

**INTERVIEW NO.10**

**DATE OF INTERVIEW: 17th October, 1991.**

**MRS. BETTY HARGREAVES  
4 COLLESS STREET  
PENRITH. 2750.**

0.39 My name is Betty Hargreaves and I live at 4 Colless Street, Penrith. I was born on the 2nd January, 1918 and I was born in Neutral Bay. I am now happily married for over 50 years. My nationality is Australian - I've come from convict stock - and I have three children.

**1.05 So just to ask you a bit about your family background, what sort of work did your father do?**

1.13 My father was a Produce Merchant. There's no such thing, I don't think, as a Produce Merchant today. (Laughs). No, well he was a Produce Merchant and he had a business in Neutral Bay. Then we moved to Windsor, and moved to Orange and we came to Penrith in 1936 I think it was - yes, 1936. My parents came here first because I was taken to hospital and I was in Lewisham Hospital for six months with a thyroid problem, and in those days it was really a major thing to have a thyroid operation. And so I was there and my parents moved to Penrith and bought another produce business here, and we settled down here.

**2.05 And so you would have been about 18 then?**

I was 17 I think - yes, 17 or 18.

**And where did you live when you came here? Not in this house of course?**

No, in a beautiful old home, which is that one there (indicates painting on wall). I was married from that home in Stafford Street, and then when I married we moved to a little cottage which is not anymore. It was on the corner of Castlereagh and High Street and we lived in that little old house - it was a lovely little place actually.

**Is this place (indicates painting) still standing?**

Yes, oh yes - beautiful. It's just round - a few streets away - beautiful!

**2.53 So, first of all, when you were living in this house you went to school from there?**

No, no I had left school. Yes, yes. I was one of four daughters actually and my three sisters all went to school here. They were all just that little bit younger than I was.

**3.11 So you started really working ... ?**

I was working with my father, as his secretary. And that's all I did all my single life, I worked with my father as secretary, and that's how I met my husband actually. He was working in that produce business that my father bought out and he was working there, and twelve months later he moved on to another position, and that's how I actually met him.

**But he met you first!**

**3.47 So what was the area like when you first came to live here?**

Well, just take where we lived. There was nothing round that at all, it was just great huge paddocks. Now it's covered with Housing Commission places - and this beautiful old majestic home - and it's surrounded by mostly Housing Commission. But Penrith was a quiet, sleepy little town in those days. There was very little entertainment for anyone and we just went to the pictures of a Saturday night or went down to Castlereagh Hall to dances. My husband and I have always been fond of dancing and that's what we did. But we love life theatre - always have - and we'd travel to town, and you'd have to travel to town for anything

like that in those days. When I say 'town' I mean Sydney. So we would drive into town and go to all the live shows, which we still do.

**Do you?**

Yes, we love theatre.

**4.44 You drive rather than catch the train?**

No, not now. We get in a train and we have a daughter at Neutral Bay, and we stay with her for the night, so it works in quite well.

**4.56 And when you were first here, how would describe the surrounding area? Did you have a lovely sense of space? Because you'd come from the city hadn't you?**

Yes, well we had moved around a little bit. No, it was ... well in comparison to what it is today, it's unbelievable, it really is! And even when we married in 1940 and we moved to that little house on the corner of Castlereagh Road and High Street, there was Chinese Market Gardens opposite - where the tennis courts are now - and it's completely changed. Unbelievable!

**5.43 And the house you moved into, was that an old house?**

No, it had been built a few years previously.

**5.51 What sort of material was it built from?**

It was a stained timber. A stained timber house. Yes, a two bedroom place with a petrol depot up the back which my husband managed. And I was his secretary then for a little while, until I started having children.

**6.10 Did you go to business college to train for that or did you just pick it up?**

It was only through a convent.

**Part of your schooling? Or was that like a ...**

No it was part of the schooling, yes.

**After you were in Penrith, or when you went to school?**

No, at Windsor. I started school in Neutral Bay - it was Mosman - and then went to school in Windsor.

**It was like a commercial course at school?**

Yes, at school.

**6.35 And the house that you moved into when you were married, did that have an inside bathroom and toilet?**

It had an outside toilet. And it had a fuel stove. We didn't have a refrigerator. We had the ice-man used to call three days a week with a block of ice, you know, put it in the top of the ice chest. But we weren't any less happy because of that.

**This was about 1940 wasn't it, when you were married?**

Yes, and when I tell my grandchildren ... just recently, a few years ago while they were younger, I wrote out a few things and asked them what this was and - even a copper stick! I didn't have a washing machine. I had a copper where I boiled the clothes, you see, and then

you had a wringer to put them through. And I got the six of them up one day, asking them all these things. Well, they couldn't believe - they couldn't even visualise what life was like without television, or even a radio! We didn't worry about radio! And they just couldn't believe that, and the things that I sketched for them to show them - like the ice-chest and ... well they all went into hysterics when I told them about the outside toilet and that you knew what day the man was coming, and so you didn't go then that morning in case he came and pulled it from under you! (Laughs) Oh, no, it's a different life all together.

**8.15 And did you have electricity? Electric lighting?**

Yes, we had electricity.

**What about vacuum cleaners and that sort of thing?**

I can't remember! I don't know whether we did have ... no, I don't think we did, although we had a carpet on the floor in the lounge. But we had a huge big log fire and that didn't have carpet - we had lino on the floor there - and this huge log fire, my husband and I used to sit it out every night. Beautiful! And that's one scene we still have here. We have a log fire, it's lovely.

