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Oral History – An Interview with Peggy Atkins

An Interview with Peggy Atkins

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I remember starting school as a five year old in the 1920's.

Q: Oh do you, you remember the day you started?

No I don't remember that. But there were two big girls. Probably in the fifth or sixth class who used to take me to school and bring me home because my mother wouldn't let me go alone because it was too heavily timbered. And there was an old theatre called Chick's theatre. And you came down May Street and instead of swerving round to the station you came down May Street and turned up and into Ethel Street. And there was this Chick's galvanised iron Theatre I remember that. There was a film, called 'Climbing Mt. Everest' and your family dog came too and he sat under the seat all the way through. (Laughs) They weren't seats they were wooden benches.

Q: And were these talkies or silent films?

Oh no, silent films. Black and white silent.

Q: Do you have any other memories of your school days? Going to school at Eastwood

Yes one very nasty memory. (Laughs) We had a reading lesson and all the books - I was in the front row, and all the books were passed along. And the teacher found one with a torn page in it, so the books were passed back and the torn page was in front of me and I got into trouble for it. And I said: No I did not tear that. So I got a hiding for it, and I remember the teacher saying, Peggy (indistinct) I could always trust you but not after that.

Q: What sort of hiding did you get? What did they use to hit you?

Just a sharp slap like that (demonstrates slapping sound).

Q: With their hand?

No a ruler.

Q: Do you remember getting punished like that very much in your school days?

No I was - another time - in the days prior to greaseproof paper there was wax paper and I remember having tomato sandwiches for lunch, being wrapped in wax paper and the wash rooms were long wash rooms, there was you know various benches and somebody had stuck their lunch in there. And it was sandwiches, tomato sandwiches in grease wrapped paper. That's something else I got into trouble for that I didn't do.

Q: Now you were talking about getting punished at school.

For something I didn't do.

Q: It's a bit hard isn't it when that happens?

I knew I hadn't torn that page, but as the books were passed back, the torn one ended up in front of my desk, and I was made - this is in the infants school - I was made to sit with one of the boys because I talked too much. (Laughs) That was my punishment.

Q: How did you feel about that?

Oh devastated. (Laughs)

Q: What did you think discipline was generally like at your school, when you were in primary school? Was it very severe?

We had a headmaster called Broome and he was a great man for music and every Xmas he put on a theatrical for the primary school and to the Men of Harlech he arranged - now what was it? A song of the Anzac men coming up from Mountain places and then we were singing Rule Britannia one day and he went (thump, thump sound) terrific thump: It's not there he planted England's flag, it's here. (Laughs)

Q: Was he a strict teacher? A strict man?

Strict but fair

Q: Could you tell me abut some of the lessons and the way they taught you?

Well I learnt to write on a slate. And because my writing was good I got lines scratched on the slate. No, I can't remember much about....

Q: ....what do you mean you got lines scratched on your slate?

Well the slate itself is bare, but the teacher had a sharp instrument that she scratched lines across and you could write on the lines, that was really an honour. (Laughs)

Q: Other people didn't have the lines put on their slates? And do you remember perhaps history and geography you learnt in those days?

In primary school, yes. It's funny you should say that. I was in England in 1985 and it was the coldest spring they'd ever had and I had planned my holiday up to every penny. I wanted to see where my grand parents and where my husband was born and I fell and broke bones so I had to come home again on my own. And I went down to Dover because my husband had gone to Dover- he lived between us (indistinct), in Folkstone. And I went into the local for British Airways to get my ticket altered to come back home early. And this couple came in with three children and there were no woolen clothes in England at that time, it was all padded vinyl and they came out and everything was horribly overheated and he came in, took his coat off and he had great big coins made into rings and he wanted a warm holiday for his wife and three children and she's looking around - you know what travel agents are like - : Oh look John, where's Lisbon? I said: You don't know where Lisbon is? I said: That's the capital of Portugal. She said: You're an Australian, how did you know that? I said I learnt it as a ten year old at Eastwood school. I found the English were very insular. Very much so.

Q: And I suppose when you were at school you learnt a lot about Britain?

Yes we did because we were part of the greatest empire that ever was.

Q: M'mm, and you learnt a lot of English history? Do you remember learning any Australian history?

Oh quite a lot in primary school.

Q: What sort of things did you learn about? What sort of Australian history?

Mainly the early explorers. And then later on after I was married and had a child we were driving down to see some friends of my father's and their property had the original Hume and Hovell monument where their expedition started out, and I can remember going and seeing that because Susan left her Golliwog there and it had to be posted back to her. (Laughs)

Q: Could we speak a little bit about your home life and where your home was? Could you explain that to me and perhaps how your family came to live in the Eastwood area?

As I told you my father was so entranced by Eastwood, that he and my grandfather went and bought adjoining blocks. And that was 1912 and as I told you the grounds - they bought it from some estate and the estate they bought it from had been granted in 1898, it was a government grant in 1898 to this particular man who my parents bought the ground from. And because my grandfather was a builder he built a lot of early homes in Eastwood, and I think it was 1917. Mum and dad didn't build for a while, they only built a very small house. I can remember living there but I had a very happy home life.

Q: Can we just go back for a minute, sorry, to your grandfather who was a builder in Eastwood. Could you tell me what his name was?

Thomas Blakenby.

Q: And when they came to Eastwood, you said he and your father....

.....yes well grandfather had built before my parents.

Q: And can you explain now exactly where in Eastwood this was? You've told me before, but could you tell me again for the tape?

Vimiera Road, it is now - you come down Vimiera Road past that street corner park and there's one - the second house - we lived in that, that was number 4 and then when my grandparents died my mother and I bought number 6.

Q: Your father had died by this stage?

Yes dad died in 1960. And mum in 1970.

Q: Now tell us about this house that you remember as a child.

Well it was only a small house. It had a nice big front room, and you went into a small entrance hall. There was a lounge room that side and a bedroom that side and you went down a hall into the back verandah and off the back verandah you went into the kitchen because in later years the house was extended and the kitchen became my own bedroom then. (Laughs)

Q: Oh right. And was it weatherboard?

No it was full brick. In later years my father built a tennis court and a lot of tennis was played in that yard.

Q: So you must have had a fairly large block of land?

It was very deep. It was 250 ft deep.

Q: Do you remember if all the other houses in the street had large blocks like that?

Yes, well see the road slanted that way, but the fence was straight and the land sloped and of course a lot of the blocks came into a corner here, but they were all very deep, and there's one it's number 16. A young builder bought it and he eventually made it into - pulled the house down and they built villas there, so that's how deep it was.

