



Chad Morgan: Oral History
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Interviewee: Chad Morgan
Interviewer: Rob Stevenson
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Legend: Chad Morgan (CM)
Rob Stevenson (RS)

RS: Hello, my name's Rob Stevenson and it's Friday 30 November 2018. On behalf of the State Library of Queensland, I'm very honoured to be interviewing today, a good friend of mine, a musical icon, living legend, The Sheik of Scrubby Creek, Mr Chad Morgan. Welcome Chad.

CM: Thanks very much Rob and I'll give you the cheque later.

RS: No worries, thank you Chad. Now, we've known each other for a very long time, we've been saying, and you've been in this business for...

CM: Sixty-six years.

RS: ... sixty-six years. How did it come to be? How did you start in this business?

CM: Well it started off as a dare. I was always singing, just for - get it right - for fun and when I was doing my national service in the Air Force, I used to sing round the - they had boxing bouts and happened one of the officers heard me in the barracks and asked me what I was singing in between bouts. So, they all got to know me and there was Australia's Amateur Hour coming to Brisbane and they were doing auditions.

One of the other fellows in my unit, he came in to squaddie one day that he was going in for an audition. Course he wasn't very well liked by most people at the time. He was a good singer too, I've got to give him credit there. They said oh you're not going to let him get away - you're better than him, you have a go and I said no, no, no, no. They were like, we dare you. Well [you must] never dare me to do anything. So, I went in and I got on and he didn't so - it just snowballed from there.

RS: So how did you get - did you get a recording contract early in the career or did that take a while to come about?

CM: No. The first - I got into the semi-finals of the [unclear] on Amateur Hour and I had to go to Sydney for that, for the semi-final. When I did the show down there, somebody from the record company heard me and they offered to record me. Course it was a very funny thing because, all my life that was my one ambition, was to record for Regal Zonophone. That was a green and red label and that was the country label and had nothing else on it. So, when Terry Dear the bloke who was running Amateur Hour at the time. He said to me, he said EMI has offered to record you and I said, no I'm not interested. He said, why not? They're the biggest company in the world. I said, it doesn't matter, I said, I want to be on Regal Zonophone. He said but they are Regal Zonophone. So, it snowballed.

So, everybody then said, oh it's a one-day wonder, you'll never hear about him again. That was 66 years ago. They're all dead now but I'm still going.

RS: What was the first song you played?

CM: The Sheik of Scrubby Creek.

RS: That was the Sheik of Scrubby Creek, which you're still playing.

CM: Which I'm still playing, and I open the show with. I have ever since I started. If I don't sing it somebody wants it, so I get in first.

RS: Your family, did they support you when you first started in this business?

CM: Oh yeah, they all have supported me. Mum used to play a banjo mandolin and my grandmother who reared me, she played button accordion and violin and fiddle or whatever you like to call it. They used to play for dancers and that sort of thing and - but no they very always supportive yes.

RS: So, there's music in the family?

CM: Yeah, old grandfather Morgan on the other side, he used to play a little concertina. He used to - people would be - he'd have them looking round like - he'd walk in and he'd be in the room. He'd be playing it behind his back and nobody - they'd be looking to see where the music was coming from and nobody could see it.

RS: Which leads me to one of my favourite songs that you've written - that you've written in more recently in your career was the Ballad of Bill and Eva. Now I think that's a wonderful song...

CM: Yeah, I'm very pleased with it myself but it took me 48 years to write...

RS: I was just about to say. So, can you tell us a little bit about the history of that song because that song actually talks about your family and talks...

CM: Yes, that's it, yes. As I said I was reared by my grandparents, but grandfather was half-caste and granny was white. People back then, they couldn't understand how this white woman was married to a half-caste man. But Grandfather Hopkins, his father was a - he was an English man and his mother was a full blood Aborigine from the Wakka Wakka tribe which is a very big tribe in the South [Burnett] and all round. Granny Hopkins - well Anderson was her maiden name - her father was a Scots man but he was an opal miner out in Central Queensland and in those days was very - well they're still dangerous, but it was extra dangerous then because if people thought you had something, they'd hit you over the head and throw you down the mineshaft and that went on all the time.

Anyway, he disappeared, I don't know whether he shot off whether he's down the mineshaft. Nobody ever knows. But granny was white, and her two sisters and her brother were all white. When the old Scots man died or disappeared, after a while granny had these four little kids and she married another half-caste man. This man she married, his father was an Irish man and his mother was a full blooded one from the [Kalili] tribe which was the same tribe as granny. So, she - granny's mother married this Tom [Conlan] and course when they - two dark people with a white kid, the government in those days, they just came along and took them away. Granny was about six I think she said at the time and she ended up working her guts out for people, but she never saw her mother again until she was nearly 22. So, it's a very sad story but it was quite common in those days.

