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Oral History –
An Interview with
Dorothy Packer

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Interviewee: Dorothy Packer

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Transcription: Gabrielle Godard.

Q: O.K. Dorothy you came to live in the Ryde area at the age of 2, that was 1922, so I was wondering if perhaps we could start with your earliest memories of the area.

My earliest memories would be Glebe St Ryde it was between St Anne's Church and Mt St Margaret's, they now call it Victoria Rd and there were brick homes weatherboard homes with big verandahs and there was a Steamboat Hotel. Have you heard about the Steamboat Hotel?

Q: Yes, what are your memories of it?

The Steamboat Hotel was where the funeral parlors are now near the Ryde RSL and I remember that quite well because in the depression days so many families came in and everybody thought everybody was poor we were all poor because most people lost their homes and there was no dole, no dole money, no nothing. But the fathers did grow vegetables and we had fruit trees and what fruit we couldn't get home we would steal from over the fences, they were always hanging over, and there wasn't anything wrong in that, stealing fruit over the fences because they knew children needed it. And we used to have carts, make billy carts because we didn't have any toys, no dolls, no toys, we'd make our own billy carts and ride down from right from the end of Glebe St right down to the bottom of Blaxland Rd there and have fun, with billy carts. Walk up to the - I can always remember the Home for the Incurables which is Weemala Home and we used to go up there a lot and visit a lady that was incurable. They used not to have any families a lot of them, so we used to take a little can of soup up to this lady.

Q: When you say 'we' do you mean you -

- all the family, father and Bob used to take us and our sisters and brothers, we'd all go up.

Q: Did a lot of people round the area do that?

No. Not many people at all. No they were left really, nobody knew them, but my father was one of those sort of people that looked after the people like

that. But we also went - I went to the Methodist Sunday School in Church St and the Church in Church St Ryde, which was opposite St Anne's and after Sunday School we would always visit the Home of the Incurables and go and sing to them hymns and they'd wait for us, some of them in their wheelchairs and they used to look forward to us every Sunday to come and see them and sing hymns. This is in the 1930's, when we were young, 1930.

Q: And what was the atmosphere like in the Home for Incurables, how did you feel when you walked in there?

Ah ... well, it wasn't a cheerful place because you just got the impression that they were all people without any family and for us to take soup up, they must not have got very much sustenance. All I remember is it was a very poor place and you felt very sorry for the people because they didn't have any people to visit them.

Q: Did you get the impression that the hygiene was good?

Yes, they were looked after.

Q: Probably not a lot of entertainment.

No, no entertainment in those days. Well nobody had anything, and you see with the transport as well, there were only the trams. And did you know there is a tram that went from Top Ryde down to West Ryde Station? It used to be always called Ryde Station till later years, it was never called West Ryde. And there used to be an old fellow that was a bit retarded and he started the trams up, well he thought he did, he was 'old Jim' we called him, and 'Old Jim' stood at the Bundy near Mr Heap's chemist at the top of Tucker St and he'd start all the trams off, as he thought all the drivers and conductors would take notice of him -

Q: What do you mean? He thought he'd started?

He thought he did (laughter), but I mean they let him believe that he was, you know, doing a job, so we all knew him he was part of our life, we'd see 'old Jim' up there every day. I would say he was mentally retarded. Not Down Syndrome, mentally retarded.

Q: Did you have any idea where he lived?

I have no idea we never found out where he lived. Never found out a thing about him, but we all knew 'old Jim' and we used to say, 'Hi, how are you old Jim?' (Laughs)

Q: He was a fixture. Dorothy going back to - you mentioned the Steamboat Hotel, I didn't quite understand what you meant there, you then mentioned people getting thrown out of their houses during the depression, not being able to pay rent. Did you mean -?

- yes they turned it into accommodation in the 30's. And they turned this hotel into accommodation and people had all these - we didn't see flats or units before we hadn't seen any of those and it was quite unusual. And actually my father's youngest in the family, his sister, she married the man that owned that hotel, Jim Smith, but she died at childbirth and we never saw him again. So all we know his name was Jim Smith.

Q: So people would often go there -

- yes it was a residential hotel and then where the Ryde RSL is now that was always Moss' garage, people by the name of Moss, they went to school with us and that's what I remember around our way, and playing and from our area we went down our yard and we came out into Hatton St and opposite -

Q: - sorry can you just tell me exactly where you lived?

We lived, second from the corner of Hatton St, second house. There were the Mills on the corner -

Q: - so you were in Hatton St?

No we were in Glebe St which was part of Victoria Rd but our yard came right down and came out into Hatton St and opposite was the blacksmith's shop and down further was the Council chambers where they had these big sandstone wheels. We can remember they used to sharpen up all their tools and things, in Hatton St that was. That Baptist Ebenezer Church was there forever, that's opposite the Ryde Park.

Q: So was your house rented?

Yes. Most people in the depression lost their homes because - well it was a bit depression really, and so you didn't get food from anyone, there was no one to give you food, so you were without food most of the time in the depression and if you were lucky to have some bread to go to school - I can still smell in the case of the sandwiches and you just had jam on it. No butter or golden syrup. But you came home from school and your mother was always there, the home life was fantastic. Because your mother was there, it didn't matter how busy and you had some fresh bread (this must have been later), and you had dripping. You'd buy the white dripping, and pepper and salt on it and we'd have that and it was the most beautiful thing (laughs).

Q: It was bought dripping? It wasn't dripping left over from the roast?

No because you didn't have the money to have roasts. So you'd buy dripping from the butcher. So we'd just come home to that and you can't remember any other food, but I mean later on -

Q: - not much fruit?

Well you had fruit, but you pinched it really. But most people had fruit trees in the yard. But our father, you'd buy seed and keep seed from year after year and he had a vegetable garden and so we most probably survived with some vegetables and I still have his rhubarb plants which now would be over fifty years or more than that.

Q: They kept going

Yes, because there are some seeds now that don't. You know that don't you? Yes there is, there are seeds now that you can't keep. So I still have some of those rhubarb plants. He used to come in with his arms full and we'd say, 'Oh rhubarb again'. (Laughs) But you can't imagine, you can't remember any wonderful food or anything like that. So, the endowment, see? That's where the money would go, into food. And steak was - I remember people near us they used to buy, they had quite a few children, and they bought sixpence worth of sausages and steak and she'd make a big stew for about seven of them. (Laughs)

Q: Was your father unemployed during this period?

Yes, yes. He worked for the T. & G. Insurance and then he became unemployed.

Q: Can you remember how many years he was unemployed for?

Oh....quite some years and then they would give them odd days, when they'd work on the roads, very hard relief work. They did the roads and gutters and they worked really hard on the road in their flannel shirts, I can always see them in their flannel shirts on a day that might be a hundred and ten or something and they wore these flannel -

Q: - and long trousers?

And long trousers, always, yes.

Q: You were probably too young to remember how he felt about the relief work. Was he really pleased to get that day's work, or did he feel resentful that he didn't have his own job?

I was too young to remember that but he was very political and at Ryde we used to - the men would preach the politics to the people. They would stand on the corners of the shopping centre and you'd go up there and speak from their heart.

Q: Your dad?

Yes well dad did. They wanted him to stand.

Q: What party?

Labor, oh yes Labor, very strong. They came from the country his brothers and they were ahead of everybody with their politics.

Q: What part of the country were they from?

They came from Mt. McDonald, out near Cowra and he was in the railway then. So he studied to do accountancy, so he got through that, so he got his job at the T & G and then the depression started, well all you can remember was - well you can remember some children at school, you knew that their fathers had their jobs still because they were dressed, you know, extra special and the teachers liked them extra specially. (Snorts) And we were all left behind, oh yes, I can remember the school days where they had their teacher's pets, that where the name came from in our day. You didn't have the confidence in yourself because you didn't have the things that these other children had like chalks, I can always remember, if only I could own a box of 'Greys' - I think that was the name, 'Greys' chalks, because we used to do art and everything at school. They taught us a lot of subjects really. And I'd think, if only I owned that, and the teacher would loan them to us, so we had to hand them back, which didn't matter, but we never envied anyone. Never envious of dolls of people with toys or anything because we had such a great outdoor life of playing and doing all those sort of things, that we weren't a bit envious of anything, even at Christmas time. You wouldn't get much, if you got a pair of jazz garters wherever they came from -

Q: What are jazz garters?

Jazz garters? They went round the socks, they were pretty elastic garters with a frill of ribbon on them and if you got a pair of those for Christmas and a - I can remember in our school stocking we'd have them washed ready for Christmas eve, and we'd be singing all the Christmas songs at school, and Mum would hang them up. I can still see them hung up along the mantle shelf, all of our sock and in it for Christmas morning was - you would have say - a plum and an apricot and some great jack fruit that you didn't get and perhaps, as I say you got a pair of jazz garters.

Q: Would the socks be long?

The socks were long, up here to your knee and that was to keep your socks up and you always had jazz garters. And so we'd all jump on the bed and we weren't envious of what anyone else ever had and that was wonderful for us to have that because there was ten of us. Seven girls and three boys. There are seven of us left still. There was a friend that walked all the way from the markets once to bring us some rolls, and the rolls were in the sugar bags, as they called them. Nice rolls. Now and again you'd get something like that.

But its interesting the sugar bags were used in the rainy weather tucked in and the men wore those, they wouldn't carry umbrellas and they wore the sugar bag with the peak sort of, and that came down, and that's what kept them dry.

Q: No rain coats?

No rain coats - oh the men wouldn't carry umbrellas, if they did, they'd hide it, and they wouldn't bring you flowers, they would be in a case, if they wanted to bring flowers to you when you were older, they'd bring it in a case so they wouldn't be sissy. You see it was all this macho, so they wouldn't be sissy, you know. There was nobody rough. Like the boys, if they did swear, which I never remember, they wouldn't swear in front of girls or women or anything. They didn't seem to swear much. They respected everybody, like the girls and the women. The only ones I can remember that people thought they were a little bit bad, they called them the 'Larrikins' of Ryde. Now the 'Larrikins' were young fellows like you'd see today, seventeen or eighteen and they would just stand around the shops talking with each other, never harm you, and we'd just say, 'just walk straight past and don't look at them'. (Laughs)

Q: Do you remember some of those people? Their names?

Oh I've got names. Do you want me to name a few people that I remember from Ryde?

Q: Some of 'The Larrikins'.

Oh - that was Zartman. Now he went to the Second World War and was killed, see, they weren't larrikins, they were just boys that - we went to Sunday School and Church, and the Church of England and the Presbyterians, we'd all mix. And they were unemployed. Most probably because - there's a story that my eldest brother, he was unemployed, we started work at fourteen, so he was unemployed, because I think there was a big place down at Meadowbank Station, they made trains or something.

