

INTERVIEW NO .1

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MRS. MARJORIE HEATH

LOT 7,

CHAIN O'PONDS ROAD,

MULGOA . NSW .

005 My name is Marjorie Irene Heath. I live at Lot 7, Chain O'Ponds Road, Mulgoa, and I was born on the 28th January, 1926, in Sydney. I'm married, I'm Australian born- I might have got this out of context- and I have three children and I've been roughly 17 years in this area.

012 **That's in the Blacktown area?**

Oh well, do you want to add ... "well, Blacktown ... 17 years in Mulgoa. Before that we were in Lane Cove for two and a half years and before that in the Blacktown area for 18 years and before that in Vaucluse for so many years, and before that, Bronte. That's where we were when we were married – Bronte and Bondi Junction.

019 **So when did you first live in the Blacktown area?**

At 17 years of age.

**And then you came back again later?**

Oh yes, we - that was for about three years, from roughly 1942 to the end of '44 when my brother got married. Then we went back to Vaucluse after that and then I got married and we lived at Bondi Junction for about three months, then Bronte for six or seven years and then in 1954 we went to Blacktown on a poultry farm.

027 **What made you come all the way back to Blacktown?**

Well, my brother had a poultry farm and he talked my brother (husband?) into going on the farm because birds in cages for poultry farming had just really started. Instead of being on the ground and in sheds it became intensive farming in sheds in ... layers were put into cages. My brother was one of the first to do that in, I suppose Australia, let alone New South Wales, but I would say Australia. And he talked John, that's my husband into going into poultry farming, and that's how we started. We went and looked for land and we went to Castle Hill, a few places. John did more looking than I did of course, 'cause he was the one ... but in the end we settled on Blacktown because my brother was there and we thought we'd need help as regards how to ... well we needed all the help we could get into something my husband had never done before, being -he was insurance - so it was a total change for him to go into poultry farming.

041 **So what sort of acreage did you buy?**

Well we bought first of all ten acres from a lady down the street on the Old Western Highway- what is the Old Western Highway today near Prospect Reservoir, and the lady we bought the land from was a

Mrs. Honeyman. She had tea-rooms, which were a great thing in those days for people out on a country drive -they'd go and have a cup of tea. Well she owned our ten acres and we bought that from her, and I'm trying to think how much it was per acre- it was ridiculously dear (cheap?) by today's standards. I'd have to ask my husband on that. It would be, oh, about \$1800 --well, no it must have been pounds in those days. But I can check that for you if you want it because he's pretty good at that, but on my memory it was ridiculously cheap on today's ... and that's how we got into poultry farming.

053 **And you had to build your house?**

Oh yes! We had to build it. And that was another ... er ... in those days it still wasn't easy to do building because there wasn't the amount of materials about that there is today, and we ... my father had done a bit of building, and he'd built our house where we lived at Vaocluse. So he knew a very good carpenter, and he went and lived up there with my husband while they built the house and the farm. They batched there with not very good conditions, you know, they'd have to have a shower under a hose and all those little ... it was 'roughing it', and I stayed till our house at Bronte was sold, and then I moved from there and went into a little cottage my brother owned on Blacktown Road until our place was finished, and then we moved into our house, and it was a nice home. It was a weatherboard, it was fairly big, it was about 14 square, a nice big kitchen. Do you want all this information? Nice family room, a nice lounge room, three big bedrooms. It was a nice home.

068 **An indoor bathroom?**

Oh, of course, yes, yes, an indoor bathroom. But at that time you see, being a weatherboard house, it wasn't easy to - they hadn't perfected, I don't think, putting tiles up in ... so I had, oh God, a dreadful thing, a 'Tile-lux' sort of thing. It was a really fancy fibro sort of thing that they put panels in the shower. Later on I put laminex over it to make it easier to clean, and then eventually I had the shower re-tiled. So, in those days there wasn't the pick of materials that you've got today. But, nevertheless it was a nice home.

077 **This would have actually been 19 .. ?**

'54, yes '54 when we moved in. You know it took a while after the War to get to the stage where we had a lot of ... things were pretty basic. There wasn't ... you go in a shop today and you can get so many sorts of building material, but not then. It was basic brick veneer - no, there weren't really many brick veneers- they were mainly timber houses about. My brother built a timber house on his farm when he moved from the one that he originally had at Blacktown. He built just before we did at Prospect there, and his house was timber -very nice. But they were really fundamental, when you think of today with the diversity of all the building materials that you've got.

088 **And did you have neighbours right next door?**

No. Not straight away. We ... there was a neighbour up the road, I've got to think now how many metres it would be away ... ah ... about 200, '300 metres, I suppose. You see we ... having ten acres, and then beside us there was a five acres and a man eventually went there and built a ... moved a Nissan,

like one of those army huts, and he lived in that and converted that to what they wanted to live in and then he put turkeys in . . . And then the one on the other side was built there, and eventually ... our neighbours there were Yugoslavs and -we've remained friends with them ever since. We ended up buying the next five acres some time after this other man ... well he was Greek, the one that had the turkeys. Can you follow all this Robyn?

102 **Yes.**

He was Greek- one was Greek and one was Rumanian- he and the wife, I can't tell you which one. But they sold to us - they wanted to sell and we wanted to buy. So we bought their place.

