

Interview with Robert (Bob) Moore

Conducted 17 October 2011 by Andrew Allen

AA Could I just have your full name please?

Robert Stanley Moore.

AA Where were you born?

RM Milby Private Hospital here in Campbelltown which in later years became the Fishers Ghost Restaurant.

AA We have interviewed quite a few who were born there.

RM Out of interest I looked up a little of its history which is what you probably already know.

AA It closed in 1941.

RM I wasn't aware of that

AA You would have had a plaque on the wall. I believe that everyone born there had a plaque.

RM The last time that I was visiting there was a reunion and unfortunately I didn't get to see the plaque which was upstairs. I was catching up with the older residents.

AA Getting on to your family Bob, how many were there in the family.

RM I am the eldest of four children. I was born here in Campbelltown in Milby Private Hospital and my brother and sisters were born I think in Sydney. I am still a little unsure of that background. The likelihood was that they were born in Sydney in the 1940s. I was born in 1939, my brother in 1941 and my sisters in 1943 and 1945.

AA What work did your father do?

RM He worked in Sydney for a company called Amco which manufactured electricity meters. He was a storeman and then in later years he developed Parkinsons disease which affected the greater part of his life. I believe that even at 28 years of age he had signs of Parkinsons and he died in his 75th year. That affected his lifestyle and working capacity.

He was later employed by Campbelltown Council as a librarian in the old School of Arts building where I started work in turn when it was taken over as the Council Chambers.

He was the caretaker there for the billiard room and a library as such until they built the new Civic Centre. At times during that period I would work in his place in the library just collecting books and issuing books. He lived with it until they moved unfortunately because of the Housing Commission limitations locally and they were obliged to move to Ashcroft which was far from ideal. There was very little accommodation here in Campbelltown for pensioners. He spent a greater part of his life as an invalid pensioner.

AA You were telling me before we started recording about your grandfather. Would you like to tell that story again?

5Mins

RM This is the grandfather that we never knew of course. He joined up in 1914 and served in the Middle East. In France in the battle of Albert, he was injured, shot in the knee and repatriated to England where he spent the last two years of the war. I have always wondered if that disappointed him in as much as he was on light duties for the last two years of the war.

In turn he was nursed by his wife to be and my grandmother. They were married in 1916 and my father was born in England in 1917 and they all returned to Australia in 1918. Because he was a returned soldier he was offered a soldiers settlement allotment here in Campbelltown. It was six acres of land and they became poultry farmers, an industry that didn't succeed for one reason and another. The house still remains here in Campbelltown. I keep promising myself to go and visit the present owners and tell them that this is where my grandparents lived and were poultry farmers. It is in Macquarie Avenue on the border of Leumeah. This is all recounted in the Grist Mills publication.

AA You would have fond memories of going there as a child.

RM No, unfortunately. It is only what has been provided through history records. My father of course knew a lot of the residents having grown up as a young man whilst he was working in the city. He grew up with the settlers and their families. For instance, my father knew Jack Hopher, who died recently at 91 years of age, particularly well amongst a lot of others.

AA Getting back to your family and father again. Was he big on discipline?

RM Yes, we would never talk back. In our adolescent years, we would readily get a clip over the ears as they say these days. It never did us any great harm. We knew when things were done that were not going to be tolerated we would

be disciplined. I was caught out telling lies about having been in Mawson Park as a young fellow smoking behind what was then the toilet blocks.

My younger brother came home and said that I was seen up there. I came home and denied it and got a hiding not only for telling an outright lie but for the fact that I was smoking. I had bought a packet of ten blue Capstan cigarettes which cost what was then in those days one shilling and threepence halfpenny for a packet of ten cigarettes from a local business opposite the park, Gralleis's restaurant. I grew up with a family that hadn't tolerated smoking. Unfortunately my younger brother in later life took up smoking and is now suffering the consequences of emphysema and other health concerns. I was tempted to smoke as a lot of young lads probably all did. I got caught out and didn't develop any liking for it as such.

10 mins

AA What was your mother's name?

RM Her maiden name was Nobes, but because she spent her younger life with her grandparents in Wedderburn she was occasionally known by their family name of Watling. There are still Watlings living locally. She was the second of four children and her mother died at 30 years of age. Her grandparents had 80 acres at Wedderburn orchards and they were self-sufficient. They reared her and two other sisters, one older and one younger and a younger brother who served in the war. She spent her younger days growing up in Wedderburn.

