

ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL INTERVIEW WITH GREG PERCIVAL ON 18 MAY 2010

AA Can I have your full name please?

GP Harold Gregory Percival.

AA When and where were you born?

GP On 4 April 1925 at Ingleburn.

AA How many were in your family?

GP My parents, myself, one sister and one brother. They are both deceased. I was the eldest and we all grew up in Ingleburn.

AA You had a great grandfather settle in Appin.

GP My great grandfather settled in Appin. He came to Australia as a convict in 1830. He was born in 1813. He was allocated to a gentleman in Appin who had a very small property of about 20 acres. Next door was the big Broughton property and apparently he was allowed time off from the person he was sent to because I was told, he worked for Mrs Broughton doing her shopping. Her husband was a magistrate and he spent most of his time in the city.

The short story is he got a pardon three or four years after he arrived here and so that is before 1840. In the mid 1850s he bought at auction 100 acres of the Broughton Estate with a moiety of another 50 acres for £68.6.8, I think that was the figure. I have got the exact figure. The point is, here is this young fellow who came out as a convict and spends £68 on a piece of property and that is probably more than a year's wages. He could have either been a bushranger or might have found some gold, or as I suspect he had rich parents. I am following a line of examination there and I think that is what happened. I think his parents gave an inducement to a magistrate over there to send him to Australia and when he got here they had feelings of guilt and sent him a bag full of money.

5 mins

Anyway he bought this property at Appin and he worked very hard at it. He built it up and there were two sons, my grandfather and Norman Percival who stayed on at Appin. Norman's granddaughter who is now dead was a Darcy. Darcy's are very old residents of Appin. So Deirdre was born in Appin in the old family home which was Northampton Dale on the right as you go through Appin. They just spent a lot of money, hundreds of thousands of dollars

restoring the original old home. So my great grandfather had two sons, one of whom was my grandfather. As a young man he got indentured as an apprentice to an uncle of his by the name of Caldwell in Campbelltown as a butcher. So he learnt butchery. He came to Ingleburn somewhere around 1893 from what I can deduce and he started a butcher's shop in Ingleburn. It was the centre of Ingleburn then, it was up to the east in Chester Road between Gertrude and Cumberland Roads towards the RSL. How long he was there, I am not sure maybe a year or two I don't know. The railway line was under construction and naturally there was a gravitation of people towards the railway line in the vicinity of the train station. So the village that was being established up in Gertrude Street like the Council building, the Church and community hall all moved down to Ingleburn as it is now.

AA Whereabouts did you live in Ingleburn?

GP I lived in Lionel Street. Lionel Street runs across Oxford Road. Oxford Road virtually runs from the railway line to the river. Cumberland Road which is virtually the main street crosses Oxford Road at the lights. The school is on the corner. Lionel is the next street going east. We lived on the northern extremity of Lionel Street. We had a few acres there. We had a couple of horses and a house cow as most people did then.

AA Is that house still standing?

GP It was until about two years ago. It's now got villas there.

AA That is sad.

GP It was a very humble little weatherboard house. It cost my father something like £35 which now sounds a ridiculous amount of money. I have in the drawer a little notebook where he kept a record of all the expenditure on the house even down to a bag of nails or two pieces of timber.

AA Can you remember in your childhood what sort of games you played, what sort of sport?

GP Every kind of sport that kids of today should play. As I said at a function where I spoke on Old Ingleburn a couple of weeks ago, it is sheer nonsense for children to say that they have nothing to do. They are just too lazy and they are not encouraged to be active. In our case, the day was too short. In the summer we played cricket or soccer or marbles which was very popular, tennis and as we got a bit older from around 9 or 10 onwards, most of my spare time was spent out and about at the river in the summer. We tended to gravitate to the river, boys particularly, the girls to a lesser extent. It was usual to come home from school, do your chores, you would have to gather sticks to light the fire tomorrow morning and other little things and then go straight

down to the water until it got dark and then come home. We would get roused on because we stayed too long.

10 mins

AA I was going to ask you if your parents were strict.

GP They were cautious about all those things but I must say that I don't recall them denying me the opportunity to do any of those things that I wanted to do. I remember I came home one night and said that Peter and I or one of my friends are going to spend the night out at the beach at the river. They thought about that and said that it was OK and be sure to do this and do that. We knew the river and we knew the bush and knew all the things not to do. It was quite usual to spend weekends out there and we walked the length of the river right through to the Woolwash at Campbelltown. We knew all the little swimming holes. We had a regular camping spot out behind East Minto, a little beach area with a long sloping rock so that you could step into the water or you could go up the rock and dive in from about 15 feet. It was a very deep pool.

AA There was probably a lot more water in the river then that there is now.

GP The level of the river is determined by a weir at Liverpool. Providing the river is running, the level will always stay the same. The whole area went through a dreadful drought; well it has a number of them. From the year I was born in 1925 right through until 1930 there was a drought and 1929 was a very bad year, I can just recall that, I would have been four. The whole of the eastern side from Minto through to Campbelltown was totally burnt out. Kentlyn, Minto Heights and Leumeah Heights and part of what was called the Soldiers Settlement area of Campbelltown was burnt. We have had plenty of bush fires in that area since, but I don't think as bad as that one.

AA Do you actually recall that bush fire of 29?