**They were the people who had come ... ?**

Yes, after us, yes. But on the other side of him, where the Yugoslavs ... that place was there, and he came down one night and wanted to get from us the poultry manure, 'cause they had a market garden. They grew tomatoes mainly, so ... at that time we were chased for the poultry manure because there were a lot of market gardeners in the area, and the poultry manure was in the demand, so sometimes we were fighting them off. But towards the end of our time there, with subdivisions taking up all the market gardening, our manure was wanted less and less. See, with urbanisation creeping in towards the end of that 18 years we had trouble getting the people to come and take the manure. It was a problem after a while, towards the end. So the writing was on the wall that Blacktown was becoming a urban area, and it gathered momentum towards (the end of?) that last 18 years.

120 **So, in the house, what sort of electrical appliances did you have when you first set up house there?**

Well, an electric stove, a hot water service ... I suppose, from memory, we had an electric heater and then my husband took a liking to those kerosene heaters, so the electric heater didn't really get that much work. We had the telephone- that's not electric, but I'm trying to tell you what we did have. What else would there be in elec ... electric light of course, so ... most modern things that you want in a home.

127 **Hot water jugs, vacuum. cleaners? Those kinds of things?**

Oh, yes. All that yes.

**Food mixers?**

No, oh yes ... I think I ... well somewhere in that time I got a Sunbeam Mixmaster, but that was towards the end of the 18 years I got that. They had them then, but I'm not really into making cakes. I'm not a

cake-maker, so that never really worried ... we had a toaster , all the general electric things that a normal house would have from that point of view.

**So you were well set up.**

Yes, well set up.

137 **Did you have the sewer connected?**

No, we had a septic. What they called a septic tank.

**Some of the properties had sanitary services calling.**

No, no we went straight in with a septic. We never had a sanitary- I know they did have them and they still had them at that time, but we didn't. We had a septic tank, so we never had that problem.

142 **And did you have a garden around your house, or I suppose you were too busy with the poultry farming?**

Oh no. You know we had a garden, and eventually we had a gardener that used to come and do the mowing and a bit of digging around the garden beds and things. He would come once a week, a couple of hours, and ... 'cause John never had time. He was very busy on the farm. It was a busy farm. We had a lot of birds. When we finished I think we had 22, 000 birds - 22,000 layers - it was a big farm.

150 **And did you sell the eggs mostly to the city?**

Mostly to the Egg Board. At that stage the Egg Board controlled most of the market so you really had to have a licence to sell. Eventually we got the licence and sold from the farm. People would come for their fresh eggs to the farm, and eventually we killed poultry. We had a processing works as well there, and people would come for poultry, and then we opened a couple of shops for the poultry and the eggs in Parramatta, in Darcy Street. So we had a shop there that sold our produce.

160 **So, were you very much involved in the farm yourself?**

No, not really. Only if ... er ... on a poultry farm poultry is very much affected by heatwaves. You can lose your whole flock. And Blacktown used to get very hot. We had record temperatures in the summer of a hundred degrees and those days ... you would have to ... well, the sheds had sprinklers on them. They'd cool the roofs. But the birds on the end of a cage, on the end of a shed, in cages at the end of a shed where they would get the western sun would be very stressed. My husband would really have to go round and water them by hose to keep them cool - actually wet them, because on a hot westerly

wind those birds ... and if a bird ... not only do they - they can die with the extreme heat - if they don't die and they survive it, they go off the lay. It affects their egg production. So it was important, seeing your life, your livelihood, is dependent on those birds, they're the first thing you worry about. And everybody on a hot day- and you can get a heatwave with three or four days- would be out there looking after the birds. Even the egg collecting might have to wait. So the egg packing was another thing that had to wait during the heatwaves. So often the staff would be hosing. Only the things to keep those birds alive only would be done. So the egg packing could be done at night when it was cool, so sometimes if my husband was there packing I'd go over and help him. But they were very rare - well, me helping was a rare thing. I didn't have to do it. But the odd occasion when we'd really ... you see in summer if you get four or five days the birds get very distressed with the heat. You've really got to - in the morning - be over there watching them - the sprinklers on the roof just weren't enough. So they were really hard times for my husband and he used to get very tired. You can imagine 101, 104 degrees, and the temperature doesn't drop very much at night when you get a heatwave, so he was always ... he hated the summer.

195 **So your role would have been a more supportive role, I suppose?**

Oh, yes, yes. But I saw a lot of my husband because he'd be over for morning tea he'd be over for lunch and he'd be over for afternoon tea. You really have to get on well. (Laughs). I've heard people say they dread their husbands retiring. I've never had that problem because I've always had him, so we've haven't had to make an adjustment. So, you really have to be good friends. (Laughs).

