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Full transcript of an interview with

YVONNE EDWARDS, MARJORIE SANDIMAR, ET AL

on 28 & 29 September, 01 October 2006

by Christobel Mattingley

for the

MARALINGA WOMEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Recording available on CD

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Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -.

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Interview with Yvonne Edwards, Marjorie Sandimar, Margaret May, Mabel Queama, Alice Cox, Pansy Woods with translation assistance from Mima Smart, recorded by Christobel Mattingley, between 28th September and 1st October 2006, for the Maralinga Women Oral History Project, State Library of South Australia Oral History Collection.

(TRANSCRIPTION NOTE: The recording is accompanied by a significant amount of echo, which at times obscures speech.)

DISK 1

This is Christobel Mattingley recording ladies from Hope Vale (?) and Yalata at ...... ......, 28th September 2006. They’re telling their story of the Maralinga lands. Those present are Alice Cox, Mabel Queama, Margaret Day, Yvonne Edwards, Marjorie Sandimar and Pansy Woods and Mima Smart. Also present are Jan and Geoff Willsmore and David Mattingley. (break in recording)

Correction there: Margaret May and daughters, Janet May and Dora Queama. (break in recording)

It’s better; the quieter it is the better the recording – – –. This is Christobel Mattingley, ...... ......, and this afternoon we’re going to be talking to Mima Smart, Yvonne Edwards and Marjorie Sandimar, telling their stories of their experiences with Maralinga. We’re at ...... ...... and this is the 28th September 2006. Yvonne, would you mind telling us where you were born and how you came to live at Yalata?

Yvonne Edwards: I was born at Ooldea Mission in 1950, then we moved out from Ooldea probably when I was two years old to Yalata, with my mother. We went to Ooldea Tank[?] before Yalata Community. Then from there we was moving round from place to place where they can find water for the people.

It was ration time for everyone: they used to get ration every week. Bit of flour, sugar, tea and dripping. Sometimes they get clothes – men get trousers, women get a dress and a jumper – and a blanket.

I went to school at Ooldea when I was taken away from my mother and lived in Fowlers Bay for a while with foster parents – Fowlers Bay and round Penong. Then I went back to Yalata. And they started school there.

There was no houses there, only a ration shed and a caravan.
Do you mind if I stop here and I’ll just check that sound recording again; we don’t want to miss it this time. Thank you very much. (break in recording) This is Christobel Mattingley continuing the conversation with Yvonne Edwards and Mima Smart’s going to join in. Yvonne, you were telling us how you were taken away and put with foster parents at Fowlers Bay, then you got to Yalata where there was only a caravan and a ration shed.

Yvonne Edwards: When I was growing up in Yalata we used to see a lot of soldiers come through. Every Sunday all the kids – when I was a child myself – we stand on the road, we see all these Land Rovers coming, and they pull up, they always give us oranges and apples, give the old people some blankets and some food. Every Sunday we know they come through. Probably they go for weekends or coming back from their long trips. And I never understand about that bomb, didn’t worry about that, till when I grow up, when I was a young woman: then I hear old people talking about their land and explain about all the soldiers coming in.

Sometimes they used to join in with the community. We’d play sports with them, they’d just come into the community for a ride. They was good people. We see them every week.

When I was a young woman with three or four children, I heard the old grandmothers and grandfathers, they used to say, ‘Oh, we’d like to go back to our land. But we can’t, because the bomb went off and it’s too dangerous.’ They say ……, the poison. They used to go and talk to government people or government come to Yalata. This one old lady, my grandmother, she used to get up and talk all the time, she wanted to go home to her land. That’s Marjorie’s mother. She used to say, ‘This is not our home. This place here, they drink, they fight. We want to go back to the bush where we was quiet, nice and peaceful, just sit round the fire and talk to one another.’

Before that, when the soldiers all left Maralinga, in the ’70s, they gave the land, all the buildings – everything in the Maralinga village – back to the community, that’s where everybody was, all the people. So my husband and a couple of white staff, they went to Maralinga to have a look. (pauses) Then, about a few weeks later, we went. Some family groups, they worked there to help them pull the buildings down, to get everything out from that place. Everything was there, just – they left everything: plates, the kitchen was there
with everything; the big shed was there with all the blankets and sheets and things for the soldiers; the hospital was still there with everything in it; and all the dormitories had all the blankets and everything in there. We stayed in one near the hospital, the big hospital. They brought some things back to Yalata from the hospital, brought a lot of blankets back for the people.

We stayed there for quite a while. My son got very sick. The men go out, we used to go with them. We go out digging for witchetty grubs, digging for rabbits, the ladies. Go out hunting for kangaroos and turkeys – there was plenty turkeys there. Millions of millies[?] – them millie birds: we’d go and get them eggs, them big eggs, we follow the tracks and we go and dig them out and get all the big eggs to take back. One day we wasn’t far, (laughs) we was not far from where the bomb went off, we was cooking witchetty grubs, and we was looking around: ‘There’s no trees around here, just all dry.’ So we seen a road, the bitumen going straight to the place where the bomb went off, the big bomb, so we went there. We got on this four-wheel drive and we were, ‘Let’s go and have a look.’ Nobody told us it was dangerous or anything. So we went there and all stand around looking. And this whitefella came and he said, ‘It’s still “hot”, you shouldn’t be walking around without shoes or standing a bit close, looking.’ Like a big hole there. And no trees for miles, isn’t it? Dry, just dry, dead.

Mima Smart:  Dead trees, with no green leaves. And dead animals.

Yvonne Edwards:  Yes.

Mima Smart:  We were sitting on top of this Land Rover looking down on it.

Yvonne Edwards:  I was walking around.

Mima Smart:  ..... .... was walking around and looking down.

Yvonne Edwards:  Some of the men was walking around, too.

Mima Smart:  With their shoes on.

Yvonne Edwards:  And the kids.

Mima Smart:  But we wasn’t told it was dangerous, that we should wear shoes and when is the good time to go in, what’s the place where the bomb went off.
Yvonne Edwards: Poison ..... Then, when we went back, we was walking around and we seen a big crack in the ground, this big crack, and – are we allowed to say this?

Mima Smart: It was ..... ..... 

Yvonne Edwards: We hadn’t – 

[unidentified male]: All right, just – – –. 

Yvonne Edwards: (whispers) Are we allowed to say this? Probably allowed – – – . (break in recording, laughter, various voices)

**Because I’ve stopped the machine I’ve got to – – –.**

Yvonne Edwards: – – – tie it up or bury it. 

[unidentified male]: The Land Rover – – –. 

Yvonne Edwards: We ..... digging them out. 

We paused then because the ladies wanted to say something about the crack in the ground. But now we’re going on about what they found when they started digging out the crack in the ground. So, Yvonne, when you saw this crack in the ground – – –?

Yvonne Edwards: They got front-end loader, they dig it out: they seen new washing machines, never been used; fridges, all buried in the ground. Then we went to another place, (laughs) we seen cracks there: they seen Land Rovers buried in the ground. 

Mima Smart: Motor bikes. 

**Amazing.** 

Yvonne Edwards: Then they covered them back over again, they cover them over again. We was there. Then the men was itchy from pulling the buildings down, they were scratching all night. They was pulling all the buildings down to take back to the community. Some of them were sold to farmers, a lot of people was coming in then, to buy things.

**So quite a lot went back to Yalata.**

Yvonne Edwards: Community and others been sold.
Mima Smart: Along the Eyre Peninsula and in Adelaide.

Yvonne Edwards: Yes. The church was sold – it’s in ...., the church – hall ..... ......, that’s the hall.

Mima Smart: Only at the left is the big hall.

Yvonne Edwards: Hall – no, it was sold, out .....illa, .....illa, the big building there. From Maralinga.

Where is it now? The hall, where did the hall go?

Yvonne Edwards: Coober Pedy.

Coober Pedy, did it?

Yvonne Edwards: Yes. And other things – farmers bought sheds and things, farmers from everywhere. ..... ..... ..... ..... We was walking round there. We used to go hunting for rabbits round the airstrip. We seen the men working, trying to cover these drums over, poison. They all had masks, these whitefellas. My husband, he had ordinary clothes, he was driving the front-end loader, putting dirt on the plutonium.

Mima Smart: Plutonium.

Yvonne Edwards: Plutonium – what they call that thing?

Mima Smart: To cover it from the wind.

Yvonne Edwards: Then they cover it, they put cement on it. We wasn’t far, we were sitting down close-up.

Mima Smart: We didn’t know how many — —.

Yvonne Edwards: They had some drums there, poison.

Mima Smart: ..... ..... around the airstrip.

Yvonne Edwards: Yes. And I always think back, you know, why these white people had masks and everything, and just because he was an Aboriginal fella he had nothing, and he getting all the dust because he was on top of the front-end loader.

Mima Smart: The drum ..... ..... .....
Yvonne Edwards: Now, it’s gone. They dig it out and took it somewhere. But that was really poison, what they was working on that day.

One of my sons got very sick. Had to fly him to Adelaide. We had our own plane in Maralinga, we had a little plane for the community.

Mima Smart: And it was driven by Alwyn Dutschke[?].

Yvonne Edwards: Dusky[?].

Mima Smart: Dusky.

Yvonne Edwards: ..... ..... ..... Mr Dusky.

Mima Smart: He was the manager who was -- -- --.

Yvonne Edwards: He was the pilot.

Mima Smart: Pilot and manager for – managed the work.

Yvonne Edwards: He was just like a supervisor to all the men. Like he was the caretaker, they was looking after the place so nobody can’t come in, just –

Caretaker at Maralinga?

Yvonne Edwards: – yeah. And we were there from the community because our husbands was working there.

Mima Smart: And we was cooking and washing clothes for them, cleaning the houses, room, doing house duties.

Yvonne Edwards: But we didn’t know that place was poison, you know?

Mima Smart: Poison and dangerous.

Yvonne Edwards: It was a dangerous place. Lots of families come and go, but we was there the longest, I think.

