.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, that's right. I ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And um the government made a lot of money ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

We knew that was going on but nobody could do anything about it, there wasn't a soul that we could turn to.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Dreadful. And what about Xavier Herbert, did he try and stand up for Aboriginal rights?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yes, well um he done quite a bit here. I'll tell you a story about him shortly. And ah anyway, as time went on—as I said—they exempted me. Well I had no trouble then, I could go and draw what money I wanted, see. As a matter of fact they used to pay us then, they, they didn't go back into the trust after you were exempted, you see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh right, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah this is how I, this is how I come to be in debt, they paid me the money and I had to admit continued on into the trust I mightn't have got into debt, you see. But anyway, oh ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

that was it. So ah, ah while Xavier was superintendent there—and I still was working, I think, I think I was still working for the Health Department, I just can't remember now. But there was a murder up here in ah Daly River. There was a, there was an Aboriginal couple there, fellow called Butcher Knight.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

At time 00:09:33

Summary: Val recalls the story of Butcher Knight an Aboriginal man who shot and killed Bill Tetlow, a white man who Knight accused of interfering with his wife. Xavier Herbert represented the accused in court and got Knight's charge reduced manslaughter. He was sentenced to a 5 year prison term. When Herbert told Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector of Aborigines about the sentence, Cook said Knight should have been hanged.

Keywords: Xavier Herbert, murder, Butcher Knight, shooting, Daly River, Bill Tetlow, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Chief Medical Officer, Cecil Cook, manslaughter, discrimination, taboo

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

You've heard of him, have you?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, well anyway, ah you might've heard the story about Butcher Knight shooting some blokes.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

No?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But anyway, that's all right. Ah they're on the Daly River and there's a fellow called Bill Tatterlow, I, I knew Bill Tatterlow. Way back in 1929 I knew him. And ah he cottoned onto this couple, and of course he's breaking up the marriage, you see. And ah the old Aboriginal, they were very tolerant and all that sort of thing, you know, towards white people especially, see, white men. And one day he had a talk with Bill and he said, 'Listen Bill,' he said, 'I think you'd better, you'd better shift and go away from me.' 'What for, would ya?' 'Oh well,' he said, 'Look,' he said, 'You're breaking up my marriage, you know,' see. He said, 'It's best for you to go, aye.' 'Oh Butcher,' he said, 'Look we've been friends for years and we've been doing this, we've been doing that,' and one thing and another. Anyway, he wouldn't go. So one day, whatshisname lured him out into the bush and shot him, shot him stone dead. The gun up against his back like that and blew a hole in him. So ah anyway, they arrested Butcher, put him in. And Cecil, Cecil Cook was the chief, I don't know what he was.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Chief protector.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Chief protector for Aboriginals, chief medical officer.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Chief health officer, see. And ah Xavier was very much concerned about Butcher, so he went up and asked Cook. He said ah, he said, 'Who's defending ah Butcher?' 'Oh,' he said, 'Nobody wants to defend that fellow.' 'Why?' 'Oh,' he said, 'He killed a white man,' see. Chief protector of Aboriginals.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh, oh Xavier said, he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'I don't think that's fair, you know.' He said, he said, he said, 'Could I defend him?' 'Oh,' he said, 'You can do what you like,' he said. 'But,' he said, 'You won't do any good,' he said, 'They'll hang him.' Anyway, Xavier said, 'All right,' he said, 'I'll have a go.' So Xavier went to court and ah he pleaded for him. He pleaded on a manslaughter charge and he got him off on five years, see, otherwise they would've hung him most likely. And ah anyway, when he, Xavier doesn't remember this but he told, he told me that the same day on ah, in, after the court he came back, he told me and ah he had a, he had a, he had a smile from ear to ear. He was that pleased with what he'd, with what he'd accomplished for Butcher ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

that when he walked into the ah chief protector's office he said, 'Well,' he said, 'What,' he said, 'What's the good news?' He said, and he saw Xavier with a big smile. I said, 'How'd you get on?' He said, 'All right.'

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

'What do you mean?' He said, 'I got him off on a five, five-year manslaughter charge.' Cook jumped up and down, he said, he said, 'They should've hung him.'

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh, but that chap was interfering with his wife, wasn't he?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

That ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's right, yes. Oh that made no difference. Now had, had the boot been on the other foot, if it was a white man that shot the blackfella there would've been nothing said about it .

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

The other way around, oh be taboo. You couldn't touch a white man.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah. Did, did Xavier ever talk to you about plans for his books? His ideas for Capricornia or anything?

At time 00:13:35

Summary: Vals's views on Xavier Herbert's books. He thought they made little impact on public opinion.

