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Oral History - An
Interview with
Greta
Hardingham



An Interview with Greta Hardingham

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Q: Greta you mentioned that you and your family first came to Australia from Scotland in 1921 when you were 12. There was your mother, father, your older sister, older brother and then the twins who were younger than you were. Can you say what it was that prompted your family to leave Scotland and come to Australia?

Well my father was, after the first World War, he was four years on leave, he was in Salonika in Greece in the 1918 war. '14 - '18, and he had restless feet when he came home and he felt that if he emigrated to Australia it would be better for his children. He came for the sake of his family.

Q: When you say better for the children, better in which way?

Well he was a blacksmith and he felt that there were more opportunities for his children in a new country and Australia appealed to him then, and my mother agreed and they made arrangements to arrive in Australia. When we first settled on a ship called - the P. & O. Company called 'Benalla', but on our first night we were very very heavily fogged in the English Channel, you couldn't see ahead and we were rammed by an oil tanker called the 'Petella'. And we were standing 12 hours in our nightgown and our life jackets and the other ship moved out - some of the hulls were damaged badly and we didn't know what was happening because the Dover lifeboats couldn't find us in the heavy fog, but luckily the chief engineer knew of a sandbank and he went full steam ahead and settled in the sandbank. We had to come down the ship's ladder with only - we were allowed down to our cabins to hurriedly dress and we could only carry a handbag and everything was left to - I don't know what happened. It turned out that latterly all of our luggage and possessions were brought back to London and be shipped. The special trains were waiting for us at Newhaven and we went to London.

We arrived in London as Big Ben was striking midnight and our hotel wasn't quite ready for us and I think all of us were so sleepy after - we had three night's sleep, but we just sat and waited sleeping around in the dining room of the hotel and spent a month waiting on another ship. That was very good for us because we saw London. We just walked all over, my brother and I, and I fell in love with London, I really did.



Because of us having a large family, you could get passengers who were single or just two on to a birth on ships, but we had to charter a special one for us and we chartered a New Zealand shipping company which had been a troop ship and all of the bunks were still there till the war and that was the family ship, the 'Hororata' was its name and we had a wonderful voyage. There were no sirens allowed to be sounded in case of ---- again because we went for hours and that was the beginning of our journey to Australia.

Q: It was certainly adventurous, wasn't it? When you came to Australia how was it that you went to Gladesville?

Well my mother's sister-in-law had come over from Australia on holiday and decided that she would come back with us. She had two children and she said, she inaugurated us actually and we were met by water launch, which Mrs Coburn's next door neighbour happened to own so we didn't go to Sydney we went straight from the wharf in the launch and we sailed down into Tennyson Point Gladesville.

Q: And that's how you arrived?

Yes, and it was just beautiful because Sydney Harbour was at its best and I think we all fell in love with Sydney from that day onward.

Q: And where did you live?

Well we stayed with the Coburn's, we didn't stay long because there were five of us. We rented a house practically the first few weeks. We stayed there until our furniture and all was settled and it was a very nice cottage in Gladesville and then we stayed in a larger house because my father bought a couple of blocks of ground in Higginbotham Road Gladesville with the intention that we would build our own house. Well at a later date my mother's father who was a cabinet maker and who had lived next door to us all our lives and he was rather lonely so the first thing we knew was that my grandfather was on the ship coming over and luckily he and the bricklayer built our house. My mother planned this lovely family home in Higginbotham Road.

Q: She drew up the plans?

Yes, and it was a very good plan for a family home. Four bedrooms, we had to have four bedrooms, two verandahs, one on the side, one on the front, large lounge, big dining room, breakfast room and kitchen, laundry downstairs and we lived there - that was our family home at Gladesville.

Q: It sounds as if your father had some money, even considerable money when he came out here.

