

**MRS. JOY WILLIS,
74 HOBART STREET
ST. MARYS. NSW.**

0.13 My name is Joy Willis. I live at 74 Hobart Street, St. Marys. I was born on 5th February, 1926 at St. Marys. My marital status - I'm widowed. Nationality - Australian, with three children.

0.42 First of all I'd like to ask you a few questions about your family background. What kind of work did your father do?

He was a sheet-metal worker at Reckitt and Coleman in Sydney.

And your mother? Did she work?

No. She stayed home and looked after the house, the family, did the cooking and the shopping and all that type of thing. Women didn't work in those days, they did their household chores and looked after their families.

And so when you came to this area - you were actually born in this area?

Yes I was born in the house next door to here.

So you've lived here all your life?

Lived here all my life and I was virtually an only child because my brother and sister were ten and 12 years older than I was.

1.46 And so you went to school from here? Was that far to travel?

No, it was about a mile ... or more ... a little bit more. It was all bush all the way through, you used to walk through the bush and you know there was no fear and worry or ... someone was going to grab you or There were a couple of old men that lived in tents that were - not tramps - they were ... it was in the Depression. They had nowhere to live. And I was always warned "Don't go near those tents". But I think they were quite honorable old men! (Laughs).

And you walked by yourself?

I walked by myself.

2.31 And what was the land like here? Was it a big block of land that you father's house was on?

It was seven acres. And I think they originally intended to poultry farm it, but the foxes took half the stock one night and someone else took the other half the next night!

So you didn't have many close neighbours?

No. There was one about a quarter of a mile away and another one ... oh about the same distance up the other way, and she had a car! An old, you know ... I don't know, I suppose it was an old Ford of some sort. And she was always telling me as a child she was going to buy an aeroplane because they were the same to drive as the car! (Laughs)

3.20 She was progressive! And did your family have a car?

Oh, no! No, we never had one.

How did you get about? You lived near the railway of course.

Yes, a half mile walk to the station. We used to go in as a child - every Saturday morning I was taken into Sydney, either taken to the movies or ... something like that, you know. An outing! I was privileged I suppose because there were so many children from the Depression that didn't even have a pair of shoes, but I didn't realise that.

So you were comfortably looked after?

We were. Yes. My father was in constant work. I was talking to a friend recently who was at school with me and she was telling me that her father - there were six in her family - and she said they never knew what money was. She said 'Until War broke out and Dad joined the Army' she said 'we'd never had money. We had dole coupons'. She said 'There was never any money in the house'. And I never realised this. I used to think that I was badly done by because when I used to take my lunch to school it was wrapped in grease-proof paper and sometimes there was a girl used to bring hers in a white serviette. And I used to think "Badly done by!". But there were some poor children that had them wrapped in newspaper! Bare feet and they had newspaper-wrapped sandwiches!

5.03 Did your parents use their garden to grow vegetables?

No. They grew - my mother was more into flowers. I think she bought all her vegetables. I don't remember her growing them.

Did she have her shopping delivered from the local shops?

Yes the butcher used to call and take an order; the grocer used to come on Thursday and take an order and bring it back on Friday with his horse and dray; and the milkman used to come twice a day, first of all in a cart and then later on his son used to come with the milk can on the handles of a pushbike - half pint morning and night, you see, because there were no refrigerators.

5.57 You had an ice-chest did you?

Had an ice-chest, yes. We were one of the lucky ones with an ice-chest.

And I don't suppose you had any electrical appliances when you were a young child did you? Like vacuum cleaners or anything?

No. We didn't get the electricity on until about 1939 or '40. Oh we had the water, because my father paid to have a private line brought down the footpath onto the house. We had an underground well and a tank up the top that you pumped the water up into the tank, and he had laid the water on into the laundry out the back and into the kitchen. So we had laid on water.

6.41 You didn't have a sewer, I suppose?

Oh, no! (Laughs)

Where was the toilet? Way up the back, or ..

Yes. Out the back, yes. Down the corner of the block.

6.51 So when you were a child what did you do for recreation.

Well I had no-one to play with for a long time.

There were no neighbours ...?