Mima Smart: Margaret May, her husband and children stayed down there.

Yvonne Edwards: ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... 

Mima Smart: Don’t put that on.

Margaret May was -- -- --?

Yvonne Edwards: Margaret May come later.
Mima Smart: She’ll tell you about it.

Yvonne Edwards: Then when everything was sold – not everything, still a lot of buildings there; half of the things – we went back to Yalata and we stayed. And the people were still trying to get Maralinga back, old people used to still talk. We went on tape and video.

Mima Smart: We went on a video with some other people that wanted to take a photo of us with the elders, talking about their land –

Yvonne Edwards: Maralinga.

Mima Smart: – to go back and live in that place, they wanted to go back. And me and Yvonne was interpreting, we were interpreters for them. Our parents – – –. (whispers)

Parents and grandparents?

Yvonne Edwards: Yeah. One fella come from Canberra, he come and stayed in Yalata and he was helping the old people.

Mima Smart: Kingsley, isn’t it?

Yvonne Edwards: Kingsley.

Mima Smart: And Maggie Brady[?].

Yvonne Edwards: Maggie Brady.

Mima Smart: Maggie Brady and Kingsley, I don’t know what her second name [was].

Yvonne Edwards: So the old people used to tell us, ‘We want to go back home, go back to our land. We don’t want to live in Yalata, this is not our land.’

Mima Smart: They wanted to take their children, the families back with them to establish their homeland away from alcohol and troubles. And build that place as their own community. A school, office, clinic and shop.

So when did that happen?

Yvonne Edwards: In the ’70s.

That you went back to .....
Mima Smart: Went back to Yalata.

Yvonne Edwards: We got ..... ..... back, we got the land back in the '80s, isn’t it? 'Eighty-three or '84.

So in the ’70s you went back to Yalata from Maralinga.

Yvonne Edwards: Yeah, went back –

Mima Smart: Went back from Maralinga to Yalata.

Yvonne Edwards: – to Yalata, and somebody else was staying there as a caretaker then.

Mima Smart: Lived in Yalata and worked, and then we had the old people wanted to go back to the land and we had a lot of meetings and meetings with the government. The government telling, ‘You can’t go back, Maralinga is too dangerous and it’s poisoned. We need to get the British mob to clean the area before you can go back home.’

Yvonne Edwards: But they gave the land back before they went and cleaned it up.

Mima Smart: Yes, before they went and cleaned it.

Yvonne Edwards: But the damage is done, already.

Mima Smart: Already.

Yvonne Edwards: You can’t fix that. (whispers) I’ve finished. (break in recording)

Okay, shall we make a start? (Marjorie Sandimar speaks)

Marjorie Sandimar: I’m Marjorie Sandimar. I was born on Wynbring — —.

We’re continuing now with Marjorie Sandimar and Mima Smart again. And Mima’s going to tell us a little bit about Marjorie’s mother, Rene Sandimar.

Marjorie Sandimar: My name’s Marjorie Sandimar. I was born at Wynbring in 1951.

Born where, sorry?

Marjorie Sandimar: Wynbring.

Mima Smart: Wynbring. On the –
Marjorie Sandimar: Train line.

Mima Smart: – on the train line, Australian – – –.

Marjorie Sandimar: Nineteen fifty-one.

And your mother was Rene Sandimar.

Marjorie Sandimar: Yes.

And she was a strong lady. You heard her stories many times? What was her story, Marjorie?

Marjorie Sandimar: (speaks in language, whispers to Mima who translates)

Mima Smart: Mima S (interpreting): Marjorie was always listening to her mother talking about her land. She’s a brave lady who gets up and talk all the time in front of big bosses like governments and prime ministers and all the men sit there and listen to her. And then they all ..... ..... what she is saying in English. She’s really strong lady because of her husband which she had, she wanted her children to go back and live in that country, where she roamed around. And all the big governments would listen to her because she meant everything that she said that she would like to see and do back in that land. But the governments would say to her, ‘It’s too dangerous and poisoned to go back,’ but she refused to listen to them, she really wants to go back, and she’ll growl, tell them off: ‘Why did you let them come and put that bomb in our land which we wandered around from rock hole to rock hole? They should let go the bomb in their own country and poison their own country, not our country, which we would like our children to be on, where we can learn them to track down some animals, hunting, gathering food and look for water holes.’

Rene Sandimar was a Christian lady and she would tell anybody that would stop them from being in trouble. If they refused to listen to her she would tell them off or try and hit them. And that would teach them not to talk back to an elder, which they should be learning from her.

Rene’s husband came from Ooldea, and then on to Yalata with his wife and with the children. Three, she had three children. Marjorie’s the youngest one. And Rene’s husband, he had three wives, that’s all Rene’s cousins, first cousins. And from then on they had lots and lots of children, and that’s why
the family grew up to be at Yalata. And when he passed on, Rene wanted to take all their children back onto her land.

In the ‘70s or ‘80s the land was given back to them and they had a big ceremony. When the land was given back they had a big barbecue and ceremonies and ..... in old Maralinga, the first Maralinga. And after that, they slowly moved back to [a lake], with some food and water was supplied from Yalata by trucks and Land Rovers, and people from Yalata, like the sisters or the teachers or the pastors or the store manager, would go and travel to [a lake] to give all the things to them, to the people. Because they didn’t want to come back to Yalata, so Yalata was supplying them everything.

And then, a few [years] later, they settled in a place in Oak Valley. It was located a couple of years later. A couple of years later they were located in Oak Valley, and that’s where they settled, and all the old people were happy. They used to have dance and talk about stories from the past, which way did they come from, telling them to all the children, all the people that were resettling there. And they really could be happy. All were smiling. Because she knew that she was the only lady that talked, she was learning the other ladies: ‘By and by you should be talking like me.’ And that’s how Yalata people went back to their land.

So your mother, Marjorie, Rene was really the person who brought the people back to the ..... lands.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes, she was the only –

She was a very determined lady.

Mima Smart (interpreting): – yes, she was the one lady that brought everybody back, settled that place down. And in the ..... she passed away, without any compensation. She just was happy to get that land back and for her children and children’s children to settle and run that place for new future. She passed that message on to her first cousins and brothers, cousins, uncles, nephews and nieces, to look after that place ‘while I’m gone. This is the place which brought me back to this beautiful land.’
Majorie is now living at Adelaide with kidney machine, not able to go back to this land. And she should be well looked after by all the things that her mother has been doing from building trust and Maralinga and Oak Valley.

That’s a beautiful story, that’s a beautiful story. How proud you must be of your mother, Marjorie, and how sad [you] must be now you can’t be back there living. And now, Margaret, are you coming to join the storytelling?

Margaret May: Yes.

Thank you, that’s lovely.

Mima Smart: I’m interpreting for her.

Yes. So we’ve got Margaret May now and Mima helping Margaret tell her story, interpreting. (women speak in language)

Mima Smart (interpreting): This is Margaret May. She was born in the spinifex near Amata and I am interpreting for her. Margaret walked from where she was located in the Western Australian area. She walked from there to shortcut through the desert till she reached Ooldea Mission. She stayed there, she settled in well with the other people from Ooldea, that later in the past she was put in school in Ooldea Mission, along with the other kids, and she made herself at home and made friends with other kids.

She stayed there for a long time, till the British soldiers came and told the people that they have to leave this place ‘because our men have got to test a bomb in Maralinga and it’s too dangerous for you mob to stay here’. So it was really a sad day for them to leave, in the evening. Then they was divided by four groups, four of the elders, four men, they had a big service and in the evening the elders of the four tribes called which ones they would take and which direction they was travelling. Some went on to Western Australia by train, some walked, and Margaret went to Tarcoola by train – to the station, Tarcoola Station – and I just went to North, up North. They probably walked back – they probably caught the train east and then north.

Margaret was staying with some people by the windmill – windmill is where people get water – and in the morning or the evening they seen a truck came towards their camp. Mr Gaetner[?], he was the missionary, our teacher. Anne Skatener[?] from Koonibba.
..... the survival story.

Mima Smart (interpreting):  He came in a truck and told the people, ‘You mob need to come back with me to Yalata where your family is.’ So Margaret went with them, he went and left them with some other family group at Ooldea Tank, which is in the South. Ooldea Tank. There was other people from Ooldea Mission was already down there, so the missionaries went and picked them up from Ooldea and took them to Ooldea Tank and Margaret went to Tarcoola but a Toyota truck came and took them to Ooldea Tank.

They were there for two years, three years, till then they started a school. School started like a little shed, like a little tin shed, with no proper school things, just a shed and a one teacher – two teachers, isn’t it? – Margaret Tischler[?] was the teacher then. Margaret Tischler, she was the teacher there at Ooldea Tank. Margaret didn’t went to school there, she was older than the other kids. Stayed with the families at camp, which she talked about with other people about how she got the ……, who she met when they left Ooldea Mission. It was really sad, they were talking about the sad day when they left, when Ooldea was closed.

In years after that they moved in a bit to Yalata and teacher Strehlan – Strehlan? Sister Traeger[?] – Trehlan[?], old man Trehlan, lived there with the old people, some people was there, and he lived under the tree with a little cabin on it, with a little caravan, which he lived amongst the whole people.

Was he a good teacher?

Mima Smart (interpreting):  He was a missionary, looking after the people. He was a good man. He kept all the old people there. Then later he went with the old people to Middleyard, they was going towards the Great Australian Bight, they moved to Middleyard and they stayed there for one year or a few months, then people was getting sick. They got ’flu, everybody was all – – –. They seen the big bomb. They’d seen a big smoke, from Yalata they seen this big smoke. And everybody died from ’flu at Middleyard and the sisters couldn’t do anything, it was too much for them. So there were two nursing sisters,
mission sisters, Sister ..... and Margaret Dischner[?] was there, they was the only two ladies.

**Margaret Tischler, the teacher who’d been on — — —**?

Mima Smart (interpreting): And Ella Footner[?]. Them three ladies was living amongst them and trying to make them better, but all of them died because of the 'flu. 'Flu. It was from that bomb.