**8.58 So, you didn't listen to the radio much?**

No, not a great deal. No, we used to read a lot and there was more conversation in those days. We'd have our friends in for dinner and you'd just sit down and talk all night. You wouldn't think about 'Oh, what's on television'. I mean, I think that has cut a lot out of life today.

**It's anti-social, isn't it.**

Oh, children don't - a lot of them - don't know how to communicate do they, because of that. But my mother was a dressmaker and she was at David Jones. She was one of the head dressmakers at David Jones, and she had some wonderful tales to tell, wonderful!

**She lives in Sydney or in Penrith?**

She lived in Penrith. She lived until she was 94. She only died about four years ago.

**Really!**

Yes, and she was 94, and I've got her on tape. I got a few, yes - it's beautiful, the tales she told. Yes.

**10.06 And so she lived in Penrith near you when you were first married?**

Yes. And they moved from that place and built a lovely old home in Lemongrove, and my two single sisters still live in that lovely old place. They are business people. They never married. Two of them, so they share that lovely old home now, and so I've always had the support of a family round me, which is ... you know, sometimes today ... and I'm very much involved in the community. I'm Executive Officer of Penrith Community Aid, which I started twenty years ago, and just seeing the needs of what was required in the area - well I've started so many things, it's been fantastic!

**11.06 So that's one way in which things have improved here then - the Community Aid?**

Oh, yes, well there was virtually .. there was nothing! How that started actually was a young man I knew in Apex came one Christmas twenty years ago - actually 19 and a half years ago - and he said he had two families. Apex would buy the toys - could I think about getting food hampers! And at that time I was President of the Governor Phillip's Special Hospital Meals on Wheels Service, so I decided I'd ask the Meals on Wheels Service and some friends to get a couple of hampers together and I'd deliver them. So I delivered those hampers, first to a woman whose husband had left her and the people from - I've forgotten which department

store - had come and repossessed all her furniture. She was left there in a house with, I think she had a couple of beds and a couple of chairs, and she was sitting out on the back step with her head in her hands and I think she had two handicapped children, and so ...

**12.19 And there was no social security?**

There was no social security. There was nothing for that woman. So, I went to the next mum, and her husband had just been put in gaol. Well, there was no Prisoners' Aid or anything like that then. So that got me thinking, and my children were coming home for Christmas and everything was here for them, a beautiful meal and a comfortable bed, and the thought just would not leave me about those two women. So I decided as soon as the Christmas was over "I'm going to get something going!" And, so from that I started Penrith Community Aid, and by keeping records of enquiries in the office we could see where the need was. So we started the Women's Refuge for battered women and children. I started the Meals on Wheels Service at the Prison Farm which is the only place in the State where meals are cooked by prisoners. There's an Occasional Childcare and Before and After School Care. We visit the aged who are lonely, we give out food and clothing. And none of that was available to those people at that time. There is now.

**When did you start this?**

1972, yes.

**And there was nothing even then?**

No. There was no social security. That woman couldn't get social security. So I went to St. Vincent de Paul and got her furniture and I did go to - they call it Family and Community Services now, it was called Youth and Community then - and they gave her some money to tide her over. And so in a few months' time then, both those families left the district. And I often think I wish both those women could see, because of their great need, this welfare service was put into operation. But it's been most rewarding for me. My husband - he's been an absolute tower of strength. I wouldn't have been able to do it without his support - I mean I'm away long hours - and the Council supports us. They've given us rooms in Penrith, so it's ...

**14.44 Have you done this on a voluntary basis?**

It's all been voluntary. And I've got 210 volunteers.

**Really? All working for you?**

Yes, wonderful. Yes. Absolutely fantastic it is. As a matter of fact I've just written a book on Community Aid and what the volunteers have done in the area. Very interesting.

**I'll have to get hold of that!**

Yes, I've got a copy here - \$10 a copy! (Laughs).

**15.14 So, getting back to when you first were married and living here in the '40's, did you have your children soon after you were married?**

No, my husband and I eloped! Because of religious differences. I'm a Catholic, my husband's Uniting Church, oh Methodist, and there was so much bigotry on both sides. Not only just one side, both sides were just bigoted, and they could not see that we could ever be happy and the marriage wouldn't work. So, we agonised over this for many months, and we thought "Right, we know what we've got to do". So we eloped, and the only people we told were my parents and my husband's father and the sister who he was close to. And so we just went off and got married, and came back and told people, and of course then they were counting out the months 'til nine months - and no baby arrived! Four years later our eldest daughter arrived!

So we were married four years before ... and then two years later I had another daughter and then we had a son, and in between that I had two miscarriages.

**16.43 And so did you plan your family?**

We - in those days there was no such thing as the Pill or anything like that and - bedroom secrets I'm not going to discuss here - but we did not want children for a little while, and so we didn't have children 'til we ... although I had a miscarriage when we were married three years ... and then we had Jill a year later. So we were married four years before we had them and then I had the three.

**And so you really wanted to have three children?**

We wanted three children and no more, and we planned it that way, in our own way.

**17.32 And it was difficult in those days too - they had no choice!**

Well it was, yes. All the women have got the choice now.