Q: The Meadowbank Manufacturing Works.

Yes. He got a scholarship to go to Drummoyne High School from Ryde and we thought that was fantastic, but he couldn't carry on because Mum and Dad couldn't afford to let him go and he was really clever. We all turned out to be quite smart years after. (Laughs) But we didn't have the opportunities. But as I was saying about these boys, we all went, but most probably they were only boys that just didn't go to Sunday School, cause in those days everybody sort of went to Sunday School and Church. It was just something that everybody you knew went, you know. So maybe they were just boys that just didn't go, and there might only have been four or five of them. So when we were coming from Church we'd just say, 'Don't look at them just walk straight past'. But they never said a thing to us. (Laughs)

Q: Did anyone call them the 'forty thieves?'. Are these the ones -

- yes, the same crowd.

Q: Someone else referred to the 'Sunshine Club'. He said he was in the 'Sunshine Club', they were unemployed and would stand around the streets.

They could have been different, I don't know about them, but I heard of the 'forty thieves'.

Q: Is that what you called them, or was that just what you've heard since?

Well, we just called them larrikins. That was our name for them. But the 'forty thieves'. I can find out about that from my sister, her husband. I can find out from them. But my eldest brother, well he had a great friend called Billy Lumbo - who was - I don't think he was Aboriginal, he was from the Torres Strait Islands, a lovely family, and they lived at West Ryde, and another boy, and Jack Pollen, they used to go out to Nth Ryde because Nth Ryde was all gardens, vegetable gardens and fruit orchards and they'd go out there to earn a little bit of money and pick strawberries, this day. And so - Italians mostly, they were too out there, and they picked all these strawberries and the worked for hours and hours and they only wanted to give them three pence or sixpence each, and do you know what they did? They pelted all the strawberries on the washing line. (Laughs) And ran away. (Laughter) That would be the worst thing they'd every do. They were so annoyed to think they were exploited, and you were exploited too you know. And at school - do you want to know about school?

Q: Yes, but just before we get on to that, we'll come on to that in a minute. I want to ask you a bit more about the depression, and you said your father had been on relief work. Do you remember him getting food relief? Getting tickets?

We didn't get food relief until we shifted to West Ryde then when I was nine, so that was 1929, so coming round to ten - that would be in the early thirties we were given a voucher for groceries, because I remember my sister and I used to have to go and we'd take our school cases and we'd go to the grocers and we were really embarrassed.

Q: Which grocer shop did you go to?

Bottles at West Ryde, there was Steve Allerdice there, he went to school with us too, he worked there and Norm somebody or other and we were really embarrassed having to take them. I can remember the order, a tin of dark plum jam and a tin of melon and lemon jam and they were all the things that we needed, you didn't get a lot, and that was all we ever got from the depression days.

Q: Did you try and get out of doing it?

No, no, because Mum never had to do any messages, cause she had enough to do, she was a wonderful worker, she was fantastic. Working and cleaning.

Q: So even though you were embarrassed you didn't protest and say, 'Oh Mum I could never do that'.

Oh no, no. We went, because we were obedient. In those days we were just obedient. We accepted the older people, what they knew best. Oh no, you never said, 'Oh Mum'. I can never ever remember back answering my mother and that is Gods truth, ever.

Q: What about you're Dad? Did you back chat him?

Dad? No. Well Dad was o.k. Dad was fairly strict. We had to be home, like he'd be waiting for us from school, and they were home a lot then because of the depression days except when they had this relief work. But no, oh we wouldn't back chat Dad either, no. But you didn't want to. Because the home life was so - there wasn't all this great hysterics and all this sort of thing in the home, and Mum would just say to all or one of us, 'Now I want you', and we'd just say, 'Yes Mum', and we'd go and do what we had to do. We didn't have to do a lot, she didn't make us do a lot. We were always playing out. No there was none of that cheek. No, all the homes that I know, I can't remember any of it, at all. Because you did respect the older people.

Q: Do you ever remember physical punishment? Did anyone in your family of the ten children ever get a belting?

Oh yes, we'd get a hiding. I can remember - Dad used to have a fruit tree switch and it was on the shelf, and we had to sit at the table and behave ourselves while we ate and you didn't talk at the table, well there were too many of us anyhow, you had to have discipline to keep the discipline. So if you did do anything, you'd just get a little switch on the arm, but I can remember my sister Olga, we used to get the giggles, and I'd say, 'I think I'll have a glass of water' and I'd go out into the kitchenette – (Giggle, giggle) - and then when I went in, she'd go out and have her turn, you know, because the discipline at the table was like that.

Q: At the table would you hear your father talking about politics there or would he do that more in the company of adults?

No, he'd talk politics, because I used to love to talk politics with him and I'd go the opposite, just to get him going about the politics.

Q: Tell me some of the things he'd say. You told me he was a strong Labor man. Some of the controversial issues of the day?

No, no, the Lang men, you know, all for the Lang. Jack Lang supporters, oh yes. And his brothers are all like that. Oh, no, we were very strong. The Methodist Church were very Liberal people, we were always Labor. I'm strong Labor now, I don't care who knows it. (Laughs).

Q: You were brought up a Methodist?

Yes. Even as poor as they were, and the Labor helped the poor more in those days, particularly. Oh yes, Methodists were really known for the real Liberal.

Q: Or UAP. Was it UAP in those days?

Yes, UAP then, they changed their name a few times. But Dad was very political, so were his brothers, and so politics was part of my life. I'm interested now, very interested. I have children who are well educated and they're very interested, they're very strong with their politics.

Q: Do you remember any particular incident, for example when Jack Lang was sacked, or when the Harbour Bridge was opened, when De Groote jumped in. Do you remember the impact they had?

Yes I was in there the day it was opened. My sister took me and we were very crushed. The opening of the Harbour Bridge.

Q: How did you go in?

On the train. We'd go by train from West Ryde.

Q: There was no Circular Quay station so where would you -

- we'd walk from Wynyard, there was no Circular Quay, none of that.

Q: So you were actually on the bridge when it opened?

Yes, and we were pushed. I can remember just being pushed along with the crowd, and then we'd go for other things, like the Royal Family. We used to take our children into see them as well.

Q: The day the Harbour Bridge opened your father was probably unemployed at that stage. Do you remember what you wore? Did you have special clothes to wear?

That was the 16th March 1932, twelve I was. My mother used to be quite a good sewer she was never taught, but she was a wonderful sewer. She ruined her eyes sitting up at night at the machine, sewing for us, and she always had us - we always had good clothes at that stage. We had the clothes for Sunday School, so we'd go with that. So you just took your frock off when you came home and it was either washed or whatever, and you put it away, that wasn't worn around anywhere, and you didn't wear your shoes outside. Once you came home from school, your shoes were taken off and I always remember what they were made of. There was a man at West Ryde station there, and he had the shoe shop, Mr Roberts and we used to get our shoes from him. Box calf shoes, and we used to hate him, because they were real heavy.

Q: What do you mean box calf?

That's what they were called. They were made of box calf. They were called box calf shoes.

Q: Calf skin?

Calf skin, I don't know. But that's what they were called box calf, and they were good sturdy shoes which we didn't like very much. But Mum would dress us all very clean and people didn't know that we didn't have very much, they used to say, 'You wouldn't know you didn't have very much, the way you're dressed'. But she'd wash at night and have it dried. Have to have it dried for the next day. So we'd go into town in our Sunday School frock with shoes and socks, and jazz garters. (Laughs)

Q: When your sister took you into the Harbour Bridge opening, had you asked to go in? Or she was just going so you went along.

Oh she was going. She would have been fourteen, she would have been just at work. Sixteen she would have been, and she just took another sister and myself in. And I remember that, being pushed right from the Quay - that's right I remember now - we were pushed right from the Quay right up to Town Hall Station, you couldn't get out of the crowd, you had to go as far as you could to get outside.

Q: And were you aware that day of what De Groote did? Or was it just that you heard and saw it later on in newsreels?

I think I would have been aware of it because things were spoken in our home.

Q: No, I mean when you were actually in there.

Oh no, I can't remember that no I can't.

Q: Do you remember the day Jack Lang was sacked?

No, no, I don't. All I know he got the child endowment for us. And with the child endowment they used to have a shop one of the old shops in Sydney, McDowells or something like that and they'd come around and you could pay off the clothes. You'd just have to have like a singlet and the bare necessities, that's later on, and so they would come around door-to-door. No we would go and buy them I think and then we'd put them on an order, I forget what they call it, it wasn't lay by, we could have them and pay them off after and I think they were paid off with our endowment money. And then of course as we all went to work we all started to - I was the fifth, and my eldest sister started at Nestles. She used to go down in the tram to the Gladesville Bridge and there would be a boat to take her over to Nestles. And then she worked for a big pharmaceutical firm. Then we all got a little bit of money coming in. Dad got work. He only seemed to get work, not continuous, I don't know how old he was then. But he died fairly young.

Q: Some years out of a job.

Oh people were years out of a job.

Q: Could you give me a picture of those political meetings when people would stand on the street corners? Did they actually stand on soap boxes or is that just -

- now look, I can see a platform and I can still see that platform, they made a little platform and stand there and everything came from the heart, because it was what they really believed in because they - no notes or anything like that, and what they absolutely believed in. In those days, politics, they were really

keen and they really meant what they stood for, and anyhow anybody that can stand up and say what they stand for without hiding behind people and that, I admire people like that, I'm very much an admirer of people who can say, 'Well I'm so and so' and be nice about it. Everybody has their own different opinions.

Q: Do you remember any conservative or UAP or whatever the Conservative Party was, do you remember their party meetings too?

No, I can't at all.

Q: Where were these Labor Party meetings held?

I don't know where their meetings were. No, I haven't a clue. I've just got a picture of them speaking on the corners up there.

[Tape breaks]

TAPE 1 SIDE B

Q: Did your mother have these strong political beliefs?

No she was too busy, too busy. No it was just Dad and his brothers, mainly and then I was interested and I used to like to go the other, just to hear him talking about it.

Q: Did he know you were being the devil's advocate?

No, no he wouldn't, so it must have always been in me, you know, and all the family they liked political, but I liked fairness. I thought it was unfair in those days, particularly school.

Q: We could talk about school now

Well I was going to say about the shops. Have people told you who owned the shops up there. You had a Cadman, Amelia Cadman. We went to school with a lot of children from the First Fleeters and you've been told about those.

Q: Oh well you can tell me about those

No I've just put some of the people's names down. I can go through them quickly if you want me to.