No he hadn't, no he never had a lot of money but I think living in Scotland you always had a little bit and that's why I didn't keep going on to school, mother couldn't really afford to bring the twins up, they were just nine and I - it just



about broke my heart, I wanted to be a school teacher, but that hadn't, that couldn't be because I understood that - they had to get a loan to build their house. They got a loan, I think a loan of eight hundred and something pounds and that wasn't very much. I will continue telling you about what happened because of the house. When it was built my grandfather who was used to the very best of timber had bought the best and of course the whole of the house was jarrah, secret [?] nailing with jarrah, but we were left with a debt of over two hundred pounds and that was to my parents an enormous amount.

Q: That was two hundred pounds in addition to the loan?

Yes in addition to the loan. The eight hundred was spent and that was owing to the timber company and my mother just - that was a terrible thing, owing debt, and we were living at Gladesville, and she was looking in the Herald one morning and she said, 'That's my job'. And the job was, 'Wanted: Woman French polisher'.

Q: Right up her alley, wasn't it?

Right up her end and the women, you see they didn't employ women then. Well it was in Hurstville and you know in Hurstville is - nine others applied and it turned out that the owner of the factory's wife was a Scottish woman and also a French polisher and he wanted to employ his wife, but couldn't unless there was another woman and my mother filled that.

Q: So it was a sense of propriety so there would not be a sole woman working?

Yes because we were working with men. There were men in the factory and she would have been the only one, so they were glad to get another woman, that was why it stated, woman French polisher. Well it was rather ---- in those days, so mother worked there, she used to get up about - before five in the morning, walked up, about half a mile's walk to the tram, into Sydney, right into the Central Station, there were no electric trains then and then walk a mile till she got to the other side of Hurstville to get to this furniture factory. And she did that until the debt was paid.

Q: What about your father?

My father got a job practically immediately.

Q: As a blacksmith?

As a blacksmith. He was a particularly good tradesman and he got job in the gasworks at Mortlake. Now that meant that he also had about nearly a mile to walk from where we lived right down to the Parramatta River and he had a rowing boat and rowed across to Mortlake Gasworks.



Q: He had a rowing boat on his own?

No he had another, he hired the rowing boat, he hired it permanently for him and he rowed - now blacksmithing was a hot job and a heavy job, I don't think he ever complained about the heat or anything because he was so glad he had a job to look after his wife and family.

Q: Have you any idea, do you remember how long it may have taken to pay off the debt of two hundred pounds?

Well I don't think it would be more than a year because mother had men's wages and of course every penny went to that. But we weren't harassed by the timber company or anything like that, but the debt was paid and I'm sure it was within a year. Years later my mother said to me, 'I was so tired that sometimes I wished a car would run over me'. And she was tired and she felt bad because she was a person who was full of life. But you can imagine how exhausting, you know, French polishing is, all movement like this, and the debt was paid.

Q: Now what are your first memories of Gladesville? You said that you came to the Tennyson Road wharf and then you talked about the houses you lived in, but what about you as a twelve and thirteen year old, what do you remember?

Well of course I remember the launch coming up the Parramatta River and then I started school.

Q: Where did you start school?

At Gladesville. It was a primary school, not a high school and I was - I'm not praising myself (laughs) but I was particularly good in English and the headmistress was my school teacher and she loved poetry and everything that was English and we were a good combination, I loved poetry. And I was very very happy at Gladesville school. We were also in the choir and I sang the alto ---- you know and so on. And I just - we didn't have a social life then because we really didn't know many people but we joined the church as soon as we arrived.

Q: Which church was that?

The Gladesville Presbyterian and we were all there so our interest even then was singing, choir singing. Mother and dad was in the choir so there was quite - and then we made friends with the other choir members. There were ten of these and sopranos and contralto, it wasn't just one-sided, it was a very good choir at Gladesville Church.

