

**MRS. OLGA ROBshaw**  
**124 Tuckwell Road,**  
**CASTLE HILL. 2154.**

0.15 My name is Olga Robshaw. I live at 124 Tuckwell Road, Castle Hill. I was born on the 8th November, 1924. My nationality is Australian, and I am widowed. I have three children and four step-children.

**0.37 First of all I'll just ask you a few background questions. What kind of work did your father do?**

My father actually worked at Riverstone Meat Works but he had to retire early because he was suffering from ... he was a World War I man and he was gassed in France and he served at Gallipoli, so he had to retire early because of disabilities. Then he conducted a small poultry farm.

**In ...?**

In Schofields. He had a 25-acre property in Schofields.

**1.19 So were you born in Schofields?**

I was born at Riverstone. I attended Schofields Public School and went to High School in Parramatta.

**1.30 You travelled by train, did you?**

Travelled by train, and in those days the train travel of course was confined to steam trains and service was fairly limited. In the afternoons we had to catch a train to Blacktown and we had to wait there for an hour, and it was very boring actually, because there was little at Blacktown, and then we had to wait an hour for a train that we called 'Stumpy' which was a very limited steam train addition and that would take us from Blacktown along the Richmond line. So services were very limited.

**2.18 And when you went to Primary School did you walk to school there?**

No I went to school ... we lived several miles away and my brother used to ride his bike, but when I was small I was taken to school by buggy.

**Oh, were you?**

Yes. A square-rigged buggy, and there were about eight or nine small children were taken by buggy to school and taken home by buggy in the afternoon. But as I got older I used to ride my bicycle to school

**Was that buggy like a taxi service?**

It was a kind of taxi service. There was an elderly gentleman that drove his horse and he used to pick the children up. I don't know what fee my parents paid, but that was the way that I got to school.

**3.09 So from your earliest memories of living there in your childhood, how would you describe the surrounds, the environment?**

Well, it was very open space. We had a creek running through our property. There was bush actually all around. There was an area called 'Cow-flat' where there were some fairly poor kind of residences. People who were on a very low budget sort of lived in ... some of them were shacks more or less. That wasn't on our side. But my brother and I and his friends -

there weren't any girls around - we used to spend our time catching ... trapping birds and riding horses and fishing in the lagoons and sailing canoes in the creeks, and of course they were a lot clearer in those days. But there was never any worry about roaming - you could roam at will - and there was never a threat to security. And as we got older I used to travel by train into Sydney - eventually after I had finished High School - and you could travel home by train and walk up our lonely hill and never any problems. Never any problems on the trains. So I think we had it a lot easier perhaps than the children of today who can't enjoy that kind of freedom.

**4.44 So that's one thing you'd say has changed with the population increase?**

Yes. There was no threat to children. We used to ride our bikes when we were teenagers to CWA Younger Set dances and so on, and nobody ever worried about walking late at night or travelling on the train late at night or riding your bikes anywhere. There was just no threat and that I think is one of the biggest changes that I notice now. I think we were much more fortunate than possibly our grandchildren.

**You had much more freedom?**

Much more freedom.

**5.28 And what sort of house did you live in?**

Well we had a 25-acre property and we had a fairly big house with verandahs all round, and we had our own tennis court and we had horses to ride. So we had a very good life, actually, and there was an area which my father had cleared in the creek, so we also had our own kind of private swimming pool which was clear. So we had a very free and easy, very good life, despite the fact that my father was suffering from various disabilities and his work capacity was limited.

**6.12 And what did your mother do? Did she work at all?**

Oh, no. My mother didn't work. No, we had a 25-acre property and we had a car. I suppose we had a pretty good life-style, and we used to ... my mother was actually ... her sister had been educated to have married a rich man and when she didn't, her father who was very well situated, decided that she was going to get a practical education! So she was sent, after her high schooling had finished, to a technical college to learn the practical arts of keeping a house. So she was very good at sewing and a very good cook and she liked preserving and so on. She belonged to the P & C and various other things. That was at Schofields.