No neighbours. None with children anyway. I used to paint and read, sew, all those things kids do, you know - by themselves! But now they sit and they say "I've got nothing to doooo!" (Laughs)

7.21 So you had to entertain yourself?

Had to entertain yourself. Later on there were three girls came to live up the top of the hill and we used to play together. Cubby houses and things like that.

Did you have any family pets?

Yes. I had an old Cattle Dog. It regularly had puppies, and I used to play with them. I used to plug them into the teats, and then pull them off and say "You've had enough, you go on there!". (Laughs). We used to have cattlemen. There were cattle sale yards down near the station and the cattlemen used to - on this paddock here we had a dam that my father had dug down the bottom - and they used to rest the cattle on there. And they used to wait for Prinnie to have her pups 'cause she had lovely pups. They used to buy them for cattle dog - to look after the cattle, you know.

8.23 And so the shopping area was very small when you were a child?

It was very small. There were two grocers; there were two butchers; a post office down on the highway, where my mother used to walk every day to collect the mail before we had mail delivery. What else was there? There was a newspaper shop, cum milk-bar cum delicatessen, cum anything else you like to think of, down on the highway. And there's a bank. The Commonwealth Bank have always been here.

9.01 So what did you do when you left primary school? Did you go to high school locally?

Yes. I went to Penrith High School. I had to travel there by train. There was only Penrith High School, Katoomba High School, Richmond High School and Paramatta High School.

So you went to Penrith by train.

I went to Penrith.

And after that did you go on to any tertiary study or to tech or anything like that?

No. I wanted to become a French teacher actually. I was very interested in French. And my mother - when I finished my Intermediate Certificate - she said to me 'Where do you want to work' and I thought 'Oh, beauty', you know, 'I don't have to go to school anymore!'. (Laughs)

9.57 So you worked locally?

No. I worked in the city. During the War you were Manpower and you had to go where they sent you, and you couldn't leave. I worked there from the time I left school until 1945, and you were released.

10.13 And can you remember what sort of money you earned when you first started work?

Yes. I got nineteen and ten pence for the first three months and then IO got a rise to a pound and twopence. I think the twopence was the tram fare up to the station because you couldn't have got on a tram with a pound note. (Laughs). I've heard of people recently who've only got - Joan Reece down here only got seventeen and six or something when she first started work.

You were on a good wage?

I was on a good wage. A good thing.

And you worked - was it factory work you were doing?

Yes. War work.

Making things like nets and ...?

Making parts for - it was STC - parts for radios and that type of thing - communications.

So I suppose most of your age-group in this area did that sort of work?

I don't know what they did. But there was no work here except the occasional job in a shop. You had to move out of St. Marys or travel from St. Marys to get work. There were a few more shops in Penrith. You could go to work up there if you could get it. But I didn't want to spend the rest of my life here - Sydney was too good!

11.40 And when you were married - when was that?

1947.

Right. And you lived in your parent's home?

Yes I lived with them until ... while this house was being built, which took about four years - three to four years or so. And by that time I had my second child.

12.02 So this is a timber house is it, or ...?

It's a timber house. But I've had cladding put on it. I couldn't afford the upkeep.

So you built a timber house and it was hard to get materials after the War?

Terrribly hard. You couldn't get anything. You had to order it. I remember we sent in an order for tiles to Wunderlich, and they sent it back and said we could send it in in another six months and they'd tell us whether they'd accept it then or not. (Laughs). That's how bad it was!

Did you have any children before you moved into your house?

Oh, yes. I had the two of them.

And you had another one after you moved.

One after. Three of them were born up at Penrith Hospital?

13.01 So you planned your children did you?

Oh. *(Knocked microphone.)* Sorry.

13.09 And what were the medical facilities like in the area?

Well, after the War we had two more doctors move in, but before that we had one.

When you were a child?

When I was a child there was one doctor and - it was old Teddy Day - and his daughter then graduated and she became a doctor too. So the two of them were in the practice. Mum had actually booked the doctor for me when she was going to have me. She had me suddenly at home you see, and the doctor came down afterwards and he said 'Can I see Mrs. Joiner?' and Mum called out from in the bedroom 'Don't let him in! He's not going to hold my hand and say "How are you" and charge me a guinea!' (Laughs). He said 'Well, can't I just come in and have a look at the baby?'

