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## COMMUNITY LIFE

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Oral History –  
An Interview with  
Norm Pacey

November 2010



## An Interview with Norm Pacey

**Interviewee:** Norm Pacey

**Interviewer:** Pauline Curby.

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**Q: Mr Pacey you moved to Ryde in 1913. I was wondering if you could tell me about your earliest memories of Ryde? Perhaps when you were really little, even before you started school, what Ryde looked like what sort of place it was?**

Yes, I think one of the earliest memories I have of Ryde is of the soldiers coming back from the war. I suppose I'd only be about five at the time. You could hear the trains going 'cockle-doodle-doo' you know, and everyone that could would rush down to the railway there and greet the chaps coming back, that was the First World War of course.

**Q: What do you mean, the trains went 'cockle-doodle-doo?'**

The engine driver used to do it on the engine somehow. It was 'cockle-doodle-doo' all right. Then of course you must remember from Top Ryde to West Ryde there were only scattered houses. There was very few houses there.

**Q: Along Victoria Rd the houses were scattered?**

There were a few along Victoria Rd, yes. There was the ones near us in Nickle Avenue and Lee Avenue and Parkes St. There was a few down in Shepherd St. I remember we used to go down to an old lady's place there to get eggs. Another chap who later became a very good friend of mine, Charles Wilmott, he lived with his mother and two maiden aunts, and we used to go down there, every Empire night they'd have a bonfire, and they'd put on a real show. It was a quite good time. But we used to get eggs down there. And then there were two Prince ladies up on the corner of Belmore street and Parkes Street, on the opposite corner to the bakery, Leggatts had the bakery then in those days. They used to have a couple of cows and we used to get the milk up there and there were few dairies in Ryde of any size at that stage. They did come later on. We had quite a few dairies, and we had quite a few market gardens. In Parkes St there were three market gardens. I can't tell you the names of the chaps that were there, but there was one right behind Hatton's old home. Hatton had a park where he kept his horses there free. It used to extend right down to what his now Colston St and then Smarts. Elsie Smart might still be alive I don't know. She had a shop just past Colston St there in the dip and behind that was Smarts' garden. He wasn't a Chinaman of course. He was a white man. He had a garden there and Elsie had a shop. Well then



there was another market garden on the other side of her, Chinese. I can't think of his name.

**Q: Further down Parkes Street?**

Yeah. And then where Longs left off there was this Chinese market garden. And then of course - well Longs had an orchard and the two old Mrs Longs when I knew them they lived there and they ran it and then there was another Long just this side of Bowden St. He was one of the sons I think. You'd have to check on that. I'm not quite sure. But he was a relative of them anyway and he had a couple of tennis courts there, they used to call them? Courts. I don't know whether those courts are still there now.

**Q: The market gardens that were up near Hattons flat. Were they run by Chinese?**

Yeah.

**Q: So it wasn't actually where the Civic Centre is now it was down the hill a bit?**

Yeah down the hill a bit. And then when the market gardens disappeared - well he left them there but he subdivided a section of it and they built a few houses along there towards the terminus.

**Q: The Hattons?**

Yeah, and they also built a few houses in Parkes Street there. But there was still a big paddock right in front of us, and then one of the Hattons - there were Hattons and Higginbottoms - they were related. I think their wives were sisters, I'm not sure. He had all this land from the tram terminus right down the hill. Originally he had the lot. He was a nice old chap, but you know, old Mrs Hatton she was bed-ridden as long as I could remember. I don't know what was wrong with her I couldn't tell you, but she couldn't get out of bed, and as kids we used to go in and see her and say good day to her. And after I got married I was walking up to the terminus and one of the boys (I think it was Joe) was outside and I was talking to him and Mrs Hatton used to lie in this bed in this front room and she called out, 'Joe, is that Norm Pacey?' And he said, 'Yes'.

**Q: And she said, 'Send him in'. She like to talk you know, and I went in and talked to her for a while, but you know, she knew the voice. And she hadn't heard it for probably five or six years.**

Well then up a bit further there was two or three weatherboard shops and the first one was a milk bar and then there was Carmicheal's Real Estate.