Course, one lot was white, and the other lot was half-caste but even though Bill was half-caste, his father was still there and grandfather, he had a - I don't know what the [unclear] - what it was, but grandfather had a very, very good education. They educated him, and grandfather never spoke - he spoke just like a white man and had all the - full education and everything and his writing was old English style. It was funny to see his handwriting. It's just like you see in the Edwardian scripts. That was his ordinary handwriting.

So, I tried, and I tried, and I tried to write the song because it had to be so right because the story had to be told properly. Then I woke up about two o'clock one morning and this tune buzzing round in my head and a couple of words, but I took no notice, I just went back to sleep. Same thing happened again the next morning. So, I - it was still buzzing around there so I grabbed a pen and a piece of paper and I started writing words down that was coming to me and went back to sleep. That happened for about a week and one night I couldn't find anything to write on and I had a phantom

comic that I'd been reading, and I scribbled on the back of it. One of the verses is on the back of it but it ended up it all came together just the way I wanted it to.

I think it still would have been - nobody would have known about it much but when this iKandy productions wanted to do a documentary on me and when they were doing the research, they came out here and they asked me had I written anything, and I said, oh the only thing I've written is this straight song. They was, can we hear it? So, I sang it to them and they said, oh, oh, we're going to put - we're going to work the documentary around that, so they took - went out to [unclear] into where granny was born, and they took me out there and did it. They sort of - they played on that but otherwise nobody would probably know about it.

RS: Now you still finish your concerts with it?

CM: Yeah, I still finish it and it amazes you just how many people come up and say I can relate to that. My mother or my grandmother or my grandfather or something and you'll see people crying. It's funny. Because it's probably because it's so true and so many people can relate to it and if they haven't, they've heard about something, the same thing happening.

RS: Also, you've over the years - I didn't know this about you until a few years ago - that you're an electronics whizz as well. You make guitars and...

CM: Yeah, I'll show you one of the guitars. I'll get one out, this has finished. It's been a hobby of mine since I was about 12, I think. At first, I got these hobby magazines and I'd see these little squiggly signs in it, but I got that way that I could understand them, and I taught myself to read them all. Then I started building and I've been building - well the first show we ever took out in 1958, the - I built the amps for that...

RS: Wow.

CM: ... and the PA amplifier and then a lot of my records - there was the fiddle, electrified fiddle, electric bass and electric guitar and three amps we used for that, I built them. It was funny when I took them in because back in those days, there was a lot of hum in the - and we took them in and as soon as the engineer had heard that I'd built them he said, oh I don't know about this, it'll be full of hum, I don't whether we'll be able to use it or not. He said I'll have a listen. He said, bloody hell, he said, there's less hum in this than some of the bloody commercial stuff we're using. So, I was pleased about that.

RS: Oh, some of the nicest guitar sounds I've heard was the ones that you've been playing of yours. When you first started playing, it was all originals and you just - where did you get your ideas from?

CM: Just everything that happens, things that have either happened to me or happened to somebody I knew or things I'd imagined was going to happen to me or things I imagined I'd like to do.

RS: So not every song's biographical?

CM: No.

RS: They're not all true?

CM: Some of them are wishful thinking.

RS: Have you got any favourite moments or favourite songs? I know you've got hundreds and hundreds of songs, but do you have your favourites?

CM: Probably the song I enjoy singing the most is The Fatal Wedding. Because I was on tour with Slim Dusty in 1956 and I had - the late and great Gordon Parson's, that made me write the Pub with No Beer, and we were sharing a caravan. Of course, we'd never ever - there was never any grog on the show - well I didn't drink much then in those days either but after the - Gordon and I had a bottle of scotch and we hid it underneath the bed in the caravan. After the show we'd have one glass and then we'd go to - we'd have a yarn and we'd go to bed.

Well this night, I think we must have had more than one because it was about two o'clock in the morning, we were still yacking away and Gordon said to me, he said Chad, he said, have you ever noticed all the real old country songs, the real old, they were all as morbid, very sad - like, There's a Bridle Hanging On The Wall, and She Was Only Seven When She Was Called To Heaven, the Blind Boy and His Dog and There Was Only Five Bullets In My Old Six Shooter, 'cos I had to say goodbye to Mona and - but they were all really sad old songs. He said let's write one and knock the lot of them off so we - ended up we wrote the Fatal Wedding. Then there was a - we had to work out who was going to record it and Gordon said oh, it'll suit you better than me. So, he said you better record it so I...

RS: And you've done some co-writing with a few - you - John Williamson did you?

CM: No. I did a duet with John.

RS: A duet. I knew you'd sang with him, yeah.

CM: Yeah. No, I co-wrote a lot of songs with a bloke from Townsville. He was an accountant bloke named John Ashe. This was funny, one of his songs - because he'd send me down a tape with music because I can't read music. I was - had to record and I needed this song that he sent down and he never sent the music and I didn't know what I was

going to do. I needed the song to finish the album off or to finish the record session off. So, I said, well, there's not one thing to do so I sat, and I wrote a tune for it myself. Though I never claimed that I'd written it, I just put it on and - but that's still, it's called There's No Night Out In The Jail. John's - I heard his tune later and it didn't suit the song in my opinion but probably because I wrote the other one and I like it better but...