**And that's another good change, I suppose too.**

Yes, that's right. But I'm anti-abortion. Definitely anti-abortion. I just think it's murder and I'll get up anywhere and say that. I really deeply feel that. We'd never ever consider anything like that anyway, but today things are so different, entirely different. Another thing I think that is good, where kids now can talk about things. They're more open. I know my grandchildren can come in here - and they're not young little things anymore, the eldest one's 22 and she's a nurse - and they can sit up here and without a blush or anything, they can talk about things that I could never even talk about when I was married!

**Yes, and they call a spade a spade don't they? My 16 year old is like that.**

Well that's right. Yes well our grandchildren, some of them, are your daughter's age. And I think that's good. And also domestic violence. It was swept under the carpet and people say "Oh, it wasn't about". It was about, by what I read. I don't think there was as much, but I think it was swept under the carpet a lot and people didn't face that. Because I know when I started that Women's Refuge and the stories that came through to me, not only from young women but from older women, and they said "I wish to God a thing like this was around when my mother was having us." "My mother had to stay and be battered, or otherwise she was out in the street with nothing". And there was no social security, nothing to help them in those days. Women had to put up with that! So women's lib has done something, I think, but then again I think they've gone too far in one way. But I think ...

**19.52 Having those community services has helped enormously!**

Oh, yes. Women don't have to put up with those indignities. And no woman should be pushed around or knocked around by a man. So I think that has been a wonderful thing for women, that they can get out and get support. But what does worry me though is the breakdown of marriages. That really does concern me. Because there are so many women, even coming through the refuge, and they don't know ... half the time most of the children don't know who their brothers and sisters are anymore, and then in a few years' time what's to say they're going to meet up with their brothers and sisters and marry! You can see that happening down there - or anywhere as far as that goes. People come in to the Community Aid office and they say "Oh my husband - or my de facto - is playing around with someone else and he's just had a baby" and ... you know, it's just going on. There's too much of it.

**21.10 So in one way it's very good that women have got these support services, that's very good, but there seems to be more marriage break down which is ...**

Yes, it's lack of discipline too I guess. Lack of discipline in the home. Children now are not disciplined. I see kids ... you just go away to ... we were recently down staying at a guest

house at Bowral, where we go once a year, and these kids about eight and nine, they just took control of everything, and the parents didn't - they were jumping from these wonderful lounge suites, jumping from one to the other - and the parents just leave them to wreck everything. And if you say anything you're in trouble!

**22.06 You're the ogre! So when your children were born, within five years of so, you had three little ones at one time.**

I was very ill at that time. Yes, I was very ill, and my husband had to get someone to help me in the house, and I was looking after three children. We'd put all our money into starting a business of our own. I was far from well and a few years later I had to go in and have another thyroid operation, and when I came out of hospital with my second daughter - Jan was just three weeks old - when my husband had to .... well he was almost bedridden with sciatica. So we had it really tough for a good many years until we got on our feet. We had some wonderful friends who came in. One man in particular would do his work, and when he was finished for the day he would come and do the orders that I'd taken during the day.

**23.15 What sort of business was it?**

A petrol depot. My husband was the agent for Ampol, the Australian company, and he was and agent here for forty years or thereabouts. He supplied petrol to service stations from about Blacktown or a little bit this side up to Mount Victoria, and he had tankers and trucks. And in those days, you see, there was no State Planning so they passed that he could have a depot right in the middle of a residential area. So we moved from down there to here about 35 years ago - probably 40 years ago - and there was still no State Planning so we could build a petrol depot. And that existed until seven years ago. My husband retired and then I took that over as a pottery shop. So I've now got a pottery shop in there.

**24.22 And that would have been the '50's then would it that you moved here, the late '50's?**

Yes, it would be late '50's or the '60's I think, yes. But it was really booming then. Business was absolutely fantastic and Ampol were just so wonderful a firm to work for, and we got really established then. By that time when we moved here we really had done quite well then.

**24.51 And was this a new house then?**

No. We built this. Yes.

**It's a brick house isn't it?**

No, it's a weatherboard.

**It's hard to tell when you're inside!**

Yes. And so many people come to us today and say "Why are you living in this weatherboard house? Nobody lives in a weatherboard house today. You should cover it with brick or something like that!" And I said, "No way! I love my weatherboard house". I love it!

**So you built this while you were living in the other house?**

Yes. And then we moved up here and my husband ran the business from here.

**25.33 When you said you had lots of support during that difficult time when the children were little and you weren't well, were they mostly neighbours or ...?**

My parents and my sisters.

**And did you have neighbours close by you?**

One, two - that's all.

**Only two?**

Yes. The rest was all around the paddocks. Three - and one down in High Street, just down on the corner, but there was nothing next door to us like that.

**16.05 And what was the surrounding land like? Was it just trees?**

Yes. No - there's two blocks here - and when we bought this there was nothing on it. There wasn't a tree or anything. Everything had been cut down. So we immediately planted trees and now they are the most wonderful trees you've ever seen. They're absolutely beautiful.

**26.38 It's a lovely garden!**

Yes. Well that out there - that part's my husbands. My husband and I used to argue in the garden (laughs) so we decided that he would take that bit and I'd take this. So I turned mine into a rain forest and so ... now, you know, it's really good. I was going to say, in part of our garden we have a swimming pool and in those days swimming pools weren't in backyards. There was only another person in Penrith that had a pool. So we put the pool in and at that time our children were young teenagers and we never ever had any problems with them wanting to go anywhere, only we had the problem that they used to bring in all the neighbours kids and they'd have parties and sit round the pool all night. We'd had wonderful nights there with them, and they had a pianola out there, and that was wonderful for them. They went away to boarding school, our children, because ...