**You saw a lot of each other that way.**

Yes. Good friends, yes. So from that point of view ... I should have done more to help I suppose, but he had a staff. But they would be the only times when he would really get behind with the egg packing. In the end, though, we had a lady that packed the eggs, but ... and they brought out a machine that made it easier to grade the eggs. You see, as time went along different ... what would you call it ... inventions, I suppose, came along that really helped poultry farmers, and in the end our farm became old fashioned in comparison with all the latest trends with the poultry industry with .. I don't know exactly what they were... I think there were things that would collect the eggs for you. It was less labour intensive. So in the end we were really forced to modernise our farm, or go- and we were all ready by that time. In 1969 or 70 the government brought out the Regional Plan of Sydney to the Year 2000, and we, in our area where we lived, it was zoned as proposed open space, and on top of that the new Western Freeway was to cut into the corner of our property. So we had to battle with what was then the State ... the Freeway the DMR handed over to the State Planning Authority, it was then - it's the Department of Planning today, but in those days it was the State Planning Authority, (SPA)- well the control, I suppose, of our land . It all reverted then to the State Planning Authority from the DMR to them. We were fighting with the DMR to get compensation for what they were going to take, but in the end it was the State Planning Authority. So we tried to sell our farm, but because it was proposed open space

nobody wanted to buy it. So we said to them well you're the only buyers and you want it. You've got to make up your mind now. And they bought it. Oh, it was a battle. In the meantime we'd had another farm start up beside us on the other boundary to the north and they were in the same boat, and they bought both of our farms, and then they ended up buying the market garden that was further up - the Yugoslav people - and gradually, I don't know what happened to the rest of the land in that area - whether they've still kept buying it or whether the people - I don't really know, but I know they bought us and...

246 **So, urbanisation really did push you out?**

Oh, well, as I said to you there weren't the market gardeners about to take the poultry manure which did become a problem, and even our neighbour Mrs Honeyman that ran the tearooms, she complained . It brought flies! You've got no idea what the flies were like in the summer! They were on the door -black! And you'd have to wave the door backwards and get ... and on the eaves of the house they would be black at night. They'd all settle there to rest for the night and I'd go out and spray them. No they really were a dreadful problem, flies . No so much in the extreme heat of summer - in autumn and spring they were just dreadful, you've got no idea. I was perpetually spraying inside, because no matter how carefully you opened the door to go in, if they're thick on that door they come in on your back, everywhere . So .. in fact my father - I laugh when I think about him – he said to me one day "Do you reckon all these fly in here- or do you reckon some of them came in pregnant?" But they were a problem.

265 **And you raised your children there on the farm too? Were they born while you living there?**

No, one was, the last one. I was living there when he was born. The first one was born in 1950 and then the second one in '52 , and then the third one in 1964, and I was living there in 1964 when he was born, and because my doctor was in the City and he went to Crown Street Hospital, that's where he was born.

273 **There were local hospitals by then?**

By that time there was. We had Blacktown Hospital by the time he was born. I'm just trying to think ... I can't give you a date that Blacktown Hospital ... it is a fair while ago that it was built . It was built in Blacktown Road. As regards ... look I couldn't tell you whether there were any private ... I'm trying to think ... no I can't even think of any private hospitals. I suppose there were, but, you see I got sick when I was on the farm before my son, the third one, was born. I haemorrhaged from the lung and fortunately we were very friendly with our family doctor. Now he was Polish and his practice was at Doonside, but we knew him socially. He was a friend as well as a doctor, and of course John called him over. Going to bed I started to cough up ... oh it was tremendous. So he came and he put me into ... the next day he said "Look I don't know what's causing it" - how could you tell - so in to RPA and I had a specialist there. So, I haven't really been into a hospital in Blacktown, not locally. You know it wasn't

all that cut off towards the end. As you say the urbanisation really had started when my youngest son was born, so when he started school from there he started at the same school the two elder ones had gone to, but oh God we had trouble with a- oh gee- one of the children in his class was a bully. (Laughs). I went looking for another school and I found a little Christian school, Tindale. It was run by the Dutch Reform Church - well it was Dutch origin, so ...

309 **Where was that?**

That was in Blacktown in Kildare Street. So that meant I had to take him in each day. But at least we got peace . He didn't want to go to school. It became dreadful . And when I went to the teacher you know she said "Why didn't you tell me?" . Well I had told her once.

315 **Which school was this?**

Oh, Central - they call it Blacktown Central School, and they're going to take it away now I believe. I think it's finished. It's right in the middle of Blacktown in Flushcombe Road, right ...

**Near the Post Office?**

Yes, you know it? just up from the Post Office. Well that's where they went. Lance would have gone there, well he did, for .. oh God, it might have been a couple of months, but I couldn't stand it any longer, so I looked around and found this other little school. But I think by then too, yes ... my sister came to live in Blacktown and her children by that - she is nine years younger than I am so her children are younger than mine - and by the time she lived in a street off Flushcombe Road, on the southern end of Flushcombe Road, so her children went to a school in Flushcombe Road and it was Blacktown ...

338 **So with the two younger children, how did they get to school?**

The older ones?

**The older ones.**

First of all there was no bus . We lived on the Old Western Highway but on the corner of Reservoir Road. At that stage when we moved in it was a dreadful gravel road and every time it rained there was always problems. So my brother went into the Council and they would grade it periodically and the next thing we had it tar-sealed, and my children used to be carried to school. My brother's wife or he or I would take it in turns to take them in backwards and forwards to school, because my children were very similar to age to my brother's children. So between all of us we -would take them backwards and forwards, but eventually a bus service started. It's hard to remember exactly how long after we were there that that bus service started.