GP I can't recall the details of it, but I can recall my parents talking about it, saying so-and-so was burnt out.

15 mins

AA Where did you go to school?

GP I went to school at Ingleburn Public School from 1930 to 1936. There were no high schools in Ingleburn or Campbelltown. There was what was called a high school at Liverpool which was a Tech college which went to second year and if you wanted to go on there was a Tech college at Granville which went on to third year. If you wanted any sort of commercial schooling then you went to Parramatta or Homebush, or of course Hurlstone. Hurlstone was always an

option for us and I chose Hurlstone as a lot of the boys did. My parents had stressed to me that I should aim to get a permanent job as the depression was on. To get into the public service, you had a permanent job. Once you were appointed to the public service you would have to commit a crime or be too ill to work to leave. That was always in my mind. I opted to go to what was called Parramatta Commercial which went to Intermediate which was third year. It changed its name the year that I got there to Parramatta Intermediate High. It is now called something else. That was right at the train station at Parramatta which was very convenient. All the children going to high school from Moss Vale through caught the normal business steam train which started at Moss Vale and went through to the City. We caught that at Ingleburn and went to Liverpool. Then we changed to the electric train which was a school special train which stopped at every station to Granville. Then it shunted a bit towards Clyde and then came back. We didn't change trains, we stayed on the train and we went to Parramatta. Then coming home in the afternoon the same thing happened. We had a special train. Parramatta High, Parramatta Intermediate and the girls Domestic Science and another nearby schools all adjusted their hours around that train.

AA You must have had to get out of bed fairly early.

GP I don't recall that it was any great problem. That steam train that I talked about left Ingleburn at 7.45am and got to Central at 8.30am. The commuters would catch the same train home which left Central at 5.23pm, first stop Ingleburn arriving at 6.03pm. That was better than they can do today.

AA Would you have walked to school in your primary school days?

GP Oh yes, everybody walked in those days. We had two girls that came from way out from the elbow in the river. They would have been the furthest east of any residents in the Campbelltown area. They only had a track type road where it was a horse track in the middle and a track each side where the wheels of the buggy travelled through the scrub. They used to ride their horses to a point in Myrtle Creek where another family lived and left their horses there in a paddock and then they walked to school from there. That's what people did. There was no school at Macquarie Fields, there was one at Glenfield. Children from Long Point walked in and that would have been about two miles. People from Denham Court walked in.

20 mins

AA Do you remember how many were in the classes? Were they big classrooms?

GP There were three classrooms, each had two classes in them, first and second, third and fourth and fifth and sixth. I suppose there would have been around 30 to 40 in each class.

AA Did you have any favourite teachers or any teachers that you were scared of?

GP Yes, all of them. We had two lady teachers in first, second and third. One lady teacher was an identity of Ingleburn. Her parents were among the original Ingleburn residents. Their name was Welshman. Their family home in Cumberland Road was the headquarters for Myrtle Cottage. The government bought the property not that long ago, perhaps 30 or 40 years ago and started Myrtle Cottage there. Muriel Welshman was a very good, but a very strict teacher. I was telling the family just the other day that first thing in the morning we would assemble and sing God Save the King, Rule Britannia and something else, and then we would go to our classes. The girls would all put their hands on the desk and she would come around and make sure that their fingernails were clean and then they would turn them over and if they were dirty they would get the ruler. So she would have the girls with clean hands.

We had a Headmaster named Chandler; he had come from two or three country towns. He lived at Kensington and to get to Ingleburn he took a tram from Kensington to Central. He then caught an electric train to Lidcombe and changed and caught the Parramatta train where he changed at Granville to another electric to Liverpool and then the steam train from there and the same thing going home. So the hours at the school were adjusted to suit those train times. He was an extraordinarily good teacher. He sent us off to high school at second year standard so first year was a breeze for everybody who came out of Ingleburn School, except for French or subjects that weren't taught here. The elementary things like English and Maths, we were very well equipped to go to high school. He was strict but I don't know of anybody who went to Ingleburn School who didn't respect him and was grateful for the way he taught us. He had two canes, one was called Aunty June. He didn't often use them, but you would stand out in the front of the class and usually get one cut.

Our parents were always ultra-kind, but if you did something really wrong, then you got the strap around the backside. That doesn't happen today. As I said again the other day we were disciplined at home, we were disciplined at school and we came out of school into a disciplined society. There was no petty theft. People left their doors unlocked. When you went out in the summer you would leave the windows open to let the breeze through. Nobody ever got burgled or hurt in any way. Things changed in Australia in the 70s.

25 mins

AA My parents used to tell me that when I was a small child they used to do those things, leave the house unlocked and that was in the 70s. Things changed in the late 70s I guess. It's sad isn't it?

GP In the 70s the school curriculum changed and teachers told the children that their parents had no reason to discipline them, because everyone is an individual and you could decide exactly what you wanted to do and it's not for your parents to do. That was the start of the rot.

You see these kids as I call them around 18 and 20 year olds who have just been caught for doing what I would call an unacceptable crime and they stand with their hands on their hips giving cheek to the coppers. There was a Police Sergeant at Liverpool and a Police Sergeant at Campbelltown. They were the police force in each of those towns, so they were on duty 24 hours a day. Their transport was a motor bike and sidecar. Every so often about once a month they would come down and drive through the small towns, talk to the Postmaster and get the drift about what was going on locally. They were just showing a presence, but everybody had great respect for them. If he got off his bike and came over to talk to one of the kids, the kids would stand like a stick to attention.