**This was your mother?**

My mother, yes. But of course we had the tennis court and that was a big social centre. We had a piano and my parents encouraged us to bring our friends home, so there were always stacks of people around.

**7.30 And did your mother do all her own cooking and preserving and making jams and that sort of thing?**

Oh, yes. My mother did all that.

**7.36 Would she have had electrical appliances in those days?**

Well we had a wood stove to start with when I was smaller, then when the electricity came to Riverstone we had the electricity connected and I remember my brother and I competing for the honour of switching on the electricity. And before that we had ice-chests. But of course when the electricity came we got an electric stove and we got an electric refrigerator.

**When would that have been?**

Oh, that would have been in the early, the mid '30s I suppose. But I remember, being younger, we thought it was tremendous having a refrigerator that your mother could make ice-cream in.

**What about washing machines?**

Oh, well I mean, earlier you had coppers. I can remember in times of drought - that was before the water supply was connected - my brother and I who were quite small used to think it was quite fun. But I can remember my father hitching up the horse to a dray and taking the copper and all the rest down to the creek so that the washing could be done in the creek. And the tin tub used to be taken down and so we used to get bathed down there. But it was just to utilise when water was very short. But when the water was connected, you know - a permanent water supply - that was another problem out of the way. But we thought it was fun. No doubt my mother thought it was a pain! (*Laughs*).

**9.35 How did your mother organise her shopping?**

Well, we had a car and the big treat used to be my father would drive down to Parramatta on a Friday night and we'd do our shopping Friday night and invariably we'd go to the Roxy - that was the main picture theatre there - and we'd see a movie on the Friday night. So that was shopping night and picture night. So that was the end of the week treat.

**A special treat!**

**10.09 And did your mother have to go into Sydney very much for shopping?**

I can remember my father driving into town. I mean, I can remember parking the car in George Street, you know. That was when my brother and I discovered that Father Christmas was really our parents, because we went poking around in some parcels that were in the car while they were shopping, and we discovered what our Christmas presents were going to be! (*laughs*). So I clearly remember the car being parked in George Street, and there didn't seem to be a great deal of traffic around. But my father believed that if you had a car you travelled anywhere and everywhere! And we used to go camping doing all sorts of things, but people didn't go camping in those days. But if there was a road, we went down it!

**He was of progressive thought!**

**11.04 And did you go camping in the school holidays?**

Yes. Well my father used to establish camp. We used to go to Avalon and Dee Why and places like that, when people didn't really go camping. We had a very good set up. And we used to take our supplies down, and he even used to take some chooks down and tether them in the bush, you know, around there, so we even had fresh poultry on the hoof whenever! (*Laughs*). So we'd spend about six weeks camping down there and my father would come down at weekends, so usually there were a couple of friends with us or perhaps some other relatives. But, no, we really had a very good childhood.

**It sounds as though you enjoyed your childhood.**

Oh yes, we did.

**11.58 What did you do for recreation apart from that?**

Tennis! Tennis and tennis and swimming and riding bikes. My brother and I had a tandem bicycle and we used to - or one of my other friends - we used to ride to a lot of Round Robin tennis things and ...

**In the area?**

Yes, and play a lot of competition tennis and, oh, there used to be small dances and so on there. There was always something to do.

**12.30 Plenty of entertainment?**

Plenty of entertainment - well, we made our own. Sing-songs around the piano and so on.

**12.37 What about the Churches in the area? Did they play a big role in the community?**

They were very small actually. There was a very small Anglican Church in Schofields and another, more or less a Gospel type of school. I went to Sunday School there because there wasn't a Church of England Sunday School. And then we used to go to the Anglican Church usually on Sunday nights at Riverstone. But very little in our area in the way of Church services. You had to go to Riverstone which was only several miles away.