RS: And you started touring in the early days. How old were you when you first started to do tours?

CM: I first started - the first show I did, we did - I did a fortnight with Slim in 1955...

RS: Fifty-five.

CM: ... so I would have been 22. That went so well. Slim got that's good [houses], he was - well Joy asked me would I...

RS: [Join again]?

CM: ... consider going out with them again so, I went with them again and that was a very interesting tour that one. Slim and I had never had a cross word in our lives but Slim had a very, very fiery temper. He was a mad Irish man and him and Joy who - one time we were driving along, and I'll never forget, they were having an argument about something and Slim goes, I'll kill the bloody lot of us and he headed straight for a tree. I grabbed the wheel and swung him round and said, you ever try that again. It was frightening but - and then people all just say that I left Slim because I had a row with Joy. Well that's not - I don't know where this rumour got around that Joy and I were bitter enemies and that. Well Joy and I have hardly ever had a cross word. We had a couple of little words but nothing, you know, just ordinary things that you do on the road.

But with Slim it was - what - it was so queer how I came to leave him. We were doing a show and my job was to look after the microphone. I had to wrap it and it was an old crystal mic. That's what they had in those days and this [unclear] an old microphone, I had to wrap it up in this cloth, put it in the glove box of the car. So, this night, I rolled it up, put it in the glovebox of the car and - but what I didn't know, Anne their daughter she was only about four then and she'd lost her little bunny rag for her doll. So, she knew that it was there, so she took and wrapped him.

Slim came and opened it and there's the microphone just sitting, and he accused me of not wrapping it up and he called me a liar. Well that's - that was it. So that's it, finished. So, I get back to the - we were staying in the caravan at my sister's place in Tewantin and we got back, and Joy came out and tried to get me to stay. I said no, I said,

nobody calls me a liar and that was it but - she said will you stay on until we get - I said yeah that's no worries. So, they had a caravan thing at grandmother's yard at Howard for a week while we did shows all around the area. But Slim and I, we never - there was no cross words after that, but they tried to get me to stay but once somebody calls me a liar, well that's it. Had I been in the wrong, yeah, but I wasn't, and I wasn't going to cop that from anybody, I don't care who it was.

But Slim and I were - over the years, we've been good mates. We've never had another word after that, but I've toured with him since then. The last - I think that last show I ever did with him was probably the show I've enjoyed more than any show in the whole of my career.

RS: Ah which was my next question.

CM: Yeah that was the Opera House. EMI sat on the - they had their recording out there and they recorded but Slim was doing an album there, so they released, and they sat on mine. They wouldn't release it because Slim had done an album. Until - I've got to give him credit - Nick Erby used to play it on 2TM. He got hold of the tapes somehow and then he said to EMI, he said, if you don't release that, he said, I'm going to just get Chad's permission to release it myself. So next thing it's out, but I got four encores that night. I got standing ovation and four encores but that's not - there's just a little bit that they cut it off. That's what record companies are like. That's why I don't use them anymore.

I've seen so many great artists or artists with great potential and get a recording contract. Next thing they've got to do what the recording company says, and you don't hear of them in a couple of years' time. They've - and of course, they change and make them sing things that don't suit them, they're not their style or thing. I've seen it happen so many times that they've ruined so many great careers that should be - artists that should still be going. So, I've got no respect for recording companies.

RS: So, you've always been independent since...

CM: Not always no. I was EMI for over 20 years.

RS: Twenty years, yeah.

CM: Yeah, but they're - in those days, they weren't greedy like they are today and their - the A&R men, they were good friends, I got on real well with them especially their last one. We used to drink together. We'd do the - we'd have a - do a recording session, then we'd go across to the pub opposite the studio and we'd have a few drinks there and - but once he died, the - I've got a record, a CD, in my car that I wouldn't play it to

anybody. It was Slim - he loved his fish and he had a - he used to go over to Tasmania and he had a good mate over there and he was - they were talking on the phone and had recorded this - they were talking about recording studios, about EMI. Well the things that Slim said about, oh, I wouldn't play it to anyone [unclear] but everything he said was true. But anyway, change that subject, I don't want to be [rushing] people down.

RS: Do you remember how many albums you've actually released in your life, in your career?

CM: No idea.

RS: Yeah. I love some of the titles you've had. Tell us about some of the titles that you've had on - of your...

CM: Oh, Sheilas, Drongos, Dills and Other Geezers.

RS: Pretty much sums up the content of what the album will be about.

CM: Yeah.

RS: So, what was your first job? You weren't always in music, you [unclear]...

CM: My first job was...

RS: Yeah before music.

CM: Yeah, I was 14 and I was working on a dairy farm. I'd start at seven in the morning and I'd finish at seven at night, seven days a week and I had one Sunday off every month, and 30 shillings a week.