AA How old were you when you left school?

GP I was 14 after I had done my Intermediate Certificate. I didn't actually leave school until the following April because you couldn't leave school until you were 15. I just went to Hurlstone for three months. In the meantime, whilst I was doing the Intermediate Certificate I sat for the Public Service entrance exam which I also passed.

Eventually I was called up for a job where I think 99% of the new graduates for the Public Service went to the Postmaster General. I became a telegram boy, riding a bike and walking around the city delivering telegrams. I did that for probably 6 or 9 months then I got promoted to an office job still within the Post Office. I realised by this time to get on in the Public Service my appointment was to the fourth division. You had to get into the third division to get any worthwhile job. So I went to a coaching college in O'Connell Street for four nights a week for a year and sat for and passed my Matriculation examination which immediately elevated me to the third division.

30 mins

While this was happening I joined the Navy. Actually it would have been just after I had sat for the examination and passed, I was just turned 17. My friends around here were either in the Army or the Air Force and you couldn't get into either of them until you were 18, so I joined what was called the Air Training Corps because I wanted to drive an aeroplane. I did this which involved going to Ashfield every weekend. It was one night during the week and one afternoon on the weekend. You did things like flag signalling, Morse code, aircraft recognition and a whole lot of preliminary things to train you for the Air Force. While I was there and I had become a Sergeant in the Training

Corps the fellow at the desk next to me at the GPO asked if I wanted to go for a walk with him at lunchtime as he was going to join the Navy. I said OK and the old fellow behind the desk said you're next and I said that I wasn't old enough. He asked me how old I was and I said 17 next month and he told me to take some papers home and get my parents to sign them and come back. That was their authority for me to join before I was 18, which I did. I reflected many times on that scene in the kitchen. In those days, the kitchen was also the living room and dining room. We were having dinner that night and I told my parents that I had some papers for them to sign as I wanted to join the Navy. When my son turned 17 I reflected on how my parents must have felt when I was 17 and in the middle of a war. Anyway they didn't deny me; they said if that's what you want to do.

AA So you really didn't have ambitions to join the Navy, it was more the Air Force that you had the ambitions for, but it worked out.

GP It worked out quite well, because the training that I had done with the Air Training Corps helped me in the Navy. I became a wireless telegraphist and up there is a scale model of the ship I served on.

AA Did you enjoy your time in the Navy?

GP That's a very natural question and it has four or five answers.

AA When I asked you that I then realised that you served during the war.

GP Every time you went to sea, there was apprehension about whether you would come back. On reflection I can't say that it did me any harm, except that I got skin cancers all over me from exposure in the tropics. Somehow or other I just slipped into the way of things in the Navy. I had four years; there were only 17 in the crew.

35 mins

AA Do you march on Anzac Day?

GP They were the World War Two patrol boats, the first patrol boats in the Australian Navy and they were called Fairmiles. Fairmile is a little village in England where the designer of these came from and they called them the Fairmile class. With only 17 in the crew I would go into the City on Anzac Day and not find anyone that I knew because the 17 came from every state and there would only be 2 or 3 potentials from New South Wales. Forty years after the War four of the other fellows formed a Fairmile Association. I became President of it at the first meeting and I still am. We have an annual meeting. We have a church parade at Garden Island on the Sunday. On the Monday we have an Annual Meeting at Parliament House in Sydney and then we have lunch in Parliament House. On the Tuesday we have an excursion, because

they come from all over Australia to this annual function, so we have an excursion, a tourist type of thing.

AA If I could just jump back a bit Greg to the depression. I know you were a very small child, but do you have any memories of that time?

GP Yes, I can remember people selling their jewellery and furniture. It was very hard. The Commonwealth Bank started a branch at the school. Somebody came from the Bank and collected your money and entered it into your pass book. To get threepence, which was the objective, I used to gather horse manure from our paddocks in a wheelbarrow and I used to get a penny a barrow load from the lady just up the street who had a lovely garden. It took a while to fill a wheelbarrow with horse manure because we only had two horses. I did that because my parents couldn't afford to give me threepence. Most of the kids came to school barefooted, but nobody complained about it and everyone was happy.

AA So you left the Navy.

GP I left the Navy and went back to the GPO. Because of the way that the Public Service worked, because I had done the Matriculation exam and graduated to the third division my seniority in the third division dated from the day that I was appointed. So I was away with the Navy for four years, I came back with four years seniority and was catapulted upstairs very rapidly. With the Public Service like most businesses, as people became of retiring age, they didn't retire because there was a shortage of staff, so they not only stayed on they were what was called retreaded. They called in a lot of retirees to come and work for one or two years. So as these people were moving out these jobs were being created. I and a couple of other fellows were rapidly going up the ladder.

40 mins

I used to hate being in an office. In most cases you would be sitting looking at a window with a big light behind you, the sun would come in and I would be sitting at a desk trying to make out what these documents were all about. I thought to myself, I am 21 and I will be doing this for 40 years before I retire. There has to be something better. At the same time I realised that my father who had carried on the butchery business from his father needed help as he was getting older, he was getting near to 50 which was old to me. I could see he needed help and as Ingleburn was growing there was potential for the business to grow but he didn't seem to be alert to that. I resigned from the Public Service and went into the butchery world.

