Try again oral history recording on the 6th of July interviewing Jenny Watson and the interviews conducted by marg McMullen and Susan dalziel of the port of Echuca and we've got some questions to get you started again jenny so if you can

Yes we finished off talking about the Wharf in the 1980s can you summarise that again forest what wolf was like in the 1980s I have to think back it was it was very very busy when was all the rivers run 8383 years and and Helen Carlson had really got the port going which made a huge difference and then of course the Emmy Lou came up and that's when I got interested in boats because I advertised for a person and I thought well what's a person 'cause we were milking cows and I wanted something to do during the day an Anthony brow was the man who built the paddle steamer emmylou an she was originally designed as a two day two night cruise overnight cruise boat so for the first couple of months I was I was a person sort of learning how to put the boat did have ran and organising everything making sure that everybody had their meals on time and we had the excursions off the boat we tide up in the right places all those sort of things and we had a lot of fun doing it and that's when I thought well I like this this is rather fun suddenly remembering all my uncles and cousins move back where captains of ocean liners so it must have been in the blood 'cause it certainly came back with a vengeance and that's when I met up with Andy Simpson who was driving the Canberra at the time he said so on my days off I used to go there and he taught me how to have to drive a boat and then Peter Pan on emmylou let me steal the boat while he was done having lunch and things like that and that's how I learned to drive for boats lots of mistakes of course lots of interesting things happen but that's the best way to learn to drive a paddle steamer because it's so contrary than rivers different and the winds are different and I can catch you at the wrong time and if you lose concentration the boat let you know but it was a wonderful experience and after four years that was not by 1987 I the boy said well you gotta get a ticket drive about and I said no I don't I said yes you do gotta have a female skipper so I thought up great 'cause the only other females skip around at that time was Pearl hog who was Pearl Collins originally and so I thought alright I'll have a go so lot of study and then they eventually came down and examined us they came from Sydney and they threw the book at me but I'd been warned the boys were all there ready to help that whisper in my ear and all sorts of things it was great fun mandible and I saw just sail through and I was I was the first person to get the ticket for the whole of the Murray river and all her environments so I could do any of the rivers went off the Murray river somebody told me to do it so I applied for it and they gave it to me so which was really fantastic so that's when I started driving the Canberra just sort of casually carrying passages but at that stage we had poker machines in NSW and knotted Victoria so we had buses coming up and we would do seven cruises a day on the camera because I had that came up for four hours they had to cruise and then they're going to lose their money and then they go home and it did it it was it was very very hard work doing 7 cruises and I absolutely where you at specially when you got to the common trees well that's what it really takes it don't next looks a stuffing out of you but we did it you know and and it was great fun I'm glad I wasn't on permanently because I would have just fallen apart I think 'cause I was milking cows at the time so you go home after doing 7 cruises to milk the cow yes Oh my goodness and I had two kids as well going to school so it was but it was great experience yeah really was but unfortunately that's when my marriage broke down and you know things just changed a lot but I still love the boat after that I after I had my ticket I worked for awhile on the boats but then I got a job at the Bowling Club and ended up as a supervisor and with mish Thompson's father we did all the weddings every weekend and it was great yeah then I went decided to go to WA and managed to get a job on the boat straight away I drive a jet boat an hour ferry that was called the the pure Prince issues to our ferry from Perth and we played with dolphins for six years and it was wonderful had met some amazing people and had a great time the maritime people they were fantastic they help me as much as possible and it was really really very very good so did you have to get different search I had to go get had to get my ticket I only had it for the Murray darling basin I had to start you know go from our ticket again in Fremantle and it was quite funny because they made us go up on this high ladder and you had to jump into the water with fully clothed well I suffer from Vertigo started work thanks word guys somebody's gotta push me in and they did otherwise I would have jumped I couldn't so why did you have to do that was all over in Costa ship sinks or something like that you gotta have all your clothes on so you learn how to survive and I also had to do my marine engine drivers ticket because steam ticket was different from diesel engines and so I went in and this exam was they gave you 3 hours to do it and I knew it all so I just filled in everything in within an hour but got up and walked out he said have you finished I said here and all these other guys are looking at me 'cause it was I was only from what you doing what you doing and he read through it he said you don't know everything don't you asking yeah so figure some got it straight away it was really great they were fantastic in Dublin right they didn't they didn't sort of denigrate women whereas they did here was terrible here So what was the atmosphere in the port like then it was the atmosphere