RS: Thirty shillings a week.

CM: Yeah that's \$3 a week. So, I saved up and bought myself a gold watch and then my grandfather died, and we moved to Scrubby Creek or Duckinwilla and then - the school was - I'd left school, but they were going to close the school down, so they got me enrolled. I didn't - all I did was tell [unclear] with the teacher most of the day but - to keep the school open, I went back to school again. Then when some more people came, and they got some more children, I left straight away. Then I was 15, I went using a cross cut saw cutting timber for the coal mines all around Howard there. I used to cut what they call crowns and crops and things for - stabilising underground. Then I went working in a sawmill. Number two benchman in a sawmill and cutting logs, mill timber and on a cross cut saw, and fencing.

Then when I was 16, I went to Childers cutting cane and then one season, I worked in a sugar mill and then when the season wasn't on, I used to work on the farms ploughing and planting and that, driving tractors and things like that. Then, I went - after, when I was - well I was nearly 19 when they drafted me into the Air Force and then when that was over, I went working on a cattle station out from a place called St Lawrence out from Rockhampton. I worked there for a good while and then I came home for Christmas and I had the motorbike accident and of course that put me hospital for 14 months.

RS: What happened with the motorbike accident?

CM: Oh, I was coming home Christmas Eve, going back out to Scrubby Creek. I had kid's Christmas presents in the saddle bags and there was a big winding bend and I came flying around the bend. I would usually take it at 60 miles per hour because it was a good easy bend to take and I'm just going - nearly around it or half way around it and this bloody car came flying down on the wrong side of the road with his lights on high beam and there was only one way I could go and that was into the scrub. I was heading straight for this big tree and I - something just made me let the front brake go and I come in sideways and cut right down [the side of the bike].

If I'd have kept on hanging onto the brakes, I'd have head on into the tree. I'd have been dead now. But funny the - when I came out of hospital, the house next door was - the local copper was in the house next door and we got to great mates, he used to like singing a little bit. We became very good mates and he said, come over to the station, I want to show you something. He showed me the report he'd written and at the bottom of the report he said, if this man survives, it will be a miracle.

But I used to give him hell the poor [mongrel]. I had a '35 Ford, my first [unclear] and I used to hoon in it something terrible and it was all - in front of the hotel on the corner, The Royal Hotel, there was all gravel on the road and the shaft caught [unclear] corner but it was [unclear]. I said I'll give you a lift back to the station Nick. I'm sorry and I hit this corner and I put it into a slide and I came around the corner on two wheels and Nick's down underneath - on the floor, he said, for god's sake, I've got to get out, if somebody sees me and you. It was a wild old age.

RS: Now I know that you've been married twice in your life.

CM: Yeah, I've been married four times really.

RS: Four times?

CM: Twice officially. Yeah but I've lived with one girl for five years and another one for 10 years.

RS: Okay, and you were one of 14 children, is that right?

CM: Yeah.

RS: And how many of your family are left now?

CM: Well I lost a brother about a month ago, but I don't know. I've got no idea. I think there's three girls gone and three boys. Yeah, so there'd be eight left.

RS: Where did you fit into those fourteen?

CM: I'm the top of the pecking order.

RS: You're on top. Top of the pecking order. Wow that's a big family.

CM: Yeah.

RS: So, when you started in music, that was - did you - were you writing songs when you were doing all the cane cutting and all the other jobs, you were still writing songs then?

CM: Yeah, but I was writing straight ordinary songs which nobody wants to hear. Then I started - there was a girl up there I fancied and so I decided I'd write a song for her, you see. Another straight song. So, I'm sitting down and I'm writing this song and I - what do I have to write her a love song for? I can get any Sheila I want, I'm the Sheik of Scrubby Creek so I - then I've ended up writing that.

RS: And that's when you wrote the Sheik of Scrubby Creek?

CM: Yeah.

RS: Wow.

CM: Then that was the first record I had out and on the other side of it was a song called You Can Have Your Women, I'll Stick To My Booze. When I was in the Air Force, I was going with a girl there and she wanted me to take her to the Air Force Ball. Of course, I can't - I can waltz and that's all I can do. I was too busy working to muck around dancing. So of course, I had the one dance with her and then after that I couldn't dance then and everybody's dancing with her and I'm just sitting there and I said to myself, bugger this, so I went back up to the barracks and I grabbed the guitar and I wrote, You Can Have Your Women, I'll Stick To My Booze.

RS: So, your first wife, you had a family with her. You had children with her?

CM: Yeah.

RS: How many children did you have?

CM: Three. Only ones that I know of that I've got.

RS: But you've got...

CM: Yeah. No, she was a very nice person, but she was...

RS: And how long were you guys married?

CM: Ten years.

RS: Ten years yeah.

CM: But it just got too much for her. She had a little bit of - she had a lot of trouble when she was a kid and she couldn't handle it, so - and the lifestyle that we had to live was just too much for her. I don't blame her for any of it.