The people we knew in Ryde and went to Ryde School. This is Ryde School, the Bensons, the Smalls, Mobbs, Cox, Mathews, Hicks, Dean, Irvine, Perry, Trevitt, Phillips, Cadman, Pope, Hardy, Whitfield, Pacey, Foulcher, Stead, Thistlewaite, Eldridge, Angel, Jenning, Dalton, Butler, Chalice, Hogan,

Littlejohn, Flickcroft they were the policeman, Hall, Pool, Harroway, Rothenbury, Wilkinson, Wicks, Westwood, McWhirter, Wood, Lane, Mitchell, Dale, Best and Porters.

Q: Higginbothams?

Yes, didn't I have the Higginbothams. I had them with the shops.

Mr Spicer the boot maker, the butchers, Mr Rankin was the paper shop, Mr Main, the menswear, Booths cake shop, Higginbothams the fruit shop, Mr Heap the chemist who used to put us in a cupboard.

Q: Yeah I've heard. Now tell us your version of this story

Mr Heap was the chemist. This is true. Mr Heap, we'd come home from school and go in there and he had a big rod and we'd all stand there and he must have been a little bit queer mustn't he? And he'd hit this rod, this big heavy rod on the desk, bang, on his counter. We'd stand there, then he'd open the big doors of his safe where he most probably kept his pharmaceuticals and all that sort of thing, and he'd put us all in there, close the door, bang. We weren't in there long, then he'd let us out and he'd fill our hands with little musk lollies, he had these jars of little musk lollies, and off we'd go, and it was a funny thing, I met a woman -

Q: - how often would he do this? Everyday?

Everyday I think we would go in you know, whether he liked children a lot or, and these lollies were the big thing for us you know, because we didn't have money for lollies. But it was a funny thing. A woman who I will have to ask something from later, her mother was a Ryde person, but she said that she remembers the same about Mr Heap and Mr Heap was a very nice man, he was a nice looking man, I can see him now you know, you can see these people that were - and he was so interesting.

Q: Did he have a family? Or do you think he missed having a family?

No, he had a family. And there was another shop up there too, Starr's, she came to our school as well, and then there was Broadhead and Barcham, they were grocery shops, and there was Booths the cake shop, Maines, the menswear. Cadman - they would be the Cadmans from the First Fleeters, hairdresser. Mr Fox the hairdresser. Braggs were the bakers, that was the bakers shop down in Park St, and Melville St Ryde. And then there was Moss the garage, and Mr Flickcroft was the Policeman, Mr Burgess was the carer of the Townhall, and Tuckwells, Thorntons, Derrins the fruit shop, Normans fruit shop.

Q: What did the Tuckwells sell?

I think the Tuckwells might have been in with cars or something then. They came to our Sunday School as well. Strange you knew all the children, and all the boys names, we all called them like, Johnny, Billy, Jimmy and they all got an i e on the end of their names. If they wanted to fight, after school they'd say 'There's a fight on' and so a couple of the boys would put a fight on and we'd all get round in a ring and they'd just have a few punches and we'd all go home.

Q: Where did they do that?

In the school paddock. Coming down the school paddock, the 'Infant's' is there now, well there wasn't then and you'd come up to the Town Hall and we'd all just gather there and the teachers, we'd keep well away from the teachers. (Laughs)

Q: Now when you were talking about shops a minute ago, do you remember Ham and Beef shop

Was that Thornton's? Was that in Church Street?

Q: No, its sort of where the Library is now, up at Top Ryde. At the top of Park Street. There were two Ham and beef shops.

Up from the Post Office might have been, but there was a hay and corn shed there, you would have seen that, we called it the hay and corn shed.

Q: Near where the Hardware store is now?

Home Corp. They were well known people, the girls were sisters at Dennison House. My three children were born at Dennison House. Yes the Hay and Corn shed and of course the - there was another hall there, where they used to have weddings. The Masonic Hall. That's where people used to hold their wedding receptions.

Q: Do you remember the Hunt's Grocery shop? And do you remember it being an early Cash-and-Carry apparently.

Morans was a Cash and Carry too. There is a Hunts here on Marsden Road and Victoria Road, how far down?

Q: No, this was right up West Ryde.

Yes I know Hunts as well as anything. And there was a hotel too you know right opposite the station the other side of West Ryde station, on the Ryde side of West Ryde station. There was a hotel there, because we didn't live far from there, we lived in Hermitage Road, and there was a hotel up there and the trams used to come round up there and it was a penny for children, but we

used to walk all the way to school and up Park Street and there was the Chinese Gardens from Park Street up to the terminus as we called it. And also where the Agricultural College is now that belonged to people by the name of Longs, did you know that? Big family. They used have all these loquat trees. They used to be wild along the river bank, cause we used to swim down there a lot. And lemons and guavas and loquats.

Q: You mentioned being at school with families of the First Fleeters. Were you aware of that at time?

No, in later years. Well we used to call in from school to the Bensons and the Smalls, and who owned Willandara up there?

Q: Devlins.

And one near the Police Station, down a bit further on the right coming down Victoria Road the Bensons used to live in there because we used to run in from school. This was a habit, we'd come from school, a whole host of kids and we'd just run into the house for ten minutes and then off we'd go and we'd hop off into somebody else's place it was a real country type of life. You knew everybody. And you were safe all the time. The mothers were always home.

Q: As this mob of kids were coming along, say Park Street were you ever cheeky to the Chinese market gardeners?

Well my girlfriend and I, we'd come up there and she lived behind these Longs near the Agricultural College and we'd say, 'See if we can get across the gardens on the way to school'. Because that was a real short cut. And he'd come out and wave his arms to us and we'd go for our life. (Laughs)

Q: Did you ever speak to them?

No, never came that close. It was quite a big garden. I had a feeling that down Victoria Road where that car place is now opposite Mt St Margaret's I thought there was a Chinese gardens there. Was there? Yes there was, there definitely was. The Chinaman would come up our street with his two baskets on his shoulder to sell goods. We had a lovely lovely Chinaman - when we lived in Glebe Street if you woke up early in the morning all the market gardeners were coming to the market and they were taking their goods to market and you could hear clip clop, clip clop, I love that sound, and all the horses and the carts, clip clop clip clop. Going along Victoria Road into town, into the markets to take all their goods in. And there would be a lot. And there were a lot of Chinese and we had one and we called him Chocky. He was the loveliest Chinaman. When he came back he'd go and stay under a big tree over the road and Mum used to say to us 'Now don't you run over there first, you stand back till he calls you'. And he used to have chocolates and give all the children around there chocolates and lollies that I can remember. And that's where he got his name Chocky, because he brought us chocolates. And he was the loveliest, loveliest man, and so we were allowed to go over then,

because he would beckon us over and Mum would say, 'Well you can go then, if he beckons you over'.

Q: Where was his market garden?

We don't know, he came clip clopping down Glebe St, so he could have come from out here Ermington or, because when I lived at West Ryde Ermington this was all open land. We were the first in the street here. We've got an old Heritage home over here. In 1792 the land was granted and the home was built in about 1820. Our land was a grant from the Captain McDonald grant. And so all this, out here was all paddocks.

Q: Can I just get back to Chocky for a minute?

What was his English like?

Yes. He was a lovely looking man. A very refined Chinese man. I had a little brother that died and that night we were out the front and my older sister was out there, and he came along. It might not have been quite dark, and he'd heard about it, and he gave her ten shillings. To get ten shillings for the family - he gave her ten shillings to take him to her mother because we'd lost the child. A whole ten shillings. When I think back now, I think, oh wouldn't it have been lovely to have known who he was. But you didn't because there were so many different carts coming down.

Q: What did your brother die of? Do you mind me asking?

No I don't mind. He had convulsions at two years and two months, they said it was his two year old teeth, and he didn't come out of the coma.

Q: Do you remember the Dr coming to the house?

We had a Dr in Glebe Street, I can't remember his name now. The old Dr around Ryde was Dr Bolton. Somebody said - my father was always very particular, always dressed up in a tie. And they said, 'If you saw Mr Wood running down without a tie you knew there was something very much wrong'. So he must have gone down to the Dr, who lived near Popes. And that Mr Pope, he shot himself. I always remember that. I was only about five and the girl next door used to go down there to the family, and shot himself, and she was down there at the time, not in the room of course, but he did, I don't know what happened about that, but you didn't go into those sort of things in those days.

Q: People didn't talk about it?

Didn't talk about, didn't come out in the papers. If you could afford a paper, I don't know.

Q: Do you remember your little brothers funeral?

Yes I remember it as well as if it was yesterday and it was a woman two doors down evidently had been a nurse at one stage, and she came and laid him out and it was a little blue coffin and I can see his hands crossed and she had little tiny white flowers in that. In those days everybody that died, or everybody that I know that died, their coffin was placed on the dining room table overnight and everybody was taken round to have a look at your relative so you were just taken by the hand by your mother or father and you walked round. But I can see my little brother, he has a twin, his sister is still alive, she's seventy.

Q: So he was two, and how old were you?

I was nine. I can see that little blue coffin. I can't remember who took it away or where it went the next day. I know the Field of Mars Cemetery back to front because all my relatives - see we had quite an extended family, we had our grandmother and grandfather on my father's side and he had two of his brothers, and one of them had a big family and the other one had three and we all lived quite close to each other and they were all buried up there and we used to go for walks after Sunday School and that was our outing. We'd go out to the Field of Mars Cemetery, and we'd look at all these stones. It was interesting.

Q: Do you remember your brother being taken up there?

No, I can't, but there is a grave.

Q: Do you remember much other childhood sickness in your family?

No, you didn't have Dr's because it was ten shillings and you couldn't afford it, and you never had Dr's. We were quite well really. But when we went down to West Ryde, we had a Chemist Mr Birch and he was our Dr cum everything, and if any of us was sick. We only had the measles and mumps. I never had the mumps. We didn't have a lot of bad sicknesses.

Why I think is, that there were rules and regulations at school that you had to stay away from school for so long and you stayed away and when you were in bed you didn't get out of bed when you were sick and your mother and father put brown paper if you had measles for our eyes, put brown paper over the lights. And you stayed in bed and you didn't have toilets inside because they were outside, so the chambers were used in those days, so the chamber was brought and it was put on your bed and you sat on the chamber. You weren't even allowed on the floor. We were looked after like that. That's why we were most probably strong. So you were looked after right through from your sickness and then when your fever was over and all the spots gone and whatever, you were allowed to get up and you sat in the sun and you didn't go back to school until you were allowed. So therefore it wasn't spread, the diseases weren't spread. We only knew of only measles and mumps.

Pneumonia, we didn't know about that until later, that wasn't in it. But we were so well looked after and kept warm.

Q: And you don't remember any inoculation at that stage?

No inoculations at all. There weren't any. As far as I know.

Q: They were just starting in the 30's.