I worked hard, you had to work hard. On Fridays we would start work at 3am to prepare the orders. Every day I would start before 7am and get home at

7pm. That was every day except Fridays and Saturdays I would start at 3am to 4am and come home around 2pm. I was right at the peak of that when I was elected to Council. In those days Council meetings would go on for hours. A Council meeting could go on till midnight and then I would get three hours sleep and get up for work. You had to do it anyway, as the town was growing. I had the good fortune to understand what was happening, I went to the bank and borrowed money and built a new shop.

AA Whereabouts was the shop? Is it still there today?

GP That shop is gone. That's where the Wales bank in Ingleburn is now and this side of that there was a piece of open ground which was owned by my father which was given to him by his father. When I wanted to build a new shop my father gave it to me. That shop that I built is still there today and the young fellow who is in it calls it Ingleburn Best Meats, on the corner of Oxford and Macquarie Roads. Later on I added a few shops to it, so there are nine shops going around the corner.

45 mins

AA I was going to ask you about what kind of things you did in your spare time socially during this time. You wouldn't have had a great deal of time I guess.

GP Both my wife Diana and I played tennis; that is how we met at tennis. I played a good deal of tennis before the war. That was one of the main sports in Ingleburn, there were about eight private courts in Ingleburn and each of those had their own club. We had our own inter town competitions. My family's court they called Wattle Park. I played there as a 16 or 17 year old. After I came back from the war that was where I played, I was a very keen player.

The president of the Bowling Club which was just being formed, told me to come and look at the greens. What do you think of that? I told him that it would make a good tennis court! He got me to try bowls and I got hooked on it, so I played tennis and bowls for some time and then tennis faded out and I played bowls. So when the competitions were on, the 2pm finish on Saturdays had to be pushed back to 12.30pm to give me time to go home and shower and get ready.

Socially we went to each other's homes a good deal, young people our own age. We all had young children and we would go nearly always on Sundays as most of us worked on Saturdays. On Sundays we would go somewhere for a picnic such as the beach but the big thing about that question is that I hardly saw my kids. I would go to work before they got up and Diana had to do everything to look after them. When I came home they would be up long enough to say goodnight to Daddy and they would be off to bed. That's one

thing in life that I regret that I wasn't able to do more with my kids. To our great satisfaction they all turned out to be good citizens.

AA You explained that you met your wife at tennis. Where did you get married?

GP We were married at St Marks at Darling Point. Diana was christened there and went there as a girl. That was her church. She had moved to Ingleburn during the war.

AA Did you have a honeymoon?

50 mins

GP Yes, my brother and sister had mutually bought a little brand new Ford Prefect and they lent us the car and we drove to Surfers Paradise, stopping at Newcastle and Port Macquarie. That was perhaps the thing to do. On the way we passed a big open paddock at Broadbeach and on a stake was a sign about half a metre by a metre which said building blocks £20. It was all sand. I pulled up and said to Diana "Look at that, they're asking £20 for a block of sand, when the first decent wind comes it will all blow away." Well it didn't blow away, it went sky high.

AA I was reading where your grandfather was Mayor as well. Did you ever meet him?

GP He died when I was a little fellow. My recollection of him is he always wore a waistcoat as most men did then and he had a watch with a gold chain looping round into each pocket. In one pocket was the watch and the other end just went into the pocket. In the other pocket he would put a couple of foil wrapped chocolates. He died when he was 64, so I suppose he would have been around 62 at this stage. He would sit out in the sun on the back veranda and I would come up and he would give me one of these chocolates. With the sun and his body heat, all I would have would be a foil of liquid chocolate. I didn't really know him. He was one of the petitioners to form a Council, which was formed in 1896. The first election was in 1896 and he was one of the nine elected. He was Mayor of Ingleburn in 1901. Apparently he went out of Council a year or two after that, I'm not quite sure of the date. He didn't stay there that long. He didn't seek to stay there unlike me I had 31 years at Campbelltown Council.

In those days as I said earlier in the generation before me more so, people visited homes and the entertainment at least once a week would be a dance in somebody's home and if it was here we would clear all the furniture out and this would be the dance floor. They nearly always had timber floors. Most houses were built with that in mind. In fact my grandfather's house was just up the street from us in Lionel Street. As you came through the door you were in this big rectangular room and the bedrooms and kitchen all went off that. So it

was the centrepiece of the house. A lot of the houses were built this way. He played the banjo and there were three of them who played in a band. I imagine he played every week wherever the dance was being held. I don't know that he played any other sport. My father was keen at cricket and tennis, but I don't know about my grandfather.

AA Getting on to when you first joined Council Greg, what was Council like at the time in say 1956 when you first joined?

55 mins

GP Ingleburn Council merged with Campbelltown Council in 1948 and the number of Aldermen was 12 in Campbelltown, it had been nine at Ingleburn. Everything was growing in 56, that was ten years after the war. Houses were being built and people were moving in and there was a need for everything. Everything that Council provides. There was no garbage pickup, there was a sanitary service that came around and collected the pans. The only piece of tarred road in Ingleburn was between the railway and the school. That was a three metre wide strip of tarred road. There was a similar piece in Minto from the station to where the school is now. The school wasn't there then.