**27.48 Where did they go to, Sydney or ...?**

My two daughters went to Parramatta to Mercy College, and our son went to Oak Hill, because we thought - my husband and I had lived in Penrith for so long and it was still only a reasonably little place - and we thought they have to know there is another world out there besides Penrith, so we decided that they would go to boarding school. So they went there and finished their Leaving. The eldest girl was teaching, she went out teaching - near Swan Hill she was sent to - a little place called Moulamein, and she met another teacher and they married. Then our other daughter is a pre-school director. She went out to Cowra and she met a country boy and they settled down out there, and our son lives in Penrith. Our eldest daughter - for some reason our children love studying - and our eldest daughter is now a solicitor. She did it full time. When she got her children to high school she decided she wanted to do law. So she's just doing a little bit of teaching, helping out at a little local school, and then she went to Macquarie University. She was living at Emu Plains at that time, and travelled every day to Macquarie. And now she's practising in the city and lives at Neutral Bay. And our other daughter is doing a B.A. in Early Childhood Services majoring in Aborigine problems. So it's very interesting to see them making their way in life and doing different things.

**29.40 And your parent's expectations for you, I suppose, were quite different to your expectations for your children?**

Yes. I think so. No, I've never been one to press my children to do ... they had to make their own minds up if they wanted to go on and further their education. They knew that they could get the support from their father and I if they wanted to do that, and they chose to do that. But the expectations - I mean today they've got to have an education to get anywhere today, really.

**30.25 And did they go to the local primary school here?**

Our local convent school they went to, yes.

**Which one was that?**

St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas of Myra, yes ... and our son was one - I think he was the first class that moved from the convent to St. Dominic's College. Where St. Dominic's College is today, we had friends there who had a poultry farm. This little house on this big block, and we used to play cards there with these people, and I couldn't believe that a few years later - they were many years older than we were - and many years later here I am measuring up for the Brothers to move in up there ... yes. So times have changed.

**31.13 That's a fairly industrial really area over that way isn't it - Cox Avenue and that area?**

Now, yes. That's right.

**31.23 So how did they get to school when they were little? Did they walk?**

Oh well we practically lived near the school when we were in Castlereagh Street. It was only just across the road from us.

**31.37 Transport services in the area, I believe, weren't very good?**

Oh, there'd be nothing. No that's right. Parents would have had to drive the children to school. But I was just fortunate - we just lived opposite and they'd just walk home. And even from here - when they were in primary school - from here they could walk home. I never had to go and get them, they just walked home. Yes, it was good exercise for them.

**32.00 I suppose your family gave you support you needed for after school care if ever you weren't home when the children were coming home?**

I told my children when they were married, as my mother told me - and my daughter recently said it was the best advice - I told them to go and start off their marriage as they wanted to go on. Don't think you can change people after you've been married 12 months.

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0.12 So I just told them to ...

**You didn't want to rear your grandchildren?**

No, I didn't want to have to stay home and rear my grandchildren because I wanted to get out and do my thing once I'd reared my children, and I never did mind my grandchildren, only in an emergency when there was sickness or when they were having babies I was always there, and I stayed with them until they got on their feet. But I never ever went and minded them just to have a social life or to work. I never did do that.

**0.49 And so you did have time to pursue your own interests?**

Oh, I've always been interested in arty things. I then decided I could do things, what I wanted to do, because my husband was OK. He had a wonderful secretary, and living - his business was at the back - and I felt no-one can live 24 hours together without something going wrong, although we had a wonderful relationship and we still do, I felt I had to get out and do things because he had his business here. And, when he retired it was different, you see, because he didn't have to say "I don't go to work anymore" - his business was there. He just walked out the back door. He didn't have that dreadful trauma of saying "I'm retired", you know, it was a different thing. But anyway I decided that I wanted to do some things so I went down to the Art School and I did some painting for three or four years, which hang on the wall, and then I didn't like that and I went to flower arranging and then I did pottery. I did all those sorts of things and then I decided I'd go back to what I always loved doing and that is fine embroidery, that sort of thing there (indicates embroidery hanging on wall). So I still do that. And it's just ... I've been able to do that. And then of course Community Aid has taken so much of my life up. You know, I spend so much time down there. So I can do all those things because I wasn't one of those grandmothers that want to be looking after grandchildren. (Laughs).



**Good for you!**

**2.45 And so when your children were small, while they were at school here before they went away to boarding school, what would your daily routine have been?**

Well I've always been out and about. When they started school there wasn't a Mothers' Club at their school. So I went down and I started a Mothers' Club and that flourished for 25 years and I was asked to be guest speaker at the 25th anniversary. Then I worked very hard for that and got lots of things for the school. In those days we'd have lots of little fetes and things like that to raise money, and then I was interested in Meals on Wheels. I did that for many, many years and then I became President of the Meals on Wheels Service at Governor Phillip Hospital, and then I started Community Aid. So my life has always been out in the community, and I did - without bragging - I was an Order of Australia for services to the community and I was also Senior Citizen of New South Wales.

**Really!**

And I was awarded the Premier's Award, and I don't know who ever put me in for these I'll never know! You're not supposed to know anyway. But you don't look for those sort of things. It was nice that it came though.