**Q: So the choir became for the whole family the focus of your social life?**

It was. The choir in the church of Gladesville Church and it brought us very much happiness, because that was our interest. Sometimes we even had two nights a week choir practise. If we were practising say it was singing 'The Messiah' or Easter music we didn't mind two nights a week. But in the meanwhile as I said, mother's friends asked them would they come and join the Caledonian Society. The first meeting was in the vestry of the Gladesville Presbyterian Church.

Q: The first meeting of the Caledonian Society? This was a new idea, a new venture?

We formed that Ryde / Gladesville Caledonian Society. So we weren't allowed to go to dances then, but that was mother and dad's social life, the Caledonian Society and old friends from home and they used to have a ball and an annual concert and all that sort of business. They hired professional singers for their concerts and the other half was anyone wishing to play cards, they had a whist drive with the cards. But that was their social life and as we grew older my sister was allowed to go to the dances at the Caledonian Society. They had them every month. As I grew up I was allowed to go too. In the meanwhile my grandfather was our baby-sitter for the twins and I, and he loved singing and he used to sit and (laughs) sing to us. I always remember you know, that strange - he was an Irish person and I remember all the funny Irish songs we used to sing. One particular one I always remember my grandfather, it was called 'The Butcher's Greasy Van'. And you can imagine how it appealed to the twins and I? He had a very very good ear for music and if you were off the track he - that wasn't right, sing it properly ----. So actually music - it seems a strange thing - but music was our life, it brought us all happiness. And we made a lot of friends, mother was very popular, she was a very good hostess. Everyone was welcome to her house. It was no trouble for my mother to have all of our friends and by that time we had all of the young people from the Caledonian Society and the church. All of the same type of what we wanted.

The Gladesville Church Choir used to also run a monthly dance and of course everyone knew everyone else so that really went on in our lives, we still know the people that we used to know as we were in our teens. Always had plenty of friends.

Q: At those Caledonian Society dances were they mainly Scottish dances or was it ballroom dancing, was it mixed?

No, it was mainly Scottish, old fashioned dancing and then one-step, two-step, Maximes and so on like that, just a real mix.



Q: Where did you learn these dances? How did you know where to put your feet?

(Laughs) Well actually (laughs) my sister was taught the piano and I was taught dancing but the only part of the dancing I enjoyed - the teacher used to come from Gladesville, my special private lessons, my grandfather paid for these, and honestly the only part of that was that mother always supplied her with lemonade and biscuits and I just lived for that (laughs). I think I must always have been greedy but food meant a lot. But you just learnt it, anyone never went to a dancing school before, but they all knew those dances. It was just a natural thing, once you see it, you know you can imitate.

Q: And who provided the music?

We only had a pianist, one pianist who could play everything and that was all we had. But it was just a small hall, the Masonic Hall in Gladesville was the venue for our dances.

Q: That was where the Caledonian Society met?

No, no. Their meetings were mainly held in the church vestry because it was just a small organisation then but if they were going to hold a function they had the Ryde Town Hall.

Q: So for the big dances they would hire the Ryde Town Hall?

Yes, and we'd have an orchestra then.

Q: When you say it was only a small organisation, how many is small, and what did this organisation do?

Well mainly it just - you see I was 12 then but I do know that the Mayor of Ryde was a man called D. M. Anderson, he was the Mayor of Ryde and he was the president of the Caledonian Society. Now there was several families in Ryde, the Ferguson family, I couldn't tell you individually, they had one - the Ferguson's had two sons and the Anderson family and there was another family, they were the Ryde section and the other folk of the Gladesville - who used to more or less organise the start of the thing, came from Gladesville.

Q: Do you know whether the Caledonian Society had functions other than the purely social ones, of getting people together and organising the dances, were there others?

I don't think, I think they only had the meetings to get together - I take it they would have the meeting and then they'd have a dance, that would be in the small hall, but latterly we used to have it - it was always, we hired the hall when we had a dance and that was usually the Gladesville Masonic Hall. We seemed to have more dances there than at Ryde, Ryde were more a larger function than Gladesville. But it got to be - you see there were a lot of Scottish



settlers in Gladesville and they came - in fact they started another - they had some disagreement or other with the Ryde / Gladesville when they were ---- and they had come from Rutherglen a part of Glasgow and they formed the Rutherglen night. We had our dance then and they had their's another night.