**Q: Was that on Blaxland Rd?**

Well, yes it's on the corner, in Blaxland Rd. And that was the tram terminus. Then over the other side diagonally across there was a big building when I was going to school - there was a chap named - - - - but before it was a fellow, I think his name was Smith. But he owned Curzon Hall and the story that I was given, I don't know whether this is true or not, but I was told as a boy that he had gone - silly - you know and he'd been locked up. And this building opposite about seven or eight stories high was just empty. But on about the fifth floor I think, there was a grand piano and this chap had it all furnished and everything, and oh gee you know, the kids just absolutely ruined the lot you know. They used to go up there and thump on the piano and that. Not his kids the kids from the school. We'd be coming home from school, you know - kids - if they know they can get up there they'd get up there and -

**Q: Wasn't the building locked up?**

Whether it was or not I don't know, but it was broken into at any rate, because the kids could go up there. I never climbed up there, so I can't tell you apart from the fact that there was this grand piano in there and it was fully furnished you know. He'd made this place to live, but what they tell me he went off his rocker and he was locked up and the place just lied there for years. And then Sundon bought it. Sundon locked the top floors off, but before he did, there used to be a pathway down into the bottom and for some years a chap named Benson used to keep his taxis in there. He had a couple of cars and he ran the taxi service in Ryde there, and he was one of the Bensons but not one of the well known ones. But he ran the taxi round Ryde and he - but when he shifted his cars out of there the place filled with water, and you know, kids being kids we used to go in there and swim in it.

**Q: You did?**

Yeah - I had a swim in there. I didn't like it very much. I had a few swims in there. And of course it used to be skinny dipping, you wouldn't have your cozzies or anything [laughs]. But in any case there were never any girls went down there. It was always the boys that went down there to swim. I tell you what the water used to be icy cold. Eventually Sundon come over and he fixed all that up and I don't know how he got rid of the water but he did and he turned it into flats. Anyhow he had flats there and there was people by the name of Thistlethwaites in one and I knew Thistlethwaite, and a strange thing you know, they're getting a new Rector over at the church and his name is - I forget, but he is a descendant of a chap named Roy Freeman - it's either his or his wife. They get this new Rector and he or his wife would be the great grandson - or daughter of Roy Freeman and Violet Willings. Violet lived two doors down from us and she was a very good singer. She sang at my wedding.



**Q: What were you saying about the scar on your lip?**

Oh, well this was when the Hatton(?) quarters was derelict you know. And on the corner where the garage is now, they had these huge long poles of wood, square they were. And on the end they had a steel cap, be about that long you know and it came to a point. It was something to do with the building that never was. Anyway I was running along with the kids one day and over I went and I got right on the end of this, and the lip's hanging down here, and one of the young girls I don't know who she was now - I didn't know at the time I don't think - she got some rag out of her sewing bag, and I held this to my lip and went for my life down to Nurse McQuirter because whenever I got anything wrong, the Nurse was the first I'd go to. She lived in the bottom house in Lee Avenue. There was only three houses and she had a vacant block of land between her and the next place and then there was our place up at Parklea. Well Nurse got straight down and sewed it up and she made a darn good job it. It was hanging down here.

**Q: Was she a nurse or just called a nurse?**

She was a trained nurse. She was a good old scout. She had a hospital there. A private hospital. I supposed she must have had anything up to twenty beds there. Women would go there and have babies. That was the main thing. She was the aunty of Senator Anderson, but don't record this (laughter).

**(Tape break)**

**Q: Now Mr Pacey you were mentioning about the Market Gardens before, would you go from your home over there and buy vegetables from them or did they mainly supply to the markets?**

No we'd go over and get all of our vegetables from them.

**Q: Did you patronise one in particular?**

Well we always went to the one that was closest. The Chinamen's', but I couldn't tell you their names.

**Q: Did they live there?**

The one that run the next Chinese garden was an old chap named - now this is interesting - it was an old chap named, we called him 'Old Dan'. What his proper name was I don't know. But Old Dan had a crippled foot.



**Q: Was he Chinese?**

Yeah - oh Chinese - yeah. Nice old boy. And he'd come into the printing works and he'd say to us, 'Give me a pound (in those days) and I play Pak-A-Poo for you'. And would give him a pound or ten bob and he'd play Pak-A-Poo.

**Q: Would he go into town?**

Into Dixon St or Campbell St.

**Q: Could you just explain this as a gambling game. Could you explain exactly what it is?**

Yes I can explain exactly to you because they also play the game today and they call it Keno. And its exactly the same as Pak-A-Poo, that was the Chinese name for that game. The game they call Keno today. And we'd mark it. And they were all Chinese figures on em, not like numbers like they've got in Keno. He would mark em for us and he'd bring the ticket back and show you if you won anything. I think I won two and six off him one time, but mostly we lost. But like with Keno, you're darn lucky to win a thing. But that is what Keno really was. It's Pak-A-Poo and it was a Chinese game and they've just taken from the Chinese.

**Q: So you trusted him with your money?**

Oh yes, he was as honest as the day. He wouldn't have done you out of two pence.