**4.20 And what about ordinary mundane things like housework and washing and shopping and that sort of thing?**

Well I hate all that. (Laughs)

**But I suppose you had to do it?**

Well I had to do it, but I've always had someone in the house to help me. Ever since the children were little I've had a woman come in one day a week and she does the jobs that I don't want to do or don't like doing, like vacuuming and cleaning bathrooms and ironing. That all she does. Just the ironing, runs the cleaner over and she's only here for about three or four hours a week, and between us we go right through the house and dust, but I let her do the jobs I don't want to do. So I've never had to ... I've been fortunate really, that we've been able to do that.

**That's great if you can pursue your own interests and you've done so much to help other people in the community.**

Oh, but then I've had the support of a wonderful husband, because you can't do that if you haven't got that support or your marriage would quickly fall apart. I've never neglected him. I've always been here. Particularly now that he's not well, I wouldn't go too far afield now.

**5.46 And what about growing things in the garden, did you have a vegetable garden?**

We had the most wonderful garden that we have one the grand-champion garden in Penrith area for two years.

**Was it your half or his half?**

It was all of us at that time. We only started to argue later. (Laughs). No, it was the whole garden, and our trees weren't as big as they are now where you could grow wonderful things under them but now ferns are the only things that'll grow because they're so big, and I'll take you for a walk round that later to show you. So that took a lot of our time. We spent hours in the garden and we didn't only just have - we had thousands of plants in. It was absolutely fantastic! And so we won the garden competition grand-championship two years in a row and the third time we won the best back garden, so that was an achievement.

**6.52 Would that have been in the '60's?**

'60's, yes.

**6.57 And I suppose that accounted for some more of your 'daily routine' time, working in the garden?**

Oh, well, yes. That's right. I'd go out in the morning and snip off all the little dead flowers and things like that before I'd start anything else, but I don't do that ...

**7.12 And did you shop locally - you are close to High Street?**

Yes. But we didn't shop for good clothes. We'd go to Sydney to buy anything, but we always did. But then I've been fortunate again. I have a sister who is a dress designer, so I just hand her a piece of material and say make that! And she still does actually, so I've been lucky that way. But the shops, there was nothing much here. In our early days here they were very very poor. There was only one department store which was Fletcher's - and that was in where the Mall is now - it was only a couple of doors down from where my father had a produce business in those days. Then Grace Bros., or Myers, took over and then it was Grace Bros. but that originated from Fletcher's Store.

**8.16 And did you have things delivered, apart from milk and bread, did you have groceries delivered?**

Yes. No, not a great deal. But Frank would deliverer them if you wanted them delivered, yes. But bread and milk of course - milk is still delivered, but no-one gets bread now.

**8.37 And what about the banking facilities in the area? Was there a bank here in Penrith?**

Oh, yes.

**Talking about finance generally, how did you manage you household finances? Who managed your finances in the house?**

I did, but my husband always gave me 'X' amount of dollars to manage that on, and in our early stages when he took ill and I was just out of hospital with a new baby, we really had to put everything - and I mean everything - into buying a truck and setting up this new business. We did go through a dreadful period for about three years where we had very little. We had everything but money. So, that didn't matter really. I mean people say you're poor, but you're not poor if you've got one another and you've got love and surrounded by people, you know. Money doesn't make you poor, I don't think anyway, really. I mean I might not have had a new dress for two or three years, but I could see we were going to get above that when my husband got well. It wasn't like a terminal thing, or anything like that. He just had to get over the illness he had. But we did go through a dreadful time there for a few years - it was about three years I think - and then we really got on top of it and we never looked back. And I always managed the household. He manages - we've both got our set things we do - and he pays all the accounts. I sign the cheques as well as him. He's not one of the people who dominates. I could go anytime and write out a cheque.

**A liberated man!**

Oh he is. He definitely is! For a man of going on 80, he is absolutely fantastic with his ideas about what women should stand up for and it's quite unbelievable.

**10.59 He's obviously given you a lot of support over the years.**

Oh, yes. Well we recently had our golden wedding, and we had a wonderful church service - an ecumenical church service - and we had our six grandchildren as our attendants, and we renewed our vows. And at our wedding breakfast, if you call it that, my husband's speech was that he'd waited 50 years for this wedding breakfast! (Laughs). Because we'd eloped, you see!

**That was very good!**

**11.49 So did you mostly shop by cash? You didn't use credit at the local store?**

There was nowhere ... no, and my husband always prided himself that no matter what we had in this home, he paid for. He never used a lay-by and he never paid anything off. We saved for everything we had, and we still - if we want something and we think well that's a bit much - we think about it a lot before we'd ever ... and .... One thing we did lay-by, when I was so ill and my husband was ill, we didn't have a washing machine and he said "We have to have a washing machine - it's something you just have to have" and we didn't have the money, quite truthfully, to buy the washing machine. So he went down and bought it and had it sent home and he was paying it off. He said "I can't stand this!" So he went down and then within a few weeks he went down and handed them the cash. So that was the only thing we ever, ever thought of paying off. We never had lay-bys or time payment. We never ever did that. Even with cars. If we wanted a car we'd save up for it.

**13.15 So you had a car did you when you were married?**

When we were married. Yes, my husband always had a car before he was married and we've got photos of those little cars. It's quite unbelievable now.

**What sort of cars did you have?**

It was a little Ford, and then we got a little Wasp, I think they call it. And of course then we got the first Holden that came out, and so we progressed along the way.

**That was about '48 wasn't it, the Holden?**

I don't know, I can't remember.

**13.56 So did you work at all as an employee for anyone other than your father and your husband?**

No. I never, ever worked for anyone else.