Q: A breakaway group?

Yeah a breakaway. We liked the breakaway too. We weren't implicated in whatever had happened. We went to both. We called them the---- night - that was our entertainment for a long while.

Q: I just wondered whether the Caledonian Society also helped people who may not have been managing quite so well, had been in some sort of need. From what you say it sounds as if that really was not their function.

I think it was more a get together of meeting people. I don't think they ever, to my knowledge, but I can't verify that really, I don't think that it was ever a function for charity. I have a feeling we didn't work for charity in those days, but it was purely a social night for the Caledonian Society. You had to be of Scottish descent, you couldn't be a member.

Q: I was going to ask you that. Does that mean that all the people who had come from Scotland kept together and what did that do for your relationships with the broader Australian society?

Well that's a good question because with the working - no I didn't meet many - you mean Australian friends? I really honestly think mostly our friends - although the members of the Caledonian Society weren't only our friends. We made other friends apart from that, but only - and our friends couldn't join the Caledonian Society unless they were Scottish.

Q: They could be Australian born as long as they had Scottish parents?

Yes only Australian born but mainly really - in the early days from Scotland. And of course their children, because it went on for years, in fact it's only more or less in the last few years that it stopped and that's a long time.

Q: So you made friends with the young people around you, the Australians as well as the Scottish people but the Caledonian Society provided a social framework?

Yes it was really for a social night together. You see we had our friends, the Australian friends were in our church and we got to know - not very many of the Scots were at the church in those days. Because you see we started right away in the choir in the Gladesville Church so we always had plenty of friends. And as I say my mother's house was always open to people coming. She was a very - what would you say - a very sociable person. She loved people, yes, and so did dad and what my mother liked my father liked, they were very fond of each other.



Q: That must have been a wonderful family environment in which to grow up.

Yes, look my family - I often really now thank God for my parents. Because they gave us freedom, we were allowed to go places that other children wouldn't because my father trusted us, and others - 'Oh you're allowed this, you're allowed?' And none of us let our parents down. We always knew that we were trusted. Dad used to say, you know, 'We trust you'. And we knew that we could invite friends - they weren't all Scottish, but we knew that my mother always had an open house for who ever came were our friends, so she saw who our friends were and really, my mother always said, 'The best way' - when I was having children - 'The best way to bring a family up is to teach them to be respectful' And that's just what we did. Even at the table with our cutlery, even closing the door if you came in and banged it, my father would say, 'Greta ---- ----' and we'd know. They were wonderful parents to us and we've been blessed all our lives because of our parents, they sent us on the right track. They weren't religious, they were as far as the church - the church was very important, but they didn't preach religion, no, no, never. None of us had ever - we all naturally went to church, we had a very good minister and that was our life. It sounds a bit tame doesn't it?

Q: No it sounds quite wonderful.

I was very, very happy, really and truly - until I fell in love. And my husband was older than I and I will confess, it wasn't a popular choice as far as my parents were concerned. They were his friends too, that was the strange part.

Q: You say there was fifteen years between you?

Fifteen years. He was 38 when we married, but that didn't seem to make any difference to me we were very truly in love. I mean that. I'm only judging with how I see other people. When Wilf met me I became first in his life. You're conscious of that, you know yourself like. And it was rather - I had a couple of years of trying to persuade my parents - they didn't think for one second I was in earnest.

Q: We'll stop here because the tape is almost over and I'll turn it round.

[Tape break]

Q: Greta you said a while ago that you were 12 when you came out here and you went straight to Gladesville Primary School, how long did you stay there?

One year. I left the following year.



