

ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH BETTY DREDGE

- AA** Oral History Interview, October 29th 2010. Can I have your full name please?
- BD** Yes, I was born Minnie Elizabeth Moss, but I was always called Betty all my life.
- AA** Okay, and what were your parent's names?
- BD** My mother was Eleanor Cecelia Moss, and my father was Luther Moss, but he was always called Tom, because he didn't like Luther.
- AA** Now how long have you lived in Campbelltown for?
- BD** Oh, 57 years, I've been here since I was married in 1953.
- AA** And how many were there in your family?
- BD** Only two, a sister and myself, but she died when she was sixteen and I was fourteen.
- AA** Now when you first came to Campbelltown in 1953 whereabouts did you live?
- BD** We lived in a little flat over Mrs Taylor's shop, next door to the Town Hall, for about four years, while the house was being built in Warby Street, and we lived at number 10 Warby Street for 25 years, and then moved from there up to Lithgow Street and we were there for 27 years, and then the last 6 months Doug and I have been at the Macarthur Village Retirement Centre.
- AA** What I might do is ask you about before that, because you said earlier that you lived in Macquarie Fields, can you tell me a bit about the place in Macquarie Fields when you were a girl?
- BD** Oh yes, it was a really bush place then, a little tiny country town, the houses weren't very close together, I think we had about 2, 2 and a half acres, at our property. We were near the end of the road, about 5 or 10 minutes walk from the Georges River. We had really good neighbours there, they were always very helpful if anyone needed help, all very friendly, never had any problems at all with any vandalism, or any trouble at all, everything was peaceful and quiet in those days, not like the present days!
- AA** Is that house still standing do you know?
- BD** Oh no, no, it was a development there now, the house was sold, after I was married and my mother passed away, the house, the property was sold and it was divided up and there's all houses there now.
- AA** So Macquarie Fields has changed...

BD Oh it has changed a lot. And there was only the one General Store then where you could buy anything and everything. And then a little tiny Post Office later on, and then after that, probably just before I left there, there were a few more shops built and more houses built around.

AA Can you describe the houses, when you moved to Campbelltown in '53 can you describe the houses, where you lived, I know you've told me where they were..

BD The unit, the flat was over the shop, but the house we had built at Warby Street was a 2 bedroom fibro place, and that was alright when we had one child, and then when our second child was born we had an extra room built onto it. And then in Lithgow Street it was a brick veneer place, and much larger. We could have done with that when we first started out, but we didn't have the money to pay for something like that at the time. But we had a lot more space and bigger rooms and everything then.

AA Is the Warby Street house still standing?

BD Yes, it's actually a commercial place now, I can't think what it is, its commercial now.

AA When you were a child, what sort of food did you eat?

BD Well, my mother was a very industrious person, very hard working, she came from up country, up near Inverell, her father was a boundary rider, but she was brought up where there was cattle and horses and everything. My father was in the war, and after the war, the First World War, and they were married and moved out to Macquarie Fields, it was only a little tiny timber place, and they grew all their own vegetables, and they had fruit trees, every type of fruit tree you could think of, and passionfruit vines, and fig trees and everything, and we had a cow and a horse, so we always had milk, and my mother used to make our own butter, and we had about a dozen chooks, so we always had eggs, so we had a lot of food available on the place without sort of buying things, you know what I mean!

AA So not much need for take-away!

BD (laughs) no, there was no such thing in those days! Couldn't afford it anyhow.

AA What about some of the games that you played when you were a child?

BD Actually we stayed mainly by ourselves, because our close neighbours didn't have any young children. There was one who lived a little way away, Dorothy Blake, she used to come and play with me sometimes. But mainly it was just my sister and myself. We always seemed to be busy playing with dolls and things.

AA Did you do much sport?

BD No, we didn't have any sport, there was no place around, we had no way of getting anywhere.

AA What sort of things were your parents strict about?

BD Strict about?

AA Were they strict?

BD No they weren't, they weren't over strict, I don't ever remember getting beaten, hit in anyway. I think my mother probably told us when we were very small, there was my father's razor strap was hanging up, and I think we were threatened with that! That if we misbehaved we'd be hit with the strap. We didn't get to that stage, we always behaved, so we were sort of taught to do what we were told and that was that.

AA Getting onto your school days, where did you go to school?

BD There was no school at Macquarie Fields in those days, so we had to go to Ingleburn school, which was about three miles away. My mother, she was the only one that could drive the pony and sulky, my father, well he'd be at work anyway, but he was scared of the horse, so my mother always did it. She used to drive us, my sister and I to school every the morning, and then we'd walk home in the afternoon. So that three mile walk every afternoon, I think that helped me a lot, health wise, so you were sort of used to walking around a lot, helped to build up your muscles and that.