**Did you get paid a salary when you worked for them?**

Yes. Well my husband was Director and I was Secretary and my three children were Directors, so it was a family business.

**14.28 And what about health services in the area?**

Well there was no area health or community nurses or anything like that.

**Did you have all your children in the local hospital?**

No. Because I was so ill, and for some reason I'd heard of this wonderful doctor at Parramatta, and so I went to Inchnell Private Hospital at Parramatta for the three of my children. My husband drove me down there and it was rather interesting actually. When we moved into our second home where we started our own business, the greatest worry of my life was to leave an active two year old in the grounds of this home. There was an air-raid shelter that was built during the War, and so that was the first job - we insisted on having it done in. So they had to cover it in, because it was full of water, you see. The water had got in and it would have been disaster.

**When was that?**

That was in - when we moved and when we first started our own business - and this was just in the grounds outside the kitchen door actually - was this air-raid shelter that the people that

lived in the house before us had put it. But it was rather interesting during the War we had to have blackout curtains and I remember one night there was a bang on the door and the Warden came in and he said "Turn your lights out. There's a little gleam of light showing along the side". So we had to sit in the dark until the all-clear sounded. And another thing I remember so clearly, is we'd go to the pictures and during the War these women had been knitting socks, and even now, if I hear knitting needles click together, it takes me back. Strange isn't it!

**16.49 Was that here in the local cinema? That's the old Dungowan?**

Yes. No it wasn't in the Dungowan. There was two. There was that one, the Dungowan, and there was Pop's - old Mr. Spence had the Penrith one in High Street, up where the Bank of New South Wales - the Westpac Bank is now. It was a nice old theatre there. But I remember the night that War was declared actually, as though it was yesterday, because Friday nights in Penrith was the big thing. You used to go and sit up in High Street or do your little shopping. Friday night was late shopping, and it was the 3rd of September and we went up. My husband called - my fiancé then - called for me and we - oh, we were married that's right - and we went up the main street and sat down, and I went into a shop and came back with some shopping and we switched the radio on - we did have a radio in the car then - and I can distinctly remember that message coming out that we were at War with Germany. Then I remember when the War was over and the festivities they had here, and when the War finished the great joy because we knew a lot of young men who went away. My husband was called up. He had to go to the Penrith drill hall and that's next door where the TAFE College is now. It's since been pulled down, or burnt down it was, and he had to come with a cut lunch and a pencil! That's what they told him. (Laughs). So he went with his cut lunch and a pencil, and he was working in the petrol business and he was in charge of Ampol distribution of petrol in the area because petrol was rationed, and so he wasn't called up. He was given this job of looking after petrol supplies in Penrith, Ampol petrol supplies, so he had to ...

**19.21 It was necessary work.**

Yes, so he did that. One of my sisters joined the Army and she was a sergeant in the AWAS, the Australian Women's Army Service. Another one was called up and she had to go to St. Mary's to ... oh, she was working in a factory down there making something or other for the troops, I've forgotten what it was now.

**Nets, or ammunition?**

Yes. But she only did that because they asked for women to go down there. But I wasn't called up because being married and having a business, whatever, I wasn't in that. So ..

**Did you sister who joined the Army, where did she serve?**

She didn't go very far afield actually. She went down to Wagga. She was at Wallacia and she used to come home and we'd say "What was going on?" and she'd say "I'm sorry I can't tell you", and I found out since that that was radar, it was the head radar and we found out since, but she would never say - well, she wasn't allowed to say. And when she got out of the Army, she rejoined as a civilian and went back into the Army again and she stayed there until her retirement.

**She must have liked it!**

Yes.

**20.49 And what about the churches in the area? Did you find that they played a big part in the community in the old days, back in the '40's and '50's?**

Yes, well I came from a church-going family and so did my husband. They were very deeply committed, you know, I think, church people - Methodists in those days as well as my family as Catholics. But, yes I think it did play a big part, because my mother used to have house

parties, lots of house parties, and we'd have sing-songs around the piano and lovely suppers people would bring and things like that, that they don't do today so much because we're all watching our diets! So yes I guess it did play a bigger part than it does today with most people.

**So it was a social - an opportunity for social get togethers as well as going to church?**

Oh, yes. They had tennis parties and things like that.

**And did the church have any kind of community aid programs themselves?**

No. I think that's really only coming into the churches now. I know they have an outreach program and they're outreaching for people that need help in all sort of ways. They are visiting and all sorts of things they are doing now that they didn't have in those days I think.

**22.33 What about recreation? You already mentioned that you went dancing and went to the cinema. Did you or your children play any sport?**

Yes, my husband's always insisted on children being too tired to worry about doing anything else! (Laughs). He's always said that and he sticks to that, and so he ... I've never been a sports person. I'm not a sporty person. I used to play golf and a little bit of tennis. Because of my ill health I couldn't run round the court, so I took up golf for a few years. But the children were quite good tennis players, and my son a cricket player because of my husband's insistence, but also because he managed teams in the area here. He used to manage a cricket team and tennis team. So he used to take the teams round with him. But, no, he was good. The kids were always interested in sport.