**Q: Did your father gamble as well, or was it just -**

No Dad didn't. He never drank nor gambled.

**Q: Now with the Chinese did they live there at the gardens? Where did they live?**

In the gardens. In rough cottages. Old Dan had a better class of cottage. He was further down, but the other ones just had - it was a cottage. I'd been inside it. They kept it scrupulously clean. But it was a pretty rough old thing, by today's standard.

**Q: So it wouldn't have gone against the Council By-Laws at that stage?**

Oh at that stage the Council didn't have By-Laws [laughs].

**Q: And did they mix in with the Ryde community? Or did they just socialise with their own people?**

I don't think the community mixed with them. I'd put it that way. What I mean - we as kids got on very well with all the Chinamen, but generally the people - a



few of the people living in Parkes Street for instance knew the Chinamen and always said good day to them, and if they saw them in the street say, 'Bring us in a couple of cabbages,' or something you know. They'd do that. No there was - they never caused any trouble with people, I'd put it that way.

**Q: But they kept to themselves.**

Yes, more or less.

**Q: And they were just single men? There were no women or children there?**

Well if they had wives they were in China. They weren't here. Well Old Dan the last time I saw Old Dan, he come up to me and he said, 'Norm I'm going back to China to die'. That's what he told me. But whether he had a family or not I don't know. They kept to themselves if they did have families. But you know I think they probably made a fair bit of money here and went over to China and became wealthy men over there you know.

**Q: And would those gardens still have been there after World War II, or by that stage had they -**

I don't think they were there much prior to World War II. See they started to subdivide the land. Colston Street went and I forget the names of the other streets, but that sub-division took a lot - well it took all of Old Dan's market garden. That was mainly Smarts' land and the sub-divisions took so much of it eventually what was left was uneconomical from the Chinese point of view. From what I could see of the Chinese then, they used to work hard. They were as honest as can be. They wouldn't do you out of two bob. But they were working to go back to China. And I would say that most of them went back fairly wealthy men from the Chinese point of view. But generally speaking they were no trouble to anybody. They used to go up to the pub occasionally, not very often, just to have a glass of beer. I don't think they were ever received quite warmly there you know. The pub was up on the corner of Church St I think they call it Victoria Rd - right down to the station don't they? But they didn't then, they called it Glebe St, and a little bit further along in Glebe St there was a big building - but down a bit further opposite the Police Station, my earliest recollection of that was a big weatherboard hotel, not a liquor serving hotel, it was a residential hotel. But it was made of wood. And I remember I was only a kid at the time waking up one night and the room was a blaze of light and I looked out the window and this place was alight. Oh it was really a fire. And I went in and woke Dad. And they went over Dad and a few others, ran across to see what they could do but the place was too far gone. It was just - old - just matchwood. And away it went.

The Births Deaths and Marriage place - that was in Church St - it's still there. It's the old building, next door to the Memorial Hall. And there was an old lady used to run that and I think they let her stop there until she was ready to retire. There was no compulsory retiring age then, but she was a very old lady. Mrs Cater her name was. She was a nice old lady and we kids would go in and



say good day to her you know and she'd always have a lolly there. The same with Heaps Pharmacy you know. Old Heap - when Mum needed medicine, I'd go up, always willing to run to Mr. Heaps because when you went in there he'd give you a handful of musk lollies. Little things like this you know. You'd go into the butcher shop to get the meat and he'd cut off a piece of German sausage and give it to you.

**Q: Growing up in Ryde at that time. Did everyone know you?**

Yes everybody knew one another and you know we'd - people made their own entertainment then. We had a piano and of course all the neighbours would come in and we had a pianola, that has the words on it you know. Everyone would get around the pianola and they'd sing you know.

**Q: Did you notice it change when radio first came in?**

Well the radio didn't change that so much, it used to in cricket. I remember my first test match I was listening. Australia was playing England in England and it was broadcast over the radio and I had the earphones on and I'd repeat what the announcer was saying, but they used to make a noise like a ball striking the bat you know and then they'd tell you whether he'd scored four or two or one or whatever it was you know. And we'd have all the mates around and you'd tell them about what was going on then one of them would take over and they'd do the same.

**(Tape break)**

Bill used to take me everywhere. This particular night I can remember he took me down to Paddy's market. The flu epidemic was on and we all wore masks. And Mum said to him, 'Now, Bill, you make sure Norman doesn't take his mask off.'

'Yes mum'.