Q: What was the reason why you did not go on to, well what I would call high school?

Yes. I had a pass for high school, well and truly.

Q: You mean a school pass?

My marks were good enough for high school. I will say my headmistress was very disappointed that I couldn't go, but I understood, my mother couldn't afford to bring the twins - they had their usual education - to carry on with. So I went to a night school and did typing and shorthand and I got a job right away at Grace Bros, household ironmongery office.

Q: Where was the night school?

The night school? It was Mr Kerr's Typewriting College in Phillip Street.

Q: So you had to go into town for that?

Yes at night, after I left I had to go off to this typing school.

Q: And during the day how did you spend your time?

Well I was working at Grace Bros. I was in the office of Grace Bros, doing whatever, I think mostly messages.

Q: So at the age of something like 13 you worked at Grace Bros?

Yes and I got 12/9d a week. That's \$1:25 a week.

Q: And did you feel that you were contributing to the household by earning this money?

Well not at that time because I mean - that was about my fares on the tram and my lunch. But I didn't like working in an office. I didn't like office work.

Q: What didn't you like about it?

Well I always wanted to teach and I just felt frustrated, but my parents didn't know that because it wasn't their fault. It was just the fault of the economy not, you know having - my mother believed in being educated. My sister had left school, she had done her high school in Scotland and incidentally my son went to Cockatoo Island and he was an apprentice there. So mother just - I don't think she could have outfitted me in school uniforms and all that. I did understand, but I wasn't happy about it. I did want to be a school teacher.



Q: And you did not mention this to your parents because you felt that they ...?

No no I wouldn't - it wasn't really their fault. And the twins needed their chance too, they were just nine years old then. I liked Gladesville school. I liked school really, in fact (laughs) I sobbed when I had to leave school, especially so, the girls that I made friends with who were all off to high school, travelled in the same tram and that was like rubbing salt into the wounds and I was going to Grace Bros., never going to their high school. One of them became the English mistress at Sydney High School.

Q: Oh really.

Sydney High School.

Q: Who in fact, do you remember?

I think her name was Wendy Scriven, but that was fifty odd years, you see.

Q: And that was what you would have liked for yourself, but couldn't have?

Yes, but latterly I didn't - I always felt in the background that I shouldn't have, you know, had to work in an office. But then I got this other - I never ever liked the thought of working with a lot of girls, you know only being the one girl in an office of lots and luckily I saw this job for, again an office. I had done a couple of months at home, I left Grace Bros, and then just helping my mother really then, and I saw this advertisement and answered it and I thought I had to go to Castlereagh Street, this office and they gave me the job but I didn't realise that they were the solicitors who did the interviewing. (Laughs) And when the accountant came to take me to where I was going it was Darlington and that's about the most wicked suburb of Sydney.

Q: It was then, wasn't it? Near Sydney Uni. isn't it?

Yes down from there. And luckily I was - that was my job, there was no one else, there were no other girls, I just ran the office, so I had my own time when I wanted to do things and so on. And I was 8 years there until I - I married and Wilf was still at sea and then when Judith was coming along I left. That was - that was my office. The senior worked, she was in the other department, in the printing, we still ring each other up once a week, we've been friends for 73 years.

Q: Tell me a bit more about your meeting with your husband Wilf. You mentioned that he was fifteen years older and your parents weren't tremendously keen on the match.

No. Well it so happened that when my husband had - had to learn to be a jeweller.



Q: This is the family business?

He ran the family business with the manager in Narranderra and that was all right, but when his mother died, the father was a very, very - not a good father - his mother he adored and when she was dying the father didn't send for him - his uncle sent to say his mother was dying, and she had gone before Wilf arrived, so he just left everything. In the meanwhile he had known that he had a lady friend.

Q: The father had a lady friend?

He used to spend the weekends with. And he had a stroke - I didn't know him - he had a stroke and the whole of his estate, the house in Drummoyne was left to her and Wilf who had never had been given a wage, because it was his business kind of stuff, was left penniless.