**23.37 And what about the river? Did you swim in the river at all?**

Yes, that was one of the main recreations in the hot summers. We used to go down where the weir is now. It's not fit to swim in now, they tell me. You know, it's dreadful to think of a beautiful river like that. But in those days we used to hire row boats and we'd row up the river. (Laughs). And that was fun too. And they also had a - something like the 'Nepean Bell' now - but it's not a paddle steamer but a little boat. You could just ... Pat O'Meagher used to take people up the river. But mainly, before we were married, we used to take row boats up and groups of us would go rowing up the river and take a picnic lunch with us. It was fun. It was simple fun, but it was fun.

**24.33 What about holidays? Did you take holidays regularly?**

No. Before I was married I'd just go away occasionally, but when our children were little my husband didn't take a holiday for sixteen years, until one day - I'd been going away, a couple of times I took the children away because I thought I would go to Newport or Manly or somewhere like that with them and my husband would come down week-ends - so one day I was in Sydney and I walked past the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau and I thought "I'm going to do something about this man" and so I just went in and booked us all to Tasmania and I came back and I said "Your business will have to run without you!" And so we went to Tasmania for three weeks, and from then on we never stopped travelling and we still travel. We've had some wonderful trips overseas. We took seven months off and went for a trip round the world, and we went over to Alaska and Canada and New York, and ... oh, we've done all the Pacific Islands! So it was that initial standing up and saying "Right, enough's enough. We've got to go".

**Tasmania was the beginning!**

So we've travelled right round Australia.

**When would that have been, the Tasmanian trip?**

Our son would have been about eight, and he's in his 40's now, 43, so it's a while ago. We've had some wonderful holidays, and what we do now, we all meet up once a year - our children and grandchildren - somewhere, like Bowral, Craigieburn at Bowral or the Hydro-Majestic up the Mountains, or the old Carrington. Any of those places. We meet up once a year and we have this wonderful family weekend together which is beautiful. And the children - our grandchildren - are enjoying the ... just getting together as a family group. They come here a lot, but just having a lovely holiday together like that.

**26.43 You see a lot of your grandchildren?**

Yes. Yes, oh they come down. My daughter was down from Cowra last week and brought one of her sons who is 18 and brought one 19 and brought his girlfriend with him and they stayed for a few days, so it was rather nice.

**17.01 And what about animals? Have you kept animals at all?**

Only dogs. When they were children we had a dog. That's all. We've never had any other ...

**You haven't had chooks or cows?**

No. No. When I was growing up we did. But not in our married life.

**27.20 You had cows for milk when you were growing up did you?**

Yes.

**27.26 And the organisations that you belonged to - you've mentioned the Community Aid and Meals on Wheels and those sorts of things. What about CWA and Rotary and all those sort of things? Were you involved in those too?**

Yes. My husband's in Rotary. I'm a member of Inner Wheel. I'm not a good member. I don't do anything in it. I go to their functions from time to time. I seem to be more involved than I want to be in some things so I always get to those functions, but I am a member of Inner Wheel. What was the other one you said?

**28.15 The Country Women's.**

Oh, Country Women's, yes. Before I was married I was Social Secretary of the Country Women's Association. That's going back a long while now.

**28.27 You have obviously made a lot of friends through these organisations and in the old days the community was fairly small and you would have had a lot of friends. Have you kept in touch with any of these people?**

Yes. All the time. And the sad part about it, all those friends - those couples - married, and now there's six of them have lost their husbands and so I'm the only one with a husband left and I've got to share him, when I go out, with all these women. (Laughs). And he loves it.

**29.02 So you had a supportive family but you also had supportive group of friends as well.**

Oh wonderful friends. No-one could know what friends are about until you're in trouble. And when we found out about my husband's cancer a month ago, it is absolutely unbelievable that people have come here to offer to look after him if I want to go out; the Cancer Support Team has offered to help; three women I know who are trained registered nurses have come and said "Oh, go on, if you want to go off..." and stay and rub his back for you and things like this. And it's just so wonderful the support we've had from the community. That young man that's saying he's only in his thirties (indicating visitor) he came just to see how Tom was. You know, as people being well known in the area I suppose, because we were in business for so long, and I've been involved in the community for so long, that we know so many people.

**30.05 Yes, and also being a small community back then, you'd have the opportunity to know a lot more of the people.**

Oh, yes. Well my husband says he gets disgusted when he says he walks down the street and no-one know him and he doesn't know anyone. (Laughs). But that happens because it's such a big community now.

**30.25 And how do you feel about the shopping area and how all the old shops have gone and been replaced by these bigger supermarkets?**

That was a very hard thing to get used to. When you go into a shop and you're used to being served over the counter and say "I want a metre of that or a pound of butter" and they would serve it to you over the counter, and you can go into a shop now and they don't recognise that you're there. As a matter of fact, to be quite truthful, I was in Grace Bros. - and I'm not ashamed to admit it was Grace Bros. - and I walked up and I picked up what I wanted and I took it over to the counter, I handed my charge account to the woman. She took that, make out the docket, wrapped the parcel up, looked away and said "Sign it there". She didn't speak! I said "Excuse me, but" I said, "I am not deaf. Are you dumb?" And she looked at me. I said you are very rude. Very rude. Don't even recognise a customer when they come into the shop. In those days you wouldn't ...

**31.41 It was personal service wasn't it?**

It was! And we still stick to that. If we find someone that gives us good service, and they are struggling to get on their feet, we would go and give them our business in preference to a bigger firm.

**32.03 It's become a bit impersonal hasn't it?**

Very! Very, yes.