14.16 And so by the time you had your children, you had all three in the hospital?

Oh, yes. Facilities were much better then.

What happened if there was an emergency in the old days - when you were a child?

I don't know. Oh, well I suppose they just had to take them up to Penrith Hospital. There was an ambulance service then. But I know my sister had a big operation during the War - a lung operation - and she had to have it dressed every second day. She was evacuated from Prince Henry Hospital because of the War and because they couldn't get petrol, they had to buy a horse and sulky. And her husband used to take her up to Penrith Hospital by horse and sulky every second day to get the dressing and the tube cleaned out - the drain tube in it.

15.20 Where was that? Where did they live?

They lived in St. Marys, yes.

So they had to go all that way by sulky?

Yes.

15.30 So after you were married and you moved in here, what was it like? Was it still very sparse as far as neighbours were concerned?

Oh yes. I'm trying to think. Yes, there was no-one. This was all ... of course my father owned that land. There was nothing around here. These were only built - these War Service Homes behind - in ... oh, it must have been the '60s I think.

So it was still all bush really?

It was still all bush, yes. After the War they did build Housing Commission houses up on top of the hill, and that was the beginning of the rot, you know. That's when the village developed from a village into (laughs) whatever it is now!

16.23 When you were a child, what was it like around here? What was the landscape like?

Oh, it was absolutely beautiful. Over the other side of the railway line was virgin bush.

Where all the factories are now?

Where all the factories are now, which are an absolute eyesore - not aesthetic at all. And I used to have - in the '50s - I used to have as many as 14 Kookaburras come and sit on the clothes line twice a day to be fed. Now, if you hear a Kookaburra ... 'Listen, listen, that was a Kookaburra!', you know. You're quite taken aback by it.

You'd hear more trains than anything else I suppose?

More trains ... well, actually being so close to the line, the trains - you don't hear them so much. If I'm talking to the neighbour up the back up there you hear them further away and the further you get the longer you hear them. But here they just go 'zshooooop', you know.

17.31 So it's not so bad? And did you have electrical appliances when you were first married?

Yes I had a few. The iron and the jug and the toaster and a fridge by then, an electric stove. I didn't have to clean the fuel stove that Mum had and used to black every Friday, you know. And gone were the candles and all that type of thing. But during ... when I had my eldest child and the second one - we used to meet everyone up at the clinic and you knew everybody in St. Marys. This was before the population swelled, and you'd go down the street shopping and leave your pram - put the break on and leave the pram outside the shop while you went in

and got it - got whatever you wanted - and you'd know all the prams. You'd say, 'Oh, look! Molly's down here today! There's Gordon in his pram!' And you wouldn't dare leave your child in the pram outside anywhere now.

That's one way the place has changed.

Oh yes. Not for the better.

18.45 You have security here now too?

Oh, doors, windows - everything! I've even inquired into a burglar alarm. The trouble is they can be a little bit troublesome too. We've got the keys to next door because he's got one and it's gone off twice with nobody in there.

Oh, that's a worry.

He left the keys so we could turn it off if it does go off.

But you do have ... you have had burglaries here? Quite a few?

Oh, yes. Not a few, but I've had two. We were up in Townsville and the video and some money and some jewellery and what-have-you ... they broke the back window and got in there. And then a couple of years later I had the lawnmower taken.

From the shed?

From the shed, yes. But it's chained up and locked now!

And you've got a dog!

And the lawnmower's not there. It's in the garage now. They've got to move the car out to get the lawnmower out now!

And you've got the dog specially?

And the dog especially.

19.59 That's a change from the days when you could go out and leave everything open!

Leave everything - the windows open - if you go down the street if you weren't going to be that long, you know. I used to lie down and have a sleep in the afternoon when the children were asleep, you know put them down, and the neighbour used to come up and she'd say to me 'One of these days you're going to get raped. You will leave that front door open won't you!' (Laughs). And now she berates me the other way because she says 'Your doors always locked'. (Laughs).

20.37 And what did you do for shopping in the '50s? Did you still have things delivered, or did you have to go to the shops as well?

No. my husband used to take me. I'd go to the clinic with the baby in the pram or the stroller, and I'd do my shopping and he'd come and pick me up and bring it all home.