Well we didn't. If we were sick we used to go to Mr Birch. He was right opposite the station and he'd send home a thermometer to take our temperature and then he'd ask what we were like and we'd tell him what the person was like, sick and he'd send home, we'd get medicine. That's the way we went through. I never had a Dr till I was having my first baby.

Q: You've mentioned your healthy lifestyle and your outdoor activities. Could you give me some idea of some of the things you did for example you did mention about swimming, I suppose at Meadowbank baths. Were they dirty and polluted?

Well, not in high tide they weren't. The high tide was wonderful. At low tide they were muddy, but we knew the tides, we all knew the tides back to front. When we lived at West Ryde we used to walk down Hermitage Road, cross the railway line, the electric railway line, walk to Meadow Bank and then to the baths and they were on the North side of the railway bridge, and they were shark proofed net.. So we used to swim there all the time, then catch crabs. We'd walk along after our swim and catch crabs and then have dozens of rides over in the punt that went from Rhodes to Meadowbank.

Q: Free rides?

Yes, free rides, oh yes, it was a punt that took cars over and it was on the Ryde side of the railway bridge. And we'd just go and ride on that, and the man that was driving he didn't worry about us being on it because that was our day out, so then we'd go home through the Meadowbank park and pick lemons and eat lemons or loquats and any of the fruit. Guavas, I always remember guavas.

Q: What did Meadowbank Park look like in those years when you were a child?

Well it was o.k. Because all the white fences - that was one job my father had with the Council, he had to paint all the fences with white paint and we thought that was wonderful to see Dad painting all these white fences. And they were there for years and years the white fences surrounding it. And it was quite well kept and there's a monument there now, it’s been there from when we kids, must have been the 1st World War, and then all the rest of it was paddocks. And we walked through all the mangroves and come round the long way home, through Charity creek, which is all concreted now, and part of Meadowbank Park. It was just all the mangroves and so you came from the

park and you didn't have to come far because the mangroves really went right up there to Melrose Park. That was really a swamp, because that used to come almost to West Ryde a lot of that swamp, until they built it up. So we'd just go through the mangroves and watch for leeches, that's all. We'd watch for the leeches. And then there was a tunnel under the train line, we'd walk up there and where the Meadowbank Tech is now we'd wander round there, there were little streams and things and eventually we'd go home.

Q: In your bare feet?

Q: What did you wear? Shorts, or an old dress?

Dresses. I don't think shorts were in. They were dresses. So they were the days. And we had kites, we made our own kites when we were young, and they didn't fly very far because the timber was too heavy and we made the paste out of water and flour, you know? But we had fun with kites and Billy carts, the boys got old wheels from prams and that and made billy carts, and we had marbles, and we were great tree climbers, we could climb any tree, we were really great tree climbers.

Q: When you're are talking about 'we' all the time…..?

…it was mostly my brothers and sisters and friends. At West Ryde [Loud phone ring]

Q Down at Meadowbank baths was that where you had the swimming lessons?

No, we learnt to swim and we were all good swimmers, breast-stroke swimmers, and we had a teacher at Ryde School, Miss Ambler, and she march us all the way from Ryde school, right across all the paddocks, we would have gone by Willandara and right down there and when we first learnt there was a man with private baths, east side of the bridge. Mr Traffard his name was. On the Parramatta river and it was in a bit of a bay there, where the ferries go from now, near Halverson's. Not quite over there. And he had - he was an Englishman - and he had these cubicles, I don't know how many, around the board and we'd go into cubicles and we learnt to swim there. Miss Ambler taught us to breast-stroke.

Q: You didn't learn freestyle?

No breaststroke, it was all breaststroke. We were really good fast breaststroke swimmers. We never learnt freestyle.

Q: Describe your swimming costume to me.

Oh - that would have been long, long in the legs wouldn't it? Oh - gee I can't remember.

Q: Swimming caps?

Yes we used to wear caps. We wore caps right till I was quite - I used to wear them into my twenties. Yes we'd have caps. So where would we get our costumes? The school must have had some, mustn't they? We didn't get them from home. When I went to Ryde school - that's right - till sixth class - so maybe we did, but they would have been with wide straps and longish, they'd be half way between the knee and the groin, our cozzies, because we used to wear, when we went surfing when I was about fifteen or sixteen, we used to wear bras under our cozzies.

Q: Where did you go surfing?

Manly, always went to Manly, liked Manly.

Q: Tell me about school. We haven't talked about school. You were saying the poorer children were discriminated against.

I've got a note here, I asked my husband last night, it suddenly came to me, I said, 'Can you remember the dunce cap?' and he said, 'Yes'. And I said, 'Now isn't that a terrible thing?' They had a dunce cap, now that was for people that were slow or didn't have the confidence to get up.

Q: They actually did that at Ryde?

Yes the dunce cap at Ryde School. In sixth class I had Mrs May. I know all the teachers right through. She might have been a New Zealander.

Q: Was she Miss or Mrs?

Miss, Miss May. They were all Miss. They weren't allowed to work - right up till I went to work, just before the war - married women weren't allowed to go to work, so if they did go to work they had to tell a lie and they'd give their maiden name. So they were all Miss, all the teachers.

Q: What did she look like?

She used to wear black. I can see her now. She'd draw her hair right back, very severely. I'd say she was Maori and she used to have this little black bag. My sister said the other night, 'Remember Mrs May?' - Mrs she was, so she might have been a widow from the 1st World War see? She had this little velvet black bag, and she'd bring it out from down between her - breasts, she used have it sitting there, and bring it out and take the notes out and count them in front of us, so she had you know -

Q: - Money?

Money, yes, which she did most probably, what an awful thing. (Exclamations) I can always remember that, my sisters remember that as well.

Q: She was a Maori do you think? She had dark skin?

Yes, dark, yes, I think she was more Maori looking, I can see her standing there - and strict - you didn't move.

Q: Was she a big build of a woman?

A fairly solid woman, you didn't get really fat people like you do today very much.

Q: Didn't you?

No, I can't remember fat people. Oh no, not like they are today. If you did see one, they would be absolutely - it would be so unusual.

Q: Really?

In those days, yeah. And Miss Ambler took us, but there was also this dunce cap and it was absolutely shocking.

Q: Did you ever get it?

No I didn't actually, we were quite smart, we would have most probably done quite well. But there was a few whose father's had jobs and they had all their equipment, like chalks and all that sort of thing, and so the teachers more or less gave them their time, thought they most probably more intelligent because they were dressed better. (Laughs)

Q: Did all the teachers do that? You had this feeling?

I had this feeling, yes, I really did. There was one teacher, a Miss Buchanan, I thought she was wonderful. Miss Olg, she was an old lady, she taught the fifth, I think she taught me everything I knew at school she was wonderful. Strict old lady but she was wonderful. We had a sewing teacher, Miss Coxedge who, - my girlfriend was mucking around one day and she put the thimble on her nose and was making everybody laugh and she turned around and caught her, and do you know what she did? She made her go into every class in the school with - when she got to the door she had to put the thimble on her nose - to make her look a fool. They used to try and make you look small, you know. Miss Haines, she was a cranky one and everybody used to say, 'oh when are we going into Biddy Haines's class?' Biddy Haines, she got the name. And we'd say, 'oh Biddy Haines' what a terrible class to have to go into. And she would use the ruler, she really whacked into me one day for

nothing. She was a really cranky woman. But I won a prize for writing in her class. (Laughs).

Q: And she really hit you?

Yes, you were hit. And Mr Pipe was the headmaster and Mr Downton was the next one, whatever they were called in those days. Deputy. And he had the caning to do and he had this big long cane and you'd see him flipping it getting it ready to give the boys six.

Q: Did the girls ever get caned?

No, but Mrs Haines used to hit everyone. She'd hit the children with the ruler.

Q: Would you go home and tell your parents?

Yes. Our parents weren't those type of parents which I don't like even now who said, 'Oh my poor child I must go up and see what they've done'. We'd be asked, 'Now what were you doing wrong? If you were doing something wrong then you deserved that.' Instead of 'Oh my poor dear little girl or boy, what did you do?' Nothing - you know

[Tape break]

END OF INTERVIEW,

An Interview with Dorothy Packer - Part 2

Interviewee: Dorothy Packer

Interviewer: Pauline Curby

Date of Interview: 12th Sept 1997

Transcription: Gabrielle Godard.

Q: I was asking you if the classes were segregated.

Well now - Kindergarten wasn't. And we had the most gorgeous teacher, I'm trying to think of her name. Kindergarten teachers used to always be lovely, really lovely teachers, and play the piano and we used to have this - Maypoles. I never have forgotten the Maypoles, and we'd all get a go at the Maypoles.

Q: Tell me more about that.

They used to have a big pole and then they had so many ribbons, well there would be at least ten, I guess, ribbons, and you'd all dance, skip, a skippy dance, and hold the ribbon and dance and then twine it, and then all come out of it again, and it was a beautiful dance, its something I remember so well, and we all got a go at that.

Q: Did you do that on special occasions?

Oh I think that was quite often really. And we used to be always singing. And then, as you say, segregation, so we'd go in from Kindergarten, first, second, third - I think we were segregated, there were the girls and the boys, yes you were. The boys were kept in their own grounds and we were kept in ours. Yes we were segregated, I never thought anything much about that. But you came together on the Empire Day, the 25th May.

Q: Could you explain to me about that, what you did on the 24th May?

25th of May. It was Empire Day.

Q: And you had a bonfire at night I suppose?

Yeah - what we did - put that down I thought that might be interesting for you - we'd go up to the Town Hall in the morning and there was some celebrities from the Ryde Council, or a church Minister, I don't know what, and we'd go up there and sing all the things, God and Country, King and Country, we were taught all about English, the British Isles all the time, that was embedded into

us as we were kids. And so we'd go up there and we'd sing all about the Mother Country, England and we'd have somebody talk to us on the Empire, you know, Empire Day, then we got half a day's holiday, which was wonderful and so we would all hurry home and gather all our - we had been building - you'd be building your bonfire for months in the afternoon. There were big paddocks so you didn't have to worry. And so all the children in the street and all around you were all congregated together, you all built them together. You didn't have your own. It was one big bonfire for the whole street.

Q: Where did you build it?

Oh - golly. Where was ours? Gee, where would be the nearest paddock to us? It might have been over the road. The one we had in West Ryde was in the paddock opposite us. But you'd build them in a paddock and you only had - your fireworks were Tom Thumbs, it was nothing to worry about. Flower pots, sparklers and a Basket Bomb, was a little bomb, you know, just a little - and there were sky rockets, if you could afford it, these were if you could afford it. And Tom Thumbs - I told you about the Tom Thumbs, and there were Catherine Wheels you put a pin through, put on the fence.

Q: The basket bomb was a cracker?