Keywords: Xavier Herbert, Capricornia, Poor Fellow My Country

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah. Did, did Xavier ever talk to you about plans for his books? His ideas for Capricornia or anything?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yes, we talked several times and ah we, I never could cotton on to this ah book writing business, you know. I, I knew that Xavier was working hard towards, you know, helping the Aboriginal people

but I couldn't see the object of his book.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Right?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Ah even, even the last one he wrote, Poor Fellow My Country.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
I still can't see the object of it. Ah he might've s-, he might've stirred up a little bit of, little bit of something ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
but he n-, he never ever accomplished anything by it. Not, not, not ah, he never accomplished anything good I, I'd say. I mean with all due respect to Xavier, he's a good friend of mine and all that. But ah, um now he's writing another one I believe. And ah what he expects to accomplish, I really don't know.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
M'mm, yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
You could um, you learnt to read and everything at the compra-, compound, didn't you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no. Ah that's another story, see. We, we had no tuition, except after I ran away and went to my sister. And she started me off with ah CAT, MAT, RAT, HAT. And I got along a bit, I was able to write a little, not very much. Couldn't, couldn't converse very well, that's all.

At time 00:15:02

Summary: Val recalls how he learned to read, write and speak English. He was born Catholic and went to church though they were ignored by the priest who focussed his attention on the wealthier members of the congregation.

Keywords: Education, religion, Theocratic Ministry School, Jehovah's Witnesses, bible study, Catholic church

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no. Ah that's another story, see. We, we had no tuition, except after I ran away and went to my sister. And she started me off with ah CAT, MAT, RAT, HAT. And I got along a bit, I was able to write a little, not very much. Couldn't, couldn't converse very well, that's all.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

That's all right. M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Until the year came 1942, when Jehovah's Witnesses, we were already having Bible studies then, me and Jain.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And what was introduced was ah what they called a theocratic ministry school. Ah anybody could join, there was no ah graduation periods or anything like that. Nobody graduates. Matter of fact we're still going through s-, ministry school, still learning. And ah that's where we learnt to talk, that's where we learnt to read, that's where we learnt to write, through that school.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

So you spoke more of a pidgin type of English before, did you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well no, wouldn't be a pidgin but ah be very, very poor ah grammatical English, I'd say. Ah see the way, way, the way the average Australian talks today, there's always a swear word, every second word's a swear word.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah since learning the, the Queen's language we'd say now, ah you could, we look back and say, 'Well those people that use that kind of speech is totally unable to speak the Queen's language.' They're not capable.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you have religious training when you were at the compound or ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you have religious training in younger life?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No. No, we were born Catholics of course. And ah that didn't, that didn't have much bearing on, we went to church and all that thing but it was, it didn't mean a thing, going to church.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

We went to church, nobody saw us there and nobody took, if they did see us there they never took any notice of us.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

The priest never come and spoke with us. Ah when I, when I come to look back now, the priest went and spoke to the whites, and especially those that gave the most money.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Gee. What was the race situation in general like in Darwin?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

At time 00:18:07

Summary: Despite being exempted from the restrictions of Aboriginal Protection Act there was still a colour bar in 1930's Darwin and there still is discrimination today. Val questions why there are no Aboriginal people in government offices or an Aboriginal Chief Minister.

Keywords: Race relations, Darwin, 1930's, colour bar, segregation

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Say, what was the race situation like? Like in the thirties, was there a lot of segregation and ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah they still, in respect of the fact that we were exempted ah in later years, it made no difference to the ah, you could still sense there was a colour bar.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

You could still sense that. As a matter of fact you can still sense it now. Ah if they say there's no colour bar, why isn't there any Aboriginals in the government offices? Why isn't there ah, ah, ah Aboriginal chief minister? Or so forth and so forth? You see. It's, it's kept exclusively for the whites.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. So um where were you working during the 1930s? Say like around about 1938—before you went to Queensland—where were you working then? Before you ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I was working for the government then, yeah.

At time 00:19:03

Summary: Before he went to Queensland he worked as an Ambulance Officer based at the Kahlin Compound. At the time Aboriginal people were not allowed to travel in the ambulance, rather they were transported by truck. Patients were segregated into wards according to their race.

Keywords: Isolation ward, segregation, Asiatic ward, Malaysians, Japanese

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I was working for the government then, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

In the hospital?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, ah we were headquartered at ah the ah, the Kahlin, at the Reserve. That's where our headquarters, I was driving the ambulance and the ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, right?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

other thing, see? And ah, ah, oh we, general sort of a, sort of a rouseabout, you know? There was-, wasn't, there wasn't ah, only time we drove the ambulance was when we w-, went down to meet the train or something like that, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Take patients to hospital. And, and of course when the, they used to send down ah, see Aboriginal people came and they weren't allowed to ride in the ambulance. I used to have to go down with the truck and pick them up, take 'em to hospital. And they weren't admitted into the hospital, they had to have a, a s-, a special ah ward for themselves. Even the ah, in, in the ah old Packard Street Hospital when Xavier was there, they had what they called an isolation ward ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And they had an Asiatic ward. Any Malaysians, or Japanese or whatever they were, they were not allowed with any others, they were put into this Asiatic ward.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Right?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah distinction there even, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. So um how did you get to work in the morning?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh we lived ah close handy.