RS: Yeah.

CM: I still think a lot of her.

RS: What was her name?

CM: Pam.

RS: Pam.

CM: Yeah no she was a beautiful - she was a good little singer too.

RS: Yeah?

CM: Yeah. I got her on to Amateur Hour. She sang on Amateur - yeah. When Chaddy was only a baby then.

RS: Okay. And how did you come to meet Joan, your second wife? Well she was your second wife I'm guessing?

CM: Fourth.

RS: She was the fourth?

CM: Yeah, she was the one I was with the longest, it was 34 year with her.

RS: Oh, I like - got a lot of time for Joan, she was beautiful.

CM: Well her and I, we just sort of - there was something there and we were just one.

RS: Where did you meet Joan?

CM: Funny story. I first met her when she was 11 and I was 12 but I never ever spoke to her. But I was going into town in a mailman's truck and it had to pull up at their farm to

get the cream cans and that and she came down to get the mail and she looked at me and I looked at her and we neither spoke, but she stuck in my mind all, you know. Then the next time when I met her, she's married to my cousin and she had a couple of little kids and they'd come to every show. In 1983 - I didn't know there was any trouble in the - and I'd never touched her or even thought anything, and it was the queerest thing. I had my birthday party and she was sitting there and I just kneeled down beside her and I grabbed hold of her hand and I kissed it and I said I don't know how - I don't know what made me say it - I said I don't know how and I don't know when and I don't know why but one of these days you and me are going to be together. I thought afterwards, what a stupid thing to say.

But next week, she arrived at my van with all her porch and everything. We'd never even kissed, never - but she told me later - she'd been trying to leave but she didn't know where to go or what to do and when I said that, it gave her her out. But I'd never - I thought I'd broken it up but apparently not. The marriage - apparently, he'd been playing up for years and he tried to bring women back to the house and - so I hadn't even kissed her, and she arrived down and that was it.

RS: Wow and together for. How long were you guys together?

CM: Thirty-four years.

RS: Thirty-four years.

CM: Yeah and in those 34 years, we spent one night apart and that's when I was in hospital having an operation. I had an overnight surgery and that's the only time that we weren't together for in 34 years.

RS: That's wonderful. She's a lovely lady. Now, you've also dabbled in the movie business.

CM: Oh yeah, I've had a lot of fun with that.

RS: Yeah now what was your first film?

CM: The first one was called Newsfront, about - around Australia rally back in '52 I think it was but all - I only just sang a song in that, that's all I did.

RS: And how did you come to do that?

CM: I don't know. Somebody just - agent just got onto me and - then the next one was Dimboola. How I came to get onto that - what's his name? Oh, I forget his name but the bloke who wrote, the play writer who wrote it - I didn't know it but - he was a great fan of mine and he wrote the part in it for me and he said I want him in - I've written the part for him and I want him.

RS: We still watch that [film now].

CM: Yeah and he wrote that part especially for me.

RS: Wow.

CM: ...and told them so they had to find me then and...

RS: And that looks pretty unscripted.

CM: It was. He said, just play it by ear. He said if you want to adlib, adlib, which is what I did. It made it more natural because I'm not an actor so if I did it just - the funny part, one part of that, was right in the middle of winter at Dimboola and it was freezing cold, was terrible. They had us - there was supposed to be a nude scene where they were swimming in the river all nude, but it was that bloody cold, they dipped their toe in it and that was enough. They had to - where I was sitting, I was supposed to be sitting in the caravan carrying on eating and something and there was supposed to blow flies all around and everywhere.

So, the University in Sydney bred this big box of blow flies for them and [brought] them out and they [let them] go in the van, they all went [makes noise]. As soon as they hit the cold air, they all dropped dead.

RS: They should have left that scene in.

CM: Yeah that was quite funny that was. The motorbike scene, there's the old Harley Davidson. The bloke had just finished restoring it and he didn't want to hire it to them. They're on to him and on to him and he said, well listen, on one condition, that I ride it and nobody else rides it. They said, oh, jeez, we wanted Chad Morgan to ride it. What did you say? They said, we wanted Chad - that's okay he said, Chad can ride it. So that was good. So, I rode round on the old motorbike.

I had trouble with the - change the gears because my leg was stiff so - when he found that out, he - not that the gear, the clutch, the gears - and he modified it, so I could hit the clutch properly with my foot. That was - I had a great - they were all terrific people. One of them took me under his wing, Max Cullen and he taught me a lot. He was sort of my partner in the movie part of it but apart from that, he gave me a lot of great advice and hints and taught me a hell of a lot. He was a good mate, Max was. I haven't seen him since then.

RS: Ah okay, and through your career, was there any - when did you decide to not go with a record company anymore and just stay independent because you didn't like the way things were going with the company or...