**Did the missionaries die, too?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): No, they were still — they were looking after them because they were Christian people and they was praying for the people that came from Ooldea. And they travelled around with them, wherever they moved, camp to camp, them three ladies would move with them. Everywhere round Yalata. Footner’s Cave, Timdake[?], on the whole highway, they lived there with the whole people.

Then a few years later there was a call out for young people to go work at Maralinga Village and Margaret’s husband and Margaret went with their families to work at Maralinga, to help the white people pull down some buildings. And then later in the years past, her husband was sitting under this pipeline, pulling some screws, nuts, and soon after this pipe fell on top of this leg. It was that heavy, it fell on top of his leg and he was crying and he couldn’t move, then some of the white men came and pulled it up for him, they lift him up, because his leg was bashed, and they lift him up and put him on the trailer[?] and took him back to Yalata, where there were a lot of people who was living out from Yalata in a big camp at ...... ...... ...... on the old highway. He went back there and everybody was crying, they wanted to know what really happened.

And later in the weeks he was coughing, then he started to cough. That’s when he knew that something was wrong with his life, health problem. Plus his leg that got smashed, he couldn’t work any more, so he couldn’t go back to Maralinga. He couldn’t go back to Maralinga any more because of his leg, then he was getting some treatment from it, going into Ceduna, Adelaide, for Ceduna doctor coming. And then he got sicker and sicker, he got asthma
problem and all sort of sickness, and then they have to fly him to Adelaide for more treatment and that’s where he ended up. The family came and sat with him at the hospital and his life passed on.

So, Margaret, you’ve got Janet, your daughter Janet?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Margaret got a son, son is Lindsey[?] May, daughter Janet, Janice, and Stephanie.

Oh, Stephanie, who’s ..... ..... ..... 

Mima Smart (interpreting): And she got lots and lots of grandchildren. She’s great-grandparent of her grannies.

Thank you, Margaret, for telling us that story, and thank you, Mima, for telling it.

Mima Smart: We’ll have a little break for a while?

Yes, good timing – the tape has just about finished, too, so that’s wonderful. Thank you very much, Mima.

END OF DISK 1: DISK 2

I’ll just do an identification on the tape before we start talking. This is Christobel Mattingley at ..... ..... on the 28th September, 2006. This is the second card, recording the Maralinga ladies about their experiences over the last fifty years. In this tape, Mima Smart will be interpreting and translating again, and we will be talking to Mabel Queama and Alice Cox. Thank you.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Mabel Queama was born at ..... , that’s in ..... , other side of .....  Her mother brought her down from where she was born, down south, near Coffanilla[?].

I’ll have to check that name a little later.

Mima Smart (interpreting): From W..... she walked with her mother to Coffin Hill and met the other family group and they walked from Coffin Hill down to Ooldea, through the desert. Mabel was a little baby girl on her mother’s back, and her brother, too.

We’ve got some lovely photos in Survival of mothers carrying their babies like that.

Mima Smart (interpreting): After that her mother brought her down from Coffin Hill, in between Coffin Hill and Ooldea they camped near the fire, with all the
other family group. And in that group there was Alice Cox. And Mabel’s
mother and brothers were travelling together towards Ooldea Mission, through
the desert, through Maralinga, before the bomb dust. And in the evening or
midday, they got to Ooldea Siding, Ooldea Mission, and there her mother was
met by her families in the big camp. And Alice was met by her families and
they were happy to see them. They were introduced by the elders of the tribe
and they stayed in Ooldea Mission for a while, for a long time.

We’ll just pause there. (break in recording) We paused in the interview with
Mabel Queama and Alice Cox because there seemed to be a battery malfunction.
We’re resuming now and Mima will continue with Mabel’s story. (several people
speak and whisper in language)

Mima Smart (interpreting): Alice went ahead with the people that were walking
faster than her mother was. She went with them first up the hills, through the
sand hills, on the plains, up the hills again, sand hills, got to Ooldea, and her
mother was still coming behind with the other group. And Mabel was on her
mother’s back, she was comfortable, (laughter) having a good ride. Brother
was there, too, walking with her father. Because Alice really wanted to see
her family first, before her mother did. And then she went along and she met
her families: her sister, Mara Watson and Mara Watson’s mother. And she
met her sister, Rene Sandimar, and Tjabarti – T-J-A-R-B-T-I, that’s another
sister, that’s my grandmother. That’s my husband’s grandmother, Yvonne’s
grandmother, Yvonne Edwards’s grandmother.

They were all the sisters, she met all of them at Ooldea Mission, and they
were happy to be introduced ——. Alice had no clothes, she had a fire stick
trying to keep herself warm. She was thirsty for water. And her sisters gave
her some water, she was happy. And that night she went and camped with her
parents, where they kept firewood. There was a big lot of firewood, and there
she camped, where they can keep themselves warm.

Alice then went with the cousins, sisters, the family, hunting for rabbits and
collecting wild food, berries, fruit. It was a happy day, their life for them,
when they met up together, where she can be with the families going out and
enjoying her life around Ooldea Mission.
Then, later in the months, weeks, she met her husband, Jack Cox. They was blessed with one child, a daughter. Two daughters. And they lived happily and was amazed that they had their first daughters in the family. Then later in the morning, in the evening one whitefella came and told them about – that white man came to the camp and looked around and went back into the Mission and did not let them know what was going to happen. And that white man came and he was arguing with one of the missionaries that was looking after them at Ooldea Mission, by the name of Harry Greene – them two was arguing. Two missionaries was there, Mrs Sichs[?] –

**Oh, Mrs Sexton, was it Sexton?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): Oh, Sixton?

**Yes, Sexton.**

Mima Smart (interpreting): – and Harry Green. This white man came and growled at them, they were having an argument. And the people didn’t know what they was arguing for. This white man came and opened everything up, opened the doors of the dormitories and the office and the store, and the people must have been told that this place was going to be closed, and they stood in line. Everybody was lining up for blankets and rations. They was grabbing it from the missionaries, the missionaries supplying them, ..... rations, clothes and blankets. Because they were ready to [leave], they knew that this place for them was closing down.

And there was four people that was divided to take their family group to their destination. Some were going west, south, east and north. Alice and everybody there, we all cry. There was crying, they were banging their head, ‘We don’t want to leave this place, this is our home, this is our home, where we are going to? Who is taking us?’ That just was disgraceful, it was a sad time for them. Everybody, old people, young kids, all the schoolkids who was in the homes, they was all crying. They don’t know what to do. And they was told that the big trucks were coming from south – Koonibba Mission and some people coming from all directions, that they were coming to take them away.
And they were told which way they have to go, which way their ..... decided to go. And Alice decided to go to South Coast, West Coast.

But other families said, ‘You need to come to Coober Pedy,’ so Alice was really upset. She wanted to go to south, on the West Coast. And then Alice said, ‘I don’t want to go anywhere, I want to go back and stay in that beautiful place, that’s my home. Where you are taking me is not my home, that’s a strange place. We was welcome to that place by this lady,’ this Daisy Bates, Harry Green, which gave them everything that they need. And she was really, really upset because some of her first cousins and sisters were going their different ways. So that would leave her south with the other cousins.

Mabel’s father was first uncle that let Alice Cox travel with him, wherever he went, and Mabel was with her mother, with her father, and they travelled around together. Then Alice and Mabel, with their parents, they went to Ti Tree Station, walking.

**You walked?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): They walked, because there wasn’t no vehicle for them to take, for them to go to that place. But the other people from Ooldea, they left by mission trucks, the missionaries came and took them. Koonibba, Yalata – Koonibba Mission. Ooldea Tank, they left some people at Ooldea Tank, and because there was no school at Ooldea Tank the missionaries decided to take some kids and the parents to Koonibba Mission, to put them in a home which they can be going to school.

When they was at Ti Tree, they stayed there for a couple of weeks. One day, and Dougall[?], one whitefella, Dougall, came with a Toyota Land Rover and took Alice and Mabel and their parents back to Ooldea Tank, where the other family group were. And two big trucks came and took everybody to Tarcoola, catching the train back to Ooldea Siding, and there were two trucks were waiting to take the people to Ooldea Tank, where the others were.

And in Ooldea Tank, they lived there forever. They stayed there till Yalata was established. Then in Ooldea Tank they travelled around for hunting, digging for wombats, making artefacts, and there was only one little tin shed
where there was a school started, and Margaret Tischler was teaching there. And then from there people shifted to Yalata.

**Did they shift of their own accord or were they shifted?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): No, they were moving a bit, because they moved around, they travelled around from water to water. Because I suppose the water was going down a bit they went to this underground tank in Yalata. And after that – they went to Yalata, they stayed there for a while – they went to Middleyard, they travelled to Middleyard. There were some other people there. They stayed there, there was a big camp, people were *everywhere* camping. By and by they got the 'flu. And there were three sisters, three ladies were there: Miss Titschner, Miss ….., Sister Ma….., with medicine supplies.

**They were missionaries, were they?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes, missionaries.

**What, three?**

Mima Smart (interpreting): Three, yes. Ladies ….. Ella Faulkner –

….. ….. you told me before?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes. And Tischler, and Sister Ma….. They’re the ladies were looking after them with rations and medicines. By and by they decided to go back to Yalata. They stayed at Yalata ever since it was established. And there, in Yalata, everybody seen the bomb, the big smoke. That bomb was the atom bomb that took off in Maralinga. And they thought it was the devil, they didn’t know it was the bomb, they thought it was a bushfire or smoke coming from the sky. And later in the years and years [went] by, when they had their children and their family of their own, they decided to go back to their own land. Go back to Maralinga.

And the government told them, in second, third, first meeting, they were told that Maralinga is poisoned, it’s too dangerous for you mob, your people, to go back now. You need to wait till we ask the British soldiers and the people that done the test to clean it up. Mabel and Alice, they were in the
meetings alongside with Rene Sandimar and with others. They sat and listened, they helped one another by sharing the stories. They said they wanted to go back and take their family ..... safer. And to make them their home which they can establish their own school, office, clinic and live there at Oak Valley.