At time 00:20:55

Summary: Val describes how he got to work, his work hours and the range of meals he ate during a working day.

The government provided his family with an unfurnished house. He describes various parts of old Darwin.

Keywords: Larrakia, breakfast, bread, butter, marmalade, eggs, porridge, porridge, bakers, Felix Holmes, Babbin* Family, Knuckey Street, lemonade factory

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh we lived ah close handy.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

So just walked?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, well I walked from say ah, when we were living in Larrakeyah, across there, yes.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And what time did you start work in the morning?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh forget now, around about eight o'clock I think.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, round about eight o'clock.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And would you have breakfast before you went to work?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah, yeah. Oh we were more or less established, and we had our own housing and that, you know, then. And ah, ah, yeah that's ah, they built this house for us and they put a stove in it, that was all. No furniture. We had to scrounge timber from the rubbish dump, and we wan-, make tables, and chairs and one thing another for ourselves, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. What sort of food did you eat?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What sort of food did you have for breakfast?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh can't remember now. I think I used to be ah, I was very fond of porridge and ah often had ah bread, butter and marmalade. I love marmalade. Might've had some eggs.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you have homemade bread?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No, it was baker's bread then, m'mm. Quite good.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did they deliver it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

The baker deliver it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, yeah the baker delivered it. The ah, I don't know whether you ever run into the Babbins family, ever run into the Babbins family?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

No.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well that, that f-, ah fellow called E.F. Holmes, Ernest Felix Holmes?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Now he owned that section, I don't know whether, did I tell you yesterday? Ah Knuckey Street, Mitchell Street to Kerry Manolas's.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, m'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And across to the Victoria Hotel, now that was all Holmes's. And the bakery was over there, the butchery was here, the lemonade factory was there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And he was the ah, the ah ice and electric-, he used to generate electricity for the city. And up here was the staff quarters up in front, in, in Smith Street. And ah that Babbins family that's here now, their

old father, he was Senegalese, he, he was a baker for Holmes. Beautiful bread, oh my goodness me. It was all handmade of course, not, not machinery like it is today.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, I think I might've seen his name in one of the old papers, the old ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, yeah. There's, I think there's one boy living here now. One boy and two girls, I think. Daughters.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah, m'mm. So d-, seeing you didn't read the papers, did you ever um hear about the news, the latest news?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

How do you mean?

At time 00:23:48

Summary: He got news from newspapers, mainly from the Northern Standard. Val worked there for a time delivering papers. He continues describing the types of meals he ate and the range of vegetables grown. All government workers were supplied a truckload of wood for 30 shillings.

Keywords: Newspapers, Northern Standard, lunch, cabbage, roast, George Campbell, pumpkins, electricity, firewood, Winnellie, woodcutting

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

How do you mean?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Well ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh we could read a bit, yeah you could read a bit.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

The Northern Standard? Or the ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah m-, mainly the Northern Standard, yeah. Yeah. I used to work there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh forget what, all kinds of jobs we used to do. And ah mainly when the paper come out we delivered them, you know.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, m'mm, yeah. So then did you have ah, when you were working at the ho-, the um compound did you have your lunch there, or did you go home for lunch?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, oh yeah sometimes we went home and other times we, we might've been out somewhere, you know, and had meal somewhere. Sometimes we used to get a meal there, you know, at the compound, see. And ah yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What was the main meal of the day?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh what would you call a main meal, in the evening?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Like the evening or the, lunch or ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yes, oh well home, like we'd have ah maybe roast or something like that, and potatoes.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Things, just like an ordinary household, you know. Ordinary ah European household. We'd have cabbage, lettuce, and ah always tried to grow veggies of our own, you know. Pumpkins and things like that. Ah when we were, when we were ah working at that reserve now we had all these, me and a fellow called George Campbell, we had a huge garden there. And ah we had beautiful pumpkins and oh, practically everything growing.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Lovely.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. Did ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah, oh it was all free, we never sold it or anything like that. If those other people wanted it, you know, they used to come and ah, pumpkins, oh my goodness me. You know the big, long, what they call the bugle pumpkins? Big, long ones ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
[indecipherable].