She was telling him all the time, 'You keep your mask on'. [Laughs] When we got in there Bill said, 'Come on and I'll buy you some chips' so we went in. Because he was about ten years old and he bought some chips in the markets. So here we were eating chips. Up goes the mask and in goes the chips. [laughs]. I often wonder after if there was any flu epidemic that could have got into our mouths at that time. I remember the people, they were very strict and I remember too, the people next door to us. People by the name of Burnett. They had a baby and the woman died. And my mother went in and got the baby and brought her into our place. Now they whizzed me down to Mrs. Willings place. I stopped down there. Of course Mum was isolated, actually I should have been too.

**Q: They were worried you'd get something?**

Well they reckoned you would - catch it. You know it was very easily caught apparently. And anyhow the woman died and Mum had the baby for quite a while. Until the epidemic was over and he married his wife's sister and they took the baby back then. But Mrs. Willings took me in. She was a good old scout and I'll never forget Mrs. Willings.

**Q: Was she a family friend?**

Yes, she was Wally Freeman's mother-in-law. She said, 'Now look, we've got to stop you from gettin -' so she made me open me mouth and she painted me mouth with iodine. You know the bottom of my throat with iodine. And whatever was there she burnt it out anyway. [laughs] I can remember that.

**Q: Was it painful?**

Yeah. Imagine iodine being in your throat. The iodine then was a lot stronger than it is now.

**Q: Did you scream?**

Oh I don't remember, I could have you know. But she did paint it with iodine - with a feather, a chook's feather.

**Q: Was Nurse McQuirter's hospital taken over especially for the flu epidemic at that stage do you recall?**

I don't know, I couldn't answer that I don't know. But I know Nurse was running round all over Ryde with a - and this is an incident I've told a few people. Mum said to me, 'You go with Nurse McQuirter and carry her bag'. So I walked up the street, there was no trams, the tram strike was on. I think it was about 1920, the early twenties.

**Q: Not the general strike in 1917? No, that's too early.**

I don't know what it was about I was only a kid. The only tram that was running was the water tram and that was like a big tank and it had a driver's cabin both ends open and then they used to spray the lines for the dust, because they were different from what they are today, and open and it got very dusty and if they didn't spray it dust would go all over the place. So these trams used to run backwards and forwards spraying and they did it while the strike was on, that was the only tram that ran. Anyway this particular day Mum said, 'Go down carry Nurse's bag'. She was going down near Monash Road and at that time they called it Victoria Rd and they changed it when they changed the other road to Victoria Rd. They changed it to Monash Road. Anyway -



**Q: That's a fair walk.**

Oh yeah I'll say. Well anyway fortunately we just got up to the top of the hill and Nurse used to wear a little round black hat. Spotlessly clean white gown you know, and this hat had two long black ribbons, I suppose they were about three or four foot long. Anyway the tram driver saw Nurse coming up and he pulled up and he said, 'Where are you going to Nurse?' and she said down the Monash Road. She was going down the Butler Road really but - she had to get down to Monash Road and then turn into Butler Road and I just forget where she went there, but - - - - - lived just down a bit further and of course we always finished up there for a cup of tea. So she said, - he said, 'Well hop aboard on the back and I'll drop you off down there'. So there's the Nurse and meself hanging on to a rail and the tram's going down waterin' the line and fortunately it was going out the front, not the back [laughs] and here was the Nurse with the two black ribbons streaming out the back [laughs] and I can still see Nurse with these ribbons. I thought it was that funny - these ribbons Laughs]

But anyway we got down there and we got to the lady's place and she said, 'Norm, you may as well go down to your grandmother's now and I'll pick you up there'.

I says, 'Righto'.

So we went down to Grandma's and she said - she came down later and picked me up and I said 'I'll take you on a short cut Nurse' [Laughs]. So I took her - we used to go as kids, we used to go down this way. I took her all through the bush you see. You know the Irvine family? They lived I think in Price St. I'm not sure. But all behind there was this paddock and there was a creek. It was the top end of Buffalo Creek actually and there was a track most of the way. But anyhow it was a rough old track, but Nurse managed it. She got back and said, 'Don't you take me around any more of your short cuts.' [Laughs] Well, we thought nothing of it as kids, but the poor old Nurse you know, in those Nurses shoes they wear. I think they still wear them today.

**Q: Did she have a long dress on?**

Oh yeah, long white dress.

**Q: To the ground?**

Well about three inches above the ground they were. You never saw girls with bare legs those days, or woman.



**Q: Norm could you tell me something about your family? Your house was beside the printing works and your mother, did she work at all? Did she help at all in the printing works, or was the home the main -**

My mother could work any machine in the place. In later years she never did, but when I was a kid it was nothing see my mother working the hand /// and in those days you pedalled them and my mother could pedal - have you ever seen a feeder clap (sp?).