on the port it was in its infancy as such as as a promotion as a tourism thing Helen Carlson was amazing I was petrified of it but that's that's what Helen was like but then I realised it was all all sort of an exterior thing she was lovely amazing person and I had a lot of time for her and Kevin Hutchinson he was he was the guy who really helped me the most he was so so quiet and so insert knowledgeable and I strike F can you help me sure Jenny and you know just tell me what it was I was worried about if that's easy this is what you doing any comments physically show me what it was was that I was worried about and that's when I was at the Information Centre by then and they said there's a job going at the Wharf at the port so I applied for it and I got it and that's when I became the tour guide so you left the port went to the tourism information for 20 which Australia then came back and to the tourism Information Centre and then came here yeah and what about work to whilst Information Centre I was working at the Lee Warner capable Oh yeah so you said this area was very it was good they say until 1983 when when red crawfords came and really started they put the gravel on the road and put the red garment cutters in and filmed all the rivers run the port was just cruised along it wasn't promoted hugely or anything like that but it was just just such a fantastic place specially on the emmylou because we used to lag download at the Wharf all the time until things change and then we'd have to load it riverboat dog where we had to have the steps and things yeah but it was it was quite an interesting experience So what about being a female skipper here and well the boys had the meetings that they would so which always did look after you only Simpson Kevin Hutchinson who else the carringtons Max Carrington he was you know very very loud person but he really looked after me helped me a lot and things like that and we had some mazing engineers come on there were sort of stuck up for me because people did dreadful thing so they used to try and grab hold of the rudder or grab holding the camera or try and climb aboard and say bloody women and things like that but I had S E news but was my deckhand on the camera i'll look after gym OK she had this long pole with a with a with a hook on the end and anybody got in the way at the maritime guys were great too yeah they they realised I was having a really lot of problems but then I I formed the MoMA add sugar river skippers association'cause I thought we all needed to get together so we could work together because there was somebody on the the pride of the Murray who was not a very nice person and quote goes major major problems so we reformed this and we the only place we could go and meet was at the sugar club which was for men only so I approached them and I said look up from this and I'm going to be the secretary is it possible that I can come in I said yes of course you can so we should meet every month and have a meeting seran it was really really good because we could discuss everything we will we didn't have the owners you know leading on us and pushing us and try to solve our problems that way and then we would you know approach the owners and to discuss it with him and it did work very very well for quite a few few years you know so it was something that went well and also the sugar club decided that women weren't so bad after all does that still exist do you know women I've seen women in there no once I left today they couldn't be bothered which is a shame because with different owners and things owners can be very different from crew sitting around Lee did you have minutes to the meeting is there anything yes but I don't know what happened talk about to say that being interesting no idea what's happened to them OK so how many members did you have all the skippers like we talk about 10 N well there be but eight or nine and he'd meet once a month to month once a month yeah yeah and it was really good because we and we could also be good discuss the river the river conditions and and you know problems were having like specially in the river rose and the floaters that come down and and for the younger skippers who did what is experienced how you got to regard for the floaters 'cause they smash your paddle floats and things like that yeah it was really at work really really well because we could get together at error grievances and get it sorted out yeah now the gentlemen's club not allowed to ban women anymore I haven't been out there that's not noddies but they didn't ban us really they just suggest as soon as I said Kelly is it possible and we went in the meeting room and then at the end we don't have a drink but that's the only time I was in the main section you know and there is no hassles so so that that was a good thing I felt that we got because we had some interesting owners in those early days we had we had went one time when the camera was going up on the slip by because they had a crane no greater sorry greater that but would put a chain on the bow and drive forward pulling the boat up onto the slipway and the cameras going up the slip by and this gradually going further and further and the yellow over the two hour radio hey you guys I'm nearly on the main highway Are you ready for me to stop yet we said yeah another couple of metres he said I can't ever do it but that that was so funny and then another time the cameras going up and that the coupling came off and she slipped straight back and unfortunately luckily fortunately for bill bill vicars under at the time and we all yelled out and he managed to jump out of the way because she just went short straight back but after that you know row tennis wasn't really tough in those days it just did it just remind me what paddle Steamboat bill fick is owned the camper did you yes yeah yeah and then he built the Kingfisher yeah at on bomb align