**13.26 And did your mother actually do the shopping locally? She went in the car?**

No. We used to go in the car. There was a small shop at Schofields, you know, a general shop and a produce store, but we used to go and do our main shopping at MacIllwraiths, I think it was, at Parramatta.

**That was the Friday night excursion?**

Yes. That was the Friday night excursion, yes.

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

Oh, well there was a local doctor. There was a small ... my brother was born in a small nursing home in Riverstone. I was born in Riverstone. The nearest hospitals were Windsor which was a very limited kind of hospital and the other hospital was at Parramatta. So, apart from the local doctors, the area was poorly served with health services.

**So in an emergency it was a fair trip to the hospital?**

Well, it was by what ever transport you had to either Riverstone to the local doctor, or to Windsor to the hospital, or to Parramatta.

**14.46 And did you have any emergencies as children that you remember?**

No. Not really. We were a pretty healthy lot. But my father was being treated for war disabilities. He used to have to go down to Royal North Shore. He'd go down by train. He'd go down there once a week. Go down by train to the Royal North Shore Hospital.

**A long trip!**

Well, you didn't think anything of it in those days.

**You just accepted the fact that you had to travel?**

Well, I mean, if you don't have a facility you travel to the nearest facility. But I think that people's expectations these days on health services are too great. Particularly seeing ... see I was President of Blacktown Hospital Board for a number of years and was tied up with health services for many years. I think that some people over-utilise health services. Their expectations are too great.

**16.02 So that's changed, hasn't it, from the old days?**

Oh, yes. Well if something's there and it's free!

**People will abuse it?**

Yes. If you've got to pay for something ... people don't always value it!

**16.17 And when you left school, did you go on to any sort of tertiary education or courses?**

Well, at that time we had a bit of a financial crisis. I did get a bursary when I first left Primary School, I did get a very good State pass, and I went to Parramatta High School. But unfortunately my father's health was really broken down then and I had an opportunity of becoming a teacher, but you know, family finances ... you don't get the financial assistance and parents had to put up a bond in those days, and it was completely ... and a lot of ... my father was a very proud man and he'd utilised a lot of money he had rather than depending on services that might have been available. So our funds were at a very low ebb. Subsequent to that he was granted a service pension, but it was too late for me. But I won a scholarship, instead of becoming a teacher, I won a scholarship to Metropolitan Business College so I did a Secretarial general course through that.

**Shorthand and typing and ...?**

Yes. And bookkeeping. But that wasn't really what I wanted to do. But, I subsequently worked in a stock broker's office and ...

**That was in Sydney was it?**

In Sydney, yes. And I was married when I was 18.

**18.12 What year would that have been?**

Well that's 50 years ago, so that's 1942. And I went to live in Ballarat for a year and then came back. I had a young son, and my first husband, he was in the Air Force and he came back when peace was declared in Europe. And then, oh, then he had to go up and do some more service in the Islands. We subsequently bought some land at Blacktown and built a house there. Meantime we were living with my parents. In the intervening period I had another son. I had three sons by that first marriage. Well, two sons, and then twins. But I lost my little girl when she was twelve months old. And my first husband and I bought into, took over 'The Advocate' - bought 'The Advocate' - and I used to assist on 'The Advocate'. And then our marriage broke up and I took over 'The Advocate' and ran it until 1976. That was from 1953 to 1976 and meantime I had three small children to rear.

**20.16 You must have been very busy. Did you rely on your parents at all for help?**

Well my parents in the meantime had - the property was too much for my father - and they bought one of my blocks of land at Blacktown and they built a place next to me.

**So you had that family support there?**

Yes. I had that family support. My father in the meantime, after I took over 'The Advocate' - became Editor of 'The Advocate' - I teamed up with a couple of other people and we started our own printing works. So we printed 'The Advocate' locally.