You had a car then?

Yes. Yes, we were one of the 'top-knots'! (Laughs). You didn't have a push-bike anymore!

21.07 So, looking at the ... oh, you went to the local school here, and did your children also go to the local school?

Yes. They went to the same school that I went to here and by that time we had a high school. The three of them went to St. Marys High School.

Did they walk there?

Yes.

It was close enough. And did any of them go on to tertiary education?

Not university. But they did other things. The youngest one went to a business course because she couldn't get a job, and the master of the Tech College said to her 'This is ridiculous with the pass that you've got and you can't get in - come and see me!' So she was in the next day! And so she did that, and my son has done business courses, you know ... what do you call them?

Management courses?

Management courses, yes. He's got his own business now.

And what about the other one?

Oh, well she's married and she's living in Townsville and she's got two children. I don't see much of her because it's so far away. It's too hot for me up there. I've got to go mid-winter if I want to go up there!

22.38 What about your daily routine in the '50s? How would that have differed from you mother's daily routine say in the '30's, you know?

Oh, I don't know. I did the housework and the washing and the ironing, which she used ... but I did it the easy way. She used to have the fuel copper that she used to have to stoke up and get boiling before she (laughs) put the clothes in. Of course I had the washing machine and all that type of thing by then.

So you were basically doing the same sort of thing but with a bit more help?

Easier. It was lighter. And I used to do a lot of sewing.

Did you? Did you make your children's clothes?

All of them - except their socks and singlets! (Laughs).

And your mother did the same for you did she?

Yes. Yes.

23.50 And what about finances. Did you and your husband pool finances or was he the breadwinner and give you ...?

Yes. I didn't work. I didn't have any income.

And did he give you a certain amount each week?

Yes. For the household and he used to pay all the bills. I got a rude shock when he died.

You had to learn how to ...?

I had to learn. I'd never written a cheque even! The bank manager said to me 'Oh you'll need a cheque book' and I said 'But I don't know how to write a cheque!' and he said 'Well I'll show you.'

When did you lose your husband?

1971. And he said 'Well I'll show you.' I pretty soon got on top of it and once the house was paid - we still had a couple of years to pay on the house - and I just felt lovely to be free of debt and no encumbrances or anything.

So he managed the finances during your marriage?

Oh yes. I just managed the food side of it.

24.55 And what about industry in the area? When you were growing up here I don't suppose there was very much industry at all?

Oh, there were tanneries and there was a cannery - one or two canneries - a jam factory. What else ... a lot of the men used to do what they called wood-cutting. I don't know what it involved but you used to see them with their axes on a bush bike pedalling out that way.

Oh yes, cutting timber?

Cutting timber. Yes. He was a timber cutter, you know. We used to buy our fire wood.

25.34 What did your husband do?

He was an engineer.

He worked locally did he?

Yes. He worked locally.

25.44 So did you have much help with the children?

No. None. He worked - the hours were too long.

But you had your family nearby so you had some sort of support?

Oh, well Mum died in 1953, just before my second one was born. So I really had no help at all. She did help me with the first one.

And you didn't have many neighbours either for help?

No, no. No neighbours.

You had to manage as best you could?

I had to manage. And you find out you can do it.

26.22 Did you belong to any community organisations?

No. Only the school, when the children went to school. The Mothers' Club and P & C - and highschool P & C. That was it. I'm not a club ... my name was Joiner when I was born, but I'm not a joiner, you know! (Laughs). I'm not a people person. I'm quite happy by myself. I suppose that's encapsulated like as I was when I was a child.

You had to find your own fun?

That's right. And that's why I get so annoyed when these kids with all their video games and TVs and everything else that they've got - and they get bored! They've got nothing to do! It's pathetic I think.

27.13 And when you say you quite like being along, when you were younger and there was no ... the area was fairly open and there weren't many houses, did you ever feel lonely or isolated?

No, no. I used to do things ... I'd find things to do. I used to think that wouldn't it be wonderful if I could juggle, and I'd try! (Laughs). I never ever could. Or if I could whirl a lasso! And I'd try, but I never could. And I used to get - you know the little tobacco tins with the hinged lid that men used to have? - I used to get those and I used to put ants in them and dig a hole and bury them (laughs) and leave them to see how long it would be. (Laughs). I'd dig them up and see if they were dead. And they never ever were. They must be able to live for a long, long time without seeing daylight.