Q: What was the number of your house?

The first one was number 4. And then we moved into number 6.

Q: Tell, us about the tennis court, and what you remember of that. You said your father actually built it himself.

Yes, but there wasn't very much back line. But all the neighbours used to come in every Saturday afternoon and (Laughs) I'll never forget. There was one man, he's probably dead now, but he used to wear silk shirts and they kept slipping up and I remember my mother telling somebody, he could put tapes so he could tie - and of course the tapes came undone (Laughs) here he is playing tennis with these tapes flying from his trousers. (Laughs)

Q: Did you ever have a tennis competition or was it just a bit of a hit thing, just a fun thing?

No we played serious tennis. And then when I started high school - no I went to Ashfield and then I went on to Hornsby High and they didn't have playing fields or anything at the time and we used to come down to my place to play tennis from school.

Q: What, the whole of - a group from school?

Yes, the teachers said how many could come and of course then we had swimming baths in Vimiera Road. Run by a man called Myers.

Q: Oh, could you tell me about those. What do you remember about those?

Oh, they were very popular.

Q: Do you remember when they opened?

No I couldn't tell you that. But when we first went there to live there was a quarry. You go down Vimiera Road and there's a bridge across the creek, and there's a big quarry there. And of course I was not allowed to go near that quarry and that was where the swimming pool was built eventually. They had swimming competitions there, and on one side of the quarry they had all these

tiered seats, but the water was very heavily chlorinated and I remember going through about three swim suits in one year. (Laughs)

Q: So you went there regularly.

Yes. Every weekend I used to go down for a swim.

Q: Is that where you learnt to swim?

No. I learnt to swim at Meadowbank. When I was frightened of the water - I think I was in about 3rd class, they organised like they do now, swimming lessons through the school and I was taken down to Meadowbank to learn to swim.

Q: So this is the Eastwood kids? The school group went down together?

Yes.

Q: How did you actually get from Eastwood down to Meadowbank?

Train, steam train

Q: And then you had lessons? The teachers taught you or outside people?

I've forgotten. I think it was outside people. But we were told to duck and my mother said, all I did was put my face in the water. (Laughs)

Q: I wonder why you didn't have these lessons at the pool at Eastwood, perhaps it wasn't there at that stage.

Well that wasn't built, oh no, no. That was long before the pool at Eastwood.

Q: Do you remember when that pool closed down at Eastwood? When it went out of business?

Well I used to go down and swim - and when I was at Hornsby High we used to go there for swimming lessons. Six or eight of them were allowed to use my - we were allowed to break off the crocodile and use my mother's laundry as a dressing room.

Q: I know what breaking off the crocodile is. But could you explain for the tape?

Well we had to march in double file from the station to the baths. And of course they had to pass my front gate, so I was allowed to deviate into the front gate.

Q: You and your mates? And tell us some of the other things. Other activities and things that you did when you were a school girl. The way you spent your time and perhaps some of your friends?

Well I grew up as a very lonely only child. I was the only granddaughter till I was 21. All the children around me were much younger than me. But my father taught me to play marbles and he used to take - as a small child, he'd take me for a bush walk every Sunday morning. I should have asked Susan for those photographs.

Q: We can look at them later. Where did you go bushwalking on Sundays?

Just around Vimiera Road and the bush towards Epping. It was only a bush track up to Epping. It was a good short cut to Epping too.

Q: And what sort of gear did you wear. Shorts? Sandshoes?

Oh no. I was too young for that. I've got a photo, my mother made me a red riding hood cape and there's a photo of me somewhere wearing that cape. Oh I was quite young.

Q: And your father, he'd wear shorts or long trousers?

Oh long trousers?

Q: So you'd be dressed fairly formally even though you were bush walking? Overhead noise interference.[tape break]

(indistinct) friends did psychiatry at University.

Q: We were talking about the things you did when you were a child. Tell me about playing marbles. Did you do that at school?

No, my father took me up on the tennis court and taught me to play marbles.

Q: Who used to win?

Dad. Oh sometimes he'd let me win.

Q: Did you have a big circle of....

.....yes, connies and agates and goodness knows what.

Q: So did you sort of have a marble collection that you treasured?

Oh yes. Of course it was given away eventually.

Q: Did the boys at school play marbles? I remember when I was a kid we all played marbles at school, the girls and boys. You never played it at school?

Well we didn't have mixed classes at school. Only in the infant's school not in the primary school

Q: But the boys were at the school, but in a different class?

Yes.

Q: Were they in a different part of the playground

Oh definitely. Not allowed to play with the girls. (Laughs)

Q: So you said you were brought up as a single, only child and you were lonely at times. Did you mix with adults much, talking about your father, what about the extended family?

Well my grandparents lived next door and there were two aunts. A widowed aunt, a single aunt and a single uncle lived next door and I was in and out of the two houses like that all the time. Because my uncle, he always used to come and he'd call me, tin teeth, whistle britches, elephants breath. (Laughter)

Q: So you were like a little pet to them, did you realise, I suppose you were the favourite of everyone?

Well the eldest aunt, she bought in 1925 a Dodge car. I think it was the last year that Dodge brothers made these cars and everywhere she went Peggy was taken with her. Oh she took me to quite a lot of places. And I can remember going through Strathfield where there were only two shops.

Q: Two shops?

Two shops in Strathfield. Never dreaming I'd one day live there.

Q: And did they shower you with presents I suppose?

No, only birthdays and Xmas.

Q: Now you did have a very special friend, though, you were going to tell me about her.

Dorothy?

Q: Yes. (Laughs) Dorothy, some of the things you did together.

Well I only saw Dorothy in the school holidays. And, when she did the intermediate, because she came down to live at Ashfield with an aunt, well she had done her leaving certificate, but I wasn't interested in the leaving certificate, I was interested in sewing and handicrafts and I think I left about 3/4 of the way through 4th year and then my grandfather owned a manufacturing business at Marrickville and in the meantime I had gone to Sydney tech to learn shorthand and typing, and the office girl left, so I got the job for a few years.

Q: Can you explain to me what your grandfather was manufacturing? I know you've told me already, but just explain for the tape.

Leather dressings. Of course there was no vinyl in those days. Leather dressings.

Q: Where exactly in Marrickville was that?

31 Addison Road Marrickville. And a few years ago - and then they built next door to the factory, and a few years ago I remember going down Addison Road and the house was still standing, but it was probably used as offices then.