**Q: How does it work?**

Well there's a - your type's fixed on the machine and there's an arm that goes up and it's got a flat face on the front of it and it would go up and press it on to the type. That's a simple matter. And - you had to watch yourself feeding it. You'd feed the paper - you used to make - after this you'd have this flat table there and you'd put the paper over and bend it over and the arms would come up and clamp it you know. So then both ends were clamped and then this arm would go forward and hit the type. There was a plate on top where you put the ink, you used to let it run to get it even and the rollers would come down, ink the type, go back out of the way and this would come forward and press the paper onto the type. Come back and it used to print as good as the printing today. Most of the printing machines are a similar sort of action today although of course the - - - - - has died out now. It's all done by photography and that. Printing is completely different. I suppose if I went into a printing shop to get a job today, there wouldn't be anything for me to do, unless you went to a bush printer. They've still got the old machinery.

**Q: So your mother could work all the machinery?**

Mum could, yeah. But later on as - well you know, she had seven kids and she got that way she couldn't spend much time in the printing. But my Auntie Kate she used to be able to - she worked in the printing office with Dad when he was in town. He started off in town.

**Q: That's your father's sister?**

Yeah he started off in Albion Place. They had the depressions in those days, same as we have them today and put him out of business. And I remember him, he brought two of his machines out from town, and I was only a little boy at the time, and he put em together himself, and they were heavy. I suppose on of those machines would have been about five ton. He got chaps to help him, - you know. But he had to do the engineering part of it because they knew nothing about printing machines. He put this press up and when he finished he had a bucket full of bolts he didn't know what to do with. And you know that printing machine still went as good as gold right until he closed the business down. But he had a bucketful of bolts that should have went in but he couldn't find a place to put em in. [Laughs].



**Q: And when would this have been? Was this when you were moving to Ryde or was this -**

No this was in Ryde, when he came to Ryde and he - he had a printing business in Albion Place, I don't know much about that. I don't remember it. And he brought these printing machines up from Ryde. I've got hazy recollections of him working there and my Uncle Reg he was there he was giving a hand. He was a printer, Reg. He had a couple of other men there working and they were all there with the block and tackle and things like that. And he put it together, and he had these bolts and my mother said to him, 'Well where are they from?'

And he said, 'Oh I don't know and I don't care. It's going and that's it.'  
[Laughs].

**Q: Did his business become very successful in Ryde?**

Yes it did.

**Q: You started off fairly small?**

Well Dad started off with practically nothing, you know. And he built it up and we had a pretty good business until - cause we went into newspapers mainly. Dad started the Ryde and Eastwood News and then we went over to Concord and there was a little crippled chap there named Arthur Morgan who said that they'd like to have a paper going in North Strathfield. Well, we started it and the Chamber of Commerce were supposed to be supporting it and they did nothing. We got it going, but never made much money out of it. He died and his sister took it over and the sister and I didn't see eye to eye, so she took over the running of it completely and eventually it closed up.

**Q: The newspaper your father started. What was the idea of it? A small community type newspaper, with local news?**

It was the Ryde Local News, it was called then. Changed its name after, to the Ryde and Eastwood Local News. The idea was just to give people a chance to advertise what they had you know. In those early days I suppose between the Top Ryde shops to Ryde Station, there wouldn't have been more than - oh a hundred houses I don't suppose. There was a few just around our corner. The other side of the street was empty and the same down that side Lee Avenue. The same down the bottom side of Nickell Avenue. There used to be a water hole down there we used to swim in, down the bottom of Lee Avenue. There's not many people remember that I don't think. And then there was a few right over the side in Anderson Avenue. There was a few houses there, very few houses along Victoria Rd. The Police Station was there of course. There was empty land next door to it. And there was old Mrs Benson. She had a house there.



**Q: Your father's idea was to get a little paper started that had good advertising -**

You've got to remember this there wasn't a great deal of printing available, you know work available in a township like Ryde because - there was another newspaper going named The Leader, run by a chap named French, Gordon French. And he was getting a bit of printing too on it you know. So there wasn't a great deal of work and that was the idea of the paper to subsidise - you know get something to do. And so gradually as the place grew, so did the paper, so did the work.

**Q: So as your father ran the paper, who wrote the articles? The local news?**

He did. He did most of the editorial and then when he was - and then I used to do it. My brother was the editor of the paper. Well, he used to do a little bit, but I don't suppose either of us were really the editors. It was just put together. But I supplied most of it in those days, the early days. Ron took over more as we got on, but -

**Q: Did the paper take a political stance or did you just stick with local news?**

No we took sides politically too. That wasn't a wise move probably because there was a lot of people who wouldn't support you with printing because you'd voice - but my father always voiced his opinion on things local and state if he felt - you know. And I suppose I was a chip off the old block I just did the same. You had your champions and you had the people who disagreed with you. Whether they were right or wrong well I'd leave it to the public to decide you know. But no, you know, you had your ups and downs with the newspaper. When you take sides on anything you always get the people who've got the opposite point of view. Although we always published their point of view.