**20.54 Did you print other newspapers as well?**

No. Just 'The Advocate' and we did job printing and all the rest, you know, so you'd become a dab-hand at inserting and cleaning machines and all sorts of things and even delivering the papers.

**2109 And so did sort of work satisfy you more than just doing secretarial work?**

Oh yes. I mean, yes, you know you are dealing with people and I've always found people very interesting. And it gives you an opportunity to be nosy and ask questions, just the same as you're doing! *(Laughs)*

**Yes. That's right.**

**How did you find it bringing up the three children while you were working? Did they get themselves to school and so forth?**

Oh, no. Well you see my mother lived next door and she used to ... well you have very big demands on your time because you'd be attending Council Meetings and doing all sort of things. Anything could happen. I only had a small staff. You become involved in a lot of things. When we started our own print works my father used to ... in those days we didn't have our own lino-type machine and he used to go and pick up the linotype and he became involved and it was a great interest to him. Oh, you become involved in different causes. For instance there was no ambulance station and I assisted with that. I used to do the publicity and I was Secretary of their fund-raising committee. And there was no swimming pool and I was Secretary of that fund-raising campaign.

**22.48 And this would all be in the '50s?**

Then there was no hospital and, you know, we started a public campaign for the hospital and I was elected to the Board in 1957. That was a Board without a hospital, and I was Secretary to the Board - Honorary Secretary - for 11 years. Until the hospital was built and the first paid Secretary took over.

**Your work was voluntary work was it?**

Oh, yes. And I remarried in 1963 and that was a very good marriage. My husband was a widower with five children, so that was an amalgamation and together we had eight. But he was a Shire Councillor and a businessman. That was a very good relationship, but he was killed in an accident in 1980. Blacktown established ... it always had more development taking place. It held that record for many years. We had the electrification come to Lalor Park in 1956, and that opened up that area and made a big difference to the town, improved train services and radically altered the town because the town was just 'Sleepy Hollow' until then. As we got more people, for instance in 1959 we got the first one-stop shopping centre in Blacktown. That was the first Westfield Shopping Centre to be established. The founders of Westfield, Frank Lowy and John Saunders, they had a coffee shop in Blacktown they opened up, and also a real estate agency, and they could see the potential and they developed this. That was the forerunner of all the Westfield Shopping Centres.

**Really, that's interesting.**

Yes. And they still remember Blacktown.

**25.20 So that changed from what you call 'Sleepy Hollow' to what it is today?**

Oh, Sleepy Hollow - well the town used to close for lunch, you know! *(Laughs)*. And there were left overs from the past. Roads substantially improved. Well instead of the 'fill-a-pothole' strategy, you know, they had to think about building the service roads to take the new development. So there was a radical upheaval actually, and you had to change from the old thinking, you know, of the 'make-do' and industry started to come to Blacktown. You had the industrial areas that were started instead of being more or less a dormitory suburb. Instead of having one central school, you had, I think it was about ten perimeter schools established. I mean Blacktown Central was the original school. Oh, well Blacktown Central is ... I don't think there is a school there at all now. I think it's the ring schools - the perimeter schools - have taken the population away. And then you've got very substantial private development around the town.

**27.07 Prior to that time there was very little industry in Blacktown, wasn't there, apart from the poultry farms and that sort of thing?**

Oh well, it was largely a rural community actually, and you really didn't have any established industrial area at all. Then you had the big housing development at Mt. Druitt was developed. Well, you see, that still is to a degree a dormitory suburb. They still don't have sufficient industry to employ the people who lived there.

**They have to travel out to other suburbs?**

Well, I mean to say, they made a big mistake! I mean Margaret Meade, you know, the anthropologist? I remember her coming and being interviewed and she said it was all wrong actually because they lumped all those people that had those particular problems, you know, the invalid pensioners and the single mums and people with all other sorts of problems, and they sort of lumped them in that area and they expected it to gel! I mean there's some very good people living in some of those areas, but you've got streets out there with all invalid pensioners, or all, you know, single mums and all the rest. Well it generates problems.