Q: So going back to your school days. After you left Eastwood - we'll just go back to that for a moment. Do you remember doing the QC. The qualifying certificate?

I did that at Eastwood and I did the entrance to the High School at Eastwood and then I went down to Ashfield. They didn't have enough high schools for the war time babies and so they established a lot of intermediate high schools. And I went to one at Ashfield and when I got through the intermediate I went on to Hornsby which had opened the previous year.

Q: So when you finished the intermediate you must have - or your parents must have expected you to go on to the leaving, or you would have finished then? Did they have that expectation, do you think?

The family wanted to make a school teacher of me because there were a lot of school teachers in the family, but I rebelled.

Q: Why?

I was much more interested in sewing and knitting and handicrafts.

Q: You could have taught that.

In later years I think I could have. Well the funny thing, my daughter Susan is left handed. I couldn't teach her to knit, but my mother managed. Did she tell

you that she had a class at North Strathfield school? They weren't actually handicapped - she had them for the mornings and they went into the normal class in the afternoons. And she taught all the children to knit. And she came home with a lot of woebegone squares. None of the other teachers knew how to put them together, they were brought home to mum and mum got them together and I had such a nice letter from all the children.

Q: Tell us about - going back to leaving school. Was there opposition in the family to you doing this, or were they quite happy to go along with your plans?

Well my mother knew that I wasn't interested in going any further. And my mother was a great sewer, although she had suffered from ill health, she was a wonderful sewer and I think she gave me the love of sewing. But when I was young I can remember sitting next to her and keeping her button - tacking needles through it while she sewed sitting beside the machine.

Q: The old treadle machines I suppose.

And I sold it after she died. She wouldn't part with it, I got $10 for it. (Laughs)

Q: How old were you when you learnt to sew? Were you very young, when you first started using the machine?

Oh not the machine, but I remember being taught to sew by hand when I was quite young. But I know I made all my baby clothes and my own clothes on my mother's treadle machine.

Q: So how old would you have been when you were making your own clothes?

In my twenties

Q: What about when you were a teenager, did you make your own clothes then?

No my mother used to make them. She was a clever sewer.

Q: Did you ever have anything bought out of the shops?

No, never. When Susan was going to high school, I made all her uniforms and the one thing she wanted - when she was going through high school, all she wanted were bought clothes, but the girls - I'll go back earlier. When she was about three or four she was too tall for her age, and when she was in kindergarten she towered above all the other children. So I went to tech and I learnt to draft in dressmaking, and from then on I made all our clothes, my own, my mothers, two aunts and I even made Susan's school uniforms. And she'd come home and: Oh I'd love a bought frock. But the girls used to admire her frocks because they were well made and they fitted.

Q: Going back to talking about finishing school and you went to business college

Sydney tech?

Q: Oh Sydney tech, right. Now what did you do there? Was this East Sydney tech, or Sydney tech?

Sydney tech, we had to go down Harris Street.

Q: What did you do at Sydney tech?

Shorthand, typing, book keeping. I think that was about all. But I remember the business principal teacher saying to me: You know, she said: You'd make a wonderful bookkeeper. At any rate during the depression my grandfather lost his business and of course dad was out of work, he worked with his father. And I was sent down to Charters to learn the bookkeeping machines.

Q: You were sent where?

To Charters, they were in Liverpool Street, they were an agency for Remington's. And I went down there to learn the Remington bookkeeping machine and after that I never looked back.

Q: So you enjoyed that sort of office work?

I did I enjoyed the bookkeeping part of it very much. And then I worked for a Jewish firm of importers. As soon as I was 21 - out - they had to pay me more wages. And I was doing temporary work and I got a phone call one day. Would I go back and see them? They asked me to go back and work for them but I wouldn't.

Q: That hurt your pride?

Well it's just as well I didn't because they used to import from Japan. I eventually got a job which I held till I was married - no, no, I went to work at Anthony Horderns, I was there for about 2 1/2 years, and then I was given the opportunity to work for the State abattoirs which eventually became The Metropolitan Meat Industry Commissioners office. And they had another make of book keeping machine, an Underwood (indistinct), it's a heavy machine to work but one of the other staff taught me to work that. And then while I was there I saw an advertisement in the paper for Remington operators to go down and be taught the national cash register company machines, so at the time I could work three machines.

Q: Most people could probably only work one, could they?

Oh yes we had some gems in our office, they were hopeless. (Laughs). Of course during the war years we weren't allowed to even enlist - we were a protected industry because it was food industry.

Q: At the abattoirs?

Yes. And I was in Head Office, and even the men were not allowed to - two or three of the men got away immediately war broke out, but after that nobody was allowed to enlist they were sent - you know manpower couldn't release them.

Q: Now what - did they actually send you a letter to say that this was the case or did they actually come and announce it at the factory? How did you know that this was what was happening, that you were in a protected industry?

For the simple reason you know, during the war years, everybody was called up, anyone working in an ordinary office job or something. They were all transferred to factories. And we were never called up.

Q: Yes I know, but how did you find out about it, did they send you a letter to say you were protected?

No the firm just told us. We were told by the firm that we weren't allowed to enlist.

Q: How did you feel about that, would you have enlisted perhaps?

Well I had an urge to go into the ANWS but no I had to stay at work. And on Thursdays, I've never forgotten, we had to work on the wages for Fridays. And the last thing I'd say to my mother leaving work on Thursday morning, expect me home when you see me tonight. Sometimes it would be six o'clock, sometimes it would be eleven o'clock. It all depends how busy you were.

Q: Did you get overtime for that?

Oh definitely. There was no public transport to the office we had our own bus from work. During the war of course it was run by charcoal burners and we had to give the garage an hour's notice to when we'd be going. One night the garage staff didn't turn up so we had to walk down to Homebush station, so we got overtime for that too.

Q: And so you were at the abattoirs. Can you explain exactly its location to me?

Well you know where the Ford Motor Company is - well it was directly opposite the Ford Motor Company and the Jansen swimwear was next door, and then we had a long palm lined drive up to the office.

Q: So this bus would normally take you to Homebush station?

Yes, of a night.

Q: And can you explain about these charcoal burners, exactly how did they work?

They were great big tanks on the backs of the car and the gas from the charcoal somehow intermingled with the petrol and that drove them in a jerky way. (Laughs)

Q: It didn't seem as efficient as petrol?

No, definitely, well petrol was so severely rationed.

Q: So the vehicle couldn't go very fast?

No they couldn't. (Laughter)

Q: Did it smell, was it sort of dirty?