CM: After - I went back then in 1984 - I did a record for EMI and the cover was [unclear] [house] and they never advertised it. They more or less buried it, so I said, that's it. But what finished me really was that Sheilas, Drongos, Dills and Other Geezers, when that - when they brought that out on an LP, that was 1982 I think, and they flew me up from Melbourne up to Sydney. They spent \$80,000 on a video to go to all - every station in Australia. They only put it into one state for the first week and it went gold that first week and they pulled all the ads. Because Slim had a new one out at that time and his wasn't doing so good so they pulled it. I've never forgotten that. One state and it went gold the first week and they pulled the ads. Never showed them in any other state. What would it have sold if they'd have - in every state and kept the ads going?

But anyway, that's politics.

RS: Yeah exactly. Since then, you've had a lot of - in more recent years, you've had a lot of accolades...

CM: Oh, I've got - since I left mainstream, I've - and went on my own, I've got more than I ever got the whole of my career, and not looking for it either because I was - Joanie - I always said to Joanie, I said, love, what's the good of it - you can't eat a gold record, you can't eat a gold guitar. It's nice to have but it's something I don't sort of yearn for or look for. The same with, on posters, I don't give a damn whether I'm on the poster or not, as long as they pay me at the end of the show. Where I go on the show, I learn the [unclear].

One of my first professional jobs was in Brisbane in - just after I came off Amateur Hour and I did a fortnight in the old Theatre Royal - George Wallace was the comedian then. The old stage manager - there was two young comedians and they were fighting with each other who was going to go first, see. This old manager said to me, he said, Chad, he said, have a listen to those blokes, he said, they're fighting over who's going to go first and who's going last, who's going to be the big star. He said, there's no bloody big stars. He said, if you're good enough, you can go anywhere, first, last or in the middle, it doesn't matter where. I've never forgotten that, and I don't give a damn whether I go first or last or any of it, doesn't worry me. I've never forgotten that. If you hear good advice and take notice of it, it'll pay off. A lot of advice you don't take any notice of anyway, but you know when something makes sense.

RS: Yeah and most of your career, you've stayed solo, no backing band...

CM: No.

RS: ... no - just you and your guitar.

CM: Yeah well, I had one album I put out, but it was too far ahead of its time. I had sax and pianos and everything in it and it never sold because people just want to hear me.

RS: The stories.

CM: They don't want to hear the backing, they want to hear the story. So, I do like having a bass with me but no - so now I don't worry about a band, I just - now and again I'll put something in just with - some songs warrant a little bit of something there just to lift them but - and the beauty of it is, when I do it on stage, people say, oh you sound the same as you did on the record. The reason is because I am the same as I am on the record. You get somebody with a big production and they've echoes, and Christ knows what and choruses and everything and then they do it on stage, they sound - doesn't even sound like the song. Whereas I do it, it sounds like I do on the record.

RS: Your iconic look was always your little hat?

CM: Yeah.

RS: How did that come about? How did you find that hat or...

CM: Well that belonged to my brother-in-law. He had a garage and that used to be his work hat in the garage and I thought - I didn't have a decent hat to wear at the time. I had no bloody money. I had to borrow money to go down to Sydney to even do the show. So, I decided that I'd put some old rags on and then I wouldn't have to buy anything and that's what I did.

RS: You did that from your first show?

CM: Yeah and I used to have an old Army, tattered old Army coat and old trousers all torn to there and a pair of hobnailed boots and - but then it was too much trouble changing in dressing rooms, so I decided I'd keep the hat and that was it. All I had to do then was just put my hat on.

RS: And has it always been the same hat or have - hasn't it been stolen a few times or something like that?

CM: I've worn one out and I've had two stolen. One - I had one stolen in Tasmania and a fan of mine. He was - poor mongrel - he's dead now but he was one of the biggest fans you'd ever get and knocked my hat off at the [Burnie] show. I had the tent on the showgrounds and I'm going off my brain out back and somebody said I know who's got it. They said, his name was [Jarvis] but he called himself Chad. They said Chad Jarvis would have it. I said where does he live? So, they gave me his address. So, I went up and I knocked on the door with a double - with an automatic shotgun, brand new

automatic shotgun and I knocked on the door with the barrel of my shotgun. When he opened the door, I said where's my hat? Well, he shit himself the poor bastard. He got it. He said, I only got it because I love you man, oh no [le le le]. He said have you got something I can swap you? I said yeah, I said, that shirt. He had a brand-new beautiful shirt on. I had this ragged old thing and he said, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. He said, you didn't really have a bullet in that gun, did you? I said, no, [woom woom]. He nearly shit himself again.

But he was - every time I couldn't stop him, whenever he'd see me, he'd get down on his knees, grab my hand, kiss my hand. Wasn't an act, he just - poor bugger. He's dead now so I found that he - he wasn't a bad singer either.

RS: Yeah, and you're still writing?

CM: Still trying to yeah.

RS: Because when was the last - you've just released an album?

CM: Yeah, The Duckinwilla Stud is the last one I wrote.