355 **You drove them by car did you?**

Yes, yes. Either my brother would come and pick up, because we were so close. We were all in a little corner there together. Not my sister - she –was further away, but my brother and I. We took in turns actually, so that you weren't out every day. One might do it in the morning, one might do it in the afternoon, instead of twice a day, or in the end ... we worked together. So that if you wanted to go out for the day you wouldn't have to be running backwards and forwards for these children. And of course I never had to worry about anybody being at home if they came home and I wasn't there – their father was always there ... so from that point of view ...

371 **So you didn't have to depend on anyone for after school childcare or anything like that?**

No, they had plenty of places to play and they were pretty good kids. They weren't any problem, and so if I didn't happen to be there, their father was always there. So from that point of view ... and of course after Wilma the Dutch lady started for me, she was so wonderful I could say to her well you keep an eye on Lance it was then you see, and she -would watch him if I had to do anything in Blacktown.

381 **Did any of your children go on to education, tertiary education, after school?**

Yes, Stephen, that's the eldest, he became a school teacher. He studied for that at Wagga.

**Wagga Teachers College?**

Yes, whatever that was then- was it called .... well anyhow, down in Wagga that teacher's college. Then he went back to night school -you see he was only two year trained and to get his third year, he had to do that as a part time student.

**There was nothing in this area then?**

No, I'm trying to think, Robyn, whether there were any other ... yes, I think Armidale he could have gone to, but for some reason Wagga was the one he ended up at. But he didn't do his third year until he got married. I think he realised that if he didn't do it he'd always be behind the eight-ball. He'd only be two year trained and they wanted three year trained. So he did that at night time, or part time, whatever that was and then he went on and did his Bachelors and then he did his Masters, all as part time, down at Wollongong he did his Masters Degree . Louise was a mature-age student. She went to Western Sydney and she did Graphic Design . See her marriage broke up and I said to her well you've always wanted to do something else, now's your opportunity and so she did that. Lance, he went first of all to Hawkesbury and then to Australian National University to do Science.

325 **Did a lot of the children from the area in the 50's go on to tertiary education as far as you know?**



One of my neighbours- she had four children- I think they all had tertiary educations. One of my brother's boys went to Yanko, his boy went to Yanko, Lucille his daughter never did anything. Yes, I don't think many did - not in the same numbers that they seem to be doing it today.

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**So, just briefly, what was the normal daily routine in your home back in the 50's?**

Well, I'd get up and get the children off to school and do housework, then if I had to go out, well I'd just say to my husband, you know, I'll be home at such and such and ... look there was always plenty- if I wasn't there for him to have his lunch to ... but mainly if I was going out then my father would come up and get the lunch for him. So from that point of view he was really well looked after. That was about ... there wasn't anything drastic or wonderful. I mean, life was really pretty hum drum, I suppose, (laughs) when you think about it.

514 **What about the family shopping and provisions?**

Yes, well I had a very good general store nearby and he would come and pick up the list for my groceries and would deliver it to me, and also we had a milkman calling and a baker- a dry cleaner even came- I had just about everything . So, the services were very good. Maybe they didn't all start at the very beginning, but it wasn't long, you know that ... well baker and milkman, they would have been from the beginning I would say. And of course in Blacktown there was some good er ... well G & G was one grocery place there. I haven't seen them for ... they went out of business, but it was much like a supermarket today. And then of course there were ... see, as I told you, we had in 1942 in Blacktown the main street then would have had the School of Arts which has since been pulled down, a Greek milk bar next door which was ... it was used tremendously because we had an old picture show as well. But that was pulled down and a new picture show was built and I think that's gone in the ... well yes, I'm sure it's gone. So Blacktown, to my knowledge, has had three picture shows ... one, two ... 'course now they've got the new ones there in the Westfield or the WestPoint Shopping Centre- so they've had their share of ... we've never been without a picture show there. So then on the corner was the paper shop, near the railway station. Opposite was the Robin Hood Hotel which was a very nice building in those days, and up in Flushcombe Road was the Library belonging to the Council which was a nice building too , and they really were very presentable buildings . Even in 1942- they were ... they were something! I think it's still there- the library in Flushcombe Road - I'm not sure.

544 **It's now in the Mall- Patrick's Mall I think.**

Is it? Yes . Is the building ... did they pull down the building? It was a red brick building.

**I'm not sure.**

Yes I'm not sure on that. I must go along and have a look. I know the Robin Hood Hotel came down. But it was there for a long, long time. It was only recently in .. what the last eight years I suppose . You see I'm ... you start to think back, and dates and years- they get a little bit hazy and I mean time goes so quickly that if I said eight years I might be surprised to learn that it might be ten, 12 years that that hotel has been gone. But in those days, in 1942, there were a lot of - when I say a lot weatherboard shops – there weren't a lot but they ran along towards the station from where I came. I used to come along Blacktown Road from a farm. The farm was called 'Hillside' and it's now a vet. The house is still there, it's a lovely old timber house and it's well looked after by the vet. But my brother had the 52 acres surrounding that and of course that came out of rural into residential- he had a subdivision, and then he moved over to where we finally went in 1954 over to the Old Western Highway. He was just near us.