Transcript: Ann McGrath
M'mm. And did you have a woodstove in the house?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah, all woodstoves here.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
No electricity?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no elec-, oh there was electricity but no electric stoves, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
See the ah, that was one of the functions of the ah, ah, the working Aboriginals, they had to come out all these places where this aerodrome is, and beyond that over, over on the Winnellie side. That was all a woodcutting business. And they used to cart us down to that reserve, they'd handsaw it into blocks like that and split it up. And each and every one of the government houses med-, administrators, the doctors, the whole lot, they all got sawn up wood. So was, every one.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Gee?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
And ah I forget now, I think it was, I think it was 30 shillings for a, for a truckload of sawn up wood.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
A truckload?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
A truckload, 30 shillings, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
M'mm, gee.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Very cheap, ah you might s-, pay \$30 now.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh in Melbourne? If you want, yes, or in Darwin, yes.

Transcript: Event

Coughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

More, I think you'd pay about 50 now for the same load.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And I think um Kahlin was moved to Bagot in 1938?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's right, yeah. Ah was it '38? I really don't know, I've got an idea that they started off, got me there, they might've moved there then. But my brother Barney, he was working for them. And they sent him out here to pull all the ho-, the huge trees there, you know? And all they had were these ah, ah big ah mechanical tree pullers, with big ropes on 'em, you know. They'd have to anchor onto one tree and hook onto another one, and they'd work this lever backwards and forwards, and gradually pull that big tree over, see. And all those mangoes and all those big trees that are growing there, my brother planted them.

At time 00:27:21

Summary: Kahlin Compound was moved to Bagot around 1938. His brother Bernie worked for Kahlin Compound tree clearing. His brother Jack was a lifting ganger on the Railways. Around 1938 the contract was let out for the construction of the air strip.

Keywords: Berard McGuinness, Jack McGuinness, Kahlin Compound, tree clearing, lifting ganger, railway worker

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's right, yeah. Ah was it '38? I really don't know, I've got an idea that they started off, got me there, they might've moved there then. But my brother Barney, he was working for them. And they sent him out here to pull all the ho-, the huge trees there, you know? And all they had were these ah, ah big ah mechanical tree pullers, with big ropes on 'em, you know. They'd have to anchor onto one tree and hook onto another one, and they'd work this lever backwards and forwards, and gradually pull that big tree over, see. And all those mangoes and all those big trees that are growing there, my brother planted them.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did he?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh he's been dead many years now. But ah about the same year I ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was this Joe?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I beg your ... ?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was this, which brother was that ah ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Bernard, the eldest one, yes. Ah my brother Jack was working for the Railways Department then. He was ah, he was a lif-, what they called a lifting ganger in Katherine.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Now a lifting ganger is ah one that ah, if there's a major repair to be done to ah, to a section of railway, ah the lifting ganger would have to do it. See because ah, especially when there was a flood on the, the lines washed away, you see. The, the, the foundation for the lines washed away, so they'd have to rebuild it up and the lifting ganger would have to lift that line up unt-, until it was all right level again, see. And that, my brother Jack done that. He was in line to be ah, ah a roadmaster, and acting manager one part of the business for the railways, he was that good. And ah, but anyway as I said, about the same time—around about '37 or '38—the contract was let out for the ah, the airstrip here, see. They planned jus-, the land at Fannie Bay.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And Ross Smith Avenue, that was the, that was the aerodrome.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

True, m'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And that's where Keith and Ross Smith landed when they first came to Australia in 1919. I was present when that plane landed.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

At time 00:29:58

Summary: He 9 years old when Ross and Keith Smith landed their plane in Darwin 1919. He sneaked out of the Kahlin Compound to see the plane and was photographed beside it. Val worked with Xavier Herbert at Bulbul and was with him when Herbert won the Centenary Prize. Later in 1938 Val worked for Noel Healy from Dunmarra. Harold Snell and Noel Healy put in tender to clear the airstrip, but they underestimated the tree stump clearing task and went broke.

Keywords: Great Air race, London, Sydney, Charles Smith, Ross Smith, Australian Literature Society Gold Medal,

Xavier Herbert, primary school, Darwin air strip, RAAF gates, Joy's supermarket, McMillans Road, aerodrome, Noel Healy, Harold Snell, tree stumps

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So ah, ah, there's a picture of a, of that plane, I think it's in the ah Parap Primary School. And I only heard about this, and ah I did see a picture of it one time but ah whether it's the same one, but they say that it's a picture of this plane standing up and everybody ah t-, the fellow standing up there in front of that plane with knocked knees, that'll be me. Had me back to the camera, see.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Nineteen, I was only nine years old then. So ...