So you were doing scientific experiments?

Oh I suppose so. If that's scientific!

28.25 And when the area started to get more built up how did you feel about that?

Oh I didn't mind in the first place. But then suddenly when they were right on my doorstep I sort of resented it. Next door there the block was too small to have a house on it, and their windows - the bathroom, toilet, bedroom window - was right beside mine.

There was a lack of privacy?

Yes. And the kids turn on the radio and they talk to each other in the bathroom and you can hear them put the soap down in the rack when they have a shower. (Laughs). And I always say I'd love one of those domes of silence over my house, you know. If only I could get that I'd be happy. I do love peace and quiet.

29.17 And that's one of the things that you've lost really with suburbanisation?

I have, yes. That's right. But they used to have - during the War, before I was married I used to go to them - we had dances everywhere and we used to go ... they had one down here every so often, and I used to chase them round, down to Seven Hills and Parramatta and Sydney, Petersham.

29.45 So dancing was the main entertainment?

Yes. Oh, yes. And if you were too tired to dance you went to the movies to see all the shows that were showing round the movies.

And by comparison, what did your children do for entertainment in their early teens?

Oh, well they weren't sort of given that much lee-way because by that time things had started to tighten up. I know the drugs and drink started to get into the high school just as my eldest girl was leaving in 1965. There was that blow-up down up about the ... purple hearts was it? And that's when she was just due to leave. It started that they couldn't have a party unless they had to have drink there. So she was monitored very carefully and ... a bit strict I suppose I was with them, but I think it's paid off.

30.49 So that was an effect of the population expansion really that in a sense they lost a bit of freedom?

Yes. But not only that I think another part of it was all this raunchy racy music with the racy lyrics and all that sort of thing. Rock music started to come out, and I blame a lot of that on it.

31.16
END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

0.03 Then we got the rock music - and it's developed even worse now.

Yes. There's a lot of talk of alcohol in schools and that sort of thing now.

Yes. Well I was here by myself the other night and I thought oh - they advertised a Max Gillies play - and I thought 'Oh, I don't mind Max Gillies you know, the ABC ...' I put it on. Well! The first sentence he said: four letter word - 'Oh, my so-and-so leg!' I just hit the - I've got a remote control - I just hit the button and turned it off. I think it's unnecessary. People can't express themselves without using bad language. I feel sorry for them. They've got a poor grip of the English language if they've got to resort to that type of thing.

And so did your children watch a lot of television when it first came in?

No. It was controlled. My son was only saying the other day - we were over there and he said: 'Oh the things that kids watch on TV and the way that kids are now!' and he said 'What caused it?' and I said 'Parental control!' I said 'You just think back'. I said 'You were never allowed to have loud music on' I said 'I used to say "This is my house and I don't want it. If you want to listen to it you take it to your bedroom and turn it down and put the head phones on." 'I said 'You were never allowed...!' I said 'Do you remember the things you weren't allowed to remember on TV?' He said 'Yeah, I suppose so.' (Laughs).

1.41 So even then when your children were growing up, there still weren't many neighbours around?

Oh, no. No.

There was still a nice feeling of space around ...?

Oh well, they started up the back, because I can remember Craig having a dozen boys in the backyard to play with.

But they still had a fair bit of space around?

Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Both houses were down behind there. So, there was room.

2.13 And what did your children do for recreation? Did they go dancing or to the movies?

Oh, well Craig was in Scouts and Cubs and all that. That's what I say, if two dogs met on the corner, Craig would have to be there! (Laughs). You know, St. John's Ambulance classes, drumming lessons, whatever, you know. It doesn't matter that he's not going to become an expert at them. But he had to be there. Couldn't be left out of anything. He's an organiser and a joiner.