I was busy at work. We were just buying pre packed meat which was wrapped in cellophane. I was the first in New South Wales to introduce that. I had two little vans and would deliver all over the place to other stores. I didn't have enough time to do the things that I wanted to. They came to me and said that they were putting a team up for Council and wanted me in it. I said no, I didn't want to stand for Council. These fellows said to let them put my name down and if I got elected well and good. More particularly the Commonwealth Games was on in Melbourne and we were both sport minded. We decided to take a few days off and go down to the games.

Of course I got elected. I was well known in town having the shop and meeting people all day. While the election was on, we were down at the games and when I came back I found I had been elected. I got very interested in the Council. Local Government in those days did a lot of good. I'm not saying it doesn't now, but it was different then. It was more in touch with people. I often talk about how people would come to me to say they had this letter from the Department of so-and-so, it might have been about their telephone and they would want me to do this or that. It was hard for me to explain.

A great deal of my time as Alderman was taken up with drafting letters for people in response to some Government or semi-Government body and even making a phone call for them. People were so timid that they wouldn't pick up a phone because they were not sure what the person on the other end was going to say. If you were to say to anyone in Local Government today how

many times they would do that, they just wouldn't because every family today has children who are better educated than their parents. The grandchildren would understand the letter and the subject matter. There were four of us who went into Council from this end. There were three wards, north, south and central. We were going to turn the world upside down. Well the other eight showed us that that wasn't going to happen.

60 mins

AA You were the young Turks were you?

GP I felt that because I was elected by the North Ward I should stick up for the north. If someone got up in Council and asked Council to consider putting a street light on the corner of so-and-so street or fix up a footpath, I would jump up and say that I would support that provided it included a street light on the corner of so-and-so, I would try and match it to get something done in the north. That very soon merged into a very effective Council and we worked for the good of the whole. From about 1958 onwards I would say that Campbelltown had as good a Council as it has ever had for about 10 or 12 years or perhaps more.

AA Did the people from the south in Campbelltown accept you straight away? Did they resent you at all being from Ingleburn?

GP Well, I think we were so aggressive for the first little while that they naturally built up resentment, but that only lasted for a few weeks. Mate Sedgwick was Mayor and Jack Farnsworth was Deputy Mayor. Jack retired about 1958, so there was a Deputy Mayor to be elected and one of the Campbelltown fellows nominated me. I always thought that they put their heads together and said that they had to stop the militant south business and pull it together, you've got Sedgwick let's get Percival. So I became Deputy Mayor.

Then one day two years later we were going to a conference at Grafton or somewhere up there in the car with Sedgwick, the Mayor, and our two wives. I can't remember what the subject was but Mate said, what do you think the new Mayor would think about that proposal. I said that I didn't know what he would think, who do you mean is going to be the new Mayor and he said you are. I said cut it out there were people like Guy Marsden, Arch Walker and Clive Tregear from the north and other people who were well qualified. He said there was no use arguing about it as he had been doing some talking and that was it. That's the way it happened, strangely enough.

65 mins

AA So there was only four years from the time you were elected until you became Mayor. So I guess it was more sudden that you had planned it to be.

GP I had no aspirations, or I don't think I did. I suppose it was in the back of my mind. It wasn't something that I was working towards. I was happy to be an Alderman and do what I could. We did make things happen. Every election we would say that every road must be tar sealed and the day came that we were able to bring that about. We were able to bring it about also because the population was blossoming, new houses were being built, Council's income was increasing from that point and so we had the funds to do all these things.

I had quite a lot to do with the building of the six storey new Council building. The locals nearly went berserk; they thought that it was a dreadful waste of money. I went with the Town Clerk to the Commonwealth Superannuation Board and got a 50 year loan of £520,000 that was what it cost at 3¼%. I said to Harley that we don't have to repay any of the principle until the 50th year and with all the growth that was happening, that was not going to be a problem, so what we do is pay the interest every quarter and we put aside an amount equal to the repayment of the capital and we'll start a fund that allows sporting clubs to borrow to build their club houses or shelter sheds or whatever they wanted. They may have wanted £10,000 or £5,000, not a lot to us but to them it was the cost of building. So we very quickly built up this little fund. That's how most of the sporting clubs got their facilities. It's only quite recently that this Council had to repay the first of the two loans, the other one must be due about now, with the cash flow that the Council has, it is just tea money. We had that impetus behind us that we were able to get things done.

70 mins

I have employed exactly the same thinking. I was elected to the Water Board some years later. I had 15 years as a Board member of the Water Board. I used to follow that same principle with the Board. The Board in those days raised its own Water Board loans. The Board paid the same rate of interest as the Commonwealth Bonds. It was regarded as a very secure loan. So we could always fill out a loan. The Board would have a £500,000 million works program each year where the government would put in a small contribution of around £20 million or something like that. The Board as we knew it has been abolished now. To sum it all up the Board now is just an arm of the government and it competes with every other responsibility of the government; hospitals, schools and everything else so it doesn't have anybody solely looking after it. We had a program of what we called renewals, not a lot of money around £20 million or something like that where each year we renewed the existing systems, which meant digging up the oldest ones and replacing them. None of that is done now, they wait until something breaks, and that is why you get reports of so many burst water mains. Sadly, unfortunately the day will come when a 20 inch or God forbid a 30 inch main will burst and there will be water going 100 feet in the air, there will be whole streets of cars washed away. We got off the track there.