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

anyway ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

What'd you think of that plane? It must've been exciting ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh talk about excitement. We were, we were s-, in the compound like, and we, we heard about it, you know? So we all sneaked out, ran away. And of course dare not let any police see you or invalat-, they'd shunt you back into the compound, see. Sh-, sneak around the back, back block sort of thing and get a, get a look at this aeroplane. Oh my goodness, we reckoned it was wonderful. Yeah. But anyway, ah I could get—oh that's right, about that same time the contract was let out, '37 or '38, for this aerodrome, see. And I was working for ah, was working for ah a fellow called Noel Healy. I don't know whether you've heard of Noel Healy. You know where Dunmarra is?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

The roadhouse ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh Healy from Dunmarra?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Hey?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was he um at Dunmarra?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. But that's ah, that's where you hear about Healy from Dunmarra, see. But du-, he was here for years and years before that.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. He had a big shop down there that sold everything, didn't he?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm, not that time. Not at that time. But anyway, I'll tell you this story later on. The ah, so he was working on the Stuart Highway and I was, I was, I just started with him. Oh, oh that's right, I came from the Lucy Mine. I left Xavier and ah Bulbul, you've heard of Bulbul?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Well I left Xavier and Bulbul and I, I came into Darwin, and I was working for Healy out here. So when I come into Darwin the contract was finished, that was, that was ah early '38. So ah, ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

So you were working at the mine some of that year too?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

You were working at the mine too? For ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, I was working with Bulbul and Xavier at that time. When he, when he, when ah word come through that he got the cent-, he won the Centenary Prize. I was, we were a-, we were all out there then.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Were you? Oh ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Anyway, ah that was, oh that must've been 1937.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Thirty-eight I think, '38. Maybe at beginning of '38?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Might've been too. But anyway, ah n-, anyway I was working with Healy when this, and ah there was a fellow called Snell, you know, you heard of Snell Street? It was named after him. He was a big gun contractor builder here. And he made it up with Healy and he said to Healy, he said, 'What about ah we go in for this aerodrome,' see. Healy said, 'Right.' He said, 'Go out and have a look at it and put in a tender.' Because he w-, we were working out in the bush, you see. He said, 'Put in a tender for it.' So

you know, where the RAAF base is now?

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
From the Stuart Highway?

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Well that, that road was there then and it used to come right down to, to where ah Joy's Supermarket is, where that gate, that's where the ro-, that was McMillans Road. That's where they used to come around and McMillans slorti-, was just up here.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
M'mm, m'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
So ah used to come up here, was all bush road. And ah Harold Snell come out with his utility and he just drove along that road and he looked. And he could see a tree there and a tree over there. Oh another one way over there, four or 500 yards away. And oh, he went back and he wrote back, wrote out a—the grass was about that high, see—so he wrote out a, a tender for £7 per acre clearing. And of course naturally they gave it to him. That was the cheapest tender I think, lowest tender. So the first thing, we went and burnt the grass. And this is where these people were cutting all this firewood for the thing. And there was a thousand stumps to the acre. There was only one or two trees standing but ah all the rest were stumps only that high. Went broke. Healy and, Healy and Snell went broke.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
So he thought because there weren't any trees it'd be easy to clear?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
But when they burnt the grass they found all these stumps about this high, see. Just below the grass top. Yeah, they counted a thousand stumps to the acre. And of course they, they had to forfeit the contract, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes, m'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
And ah immediately after that we packed up and we went to Dunmarra then. And of course ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How did you get there?

At time 00:35:30

Summary: Val had previously worked for Noel Healy and in 1938 he went to Dumarra to again work for Healy as a long distance truck driver. The Dumarra Roadhouse was not there then and the area was formerly known as Milner's Pond. The previous owner was Jack McCarthy. Val loved and respected Noel Healy. He talks about the circumstances of Noel Healy's death.

Keywords: Leyland truck, Noel Healy, Sydney Williams, Dunmarra, Jack McCarthy, Katherine, fuel haulage, Pearce family, Daly Waters, Wave Hill, trucking, assault

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How did you get there?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How did you get there? Travel there?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh big truck. Healy had, see we used to drive a, 1929 ah driving a truck for Healy, it was a big Leyland with solid tyres on it. And ah, oh a huge thing ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Solid, m'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

rattle along. Not only rattle, the truck'd rattle, the bones in you and everything. Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

The roads would've been rough in those days?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

The roads would've been ve-, ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah no bitumen, just a, just a dirt track. And our, our ah part of the job was to cart from Katherine to Wave Hill, that was 300 miles then, and 300 miles back. But ah it mightn't have been 300 mile in a direct line but when you wound in and out of a-, around the hills and up the top of valleys and down the creeks and everything.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