No, I never noticed that. But then just after the war we got some converted ambulances and they converted those into staff busses, the funniest memory I've got of work, but you probably can't publish.

Q: Try me. (Laughter)

The accountant was a big man, I think he had a lot of serious operations. I don't think he'd seen his boots for years, but he'd have to walk like this (Laughter) And he lived at Rose Bay and he had to come from Rose Bay to Homebush every day. Well one day, there were two busses, the first and the last, and I was going to work on the last and down comes Barker. Well - and he must have had a new pair of underpants, out of the fly of his trousers there was a label hanging, 'Morely, look for the name'. (Laughter) And we had one jump seat in the bus. If the bus was full there was this one seat that dropped down and you had to face the rest of the staff, and he was sitting in this with his legs (Laughs)

Q: Did anyone tell him.

I saw one of the men go in and tell him. (Laughter)

Q: So coming back and forwards from that job, you'd get to Homebush station and then what was your route then from there you'd go by train to Central?

No. We changed at Strathfield to come home to Eastwood. But another girl and I discovered that by walking from Parramatta Homebush across to North Strathfield Station we could get the same train without having to go to Strathfield and wait. So that was good exercise, we used to walk across to North Strathfield every day.

Q: And the how long did that take you?

Oh I suppose about 20 minutes.

Q: And then when you got to Eastwood station on your way home you'd walk from there?

Yes.

Q: And was that a fair walk?

As a quick walk you could do it in ten minutes. Dorothy lived a few doors down from me. We'd leave home on the three minutes to eight train. We had to be at a certain house when the three minutes past eight train went down. Another spot when the 13 past eight went down. She was working at Burgers at the time and we used to get the 8.28 train.

Q: So it was carefully worked out.

Yes. (Laughter)

Q: Now sometimes on these nights when you might have come home at say 11 o'clock, the Thursday nights doing the pay, when you got to Eastwood station would you still walk home from there?

I was never frightened.

Q: And no one in the family worried about you doing that?

Oh my mother did, terribly. But the minute I hit the corner of Vimiera Rd and Blaxland Rd I'd run, get in the middle of the road and run home. (Laughs)

Q: And there was never any people around to bother you, or drunks hanging around the street?

No, never. Sometimes I'd be in town and I'd catch the last train home from a movie or something, I used to get out and walk home, it never worried me.

Q: Mrs Atkins could we go back to the depression for a moment, you were saying how your grandfather lost his business and your father was out of work. Could you tell me a little bit about that experience? You would have been a teenager at that time?

I was also working in the office for my grandfather at the time, so dad and I were out of work. And dad, he was working for my grandfather, but he was mainly going into the city and drumming up business every day. That was when I went to learn the bookkeeping machines. But we used to walk from Stanmore station right down through - the quickest way to get there was from Stanmore station and a long walk to Addison Rd. So it probably kept me healthy.

Q: There was no Marrickville station then. Or it was on the wrong line?

No.

Q: Right. Now do you remember when they actually found out that the business would have to close? Do you remember what that was like at the time? Do you remember that, when you found out? Your grandfather's business would close and that you'd be both out of work?

Well I remember too - I don't know what happened, but I heard my father on the phone say: I'll let you know on Friday I can't let you know what's happening before Friday. I can remember that. And then of course they went into voluntary liquidation they didn't become bankrupt. And that was when I first started to go down and learn the bookkeeping machines.

Q: And do you remember how it was your father being out of work? Did it change the atmosphere at home at all?

Well Dad, he was a cabinet maker, he did a lot of carpentry and he was doing casual work. He worked in the Rural Bank.

Q: Your uncle?

My mother's brother. And they wanted an inspector to inspect, you know carpentry and that and Dad was on the short list and I remember coming home from work one day and my mother saying: Your father's going to [tape break]

TAPE 1 SIDE B

Q:....right okay, off you go, you were saying your father didn't go to the war.

No but he was in the reserve army here, he was in the signals. When he went for this position he didn't get it because it was given to an 18 year old son of a war veteran and he was taught the trade from the Rural Bank.

Q: From - a WW1 veteran you're talking about? Do you remember how your father felt on that occasion?

Very upset and very hurt and angry.
In the early years of the war he got a job at Clyde Engineering and he worked there all through the war years.

Q: So was he out of permanent employment for a number of years?

No, no. Only for a short while. We went to visit some people. I remember dad saying something, and this man said to dad, he said: You're a carpenter aren't you? He said to dad, I can get work for you. And from then on Dad worked at Clyde Engineering all through the war years. But I remember in the really tough war years when there were no public holidays, you had to go to work on public holidays, but he got this job at Clyde engineering and at this very heavy part of the war they were doing 12 hours a day seven days a week. And I remember dad coming home, mum would put his tea in front of him, he'd fall into bed and he'd have to get up and start work again. That went on for quite a few months. He was worn out. It was a great relief when they went back to normal hours.

Q: And that would have been during the Pacific war I suppose?

Yes.

Q: Now just going back to the depression ?

Oh, the Pacific war - we had to have air raid shelters. And at that time there was all these sheep and cattle were unloaded to Flemington and they had to cross Parramatta Rd and across to the agistments. And they put a great big concrete path half buried in one of the agistment paddocks, an air raid shelter (Laughs), we had to clamber over the gate to get to the air raid shelter. And then a great big building had been put up for government meat, and before it was used we were to go down to that as an air raid shelter, heaven only knows, had we been hit, because all the ammonia pipes were set to go into action. (Laughs) But we never had to worry about that.

Q: Did you have an air raid shelter at your place at Eastwood?

No. No, my father said no, we won't need it.

Q: (Laughs) Do you remember anyone being seriously worried during the war in case of invasion? For example the night the midget submarines came into Sydney Harbour, do you remember how people felt at that time?

No, of course I didn't know anything about it till I read it in the papers the next morning. All the people who lived on the coast, they lived in there and that's when all the European migrants were coming out here, and they bought all those properties up cheaply.

Q: Now just going back to the depression for a minute. When your father was out of work for that short time, did you notice any changes in the household budget? Were there things that you simply couldn't afford for a while, did it change your life style much?

No. Before the firm went into voluntary liquidation my father worked for months without pay. And fortunately my mother was a good manager and we were living on the money that she had saved till dad finally got all his back wages back from the liquidators.

Q: And do you have memories around Eastwood of the visible effects of the depression perhaps? Did you ever see anyone evicted from a house, or people in dole queues or people camping out before because they didn't have anywhere to go?