Q: How long before that did you meet him, or did you meet him during that time, was it before that or afterwards?

No, I met him after that. He had been twice on the Aorangi. When he first came up after his mother died he had the orchestra on the Aorangi but when his father died he left the ship thinking that he'd be taking over.

Q: Taking over the jewellery business?

Yes, yes and then discovered - he knew that he had re-married - she lived in the Drummoyne house, but he didn't know. He had two sisters, they were left without a thing too.

Q: Now you say he had been twice on the Aorangi. Can you tell me the story again for the tape of what he did on the Aorangi?

Well he just played, he had this orchestra, he played the piano, he was the concert master and the others, he was in charge of the orchestra, he chose the musicians and say you were pretty good with the clarinet and would like to go over to Vancouver well he would take you home for the trip, sometimes they stayed two or three years with him, but they were all first class musicians. Now one was just a young lad whose parents had lived in New Zealand and Wilf used to keep young Harold on. He was 12 in the ---- orchestra in New Zealand, so he really was child prodigy and came to Sydney and Wilf took him and he saw his parents, he used to stop at New Zealand, but he was a fine musician and went straight from the ship when he left, into the Sydney Symphony. He was second violinist there.

Q: So what was Wilf doing when you met him?

Well as I say, one of the wealthy members of the Gladesville congregation doubled his salary that the church gave him and that would be fairly minimal. And he just really - when he discovered that he had no money his



musicianship kept him, he did different things, but not able to - just keep himself, if you understand.

Q: Different engagements?

Yes just kept him going until he was offered the orchestra again. The commander of the Aorangi loved the church service on the Sunday and Wilf was a good organist and I think that helped.

Q: So the job that Wilf was given when he was paid double was church organist?

Yes, but it wasn't a big salary, no church organist gets a big salary. He was also deputy organist of St. Stephen's in Sydney when Mr Fendler wasn't there, he was just a stand over in case he was needed. It wasn't often.

Q: So one day there was a beautiful organist up in the organ loft and you were down in the church or what? How did all this happen?

Gladesville Church liked his music, we didn't have a loft, we had a pipe organ, it was very good. I used to sneak into the back of our church, which wasn't lit, and I'd just sit and listen. I didn't realise then that he attracted me. It was his music that attracted me. And as a matter of fact I used to think, 'What would it be like to really fall in love?' but even then we became - Wilf would walk me home but he wouldn't come in for a cup and he wouldn't have been invited. But all the way we used to talk and he - I gradually learned what happened - he wasn't a talker - like me. And I just got little bits when he told me about his father, ---- ---- ---- but he wasn't happy, he never went back to the second wife. He would stay with his sister when he came home from the ship.

Q: How old would he be?

He'd be at least two years at Gladesville Church. I remember I had my 21st birthday and Wilf was invited too and was incidentally invited to my sister's wedding. Because my parents were friendly with him, but he mustn't marry the daughter. (Laughs)

Q: Well he was part of the church set ---

---yes, and well he was a great friend of my father's. So we had a lot of conversations together. But I think mother had more ----, you know a mother always thinks that no one's good enough for their daughter, but she came round and gave me my wedding and that was right at the height of the depression. And she realised he was a very kind person. You know it's strange isn't it? But I kept, they all thought, I had another boy who wanted to marry me, he was just an ordinary friend and he came from Adelaide and seemingly he had told my brother-in-law, 'If Greta gives up Hardy', he always called him Hardy, 'I'll come back to Sydney'. Well I knew I wasn't going to give up Hardy. (Laughs) But the family would have liked - he was, he had money, his father had a shoe factory or something and he was a very nice person. But



I had only one - he was my first and last lover, you would say, and yet I had tons of friends I was never short of a dance, I had another boyfriend who used to ring me up - there was a dance on at the Leichhardt Town hall. He was in love with this beautiful car, he had a Falcon Knight, but he was also a good dancer so we used to go and ----- I used to say to him, 'Look Bill if you ever meet a nice girl tonight, as long as you take me home first I don't mind what you do'. At the time we were friends, never kissed goodnight or anything like that, just good pals.