**28.35 Yes, and they're not much support for each other?**

No. Well, I mean to say, this is it and they had really no support services at all. Actually Alan Whitham, the Anglican Minister - who was the pioneer Anglican Minister there in that new housing development - he was more or less financial advisor, spiritual advisor, handyman ...

**Everything?**

Everything to those people, and it was an unreal kind of load.

**29.14 So when you worked at the newspaper, I suppose that was very unusual for a woman to be an editor of a country paper?**

It was very unusual, but I found that my practice was I didn't believe that you should expect any favours - that you should stand on your own merits - just because you're a female. I mean I'm not a militant feminist, but I believe that if you're going to get co-operation or you're going to get respect, you earn it!

**And you found that you were well accepted in the community?**

Oh I found that I was well accepted and I just didn't expect any favours, and generally I found that men generally were very easy to work with, as long as they, you know, they more or less treated me as an equal, which is what should happen! But I just didn't ask for any favours. I found it ... the first time I had to do it and, you know, went into purely male society, I was a bit nervous. But, I mean, I did it so often I was used to being the only female amongst male groups - it didn't worry me really.

**You got used to it quickly?**

On yes.

**30.49 And I suppose you found that quite an exciting time during the '50s?**

Well it was exciting because there was always something happening and there was always some challenge.

**31.00 And did you belong to many community organisations? I don't suppose you had very much time?**

Well, I mean, from 1956 as I said I was publicly elected to the Hospital Board, and we didn't have a hospital. So that was **the** cause, and you know we had many deputations to the Minister for Health and that was quite an exciting campaign. And Mr. Sheehan ...

**And you were involved in the fund-raising and auxiliaries too?**

Oh, yes. Well I mean I started a number of auxiliaries when we organised a number of auxiliaries to start raising money for the hospital. And my husband was in Lyons and ... oh excuse me ... I've got the water on!

END SIDE A

SIDE B

0.10 Of course we were raising funds for the hospital and the swimming pool, so we personally used to run quite a few functions at home, and on our property that we had at Bilpin. We used to organise some picnics and barbecues and clay target shoots and I'd take people on a tour of district gardens. We'd have as many as 250 or so up there, you know. Lyons would help us organise it. And then we used to have some big house parties and gambling nights and things like that! We organised with Les Irwin, who was the Bank Manager at the time - that was jointly for the swimming pool and the hospital - we organised Barbara Moore to come out to Australia - the celebrated walker!

**Oh yes.**

Yes. That was Les Irwin (*indicates photograph in magazine*) and my husband was the President of the Swimming Pool Committee and I was Publicity Office ... and that was quite an exciting time. We had Barbara Moore come and take over my mother's house, which was like having a horse come to stay, you know! (*Laughs*). So, I don't know, there were just so many things happened actually. But it was all very exciting. And then when the Blacktown City Women's Bowling Club was formed I was asked to be Patron. I'm still the Patron over there.

**Are you?**

And that was a first, you know, for Blacktown. But not as many women worked in those days and there were a lot more women involved in voluntary work. There was more a tendency, if you didn't have some amenity, to sort of get in an work for it, instead of these days people say 'They ought to do this!' and 'They ought to do that!' or 'The Government ought to do this!' There was more of a feeling of self help, but then a lot of girls these days have to work to help pay the mortgage!

**2.40 Yes. And do you think that the reason that most women didn't work in those days was partly because it really wasn't the done thing for women to work, and the husbands wanted to be the provided, or do you think it was the financial aspect?**

Well, I think that there is a big financial burden on the younger women of today - even people getting into middle age. Whereas once upon a time people could go ahead and have their families, I think now they've got to think twice about it because who's going to pay the mortgage! So, you know, well it's an accepted fact that people are delaying childbirth, you know, until they are more financially secure. So I mean that's more or less a social question of today.