Well we had great friends who lived near us, and they lost their house. I remember them having to move out, they were buying their home and they lost it, and after that they rented a house at Neutral Bay for some while. I remember a man coming around, I was standing at the front gate, and this man came around and he was looking for work and he said to my mother: Is that your daughter? He said. I've got a daughter that age have you got warm clothing that your daughter doesn't wear? Mother gave him quite a lot of that. It was nothing for people to beg.

Q: Did people come to the door asking for a meal or for food?

I think every tramp in Eastwood knew our place. They were always getting sandwiches and a hot billy of tea.

Q: Did you see that sort of thing much? Tramps coming and asking for food?

Yes, quite a few, during the depression yes.

Q: You mentioned Dorothy before. Tell me about some of the things you and Dorothy used to do together. Or did you just stand at the fence and talk? (Laughs)

My grandparents planted a beautiful passion fruit vine and we used to eat the green passion fruit, the greener it was the braver we were. (Laughs) My grandfather wondered where all the passion fruit went. (Laughs)

Q: That's when you were teenagers.

No, no.

Q: When you were little kids?

We used to play together in our yard mainly. But Dorothy's mother died when she was only 20 and then she came down to Eastwood to live, not far from me. She inherited a lot - homes and that. Her aunt was a very wealthy - not wealthy - but she was a woman who worked hard and saved money and Dorothy inherited three or four homes which she eventually sold. She went to business college and when they knew she had the leaving certificate they weren't interested in employing her, but she did temp work for a while to get experience, then she got a good job in town. Together we used to go to every show that was on at the Theatre Royal, and we'd been going to the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas. She was working in the city at the time and she says: I've got tickets for the next show at the Theatre Royal which was up in Castlereagh Street at the time. It was a play called 'The (indistinct) Ridge'. I've never forgotten it, it was as rough and crude as you could wish, and we got - oh lovely - first row in the gods - two other women (Laughs) - and they were drinking madly out of bottles all through the show. (Laughs).

Q: The women?

(Laughs) Yes. (Laughter)

Q: How did you feel going to a crude show, were you shocked? Having had I suppose a fairly strict upbringing?

Well - I mean - I was grown up then, just took it all in my stride I suppose. And there was another show called 'Let's Face It'. It was Fifi Dunbar, all women and they did cartwheels across the stage and they got encores for that. (Laughs)

Q: What were some of the Gilbert and Sullivan shows that you remember seeing?

'Trial by Jury'. I remember it quite distinctly - I think it was the defendant - and the judge said - 'Oh she stands in the doorway? She pass for forty - in the doorway at dusk with the light behind her'. (Laughs) I always remember that.

Q: Who were some of the big stars in those days? Did you sort of have favourite stars that you followed?

I'm trying to think who they were. One of them was Stella Wilson, and I've forgotten who the male was - oh and then one night Ivan Menzies was the comedian of the show, and this night we were coming - Dot and I had been to see, the only Gilbert and Sullivan I didn't like, 'Yeoman of the Guard' and the comedy man, at the end of the stage, he just went like that, straight down under the stage and Dot said, don't look now but Ivan Menzies is in the seats behind us. And every time we looked round, he must have moved further up the line because when we got out of the train he was still in it.

Q: You didn't get his autograph?

No (Laughs) we probably didn't have the courage. I remember one occasion. I had lost all my teeth young because I had bad chalky teeth and I had to go into dental plate. When Dot and I went to the show we'd have tea in town and then go on to the show, but then I got this job at Homebush and Dorothy started working at Burger so we used to go home for tea and go down and buy the best seats in the theatre for the show. And this night I had new teeth in and we had brought some caramels, and I went to speak to Dorothy (Laughter) and I'm half way through, but my teeth were stuck together in the caramels. (Laughter) I couldn't do a thing until they just melted away.

Q: Tell me about going to the restaurants, or cafés was it? Where did you eat and what sort of things would you have when you dined out in those days? This is before the war or after?

During the war. I remember one night - the State Theatre had a dining room just near the State - oh! - the meal was terrible, prior to that we'd go to Cahill's and have their beautiful ice cream cakes. This was a cold winter's night and Dorothy said, we're not having dessert here, this pie's like deteriorated cardboard and we went into Cahill's on a cold wet winter's night and all we wanted was our dessert, an ice cream cake. (Laughs)

Q: At these, Cahill's and other places, what sort of main course would you have? Would it be sort of a roast, or steak?

Oh no, just something hot - we couldn't - this particular night we had meat pie which we didn't like, but then when she started working at Burgers and I was at Homebush we used to come home for our tea and then go back into town.

Q: Tell me about the clothes and the get up that you'd wear to these things? Would you wear make up for instance, high heels?

Nope - I couldn't walk in them. (Laughs)

Q: What sort of dresses would you wear?

Oh maybe down to about here. And I remember I'd bought a new top coat and Dorothy bought a new top coat and we went to go out, we'd bought the identical coat. (Laughs) There's a photographs somewhere around, the two of us walking down Martin Place in these two identical winter coats.

Q: So during the war, none of the theatres stopped business? They kept going as normal?

Yes.

Q: Tell me about some of the other activities during the war. For example did you ever have any contact with American servicemen?

No. Because I was working at Homebush at the time, but I remember going down and this man pulled me up, he said, how do I get here around this town? I said, we're not a town, we're a city. (Laughs) I remember being very indignant about that. (Laughs)

Q: Do you remember how people thought of the American servicemen? What was the general attitude to them?

Oh - you've just brought something to mind. Dorothy and I had been out - we'd gone for the weekend - where had we gone? We came home on the Liverpool via Regents Park line back to Strathfield and there was a big military camp I think it was down near the Rose Hill racecourse. And all these Americans got in. And this chap - they pulled the seat round and they sat opposite Dorothy and I and before we'd reached Strathfield he wanted to marry Dorothy and take her back to America. And he kept saying to her: How old are you? Oh, said Dorothy I'm eight weeks older than her. And he looked at me and he said, “how old are you?”. I said, eight weeks younger than her. (Laughs) And we kept this up all the way into the city. (Laughs)

Q: Did people think the Americans were a bit cheeky?

Oh some of them were very cheeky. We had a couple of girls who became pregnant to Americans.

Q: Did they go back to America and marry them, or were they just abandoned?