And the government said, in two or three years’ time, ‘We’ll have a big meeting at old Maralinga’ – Maralinga Village, the first Maralinga, other side of the railway line near Ooldea Siding, Watson[], on the bitumen road. And there they had the meeting, and everybody from every state came to that meeting and it was a big day when they was handed over their land. And everybody was really happy, and they celebrate by having a big barbecue and ladies danced and men danced, they had a big ceremony. And then, in the years later, the years passed, they went to Lake Dey Dey, which Yalata supplied them with water, education, school and medicine and store, which was carted to them by trucks and Toyota. And there were lots of old people there. And later in the years they were moved to Oak Valley, which now they are there today.

While living there they went out everywhere, looking for wombats, looking for rabbits, hunting for turkey, collecting seeds and making bush medicines, sharing their culture with other people. And a lot of them old people has passed away, because it was the bomb dust which made them sick, and they had asthmas and all sorts of sickness and couldn’t live any longer. And we have only three or four old people there which we can gather our stories from. There used to be a lot of old people, but not now. We only got one elder, and that’s Alice Cox. We can collect stories and she can tell us stories. She is our one survivor, she’s living at Oak Valley. (women converse in language)

She was crying. When Ooldea Mission was closed, she was crying. She only got there the next day, the day, and two days later she was gone, that place was closed. Just closing up. Didn’t [took that long to live?] for two or three or four years. Travelling together all the families. (language)

It’s a really sad story, right? That white man, Mr Dougall, he came to the camp – he must have knew from before, you know? He must have been told.
When he came to that camp he never told the people in that camp what’s going to happen, about that place. Dougall. And he went and had an argument with Miss Sichs and Harry Green, and Mr Harry Green was really upset. He belted him, he must have struck him, with two or one – – –. He didn’t want to know about it, must have [told] him lies ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... but he must have been – soldiers must have rang him first. Nobody knows in the camp, no-one knows what is really happening. Old people must have wanted to belt him, too, you know? You must have went and told the soldiers that ‘I don’t want to live in Ooldea Siding’. (language)

And one old lady, Mabel’s sister, came through. Edie Milpuddie, she came through when they had that bomb. She didn’t know what was there, she came through with two kids, her daughter and her son. He was looking for Mabel’s father. And then later she made a fire, cooked him something. She was cooking some tucker and the soldiers who were standing on top of the hill, they seen the smoke. That soldier was talking and speaking, eleven people, other soldiers notice the smoke down the track there, and all the soldiers went looking where that smoke was coming because they know it’s too dangerous to make a bush fire. Right beside the bomb, she was making a fire. But she didn’t know there was that, that dangerous. And later on the soldiers picked her up and they took her and her daughter and son to the Army station, put in a little prison, which they kept them overnight till they rang up to the Yalata Mission and talked to Barry Lindner – Pastor T....., told him that we got some family group here, a mother, father and a daughter and son. We are bringing them to Yalata. And ..... and Barry Lindner told the people, ‘There’s some other family groups back in Maralinga, the soldiers have got them in their sight. They are bringing them tomorrow’, the next day. When they brought them, she knew that there was the family there, she ran to one of the uncles, to all of the families, and the soldiers and the men at Yalata Community. Mission, knew that this lady and the family were family group from the Yalata people and they had a big cry. They cried that she came – – –.

She was the last person that came through that bomb. Because the soldiers, the soldiers, the British soldiers, ..... the soldiers said, ‘If you people don’t
know this family group we’ll take them back and shoot them.’ When they was told like that, that’s what he said. But when she got to Yalata she knew the people and she went to her family, that was her family. Her uncles and the cousins, they were happy to see her. Because she had two kids of her own. And this is the lady that was the last survivor that came through.

That’s Edie?

Mima Smart (interpreting): She came through the bomb, when the bomb was tested she came through, because she was the last one, last people.

And then she had a lot of sickness – – –.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes, she had a lot. Her kids, her children. That was Mabel’s sister.

Yes. Her story’s in Survival.

Mima Smart (interpreting): And she was the niece to Mabel’s father.

Oh, right. Thank you for showing us that, it’s really handy[?].

Mima Smart (interpreting): And her daughter and son had sickness from that bomb, because they already [?camped there?].

Yes, there was a lot of sickness in her family, wasn’t there?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Only two left. (language) She got only her daughter, young daughter and her young son left out of the four.

Her daughter and her son?

Mima Smart (interpreting): And that’s Sarah Milpuddie and Roger Milpuddie, left. But they were born in Yalata.

Thank you. It’s been a very good session. Thank you very much for sharing so much. It’s a hard story to tell, isn’t it, it’s such a sad story.

[unidentified female speaker] So what we doing tomorrow? Story again, or finish?

..... stories ..... (conversation, break in recording) This is continuing now with Mima Smart ..... translating and Pansy Woods telling her story. (indecipherable speech) So, Pansy, you were born – where were you – – –?
Mima Smart (interpreting): (apparently translates largely from notes: speech is frequently accompanied by the sound of turning pages) Pansy Woods was born at Forrest[?], this side of Cook, on the railway line. On the airport.

Do you know about the year when Pansy was born?

Mima Smart (interpreting): What year? She wouldn’t know. She would be a baby and she wouldn’t know the date or the year, the date of birth.

That was [?in the Department?].

Mima Smart (interpreting): What she would have been like. Must have been like in 1940s or something, 1940s or ’30s. ..... ..... ..... ..... And she lived there with her family, her parents. Then years passed, my parents went to Kalgoorlie and I was with them. I was a little girl. We went by train. We stayed for a long time in Kalgoorlie. Years later, some of my family group came from Ooldea Mission. I felt happy, I look happy to see them. They were strangers to me till then my parents introduced me to them, and what to call them.

Then later, in the weeks later, my parents and the family group from Ooldea Mission, we went up the train and came to Sanders[?]. Then later she took me, my parents took me to Cundeelee Mission, where the other people that was living there, which they moved away from Ooldea, and their family took them to Cundeelee Mission, so that’s where I met up with my other family, my mother’s family.

Then I met Alice Cox and ...... ......, another family group. I was looking forward which way the next trip would head. I was getting excited. I wanted to go with them, if they left Cundeelee. Then I was crying, asking my parents, ‘I want to go with my families here, to Ooldea Mission.’ I heard about the place when my parents told me, I would like to see that place.

Then we got the train from Sanders to Ooldea Mission. We was all together. I was happy to see my other families. The next day my parents told me that Ooldea was to close down. And it didn’t take that long for me to stay and went to the homes there. My parents were supposed to put me in a home but it didn’t get long. I was there for two days, I went in a home. And the
next day or two days later, that things was closed; and it didn’t take that long
for her to learn. It made me upset. I was crying, because Pansy said, ‘Why
didn’t we come this way? We should have went further up.’ (telephone rings,
break in recording)

We’re just starting a new section with Pansy Woods because we were interrupted
by a phone call. So what about Pansy’s father? Pansy’s mother’s name was
Jeannie Wright? She ..... .....  Pansy .....  

Mima Smart (interpreting): ..... ..... ..... and she looked like her, too.

And she liked clean clothes.

Mima Smart (interpreting): My parents told me that Ooldea was to close down
and I was crying.

Yes, Pansy was crying.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Because people didn’t know where they were
supposed to be going. Then she was told that some missionaries were coming
to take the people to Ooldea Tank. (language) They camped out at Ooldea
Tank. And there were six or five trucks were taking the people to Ooldea
Tank.

So when you got to Ooldea Tank, how long did you stay there? For a long time?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Ooldea Tank, she came and she stayed there for a
long time. A few years later she met up with Micky Woods, her partner.

Was he an Ooldea man?

Mima Smart (interpreting): (language, unclear whether the question is answered)
Them two lived together for a long time. Then she had one daughter, first
daughter.

Where were you living then?

Mima Smart (interpreting): She was at Ooldea Tank.

Still at Ooldea Tank.
Mima Smart (interpreting): With other family group. There was a lot of people that camped everywhere. They lived there where there’s water, [?meet/meat?] where they can hunt, ..... ..... where they can gather.

So when did you move to Yalata? Did you move to Yalata?

Mima Smart (interpreting): No, she stayed at Ooldea Tank and they moved to Yalata. She went to Yalata by horse and cart. Someone came and picked her up. Two men came with horse and cart and took them to Yalata.

How many children did you have then, Pansy?

[Pansy Woods]: Four. Three boys, one girl.

Mima Smart (interpreting): She had three boys –

Three boys and a girl.

Mima Smart (interpreting): – one girl. They stayed with her for couple of years. (language) Then Micky and Pansy travelled on the West Coast to work, Micky have to work on a farm, stump-picking. Near Nunjikompita, Haslam, Smoky Bay. And later, in the future, they came to ..... and worked near Nundroo, and they worked at Penong, Woodsale[?].

..... ..... ..... finish because this card’s nearly finished now. So is there something else you want to say to wrap up, or have you got more – – –.

Mima Smart (interpreting): No, that’s it. Penong and Nundroo, and then went back to Yalata, and ever since they stayed in Yalata till they shifted to Oak Valley. ’Flu in Middleyard. She went to Middleyard, there was people, ’flu, big ’flu. Then she came back to Yalata, went hunting for wombat, kangaroo, rabbit, ..... and then later in the year they seen the bomb, smoke of the bomb.

Right. Well, thank you – – –.

END OF DISK 2: DISK 3

This is an interview with the Maralinga ladies and their names are Alice Cox, Yvonne Edwards, Margaret May, Mabel Queama, Marjorie Sandimar and Mima Smart and Pansy Woods. Also in the interview are ..... May and Dora Queama, Jan ..... and David Mattingley. The interview is taking place at ..... ..... on the 29th September 2006. Interviewer is Christobel Mattingley. (break in recording)
You just say something back to me so that I can see that it’s recording correctly. Now I’m going to be talking with Alice Cox this afternoon, and that was just Pansy Woods who was speaking then. Now, Alice, would you like to say something, just to tell us – you’re going to be telling us about your childhood, aren’t you?