Q: Did Wilf come with you to the Caledonian Society dances?

Oh no, he wasn't there in these days. No I'm talking about the late 1920s and '30s.

Q: Had you stopped going to the Caledonian Society dances by then?

No - but it wasn't so prominent in our lives then because we had - you know we knew people then.

Q: The environment had broadened?

Yes it had, it had a lot. And as the next generation were in the Caledonian Society - when mum and dad were in it they were more or less interested in hearing about Robert Burns and more of the historical part, the serious part of Scotland.

Q: More into the tradition?

Yes, but latterly it became the dance, you know, I think they would have had a 'Burns' supper.

Q: Do you think it's part of the transition of migration that there's a gradual letting go and this was expressed in what the Caledonian Society meant to your parents and how it changed over the years?

I think what it meant to them ---- ---- was, that we had people who had come from Scotland, not necessarily from where we lived or anything, but we were from Scotland and didn't know anyone else. So then we were satisfied to have them, but luckily my parents had the church life too which broadened their outlook and eventually that wasn't so important in their lives. And my mother in any case latterly didn't live in Gladesville. So that's another chapter. So in the Caledonian Society, Wilf was never at that.

Q: How did the depression affect your family?

Well to be quite candid I was the only person who had a job. My father he was first of all on part time work with this company and then it got closed. He had no job and my brother had just finished his apprenticeship, but there were no further jobs.

**Q: What was he apprenticed as?**

He was apprenticed as a carpenter. Carpentry was inbred in our family.

Q: So your brother didn't have a job either?

He didn't have a job. My young sisters had a job, they were both in the Roneo company in Hunter Street, but I think they were getting about two dollars a week or something like that, two pounds a week. So they really - I was the only one. Now that was another reason why I couldn't leave the family and we would have managed any time. It wasn't really fair for my husband, because he would come home - we were great friends but we never ever had sex. We had 'loving up' and all that sort of - but because I couldn't afford to become pregnant, I was keeping the house, I was paying rent and so on. Now my parents abhorred debt and they went up and got a miner's right and went to Sofala to dig for gold and mother had a great life there, she enjoyed every bit. They built a wattle and daub hut (laughs), so embarrassing, but really she told me it was so peaceful and beautiful she loved every bit of it and I used to send her ten shillings, one dollar a week. She said, 'Sometimes we could buy a few biscuits with part of that ten shillings'.

Q: How much gold did they find?

None. Tiny little bits of it you could hardly see.

Q: But as it affected your life you did not feel that you could get married to Wilf because all the money was keeping the family in Gladesville going?

She never lost her rent, that was always paid, and my sister got married and was staying in another house after her wedding, so she came back and we took over mother's house and I did the kitchen work because I liked that and she hated kitchen work and loved dusting and everything else, well it was a very admirable thing, we always got on well together.

Q: Were you married to Wilf at that time?

Yes, yes.

Q: So how long did you know Wilf before you got married?

Two years. I think he came to the church in the late 1920s and then he went - he still came back after the ship, when the ship came in which we spent together walking everywhere and talking, but no I was married then. I had Judith. You see I had been working up till then.



Q: Yes because you - since you got married in 1932, so when you married Wilf he actually came into your house, your family's house in Gladesville?

Yes, I had never left it you see. And we said - my husband wrote to my father and told him, he was up at that time - that was before that - before I was married and dad was up at a banana plantation in Coff's Harbour, he had taken over that thinking - a mate of his suggested they do it together. Well, - it didn't - it wasn't a success. But Wilf - dad was there. Now that was after the days of the gold digging. Dad went up to there and mother went with him again, so the house was still ours. In the meanwhile I got married, mother of course was at the wedding. My father couldn't afford the fares to come down to give me away. My uncle gave me away. But I wasn't a bride, I had a half past seven wedding at night, Friday night, when the ship came in.