yes yeah yeah he did a lot for the boat yeah yeah so in your commentary as you're talking to your passengers did you have stories about characters of the river like Tommy freeman Oh yes yes So what were some of your favourite story Tommy freeman with with the he was known as the greyhound of the river because he had the paddle steamer kanali which was the fastest boat and he used to use to sneak up as soon as any sort of whisper of a load of wool he had the canal fired up all the time and he just go straight I need push everybody else out the way he he absolutely flat out but the thing thing he did the most he put a rope across from the Wharf over to the other side I mean it I tried walked ISO pictures on yeah but then came back again and so then the guy and at the Niagara Falls I forgot his name invited him over and he went over and walked across the Niagara Falls with have a bar of course to balance but he went to swan hill and did the same thing and he had a chair need to put the chair in the middle satin had his lunch that's the sort of guy was in what era was this that's when Tommy freeman was 1890s yeah round about that yeah yeah it would have been it yeah yeah and would say the frame and member of the freeman family who drowned in the rivers I don't know about that don't know that no he I think it was their family yeah but is he buck freeman was his son yeah and he was the cabin boy for many years but in the second in the second First World War sorry he went over to Gallipoli and my uncle was there as well and they met because they had to evacuate and they went on this on the on the ship sandland I think it was called by Connor have to cheque that up and she got torpedoed so they had to evacuate and anybody who could swim was told to swim so those two that they got together and they could swim in they had horses and they let the horses go and so my uncle hang on to the horses tails and Tommy hung on to my uncle and they managed to survive but luckily the ship didn't sink but she just have you know managed to limp away and then they both went to France and served there so and they both survived they both survived goodness yeah which is quite interesting yeah and I did that just sort of that Michael was there then this is Debbie he knew all about that yeah so those sort of things are fun what are the river stories river history stories passengers well of quite often just depends what which boat I was on really you know just upstream we've got what I used to call the marriage tree this is an aboriginal thing when the gum trees fused together and that they were known as a marriage she said that that's when they when they felt that there was going to be a reunion of a family or something like that and there's a wonderful one just upstream there and it's very obvious to show how to fused into another and it's absolutely solid so it's still there it's still there yes I haven't seen it right back far it's just on the cruising up towards oh just passed caravan park pass and now I'm a wolf and yeah yeah Oh yeah yeah yeah upstream further than that yeah OK unless I'm sorry it's a caravan park and I used when we were on the Emmy Lou we used to go down street and I would show them where they had the last benecol fistfight ape Higgins and Larry Foley for dinner we still go and walk across another move where was this downstream but and out a half two hours downstream on the NSW side because the fight was organised and they were when allowed to have it in Victoria so they all went across road across the river even the Victorian police or went across the river to watch the fight at last at 8 hours but Larry Foley won 'cause he didn't fall down but those those sort of things which are Richard great fun to tell people about and and the stories and things like that I think there's a rumour that Ned Kelly made it to that fight there is a rumour but sort of cutting style up to two and all those sort of things you know you just think yeah well maybe maybe but that's better it makes it so much more fun yeah and then there was the the burning of the Rodney which was yeah a bit of major tragedy during the ship the shearing strike no scab labour and they tide up in the reeds and of course they followed them and threw them all over board Bertha boat and they were tough in those days very very tough you know if you rented the union everyone to union list you word you would loud ought to do anything and you had to do it by them all the time in the sheep shearers were absolutely given the worst sort of shocking that they were treated bad so badly I mean how they survived I don't know because wool was australia's only income and I had to have serious I have lots of shares yeah and it's all blood sharing too you know yeah because we used to take the pony club that was used to teach pony 'cause I was mad horse rider and we used to ride the horses over the bridge go to parakou to station for the pony club camp and we stayed in the shearing shed 24 stand shearing shed so we made them right over in the morning so that home police escort'cause you know they had thought it better and by the time they got to Barracuda station there so tired they will sleep the first night which is wonderful we stay there for the week and then ride back again we had a wonderful time with pony club piano what about the \*\*\*\*\* and pups you know area of the river had you been down there I went down there yes Howard ball had a boat here and he wanted to take it down downstream or go all the way down to \*\*\*\* druck and they said this one area where you won't be able to go when the river is very very low it's called the Bishop up so just at Tooele back so I went down there to have a look but it is it's a whole lot of rocks sticking up that looks like a dog with a little pups all surrounded around yeah and we virtually found a farmer who's who's from actually was right next to it and he took