Yes it was a real cracker, that was a real cracker - and you let them off altogether, you didn't break them up it was a bit hard, the wicks would come out, so they'd let them off, so they were a real, you know, bang, bang, bang. And then from all the families people brought a few of each so we had quite a good - we'd have a wonderful night and sit around the fire, this wonderful fire that we'd all built for months. They were big fires. And that was a really, really great thing in our lives. And Empire Day, we loved that.

Q: You looked forward to it?

We looked forward to it for a long while, oh yes, because you know, you'd pick up everything you could to put on this bonfire and some of them were huge.

Q: Did anyone throw spuds into the fire?

No, no, we used to have our dinner, I remember Mum used to say, 'Well now come on then you've got to get everything ready then you can go out then to the bonfire'. We couldn't get out quick enough you know to the paddock to the bonfire with all the street children, everybody. So everybody had their little crackers and let them off the way they wanted to and the Tom Thumbs were thrown in the fire, and then there were crackers that were a little bit bigger than that, so they could go in too. And so it was a really great night. They were great nights see, those sort of things, that other kids would think nothing of today. The world's changed, but you've got to go along with it. (Laughs). Completely changed. And at school we played basket ball, cricket, soccer.

Q: Did the girls play cricket as well as the boys?

Yes they played vigaro, the girls. But the discipline, we took it all in our stride, it was no hassle, you know, it was obedience and there wasn't all the talking, we couldn't talk or jump up and down in school and do all those things. But we learnt, we had - I've just put down here some of the subjects. (Rustling of paper) First thing in the morning we'd go in and we'd assemble in the playground and sing the National Anthem, then we'd do exercises. This is everyday. Exercises. Stretching, arms up, sideways. And we were really fit kids. And then we'd march into school.

Q: Would there be music to march by do you remember?

There'd be a piano. There wouldn't be much else, unless somebody came from a band and there weren't many bands around then. (Laughs). And then we'd go into school - and see this is why I remember things, we'd sing our times table. Two ones are two, two twos - and we'd go right through till the ten times and maybe more. And we'd sing all those, so you knew them off by heart, absolutely off by heart.

Q: Must have been a racket. Do you remember the noise?

Yes, but it was good. (Sings) Two ones are two, two twos are four (Laughs). And so years later you could add up, no trouble, and people would say, 'What's that?' and you'd just add it up. And then we'd have a syllabus of spelling. And we were all good spellers. Everybody was good at English, grammar, ‘cause that was all just really put into us. And so we'd have the syllabus of spelling, so we'd go through - one day we'd have one page, next day - and so we'd all be good spellers, and then we had History.

Q: What sort of History did you learn?

We had English history and you had to learn dates. I loathed dates. And we had Australian history, but there wasn't much of that, and there was nothing about the Aborigines only one person came up, that was 'Jacky Jacky'. There was a story about 'Jacky Jacky'. That's all. You learnt nothing more than that of the Australian history. Geography I used to prefer to History.

Q: Did you learn Australian things in Geography? About the wheat and wool industry? Or more about overseas countries?

(Pause) I just can't remember all that really. It would be just what happened I suppose up when they came into Australia. That would be the Australian History, there wasn't much more. We learned Geography where every town was. And we had to always free hand-draw all the maps. So we could free hand draw Australia and that was our Geography and you knew where all the States were and the cities and all that sort of thing, and we had sewing classes, and there was English, grammar, and we had to really know all that you know and -

Q: - do you remember any of the books you read at school?

Dot and the Kangaroo. That was my favourite. That would be in the Infants most probably. Or third class. What else? Oh there was always books. And we had to learn poetry.

Q: Do you remember any now?

Weeel - 'Daffodils' I loved that one and then there was another one. 'We must go down to the sea one day, the lonely sea and the sky'. (Laughter). Yes we had to have that, and 'Daffodils' I loved. Oh there were many many poems that we had to learn. We really had to learn them. Cause she could ask you to stand up and say them, you know. And sewing - when you look back there was a lot, but it was all thorough. And our grammar and English and spelling had to be - it was great. There weren't many kids, I can't remember, that couldn't do it, there might have been a few. They were the poor kids that probably got the dunce cap.

Q: Do you remember at Primary School bringing work to do at home?

Primary? Oh gee - no - we most probably would have a bit, I don't know, its something that has eluded me. I played so much I was an outdoor person, I still am. Open the door and I'm out. So I used to play. I was a great one for sport. Then up at the town hall, the children whose parents could afford it, they'd be learning dancing. So my sister and I would sneak in there, sit up in the mezzanine, watch them dancing and then go for our lives home, the teacher caught us once and said "what are you two girls still up here for.

Q: Would you have liked to learn yourself?

Yes, I used to love to watch them I thought it was wonderful, those children learnt to do those things. We weren't jealous or envious of anyone. I always used to think if only we had the money. There was a shop up there at Top Ryde and they started to have frozen bananas on a stick and frozen oranges. Lucky to get a penny or whatever it was to buy one of those. You never ever thought of stealing or anything to get anything.

Q: Do you think you never felt envious, because there was so many people in the same boat

Perhaps it might have been, it would be the minority, I had a girlfriend, the Foulchers. Her father was the post man, so he most probably was working all the time. There were a few people like that. But in a big family you never feel jealous anyhow. We all got along, I can't remember any of us ever having any arguments or fights ever. Because it was give and take and we had a wonderful mother that had all the patience in the world, never raised her voice. So we all just, I suppose we were all happy.

Q: With so many children and the various houses you lived in, you've mentioned two different ones. How did you all fit in?

Oh! - How did we all fit in? Yeah, yeah. Are you interested in that? (Laughs) Well. In the double beds there'd be three or four of us. Two at the bottom and two at the top. And so there might have been three or four bedrooms. You see there were ten, so that's four in one bed, another double bed, there'd be eight, and there'd be two perhaps in a single or something. And you played so hard that you slept so well and there was no wirelesses, and I can see the light switches on a cord you know, switch the light on with a cord. In fact I can remember the gas lights in our home at Top Ryde. The gas lights inside.

Q: So you didn't have electricity up there?

We did after a while I think. Maybe they were there and it came on, I'm not sure. But there was no ice chest, you had the meat safe. And in those days you shopped every day, you didn't keep food. There used to be a rabbit man come round and a fruit man and a fisherman, butter, and your milkman came every morning, and you put your billycans out, and they filled your billycan with milk.

Q: Just getting back to sleeping arrangements. I've heard a lot of people say to me, especially boys, sleeping on verandahs.

Yes, open verandahs. Well we didn't. Up at Top Ryde we didn't and we had a big brick home down at the bottom, well it was really a small private hospital, but it was quite big. So we had more rooms there.

Q: The one at West Ryde, where exactly was that?

Hermitage Road near Victoria Road, its not there now it was pulled down.

Q: Did it have a St number?

Yes, 74.

Q: And it had been a Maternity Hospital?

A private hospital. And we were renting that.

Q: You moved there because it was bigger?

Bigger I think. Because - and then the man that we were renting it from, Dad used to look after it and he'd paint and look after it, and so we most probably got it - and it was rented right up till when my Mother left there, really. So they rented a lot of houses, and you'd see empty houses. Isn't that strange? And we'd say they were haunted, we'd go past and there wouldn't be anybody in them for weeks, and we'd say, 'Oh that house is haunted'. You'd make up all these stories and it took up a lot of time and you had a great imagination you

know, and so all these empty houses, you could always rent a house, always, there was no trouble.

Q: So you have a memory of quite a few empty houses.

Oh yes, quite a few.

Q: And do you any memory of a family actually getting evicted? I know you would have heard of it, but do you ever remember a family you knew perhaps?

No, never. I don't - and if they were there'd be another one waiting. It was a funny thing, up at Top Ryde when we lived in that one up there, the landlady - they were very kind - at Christmas time she'd bring us a big pudding and a big cake, a fruit cake and a fruit pudding. We thought that was absolutely wonderful. I'll think of her name when you go, but that was wonderful.

And so the houses - you just could rent houses quite easily. As we were going to the baths and that, we'd see empty houses and we'd (Whispers) 'Oh that house is empty, must be haunted'. (Laughs). And you know this is the sort of life, you know that we had, and as I say by the end of the day, - my Mother said to me, she says, 'I can't remember much about you'. 'Can't have been much wrong then Mum'. She said, 'Your head would be down, as soon as you finished your dinner'. And like your baths, you all got in, you all stepped with the whole lot of you, the bath was there, and so you were washed, your hands and face and arms and then you got in and you washed up to here, and you can't remember when you were young, many baths.

And then when we went to West Ryde we had a chip heater with wood. So we most probably shared the baths there too at times, because you couldn't use all that water and all that wood and all the rest of it. And the mothers had coppers with wood, they worked very hard. Big dishes of starch to starch all the collars on the clothes. And I even starched with my children here, I had all starched clothes and ironed clothes. So I mean its changed, hasn't it?

Q: As a large family of ten, do you remember when any of the younger ones were born?

M’mm - no, I only remember when Mum went off to have the twins and she went in to Marrickville to the Salvation Army place, what was it? Bethesda? Ebenezer?

Q: Why Marrickville I wonder?

Well my Grandmother and Grandfather when they come down from the country, they were Salvation Army people and coming from Marrickville - Bethesda was the hospital - and Mum probably had me, she had Doreen, Lloyd, Iris, Olga and myself, five of us and then the rest with a midwife. The midwife lived near the Methodist Church in Church St opposite St Anne's, and I can't think of her name I don't know whether it was a Miss Bonnie -

Q: - or Miss Mcquirter?

No – it's a funny thing, one of the McQuirters, she'd dead now, but she hasn't been dead for long, told me recently, she said, 'Do you remember the nurse the midwife up Top Ryde?

Q: - Oh - Nurse McPhail.

Yes Nurse McPhail.

Q: There was a - - - - - - - or someone too. I've heard of her. Nurse McPhail was up where you're talking about.

Yes, and she was the midwife so she'd have brought Laura, Hilton, and then came Kath, that would have been three she'd have come to the home, and then the twins, Mum went back to Marrickville.

Q: Did she know she was having twins?

I don't know, but she must have gone by tram. They would have traveled by tram all the way to Marrickville, and so she had the twins there. And they came home, the boy was the healthiest, the one that died. And then my youngest brother was born in Maxim St West Ryde in the private hospital there. I can't remember that private hospital at all. But I remember where the nurse came from because she had big sandstone steps up to her place, and so she was the midwife for Ryde and one of the McQuirters went to Ryde School. Do you know of them?

Q: No, I've just heard of Nurse McQuirter. In Lee Avenue.

Well some of these McQuirters went to Ryde School, because she only asked me a few years ago, 'Do you remember the midwife at West Ryde?' and I said, 'Yes'. So we knew of her.