**32.07 And do you think - how did you feel about the area changing from a more countrified area?**

It's too big. Well, we don't like it. I still love my life here and no way could we ever move away from here, but we just think it's just too big. Because now when I get into my car I've just got to think, "Now I want to go there. How do I get there?" You've got to think which way you're going. So, no

we both agree that it's ...

END

SIDE B

TAPE 2

SIDE A

**0.13 One thing I'd like to ask you, after the War when migrants came here from Europe, often as displaced persons, did you find them coming into the area made any difference? Did you have much to do with the migrant people?**

No. I still don't have a great deal to do with migrant people. Although I have had an International Night here in my home, and I invited an Iran man, an Iraquian, a New Zealander - you name it, they were all here! And they all came in with their ... I'm not racist at all, it doesn't worry me at all what a person's race is ... but I think there are 16 now different nationalities in Penrith. Yes.

**1.07 They used to have market gardens and that sort of thing on the outskirts of Penrith, didn't they?**

Yes, well where we lived down - as I said before - that was a Chinese market garden office where we lived, but I don't have a great deal to do with them. I do have a bit to do with an Aborigine woman, only because of the work I do, but other than that I don't have a great deal to do with them.

**1.38 So, after reflecting on your life during the '40's and the early '50's, looking at the changes that have taken place and how things have changed, how do you feel about that and how has it affected you personally?**

No, I don't think it ... you see, I've always been a liberated person and done my own thing, and my mother was the same. And my daughter's say I was the original Germaine Greer, and I've never had any problems really with anything like that. But I can see really where life has changed so completely to what it was when we were growing up. Completely different! I mean if a girl had a baby before she was married - I'm only thinking of one particular woman now that was my age and she had a child - and she was ... it was shocking how that girl was treated because she had that baby. And it was good for her that she had parents who supported her and kept that child, but no-one wanted to have anything to do with her, and she was about my age when that happened and I've never forgotten that!

**3.19 So in that way you think the community support is better?**

Oh, there more tolerant. People are more tolerant to the things like that. I really don't ... actually I resent de facto relationships and things like that, and I just think that married women ... you're married, and the sanctity of marriage ... I've tried to teach my grandchildren that too, and I hope that brushes off onto them a little. Because I don't think that de facto's should be regarded as wives and - I'm sorry if you're ...

**No I'm not.**

But that's how I feel! I really feel that way, but that's only me.

**4.09 What about the feeling of ... is there anything you miss about the old days? Perhaps the feeling of having more freedom or more space around you?**

I think that that you don't feel as safe today. You could walk anywhere, and if you here a noise now outside I wouldn't open that door to find out what it is! You've lost that feeling of security. I mean we've got this house heavily alarmed. You couldn't lift a window up or anything like that here at night, and as soon as it gets dark I turn the alarm on and we feel safe. But I just think it's sad that you've got to live that way. And I wouldn't open that door at night, after dark, unless someone identifies themselves and I've got to be sure they are who they say they are. And I think that's only taking wise precautions anyway, isn't it?

**It is. And I suppose you never locked the doors when you were first married?**

We never, ever locked the door. We never locked the car. We've had three cars stolen from Penrith. We got there each time back, but just leaving them in the street with the key in it - we didn't realise that things would get like that, but that's how it happened! But you've lost that sense of security that you had once.

**5.49 And so you don't feel that you miss the old ways so much? You feel that you've moved with the times?**

Yes. We have. I think so. The only thing I can't get used to is metric. I really cannot. I still work everything out in miles and yards, and I go into a shop and I say "Right, I want so many yards" and they say "What's that?" and I said "Well you work it out for me, I'm not standing here ...". (Laughs). So, moneywise OK, I had no trouble with money. But it was the metric system with miles and things like that - I still can't get used to it. I'm not going to try anymore! (Laughs).

**6.29 So you think that the urbanisation of this - what used to be a country town really - do you think it is better for the urbanisation for people living here?**

Oh, I think it's better for people, and there are more jobs available for people. They don't have to travel. In those days there were very little jobs in Penrith. I know, just my sisters,



had to travel to town. Yes, they worked in the City. They couldn't get jobs here. Well there was nothing for them to do in Penrith, so the three of them worked in the City. I didn't, as I say, I worked for my father, so ... but I think, considering our age, I think we've coped with it pretty well and the changes, because it has been big changes.

**7.23 What about the feelings of - do you have any sense of loss when you think of all the old buildings that were pulled down?**

Well I think Penrith Council should hang their heads in shame really, when you look at what they've done over in Windsor where they've preserved the wonderful buildings there and they've got these wonderful little plaques everywhere to say what it was! But in Penrith as soon as something gets too old, they just ... yes ... it's gone! And I went round to the Council some time ago to find out about those terrace houses that are in High Street. There's a ...

**Opposite the old church there?**

Opposite the old church, yes. And I said "What are you going to do with those?" Because I would have got a petition up to save those, but they said "Don't worry, they will not be pulled down". So I said "Well, they want repairing". But anyway I've noticed now that they have been repainted and apparently repaired. Because that's a pity. You see, the Catholic Church here - that big round church down here - you've no idea the dear little church that was there! Absolutely beautiful it was, this little old church, and they pulled it down to make way for that big round church, but ...

**Is that St. Nicholas'?**

St. Nicholas', yes. So, they're the things I think we should have preserved. But they haven't. But that old home there (indicates painting) is still standing!

**8.55 Well I think we've covered everything now. So thank you very much indeed for your interview.**

Good thank you, and I hope it's a success for you.

END OF INTERVIEW