

## The Story Project: Sunshine Coast Oral History Pilot Project

**Participants:** Joe Crane and Dorothy Crane  
**Facilitator:** Jen Barrkman  
**Date:** 21/06/2011  
**Place:** Eumundi, Queensland

**Title:** Joe Crane's life and travels.

### Summary:

Joe gives a brief overview of his life and shares stories of his overseas travels in the late 1950s. He talks of his early life in central Queensland and north Queensland and his first job in the railways.

He talks with humour about his adventures as a young man travelling with friends through Canada and the USA, from 1957 to 1960. Joe talks of meeting and marrying 'English lass' Dorothy and returning to Australia in 1963 where he worked at IBM in Brisbane for fifteen years.

He finishes with a summary of all the places in Queensland he and his family have lived and the places in Australia and overseas that they have visited together. Now Joe and Dorothy are retired and living on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland.

### Transcript Notes:

Joe Crane My name is Joe Crane and with my wife Dorothy we live in Wurtulla on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland. Today's date is Tuesday 21st June 2011. We are in Eumundi today making this recording as part of The Story Project's Sunshine Coast Pilot. We are going to talk about our travels. Dorothy, would you please start.

Dorothy Crane No better place to start than tell us about your birth.

Joe Crane I was born in Hughenden where my Father worked in the Railways. I have been told that I was brought home from the Hospital in a 'Gladstone' suitcase.

Dorothy Crane Where did you start school?

Joe Crane I started school in Mackay. I was always keen on fishing in the canal at the back of our home in Mackay. One day I was away a long time and my Mother was concerned so she phoned the Police as there was lots of quicksand at the end of the canal. A police sergeant arrived to where I was and with his big boot he gave me a kick in pants and loaded me into his ute and took me home.

Dorothy Crane Where did you live during the War?

Joe Crane My sister was suffering from asthma and Dad decided to move to a drier climate at Longreach. At this time Longreach was a centre for

the U.S. Flying Fortresses dropping bombs far up north. Their Aircrews were based at two hotels the white aircrews were at one hotel and the coloured at another.

Dorothy Crane Did your family do a long trip to your next home?

Joe Crane Yes, it was during the war and we went the longest way to Dalby in a darkened train. Dalby was a wheat growing area and I well remember the wheat was bagged, not in silos, being stacked maybe a 100 bags high. We climbed these stacks when no one was around.

Dorothy Crane What was your first job?

Joe Crane My first job was as a clerk in the Railways. Yes, I knew what were then Stations off by heart - Dalby, Warra, Brigalow, Chinchilla all the way to Cunnamulla.

Dorothy Crane Did you do your National Service?

Joe Crane Yes, I spent the required time at Wacol. After training in Sydney I was promoted to the rank as an Officer, a Lieutenant. It was awkward at first when walking down the main street having to let my girlfriends hand go so as to salute back other soldiers as was the custom.

Dorothy Crane What made you decide to go to Canada?

Joe Crane I had a bust up with my girlfriend and one day I met up with a friend and he told me he was off to Vancouver. He gave me the address in Sydney to write to and this I did. They replied very positively. Offering me a two berth cabin 354 and telling me to pay up. I paid up and left Toowoomba for Sydney by Pioneer Coach. I left Sydney on the sixth August 1957 the cost of thirty days on the calm blue Pacific was one hundred and seventy four pounds. (\$350) The 'Orion' left for Canada stopping at Auckland, Suva, Honolulu and Vancouver.

Dorothy Crane Did you have friends to go with?

Joe Crane No, however I met up with Blue and Jack, both from Bendigo. and have been close friends ever since. I shared the cabin with a Sydney fellow Frank Davies and had invited all his female office workers to come aboard and bring a bottle. I do not remember sailing under the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Dorothy Crane What are your memories of Auckland, Suva and Honolulu?

Joe Crane The Police were dressed like London Bobbies in New Zealand and we toured to the hot mud pools at Rotorua. A Fijian Band was on the dock in Fiji and the people of Fiji were tremendously friendly. We were told by the Ship's Officer not to hire bicycles and coloured shirts. This of course is what we did in Suva. Blue sat for a car driver's licence in Honolulu and failed. I think it was something to do with the cars being driven on the other side of the road in

America.