2.48 And did you have a lot of friends in the area through neighbours or through the school clubs and so forth?

Myself? Oh, I had acquaintances but not close, close - not really close friends. Somebody that I used to ... occasionally I might take one of the children for a walk in the stroller in the afternoon and visit them and come home. Not like my mother had a close friend that lived - oh at least a mile away - at least! And they used to visit each other. Maude her name was! (Laughs). Maude! And Maude would come down here and - I think it was Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon - and have afternoon tea. Mum would have the embroidered table cloth and the sugar and the cakes and the tarts or whatever she'd made, you know, and then the next week - she'd only be here about an hour - and then the next week Mum would go over to Maude's and Maude would have the afternoon tea table set with the embroidered table cloth! (Laughs)

They went to so much trouble just for the hour's visit.

Yes. That's right. Maybe two hours at the most. And to walk that far too!

4.08 She thought nothing of it I suppose?

No. No, no.

And you had a car when your children were growing up so it was easier for you to get around?

Yes. Yes. We used to take them in summer time a lot to the beach. We found that was a good recreation.

Which beach did you go to?

Collaroy mostly. Or sometimes we'd go down south or we did take them up to Coolangatta.

4.37 And did you go on family picnics and that sort of thing?

We had barbecues. Well we went to the beach for our picnics in the summer and we went out into the bush or somewhere for a barbecue in the winter, with relatives.

4.53 And what about after the War - a lot of European migrants moved in - did you find many of them settling around here?

Yes. At one stage I was the only Australian in this block of houses here. But I found them all pretty good.

What nationality were they?

Polish ... she's Scottish married to Maltese next door; then there's an Australian, but they used to be Italians in there; and then there was an Australian married to an Italian; and then there's a Yugoslav married to an Italian; and then there's two Yugoslavs; and then there are Italians further down; we had ... and Germans round the corner; Lithuanian married to a German.

And when would they have moved in here?

They came after the War. In the 50's I guess it would have been. When they started bringing the refugees out from Europe. Dutch ... but the Dutch mostly seemed to clan together and go out, you know, where one bought a block of land the other one would buy a block of land next to it and they seemed to stick together like a clan.

And did you find the European people had any effect on life in the area? You know, did their life style ...

No. Except that some of them had to have everything straight away. 'Oh you must do this' and 'You must tell me this' and 'How much can I get this for' and ... that was it. They weren't willing to wait and go without. Like when I moved in here I had nothing. I had one wicker chair. I had no lounge. I had a table that had been loaned to me and chairs from my father that had been loaned to me. And I was happy - not happy - but content to go without until we could afford it and pay cash.

Right. You didn't use credit!

Oh, no. No credit. And I felt that some of them had to have it straight away. And it's strange because they'd been without - they'd been deprived - in Europe for so long.

7.42 Maybe that was why. They thought they'd come to a new country. And the industry here now of course has grown enormously. What sort of industry is there now?

I don't know ... oh, Case up there make ... it's heavy industry. Farm machinery and things like that. I don't know ...

The factories across here - what do they make?

I don't know. I really don't know. (Laughs). It's noisy, whatever it is that he makes! You know those British Goldmont Gong, the man with the Gong? I think that's what he is! (Laughs).

8.22 Making that noise! So when you think back on what it was like here when you were growing up as a child and what it developed into after the War with more population moving out to the west, what are your main feelings about it?

There are some things that have their advantages, like medical facilities, shopping's easy. I rarely go out of St. Marys to buy anything now. I think the only thing I'd have to leave here for would be to buy furniture.

And where would you go for that?

I don't know. That'd depend on what I wanted. Parramatta - furniture shops are everywhere, but not here. Electrical shop's here. But all in all it's lost its village atmosphere where you go down the street and you'd meet someone. You knew you were going to meet someone and have a little chat. You never see anyone you know now. Never. 'Cause I think the population's something up close to 100,000 now. 'Cause by the year 2000 I think St. Marys and Penrith their estimating 200,000?

I think it might be more! And what other things have changed for the better or for the worse? How has it affected you?

The noise of course. I just don't have to ... rarely do I go away from here to buy anything - even Christmas shopping. No ... I can't put my finger on what it is but it's just sort of lost its friendly atmosphere ...

And the sense of security that you were talking about?