How long did that take?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh about two days, I think we used to make the trip two days. And ah it'd take you about two days to come back too.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But anyway, ah that's how I come to be associated with old Healy then. And ah that was, that was way back in 1929, 19-, just before I got married. And then I m-, I met him here again this, and he give me a job straight away, see? So I went to Dunmarra with him in '38. Oh yeah, be early in '38. Anyway ah see that roadhouse wasn't there then. You know, you've seen our windmill down on the thing down there? Near the tank, water tank?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

That's where the house was before.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And it wasn't known as Dunmarra it was known as Milner's Pond. And this is where I got this McCarthy mixed up with last night. I, I was thinking about you and then I ah, McCarthy. There was an old fellow there called Jack McCarthy, he had a, very old man he was. He owned Milner's Pond and he sold to Healy.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Milner, is it?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Beg your pardon?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Milner's Pond?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Milner's Pond, yeah. Was ah, you can't see the pond, it's way back in the, in the scrub there but it was a huge thing. And ah anyway, that, that was ah, that was the station, it was Milner's, Milner's Pond. And ah anyway, Healy bought our, one of those Sydney William things, big—or Sydney Williams—and built it up on the hill there. And ah we named it Dunmarra. And ah, oh it was from there I went to Queensland. I never got back here till '60. But when I got back the other place was established, down where the roadhouse is now, see.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah he was still there. But I tell you what, when, when that man died I, as a matter of fact I still feel like crying because he was like a father to me. He was better to me than my father was, old Noel Healy. Anything I wanted he'd give me. If there was a, if there was a job to be done anywhere, he'd send me out to do it. Say, 'You can do it,' I, I don't have to be there, you can do it.' And we used to, used to do all the windmill repairing, all kinds of things, ah used to send us out. If there was a ah, we used to have to cart fuel from Birdum—that was the end of the line—we used to have to cart fuel from there to Daly Waters, that was the international airport then, in those days.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, ah I've seen pictures of that in that book by um George about Daly Waters.

Transcript: Event

Coughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

There's a book about the Pearce family at Daly Waters.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, old Bill Pearce had the pub and ah store there. So Healy would say, 'There's a, there's a load of petrol in Birdum. I don't want to go, you, you want to go?' I said, 'Yeah right, I'll go.' He let me take the truck, do the job. Oh he was excellent. Didn't matter what I wanted, he'd give it to me. Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

He was, he was generous, generous?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Only to me though, oh dear me, he reckoned I was a great bloke. I reckon he was a great bloke too.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah poor fellow, he, he died more or less and ignominious death. He ah, he heard a bit of a, a noise one night out the back. And he went out and he was, a couple of blokes trying to take a battery out of one of his cars or something, see. So ah anyway, he tried to ah apprehend them and they belted the t-, copli-, out of him, belted into him. He was a man seventy years of age, and he never got out of it. They sent him to Adelaide Hospital and he died as a result.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm. It's cruel, dreadful.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Now had those fellows asked him, he'd have probably gave him the battery. They didn't, they, they wanted to go round and steal it. M'mm.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Gee. Did ...

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Well I don't know what else I can tell you.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Was there much talk about the war in, around '38? Were people starting to talk about ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no. Ah when I ah, ah, the war with England and Germany didn't break out till I was up in Batavia Goldfields in, in the Cape York Peninsula. The time ah Neville Chamberlain went over and had a conference with Adolf Hitler ...

At time 00:41:19

Summary: Val had moved to Batavia goldfields by the start of WWII. None of his relations were involved in the war. He recalls Xavier Herbert winning the literary prize for Capricornia. Herbert was pleased to win the prize and gave Val a copy of it which Val started reading but didn't understand it.

Keywords: WWII, Neville Chamberlain, Adolf Hitler, England, Germany, Batavia, Cape Yorke Peninsula, Xavier Herbert, Capricornia, Sesquicentenary

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no. Ah when I ah, ah, the war with England and Germany didn't break out till I was up in Batavia Goldfields in, in the Cape York Peninsula. The time ah Neville Chamberlain went over and had a conference with Adolf Hitler ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
that's the time I left Dunmarra to go to Queensland.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Is it? Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
I think it was in, oh can't remember the ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Well that'd be in a newspaper anyway, if someone looked that up they could find it.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
And I think w-, I think the month was September when war, when England had declared war on Germany. But I was in Batavia then.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yes, yeah. But people weren't talking about the European situation?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yes, oh yeah there w-, yeah there was a lot of talk about it. Matter of fact ah radios were gone then, blaring everywhere about ah, ah, especially about peace negotiations by Neville Chamberlain and one thing another.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah. And um were any of your relations in the First World War?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