One of the great things about being a member of the Council is to see things happen and the satisfaction you get yourself in making it happen. I chaired the Planning Committee of Council for many years and I started to worry about creating an open space area between Campbelltown and Hornsby because Sydney went from Liverpool to Hornsby all joined together. So I said that I would like to see a strip of land a mile wide from the railway to the river and the same thing on the other side out to the Hume Highway. Well, because I was Chairman of the Planning Committee and they considered every plan that came in for development we would work it so that the developer made a contribution to Council for open space anywhere within that strip. We would require them to dedicate that piece of land as their contribution to open space. It took a little while but it has happened.

75 mins

Just across from here on the other side of the railway line there was an old property there. Now there are the football fields, then the swimming pool, a horse and pony club grounds, Australian rules grounds then the next oval and then there is bushland until you get to the river. On this side there is what is now called Macquarie Links, which isn't what I really envisaged straight up past the old Macquarie Fields House at the top of the road.

Later on when I was Commissioner of the Planning Commission, I was also instrumental in having 20 hectares of land attached to Macquarie Fields House, because the government owned it all as a curtilage to Macquarie Fields to make it an historic precinct. That is in place. I've had a few wars with the government about the land between Macquarie Fields House and Hurlstone. We have had a few Ministers who have wanted to turn it into Housing Commission. We have been able to repel that. This latest Hurlstone thing is all with the same objective in mind, instead of Housing Commission it would have been private developers. That's been on the back burner at least for a while. These are the things that give me great satisfaction.

One of the first meetings that I chaired as Mayor, you've got to remember that it was a much smaller community at the time, the population for the whole area would have been around 15,000. The Town Clerk was the treasurer, just the manager of everything except public works. At the end of correspondence we go through the business and he said that there was one other matter. I've got a letter from Joe Blow who wants to sell us 10 acres of land at Leumeah Station for £7,000. We can't afford it, so I recommend that Council tell him that. I said we can't afford not to buy it. He said no, we can't afford it. I turned to Council and said here's an opportunity for 10 acres of land right at Leumeah Railway Station. Just think what is going to be needed there, for shopping facilities, for car parking, for anything at all. To be able to have it to hold for £7,000, it is too good to miss.

AA That is where Campbelltown Stadium is today is it?

GP Council went with me on that and bought it. There was a row of cottages along Pembroke Road, so the actual playing field is on some of those cottages. This was behind those cottages down to the railway line and it ran right across to Rose Payten Drive. Later on Council bought those cottages on Pembroke Road and added to it. But those 10 acres became the nucleus for the Tennis Club, the car park and the Wests Leagues Club.

80 mins

AA So you have to look at the long term benefits.

GP They are the sort of things that I got a lot of satisfaction from. There are the simple little things that you do for people that work out alright. Council and the government got very strict at one time about people living in sub-standard houses. Some of them weren't an accepted house. After the war, young people didn't have the money to build a house, so they would build a garage and live in the garage and then build the house. It could take two to three years. The government was trying to clamp down on this for some reason and the Council Building Inspector was instructed to do likewise. A number of those people would come to me and say that they had a notice from Council to cease living in this garage which was sub-standard. I would say you have got to have a toilet, running water, a sink, somewhere to do your washing up properly. As long as the hygiene is OK then I will back you. There are two or three of these houses still around where the people have moved out and they eventually moved into beautiful homes and that is satisfying. You wonder what they would have done if they had gone off somewhere and put their name down on the Housing Commission list. You've got to encourage initiative.

AA Can I ask you Greg how you felt about Kath Whitton when she took over from you? Were you surprised?

GP I was keen to go another year, because there was a particular project that I wanted to see through. Quite frankly I expected to be re-elected. There was a little white anting process going on that I wasn't aware of until the night of the meeting when it became quite obvious what was going to happen. I was disappointed but like so many other things it did me a good turn, because I was spending so much time on Council business. By this time I had six or seven people working in the shop. When I was away, I had to get a casual in and instead of my business going up as it was, it plateaued off and I wasn't fully aware of this at the time. It was only later when I was talking to the accountant that I could see this. So I pulled in the reins on a couple of things and had to get of somebody in the shop who wasn't doing the right thing. Had I stayed up there, my principle thing was the Council, I might have gone

broke. Kath tried hard. I didn't like the way she went about a lot of things, but I supported her wherever I could. The Mayoral robes we had then were handed down from Mayor to Mayor. There were two big men preceded me. They looked alright on me but they were so long, when she walked she would have to hold them up so she ordered a new set of Mayoral robes that were more appropriate. That caused a hell of a stink through the local press at the cost of these robes. I got in behind her and supported her on that as she was the Mayor and entitled to wear the robes if the community wishes that, she should have something that she was able to wear comfortably but more importantly something that did the Municipality credit. That's just one little thing that sticks in my mind.

85 mins

AA Just briefly, did you enjoy your time in State Parliament?