563 So the shopping in Blacktown has really improved to such a degree now, when I go in there I really don't feel I'm in the same area as I was at 17 or as a young woman . It's so completely changed, and the one that has changed more than either of those I think is Parramatta, because we used Parramatta's facilities for- they had their picture shows there and we would use those. David Jones started in Parramatta and the Westfield Shopping Centre there started and once it started and the Mall was put into Parramatta it altered the whole ... I don't know how you could describe it. It became, instead of a big rural ... well you wouldn't call it a city 'cause it wasn't a city in the true sense of the word, but it was -a big town! But it changed completely to become like a commercial district.

577 **So I suppose most of the old shops have gone in Blacktown?**

Most of them, but there's still ... well, Bowes was a Chinese Restaurant, takeaway. They did a very good business when we first ... I'm sure they were one of the first shops ... I'm sure they were there when we went in 1954. But it's what I said, Robyn, you put a question mark over years. It's around like, we were there 18 years, so it's very hard for me now to say that in 1954 that was there for sure . When we left in ... the end of 1971 -we left Blacktown, so it's hazy now if the shops that would be still there that would be there when -we were there from '54. But I would say Bows would be one of them. There was a Crighton's Cakes there too. They were there for a long, long time and I have a feeling they could still be there in that Mall.

595 **You think it's changed for the better, anyway, do you?**

Blacktown?

### **The shopping centre.**

Ah, I suppose you've got to say yes . There's more variety. The mall- I like malls personally- I think they do something. But I know that everybody that I've ever spoken to that's in business on a mall they reckon that their business is killed. We've got one in High Street. The shops in there have been decimated by the mall but I think the Council is now trying to do something and I think the Chamber of Commerce is trying to help them because . . . look, no-one can give you really an answer. I think it's lack of parking where you get a mall. The mall in Parramatta is not a success. Well it doesn't appear to me to be a success, because you've got a mall with a few shops and then your main shopping centre is away where Westfield is, and I ... it's just hard to say.

609 **How do you feel about the difference of shopping in the old days to now?**

To now? Better. Yes, yes, better. When we first came here I could shop anywhere in Penrith - park anywhere and shop anywhere. It's not quite as easy now. It is normally, at normal times, but when you get your abnormally long Christmas period and Easter period everybody seems to be out. For about six weeks before Christmas it is a headache to park and to shop, but I suppose it is anywhere else that you go. Penrith has grown beyond anything that I imagined in the 17 years that I have been here. We're getting now- they're even extending our Plaza. We have a big shopping Plaza there and that is being extended. It will be one of the best I believe in Sydney. It'll be huge I believe. So from that point of view, provided they give enough parking space it'll be tremendous, and parking is a problem particularly in an area like this because the bus services aren't good. That's one thing that needs to be said about the west. The bus services could be greatly improved for people living in areas surrounding these shopping - well, like the centre of Penrith - anybody wanting to go in there, they need a good bus service.

627 **Yes. What was the situation with transport back in the 50''s when you were living in Blacktown- with the buses?**

No it wasn't good for us. You really couldn't manage without a car where we lived. You had to have a car.

### **What about the train service to Blacktown?**

Well the train service ... my husband used to drop me in at the odd times I did want to go by train, and it would take over an hour and it was passable. You could get to Sydney and back ... it's better now, believe it or not from Penrith. I can get into Sydney from Penrith, if my husband drops me in there, in just on an hour. That's early in the morning just around peak time or just after peak. It's a very good service- it has improved. I've got to give credit there- it has improved from what it used ... 'cause it used to take an hour from Blacktown, but now it's an hour from Penrith. I've never tried it ... look if you got

a slow train where there ... through the day, most probably you'd be pulling your hair out- it'd take an hour and a half.

643 **What was the condition of the roads? I know you mentioned before they were gravel.**

When we first went to Blacktown, yes.

**Most of the roads were like that were they?**

Yes, oh yes, yes! It was a rural area!

**No curb and guttering?**

No. Very little curb and guttering. Even I think when they put in the first of the subdivisions they weren't very fussing on the curb and guttering. Not ... today they're very fussy on what the developers put in. See in South Penrith they've got underground ... there're no poles in there- it's all underground electricity. But you end up - you pay for it. You pay for it in your block of land- the developer puts it all on to the buyer.

656 **Yes it's aesthetically good, but you do pay for it**

Yes aesthetically it is good, but you do pay for it!

658 **Getting back to the old days again: recreation. How much leisure time and the family have?  
What did you do for recreation?**

For recreation ... I used to play tennis, night tennis "With my brother. There was a court over at Richmond Road ... was it Richmond Road? Anyhow, Quakers Hill, and we used to go over and play night tennis. That was one bit of ... and then I belonged to the CWA at Quakers Hill and I'd go there once a month, I think it was, and there was afternoon tea. We'd take a plate each.

**Were there a lot of women there?**

Yes, there would have been about '30 women "With similar interests. A lot of poultry farmers' wives belonged to that from around Quakers Hill and Blacktown, and we would have socials ourselves. Like w became all very friendly that we'd have our own parties or dinners at our own places and everybody would come. And we'd also have different social things at our own hall that we had. So it wasn't lacking altogether in any social ... we led a social life, I suppose. I don't feel that any of us were denied some of the finer things I suppose that you look for in life, because we were altogether and with similar interest. We made our own entertainment.