**Yes. But it did seem often to be that the women ... that their husbands really would have preferred them not to work too, back in the '50s.**

Oh, I didn't really encounter that! You know, I knew quite a few people who actually worked. I know my husband was quite proud of what I did.

**And supported you?**



And supported me. Well he was in business too, you know, and he was an Alderman and so on, and we were very much involved in community life. But I suppose his outlook was enlightened. (*Laughs*) I don't really know., but I didn't really strike many people whose husbands were as old-fashioned as all that!

**4.25 Right. And did you find the community a close-knit community?**

Oh, well it was smaller. It was smaller and there was more of sense of identity, whereas you had a whole lot of people came in. You know, you had thousands - about three thousand homes built in the Lalor Park area. Well naturally that makes a difference to the community. You had a lot of ... and there was that settling down period, and ...

**4.56 After the War there were a lot of migrants too?**

Oh, well this was ... no, this was after the electrification, you see. And then Les Irwin, who was the great character in the community, he encouraged a lot of migrants to come to Blacktown and we probably had a bigger share of the migrants than any other community. As a matter of fact, when they were planning the Bicentennial celebrations, Blacktown was selected as one of six areas in Australia which was said to have all the components. You know, it had all the migrants, it could be regarded as a general kind of community where everything had happened. I sat on that Bicentennial Committee and we ... there was lots of discussions about the way ... they wanted a consensus of opinion from that mixed kind of community. But we had a very big Dutch make-up in our population in Blacktown. Quite a lot of Maltese, but then or course, see that's changed radically in recent years.

**And it's become more Asian now has it?**

Well, I don't know. Of course I live in Castle Hill. There are more Asians here just the same as there are more Asians everywhere. But you had a very strong Italian background too, and they are very good people. Very good family people.

**6.41 Yes. How did the influx of migrants after the War effect life in that area?**

Well, I know personally I used to find it strange when my boys used to talk about boys with these unpronounceable names, and you know you'd meet them and they were just normal people like everyone else. But those children of migrant families generally highly valued education, and quite a few of those boys I know, of my two eldest son's generations, they have pretty well to a man done very, very well.

**They've made their name?**

Made their name in different fields. But they valued - or their parents valued - education, and they brought a new keen-ness - or their parents did - to valuing education I think.

**I wonder how much of that rubbed off on the Australians.**

Oh well it's hard to say. I think it depends on the individual. Then my boys went to Kings School at Parramatta so, you know, they left more or less the public system.

**8.05 And did they go on to tertiary education themselves?**

Three of them have degrees, and others are involved in ... one is in the Army in Adelaide. One has several degrees and he is an international trader. One's a computer scientist. One is in middle-management in the Bank. Another one has just about done everything! He's a very talented boy! Another boy is a motor mechanic turned Ambulance ... in charge of an Ambulance station so ... and heavily involved in cliff rescues, you know, in the Mountains and all the rest. So they're all ... and the one girl - one girl was killed in a car accident - the other girl is married to a builder turned farmer up on the North Coast. So they're all ... into everything, just about.

**9.17 And would they have had a free sort of life-style as children in the same way that you did growing up in the '50s?**

No. Not really, because you get this element of fear as regards their security. You know, the feeling of having to ... they couldn't roam as freely. I mean, when the boys were young, when we were at Blacktown, I can remember taking them on picnics in the bush. But I mean that soon changed when the ... but I mean they were heavily into sport and swimming and all the rest, so they always ... there was a golf-course at the back and they were heavily into golf and so on. There was always something for them to do. They were all very active.

**10.11 So there was plenty for them to do, but it was more structured?**

Well they weren't the lounge-lizard types, you know. We still ... you know, I used to take them camping and do all sorts of things much the same as I used to do as a child.