[unidentified female]: We’ve just got to wait for a translator, Christobel.

And, Margaret, are you going to be telling us about your childhood today? Can you say so, could you just say, ‘Yes, I am.’

Margaret May: Yes, I do.

Good, thank you. Now, our translator today is going to be – (language), Lyn, are you going to be translating, or is it going to be Dora?

[unidentified female]: Mima.

Mima, you are?

[unidentified female]: Dora’s busy painting.

Good, all right. And, Mabel, ..... ..... ..... ..... (women converse in language)

[unidentified female]: Mima’s just saying, ‘You’ve got to talk slowly.’ It might be good today if we just do a little bit, one – – –. (break in recording, women speak in language)

We’ve just paused until everybody was assembled, and now we’re going to continue. Alice Cox is speaking to Mima, who will translate.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Alice Cox as a young girl ..... ..... she was living with her father and mother at Coffin Hill, a place called ..... At Coffin Hill. As a little girl, my parents had another child and he was my brother. But I was still a child.

You don’t have to whisper, it’s good if you speak out loud.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Can you pause it? (break in recording)

We had a pause while Mima and Alice discussed some family relationships. Now we’re resuming.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Alice’s grandparents[?] was at Coffin Hill. And before Alice was born she had a brother and a sister. They were the eldest of her family. And the weeks passed, Alice was born later. So in the family
there were her brother, her sister, her parents, and Alice was the baby. They lived in Coffin Hill with their other families. Went hunting and Alice was carried by her mother in the back. They walked in the desert looking for and hunting for food, gathering wild fruit, making wild dampers, and hunting. When her parents, her father would get kangaroos, spear kangaroos, they would cook it in the fire, in hot ashes. When Alice was too small to eat, she was just looking at her families eating away. Then she tried to nibble some of the meat, to get a taste of it, and some fruit, wild fruit.

Then one day, in the summer season, Alice was growing up. She was eight or seven years old, she wanted to know what was about, about living in the desert. And she walked with her parents, with some other kids that was camping around, to look for some wild berries. Some of the kids spotted a wild fig near big rocks, on the hills. Then she would go and gather some, to have the taste of it. The wild fig’s name was elli, like the wild figs at ..... She would gather all the wild berries, figs, and bring it back to the camp, where her parents were and other families were. Her and the kids would share it round with other families. They would have a good taste of it. And Alice would tell her parents where they went and where they collected from, and which directions the wild berries were. And Alice and the kids would say, ‘It’s not far from the camp. It’s just like it’s ten miles or five miles out from the camp.’

Alice would walk around with her parents and grandmothers and grandfathers, around that camp area, where they would find water in the rock holes, in the mountains. If they found some, Alice’s parents would go and tell the other families where the water is. Because it was really hot and summer day, that they would like to stay near the rock hole where they could get some cold drinks, water. And later in the weeks or months the family would get up and move to another place, where there is water, more food, more meat, where they can hunt and get wild berries.

Alice would sit with her other family group and her parents and listen to them chattering about ceremonies and their cultural stories, and learning and getting some information from grandparents and her family. Alice then grew
up to be a young teenager. She was a young and nice young woman, young
girl. Her father passed away and then her parents and other families were sad.
They had a sorrow camp which they had in spinifex. Then the elder of the
tribe said to them, ‘We need to take Alice to another place,’ because she knew
that her father wasn’t there to take her and guide her wherever he would like
to go.

In the past years, Alice and her mother and her sister, they travelled ..... in
south of Coffin Hill. They were travelling through the desert, gathering food,
playing[?] along on the road, having a rest, and they came to this other
camping area, in another place. They came to a place called Wantu[?], where
their other families were. They came and Alice was introduced to other girls
that was in the camp. It was another place which people from all ..... ..... other
communities would come and meet up with their families, and they would all
decide which direction they would like to go for their long journey. Alice then
was told that her mother was going to take her more towards the South, where
she was told that the other families were, towards Ooldea.

Alice was walking through this big water snake, way in front of them, and
they was walking in lines, in groups, as families, and one of the ladies in that
group was nearly bitten or nearly was grabbed into the water. It was a big
snake, water serpent snake. *Wanampi*. And the old people were saying that it
is dangerous for kids to hang around there, that this serpent snake would
become angry, might hurt the children. Then Alice was really frightened, she
didn’t want to hang around that area where the other girls were leading her.
Then later, the next day, they kept on travelling. And then at night they
camped at a place called Murka[?]. They camped there two days. And that
place, Murka, place where they camped, there was nobody camped there. So
they were the first or the second family group that went and camped. And
then, later in the days, some people came from Ooldea to the place where
Alice was camping with her parents. (language) Then two days later Alice
and her families went with the other group, still travelling south, they came to
a place called Puntja[?], where there was nobody there, no-one was living
there. Only there was a rock hole with water. And they camped there for a
couple of days, weeks.

And weeks passed. Alice was growing up, too, growing, and she was
travelling with her family towards Ooldea, walking through a big lake. They
was going round, through Maralinga, when there was no bitumen, no police,
no soldiers was there.

Alice Cox: Nothing, empty.

Mima Smart (interpreting): They walked through. Through Maralinga.

Alice Cox: Nobody there.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Through to Ooldea. Ooldea Mission. They came to
hills and ..... spinifex bushes, big grass, they burnt them to give them a signal,
the people at Ooldea would know that more visitors coming from up north.
And Alice would ask, ‘Why are you smoking, why are you making fire and
smoking?’ And her parents would say, ‘We are making fire to give them, the
people at Ooldea Mission, to see there are some visitors coming through to
Ooldea, coming to Ooldea.’ And Alice was thirsty for water and when the
people at Ooldea Mission seen the smoke they filled a bucket of water, they
would take it and meat them. They took ..... and bucket of water and cups for
them and they met up with Alice and her family. When they met up they was
crying, they were happy to see them, and then later in the evening Alice and
her family was led by the people from Ooldea Mission into the camp. The
evening came and they took them to the campsite to be introduced and be
introduced to ..... families, to all the people at camp.

That’s a lovely story, Alice, thank you very much.

Mima Smart (interpreting): And at Ooldea Mission, while they were at Ooldea
Mission, Alice and the family was given clothes and blankets and food. Harry
Green gave them all the clothes and blankets — — —.

Was she nikiti [naked] before then?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes, she was nikiti when she came through. (Alice
laughs) Fire stick, travelling with fire sticks and grass skirt.
They brought their fire stick to Ooldea.

Mima Smart (interpreting): The fire was their life saver, to make fire on the way, coming. And that one there, this childhood story, match up from Ooldea and that she was telling. That other story from yesterday’s.

[unidentified female]: So this story come first?

Mima Smart (interpreting): The first one of childhood would come first.

Do you need a pause now? (break in recording)

[unidentified female]: Three times ..... ......, wasn’t it?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Yes, like moving back and forth.

[unidentified female]: Three times?

Mima Smart (interpreting): Three times, four times.

Let’s get this down, if you don’t mind. Okay. Now, we’ve had a pause and discussion about the movement between Ooldea Tank and Middleyard. We’ve gone back to Margaret May’s story and Mima’s now going to tell the movements of Margaret May and her family between Ooldea Tank, Yalata and Middleyard, before the Maralinga explosion. Thank you, Mima.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Margaret and her family was then moved from Ooldea Tank to Yalata. And they stayed a couple of nights and was told there were people at Middleyard, and then her family, or the missionaries, took them to Middleyard and there she seen everybody. There was a big camp and everybody was camping everywhere, and in the middle there was an underground tank which had rainwater. People were carrying their water in the bucket and the bucket was carried on their head and ..... on their heads while the bucket of water stayed still, while they were walking to their camp. And Margaret would help her parents. If she would have a billycan she would help her parents take some water to the camp.

While staying at Middleyard Margaret then went to Yalata. And in Yalata, that’s where she seen the smoke. And they thought it was a ......, that big smoke, it was a buyu[?], poison buyu.

Okay. ..... ...... ..... ...... ..... bit of a story about seeing the bomb in Maralinga. (break in recording)
Mima Smart (interpreting): One day all came back to Yalata, they seen the bomb, smoke.

We’re doing a slight correction here. So, Mima, what’s the correction now?

[unidentified female]: Sorry, you couldn’t see it at Yalata, ..... .....? Ooldea. (language)

Mima Smart (interpreting): You couldn’t see the bomb. But later, when you was in Yalata, you seen the bomb. They would shift the people but didn’t let them know what’s going to happen and when they was going to test the bomb, what they really waited for, south wind to come. And south wind blew that way – pou! – and smoke went that way, like north-west. But didn’t ..... ..... But in the later in the years and years and years past they didn’t know, they thought it was safe for them to walk and hunt and travel. When the wind blew they didn’t know the way, direction it was coming through with the wind and the dust. (break in recording)

--- knew when she was getting older that – her story was given yesterday.

Yes, that’s right. But I’ll just put that bit in now.

Mima Smart (interpreting): On the Ooldea Mission, on the Ooldea Mission story, through ..... go interstate[?] and then went back to Ooldea Tank. She finished a young lady, you know, and she wouldn’t know ..... of story. I think that’s all she can remember, only when she was a little girl. But when she grew up she is [at] Ooldea Tank, and from there, Ooldea Tank, Yalata, round about, Middleyard, all that. She was in Koonibba, growing up, and then she met up with Herbert – – –. Old Yalata, first Yalata. (somebody yawns, break in recording)

--- bones, absolutely agonising.

Mima Smart (interpreting): Screaming, and you can’t hear the words.