No.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

No? M'mm. Well getting back to that um prize, do you remember Xavier telling you that he'd been awarded that prize?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah, yeah I remember that, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And did he tell you what it was in aid of?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I think he did, yeah. Ah what do they call it again, the Literary Prize, wasn't it?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

For the sesquicentenary, it was.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

What is it?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Sesquicentenary, 150 years since the First Settlement.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I see, yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes. That's what that, they were supposed to be celebrating it, see?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I know he had to ah, he had to go down for that to receive something. He had, he had to go down, I'm aware of that, Sydney or Melbourne, somewhere there.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was he excited or happy about that?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

M'mm?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Was he happy ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh yeah, he was very happy. I think he did present me with one of them, Capricornia, but I, I started reading it and ah I could never—as I said, I couldn't read very well and I couldn't understand it.

Probably was a good book but ah there's a, there was a short story, oh dear me, can't think of the name of it now. But ah this happened in ah, oh forget the year now. When did I come over here? Sixty. Yeah this must've been around about '59.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah my son Johnny, he was ...

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

At time 00:44:30

Summary: Val talks about his son John McGuinness's boxing career during the late 1950's. Val was a middle weight champion himself.

Keywords: John Johnny McGuinness, boxing, Tokyo Olympics, middle weight, Mr Bond, Queensland Boxing Championships, Far North Queensland Boxing title, welter weight, Brisbane, Bluey Parchent, Xavier Herbert

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

he was ah, he won five championships. And ah he was eligible to go to Tokyo to represent Australia. And he just dropped it like that, I was glad too because boxing's no good. I used to be middleweight champion myself one time, but oh, ah I reckon I'd live longer if I turned around and ran the other way now.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

But anyway, ah, ah there was ah Queensland state titles coming up in Brisbane. So ah all the, all the boys from the north went down and from the south came up, and ah they all converged at Brisbane. And Johnny had already won the ah light middle ah, light welterweight title of North Queensland, see. So he went down, he was gonna try and get the state title. And he went down, oh when he come back he was terribly dejected, oh I couldn't talk to him, you know. I'm like, 'What's wrong?' 'Oh,' he said, he said, 'You know,' he said, he said, 'They railroaded all their southern boys into the championships and pushed all us northern boys out.'

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

On some pretext, you know. So ah he said, 'What's more,' he said, 'I could've beaten that fellow.' A fellow called Bond that won it, see. 'Oh,' I said, 'That's a pretty big boast, you know, Johnny.' He said, 'Yes,' he said, 'I have no doubt,' he said, 'I could've beat him,' see. He said, 'I could've taken that state title.' Anyway ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Gee.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Few weeks went on, or a few months went on and they had a Far North Queensland title by then. So they invited the winner of the state title ...

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Ah so ah he, he was genuinely sorry, he said he couldn't come. But the fellow that he'd defeated—a fellow called, I t-, can't think of his first name but we used to call him Bluey because he had red hair, see? Bluey Parchent. He was a fellow that was undefeated for the title. He said, 'Look,' he said, he said, 'Can I go in, in Bond's place?' They said, 'Yeah, you can go if you want to.' So, 'To fight John McGinness,' see. So we had the title, ah Far North titles. And—tournaments, it wasn't a title. And ah of course the last fight to come up, that's the main one, Johnny and els-, crowns, you see. So ah, and who should come up, he heard about it, Xavier and a friend. He came from Cairns.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

He wanted to see young John fighting, see. Ah and of course Johnny beat him hands down, you know, no trouble at all, see. 'Well,' I said, 'I believe it now, you could've, you could've won that title,' you know. He never knocked this fellow out but oh boy oh boy did he make a mess of him.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Did you teach him how to box?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Me?

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no someone else did.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Who taught you?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
Oh, ah fellow called Fred Don. He became a policeman after.

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes?

At time 00:47:54

Summary: Val's boxing activities. Fred Don taught Val how to box. As a teenager Val had a fight with a huge man in Katharine and won so he got an early reputation as good fighter. At his first bout he knocked out Andy Wright in the 7th round. The dilemma caused by being challenged to fight by his best mate who later died of a heart attack during training. He also played football.

Keywords: Boxing, Fred Don, Harry Edwards, Paddy Ryan, Arthur Wright, lino type operator, George May, Packard Street Hospital

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
But ah ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath
Not the chap from, that had the picture show? The Don Pictures?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness
No, no. I don't know how that came about. I don't know why they called it the Don, ah might've been some old thing. But anyway, this ah, approximately 19,—that's right. When I was, when I was finishing off my apprenticeship, blacksmith and wheelwright, this brother-in-law, Harry Edwards, he had this nephew of his, Fred Don, came to live in Darwin see. And he was a boxer. Some kind of a boxer. And ah anyway, he took me in hand, he said, 'I'll teach you how to box.' I said, 'All right.' So, oh what happened just previous to that, I'd had a fight with a fellow in ah, in Katherine—or Katherine we used to call it, I still call it Katherine. And ah oh he was a huge man, was an Irishman too. Ah Paddy Ryan, Paddy Ryan. And ah there was just some misunderstanding that we got tangled up, and we went outside one night, one of these places. And I was only sixteen at the time, and I flogged him.