One of them, the last we heard she was going back to America on her own with the baby, and another one we had a girl - oh, always very showy clothes, she was out every night of the week with various yanks. And this time she came to work and she and her mother had cried all day because his wife in America would not divorce him. I don't know what happened but she must have been pregnant, but she had a very splashy wedding down at St Anne's a few weeks later. So the fact that she was pregnant must have - she was

pregnant, we knew that. She had a baby shortly after she was married. But she had this big splash wedding. Her name was Joy Fiddler and we had one chap in the office who always used to call her Joy Piddler. (Laughs)

Q: So some girls were sort of racing out with the Americans but obviously you and Dorothy didn't. How was this sort of regarded, like were your parents warning you all the time, or did they just sort of know that you...

.....I was never interested in men. My mother told me I wasn't interested in men when I said (indistinct) but, no I was 31 when I was married. But if anybody came to the door and wanted to take Peggy out, she couldn't go out she was 21 and they'd get the door slammed in their face. But I met this chap and he wasn't going to be put off (Laughs). I married him eventually and we had a very good married life.

Q: So in all those years you just enjoyed going out with girlfriends and you just didn't bother with boyfriends at all?

No. Well then after I was married. We both wanted a very quiet wedding because my husband was the only one of his family out from England and I didn't want a big wedding. I wanted to be married at home. Or I'd like to go to the church where my parents were married. And dad said, look if you want a quiet wedding what's the good of going all the way to Stanmore to be married? You'll be married in your husband's church. So we married in St Phillip's church at Eastwood. I think there were only about - I think there were my parents. I rang my girlfriend up and said, do you want to come to a wedding Gwen? When? I said, tomorrow, it's mine. (Laughs)

Tom had come home about 10 days previously, we'd been engaged nearly 12 months and he said, come on we're getting - not this weekend but next weekend, I've got four days leave, come on, we're getting married, and we were. (Laughs) And coming home from work, there's a neighbour, and she said, you're a sly dog, very sarcastic. And I said, why? Because getting married and not telling anybody, wouldn't it be funny if you had a prem - just like that. I thought?

Q: Had what?

A prem - a premmy.

Q: Oh. (Laughs)

I could have cut that women's throat. And I had to pass her house to go to work. Every morning she was on the front verandah. I tricked her. (Laughs) She had to wait 13 months. (Laughs)

Q: I'm wondering about dancing.

A girlfriend and I, we used to go to dancing classes and we used to have a good time there.

Q: Where were the dancing classes?

In Pitt St, but I can't remember what part, I know we had to go to Pitt St.

Q: So you never went to the Trocadero?

No. I'd go to the Masonic affairs at Eastwood. I'll never forget one occasion, just before the war. They decided to start a Masonic younger club. Because my father was a really ardent Mason. I remember going on my own and one girl sitting each side of me talking across me the whole night, and I thought, no, I'm not going to change, they asked me to change, but I'm not going to change, and I determined then and there, if I ever saw anybody on their own I would go and speak to them and I made some wonderful friends that way.

Q: So you got married, did you have the bridal gear?

No.

Q: Why do you think your mother didn't want you to get married?

Well she just wanted me at home.

Q: Wanted the company?

Because I was an only and she didn't want to....because you know what housing was like in the war years. After we were married we went to live with mum and dad in the big house. I was married and Susan, we were both married from the same house in Wimiera Rd. And I don't know - mum said to this neighbour, I never wanted Peggy to marry, but Tom, - when I first met him I wouldn't have given you twopence for him. He was down in New Guinea on leave you know - all bravado. And then I realised underneath it all, he was quite kind and gentle. So we got married.

Q: What was it like living with your mother? Your father had died by this stage.

I was living with them from the moment we were married.

Q: And that worked out okay? You didn't feel restricted, or squashed?

No, no. But Tom had a wonderful sense of humour. And after my dad died, he was wonderful to my mother, he really was. I think she really looked on him - anything that went wrong, Tom, Tom, - you know? She looked on him as a son I think.

Q: How long were you living with your mother for?

From the day I was born to the day she died.

Q: Oh right, so you never actually, you never moved out of that house.

Well we thought of buying but, no Tom didn't want to buy. There was a nice house in Balaclava Rd we wanted, but somebody beat us to it. My dad was still alive, he came out and he said, your mother and I have been talking, if you're prepared to live with us and look after us in our old age the house is yours and they kept their promise.

Q: You were the only child...

Yes, and he was the only one out here. And Tom used to keep it in good order and he was always working around the house.

Q: Could you tell me something about the housing shortage at that time, what do you remember about it? Obviously you were lucky living with your parents but do you remember just exactly what it was like at that stage?

Well I can remember one instance. You know Bertram St Eastwood, well there was a woman who lived at the bottom of Bertram St, she was renting and when my grandparents died she came up and she wanted to rent the house. And we said, no, it's not - and she said, what about - and of course my mother had sold her house by then and we were preparing to shift into the grandparent's house, and she said to my mother, it's not hard to get old people out of their homes. And every time - Dorothy and I used to collect for - during the war, this house, this street supports a prisoner of war, and we used to collect every week for this prisoner of war, you know to send parcels and every time I went down to this place she'd come to the door and - do you know of a place to rent round here? I'd say - nope - I don't. She wanted that house for right or wrong.

Q: So when you moved out of the smaller house to your grandparent's house, what happened to that house, did you sell it?

Smaller house, it was my mother's house, she sold it. And then mum and I bought the big house between us. So I never lived anywhere else but Wimiera Rd.

Q: Now, thinking about some of the changes that you've seen in Eastwood over the years. You mentioned Chick's picture theatre before, can you tell me something about what that area where you lived - what it looked like, what the streets were like, sort of give me an idea of what it was like?

Well going along Blaxland - Rowe Street - where Progress Lane turns round, that was the last shop in the street. And all the rest were paddocks. I remember my uncle, he was a Returned man, and they used to have fetes up near where the roll of honour is now in the park. The carnival was to raise funds to build Ryde hospital. I can remember that.

Q: What were those days like? What sort of activities would be going on?

Well I can tell you this when I was young the best tadpoles are in Eastwood. (Laughs) And where the road goes straight through there used to be - where the storm canal is now behind the shops, it was a creek and the best tadpoles in Eastwood were in that creek. (Laughs)

Q: You went fishing for them did you?

Yes. (Laughs)

Q: Tell me about the days, raising money for the hospital, the carnivals. Were there stalls and street stalls?

Oh everything under the sun. Chocolate wheels.

Q: Did your mother cook and sew for those sort of occasions?

No, she used to work hard for the Masons. I remember in 1927 my father was master of the Lodge. I'd be..

Q: ....twelve, according to...