Oh yes, oh yes. You never know who to trust. We had a big storm here one night. Oh, it was dreadful, and the poor old Labrador that I had used to go berserk when she got older. When she was young she used to ignore it. She used to go berserk. And this night we had this dreadful storm and she kept coming into my bedroom beside my bed and going 'mm..mm..mm..mm' and I ... in the end I thought 'She's not going to leave me alone, I'm going to have to get up and go out there with her. Not that you could do anything for her. When I got out there Nick was already out of his room, sitting there, and I said 'Oh she got you up too!' I said 'What did she want me for?' Anyhow, of course we had the lights on, and I said 'Well she's not going to let us sleep, I may as well go and have a cup of coffee while I'm sitting here. This is about half past three in the morning. We had the light on. The next think there was a knock at the door - and it's still teaming cats and dogs - and I opened the inside door - not the outside one - and there was a young fellow standing there and it was just as though you'd picked him out of the sea like that. He was plastered with water, just drenched! He said 'Oh' he said 'I'm sorry to trouble you but I saw your light on. Would you mind ringing for a taxi for me?' And I said 'No'. I thought 'No, I'm not asking you in!' I said 'I'm sorry I can't ask you in'. He said 'No that's all right, I couldn't come in anyway, but I'll just stand up there'. He was shivering - it was cold! Anyhow I said afterwards - he'd wanted this taxi - and I said afterwards 'Now isn't that dreadful to think that a person' ... I said 'Years ago you'd have invited that person in, given them a rug to put round them and given them a cup of coffee to warm them up'. I said "I wouldn't have opened ..." He asked me for a cigarette. I wasn't going to open the door and give him a cigarette. No way.

And you've had those three men try to knock the door down recently!

Yes. Kick it down! She said they were kicking and ... they got it open, and they broke the handle off the one round the corner - off the security door.

13.16 The security angle is one that has changed.

Yes that's a bad one, yes.

And what about the way children live in the area now? Do you think that has changed much?

I don't know. I don't have much to do with the children now. I always say 'I've reared mine - I'm shuck of other people's'.

13.45 Your upbringing and your children's upbringing - was there much difference?

No. I don't think so. I really don't. Except that I was a loner and they had each other to fight with. And, boy, do you know how many pairs you make out of three children?

How many?

You can make three! You can make that one and that one; that one and that one; and that one and that one. (Laughs) And there's always two against one somewhere.

14.20 And what about the landscape, how that's changed since before the War?

Well we had beautiful natural flora and fauna. There were foxes over there. I know they're - what do they class them as? - a pest or rodent now? And the rabbit man used to come with his basket and the rabbits in it, you know, with a white cloth over it. Caught the rabbits over there - one and six a pair! What are they now? About four dollars each!

A luxury!

I couldn't bring myself to eat them now. Mum used to do all sorts of things with rabbits - she'd bake them, she'd stew them, she'd curry them, she'd fricassee them! (Laughs).

They taste good too!

They used to. I used to love it. But I haven't been able to buy rabbit since I was a kid - I had a pet one. (Laughs). I mean all flora that was here ... I see them now showing natural Australian things on TV and I often say 'We used to have that growing round here!'. We used to have the little fly-catchers, you know like little honey-dews? With the ... we used to have them here. We used to have ground berries and five-corners. We used to go and pick and eat.

Five-corners?

Five-corners. Do you know what five-corners ...?

No.

Oh. Nobody ... I've only ever found one person who knew what a five-corner was. That was a fellow from Canberra. I mentioned five-corners one day and he said 'Do you know what they are?' and I said 'Yes'.

A little fruit is it?

Yes. It's a spikey little plant that grows like that with sharp whats-a-name, and the berries grow in like that, and they're sweet. They're nicer than the old granberries are. Oh well they're a pretty little prickly bush that grows flat on the ground. You lift them up and pull the berries off them and eat them. But the five-corners are the nicer ones of the two. They grow up from the bush like that. But sago bushes and things like that that used to grow.

Did you pick your own sago?

No, no, no, no. It has a flower on it like that. It's just a shrub. It has a flower and it's just like a lot of sago on the top.

And so you don't see any of those things anymore?

You don't see any chocolate flowers!

I've never heard of them

Oh they're beautiful. They're a little purple flower and they grow in the ground and they smell just like milk chocolate!

Really!