AA That's a fair walk!

BD It was! (laughs). And then, do you want the high school?

AA Yeah, I was just going to ask you with the Primary School were the classes very big?

BD Oh no, they were very small, only three, 1st and 2nd had one room, 3rd and 4th another room an 5th and 6th another room. And there were only about 20 probably in each room at that time. There was no pre-school at all. I think I started when I was, I think I had was turned six, or five, no I think I was turned six when I started, because I had to walk home and I think I would have been too young at five to walk that distance.

AA Yes, your high school?

BD Yes, I went to Homebush High School for three years. I had a push bike, I used to ride that to Ingleburn Station, and leave it, there was a general store that used to deliver everything, groceries, and we had to get horse, chaff and bran and things like that delivered, they were very friendly people at the store, they let me leave my bike there, and it was right next to Ingleburn Station. I quite enjoyed that high school for three years. Then I went to Sydney Tech at Ultimo for one year, to learn office work, like shorthand and typing. And then to go on from then to work?

AA I will in a minute, I was just going to ask you if you had any favourite teachers say in Primary school and High school?

BD I liked all the teachers, there wasn't one that I didn't like. So I don't think I had one favourite over anyone else, I enjoyed them all. I got on well with all the teachers.

AA And the games you played at school?

BD Um, well at High school, at Primary school I think it was skipping, and hop step and jump, and marbles and you know, games like that, hopscotch and things. At high school we had swimming in the summer, which I was glad to have, we used to go to the Granville baths for swimming, and then in the winter I played tennis.

AA Do you remember how old you were when you left High School?

BD Would have been sixteen, I think, because I was seventeen when I got my first job. Yes.

AA What job was your first job?

BD The first job was at Anthony Hordern's general store in Sydney, which is not there now, but older people would remember it. In the office part there, I worked there for nine months. And then I had the chance to work, there was a vacancy at the veterinary research station at Glenfield, for an office, shorthand typist, and I applied for that and I was lucky enough to get that job. So that, whereas working at Anthony Hordern's I had to get to the station and go by train to Sydney and get to the store etc, which made it a long day, but when I worked at Glenfields I rode a bike, it was only about 3 or 4 miles I suppose to Glenfield, which was a lot better, and I really liked that work, when I worked there in the office.

AA Sort of lucky it worked out that way.

BD Yes.

AA You're not the first person who's told me they worked at Anthony Hordern's. A number of people have said they worked at Anthony Hordern's.

BD Oh yes!

AA They must have been a big employer. Do you remember how much you got paid say at the Glenfield job?

BD Twenty seven and sixpence a week, one pound seven a week when I first started.

AA How did you get on with your workmates there?

BD Very well, yes, there was only one other lady in the office at the time. And her father, that was mainly how I got the job, her father knew my father being returned soldiers, we got on very well together. And then after about three years she left to get married, so I moved up to into her position, with the higher, the senior office worker I suppose, and then they put on another younger person for the job that I had.

AA And the boss?

BD The boss was very good. It was Bill Hindmarsh at first who was very good, and then later, Grahame Edgar. They were always really good bosses.

AA So when you left there, why did you end up leaving that particular job?

BD I stayed there until I was married, and then, when the family started, I left work, and I did go back for a little while a couple of years later, to get a bit extra money to build the house, sort of thing and my mother used to look after our eldest girl, daughter. And then I left then. And then I didn't work again until they applied, there was a job advertised for a typist at the St Peter's Church for six weeks, and I applied and another lady and we got that job for six weeks, and then after that they needed someone to do a bit of office work, so I stayed on to work in the office of the St Peter's Church, and I did that for quite a few years, and then after I retired from that,

I did one day a week voluntary work in the office at St Peters Church, 'cause I've always been close to the St Peter's Church.

AA Okay, yep, I'll go into your marriage in a minute, what about say your spare time, what did you do in the evenings?

BD Mainly knitting, I was very fond of knitting. I learnt to knit when I was very young. That and reading. That's about all. Listening to the radio when we had it. I didn't mention, when we were young, like living right out at the end of Macquarie Fields there, we had no electricity or water laid on or anything, we had four tanks, and two wells, one down in the vegetable garden, another one up in the back paddock for the cow and the horse, we didn't get the electricity, we had kerosene lights of course, we didn't get the electricity on until I was in high school I think, and then the water wasn't laid on until a good few years after that. But we managed all right. We never ran out, never had to buy water, there was always enough in the tanks and the wells. We seemed to get more rain at that time I think than what we have now.

AA You would have noticed changes in the Georges River.

BD Oh yes, when we first used to go down there, I learnt to swim there, and it was so clean and the sand was white and everything, the pools were beautiful and clean, but then years later it started to get brown sludge, it wasn't nearly as nice.

