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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

Interview with Margaret Kroopin Biographical Notes and Timed Summary

Background

Margaret Kroopin (nee Pearson) was born in Canberra in 1930 at the old Canberra Hospital in the grounds of the Australian National University. She was the oldest of five children. Her parents emigrated from England and met in Australia. They came to Canberra in 1927, the year that Parliament opened, to join relatives.

Margaret's father first worked as a farm labourer for the Southwell's at Spring Range – a property near Hall. He later worked at Duntroon and then for Parks and Gardens. After going to night school he got a clerical job in the Department of the Interior. In the early years the family lived on the property at Spring Range but moved into Hall when the children reached school age. In about 1945-46 they bought a house in Canberra, in Ijong Street Braddon.

Margaret went to Hall Primary School and then Telopea Park High School. She left school when she was 15 and a half and got a job at the Department of Interior as a messenger. She then trained on accounting machines and accepted a transfer to Transport in the costing section in 1947. She had her 21st birthday at Transport and the manager, 'Cocky' Roach, made her a key in the Transport workshop. She still has the key.

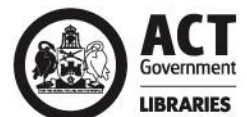
Margaret went back to the Department of Interior in about 1955. She met her husband there and they married in 1958. In accord with the regulations of the time she lost her status as a permanent public service employee when she married. She left work not long after her marriage and her two children were born in 1959 and 1961.




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Margaret's husband, Dimitri (known as James or Jim) Kroopin, was the son of a Russian tea merchant who had a business in Manchuria. He was born in 1915 and when he was eight or nine his parents sent him to join an uncle's family on a farm in Queensland. His mother and later a sister came to Canberra in the 1950s with the help of the Red Cross. James worked as a clerk in various positions in the public service in Canberra, including at Transport. He completed accounting qualifications at night school.

In the late 1960s Margaret went back to work at what was by then the Department of the Capital Territory. She returned to Transport in 1970 and worked there until 1972 when she did a Nurse's Aid course. At this time her husband was also working at Transport. After qualifying as a Nurse's Aid, Margaret returned to the public service as the shift work did not suit her. At this time she went to the Department of Defence as there was no job in Transport. She left work again in about 1980 when her husband retired but returned to a job in Defence in the 1980s, after her husband's death in 1981. She retired in 1994.

Margaret lived in Ijong Street until she married and went to live in Sherbrooke Street Ainslie. She lived in Sherbrooke Street until she retired. She then went to live at Umina on the central New South Wales Coast where one of her sons was living at the time. When he returned to Canberra, she also returned and bought a house in Gowrie as her son was living in this area.

Margaret's interview provides a snapshot of women's office work in Transport before the expansion of Canberra and changes in technology had made a significant impact on the organisation, work and workforce of Transport.

The interview was conducted at Margaret's home in Gowrie.

Interview Summary

Track 1	0:26:18
0:00:00	Introduction. Parents emigration to Australia from UK; circumstances of their families and work; father's relatives in Hall. Father's work at Spring Range. Move into Hall. Hall in the 1930s and 40s; story of living opposite the showground.
0:05:32	Going to the one-room school in Hall. Impact of Depression in the 1930s. Father's work at Duntroon and Parks and Gardens. Transport to school at Telopea Park – the school bus. Going to and from work on the workmen's bus.
0:10:00	Father's work for Department of Interior. Own work for Department of Interior as a Messenger. Training on accounting machines. Learning to type at night school with sister.
0:15:09	Sister's work at Public Service Board at Barton. Operation of accounting machines. Work in machine room and typing pool at Department of Interior.



	Move to Transport; enjoyment of work there. Getting to work at Transport on the bus – bus route through Barton.
0:21:22	Office set-up at Transport. Machine room; different machines; operation of comptometers and use to calculate hours of work. Overtime for end of financial year work; balancing ledgers, making group certificates. Workers in machine room.
0:26:18	END
Track 2	0:08:11
0:00:00	Position at Transport; looking after ledger for buses, Stromlo and Forestry. Details of accounting work – from docket to journal to ledger. Work on Remington machine in 1950s. Work on another machine that was able to do a wider variety of operations when returned in 1970. First boss Wally Pearson, later Keith Gladwin.
0:05:14	Boss's job – head of costing section. Other women in Transport office. Jobs in paymaster's office. Husband's work in pay office in later period. Other positions in Transport held by women. Other Transport office positions.
0:08:11	END (Telephone call)
Track 3	0:21:42
0:00:00	People at Transport 1947-1955; office workers, bus and car drivers. Union membership. Work environment
0:04:39	Work routine; sign-on book; morning and afternoon teas. Alma's sponges. Turn 21 at Transport – cocky Roach's presentation of key. Return to Department of Interior.
0:10:05	Return to Department of Interior 1955 and marriage 1958. Return to work about 1969-1970. Operated sensomatic machine at Department of Capital Territory and then worked for Transport again until 1972. Work at Department of Defence from 1973-1980 when husband retired. Return to work at Defence after husband's death. Retirement 1994.
0:15:49	Living at Umina until 1999 and latest move to Gowrie. Meeting husband at Department of Interior 1950s. Husband's work for Transport. Status of married women as public service employees in 1950s – lost permanency.
0:19:42	Details of work at Transport in 1970s
0:21:42	END (telephone call)
Track 4	0:10:34
0:00:00	Work after 1972 dependent on where sent by Public Service Board. Memories of Kingston in early 1970s. Women employed in Transport at this time. Move to Braddon from Hall for schooling for younger siblings. Getting to work from Braddon 1947-1955 – local bus stops
0:05:09	Memories of Ijong Street Braddon. Living in Ainslie after marriage. Children schools and convenience of Ainslie. Move to Umina. Sense of changes in





	Canberra over time. Reflections on employment in Transport.
0:10:34	END



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