**Q: Do you mean their letters? Did you always publish their letters?**

Oh yes. But there were certainly times that we lost advertising because of things that we said. There were lots of things we advocated that came to pass like Hospital fund raising. It was Dad's idea originally to have a hospital in Ryde. And he went round and he got people he knew, like most of them were Aldermen and things like that.

**Q: And this was to take over that building that was a recuperation place for the soldiers at that time?**

I don't think there was anything there really when they first took it over. But he didn't get the recognition he deserved for what he did.



**Q: Could you tell me about your memories of the depression in Ryde? Were any of your immediate family affected?**

The depression hit Ryde hit very, very badly. My father was moved to an organisation - it was to raise money to help these people who were out of work. He got quite a committee together and all these names I just mentioned were all prominent in it. They used to run carnivals down at Ryde. Firstly they were in for the hospitals and then they continued on for the depression and they used to raise money and then do what they could for people.

**Q: Where were the carnivals held?**

In Ryde Park. He started a boxing tournament. There was Dad and Teddy Williams. I think Alf Hancock was in it too. A chap named Stan Chapman. And a fellow named Norman Bourke. They were all interested in this and they started this boxing tournament and my father bought the boxing ring. Down in our building, we don't own it now, we sold it. When we left the boxing ring had been used in - we had quite big ceilings there. We built a sort of second floor up and we had a wire stretcher up on one part and we had a place where we used to fold the papers by hand, in those days, up on the other part. And that was the old boxing ring, cause Dad owned the boxing ring. There was some great old names in the boxing ring. There was -

**Q: And this was to raise money?**

Yes, for the unemployed. They raised quite a lot of money. I used to ring the bell when the three minutes was up. Ray Leary had put the side up for what round it was you know?

**Q: Did you ever get in the ring yourself?**

Yeah I did, but I didn't last long. Not publicly, but I used to go down to the gym with them. I used to go out running with them. There was quite a few. There was a chap named George Mills, I think his name was. He lived down in Shepherd St or Bowden St I'm not sure, but he had a gym down there and there was a chap named Walter O'Grady, I don't know his other name [laughs]. There was Bobby Watson, that was this fella's son-in-law, he was quite - both blokes were very good fighters and they got well up in the boxing world you know. And there was a chap named Dobby Wilson, he was a bantam weight and he very nearly got the bantam crown too. He was a good boxer. We had some good boxers.

**Q: Boxing was very popular at this time.**

Yeah, that's right. I can't think of all their names now, but every Friday night, we'd have this boxing.



**Q: How was the money actually distributed? Like who would be in charge of that, or was the money given to a charity?**

It was controlled by the Council at the time, the funds that were raised. It was channeled out, I'm not quite sure how it was channeled out. But it got back to the unemployed, there is no question about that.

**Q: Do you remember friends or relations being unemployed at this time?**

I knew a lot of friends that were unemployed. In fact one of my friends, he's still alive, lives in Concord now, he 'jumped the rattler' with several other chaps from Ryde. Do you know what 'jump the rattler' means?

**Q: Yes I do, but could you explain what it is though?**

Yeah, well he went up the bush, he went away, because his mother and father you know - only living on the dole and at that time until you were 21 you were the responsibility of your mother and father, you know. Not like today, you can leave home and you can get the - some sort of pension. But in those days there was none of that. They just had to live on whatever their mother and father got. So these young fellas, there was quite a few of them round Ryde, but Harry was one of them. They jumped the rattler and run the risk of getting a belt across the ear with a baton because they had jokers searching the trains, you know, and if they saw a young chap that shouldn't be there they'd be just as likely to chuck him over the head with a baton. He was away from home for quite a long time, Harry.

**Q: Did he get work up in the country?**

No there was no work anywhere. But at least what they could do they could go into the Police Station and they'd get a food chit or something. They never gave them money. They didn't starve. They moved from town to town. Well, he and a lot of our friends, they did this. Cause I was lucky I worked for my father. Actually I didn't. I started out as an apprentice electrician to a firm called - - - - Electric Company, well they went broke so I finished up in printing and I was lucky. These chaps had to go out and pick up whatever they could of foodstuff and believe you me things were darn tough. People today out of work - well I'm not saying they got an easy life, but lord, if they were out of work in the depression time, it was a struggle just to exist, not to live, just to exist, you know. There was no Government assistance, very little.