AA Did you have your own sort of private swimming hole or did you share?

BD No, no it was just shared, but there was only a few local people that went down there. There wasn't an actual road down, it was just a little bush track, that we used to walk down, around rocks and that, so not many people would have known about it, only the local ones that lived there.

AA What was a good night out when you were say in your teenage years or early twenties?

BD We were a very quiet family, we didn't go out much at all, except that every Saturday night, some friends of ours, we used to go to their place one Saturday night and they'd come to our place the next Saturday night. When we were at their place we used to play a game something like billiards it was called bobs, and we'd stay there, and play the game and then have supper, and then walk home, and then they'd come to our place the following Saturday and we used to play a card game called Crib, or Cribbage. We always looked forward to that, that was really good.

AA So you stuck to the same sort of group of friends?

BD Yes, yes.

AA I was going to ask before, did your parents have a car?

BD No, no we never had a car. My mother used to drive this pony and sulky, we had that for years and years. And then later the only transport we had was a bus, which was about 5 minutes walk from our place, where we used to have a bus stop that was all. we never ever had a car, Doug and I had been married, oh for over a year, and then we bought a small car

AA So getting onto your husband, how did you meet Doug?

BD Yes well actually, Doug and I both started work at the veterinary research station in Glenfield in October 1941. I started a week after Doug. I was supposed to start on the same day, but I remembered, a week, or two weeks before, one week before I was supposed to start, I got the mumps, and I was 17 and I wasn't very happy about that, (laughs) so I had to delay starting until I got over that. And then, we both sort of worked, Doug started off washing bottles I think, and taking the mail over to the station and picking up specimens from the railway station in a little barrow thing. Everything was primitive in those days. And then he went to Tech and studied, and worked himself up, started as a laboratory attendant, and then a laboratory assistant, and passed exams, and ended up being the chief medical technologist, which gave him a lot more money, but he had to work hard for it, he didn't mind doing that.

.AA So how did you feel about him straight away, was it love at first sight?

BD Not straight away, probably over, perhaps a year or two after we'd been there, 'cause he used to come into the office where I was typing, to pick up the mail, and he'd bring the mail of a morning, and take it back of an afternoon. He used to come in to get the lunch money and things like that, and we sort of got to know each other that way.

AA Now, where did you get married?

BD At Ingleburn, I went to the church at Ingleburn, St Barnabas, in January 1953, we were married there.

AA Did you have a reception, and what was that like?

BD Oh, we only, ooh, probably about 30 odd people, it was only a small wedding. We had the reception in, I think it was the School of Arts, and they just laid all the tables out and everything, it was all nicely done. Nothing flash! Because my father died when I was 19, so there was only my mother and myself, and she couldn't work, because she had home and everything, the cow and the chooks and everything, and she wasn't trained for work really, and she couldn't get a pension until she was 65 I think, so when my father died her only income was my board money that I gave her. So we didn't have a lot of money if you know what I mean for a big wedding or reception or anything like that.

AA What about a honeymoon, did you have a honeymoon?

BD Yes we went to Cronulla (laughs). It wasn't much considering now where people go overseas and all sorts of flash places!

AA It's a nice place though.

BD It was nice, and I hadn't been there very often through not having a car, and you know, Cronulla was all new to me, so we really had a nice week there.

AA Yep, yeah, great. With your children, did you sort of have the same ideas about raising children?

BD Oh yes, we only had the two children, I would have liked a third one, but Doug thought two was enough. You know, we had no arguments or anything like that, we always got on really well together.

AA How did you get on with your in-laws? Now they were Ray and Zillah, is that right?

BD Oh yes, very well, she treated me like a daughter, Zillah Dredge, yes, and Ray. They were very good to me. I got on really well with them. We used to take Zillah on our holidays, like Doug and I, when we went to New Zealand, and to Tasmania, and up to Alice Springs, where Zillah's other son Ray and Errol lived at Alice Springs, and we took Zillah up there with us on our holidays, but later in life. I always got on really well.

AA So where were they living when you first got married?

BD In Queen Street, which is now Dredge's Cottage.

AA Oh, they lived in Dredge's Cottage then, right.

BD Yes, yes.

AA Do you remember anything about the Depression at all?

BD I know during the war that food was scarce, but I never remember being hungry or going without anything, we always managed, and I think there was clothing coupons, so my mother was always very economical in every way, and she used to make, she had a little old Singer sewing machine, she used to make clothes and things like that, we managed alright, I don't ever remember going without anything.

AA Can you tell me your experiences of the war years?

BD No, well that's the only thing I remember about the war is being a bit short of food, you know, being a bit harder to get some types of food and that. The main thing I remember I used to knit socks, woollen socks for soldiers, and they were sent away to the soldiers overseas. And that's about all I remember about the war.