Dorothy Crane And about Vancouver?

Joe Crane I saw snow on Squaw Mountain in Vancouver, the first snow that I had seen. Although I could not get a clerical job I did get a job with Blue and Jack on the Car Ferry washing up the dishes. A very scenic trip each day from Vancouver to Seattle and return.

Dorothy Crane Did you get the train across the Rockies?

Joe Crane Great views across the Rockies in the train to Banff. Got the chair lift up to Mt Norquay in Banff. Very cold minus 16 deg. No rum available, beer only

Dorothy Crane Did you visit Calgary?

Joe Crane Continued by train to Calgary and saw lots of snow. Blue and I crossed the road waiting for Jack to come out the door and step onto the footpath. Being of heavy build we waited for him to slip over and that he did. Booked in for two at a Motel and slept four. The Mounties were called next morning and warned us that we would be locked up in the "Fort". We exited quickly.

Dorothy Crane Did you seek employment in Edmonton?

Joe Crane No employment available. As Christmas was coming up (1957) the three of us Blue, Jack and myself we got to selling teddy bears. After Christmas we advertised in the 'Edmonton Journal' for a car and driver to drive us to Mexico. Two Canadian's, Slim and Wally, showed up with a brand new Ford Meteor car. Off we went.

Dorothy Crane First stop in U.S.A. would be Salt Lake City?

Joe Crane We had crossed the US border with the two Canadian's laying on the car floor covered in a blanket. At the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. We were told that the organ there was built by an Australian Joseph Parker- We cheered and were soon detected.

Dorothy Crane Did you come across any Australians?

Joe Crane We crossed into Nevada and the first town was Elko. We saw a sign reading "Commercial Hotel and Casino". We stopped and met the Australian owners. We received free beer, coins and accommodation. Pancakes and maple syrup for breakfast.

Dorothy Crane Did you get to San Francisco?

Joe Crane Yes, we did a boat tour of San Francisco Harbour and enjoyed the view of the bridge, Alcatraz Island Prison, street cars and China Town.

Dorothy Crane Where next - Los Angeles.

Joe Crane Highways and high buildings was L.A.

Dorothy Crane On to Disneyland.

Joe Crane Yes, we travelled to Disneyland and bought a jumbo book of tickets for entry, it cost four dollars. Had a fantastic day.

Dorothy Crane Las Vegas.

Joe Crane Yes, and the first Club was the "Horse Shoe Club". Framed and guarded in the foyer was One Million Dollars in ten thousand dollar bills. Free drinks for the pokie players, and the machines paid well. Woke up next morning with a pocket full of dollar coins.

Dorothy Crane Sacramento.

Joe Crane Yes, and saw petrol being sold for twelve cents a gallon (three cents a litre).

Dorothy Crane Did you cross into Mexico?

Joe Crane Crossed the border at Nogales and was amazed at the availability of young females. Stopped in for drinks at a pub and the Street Musicians called in. We said yes, to there offer of music and then they asked for a hundred pesos. We said more music and then the Mexican Police arrived. Blue, Jack and I had our hands on the pub mud wall and with their guns out they demanded two hundred pesos. We soon paid the money.

Dorothy Crane Were you in Miami?

Joe Crane We crossed the desert to the East Coast. The car ran over a bolt on the road and got a hole in the petrol tank. Watched the petrol gauge move to empty fast and was lucky to get a lift in a horse and trailer with a coloured family. Much music. Enjoyed Miami for its beaches and people. Mainly Jewish. Went to Social Security and some how or other I secured a "Green Card". Too scared to use it to secure employment in the States.

Dorothy Crane Key West.

Joe Crane Went across many large bridges to Key West. Very expensive. Could view Cuba from here. Caught speeding by Police and we offered to pay fine on Monday. The police said OK but you will have to spend the weekend in the Watch House. We soon paid up.

Dorothy Crane Next New York.

Joe Crane Up to New York, Baltimore and Washington. In New York for St Patrick's Day and was surprised by the big percentage of coloured Irish people in the St Patrick's Day Parade. We got the lift for a dollar up to the hundred and second floor in The Empire State Building. Cars below looked like ants.