**10.27 And in the household did you do all the cooking and the housework?**

No. Everybody had a job, because - particularly when I was married the second time - we had a household of seven. Seven children plus my husband and I. So I had someone in to do the housework and do the washing and ironing, but it was a case of every man for himself, or everyone for themselves. Make your own bed and share the load. There was no woman's work or anyone's work. It was ... everyone had a job.

**And did you say you had someone come in to do the housework?**

Yes. Oh, well my husband was in business and I was running a newspaper, plus! We were involved in community ...

**It would have been impossible!**

Yes. This is right. So, everyone had their particular chores.

**11.13 What about shopping - how did you manage that?**

Oh well my mother - my father had been killed in an accident since then - but my mother lived next door in her house and she used to love to do the shopping.

**Oh that was great.**

So that was her job. She loved to do that. I used to pick her up, once she'd done the shopping, and I'd take her home and then she'd supervise putting all the ironing and all the rest away after it had been done. Very often she'd cook a meal or my husband would cook a meal, or I would, you know.

**It was a good sharing sort of household?**

Oh, well, I mean to say when you're very busy people, that's the only way to do it!

**12.03 And did you have any animals? Did you keep any pet animals?**

Oh, black Labradors! Earlier we had Fox Terriers, but then about this time, back in 1958, we'd acquired a property at Bilpin and we spent all our weekends up there if we weren't busy. We were developing an orchard and landscaping the property up there.

**That's apple country isn't it?**

Apple country, yes. We had 25 acres up there. So that was our weekend escape!

**12.39 And you would go up there regularly, would you?**

Every weekend, unless I particularly had something to do. So that was where - our boys were in their early teens - so that's where they got all their 'bush' from. We had tractors and, you know, we were right in Wollombi National Park and there were gorges and caves and all sorts of things. So we had our bush up there.

**And that was close to home, really.**

Oh, it's only 40 kilometres away, so we'd usually go up there on Friday nights and come home Sunday nights. That's unless we had commitments.

**13.28 So looking back on your life during the '50s - through the late '40s and through the '50s - what would you say were the biggest changes that took place after the population began to increase here and the houses became more crowded?**

Well there were better local facilities for people - better shopping facilities. I mean Blacktown is now a regional centre. There were more amenities established there - better facilities. You had the development of community services. I mean, you had community nurses, all that sort of ... domiciliary care, you know, particularly since the opening of the Hospital in 1964. Well that was 1964, but that made a very big difference to the area. Well you've got a trade-off actually! You've got better facilities, better shopping facilities, but less freedom; less security; possibly more social problems as you get greater development; better train services; more problems on the trains; more local high schools; less travelling; more civic amenities; possibly more parks; more sporting fields; opening of the library; and the opening of the swimming pool.

**15.51 And what about the landscape itself - how that's changed - how has that affected you personally?**

Well I'm a bush person. I love the bush. That's why I live here with all the trees around it! You do find that ... you see the concept in the 1950's ... before that you used to just have a block of land would be sold and people would move into that street and they'd wait for curbing and guttering and so forth, until the Council could afford it. Well you had more or less service development took place from the 1950's where you'd have a development - it might be 40 or 50 blocks - and that area would be serviced with electricity, the streets would be sealed, it would be curbed and guttered, and so on, and that developer would have to make a contribution towards parks and recreation space and so on. So, that speeded up the establishment of some of these amenities, but you had to have that radical change because otherwise your area would never have caught up.

**17.25 The infrastructure wouldn't have supported the population?**

The infrastructure, yes. But of course that pushed up the price of land and I mean that's being discussed at the moment, actually, the high cost of infrastructure. So, and then of course we had the advent of the sewerage service in the area! Because, I mean ...

**That was quite exciting?**

Oh, well, I mean (*laughs*) it was a very great improvement! So, these are things that people take for granted now.

**17.58 That didn't come till quite late did it, to round the Blacktown Municipality?**

Well, that would have been in about ... 1955/56. So, I mean, you can't imagine being without it now! So that made a big difference, but then again that's another cost that's added to the development of land, you see - all the infrastructure.