And I can’t hear what the point of the tape is. Now, we’re continuing and this time Mima’s going to tell her story, and we’re now at 24:30.
Mima Smart: I’m Mima Smart of Yalata. I was born in Penong on 1st of the first, 1956. My parents lived around north of Penong, by the rock hole. There were a lot of people who lived there. My father worked with his boss for stump picking. And as I was growing from my childhood I decided to know, want to know, what’s the world around me. When I was about five or six my mother then decided, and my father, to move back to Yalata. We travelled by mail truck and the mail truck would come from Streaky Bay and Ceduna through to Penong to Yalata. It would bring some mail for the staff, missionaries, and food for the people and for the people of Yalata Community. Later in the years my mum would take me to the pre-school and there I would meet some kids, other kids. It made me feel happy and excited. I was amazed when there was a lot of kids around, playing with all the toys, and it made me feel like I wanted to be coming to school all the time.

Later in the years past, I grew up to do my study in the first primary school. That’s when I was ten to eleven years old. I done my study in the school with the other, bigger kids. Then my father decided to go back to Western Australia to meet with his other family group, a place called Cundeelee Mission. And I would travel with him and my parents by train. The mission truck from Yalata would take people to Ooldea Siding, we camped there for the night and early in the morning (child calls out) some people would catch the train. Some people would catch the train.

Sorry, Mima, could we just go back over that bit because of the interruption? I’ve got the mission truck taking you Ooldea Siding – – –.

Mima Smart: And we would camp for the night. The next day, early in the morning, the train comes from Adelaide, then we’ll jump the train to Western Australia. It was exciting on the train, looking through the window, out the window, we can see a lot of animals. And the breeze coming through, looking through the sceneries of the Nullarbor Plain. Walking around inside, it was really rough and frightening.

Inside the train?
Mima Smart: Inside the train. Then the old people would sleep and rest and enjoy the ride of the train. The next day we jumped off at Sanders[?], the train pulled up. When we got out the train there was a mission truck from Cundeelee and Brian, Uncle Brian, would wait for us, Brian Enfield[?]. Took all the people off the train, took us into Cundeelee. We stayed not far from the camp, when there was the elders of the tribe would come and met us. And then, at the camp, they would take us to our different family group, where our family would be happy to see them. Then I walked and played with our families, with the other kids, and I was in my thirteen years old. I went to school with my other families. There I met my other families in the mission, which they didn’t camp at the camp but they was all around Cundeelee Mission. I went to church with the old people; sang some nice lovely songs, which I learnt from the old ladies.

And there were some people who wanted to go back to Yalata, and my father’s family travelled back with us, back to Yalata by train.

Then later in the years past, I was sixteen years old, that’s when I had my first child.

Boy? Girl?

Mima Smart: Boy. Then the Welfare said I was too young to look after my child. I have to pass it on to some family group. So I decided, gave the child to my first cousin, to May Day and Mervyn[?] Day, to look after the child for me.

How did you feel about that, Mima?

Mima Smart: I felt really strong but didn’t want to refuse to look after it by myself. Because it was under the law that my parents would like to look after it for me, but they kept on travelling around.

Later in the years past, I worked in the school doing cleaning, washing school uniforms –

This was at Yalata?

Mima Smart: Yalata, in Yalata. Then one day one of the mission workers wanted me to work in the Welfare, washing little kids and giving some Fourex[?]. I work for one or two years and then decided to work with Mrs Linda[?] in the
artefacts. In the shop they had artefacts and I worked with her for a couple of
years. I worked from another job to another job, trying to get the one that I
really like.

Then years passed, I went and worked at TAFE for one year study, in
Yalata. When the twelve months was over, I decided to work in the school.
Two or three years later I liked it and every ..... me to be the number one
AEW, to teach and help the children and the staff, what was wrong, what was
right.

Then years later I was into it. And my job was an AEU, Aboriginal
Education Worker, and I liked that job. I worked for years and years, nearly
twenty or nineteen years, over. Then I had another three kids – one boy and
two girls. They were going to school, grew up.

**One boy and two girls.**

Mima Smart: And later in the years, when the kids grew up, they wanted to do
their job, look for a job.

**When your children grew up, you looked for another job or they looked for a job?**

Mima Smart: They looked for a job. But I was still working in the school. And
when the CDB[?] came through to Yalata for people to work and earn money,
everybody worked in Yalata.

**Was that the TB?**

Mima Smart: CDB, the money, you know – – –. And later in the years past my
partner, Colin ...... got sick and I have to look after him. I had too much things
to worry, too much things to do. Then I decided I have to leave for a term or
two, till I really wanted to come back to school when I’m ready. I just let it go
for my son to run the school with the principal and look after the school and
get the kids to come to school. And today my son and my daughter are at
Yalata School, working.

**Thank you. Well, I always thought, Mima, when I went into Aboriginal schools, it
was the AEWs that ran the school, really, they were the ones who kept it going –**

Mima Smart: Yes, kept it going.
– who understood the children and their parents and the community and that made the school what it was. I always thought the AEWs were the most important people and the school couldn’t have really functioned properly without them. I’m sure you made …… at Yalata.

Mima Smart: Two thousand and six this year, isn’t it? Last year I was nominated to be the Person of the Year for the NAIDOC Week. Education Department. Reconciliation. Appointed me to be the Person of the Year for 2006.

For 2006? I didn’t know that, congratulations. Terrific.

Mima Smart: And the second trophy I got was from the Education Department, from the Aboriginal Education Unit, AEU, for a number of reasons, that I’ve been working as an AEW, a union member.

Were you there when the ….. were there? That was after. That was when I was at Yalata. Twice ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. …..

Mima Smart: And at the end I would like to say I am proud to be what I am, that I had to achieve for my family and for the community.

You certainly have done that.

Mima Smart: And now I’m here to support my elders, my grandparents and my cousins, helping them make the book of Maralinga story.

You’re now supporting ….. ….. …..

Mima Smart: Supporting, yes. I’m here supporting my families about Maralinga story, to be published for our children’s children. So in the future they can know, can be told where their family really comes from.

Yes, very important, isn’t it? And now you’re the Chairperson of the Yalata Community.

Mima Smart: And now I’m, for this year, the community accountant selected me to be the Community Chairperson of Yalata. This is my first time and I’m feeling good to do something – – –.

You’ve made a very good job of doing all the translating and the interpreting for everyone, so I’m sure you do a great job at the Council, too.

Mima Smart: Yeah.
Thanks, Mima, that’s terrific. Thank you so much.

END OF DISK 3: DISK 4

Now, I’ll just introduce you on the card. Now I’m speaking with Mabel Queama, Mabel, and you would like to tell your story about your sister, Edie. Would you mind saying that again? And Dora, Mabel’s daughter, and you’ll be interpreting for your mother, won’t you?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Yes.

So, Mabel, Edie Milpuddie was your sister, wasn’t she? Would you like to tell Dora the story, and then Dora – if you just tell it a few sentences at a time, and then Dora can translate those and you can go on to the next little part of the story. So can you start telling about Edie now? (language, pause) So what did your mother say then, Dora?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Edie came to Yalata and Mabel’s father returned [to] Yalata.

So where had he been before she came to Yalata? She and her family had been walking, hadn’t they? Can you tell that part of the story, please, Mabel?

Mabel Queama: (language) – – – husband ..... ..... ..... husband, when I used to have a husband ..... whitefella been there, camping. Whole family only had a mother, son and daughter.

And your husband?

Mabel Queama: Husband been gone – – –. (language)

So husband’s been – Dora, what did your mother say about Edie’s husband?

Dora Queama (interpreting): They made fire and camped, seen the smoke, and her husband told them to stay at the camp, ‘I’ll go and check if there’s any water.’ Went to the camp and where soldiers are and knocked on the door.

Right. And what happened then?

Dora Queama (interpreting): And soldiers picked him up and took him to show where the others are.

What happened then?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Then the soldiers picked them others and went to village, to the Maralinga Village.
The mother and her children.

Dora Queama (interpreting): The mother and the children.

And what happened when they got to Maralinga Village?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Told them to have shower.

Had they ever seen a shower before?

Dora Queama (interpreting): I don’t know, must be the other son knows — — —.

Did they know about soap? (pause) And in the bathroom, there was a mirror, wasn’t there? Tell us about the mirror, Mabel.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Edie thought it was somebody else but it was her standing [in front of] the mirror.

So did she get a fright when she found that out?

Dora Queama (interpreting): She was [stuck in/looking in?] another room. Mirror moving and she’s moving.

So did someone come and explain it to her? (pause) And what happened to their dogs?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Dogs must be standing outside, waiting for owner.

And did the soldiers shoot the dogs because they were radioactive?

Dora Queama (interpreting): They took them to Yalata, dogs and the people, all.

Was it the first time Edie and her family had ever travelled in a vehicle?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Walking.

They’d always been walking.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Walking from Ernabella to Maralinga.

From Ernabella? That was a long way. So they’d probably never seen a vehicle before. And then, when did they start getting sick?

Dora Queama (interpreting): After a few years later, when they was getting older.

What happened, what sort of sicknesses did they have?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Asthma.
Anything else? Didn’t Edie have a stillborn child after that? Wasn’t one of her babies stillborn?

Dora Queama (interpreting): She became pregnant ..... ..... ..... 

And didn’t some of the children have disabilities or deformities after they were born? Didn’t they have troubles with their legs or something? Do you remember that part of it? (long conversation in language)

Dora Queama (interpreting): She lost the baby when he was newborn.

And so when did her husband pass on?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Then she had another boy.

Was he healthy and strong?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Yes. Big, strong boy. Five or six years old.

What happened when he was five or six?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Must be ’flu.

Mabel Queama: Or maybe same thing that happened to ..... ..... ..... 

Dora Queama (interpreting): Must be off that radiation thing. Or ’flu, I don’t know.

And did he die then?

Dora Queama (interpreting): He didn’t live long.

Mabel Queama: No, he was three years old, I think. Four years old.

And what about the others?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Had two twins, girl and a boy. They both passed away from ’flu. And then had Sarah.

Mabel Queama: After that, after twins.

Jan Willsmore: After that – with the twins, going back to the twins, it was maybe with the ’flu or maybe with the other sickness.

And Sarah’s still alive, isn’t she?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Yes.
How old is she now?
Dora Queama (interpreting): She’s had four kids.