AA Do you remember the blackouts, did you have blackouts?

BD Oh probably, but having the kerosene, like we didn't have electricity so it didn't affect us then, oh wait on, we would have had electricity, but I don't actually remember much about it, about the blackouts.

AA Yeah, yep, and your father in law was in the war too, he was in the First World War, Ray I think wasn't he?

BD Yes, and Doug's brother, two brothers, Garnie and Errol, or Boyo he was called, they were both in the war. Doug was too young, or he might have been old enough, but working at Glenfield research station they said it was **protected**? An industry where they can't let the people go, sort of thing, I forget the word they used. But he didn't want to go to war, and his father didn't want him to, the two older boys had both gone to war and he didn't want Doug to go too, so he didn't go to the war.

AA Right. Can you remember some of the buildings that have gone now, that are no longer there?

- BD** Yes, next to the old Town Hall, there was a hotel there, the Good Intent, I remember that. There was another big hotel at the corner of Queen Street and Railway Street, I think that's all changed around there. I remember in the centre of the town there used to be Council Chambers it was called then, or something.
- AA** Oh right. That's the School of Arts? Where the School of Arts was?
- BD** Yeah, that was the School of Arts. That's probably it. But a lot of the old shops were changed later, they were little, you know, old small shops at that time.
- AA** What about the doctors, did you have a doctor that you regularly saw in Campbelltown?
- BD** Yes, we used to go to **Dr Vinery** and then **Dr Breen** I think, yes. I think Doug and his family probably went to Dr Jones, but I wasn't living in Campbelltown at that time.
- AA** Yes, I've heard all about Dr Jones.
- BD** Yes, (laughs).
- AA** When you went to church, you went to church in Ingleburn, so you went to church in Campbelltown, St Peters, is that right?
- BD** Yes, St Peters, yes.
- AA** And you were sort of involved in the church there?
- BD** Yes, at the Ingleburn church, I, we, used to go to fellowship, with people, teenagers used to go to a meeting. And I used to teach Sunday School for a little while, until up until after I was married. I quite liked that, the little children were always nice, well behaved, at that time.
- AA** What about grocery shopping, where did you do your shopping when you first arrived here?
- BD** When we first came here? I think there was a Coles store, there was no big store like the shopping mall, and that wasn't built then. Oh, and there was a little store at the corner of Queen Street and Chamberlain Street, I can't think of the name of the little grocery store, we used to get some things there.
- AA** Right. Do you remember the shop between, or next to Dredge's Cottage, the one between the Town Hall, and....
- BD** Yes, That was Mrs Taylor's shop, yes, it was on the top, she had a floor above the shop, that's where we lived for the first four years when we were married.
- AA** Oh, you lived there...
- BD** Before it was demolished to make way when the mall was built. Mrs Taylor was a lovely old lady, she was a great friend of Zillah Dredge 'cause they lived next door.
- AA** Yeah, right. I think as soon as she died it was demolished wasn't it?

- BD** I think so, yes. It was very old, and the white ants were in it, and everything.
- AA** With the Town Hall next door, did you go to the Town Hall much?
- BD** No, not much at all, only for a flower show or something like that. We used to go to the picture show, which was pulled down. Opposite the Civic Centre, it was.
- AA** Yeah, Macquarie Cinema.
- BD** Yes.
- AA** Did you go ice skating?
- BD** No, Doug did. I used to go ice skating at Homebush High School, there for a while.
- AA** Do you remember any interesting characters in Campbelltown, back in say the fifties, the sixties?
- BD** I remember Sid Percival, you've probably heard of him, he used to do ploughing and things like that. Only the people that Doug knew, like his friends like Eric Henson and what's his name? Jack Love, and you know, people like that.
- AA** What about the changes, is there anything that stands out that's changed a lot?
- BD** When we first came to Campbelltown, and you walked up the little shopping area, it wasn't very long in Queen Street, and you'd meet people, you'd know everyone you met. Now of course it's such a big area, so many people living in the area, you don't know hardly anyone, you're lucky if you meet someone to say hello to. I liked it better the way it was then, I think rather than being like a city. It just seems to be too many people in too small an area to me.
- AA** Did you ever take the train to Camden, do you remember the train?
- BD** Yes, occasionally yes, we used to watch it from Doug's. When I used to visit Doug before we were married, from his back door you looked out onto the railway line, you could see the old train chugging up the hill, trying to get up the hill to go to Camden. The trains we used to get to go to Sydney was always a steam train, as far as Liverpool, and then you changed there to electric or something.
- AA** So how long would it take to get to, say when you were a girl and you went to Anthony Hordern's, how long would that train journey be?
- BD** Oh, oh some of the steam trains went right through to Sydney, oh, only a bit over an hour. I don't think it would be much different to what it is now.