Q: Do you remember what Nurse McPhail looked like?

No, she'd have a bonnet most probably, she'd have uniform. They used to wear bonnets.

Q: Do you have any memory of your mother looking pregnant, or being told about anything?

Never, we were as innocent. So innocent in those days, we didn't know, we never ever thought of her being pregnant or having a baby. Or pregnant women or -

Q: Someone might hint that maybe she'd be coming home with a baby?

No, no, and they'd wear blouses and long skirts, right down to the ankle. I have a photo from Bowden Street where my father's youngest brother came back from the First World War, and they had a flag up outside the house in Bowden Street and Grandma and Grandad were there and my uncle and others. I'll find it and give it to you. I have so many photos in my albums, I'm a real bower bird, and I'm a - well my spirit's still in Ryde, it's funny I've never said that before, buts it's funny how they say the Aborigines, you know, they're spirit's somewhere, and I suddenly thought, my spirit's in Ryde. It is, I could never have left - I'm not mad about Ermington.

But West Ryde and Ryde - you see we went back to school up there, and we went to church there, and my brother and myself, our names are on the honour board up there for the war, you know, we were both in the army. They call it a Wesley church now or something, don't they? And then behind that was the Parsonage which was in Devlin Street. But that's all falling down I believe. That was a great old place, we used to go in there after Sunday School and the Minister and his wife and children, they used to make great friends of all us. We'd have an afternoon there and then go on home. But I always say my spirit is in Ryde. I get very nostalgic when I think of Ryde. And when I go back and see things like Ryde shopping centre I think that's horrible because that was so much of our -

Q: - Top Ryde shopping centre?

Yes, so much of our playground, that's where I remember so many memories there and so many kids that we used to know there and to me that's terrible.

Q: You had a free sort of childhood?

Very free, yes. To go to the Field of Mars cemetery we would walk right down to Cressy Road and go to the Field of Mars Cemetery that way.

Q: Why did you go to a cemetery for an outing?

Just for a walk I suppose and then in those days, why we did because death was - well I suppose they told us a lot - because we went and we say our aunts and uncles and Grandmas all in their coffins and so therefore it would be carry on, and I don't like freesias, the old freesias, because they are all over the Field of Mars Cemetery and their perfume and I can't stand it and I wouldn't have one in my garden, because it belongs to the Cemetery.

Q: Like certain taboos. Like birth, but death wasn't?

No. Well death was terrible, but I think that's why we might have gone to the Cemetery because we knew all our - well the extended family was very close, it was such a close thing. I miss it terribly now I think its terrible not to have an extended family which I haven't for a while because my son is in Queensland

and my daughter is up at Valentine, I've got one at Avalon, but - and then my sisters all went away when they retired. With extended families you just carried on, and there'd be a few of us that would all go to the Field of Mars Cemetery and we'd love reading the headstones.

Q: So you would have cousins around?

Yes cousins we mixed with all the time, there were cousins that we went to school with and we mixed with them and we saw them at Grandma and Granddad's place. So we mixed with them all the time, we were friends with them. Really close friends, and you felt that you had - people, and so I can understand the Aborigines when they lived like they lived together and they put them in jail and they haven't got anyone, if you've got a very close family, that's a terrible thing to be torn apart from. I can understand how they really feel, because having had a big extended family and then, on my mother's side all the family were country people, they would come to our place, all of them, you always had visits from your country cousins. We loved our cousins and we had so many.

Q: Did you go to the country and visit them at all?

No, we couldn't afford to go, but they used to be able to and they came down and they would visit, and as they got older we'd have cousins come to our place when they were old enough to come to Sydney, and they'd come and call on us, so we had this very close extended family, which to me is a great thing and which isn't there today. I suppose times change, and it's changing now.

Q: Dorothy I'd like to mention Mr Stubbins.

Mr Stubbins was part of Ryde and he was the Rector of St Anne's church. He lived down in Church Street, between Church and Devlin Streets in a home we couldn't see because it was surrounded by trees, so we were always curious to know where Mr Stubbins lived. He lived there for years and he was just part of - 'Oh there's Mr Stubbins', old Stubbins we used to call him. And he was there for years and years, and then they had a Church of England Hall down in Victoria Rd down near Belmore Street and there was a Miss Carpenter. She was a very ardent worker for the Church of England church and in this hall the school children used to go once or twice a week and she'd teach them crafts. She came from West Ryde, Miss Carpenter. I can see her now.

Q: Was she a sort of older unmarried lady?

Yes unmarried. A little short woman, very bright. Our Sunday School and churches were our social life. In our church we had this family called the Foulchers, they were gifted people, they were very musical and they could sing and everything. They had concerts at our church, and we had concerts and they'd dress us up and they'd go to no end of trouble, and so I was always singing and we sang in the choir and it was our social life. Because in those days there was only the picture theatres and dancing at the Ryde Town Hall.

Q: I was going to ask. As a Methodist.....

…we didn't do that and my father wouldn't have allowed us to dance see, and he didn't even believe in picture theatres.

Q: Would you have liked to have danced?

I would have loved to have danced.

Q: So later on did you? Did you learn to dance later on and get into it?

It was too late then the war came and then my Father was strict about that so I never did learn but I adored it and I used to watch it. Watch people dancing and I loved it and that was one thing that I didn't do, but you just sort of - well that's it you know.

Q: You never rebelled?

Oh no, no. Might have rebelled underneath. You rebel underneath, but there's no use rebelling to your Father, because - my Mother would have allowed me.

Q: Would she, even though she was a Methodist as well?

Mum wasn't really, Mum was a Church of England actually. Dad was the Methodist, but Mum was much more broadminded. But Dad - well with seven girls I suppose he.....

Q: Did any of the family get into dancing?

No, no, I don't think they did. And then you were sort of married then in no time. It was dancing at Ryde Town Hall and you mixed with anyone and everyone you know. I don't think there was any harm in that, wouldn't have been, but in those days it was just so different. They used to have the dances regular, every Saturday night. So you had your girlfriends. You had wonderful friends, and boyfriends, I used to like the boys as well as the girls, and we'd all get out together.

Q: What did you do? Your father didn't like pictures either, were you allowed to go to the pictures?

No, not till later. I did when I went to work. I did then. No, we'd just go, they had moonlight ferry -

Q: - This would be the church group would it?

Yes. We'd all go down to Meadowbank, pick up the ferry and go all around the harbour and then come home. And then we'd mix, we'd go to each other's homes and they had pianos and we'd have a lot of singing around pianos.

Q: Could you play?

No I couldn't. But I had girlfriends, I had two or three, and we'd sing all the modern songs and that, and so we went to each others homes, you didn't sort of sit at home, you were allowed to do that, go to each others homes.

[Tape breaks]

TAPE 2 SIDE B

And as I say boyfriends and then you went to work and you had boyfriends then and that, so I mean life went along very well from then on. It was when we were young more than anything.

Q: When were you allowed to go out with boys? Did your father have strict rules?

Oh no, no, as long as they were decent and we could bring them home and on a Sunday night we'd all cook, because my parents were country people so we all cooked, Mum was a good cook, so we all cooked and we cooked our different types of cakes, we all had different ones. Fairy cakes.

Q: The boys as well?

No, the boys didn't cook, but we did. Then we could ask all our friends home on Sunday night for tea, and so then they would do that in their homes. So you were never still you were always mixing, you just had a very - what sort of a life - a sheltered one I suppose.

Q: And you never would have had a drop of alcohol? Your father and mother didn't drink?

No, no.

Q: What about his brothers?

Oh no, they were different to him. Totally different. See Dad went too also, to the Salvation Army, but he was very bright and wonderful, you know how they are? They do things and that, and so he was with them then, and Mum said he was terrific.

Q: Did he wear the uniform?

Yes. I have a photo of my Grandparents in uniform, but I haven't got one of Dad.

Q: So he eventually left the Methodist's and went to the Salvation Army?

Yes. And so, yes we had lots and lots of friends. My husband did the same. They used to go out walk for miles and go to somebody's place and have a sing-song and you'd have supper and come home. It wasn't boring, our life.

Q: Did you have a good singing voice?

Yes, I had a fairly - I was in the choir.

Q: Still probably have, haven't you?

I don't know. (Laughs). We used to sing a lot. We were allowed to sing at work. That's a funny thing. When we worked, we had to go to work at fourteen, so you weren't educated enough to get a good job. What were the good jobs then? There'd be only, if you could stay and learn, shorthand and typing, typing mostly, it wasn't shorthand even then. So, you never had morning tea. You had foremen or forewomen over you the whole time. They just stood behind you, they were there the whole time, you never lifted your head from your work and they all allowed you to do - you used to have little books of all the latest songs and we used to all sing together.

Q: What job was this?

This was a factory. Somewhere in Sydney, Redfern, I think. It was making leather coats. So I did the jigger buttons, and we used to have to wax, that was pretty hard on our fingers, with a big needle.

Q: What is a jigger button?

A jigger button is a button that sits out from the coat so you don't have it flat against the coat and with leather you have to have a bit of room between the button and the garment. So it was pretty hard work. And they were mostly Jews, we worked for, they were all Jews that were the manufacturers and employers. And we had no unions whatsoever, so we were exploited. We were very much exploited. We got about ten and sixpence a week. So you paid five shillings a week for your train ticket, sixpence pocket money and the rest went to the home. (Laughs)

Q: And you can't remember where that first job was?

No I can't. It would either be near Central somewhere, there were a lot of factories around Central and Redfern, not right in the city.

Q: How did your father feel with you in a job being exploited and not in a union?

Well he most probably would have been talking to someone else about it more than likely.

Q: Did you have a political consciousness by that stage?

Not really, it was only when dad talked politics at home I think that it used to stir me. But now I don't like anything unfair and it sort of lives with you, for all those years. There's something underneath, the unfair way that you're exploited at school. My granddaughter took a tape of me - they wanted Grandma's to tell, she was in about third year at High School. And she said, 'You were the only one Nanny that didn't like the school and the teachers'. (Laughs) I didn't mind school so much, but it was the teachers, I felt that you didn't have a fair go. The teachers would choose the girls to go in and make the cup of tea and into their room where they sat, and you used to think, if only you could go in and make a cup of tea. But you weren't chosen because you weren't the yuppy ones, you know? Oh very much that was. I felt that very much.

Q: So you remember doing the Q.C. as they called it?

Yes the Q.C. we did. And I passed it. I could go to Gladesville School, we used to go to, used to be right in the shopping centre there. And then you went to Riverside High.

Q: So we're looking at a permit to enrol in a 'super primary' class. This is what they called it before the called it High School?

Yes, evidently. 1932 that was.