RS: Yeah, and on Bill and Eva, you actually sang with your granddaughter...

CM: My granddaughter, yeah.

RS: So, you've had a few family - because I know in the last album that you did, your son sang a song.

CM: Yeah, I've got everybody on there.

RS: Yeah everybody.

CM: Yeah, my granddaughter singing by herself. My son singing, two sons singing and my daughter singing with me.

RS: That's great.

CM: The whole family...

RS: So, it's become a family affair.

CM: Yeah, that's why I called it Family and Friends.

RS: Yeah that's great. I suppose what was - it's been a long and amazing career, with down times and happy times and all that. You must have had some of the funniest moments in your career. What would be something that stand out for you?

CM: Oh, see that's hard, there's so many of them.

RS: Yeah there's so many. There'd be many.

CM: But some of the most poignant moments, if that's the right word. A friend of mine that I worked for - he had - owned a station when I was working at Theodore when I broke up with one of the many girlfriends, I decided I'd give her the [run]. I went up there and I had six months, seven months or eight months up working on the property there, driving a header and ploughing. His son was only a baby then.

He was about 40 something and he's got a big cotton farm up there now, but they had two helicopters. His son took one up and his father said don't take the single seater, take the two-seater and of course, being the son, he took the other one. A pin broke and it fell straight to the ground and killed him. He was only 42 I think he was.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, I heard about it, so they rang and told me, and they said, we don't expect - it's too far to come. I said, no I'll be there. So, I grabbed young Chad and the car, and we drove up and that night, the night before the funeral, I'd just gone to bed. It was about 11 o'clock and Arthur came in and he said, it's been killing me all night, he said, I've been wanting to ask you this and I haven't been able to, he said but I've got to. He said, will you say something at the funeral and sing a song? I couldn't say no, I said yes, it's right mate. Then I thought afterwards, what the hell, what am I going to sing? Hey, what am I going to sing?

So, get to the church and I'm on the front row with the parents and his wife and daughter. Everybody's crying and carrying on and - came my turn and I got up and I said a few words and then something just told me what to do. I said, when I was working up here, I said, he was only a baby, I said, and I was practising a song. I was going back to Sydney to - and I said and every time I'd sing this song that I was practising, he'd laugh his little head off, which was a lie but - and I sang The Farmyard Yodel. Everybody stopped crying and started laughing and the whole church was just laughing.

The Minister said to me at the - out at - where they were burying him, he said, Chad, he said, I've never seen anything like that in my life. He said, a whole church of people crying. He said, and you come out and they all walk out of the church laughing. He said I've never seen anything like it. But that made me feel so good. His two daughters. They were right in front of me crying their eyes and then they started smiling and then laughing and I thought Jesus I've done something right.

RS: That's great.

CM: It was such a wonderful feeling. That's one of the things I remember that I - great, made me feel good.

RS: Those are the magic moments.

CM: Yeah.

RS: You've done some - obviously done a lot of Australian TV shows in your time too. You would have done [unclear] shows.

CM: Yeah, I've just about all of them, I think. Out of all of the - the easiest radio interview I ever done was Bert Newton - the easiest TV show I ever done was Dave Allen.

RS: Really?

CM: He was magic. He was just magic. So easy going. But it was funny on the same show, we had a bloke, I'm sure he had cockroaches in his hair and he was walking about this high off [unclear]. Bob Dylan, high as a kite he was and his band. What's his name? Don - oh, it was with that, Don...

RS: Don Lane.

CM: Don Lane. They are both Jews and they were both brought up in the same street. Apparently, Dylan has something on Lane you see. Lane was - oh he was petrified, he thought that Dylan was going to hit him with it on the - on air but he didn't but oh - but well you couldn't - I couldn't say what Dylan was like because he was so high, I couldn't say whether he was a good bloke - but one of the nicest blokes I met there was great man Gene Pitney. Oh, he was a really nice - and the other one I liked there was Donald [Campbell's] wife or ex-wife. She's a French girl. She's a singer. I forget her name now. I've googled her and she's still going apparently. She's in her 70s. She was in the dressing room with me and she sat down beside me, and she said, they say that French men are good kissers, but I think Australian men would be better, would you like to try? Well, you don't dare me.

RS: No, that's what you said before, a dare.

CM: Yeah, but she was a really nice person, yeah but she wanted to see what it was like, yeah.

RS: That's great.

CM: Who else did I - oh, what's his name, Martin, he was good interview or to interview me and Ray Martin.

RS: Ray Martin, yes.

CM: And [Albert]. There was another English comedian, he was - ah he wasn't that much good. I forget his name, [Gerry] something. But there was so many of them, I can't

remember those - all back in the '50s, '60s. So much happens, so much water under the bridge.

RS: Then just a few years ago, the ABC steps in and says they want to do a documentary movie.

CM: Yeah.

RS: And they followed you round for how many...

CM: No that wasn't the ABC.