**And the rates of course are higher too?**

Yes they're high, but I mean to say the initial cost of purchasing a block of land is very much higher. But I suppose you've got to pay for progress, really.

**18.50 And what about some of the old landmarks that have disappeared in the path of progress? How do you feel about that?**

Well, I mean, there's a great deal of talk about it, but if a landmark isn't beautiful, if it hasn't ... I mean some things are preserved that aren't things of beauty. I can't see the value of preserving them. I think it's a shame that St. Bartholemew's Church ... that the money wasn't ploughed into St. Bartholemew's Church at Prospect. Because that was a very beautiful Church and there have been a number of people trying to preserve that, but it's been so vandalised, it really is. But, places like that - I mean, Henry Lawson is buried there! They're places that should have been preserved. I can't feel sad that the old School of Arts disappeared, because that was falling apart.! So, while you can feel sorry that the quality, the creeks and the creek system, the river systems, you know, they've been fouled, you have pollution. That's regrettable. But there was really ... old Bungarrabee House would have been beautiful had they been able to preserve it, but it's construction was such that it was impractical for them to preserve it. But, really, about the only thing that I can think of in the area that was worthwhile preserving - and it's a shame, it could still be preserved - is St. Bartholemew's Church.

**It's still in a state of disrepair now, is it?**

Well, I mean to say, they attempt to do things from time to time and there's still a preservation committee going. But Blacktown - its early history - it was largely rural. There have been big plans to do various things in Blacktown, but unfortunately money governs all these things - or lack of it!

**That's right.**

**21.17 I think we've just about covered all the questions that I had to ask. Is there anything else you'd like to add in thinking about how suburbanisation - the changing from the more rural 'sleepy hollow' to what Blacktown is today - is there any more you'd like to add to that - how it's affected you personally perhaps?**

Well I don't that I could be regarded as typical. You know, because I was sort of involved in two or three kind of worlds, and then we spent a lot of time at Bilpin. It's not as though I've sort of stayed at Blacktown and not sort of moved on to do other things.

**22.17 But you did spend your childhood there and you did raise your children there.**

Yes. I spent my childhood at Schofields, which as I said was very carefree. There was never any element of fear. That was the most pleasing aspect of it and, you know, one was never conscious of privation of anything else. It was always a sense of freedom. I think the one thing that does bother me, and did particularly both me, that you have a number of ... often in the newspaper office I used to have people - embryo social workers - from town ring me up and they'd want me to tell them about the trouble spots in the area, and they wanted me to point them in the direction of where they might get stories and I mean they came out with pre-conceived ideas about the kind of second-class person that lived in Mt. Druitt.

**23.35 Focussing on the negative?**

Focussing on the negative, and that always made me very angry, really, because there's a lot of very good people live in those areas - a lot of good kids, you know. A lot of good stories emerged from some of those ... and it was surprising what some of those people did. So I think it is wrong to label an area.

**24.03 And did 'The Advocate' under your editorship focus on the positives?**

I tried to find the good news, you know, and the media - I don't agree with the media generally. You know they want to do a beat-up on a story - a pre-conceived story - on an area. But I mean places aren't typical. You can always find someone who varies from the ... .

People get a pre-conceived idea in their head - it doesn't matter what the facts are - they want to write a story in the mould that they've conceived, and that's wrong. And a lot of people have done well from those areas, you know, from what was really a difficult background.

**Yes. They'd really not had an easy life?**

No. Not had an easy life, particularly in those area. I mean it's not like Canberra where everything's provided before the people move in. A lot of those amenities didn't come while the people were there. A lot of them, they had to work for and to fight for, to get. Things have changed I suppose a little bit since then. I think it's wrong to label an area, you know. 'crime area' and so on, because nothing's typical.

**Thank you very much for your time.**

END OF TAPE.