....not quite, my birthday's right at the end of the year. And they were having a ball, and they had to get the floor slippery for dancing, so all of the Mason's young daughters were allowed to go in and slide along the floor all afternoon. I can remember that quite distinctly.

Q: And where was this held?

In the Masonic Hall

Q: In Eastwood?

Yes. I remember my uncle was disgusted. He belonged to the RSL and when Tom came home - because my uncle was still alive, and he took Tom down to

the RSL to a meeting and Tom was very disgusted because they weren't allowed to mix together. WW1 there and WW1 (indistinct) so Tom said I'm not going back to the RSL and he wouldn't go back.

Q: Why was that restriction? Why was that segregation enforced?

I don't know, I never found out. Tom said, no, I'm not going back because we weren't allowed to sit with (indistinct).

Q: Now I'll just read for you how somebody described Eastwood in the 1920's. They called it, 'A country town, nestled in dense eucalyptus forests'.

Yes.

Q: Is that how you remember it?

A lot of trees around Eastwood. Yes. I had a girlfriend who lived at Summer Hill and she loved coming up to our place for the weekends to see the trees.

Q: In your front and back yard were there any trees?

Yes. And as you go down Wimiera Rd on the left there's a Reserve, well that was never built on, it was always very heavily timbered.

Q: We were talking about what Eastwood would look like.

I remember in the days of radio some Insurance firm - they were advertising - not advertising but telling the story of all the different suburbs and how they got their name, and Eastwood got it's name because it was East of Parramatta and with timber in the early days, it was convict felled and floated down the river to the harbour.

Q: Do you remember the roads, what they were like when you were young?

Well there was no bridge over the Parramatta River, we had to go across by punt. Many a time - my uncle was going with a girl from Eastwood at the time - I don't know how it happened but they missed the last punt, they must have walked from the (indistinct) station to the river or something, but they missed the last punt so he borrowed a rowing boat and rowed her across the river, left the boat and walked her home to Eastwood. (Laughs)

Q: Very keen. (Laughs)

He should have married that girl too.

Q: Didn't marry her after all that?

No.

Q: Do you remember when Eastwood or (indistinct) was a separate municipality?

Yes we lived in the Eastwood municipality. I remember when it was incorporated into Ryde.

Q: How did people at Eastwood feel at that time? Did they feel that they were - really had a separate identity and they'd like to have stayed separate? Or did they feel that it was a progressive thing to become part of Ryde?

Well at one stage they wanted to start a new Council. Macquarie Council, but that fell through. But there was a lot of discussion - there was a town clerk a man called Forcett, he got his daughter on to the staff too and that was a lot of nasty talk in Eastwood at the time.

Q: That was Eastwood Council?

Yes.

Q: And did your parents feel that Eastwood had a separate identity or that it should have stayed separate from Ryde?

No because I wasn't interested in municipalities at the time. I know when it was incorporated from Ryde we got a lot more done than we ever had done in the Eastwood Council. We got concrete footpaths down, before that it was only a dirt path to the end of the street. Did I tell they used to play cricket matches in that park. There was a concrete pitch in the middle of that park and every Saturday afternoon there be a cricket team playing there. So all the local residents complained they might get broken windows. (Laughs)

Q: What park was that?

That was the park on the corner of Vimiera and Balaclava. It was a bigger park in those days, much longer and then they altered it, you used to come along Blaxland Road and straight into Balaclava Road or Vimiera and then they altered it. You had to come straight in and go around. The park was much longer then and many a time I remember going to work and this was after the war. Tom was on leave and he be waiting at the corner, I don know what time he left camp, but he be waiting at the corner of the park to come down in the train with me as far as Strathfield.

Q: Do you remember when you first got sewage? What the sanitation services were like?

I remember it. The house opposite us on the corner of Vimiera Road, going along from Blaxland Road we were on the right hand side, then you went down Bertram Street, the house on the left hand side (noise of microphone being bumped). They were the last house to get sewage and we had to wait

till after the war to get it. And the woman come in and she said oh flies around is it pan day today? (Laughs)

Q: Why was it so long getting it on? Other areas would have had it earlier

The war stopped it.

Q: It wasn't regarded as essential

And then the people at the back of us, they had built a tennis court and they didn't want the sewage pipes to go through their tennis court, could it be deviated through our ground and father said no, so that was that. Then when I was in hospital only a couple of years ago the woman there said to me. Did you know Mrs so and so, I said yes. She said she's my cousin so I thought I'd better shut up. (Laughs)

Q: Now thinking about when you got married. Did you finish work straight away?

No I kept working until I became pregnant and then I left work.

Q: And was that regarded as quite a radical thing to do in those days?

No, because during the war, if you became pregnant, Manpower wouldn't release you, you had to stay at work until you were 6 months pregnant. Well that had then been reduced, I think I was about 5 months pregnant when I left work, I didn't tell anybody I was going to have a baby, I believe half the staff didn't believe it .

Q: And then after that, did you ever work after that?

Not then, she was about 8 or 9 there was a new PDF shop in Eastwood and my mother said go down there and see, something came up. I walked in and the girl I used to work with at the head office of Anthony Hordens and that I'd gone to school with at Eastwood and they'd started up the business. I was working for them on a temporary basis for quite a few weeks or months really.

Q: Did you miss work?

No, not really, of course I had, I mean to say, I left work in the September and Susan was born in the February, so I was busy for ever after.

Q: When you had her, living with your mother, how much support did she give you?

A lot

Q: Did you find it was a good thing to have her there?

Yes. I relied on her a lot.

(Missing segment)

Q: Did you feel that with your mother there, you know, she was a support to you? But did you ever find that she said different things to what the health sister at the Baby Health Centre said? Was there a conflict in the generations?

Old Dr Watson, he said the child's mother was the best Dr, I always had that drummed into me. I remember taking her to the clinic and asking - she'd lost a few ounces this week and I was very upset and they told me to buy some Farax on the way home. And my mother had the Farax and was feeding Susan before I took my hat off I think. (Laughs)

Q: Are there any other things that you'd like to finish off by telling - you know things that we haven't mentioned so far? There are a lot of other things we could talk about, are there any things in particular that you want to mention?

The winter's nights from the city. As soon as you crossed the river at Parramatta on the train it became cold, and by the time we walked home from the station - the next train was going out and were glowing from walking. But my mother was never asleep till I came in. [tape break]

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2 SIDE A

Q: You were going to tell me how you and Dorothy went to the quiz shows.

Yes. When I was working, one of the men in the office, he was working in radio and we used to go to all the quiz shows and I remember we went to some quiz show with Jack Davey, and he was a man that always had to be taken notice of.