RS: That wasn't the ABC?

CM: No, that was iKandy Promotions.

RS: Oh okay.

CM: They leased that to the ABC.

RS: Leased it to the ABC.

CM: To the ABC and SVS. They were great. We became great friends - I'm still great friends with them and they ring me up every now and again. I ring them, and they come and see me wherever - no they became part of the family. They just travelled with us.

RS: Yeah and that just came - how did that come about? To do - I'm Not Dead Yet, it was called, wasn't it?

CM: Yeah. There was a bass player. I think he's playing bass for the Bushwackers at the moment. He was an amateur and he started off doing a [unclear] on me and he was friends with them because Steve, he used to be a bass player, a drummer rather. He drummed for - oh what's her name? Marcia Hines. He used to be her drummer. He also drummed at the Texas tavern for Nev Nicholls and Kevin King all the old - all my old mob. That's where they met.

After he'd done a fair bit of filming with me, he saw Steve, he said Steve, he said look, I'm going to see if you'll carry on. He says, it's got too big for me. He said, there's so much there that I can't handle it. Steve said to me later on, he said, we found out we nearly couldn't handle it. He said, there was so much there. That's why it took so long. They just kept going and going and going. Yeah funny how things happen.

RS: Mm-hm, it is. I think it would be really nice to finish off our little part of the day maybe with whatever song you would like to - we've got to get - we just happen to have a guitar.

CM: Yeah but that's one no good because I haven't got an amp for it. I'd have to get an acoustic. Grab the little [Martin], it's just there though. I'll let you hear that through the amp later.

RS: Yeah. That's one that you made.

CM: Yeah. [Unclear]. Oh no wait until you've finished filming yeah.

RS: Yeah because that was an amazing thing too. I didn't know until backstage - I think it was at [Kettering] that you brought out this guitar.

CM: Oh, that's right, I brought it over. Yeah, you've already seen it, you've heard it yeah.

RS: I tuned it for you.

CM: Yeah, what's his name played it didn't he?

RS: Dallas.

CM: Yeah Dallas played it, yeah. It had a little warp in the neck, I've straightened that out since then. It's a lot better now.

RS: You were never taught electronics or anything.

CM: No, no.

RS: You just had this knack.

CM: Just a hobby yeah.

RS: What made you think, oh I'm just going - because I don't wake up in a morning and go, I'm just going to build a guitar today but so did you just - but you just make a guitar.

CM: Yeah, I don't know. I decided I'd make a guitar.

RS: Yeah, as you do. I'm just going to wake up today and build a guitar. Did you - because back in - when you first built a guitar, there wouldn't have been internet or anything.

CM: No.

RS: Yeah, so you had no plans or anything?

CM: Yeah, I did. I sent away and got the plans. But that's a solid body so it's not as hard to build as an acoustic but yeah, I did get the plans - after I got - then I don't use the plans. I mean now I just put a guitar down and go. I just get the router and route the neck out and - but that - I do all the woodwork of that and the electronics but Chaddy does the finishing on it.

RS: Yeah okay and you never thought of getting him a company and having them as Chad Morgan guitars or anything like that?

CM: No. it's just a - just something for my own...

RS: Just something for your own self.

CM: I did sell one, but I didn't want to. But I'd built it for myself and somebody saw it and saw a photo of it and he said I want it. He's a collector and he wanted it. So [Ian] and [unclear]. So, he said how much do you want - put a price on it. Ian told him that I wouldn't buy it, but I won't tell you the price. But I put a very, very substantial amount on it so that he wouldn't - and he bought it.

Some picks here so I'll tune this up first so.

RS: I still remember on that - the documentary of you trying to do a show when...

[Guitar playing]

RS: ... on the back you've just got the other band.

CM: [I know Mongrel tune it up or]...

RS: Yeah.

[Guitar playing]

CM: That'll have to do it. No, she's right [old].

RS: Play some of the country, the jazz.

CM: That'll do me.

RS: Do you want your hat?

[Guitar playing]

CM: That's good enough for me.

RS: Good enough for you, would you like your hat?

CM: Yeah, we'll do the last one I wrote?

RS: Yeah.

CM: You can sing along with this one in the chorus. You too, you too. All you've got to do is a couple of words.

RS: Yeah.

CM: Here we go.

RS: Here we go.

[Sings song - The Duckinwilla Stud]

CM: Don't clap, just throw money.

RS: Just throw him money.

CM: [Unclear]. What do you think [unclear]?

RS: And this is your Sheik tone?

CM: Yeah.

RS: I don't even need to ask why you've called it that. Sheik of Scrubby Creek.

CM: Yeah. No, she plays good.

RS: No, I was just going to say and on behalf of the State Library of Queensland, and myself, it's been an honour to talk to you as always Chad, and I'd like to thank you for taking the time to spend with us and to share some of the stories of your life.

CM: Ah thank you very much Rob, it's nice to tell a few lies now and again.

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