GP I enjoyed it because of the experience. I enjoyed being part of what was happening. As soon as I got into Parliament they allocated all Local Government bills to me. I was in opposition while I was there. I leant to the opposition on all Local Government bills. Most of those I enjoyed very much because I understood the subject and I could always add to it from my experience no matter what the Local Government subject was. I enjoyed that part of it and I enjoyed the bit of repartee across the floor from people on the other side who were trying to support the bill and didn't fully understand it. It makes you feel good when they would say; oh I'm glad you said that. But generally speaking it is a dreadful waste of time. We would sit up in the Upper House until midnight and later sometimes just to hear people talk out time, talking for the sake of talking so there is not enough time left to introduce the next subject. That used to annoy me no end. Before the Parliamentary week starts each party has its own meeting. The government in particular would say we have bills for this and that and they would allocate them so that the people handling them could go and do their research and put together what they are going to say. Then it would be an open forum and they would ask if anyone had anything to say about this and that.

Transport was my big beef then. I would go to Water Board meetings and to get there we would have to cross the river through Moorebank Camp down Canterbury Road take a circuitous route to beat the traffic. I would only be doing this a couple of times a week but people were doing this every day. So I was concerned about transport, roads in particular and the irregularity of trains and the quality of the trains. In those days it wasn't a danger on them like it is these days to travel on the trains. I would go to a party meeting and they would say, just a minute Greg I will come to you in a minute and in the meantime somebody wants to talk about Parliamentary salaries or superannuation. This happened three meetings in a row, so I said to the

leader who was Greiner, you won't give me the call, are you frightened about something I am going to say. He said that he wasn't frightened about anything I was going to say. I said well maybe you will give me the call next meeting.

90 mins

The next meeting came and went, so the next meeting I'm leading for this Local Government deal and I would go off the track. I would say to draw a parallel to this I could talk to Honourable members about the traffic conditions for John Citizen as he struggles to get to work from Campbelltown to the City day after day regularly, this is what happens. Similarly people had diverse problems like the trains. So I said what I wanted to say and they didn't like that at all. I said to some of the fellows that this is just a waste of time. The fact is that in any government anywhere as far as I know what happens is determined by about that many people, they are the members of the government. They decide between themselves what is going to happen. They each go off and they have their own group of supporters or buddies and they say what we would like to do now is da-de-da and that's the way that it goes. It comes into parliament, those in favour and the hands go up or not according to which side you are on. You could abolish the whole operation and all the bureaucracy that goes with it and simply have say about five people. You could have an opposition with about the same who could debate equally on whatever the issue is.

To talk about representation of the people, that has become a farce, because we have got the example of the electorate of Werriwa and the person who is going to represent the people of Werriwa lives 50 miles away. So that is all a fallacy, he could represent those people or the people in Broken Hill equally as well because they all have a need. They have a computer and facsimile machines and telephones and it doesn't matter if you are in the next room or 100 miles away you can communicate the same way. It's not likely to ever happen because before it could happen the parliament would have to carry a bill to make it happen and you are not going to get the Members of Parliament to vote themselves out of office. So that is what I think about parliament, it is a farce.

AA So you retired in 1987, do you have any regrets about when you retired or do you think it was the right time to retire?

GP I stood again for pre-selection but they made sure that I wasn't pre-selected. I suppose I was a bit disappointed but by that time I was 63, I thought it was time I left. Again it did me a good turn, because I turned my interest to other things like the stock market.

AA You had more time for recreation I guess too.

95 mins

GP Oh yes.

AA Of all the positions that you held what was the most rewarding?

GP Either the Council or the Water Board. The Water Board was quite a remarkable organisation and I got a lot of satisfaction out of seeing things happen. Take our own area for example. When I went to the Board in 1967, I'm not just saying this because of me that this happened, but in 67 when I became a member of the Board, the Councils that I represented went from Windsor across to Sutherland to Parramatta down to Kiama, 16 Councils which was about two thirds of the Board's jurisdiction. Places like Liverpool, Blacktown, Penrith and some of those, where only about 17% of the properties were sewered. Campbelltown was lucky; it was about 30% sewered. Some of the industries still had a pan toilet. I was elected by the members of those Councils. I think there were 150 Aldermen in those 15 Councils. They were my electors. When I would go to a Council as I did constantly to talk to them about their problems, it became pretty obvious that it was never going to happen. There was so much to be done and the resources available so inadequate, we had to do things differently, which the Board did and we were slowly able to build that up.

When somebody came to Campbelltown Council with a subdivision when I first went to there and in the years after, they would have a piece of paper with the subdivision drawn up, all to the requirements of the Local Government Act but the only requirement for construction of works was that if roads needed to be constructed to meet this subdivision they had to be of no lesser a standard than the adjoining roads. We had a developer who came to Campbelltown and did the St Elmo Estates by the name of Neil McLean. He said that he wanted to put in kerb and gutter and tar seal the roads in his subdivisions because that would help sell them, which it did of course. It meant that they cost a bit more, but the people going in were happy to pay a little extra and get a tar sealed road with kerb and gutter and even some footpaths. He did that off his own bat. You can't believe it, but some members of Council opposed it. Anyway Campbelltown talked to the Minister for Local Government and he agreed that was a good move and they legislated and made that a requirement for all subdivisions that the developer provide kerb and gutter and tar seal the roads. I suggested that why not approach the Minister for Works to make the same condition that the developer provides the water and sewer mains in all subdivisions so that when the Board comes along with its main they can just connect up. Eventually that came about. That was all due to Campbelltown's initiative in the first place with the tar sealed roads.