Dorothy Crane And after New York, Toronto.

Joe Crane After spending time at Niagara Falls we rented a flat in Toronto.

Saw advertisement for a clerk required at Insurance Company. The Advertisement stated "Religious lad required". I started work there on accounting machines. Saw another employee sitting in the desk in front of me and he had very red ears and in great pain. He had frost bite on his ears. At lunch time I went out and bought a pair of ear muffs. Sports in Toronto were mainly ten pin bowling and skiing. Toured Quebec, Montreal and Ottawa. I said goodbye to Blue and Jack as they stayed in Toronto.

Dorothy Crane Why did you go back to New York?

Joe Crane I looked at a map and saw how far Australia was and Europe was very close. I went back to New York to board "The Queen Elizabeth" for England. It took four days to get to Southampton and the Atlantic Ocean was very, very rough. Elizabeth Taylor and her husband Michael Wilding was also on board.

Dorothy Crane What did you do when you arrived in London?

Joe Crane I saw a computer job advertised at Mobil Oil Company. I went to IBM head office in Wigmore Street and a very nice person told me and showed me what computing equipment Mobil Oil had at their head office on the Embankment. Whilst working at Mobil I travelled to Ireland via Blackpool, Isle of Mann, and the Irish Sea to Dublin.

Dorothy Crane The Rome Olympic Games

Joe Crane I had purchased tickets to the Rome Olympic Games in 1960 and then I intended to go back to Australia. I cancelled the tickets and got married to English lass, Dorothy that I had met while working at Mobil Oil. Our first night out was with another couple and we watched the comedian Charlie Drake. We spent our honeymoon in Majorca. We bought our first house in Wimbledon.

Dorothy Crane Why did you go back to Australia?

Joe Crane In 1963 and after five years away I decided to take my family to Australia. Christmas in London in 1962 was very cold with lots of snow. We sailed on the "Oriana" in May 1963 through the Suez Canal, Aden, Bombay, Perth, Melbourne and on to Sydney and then by car to Brisbane. I had a job organised with Mobil Oil in Melbourne but took employment with IBM Brisbane on Computers. As Brisbane did not have many computers we had to go to Melbourne and we spent eleven months there before returning to Brisbane. Spent more time being education in Sydney. I left IBM in 1978 after fifteen years service.

Dorothy Crane What did you do after IBM?

Joe Crane Our son, Mark, wanted to be a motor mechanic so I took over a Service Station in Redcliffe. Whilst at the Service Station by using brake fluid on a competition scratch-it I won a cruise on the Orana to various Islands in the Pacific. One day at the Service Station we were robbed of eighteen thousand dollars. A while later the Oil Company insisted we trade for twenty four hours a day. We

decided to leave the Service Station for our safety.

- Dorothy Crane Places that we have lived in Queensland?
- Joe Crane We bought a house in Redcliffe, then a house on eight acres in Burpengary, then onto Mountain Creek and finally (we hope) Wurtulla. (The new owner was later arrested for growing certain banned plants on our old property at Burpengary.)
- Dorothy Crane Other places that we have visited?
- Joe Crane Melbourne, Adelaide, Cairns, Perth, Alice Springs, Darwin, Broome, Tasmania, North and South Islands of New Zealand and Norfolk Island. In 1995 we did a round the world trip visiting London, Ireland, many countries in Europe, United States and across to Canada. Whilst in London we did a flight on the "Concord". We are now retired and living on the Sunshine Coast. Our family of five children and their families live in Brisbane or on the Sunshine Coast.
- Dorothy Crane Hobbies
- Joe Crane I have also recorded this information in my "Green Book" with my collection of postcards which I have collected over the years. My wife Dorothy and I have searched intensely and have recorded all of our family histories. We are both keen gardeners and enjoy boating, fishing and mud crabbing on our canal at Wurtulla.

### **Tags**

Travel stories 1950's  
Memories  
Young man travelling  
Travelling USA, 1950's  
Travelling Canada, 1950's  
IBM employee Brisbane  
Sunshine Coast, Queensland

### **Picture**

Joe Crane (left) and Dorothy Crane (right)