683 **Did you have musical evenings?**

Well, see once again, there's been musical evenings recently "With it, but not so much then. But we'd make dances, like we'd have a dance in the hall. As I said, once again you'd all bring a plate. I've still got the friends from there - even though I don't go to the CWA anymore - I found it was too much of a hassle from here to go over to Quakers Hill - I don't go, but I've still got friends from there and I still see them from time to time. Of course we've all got old (laughs). One's over there in an old ladies home ... well an old, you know, what do they call it? A retirement village at Richmond. She's 80 ... oh wonderful, and the other lady, one of them she- now there's a story! She was on five acres with a poultry farm, and now her five acres has come out into residential and the value's gone from ... well I'm not sure what it was, but it's gone up to \$485,000 for five acres. But, she's worried about who's going to buy it . She lives in an old fibro house on that that five acres. It's all developing up around her, but the economic market as it is today, nobody wants to develop land. And she's worried because her rates will go up . In fact I think they have already started to go up with the Council, and she's on a pension and she doesn't want to leave the home. See she's 70, nearly 80- going on for 80 - so, she's worried what's going to happen to her now. I keep saying to her "Look, go into a retirement village. Sell it for what you can". But I don't think there's even somebody that will buy it at greatly reduced, because it has slowed down to such a degree. So she's worried. She did poultry farming on there. She's not far from the prison.

717 **At Parklea?**

Mm. See she's up there. So I feel very sorry for her ... because she likes .. look she's lived there so long that it's her home . She doesn't really want to go into a retirement village, but she'll be pushed out. It's got to come. That's another thing; I don't think they've even put the septic on there- the sewerage on for- so it's a way, perhaps five years, seven years perhaps she'll even get her money. It's a bit unfair ... isn't it you know to charge her the new rate. But I think Council will help her. I must give her a call and see how she's going with it all .. so ... and on top of that when we had that dreadful storm in January all the water came into her house. Oh God she was in a dreadful state. So I feel very sorry for her. But you see, we've all aged and the area has changed. Around her the houses have come up like mushrooms. She's not in a rural area at all anymore. It's very hard, I think, for people when they get older to adjust ...

**To the change?**

Yes, very hard. So ... this eventually, here I suppose, where we are, will .. it'll gradually encroach. It's ... see we've got South Penrith, and Orchard Hills will be ... they're wondering what to do about ... you know Orchard Hills ?

**Yes.**

So that's another one where there'll be ... but at the moment who wants to develop any land? You know, it's ...

**It will happen again, but it's getting through the ...**

I hope so , Robyn, but at the moment things are very bad in that direction.

746 **So you've made good friends in the area, with all the neighbouring ladies?**

Yes, that's one thing in a rural area you make friends much more quickly than you do , say, in suburbia. Do you find that?

**Yes. In suburbia you don't sometimes know your next door neighbour!**

No. Well you can be lucky or unlucky. I mean, I suppose we could have been unlucky. We had wonderful neighbours. The Yugoslav people that were our neighbours, she'd send me down tomatoes 'cause that's ... and I'd send her up eggs, and down would come more tomatoes and up would go more eggs.

**It was like a bartering system?**

Yes! No matter what I did she'd want to do twice as much. They were wonderful neighbours. We're still friendly with them, very. In fact one of the sons lives up at Silverdale, and even though their farm was in the proposed open space, he carried on his business and he's got a very big poultry processing business up there, so he's kept it going.

764 **Just looking at other forms of entertainment, did you go to the theatre or the cinema?**

Yes, we'd ... gradually ... with all these friends we might one night say well we'll make up a party if there was ... well, "My Fair Lady" when it came, we all made a party and went ... different things of theatres. Yes, we'd go to the theatre - we weren't cut off completely. Not real country hicks! (laughs).

771 **What about sport? I suppose sporting activities were fairly popular?**

Well, my children learned to play tennis. I made sure that they learned. They learned swimming. They had a very good life, my children. They had the best of both worlds because they could come home and wander on ten acres, 15 acres, and then they ... they weren't ... I suppose they weren't ... streetwise, as you get when you're in the city. I always think kids in the city are much more streetwise than kids in the bush . . . And it was bush in those days , when we first went there, it was ... but not as much as when I when I went to Blacktown in '42.

**That was totally different?**

Yes. (Laughs) They were real country hicks. Our ... the plumber that we had, he had a set of false teeth that didn't fit properly. When you'd talk to him they'd jump out at you (laughs). .And then the lady that packed eggs for my brother, she talked with a real slow drawl. But she wasn't slow mentally, but it was the way she spoke. She was country! But they were all very, very, friendly and very nice. It was a bit like Ma and Pa Kettle in some ways you know. (Laughs) . But it was .. I noticed going to the country more when I was 17 than when I went in 1954.