100 mins

So I got a lot of satisfaction in the early 70s because of what was called the Three Cities Plan. When the Plan came out to Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly, it became obvious that the Board would have to put in a big main and a big treatment works to serve all of this valley. So that happened, they built a big treatment works at Glenfield. They put in a 6ft main, in some parts it's a 6ft square box put in that way. When it has put in that much capital just to leave it lying in the ground, I said we have to get properties connected to this as quickly as possible then we can get some sewer rates to generate more funding. That's the way that happened. We did the same thing at Blacktown, Penrith, Sutherland, Wollongong all of them. Wollongong was one that was only in the 20% sewerred. That's hard to believe, although big places like the steelworks and big industries put in their own septic systems. A lot of homes had their own septic systems, but that's only 40 years ago. It's hard for me to comprehend when I look back on it that that was how it was. So I get a lot of satisfaction out of what I helped happen. I get a lot of satisfaction out of Council successes.

AA I'm just going to get back to some of the older buildings in Ingleburn when you were a child and aren't there anymore. I was also going to ask you about some old characters that used to live in Ingleburn that you can remember and maybe some of the old characters in Campbelltown. Can you think of some old buildings that were in Ingleburn that aren't there anymore?

GP I can think of many of them. There was the old blacksmith's shop half way up Oxford Road that became a service station and mechanic's shop. That is gone now, there are shops there now.

AA Do you remember Mac's Emporium or was it before your time?

105 mins

GP Oh McIlveens. I remember that very well. I don't know that it is the same building on the corner but it has kept the same sort of façade and similar shape. It was a shop with a residence above and a big decorated veranda. There were two petrol bowsers on the Oxford Road kerbside and Collins immediately opposite was similar with a shop on the ground floor and a residence above. It also had two bowsers out the front. Then in the centre of the square as we called it there was a gas light. In more recent years after the power there was an electric one and later that became a suspended light.

AA Are the Council Chambers still standing?

GP No, the Council Chambers were a bit further along Ingleburn Road past the hotel. The original Council meeting place was up in Gertrude Street and that building had been the Church of England meeting hall. It was sort of a

community meeting hall. They built a new Church on the corner of Minto Road and Cumberland Road called St James which was later moved brick by brick down to Minto opposite the Primary School where it now is. When the Church moved from there, the Council bought the building and that became the Council meeting place. The Council met on Tuesdays, on the Tuesday before full moon so that the people and the Aldermen could see their way home after the meeting in the moonlight because there were no street lights.

The first school at Ingleburn came from Brooks Point at Appin where the Water Board had a little construction village for the men working on Cataract Dam and on the water channel that runs all the way to Gosford to bring the Cataract water to the City. The Water Board established that little town which encompassed a school. When that work was finished it became redundant and Ingleburn needed a school so they moved the building here and put it where the present school is. When the school was built they moved it to the other side of the road and it became the School of Arts and community hall. Later on the community hall was built and it was moved again to Cumberland Road where it was used I think as a Church hall.

AA Are there any interesting characters that you remember from your childhood in Ingleburn?

110 mins

GP I don't know that there is anyone outstanding in a particular way.

AA Do you get to play much golf these days ?

GP Bowls was my game, but I haven't played bowls for four years because of this hip. After next week and a few weeks recuperation after, I am looking forward to playing bowls again. The doctor said to me last week, what is your ambition. I said to get back on the bowling green. I hope to be there in 3 or 4 months.

AA My last question is, are you happy with how Campbelltown is heading, how it is progressing?

GP Overall, yes. Campbelltown would have done remarkably well had we been given the support we were promised over and over again by the government. We, I mean the Council knew that there was enormous expense needed in infrastructure like water and sewerage, roads, trains, art galleries and all the kind of things that go to make a community. We couldn't afford it unless the government did its part. We had Minister after Minister come out. If it was roads, they would say don't worry you do your part and we'll put the roads in. You do your part and we'll put the railway in. The only two authorities who in any way kept up and that was the Education Department who I think did remarkably well. Sure, there have been some complaints about inadequacies

in some ways, but the simple fact is that the Education Department kept a supply of schools which as far as I know met the demand. Once the Water Board had laid its initial capital expenses, it met the demand. No other government authority has come close when you think about hospitals and the roads are a scandal. The roads were designed for a capacity that was needed the day before they were built. They made no provision for the future. The train journey to the city is slower than it was when I was a kid. The type of transport you get is poor and of course the safety angle of transport either by rail or road is deplorable.

Government say that they don't have the funds to do these things. Why haven't they, what are they spending it on? Where is it going? They have got an enormous pool of funds now. The states have got all of the GST collections. Every cracker collected by the small business people. They're the tax collectors for the government. They put the GST onto their products and they collect that GST and pay it to the federal government who pays it all to the states. They should be wallowing in money. It's just mismanagement. I think the right person given the right authority could take charge of every state. Just one person in every state given ten years could pull it into reasonably good shape.