Woman with four kids now. And what about her other son, Roger?
Jan Willsmore: We can actually talk a bit more about Sarah first.

What can you tell me about Sarah, Mabel?
Dora Queama (interpreting): Sarah was ..... .....  
Jan Willsmore: What about the epilepsy? Sarah, you know, she used to have fits when she was a little girl all the time? When she was a little girl she used to always have fits, fall over and everything.

Was this ..... ..... ..... .....?
Mabel Queama: She want baby, you know, that time? (language)
Jan Willsmore: Like when she was a teenager and everything she used to have epilepsy. When we were there she used to have epilepsy all the time. Like she’d sit on a fence or something and she’d just fall off because she’d have a seizure.
Mabel Queama: You was there when she had a little girl.
Jan Willsmore: No. That must have been later, I think.
Dora Queama (interpreting): ..... ..... ..... born in ’77.
Jan Willsmore: ’Seventy-seven?

Sarah was born in ’77?
Jan Willsmore: No. No, they’re talking about a daughter that she had. Oh, maybe we were there. We’ll have to ask Kumina[?] after.

That was her first child, was it, born in 1977?
Mabel Queama: First baby, girl, ..... .....  

That was her first baby?
Jan Willsmore: She was cranky. Like intellectually disabled, sort of. You want that in the story? No.
So what about Roger? That was her last child.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Last one.

Was he well?

Mabel Queama: He’s strong.

He would be about thirty-five or thirty-six now, would he?

Dora Queama (interpreting): I think so.

And is he still at Yalata? Does he have children?

Jan Willsmore: Can you remember if Sarah’s got a bad heart as well, or not? Oh, Hilary?, right.

Who’s Hilary?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Sarah’s sister’s daughter. Her sister came from the smoking.

So Hilary is Sarah’s niece?

Mabel Queama: Yes.

Jan Willsmore: Rosie’s daughter?

Rosie’s daughter. We haven’t got anything about Rosie. Was Rosie – – –?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Rosie came through the smoke, with Edie.

Rosie came through the smoke with Edie.

Jan Willsmore: Did you talk about Gutsy[?] as well? Was he in that family?

(conversation in language) Do you want to tell that to Christobel?

(conversation in language)

I didn’t get that, what – – –?

Jan Willsmore: The order of the story is a bit mixed up. The first part of the story should be at the end. I think the chronological order’s a little bit out, sort of thing.

Yes, it often is in oral history. So what’s the first part then, really? First going through the smoke? Coming through the smoke’s the first part? All the way from Ernabella?
Dora Queama (interpreting):  Came from Ernabella. (conversation in language)

Jan Willsmore:   I didn’t hear the first part of the story, I wasn’t here then, so I didn’t hear.  But talk about Ernabella first?  Was the part about Ernabella there?

No, not at first, it was a little bit further on.

Jan Willsmore:   Well, Ernabella needs to come first, the Ernabella part’s first.

That would be the smoke — — —.

Jan Willsmore:   Yeah, when Mabel came through on foot, from Ernabella.  ..... Edie.  So that’s the first part.  And what’s next, after that?

That was when they made a fire in the camp and husband told them to stay at the camp and he’d go to see if there was any water.  He went to the camp where the soldiers were and knocked on the door.  Soldiers picked him up and took him to show where the others were.  The soldiers picked up the mother and children and took them to Maralinga with them.  They told them to have a shower.  They’d never seen a shower before, didn’t know about soap.  Edie thought it was someone else in the mirror, talking and moving same as she was.  No-one explained it to her.  Dogs outside waiting for their owners.  They took the dogs and people to Yalata.  Edie and family had always been walking from Ernabella to Maralinga.  They started getting sick a few years after, they were getting older:  asthma.  Edie became pregnant at Yalata, the baby was stillborn, lost the baby when it was born.  She had another boy, Alfie[?], that died when he was three or four with radiation sickness or ’flu.  Then she had twins, girl and boy, and they both passed away with colds, ’flu or radiation.  Then she had Sarah, who’s still alive, a woman now with four kids.  Sarah had fits, epilepsy, seizures.

Jan Willsmore:  When she was young, that was, because she doesn’t have them any more.

When she was a teenager she had them, when the Willsmores were there.  Doesn’t have them any more.  Sarah’s daughter was born in 1977.  Her first baby was cranky.

Jan Willsmore:   But that was from other causes, something else; the women were saying that wasn’t to do with radiation or anything like that.

Then Roger, her last child, was strong.  He’s about thirty-five or thirty-six now.  Doesn’t have children.  Sarah’s sister’s daughter, Hilary, Sarah’s niece, Rosie’s daughter, Rosie came through the smoke with Edie.  Now, what about Hilary?  Is there something wrong with Hilary or her family?

Dora Queama (interpreting):  Edie ..... her son, when soldiers got him.
Edie told her son – – –?

Dora Queama (interpreting): When soldiers ...... ......, they didn’t speak English or can’t understand about everything, ‘Jesus loves me’.

Sorry, I didn’t get all of that. Edie told her son, when the soldiers came – – –?

Jan Willsmore: Yeah, we’re going back again now.

I can see that. What did Edie tell her son?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Edie and her husband don’t know.

Something about ‘Jesus loves me’.

Dora Queama (interpreting): And that older son sing that song, ‘Jesus loves me’.

Oh, right, yes. Well, that’s in Survival, isn’t it?

Dora Queama (interpreting): It’s in that book. (laughter, whispered conversation)

When they went to that village, you know?

Jan Willsmore: This part’s in the middle of the story.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Mr Dougall’s brother.

Mr McDougall?

Jan Willsmore: His brother.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Brother. Knows how to speak Pitjantjatjara and told that young boy, told him to sing a song, ‘Jesus loves me’.

Jan Willsmore: He taught him, taught him the song?

Dora Queama (interpreting): It was recorded on the tape.

Jan Willsmore: So they told him to sing ‘Jesus loves me’ and they recorded it on a little tape recorder. And then they played it back to him and he listened to it. Did he give them the cassette and they put it in their – – –? Oh, Andrew Collett’s[?] got it. Andrew Collett, who’s Edie’s solicitor, has got that tape.

Good. I’ll be speaking to him, he’s going to help me with this book, some of the other parts of it, so I’ll ask him about it. Thanks, Mabel, that’s good. I knew him when I was doing the big book, Survival in our own land.

Dora Queama (interpreting): He bought painting from me.
Did he?

Dora Queama (interpreting): I don’t know the story, but that painting, he put it in the office.

That’s what I was just thinking, it would be lovely for him to have one of your paintings in his office and he’s got one already.

Jan Willsmore: He has. One of Mabel’s, too.

One of yours, too?

Mabel Queama: Yes.

Dora Queama (interpreting): You seen that painting?

I’ve seen the one that was in the Town Hall and it’s now in the Festival Centre.

Jan Willsmore: Yes, that’s a different one.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Mine’s in Andrew Collett’s office.

Mabel Queama: Mine, too.

I’ll be seeing them soon, then, because I’ll be going to see Andrew soon.

Jan Willsmore: I saw yours, the Maralinga one. Christobel’s seen yours, too, the Maralinga one.

Yes, that’s wonderful. I’d like to have that one in the book but maybe you can do one something like it for the book, rather than us trying to get permissions from the Festival Centre and all that.

Jan Willsmore: It’s still somewhere in Adelaide.

It’s in the Festival Centre, isn’t it, that one?

Jan Willsmore: The last time I saw it it was in the – – –. Yes, Yvonne and – – –.

Mabel Queama: [Take it home?]

Jan Willsmore: Christobel, there’s one other boy we haven’t talked about: Randolph[?]. He’s passed away now.

He was Rosie’s son, was he?

Jan Willsmore: Can you talk about Rosie’s children, in order?
Dora Queama (interpreting): She had him first.

He was the oldest?

Dora Queama (interpreting): He was the oldest.

And what happened to him, is he still alive?

Jan Willsmore: No.

How old was he when he passed on?

Jan Willsmore: A teenager when he passed away. He died from petrol sniffing. He died in Adelaide, through petrol sniffing; but he was born with issues as well.

What was he born with?

Jan Willsmore: Health issues.

So that was Randolph. Who was next of Rosie’s children?

Jan Willsmore: The ladies are just saying with Randolph he was born with –

Was that the club foot one?

Jan Willsmore: – yeah, he was what we would call a club foot, but the ladies say ginakalikali[?].

I’ll have to get a note – gina, that’s a foot, isn’t it. Kalikali.

Mabel Queama: Kinakali.

Yes, ‘bent’.

Jan Willsmore: And he had a couple of operations on his foot to try and –

Dora Queama (interpreting): Straighten it up.

Jan Willsmore: – straighten it. And was his heart all right or not?

Were they both turned, or was it only one?

Jan Willsmore: Just the one.

One, or two?

Mabel Queama: One.
Jan Willsmore: No, Christobel’s asking was it both his feet? Yes, one.

Dora Queama (interpreting): One. And Rosie had daughter.

Soon after Randolph, was it?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Yeah.

What was her name? Was she healthy?

Mabel Queama: Clara.

Clara. Was she well or was she sick? Passed away early? How old was she?

Dora Queama (interpreting): From cold and the ’flu.

Mabel Queama: Three years old, I think. She been walking – – –.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Two or three.

Mabel Queama: Two or three. (door slams, laughter)

That was Clara; who was the next one?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Hilary.

Oh, then Hilary. And she had asthma?

Jan Willsmore: No, she’s got nothing. Oh, asthma.

Dora Queama (interpreting): She had heart problem, [had an operation] when she was a baby.

Jan Willsmore: She had an operation when she was a baby. She’s got a scar to show for it.

Might have been a hole in the heart or something. She’s still alive?

Mabel Queama: Yeah, she works in the clinic now. (exclamation)

So who’s after Hilary?

Mabel Queama: Roger. Another Roger.

Another Roger?

Mabel Queama: Nephew.