Q: Jack Davey?

Yes. I remember he opened the door, it was only the small studio he had in in Adyar Street at that time.

Q: What Street was it?

Adyar House in Bent St I think. Opened the door and looked around, and nobody took any notice, he came in, Hullo everybody and slammed the door. (Laughs)

Q: What sort of quiz shows were these? General knowledge? Which particular radio station were running them?

Well we went on several. Mainly 2GB. But this temporary in our office, he knew everybody in radio and then there was - remember Reg Courtley? The little comedian - oh he was a funny - he was really a fore runner of Ron Shand, that type. And they were running quiz shows in the Scott's Church auditorium, and Reg Courtley was doing a lot of the, you know, interviews and that. And he introduced us as the - Meat Commissioner's Ladies. (Laughter) We were very annoyed about that.

Q: Were you ever a contestant?

Oh yes, we all went in.

Q: Oh I see, you weren't just part of the audience?

No we used to -

Q: You were one of the contestants?

Yes.

Q: Oh I see, right.

Sometimes a lot of the office used to go in together too.

Q: So you were on the radio?

Yes.

Q: Oh. Everyone would listen to you I suppose?

There was a show on 2SM on a Sunday night and I came home and I said to my parents, oh, another girl and I shared the first prize, he said, yes, we heard you. (Laughs)

Q: Were they very proud of you?

I don't know. But I got very annoyed because they called me Job instead of Jobe, and I pulled them up. (Laughs)

Q: Oh, yes, that would be annoying. What sort of questions did they ask you?

Just general knowledge questions.

Q: And you were pretty good at them?

Well we always came home with money in our pockets, I know that. (Laughter)

Q: And did Dorothy go on it too?

I can't remember whether she did or not. She might have, I can't remember. But it was mainly all the office staff. But we used to go to all these show together, during the war years, went to a lot of shows together.

Q: Did you ever go to the Tivoli?

Only once or twice

Q: What about someone like Roy Rene, would you have seen him perform?

No I never did. The Tivoli was a very loud place in those days.

Q: Oh was it?

Yes. (Laughs)

Q: Bit rough and ready was it?

Yes. I remember going there - Eddie Hayes and Will Marney were on - what was it? She dropped the baby or something and he said: Oh, I can't find all

the pieces - and the baby's name was Willie. He said, oh pick up the pieces and call it (indistinct) (Laughs) I remember that. (Laughs) (Pause)

Q: ....when you first heard radio? When your family first heard a radio?

Yes my father made a crystal set and he used to set it for me to listen to the children's hour. I remember that, you know stuck with the headphones on my ear.

Q: How big was it? Was it a big?

Oh no it was only a little gadget. He had a wire and he used to play with this wire till he got station.

Q: What was the sound quality like when you listened to the children's show?

Well it was just sound as far as I was concerned.

Q: No, but was it staticcy, or could you hear it properly?

I could hear it quite plainly. And then he built the radio and then he disguised it as a writing cabinet. We didn't have a speaker and one of our neighbours that worked in the Sydney museum, and he brought back a big conch shell and dad used that as a radio speaker for many years.

Q: He must have been quite inventive.

Dad, he was wonderful. And when Susan was going to primary school - no Infant's school her teacher discovered - she'd want something made she'd always ask me to get dad to make it for her which he did. And I remember he made Susan - wooden toys were expensive - he made Susan a beautiful little train set, engine and carriages and he did a lot of little things like that for her.

Q: Did you ever get a shop built radio, or did you stick with the one you always used?

No dad always built them. (Excuse me I'm after my handkerchief).

It was quicker to walk up from Wimera Road up Epping station than it was to walk back to the station and get the train up.

Q: You never caught the train?

No we always walked up to Epping. I used to hate Epping then, I don't know why. I eventually lived there for 10 and a half years.

Q: What was it like when you were young?

Bushy, very bushy. And I remember there was a vacant block next door and my father - it had tall gum trees - and he built me a telephone with two treacle tins on a line of rope between two trees.

(Break in tape)

....had grown out of a very full skirt, and she said to Susan here this goes round you - so I pulled it to pieces and I got a straight frock out of it for her. Oh I did lots of funny things. (Laughs) I won't say funny things, but you had - now that scarf you see hanging over that chair, when she was in first year tartan skirts were all the fashion. She wanted a tartan skirt. So I went and bought the material and I think it was twenty five shillings a yard and Tom hit the roof. I said, don't worry it will last. I've used that as a scarf - it's long enough I'm sitting, it's not cold enough to put that on, and that scarf's long enough to go round here and over my knees.

Q: That's the tartan skirt. It lasted a while didn't it?

Oh yes, she wore it all the way through University. But once you were married it was infra dig to have clothes that you wore before you were married. (Laughs) But I did all her wedding sewing. And I was very hurt. I made her frock, and both bridesmaids, I made their frocks, and I never got a word of thanks from the chief bridesmaid. And Susan said, I told her you didn't want anything for making it, but she didn't even write me a note of thanks. Oh, it was a long time later she came back with some very gauzy material, she was a bridesmaid, she had to have an organza top over a strapless bra, and I said I can't measure you for that you've got to have a special bra made to go under that frock. And I honestly told the truth, I said I haven't got time to do it Judith. So I heard later it cost her $100 to get it made. (Laughs)

Q: You certainly enjoyed sewing.

I did I loved sewing. I made all her school uniforms. Well not all of them. A friend of mine, a girl I'd known at school, her daughter had gone through Hornsby and I said, would you lend me one of Wendy's uniforms to copy it and she said, you can keep it, of course Wendy had left school by then. But no - I made her uniforms. I made her a sleeveless frock, opened down the front with a bias strip and it had a square neck and I was pulled up in the street, some woman said, where did you buy that nice frock for your daughter? I said, I made it, and she looked at me as though she didn't believe me. (Laughs) A couple of times I was asked. And every winter I used to knit myself a frock, and one of the neighbours asked me for the pattern, I said, no. I made it without a pattern. She wouldn't believe me, I think she just though I didn't want. But I never - I never did.

I used to make the skirts in a circular (indistinct) and when it got so high I put a string round it, and my mother would say, I think it wants to come in a bit

more, so I'd have to decrease it a bit (Laughs) more until I got to the waist. I made the top separately and I always joined them with elastic so that when they were washed they didn't drop.

I always liked knitting and sewing.

Q: You must have got a great sense of achievement out of it?

I did.

Q: Thanks Mrs Atkins.

END OF INTERVIEW