Q: And sometimes they would have the class, the seventh class actually in the same building as the primary school . So you could have gone to Gladesville?

Well I went and enrolled at Gladesville and then I thought - well somebody must have said to me that there was a Carlingford District Girl's school, and me being the type that likes all the open - and that was an agricultural school and its up there now, near the shopping centre. They went over to that top school, (searches her memory) they get a lot of very top passes there at - oh yes, James Ruse. They had animals and gardens and all the rest of it, the boys did that, we didn't.

Q: Now you couldn't do that seventh class at Ryde could you? No. So you decided to go there and your parents thought it was a good idea?

Yes and it was tuppence from Eastwood or Epping so we used to walk a lot of the way and spend our tuppence.

Q: So then you hopped on a train?

We'd go from West Ryde to Eastwood. There was a bus from Eastwood or Epping out to Carlingford School and so I did two years there that's all.

Q: Did you go there with some mates, or were you the only one from Ryde going there?

I think I was the only one from Ryde School.

Q: You were an independent thinker, weren't you?

Yeah I love to be independent. (Laughs) More so now. In my era we weren't brought up to be independent from our husbands or anything. The husbands were the -

Q: - Kingpins? (Laughter)

Yes, kingpins (Laughter)

Q: So you got this idea in your head to go to Carlingford. Where had you heard about it? Did you know people who had been there?

I can't remember - there was another girl. She was a Margaret Watson from Ryde School. That's right. And she must have told me she was going there. So I said to Mum, 'Can I go there?' So they said yes, I can go there, so I just enrolled there.

Q: And your older brothers and sisters didn't go there?

No.

Q: So tell me what you did there?

Well we did everything. We could do whatever you wanted to. Oh, Domestic Science. We went from Carlingford School to the Barnardo homes at Nth Parramatta and we used to do our Domestic Science class there. And then we did maths, I was very good at maths. I should have been a bookkeeper. So there was bookkeeping and history and English and all that. And I quite liked it and did quite all right.

Q: So what was the rural part?

Boys did the rural part, we didn't do it at all. But I thought, oh that would be out in the open, you can imagine what Carlingford was like, it was all paddocks all round there. There was nothing.

Q: So were you disappointed that you didn't get in amongst the animals?

No not really, no.

Q: So it was two schools together? Or a co-ed school?

Oh yes, it was a co-ed. We were all in together. Mr Tollis who was the headmaster lived at Meadowbank. I remember his name - so you see, there's something up there (laughs). It’s amazing how that part of your brain stores up things.

Q: So you had two years there and you decided not to go to the Intermediate, or wasn't it expected that you'd do the Intermediate?

Well I was offered a job in the Public Service at that time. And I wouldn't do it. I can remember Mum pleading with me to do it. You know, 'You'll always have a good job'.

Q: Who offered you the job?

The Minister's daughter was well up in the Public Service at the time. She said she could get me a good job. They must have seen something in me. (laughs). I refused that.

Q: Why?

I didn't have enough confidence in myself to do it. And poor Mum she pleaded and pleaded. Because she'd had a very good education in the country. And my father as well, because they only went to twelve up there. She was a beautiful embroider and sewer and she learnt Latin mind you in that time in

the country. But anyhow I didn't. So I finished up in a warehouse. I had a good job there in the sales department of Murray Bros and Thompson and I loved that. And that was very good because you got to know the people, the regulars came in and that was a very good job I liked that and then I went into the army.

Q: So hang on, that was your first job?

That was my second one.

Q: That factory where you were singing?

That was the first one, then I thought I'd apply for this position that was in the paper, the SMH, and we all used to write the same thing. 'Having seen in the SMH an advertisement for a sales assistant' (laughs) and so I answered it and you went and you were all dressed up and you had your hat and gloves on and you never sat until they said, sit, and I got the job out of oh, a lot of people, there were a lot of people.

Q: So obviously you must have had something by this stage.

(laughter) Yes I must have had something. And so I worked there then till I went into the army and then when the war came it was very sad. I can remember a Friday night when we used to stay back in town a couple of girlfriends and myself and we'd always stay in town on a Friday night and walk round town and have a milkshake and things like that.

Q: Pick up boys?

Yes, pick up boys. (laughs). I always did that anywhere. (laughs). I loved the boys. (laughter). So this Friday night we heard while we were in town that the war had been declared and I came home and I burst into the house crying, and they said, 'What's wrong, what's wrong?' I said, 'Lloyd will have to go to war'. That was my eldest brother. And they said, 'Oh calm down' you know. Anyhow, it did come to that.

Q: How did you hear in town? Were people talking about it?

Must have been talking about it. Must have been in the shops or something. It wasn't so busy in the city that you didn't speak to people in those days. Everybody had a talk, because there was time I suppose. And so when the war started it was terrible. Our lovely brother and our first cousins that we were very close to and my brothers' friends and all the boys that used to come home, we always used to have them home. And they were all going. They all went off to war and it was like a vacuum. All the boys and all the men gone that you really knew and loved, you know, and then the Japanese were coming down, they were up there in Queensland so I thought here is the time for me to go in. But I wasn't quite 21 and guess what my father said? He said, 'No you can't go in till your 21'. And I can hear Mum saying, 'Oh Charles, you know how we've brought her up, we've brought her up very well, she can take

her place anywhere, she knows how to conduct herself'. And so, I had to wait till I was 21. So I went in at 21.

Q: You joined the army?

Yes and we went out to Liverpool to do our rookie's course which was wonderful, I thought it was fantastic and met all these girls. It was terrific. And then there was a couple of - it was when the torpedos came to Sydney Harbour, and we were all called out one night, out of bed down, down into the Parade Ground where all the big trees were.

Q: At Liverpool?

Yes, out at (tries to recollect the location). It will come in a minute. And we had to lay under the trees in the moonlight. I remember the moon, it was a moonlit night and we had to lay under there cause they didn't know what was happening in Sydney and so when it was all clear, back we went to bed, and so we did that course and it was lovely. We had lovely people over us, you weren't screamed at, it was really nice, made the greatest friends, still got em today.

Q: What were your duties in the army?

The duties in the army were, you had to clean the ablution block. That was in our rookie's course, and sweep and make our beds and keep everything clean and help with the food. We all just had chores like that, and the food was good. Plain but good. We went out on marches, in the rain and everything like that, and it was really really great. Then we had a big march past, which was fantastic. And so I came out of it and just at the time we were finishing they were opening in each city in Australia, they opened a big, like a hotel where men that were on leave from interstate or overseas could come and stay the night, and there was a bed for a shilling, meal for a shilling, and so quite a few of us girls from our unit were sent down there. So when we got there we had to clean.

Q: Housemaid type jobs?

Yeah. I was chosen as a hostess, there was another woman and myself as a hostess. So we had very good jobs actually. What we had to do was, on this lovely place, oh it was a beautiful place they refurbished. On the ground floor there was a big grand piano. And on one end there was a snack bar and then they had all these lovely seats around the old pillars that came down, and they had reception desks and when the men came in we just had to go and just mix with them and speak with them and ask them if there was anything they wanted to know and where to go and we'd get invitations, a lot of invitations in from homes, private homes to take them in. So we'd choose the ones that we thought that were, you know, decent enough. So they'd go there for a dinner

or a party. We'd choose the soldiers that we thought would like them and fit in, you know, with the invitations.

Q: Where was the hotel you were talking about?

Right at Central Square. You know Central in town? There's a building, its still there, we've got a plaque there actually. We were the ninth Australian Army Canteen Service Club. Its a little narrow building to start with, and its in George and Pitt, comes right up where all the trams used to be. You'd be a bit young for all that. There was a big tram terminus there. And so that was taken over, and so one floor or two I don't know how many, were for beds. And they had girls from the army working, making the beds and cleaned the rooms, some were cooks, some were waitresses in the dining room and then at the reception desk we had the girls all of us office ones, there was a reception desk there and so the girls there, we all did different hours to book the fellows in, the soldiers.

Q: In a place like that, did you have to sort of ward off prostitutes hanging round?

No, none whatsoever. We had absolutely no trouble whatsoever. Americans weren't allowed in there.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Americans?

No not much. The only contact we had was when the 9th Divi came back from overseas, the 'Rats of Tobruk' they were called. A lot of the Americans had been in Sydney and taken all their wives and girlfriends, so some of these Ninth Divi 'Rats of Tobruk' gave us - we had a safe, and gave us - we'd say, 'Oh give us the knives'. They had some knives, I don't think they would ever have used them - after these Yanks. They hated the Yanks because the Yanks got everything in the war, they got all the best food, they got all the best clothes, they got everything - well we needed their help, so I mean you can't say anything else than that. And so we'd put them in the safe for them and then we'd try and talk to them, I'd talk to them and say, 'Oh no you don't need that, don't worry about it, she's gone off with somebody else, its not worth to worry about'. So, we were real old women, really (laughter). And then some of the men - we used to get some beautiful pianists in there, they'd just come in on leave and they'd sit at the grand piano and could they play. And so I had a very good cushy job really.

Q: Did any of the men coming in look like they had shell shock?

Yes, very worried, and we'd talk to them, we'd sit - this other woman Brigid and myself, she was a lovely person, and we'd sit and we'd talk to them, and let them talk to us and tell us any of their stories which they did a lot of them and how they felt. They were mostly from interstate and away from home and they'd talk to us for hours. There was one fellow, I still remember his name, and he came in late one night. I used to finish about eleven though I think. And he said to me, 'I'm drunk' and he wanted to talk to me, so I talked away to

him, he was very nice, we were always treated as absolute ladies, they never ever swore, they never ever - the soldiers and sailors and air force they were, they never ever were rude or ever said anything wrong to us.

Q: No one tried to put the hard word on you?

No, never, we never knew that, we didn't know that all our lives.

Q: But surely the soldiers would have?

Yeah, but see, they would go somewhere, they would know a place. They used to go out to Kings Cross, that's what we knew of but we didn't know then, we were so innocent.

Q: Even though you were over 21?

Yeah, even though. These soldiers just wanted to come in, it was a home away from home and they could sit and we would just chat away, and this fellow said, 'I'm getting sober I'm going to go now' and so he went upstairs then. There was a lift, so he went up there to bed. But they were all so decent. There wasn't any one that ever said anything out of place whatsoever. They treated us as absolute ladies we were. This is how I think they all were. Some of our girls in the job, they might have gone out with fellas. There were stories about that you know, so we don't know what they were like really, but on the whole, we had a really nice office staff and we had a lovely lovely lady who was our Madam, our O.C. she was lovely. I went to her on the first night and asked could I see her and you were sort of - everybody - well they were big and above you, and I said, 'Oh Madam I don't think I could do this job that you've asked me to do as Hostess'. She said, 'My dear' she said 'If the army think you can do it, you can do it'. And so I did. And it was the most wonderful experience of my life. I met the greatest people and the most interesting people that I think I've ever met in my life. Mum said, 'If I let you bring all those fellows home you feel sorry for, my house would be so full'. (laughs).