795 **And what about the industries that grew up in the area? It was mostly poultry when you were there?**

Yes, yes. Well then we got a few factories. What was the one that made shirts that had the patch over the eye? Pelaco? No, not Pelaco. The Chief Clothing factory was there. Oh, I can't remember the name, but they had a big factory there in Blacktown Road. In fact one of my friends, she used to work there, putting, packing all the shirts, you know, and pinning them. But they went eventually. I think they took their business overseas. .Along off Sunnyholt Road there was a bit of an industrial area in there that gradually got bigger by the time we left, you know, to leave Blacktown after the 18 years. Blacktown grew - in that 18 years from '54 to nearly '71 it really took off, but I can't think of many factories, but there must have been others there that I wouldn't have known about. There would have to be, because it started to grow and you must create some sort of industrial areas when you start to urbanise- it's got to be. But I know that in Blacktown Road, going up towards ... past the hospital .. and up there, there were numerous small factories I suppose in there, or small businesses mainly, and of course this big clothing factory and I can't think of the name . He had a patch over his eye.

**I can see the patch!**

Yes. It wasn't Pelaco. I'm sure it's not Pelaco. Pelaco's been going for ages. This was another one. Anyhow, someone might tell you in the area, Robyn, who knows more than I do.

835 **Talking about all the changes that have taken place, I guess one of the significant changes is the ability of women to control childbirth and the number of children they wanted to have, and I was wondering did you want to have children when you got married and had you planned the number of children you wanted to have?**

Yes, I wanted to have children. I wanted two- the third one was a mistake. (Laughs) . After 12 years! Well, in one way you see, I blame the doctor because ... silly ... doctor told me that at my age (I was 37), she was a lady doctor, that I would be most unlikely to fall pregnant. I had a retroverted womb and something else, and ... mainly age ... (when I think about it, it was ridiculous!), and I would most

probably not fall pregnant, and I suppose we never took precautions after that. But I'll say this, Robyn, it never entered my head to have an abortion, not once. I just felt, well this is fate; this is what was meant to be. So I was very pleased because out of the three he's been the easiest one to .. I've been lucky there. I was very lucky.

861 **It must have been difficult in the days before the pill and that sort of thing to actually control births?**

Yes, and bear in mind that at that time there was all that scare about thalidomide, you know, and of course you were frightened to take ... in the end I was frightened to take an Aspro or anything. But in one way I suppose she did a good thing for us because it's been a pleasure to have him. When I say he was the easiest - he was the easiest one - maybe because I was older and I was calmer. Most probably you bring on a lot of your own ... (laughs). He was a good child, so I was very lucky, but you know .. the stupid doctor is saying, you know ... how can you say that to anybody? At 37 you're past having ... very unlikely to fall pregnant! So, the pill had come out before that- no wait there, no after I had ... I did go on the pill after Lance and it didn't agree with me . I got dreadful lethargic and put on weight and I thought oh, damn this, you know. So, I never bothered with the damn thing again. We were just very, very careful. (Laughs)

**It's difficult isn't it.**

Oh yes!

887 **Now getting onto a slightly different tack, did you keep house pets and animals?**

Yes, oh well we had a dog, yes. A dog that was given to us and John ran over the first one. He backed the car out over him and felt dreadful, and then they sent another one. That was the dog and the next one a bitch, and ... lovely. She was a bitser but very good. And then we had .. well then, I told you, we had the problem with all the rats. Huge rats! And I remember my cousin came up to visit one night and we wanted ... she was staying, you know, we were going to have some scrambled eggs for tea, and she said "I'll go over to the shed and get them" and I said "Yes, OK, you go over ... " ... and she came running back . She said "There's rats over there- they're everywhere! On the cages and in ... " and I said "Well, you didn't ... ". She said "I nearly tripped on one!". They were that big. They were huge, and they would burrow into the manure under the cages. So, we tried various people, you know, what was the cure for all these rats, and in the end someone said don't you know the simplest cure is to get cats. And this cousin, she had a shop down in Adelaide Street on the corner of Fletcher Street at Woollahra there, down near Cooper Park. And of course she got all the people who came in to the shop to ... any cats they didn't want: "I'll take your cats", and she'd bring them up and we must have had, oh ... 30 cats that finally arrived. Ginger cats, black cats, you name them, and of course they all had kittens, so we always had a supply of cats and we never had any problem with rats after that. ..And the cats kept



having their families and, being on a farm, all the feed that would spill on the ground - and it's very nutritious, the feed, because what you feed a bird is what you get back in the egg – you see you must give them a proper diet to get the eggs. So they had bran, pollard, protein in that, milk powder, molasses. So our dogs would go and lick it and the cats all did, so they only needed water, and then we got the killing works our dogs would go over and come out with the head of the chook hanging out, the red wattle you know. Crunch, crunch ... oh ... but they were a delicacy! Oh they used to love killing day when he'd come and kill the birds 'cause he'd give all these heads to them.

944 **So it cost you nothing to feed them?**

The dogs really cost nothing. We never fed them, nor the cats, because there was always ... if you feed a cat too well it won't mouse or rat. We had our plagues of mice too, of course, you know in the country you always get those, and they get into the house. They find any little cavity that ... and they make a dreadful mess in cup boards. But there not as bad ... we never had them as bad as some people I know in the country where all night the (claps hands) traps going off.