Little purple ... and little ground orchids, you know. Oh, I don't know what they call them. We used to call them orchids - bush orchids - but they had little yellow flowers with brown spots on them. Just like little orchids they were.

17.39 So you don't see anything like that anymore?

You don't see anything. It's all been bulldozed. It's all gone. 'Course we don't see the bull ants now either - you know those big bull ants? (Laughs).

17.45 That's a good thing! And of course you've got all the industry over here to look at instead of the bush.

Oh, that's dreadful. It's an eyesore. An absolute eyesore. But we used to take ... we went through - well, that wasn't mooted until 1972 or 3 over there. We used to take the three children for a walk through - crossed over the railway line and down the other side - and the kids used to love it. There were little dells where the little bush ferns grew and chocolate flowers! (Laughs).

It sounds magic!

It was! And the kids used to absolutely adore it. "Oh we're going for a walk!" you know, through the and they used to adore it - go right down to the creek down there and walk along the creek and come back again. It's all gone!

18.46 I think that's just about covered everything really, unless you can think of anything else you'd like to tell me about?

18.58 I can't think of anything. Did I mention on that tape - on that tape - about walking home from the railway station on the?

No. What ... this was when you were coming home at night?

Yes. Coming home at one o'clock in the morning and there'd be bush each side. No worries! Never worried about anything.

And how far was that to walk?

About half a mile. It's half a mile from that corner - that used to go straight through down to the station.

Your parents didn't worry about you coming home late at night?

No. I suppose my mother would have worried if I had not been in by, say, quarter past one, you know, because a ten minute walk up from the station. But I was so envious of the girls that lived in the city, you know, and they could catch a tram and go ... and I used to have this long train trip home. Have a sleep on the way home of course.

19.57 And the trains were safe in those days too?

They were, yes. Oh, definitely. You wouldn't have any trouble on the trains. My eldest daughter's had a couple of nasty experiences on the train in the daytime!

20.20 Has she? I think about the only thing I haven't asked you about really was the transport and the roads. You know, there wasn't much bus transport I believe in the area ...

No, the buses didn't start here until ... it must have been the '50s I think. There was a taxi!

Oh was there? One?

Yes. (Laughs). Oh and it used to hold a pile of people. It had seats that folded down and ... oh, I can't remember ... and his name was Darling or Darlington, his surname, and they used to hire him to take them to Penrith pictures on Saturday afternoon, and they used to pay a shilling each. My mother and me and a couple of sisters and, you know, whoever. They'd get a load for him and pay a shilling each for the taxi. And he'd be there waiting for us when we came out of the theatre. We used to have a theatre in St. Marys too.

Did you?

When was that opened? In the 19 ... it must have been in the '50s. And then with the advent of TV of course - I went down there one night to see "Long Hot Summer" I think it was and there were 18 people in the theatre. It held 999! So he went down the drain.

Goodness!

Well I think we've just about covered everything, so thank you very much for your time.

You're welcome.

21.59 We used to ... if we got a penny to spend we used to go down to the grocers where they had a cardboard box and would had 'lamp-posts' in it, which was a stick with a triangle - a cone - of red or green hard lolly on the top, or marshmallow clocks or cigars - marshmallow cigars with chocolate on the end of them. What else did they have in that box? Oh, penny creamy toffees, oh, aniseed sticks, oh I can't think of all the things.

All for a penny?

.A penny each and if you were lucky and you got there ... oh, the little cone - the penny icecream cone - that was filled with sherbet and marshmallow on the top and hundreds and thousands stuck in the marshmallow. And if you were lucky and they opened a new box, you had a pick of all that. It was absolutely wonderful! Oh, dear they were great!

That was when you were a child?

When I was a child, yes. It was really great, you know, to get ... or if you wanted something that was going to last a bit longer you'd get a penny's worth of boiled lollies. The grocer used to get a piece of paper and twist it into like an icecream cone around his hand, twist the bottom of it, fill it with boiled lollies out of the jar and then that was your penny worth of lollies.

These days everything's pre-packaged isn't it?

Oh yes. I'd love to be able to buy some loose biscuits for a change, instead of buying a full 250 grams of one sort of biscuit, you know. I'd like to be able to say 'Oh well I'll have a few of these and a few of those and a few of something else'.

24.03 END OF TAPE