Transcript: Event
Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh I gave him a terrible hiding.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Never, never had a fight in my life before, you know, but I gave him a g-, oh he was bleeding. Anyway, eventually he gave up. I ah, after that, oh my fame spread all over the country, see. And when I come down he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'You're the bloke,' he said, he said, 'Come, I'll put you through the ropes and I'll teach you how to box properly.' So got me a match with a fellow called ah, I don't know whether you've run into him, Arthur Wright. Used to be the, used to be the ah line and tap operator for the Standard newspaper.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

He lives just over here, not far. Well his brother Andy used to pride himself as a ah fighter or boxer, one thing or other. Anyway, we were matched up. I don't know how the match come about but, and ah we fought for the middleweight championship of the Northern Territory. And of course I knocked poor old Andy out in the seventh round, you see. And ah, and ah there was another one came up after that. One of my best mates, we were mates since—oh he was a little bit older than me—we ah, we were that m-, good mates that no matter where he was or where I was, we used to write to one another, you know.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And he used to go out bush-hopping that often, get a letter from him, I would write back to him. Then he come back and he challenged me for the middleweight title.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

And what's his name th-, ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Named George May.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

And ah he challenged me for the middleweight title. And oh look I nearly cried, you know, I said, 'How, how, how can this happen? He's my best friend, I can't fight him.' And my brother-in-law, oh boy was he up in arms. He said, he said, 'He, he must be a bit of a mongrel,' he said, 'If he, if he threw out a challenge for you.' He said, 'Your best, he's your, your best mate.' I said, 'Yeah,' I said, 'That hurts, you know.' I said, 'What'll I do?' He said, 'Fight the be-,' he said, 'Fight him.' I said, 'All right.' So we went into training. Unfortunately he died of a br-, ah weak heart in training. He dropped dead when

he was training, oh he collapsed. And we took him to hospital at Old Packard Street now, and ah he died as a result. Oh boy that, that frightened me all together.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

M'mm.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

You know, just thinking of, if the fight had have came off and I hit him in the ring and he d-, ah probably would've killed him and ah I might've been up for manslaughter or something.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah, that's right.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Anyway, I, I sort of went off it then. Oh little, little while after ...

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

couldn't get, couldn't get, couldn't get opponents, you see. So ah this Fred Don—this fellow that taught me—he was a heavyweight, he was a different division, see. So ah his uncle, that was my brother-in-law, he said ah, 'Why don't you fight Fred for the heavyweight title?' 'Oh,' I said, 'I don't know. Why?' 'Well,' he said, 'He wants a fight,' he said, 'And you want a fight.' He said, 'You can't get an opponent, he can't get one. Although you're only a middleweight,' he said, 'You, you can fight for a heavy.'

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

I said, 'All right.' Said, 'I'll fight him.' So Harry went up and challenged him, you know, that, Harry was his uncle, see?

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yes, yeah.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

He went up and challenged him. he said, 'No, no, no.' He said, he said, 'I'm not gonna fight him.' But it's a funny thing, we used to, we used to go up to the police station and I'd get this Fred Don to give me a workout, see, when I was training, see. And oh he was, he was as tough as nails, truly. He was a bit heavier than I was. So one day we were, we were sparring away there and I caught him with a right cross like that and I dropped him, see. And he got up, and shook his head, and give a silly looking grin and had a few more giggles. But after that he wouldn't box with me anymore, see. And he wouldn't, wouldn't fight me for the title.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Yeah. When ... ?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

'Police Department said won't allow me to fight anymore,' that was a bunch of, he was scared.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Oh you must've been very good, by the sounds.

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

So anyway, ah—as I said—I've learnt to run the other way this time.

Transcript: Event

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah.

Transcript: Ann McGrath

Any other sport? Did you play any other sport?

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh we used to, football and ah, matter of fact I've got a, think I've got a letter here from a friend.

Transcript: Event

Interview Paused

Music plays

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Ah ...

At time 00:54:09

Summary: Fragment of Hawaiian guitar music with children playing in the background.

Keywords: Guitar

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Yeah. Ah ...

Transcript: Event

Music plays

Laughs

Transcript: Valentine Bynoe McGinness

Oh you ...

Transcript: Event

End of Interview

At time 00:55:31

Summary: End of session

End of transcript