TAPE 2

SIDE 1

001 **To sum up, after reflecting on your life during the early years in Blacktown, the 40's through the 50's and into the 60's, how do you feel about the change and rapid growth that taken place in Western Sydney? How had it affected you? As a woman?**

Well, how has it affected me? As a woman? I suppose it hasn't affected me greatly Robyn. I suppose sometimes you might feel you've missed out on some of the more sophisticated things of life because, I think, when I go down now to the eastern suburbs it seems to be ... it's still different to the west. It's still ... because I find the eastern suburbs drivers are the most impatient, they're the rudest. I find in the west that the drivers on a whole are much more courteous. I find the girls in the shops on a whole are much more courteous. Not all. I mean that wouldn't be fair to say that there's nobody in the eastern suburbs ... but I'm talking on a whole. I find it's much more sophisticated in Sydney. There's a greater sophistication, I would say, in the fashion, in the shops. When I say this I don't mean like Grace Bros., because we get the same in nearly all the shops. Although I would say Grace Bros., say at Bondi Junction has a different, more expensive style of dress than they would out here at Penrith. So, from that point of view, and I would say it's always been that way, even when in the early days you'd go to the City you'd be far more conscious of fashionable women than what you'd strike in Penrith or Blacktown. And I think it still follows today. .As regards myself I suppose I haven't been handicapped in any way being on a farm. It's been a good life, I would say, for my children. That's benefited them. My husband worked hard, very hard. Even though he had help, it's still your business. It's still seven days a week, and if you want to have a day off you've got to have reliable staff that give you the day or week off.. .And we would go to the City on his days off to the movies - to the pictures - movies - I would never had said that but they say that today, "movies". See we've altered even our language. We'd

go to the pictures on his day off which was a Wednesday until Lance arrived and then we had to alter our day off and we would go out for lunch somewhere, because being a baby we couldn't cart him to the pictures. We had a good life, on a whole. We were never short of food, never short of money. There was money - we did well money-wise. We were very comfortable, but he worked for that. He really worked hard, and he's always said it's the bottom of the rung, poultry farming. I can't speak for today because today poultry farming is different again. I think they've modernised it much more than we had it, yes it's more mechanised, so most probably it wouldn't be such a hard life. But when I go through the summers that we put in with the heat, yes it was hard for him even then, and they've been the setbacks. But for all setbacks there's also a good thing, and the good thing was, I suppose, the good friends we made out of it. They're still friends today. They've got older as I explained to you. We've all got old together. But I've often wondered how different life would have been had we not gone on the farm, if we'd gone into another business. And you'll always question something like that, that decision. I don't know, but it was 18 years really of hard work. Not for me, and that's what we're looking at, from a woman's point. My only hard work and it demented me, when I think back, was the flies! (Laughs) . They were a dreadful problem. And I suppose carting the children around a bit more than if I'd been in the eastern suburbs or the northern suburbs, because everything was a bus trip away or a car trip away. We were isolated to that degree. Not isolated out west in Bourke or anything like that, but you still didn't have all the, what would you call it, all the conveniences that you'd have in the eastern suburbs - that I would have had. From that point of view it was harder, but you can't alter anything, so you've got to accept what happened.

060 **Do you think it's easier for young people bringing up families in this area today, for that reason?**

In this area? No. I think they go through a lot of ... for one thing the bus ... from what I've heard the bus out here ... the services could be improved. If you haven't got two cars in your family out here you're really relying on buses to get you anywhere with children. They should have, I would say, more child-minding facilities to give women. But I think today, from what I can see, so many of them, to pay off their mortgages both husband and wives are working and it makes it very hard.

No, I haven't had a hard life, when I look at them today. I think women today, to buy their houses and keep them going; they've both got to work. Well that's what I find. I talk to them in queues in the ... going through supermarkets. One lady ahead of me the other day, she had two little boys and she said "I am so tired" and I said "Yes, I can imagine you young mothers with, you know, trying to get in and do shopping .....". She said "But I work at night, I'm on a night shift, casual" and she said "I had to get up and come out" and I said "Yes". Well, there you see, she's .... I .....

176 **And I suppose in some sense the urbanisation has isolated people more in a way, because before you had this big community network which maybe they don't have quite so much of today?**

No, most probably they haven't. See, I can't compare myself where I was, Robyn, on a farm in a rural area with what it is today, urbanised in a rural area - like Sou' Penrith. I can't really compare the two

together. You can't can you? You're stuck ... look, what annoys me, and I think it's a dreadful thing that Sydney does, is to downgrade the western suburbs. It's really - they don't know. If you come out here, you really know, the people are nice. They're human. There's another face to, you know, down ... 'cause I've struck it. (Laughs). You get plenty of laughs ... yes.

091 **I think we've just about covered everything, Marg.**

Yes, well I can't sum up any better than that Robyn. How do you know? I've never lived the other life. I've lived this life and it's been tied up with here. All I know is when we did go back to suburbia for two and a half years it drove us mad. It keeps my husband busy here. You know, it's not ... we're not dependent on this for a livelihood here, but we've got the best of both worlds now I suppose, what's left of it. (Laughs).

100 **Well thank you very much indeed, that's been ...wonderful.**