Q: Being in the army, were you in quarters somewhere?

They had the quarters right at the top for the girls and I stayed there for a while, but then we could live out, so I came home. And I used to go to Central Station there at eleven and come home, no worries at all.

Q: And then you'd have to walk from West Ryde home?

Not far to home. Not far, we were used to that. I could always run down that bit anyhow. I think I did run a few times. That was a wonderful experience, and then the girls in the office they just booked them in and the different fellows that came in, they were more lonely and lost than anything, and they had somewhere to go and something to do there and with these people that invited them home to parties and all that sort of thing, well we'd arrange and send them out and give them the address and all that. So really I had a wonderful job. Then when I got a bit tired of that after a couple of years I was

a Pay Sergeant. I went into the Pay. I was a Pay Sergeant. So I came out of the army as a Sergeant. That was quite good, I liked that. I thought I'd just like a change. And then it was dwindling I think a bit. There was only this other girl and myself, she was a bit older than me. So that was my army days.

Q: So you enjoyed the war?

Yes I enjoyed it (laughs) yes.

Q: Did you ever feel any sense of danger, for example when the Japanese Submarines came into the harbour?

Oh yes we did. Oh we did, we felt a sense of danger when they started to come up into Queensland. And then when they bombed Sydney Harbour, when it was torpedoed, well we were very frightened of them we really could have been invaded. And that was when the Americans came in and really saved us. Other than that we would have had them come right down over us. So I mean, as much as they had everything, which was good for them, good luck to them, they did save us at that time.

I was married while I was in the army. My husband came back from New Guinea and then when the war finished, they de-mobbed us married women first, we came out first.

Q: When you came out, did you work for a while until you got pregnant?

No I stayed home. I was living with Mum for a while and I didn't go back to work again.

Q: You were both living with your parents, was that because of the housing shortage?

Yes, it was, very very much so. Actually my husband built this house and he isn't even a builder, he's an accountant. (laughs). So we had to come out this far. I'd rather have been nearer West Ryde station. But the land was cheaper. One hundred and ten pounds the land was then. And so then he built the house on his holidays and weekends and so forth, here. And so he won't leave here. This is his house and he built it and he did do everything. The only thing I think he didn't do was the plastering and the tiles, he did everything, he just went along.

Q: How did you get on as a married couple living with your parents?

O.K. Quite O.K. Quite good.

Q: It seemed to be very common at that time.

Yes it was common, very common, it was quite common at that time for people to be home and you couldn't get anything to live in, so it was, it was a common thing. Part of my family had been married then, and there was more room at home and I loved home, I was a real home-bird, me. And my mother, very much a home-bird. So I didn't go far, from her. (laughs).

[Melinda Tustian a library student is going to ask our interviewee Dorothy a question]

Melinda: I was just going to ask back when you were saying, when you were going to the Methodist church at the time, and they were very Liberal people involved in the Methodist church where your father was very Labour. I was just wondering if at all at church at any time there was any sort of -

- no never. This is interesting about the church, our church, and the churches then. You only went to church and you went to church for service, no other church was mentioned you weren't told what to do what not to do or what you couldn't do, we just went and it was just a service, a hymn, the choir sang, and they gave a little sermon and it was always a parable mostly a nice story, and there was never anything whatsoever about other churches or what you could do or you couldn't do. We could do whatever we liked. You wouldn't know the politics - no. No politics, no nothing.

Melinda: What about at home? Did your father make any comments about the fact that a lot of the people you went to church with were Liberal?

No he wouldn't know that. I only found that as I got older and its a funny thing, I followed it and listened to different ones and I thought, they've been Methodists, they're Liberal. (laughs). Cause see a lot of people took it as a stigma, Labour. It was L a b o u r wasn't it once? And they took that as a stigma. I think. They thought 'Labour' and just because you were Labour, I mean, my daughter mixes with quite a lot and she says people who are educated and over that way, Palm Beach and all that sort of thing, she said they are educated and they can think for themselves. It’s the people who think for themselves that think differently to other people, and you haven't got to follow. In our day, it was most probably following and that was the right thing. No, the church, we had an absolutely wonderful time at our church and that's all we did, sing, and the service, and there was never any - there was no money - the plate came round and if you didn't have a penny, that was absolutely nothing, you were never asked for money. I call the churches now Finance Companies, myself (laughs). That's what I think they've turned into, a lot of them. [tape break]

TAPE 3 SIDE A

I was just going to say, the way we were brought up. When grown ups were having afternoon tea, there were lovely cloths, all hand done and always had doilies under the cakes, I've got some in there now, never use them. Always had doilies on your cake plate. Everything was set up lovely. Children weren't asked in, and the grown ups

had their afternoon tea and then the children went outside and played, the visitors and so forth. And then when the grown ups had finished their afternoon tea the children were called in and they could have a piece of cake. So I thought that was wonderful manners. (laughs). Not like a little girl I saw recently she did the opposite and I said to her, 'We never did things like that' and she said, 'I'd rather my days'. (laughs). But I think people filled in their time too with knitting and sewing and embroidering and crocheting and all that.

Q: Were you a keen sewer and knitter?

Because I didn't work I cut my children's hair, I sewed all their clothes and knitted all their clothes. You had to do that. But I worked for the school. I used to do a lot of cooking for the school and I was a Treasurer at the school. I was always home for them. I was one of those old fashioned ones. So you don't give away that much, you have to work a bit harder that's all. So I did all those sort of things for them. But we all sewed, our mother's sewed and people crocheted and knitted all the time. Today people say, 'Oh its not worth making that'. Well see, we would feel it was worth making it, and you'd save money. But you could save money today too, but they don't want to, its just a different generation. But I think they were fantastic days. And as you were saying, we had no worries about boys worrying us, putting the hard word as you said, nothing, never ever ever entered any of their heads, they never ever tried, or nothing. It was just that time, it was only a kiss and a cuddle, that's all. And I'd say most of the people that married were virgins.

Q: And your mother probably wouldn't have spoken to you a lot or informed you a lot?

No, because Mum told us when we were older that we taught her more than she knew herself (laughs). She said, 'You girls have taught me more'. (laughs). Being a shy country girl. She said they knew nothing about contraceptives. She said she knew nothing whatsoever. You see her mother died when she was seventeen and she reared a young baby, her mother left a three day old baby, so my mother was seventeen and reared that as well as all the other children, she and her older sister, they looked after them while the father went to work. So she really looked after two families. And so she said, 'No, contraceptives, they didn't know anything about that. A couple of my sisters must have known but they never ever told me.' (laughs).

Q: When you were married did the Dr give you some information?

No. Contraception when I got married was only - they'd say it was only 99% safe. So you never had 100% safe of anything.

Q: But would the Dr ever explain to you?

No, no, you didn't, you weren't brought up to sort of go and talk to the Drs about that sort of thing. But Mum took me to a lady Dr, I could never imagine that she did, to see if I could have something fitted, you know.

Q: Where was the lady Dr?

Down Burwood. So your mother had that idea in her head?

Yes, yes, oh yes see, as you go along you must learn all these things. But no, you didn't know very much at all, no, you were very very innocent when you got married. So that's why I think a lot of people had babies straight off and that. I didn't I waited about four years, just as well in the war time not having a home. But that's how it was. So sex wasn't ever talked about. Not talked about at all.

Q: Now getting back to a completely different subject. You were talking about the church before and religion, and it sounded very nice, but what I'm wondering about is religious bigotry. Some people talk a bit about it. But that division, especially between Protestants generally and Catholics, were you aware of that as a child?

Yes. A lot of them went to St Brigid's. We were always friends with them all, but we knew we weren't accepted in their church, you couldn't be a bridesmaid and you couldn't be a best man for a Catholic wedding. When my mother died my son's friend who was about sixteen or something and he came up to me and said - he lived in the street, they were always great friends - we're still family friends. He said, 'I don't care what Father so and so says, I'm going to Greg's Grandmother's funeral because he's my best friend and I don't care whether he says I can't go'. So even up to that -

Q: - so your talking now up to about the mid-sixties.

Sixty - seventy, wouldn't it? Because Greg finished Uni at 68.

Q: Your mother died in 1967.

Yes '67 it would be. And so we really knew but we didn't worry about it because oh, by then you had relatives that were married in - but you knew that you weren't accepted unless you were going to change into them.

Q: So you thought you weren't accepted as Catholics rather than you felt you didn't accept them?

Oh we accepted them, that didn't matter. Anyone could come into our church and you weren't told who you were, you didn't know, nothing was said about Catholics, there was none of that. Absolutely none of that. But we just knew later on, that they couldn't go to your funerals and things, they had to get permission. But see that's altered now hasn't it? Altered completely. No that didn't worry us that sort of thing, because they just went to the school and we knew the kids and we were friendly with them. The Butchers in Bowden St,

they went down to St Brigid's and we were good friends with all the kids you know. And that's how it should be, shouldn't it?

Q: Yes it certainly should. Melinda, is there anything else you'd like to ask Dorothy?

Melinda: What about when you had your first job and you said that was mainly run by Jewish people. Was there any sort of -

- no I just think they, the Jewish people were the ones that were manufacturers and they seemed to be the ones that had all these factories and - that was just part of their culture I suppose, not culture I don't suppose you'd call it, - but their culture to have those factories and manufacturing places. They had a lot of the shops in Sydney that we went to. The rag trade, and the business, they were business minded. They were the rag trade and the business people. So that was just something....

Q: So you would have been working for them in the 1930's during the rise of fascism, and with your father being a strong political man did you sort of realise at the time what was going on in Europe or have any idea that people like the ones you were working for were getting a hard time over there?

No, my father wasn't bitter with anything at all. What he believed in he lived in his life and he was always a kind person and when we were sick he'd sit beside us and bathe our foreheads and so he was kind. And there wasn't all that stuff. I think its all media that you hear about and you learn about all this a lot today don't you? And I think makes people - better not said a lot of it, isn't it? I think everybody should have their own views of things and get along a lot better. I like people. I'm one of those people that likes people. (laughs). You were thinking about the Jews just before the war really started a lot of European Jews came out and its amazing how they find out about warehouses and that to get the things cheaper and all that. And we met so many that came in and they came before the war, so they were warned, fairly well I'd say, because we met them at work, and as I say they used to come into all the warehouses and that. So they were out here, and just as well. The holocaust and that, terrible isn't it? It’s terrible to hate.

Q: Thanks very much for that interview Dorothy. It was most interesting.

END OF INTERVIEW