Q: You mean you didn't have the bridal dress and the veil, but you were a bride?

Oh yes, I really was a bride, and you know when we decided I said to Wilf, 'We're going to be married the next time the ship comes in, it's not fair for you', and I wanted him to love me as much as anyone else, but I didn't think that was right. I couldn't when the family depended on me. And that was just the situation. And for two years it wasn't very nice really because I - I wouldn't give Wilf up. We had thought we'd go to Canada because Wilf had connections there, but no, mother realised, without me, I'd be just - just really safe and being married and Wilf was going to be my husband. (Inaudible words - outside noise) My eldest sister thought it was dreadful, she had - my eldest sister was the one who got things in our family. A cousin from Scotland left her forty five thousand pounds, just a few years before she died, and my younger sister said, 'I hope she gives us all a thousand dollars each' but she didn't give anything. And that was because she was the eldest of the family this cousin. But what I was going to say, she thought it was dreadful.

Q: What did she think was dreadful?

Me spending my time with Wilf. She knew that wherever we were we'd be sitting on a seat in the park 'loving up', they all knew that I - I didn't make any bones about it, they all knew and during weekends we would go on a hike, you know, just anything to be together, but it used to be funny because everyone else just took it for granted that we'd go and enjoy things ---- courting my young sister, they had supper after church. Not Wilf.

Q: How much did you know about contraception?

Well I didn't know much, I must confess I didn't know much. As a matter of fact I really had to depend on my girlfriend who worked with me and who I still see. She was older and had two friends and they were older than I.



Q: And you went to them or particularly to one girlfriend for advice?

They were kind of looking after me, they were afraid, you know, got to be careful. One day I came home ---- said I've been told about this girlfriend who used to ---- and I heard 'French letters' and I thought she must be pretty well read ---- ----- and they were horrified. ---- ---- well, I wasn't I was just naive, about 17 or 18.

Q: They were horrified because you didn't know?

Because I didn't know. Anyway I knew then about - and after all my husband was older than I and he - but he knew the situation. Everyone thought that I was - with me deciding suddenly that I was going to be married the next time the ship came in, it was seven weeks and suddenly I was ----. I remember feeling ---- ---- married when the ship came in and she just looked like this.

Q: (Laughs) ---- your stomach.

I knew everyone thought that and it tickled me to death because I knew it wasn't. And I was married in my husband's favourite colours, and it was a beautiful shade in - not red, no nothing like that, more a kind of wine colour, nothing like a bride at all. But it was - it was very funny. I knew they sensed all this and no one said, no one mentioned that, you know. Except about a year - about nine months later one of these one of the choir - a friend of my husband's too, he said, 'You know Greta I'm glad that this nine months is over, because we all thought you were pregnant'. And they did, at least they could have said straight out, but I was tickled to death because we knew what was on their mind. And I wasn't - I had no intention of enlightening them either because it's my concern.

Q: Well it's an intensely private matter.

It was a private matter but no one would have been game to say I was pregnant. Anyway Judith came two years after we were married.

Q: And you lived together in the family house? How long did you live there?

Until I had - seven years living there and Wilf was at sea for seven years of my marriage.



Q: So that was really right through the depression years? And it was the music that kept you going financially?

Well he wasn't very well paid, he didn't get more than - I couldn't really say. I only got an allotment from the shipping company and I think I only had about six pounds a month from the shipping company. That was a wife's allotment. So I didn't have much then. But Judith came along. That's why when I was married my boss at the office said, 'Look your husband's at sea, why leave?' And I said, 'I'd be glad to stay on', and I stayed on for nearly eighteen months, until Judith was on the way.

END OF INTERVIEW