Edie’s nephew – – –?
Mabel Queama: No, grandson.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Grandson.

Mabel Queama: Edie’s grandson.

So is he well?

Dora Queama (interpreting): He’s well. He’s big and strong.

He’s a big man?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Strong, healthy.

Big man. Well, that’s good. Somebody’s healthy. Good that someone is. So that’s Randolph, Clara, Hilary and Roger were all Rosie’s children. Did she have any others?

Mabel Queama: No, only four.

She had four. Anybody else at Yalata that you can tell me about who had health problems, who was sick or who is sick now? Anybody else at Yalata or Oak Valley who has sickness now because of the bomb?

Mabel Queama: I have problems.

You have? You have breathing problems. What about Dora, how’s she?

Mabel Queama: She’s strong, strong girl.

Oh, good. And ..... and ..... they strong?

Mabel Queama: Two boys, she got four. Two boys, two girls.

Is that one of the boys .....?


Oh, that’s right, I heard her talking about Joshua. And they both well?

Mabel Queama: Yes.

Mabel has breathing problems.

Jan Willsmore: So straight after she’d been in that place, the smoke place, she started coughing and coughing a lot at night, and she went and saw the sister and the sister said she had asthma.

This is Rosie?
Jan Willsmore: Mabel. Straight after you’d been there, yes.

Straight after the – – –?

Jan Willsmore: Straight after she’d been in the smoke place.

Well, then, you were a little girl then.

Jan Willsmore: She had five children then, at that stage.

Mabel?

Jan Willsmore: Yeah.

Dora Queama (interpreting): They were working ..... ..... now and then. ..... ..... took them. Maggie Brady and Keith ..... 

Geoff Willsmore: She worked with anthropologist Maggie Brady and Kingsley[?].

Jan Willsmore: They were taking them around.

Geoff Willsmore: That was in the early ’80s.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Or showed them where the problem was.

Geoff Willsmore: Showed them all the sights.

Kingsley?

Geoff Willsmore: Kingsley and Maggie Brady.

Mabel Queama: Oh, she even gave me big – – –. (laughs)

Dora Queama (interpreting): Big shoes and wear the masks and everything.

Jan Willsmore: So she gave them big shoes to wear and masks, face masks. Just big shoes? Yes, and gas masks. They tied them up behind.

So is there anyone else that you can tell about who had problems with their health?

Geoff Willsmore: A lot of people.

Jan Willsmore: Ian [?Mabelson/Mabel’s son?]. Oh, so maybe that wasn’t from the bomb, might not have been from the bomb. Smoking too much, yes. He’s got asthma. Lots of people. A lot of people finished now. Dora used to be a health worker and she said a lot of people have got asthma problems.
A sad story, isn’t it? Very sad story. So what about the bush medicine, did you use any bush medicine when you were sick with all these illnesses? Did you try some of the bush remedies? Were there still people there who made the bush medicine?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Bush medicine only started, people been showing them from ..... land.

So your people weren’t using the bush medicine then?

Mabel Queama: Now, we’re using it now.

Oh, now, because your AP Lands have – – –?

Dora Queama (interpreting): They’ve got old people round there. (discussion in language)


..... didn’t sound right.

Jan Willsmore: So they’ve been teaching them and showing them how to do, put it in the saucepan. Put it on the fire, put the saucepan on the fire, put in butter.

Butter? What would you have used before butter?


But instead of butter, would have used fat from the – – –? Many of the animals didn’t have much fat, did they?

Jan Willsmore: So with the rock they ground the leaves and put that in. So if they had a headache they’d put it across –––. Not used to put in water. Butter. And put a little bit of water. (child shouts and slams door, break in recording)

What about – we were talking about the craft. Can you tell me a bit about the craft? We’ve resumed with twelve minutes, thirteen seconds left. Talk about craft. You were telling me, Mabel, you do some carving?

Mabel Queama: (speaks in language)

Karli[?]? And little animals?

Mabel Queama: Yes.

And snakes? And the lovely ......, the ......
Dora Queama (interpreting): Yes.

And you use mulga wood? Quandong wood. And you use things like tomahawks now and chisels?

Mabel Queama: Rasp.

Rasp, yes. Oh, and we were talking about the sandpaper, weren’t we?

Mabel Queama: Make them shiny.

To make them shiny, make them smooth. And people don’t do the weaving or the spinning of the string any more? Spin the hair, spin the hair and the wool? Did your mother do that?

Mabel Queama: Granny.

Granny did it. But she didn’t teach you? That’s a shame, isn’t it. So the ladies used to roll up a piece of clothing to put on their head, did they, when they didn’t have the — —? But what about the thing they made to put around the baby’s neck? Do they still do that?

Mabel Queama: Yeah.

They still make those little hair – sort of like medallions, in a way, aren’t they? So they still make those.

Dora Queama: How many more minutes? Five minutes.

Have your children got them, Dora, those little things that were made when they were babies to put around their necks? Do they, they still have them? Did you make them, Mabel? (quiet speech)

Geoff Willsmore: Who’s got them?

Mabel Queama: Stephanie’s got them.

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, Stephanie’s got them.

Dora Queama (interpreting): She got it for the kids — —.

Mabel Queama: For Brenton.

Dora Queama (interpreting): Oh! Her sister made them for Brenton. Her sister, Edie, made them for her son, Brenton.

Mabel Queama: No, for my son.

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, for your son. For her grandson.
So what are they made out of now? Still made out of hair?

Mabel Queama: No, but she finished now. Sister, she always helping them.

So ..... many more of them to the children coming on. Still made out of hair that they’ve spun against their knee.

Mabel Queama: (demonstrates) Knee, this way.

Yes, up their thigh.

(whisper) ’Night-night.

Mabel Queama: They sleeping and it make me sleepy too.

Does that take a very long time to do that?

Geoff Willsmore: It’s easy. Half an hour. Oh, you’ve made a round one, out of wool, for Patria[?]. She made a round one out of wool for Patria?

Mabel Queama: Patria and N.....

Yes, when I was up in New Guinea with the people there, they were still making lovely string by rolling it on their legs, making it out of grass or palm fronds that they’d split very fine and making them into string. Might be nice if somebody could do a little painting of one of those, Dora, or a painting of a child with one of these on. Would that be a good thing to do?

Dora Queama (interpreting): Nearly finished it.

Do a picture of the one that Mabel made for Patria?

Mabel Queama: ..... making them.

Yes, it would be lovely. And did you do one for Nikita[?]? You did, too? (somebody shows an unfinished painting) Oh, wow.

Geoff Willsmore: That’s going to be good.

Dora’s now showing a painting she’s done of the bomb exploding over Maralinga. She’s been working on this canvas for several days. Keeps taking different images and this is the latest one. First one was ..... the railway line and the bitumen road. Then we had an all-black sky, and then we had a blue sky; now we’ve got the red earth and grey smoke and the blue sky with the misty cloud in it and some wiltjas down in the foreground on the red earth. That’s lovely, Dora.

Geoff Willsmore: Mabel, your sister who passed away, she had three kids?

Mabel Queama: Four.
Geoff Willsmore: Four kids.

Mabel Queama: Five.

Geoff Willsmore: Five.

Mabel Queama: Seven, really.

Geoff Willsmore: Seven?

**Geoff is now talking to Mabel, asking about Mabel’s sister’s family.**

Geoff Willsmore: Who was the first one?

Mabel Queama: Henry.


Mabel Queama: And there’s three in the middle.

Geoff Willsmore: Three in the middle died. Why did the first two die, why did Henry and those other two? Heart problems.

Mabel Queama: They been travelling – – –. (speaks in language)

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, from after the bomb time? Okay.

Mabel Queama: She straight away was ..... ..... One week, might be, and still that smoke ..... 

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, one week. Oh, right. So they died straight away.

Mabel Queama: No, ..... ..... ..... ..... boy and girl.

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, the oldest one – still had a boy and girl. But she died young.

Mabel Queama: Asthma.


Mabel Queama: Mm, maybe.

Geoff Willsmore: Maybe the bomb, you don’t know.

Mabel Queama: Or maybe having problem ..... 

Geoff Willsmore: From the ’flu, or – – –?
Mabel Queama: Smoke, I think, maybe.

Geoff Willsmore: Smoking?

Mabel Queama: Not smoking; walking, you know? Just having a ..... 

Geoff Willsmore: Rosie had a bad heart, didn’t she? And then, out of Rosie’s children – Randolph, Hilary and another girl –

Mabel Queama: Before Hilary.

Geoff Willsmore: Oh, there’s a girl before Hilary. Okay, so there are three children. The baby ones died and Randolph’s died from petrol sniffing –

Mabel Queama: And his sister.

Geoff Willsmore: – and his sister.

Mabel Queama: Hilary, and Roger. Two left.

Geoff Willsmore: Roger’s got two children left? No; but Rosie’s got two left. Oh, Roger, called him Roger: same name as his uncle. Okay. Sounds like we’ve run out of tape.

Yes, we are. We’ve got two minutes of tape left.

Geoff Willsmore: So out of all of Rosie’s children, Randolph had a club foot and the other girl had a bad heart, didn’t she? ‘Flu, had the ‘flu. Don’t know why she died. It was around the ‘flu time. Randolph’s sister. So there was a lot of illness in that family after the bomb, wasn’t there. It’s very sad. Four died. I’m not sure, we need to clarify.

Yes, I think we need to go through this.

Geoff Willsmore: But we need to go through one by one and look at all the lines, draw some lines down, and straight lines show this one and then who the mummy and daddy were and then which child died, so we actually draw a normal family history line, draw a tree, like a big tree, for a family.

Mabel Queama: Family tree.

Geoff Willsmore: Have you got a family tree? We might draw a family tree. Write it down on paper.
That would be very good.

Geoff Willsmore: I think I might start drawing it over lunch, all right?

Yes, thank you very much. We’ll end the recording. Thank you very much, Mabel, and thank Dora too, won’t you. Thank you.

Geoff Willsmore: I’ll start drawing this tree.

END OF INTERVIEW.