**(Tape breaks)**

You couldn't get relief until your turned 21 so consequently they had to go out and catch rabbits or do anything as long as they could get a feed you know.



**Q: Do you remember any shacks or shanties around where unemployed people lived, perhaps people who had been evicted?**

I don't remember a lot about them because there weren't many of them around Ryde. But out where the rifle range is at Maroubra that was littered with them. And there were other parts around Sydney - and of course in those days you didn't travel around much because you never had the money to go on the tram.

**Q: Did anyone feel negative towards the unemployed and did anyone say, 'Oh, it's their fault, why can't they get a job?' Or were people very sympathetic?**

Oh you always get critics you know. Usually people who have got plenty themselves. Most people though, tried to help where they could. But don't forget too, most people were out of work too, so there was very little what they could do.

**Q: Do you remember the Spooner Schemes?**

Yes there were great things done under the Spooner Scheme. Epping Rd. for instance was built under the Spooner scheme.

**Q: Do you remember Spooner himself?**

Yeah - Eric Spooner, yes I knew Eric Spooner. I worked for him in the elections.

**Q: Was he eccentric?**

Well I suppose some people would call him that. But he wasn't. He was a great thinker, a very deep thinker, Eric Spooner. He did a lot of good things. There is no question about it. He was one of the good politicians, Eric Spooner. He had a brother too, he was a politician. I don't think he ever reached the heights that Eric did. Yes I had a lot of time for Eric Spooner. I reckon he was a real acquisition. You know.

**Q: Some of your Labor friends at the time. How did they regard him? He had the job creation schemes, did they regard him favorably?**

The true Labor man didn't have much time for Eric Spooner. But the chap who 'thought' did have a lot of time for him, even though they worked against him. They respected him. He did a lot of great things Eric Spooner. It's hard for me to pin point em now but, he put schemes up which created employment. See when the Labor Party was in before Eric came in, they had men out in the sand hills and they'd dig sand out here, and they'd put you know a heap over there, and then - this is the sort of thing they would do. Achieving nothing. But Eric Spooner brought in schemes like Epping Rd is one scheme he did. I've been trying to think of others, there were others, but I just can't think of them



now. But he - right through the country he created schemes to give employment. But unemployment was a very big thing in those days you know, it was - and there was no hope of getting part-time jobs or anything else. Everyone was been put off. They weren't being put on. And until the Second World War started there was tremendous unemployment and of course that put an end to unemployment with the making munitions, and men enlisting and all that type of thing. Women started to come into the work force. They hadn't been in the workforce before. And of course that's one of the things today. There's just as many women in the work force today as there are men. But in those days, women in the workforce were very small. They were mainly confined to office jobs and nurses and things like that, you know.

**Q: Just getting back to the depression for a moment. Were some of the problems you saw in unemployment -- you never for a moment thought the Labor Party might have the answer?**

No the labor party didn't have the answer. Jack Lang didn't have the answer. I think the first person who had any answers was Eric Spooner and he really tried to do things and he did do things. But the Labor Party - Jack Lang was a nice joker. I wouldn't say anything against him.

**Q: Did you meet him?**

Oh yes, I met Jack Lang quite often. Matter of fact after he left the Labor Party Jack Lang used to come over and work for the Liberal Party. A lot of people don't know that, but he did. He never showed himself publicly working for them, but he sort of gave them ideas and things like that. He was a nice old joker Jack Lang. I liked Jack Lang. I didn't like his politics. He didn't like mine. [Laughs]

**Q: Mr. Pacey I don't want to wear you out. We've talked about a lot of things is there anything else in particular that you'd like to tell us that you particularly thought you'd like to record this afternoon?**

Regarding what?

**Q: Ryde in the early days. Your early memories of Ryde.**

Little incidents I suppose in most cases. After World War I - I was only a kid. They used to run these carnivals on the park. Dad was involved in them. I think it was more depression work than anything else. People out of work after World War I. But one thing I remember was - they used to put on a show in Ryde Park, and they had chaps dressed as Australian soldiers and chaps dressed as Turkish soldiers and they would put on a mock battle. And we as kids thought it was great to watch this [laughs].

One thing that I was involved with was the Royal Ryde Homes. In fact we ran the first dance that was ever held in their assembly hall. It wasn't quite finished but we ran the dance. There was a couple of nurses there who...there's a friend of mine name Jim Gair. (He's still alive. He lives up



around Woy Woy. I haven't seen him for years.) He and I used to go around with two of the nurses. We weren't lovers or anything like that. They were good dancers and they were good to dance with. But they were quite a bit older than us. I suppose now you wouldn't think they were much older than you, but in those days they were. And they worked at the Home for Incurables. That's more or less how I came involved, though my mother had been involved in years of fundraising for the Homes. But I got involved with these two nurses. We had some funny experiences together. One was named Edith and the other was Dorothy. That's how we came to run these dances, through our association with these two girls.

But I took them out one night to a dance out at - an Order of the Eastern Star dance out at Bondi...And they were always at me to come out there to dance, at their dances. So the four of us decided to go out, and (I don't know whether you want to publish this) but any rate, we went out, and we were dancing (New Vogue was just coming in then) and we started to do New Vogue, and we scandalised the...there's nothing wrong with New Vogue.

**Q: Can you explain what New Vogue is?**

Well, it was just a different way of doing the old time dances. I can't see anything wrong with it myself. Now it's accepted. Most of the old time dances are really New Vogue as we knew it then. Anyway, we felt out of place, so about half past ten I said, "Come on. Let's go home." Of course it's a long way to travel from Bondi out to Ryde. And when we get to Ryde it's about midnight.

**Q: How were you travelling?**

By tram, yeah. And we got out at Ryde and we got out at Mt St Margaret's and you know the street that runs up to the Homes down at Mt St Margarets? It's made now. It wasn't then, and there was a creek at the bottom. So we get...we're walking down there. Ed and Dorothy are wearing...are both in long evening dresses right down to their ankles more or less. We get down the bottom and there's water running in the creek. So there was a wire fence, with strands of wire through. I said, "I'll go over it and see if it's all right." So I got across okay. And I said to Jim, "You better stop over there and help the girls across and I'll help this end." So we got Dorothy across all right, and Ed gets in the middle, and she started to laugh. [Laughter] She's holding the dress up, so it wouldn't get in the water. She's in the middle. (You know wire - when you walk along wire it's moving all the time) In the middle...and I said "Ed, Ed, come on, come on". And with that she slipped. Down she went, up to about here in mud. [Laughter] You never seen anything like it. Gosh, we laughed!

Then of course the girls in those days at the hospital were supposed to be in at 11 O'clock at night. When we get up there this was after midnight. So any rate we got up the top, and of course the gates are locked. So we had to leg them over the fence, and they said, "Look, come on in because the cook's going to have some Christmas supper." (I can't think of her name now, but she was a lovely old lady.) So we jumped the fence and went in. And they left us in the...there was a hedge there, there was steps going up into the cook



house, and we were in behind these steps with the hedge in front of us and the cook brought out Christmas Cake. Now when the girls went in and got dressed because Edie was in a mess. They came back and the cook (I can't think of her name but she used to work at Ryde Hospital too) She brought us out Christmas cake, and tea or coffee. (I think it was coffee.) And we had quite a little Christmas party there.

Then the cook come out and said, "Don't make any noise. Matron's on the prow!" [Laughter] So any rate, we were packing everything up to give back to the cook. Jim put his arm on... and knocked off the darn thing and broke all the cups and saucers. There's crockery everywhere. Of course it made a hell of a din. Just think there was four cups and four plates and four saucers, plus the spoons and that. They fell onto the concrete, and just imagine the din it made. So Jim and I got all the broken crockery and we threw it over in the paddock on the other side of the road, and then we climbed the fence and beat it. The girls beat it back to the barracks, and nothing was heard. But next morning, someone had taken the cups and that and the bits and pieces and put them all along the gates, and of course they were all institutional crockery and that. And I believe old Matron Lindsay (her name was) she wasn't a bad stick, just the same. She kicked up - she wanted to know, but she never found out who it was.

And it was funny years ago (I had a cottage down at Collaroy just near the beach) and I'm walking along to the shops to get something, and who should I bump into but Matron Lindsay? And of course she and I was having a great old gab about the old days and the Home for Incurables and that and she said, "Tell me, Norman," she said, "there was one night, one Christmas Eve there," she said, "there was a lot of crockery broken in the...do you know anything about it?" Course I laughed, (and of course the girls had passed on they - I don't know whether they ever got married or what. I don't know. I don't know what became of them to be quite frank.) But I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, yes, Matron we did, we broke the cups and saucers. Do you want us to pay for them?" She said, "No, forget that. It's all over and done with now. But" she said, "I always thought it was you and that Jimmy Gair. But," she said, "I was never been able to prove it. Everyone was tight lipped about it." Yeah, funny after all those years bumping into her down at Collaroy Beach. She was living down there she said, but I never bumped her again there...I always enjoy talking about old Ryde.

**END OF INTERVIEW**