AA Were you fairly close to both your parents. Were you close to your mother?

RM Not since having married in 1970 and they were in turn living out in Ashcroft. It wasn't an ideal situation for family relations and after two years we started a family and it was awkward for them to relate as grandparents. We were still living here in Campbelltown. They relied on public transport and I was still working in the city. It had its shortcomings unfortunately. We grew up accepting our father's disposition. He always contended there was someone worse off than he was. It was disappointing to think that the authorities wouldn't allow him to keep living here for the sake of having a Housing Commission unit being made available. They were very limited and there was a waiting list of years. Even when he died, there was the likelihood of him not being buried here in Campbelltown. It was initially said that he would probably have to be buried in Camden which was not ideal, but he is now buried in St Peters cemetery.

AA Did your mother have to work because your father was incapacitated?

RM She worked as a domestic and she minded a Wedderburn family's children. She worked for Dr Mawson in Campbelltown as a housekeeper. He was the

brother of the Antarctic explorer. They were a family of four children. We survived despite the circumstances.

AA Where was the house you lived in when you were a boy in Campbelltown?

RM The address in Campbelltown was 190 Queen Street which was opposite Solomon's Stores which in turn in later years became Downes Stores. The house was eventually condemned by Council in 1960 and a block of land was purchased in King Street. The family home was built there through Campbelltown Building Society No 6 and financed and mortgaged for £3,000. Our accountant was then Secretary of the Building Society. The pity of it all is that that house and others in King Street no longer exist. The property was sold and now a three storey multi complex is there. It is hard to imagine now what existed. That is what is called progress.

15 mins

AA Was your mother a good cook?

RM Yes, she was no doubt taught by her grandparents. They were farmers who lived off the land, killed their own sheep and grew their own fruit and vegetables. We weren't indulged too much with luxuries, but we survived.

AA Did she have to go to the shops much?

RM No my father fortunately was a very competent gardener and grew his own vegetables - rhubarb, beans, peas and potatoes that I can recall. They became our staple diet. We grew lettuce to the extent that they were sold over the front fence to the public for 1/- a lettuce. It was a means to an end that people didn't think anything different about growing their own vegetables. We had a back yard to grow them in. We had fowls; we had eggs and no doubt that came from dad upbringing on the farm. We would buy meat of course. In those days there was rationing with green coupons. The meat was far less expensive in those days.

AA Did you ever have the occasional visit to a café or milk bar?

RM Not that I can recollect. We made our own entertainment. Family occasions were celebrated at home and had relatives to visit depending on public transport. My father never owned a motor vehicle. They were luxuries in those days. When I started earning a living, I bought my first car in 1962. It was an EH Holden. That allowed us to visit relatives more readily because they were orchardists near Goulburn. Their orchard still exists; my cousin is now managing it. It is a hard existence to make a living from.

We would go out to the orchards in Wedderburn in later years because the likes of the Rice Brothers were family friends, my mother having lived her early life out there. We would buy the fruit that was in season. We would depend on someone taking us.

20 mins

AA Did you have big Christmases?

RM Yes, with relatives. Nothing extravagant, we were a family of four living on a limited pension income. But we appreciated what little we were given at Christmas compared to our grandchildren nowadays. We got one or two presents not three or four.

AA If I can get on to your school days Bob. What Primary School did you attend?

RM I went to Campbelltown Public School as it was known then which became known as Campbelltown Central. I went from Kindergarten through to 6th Class. We had a lot of respect for our teachers and we were keen to succeed. I usually came in the first three or four in the class. The teachers would encourage us and we would try to achieve a little more. We had a lot of regard for our teachers.

AA Did you have a favourite one?

RM Not so much a favourite one. We had a different teacher for each class. We had female teachers, one who rode a pushbike, which seems a bit odd these days. We had a teacher who served in the Air Force, a teacher who had a son become a teacher and subsequently became a Headmaster. We were taught to respect who they were, not favouring one or the other. The Headmaster in those days taught classes as well as being the Headmaster.

AA How did you get to school? I guess you would have walked.

RM My home was in the main street which wasn't far. We would come home for lunch. On one occasion we came home at 11am rather than lunchtime. By the time we came to the end of Lithgow Street we could hear the school bell ringing. We were an hour early.

While we were still at primary school they introduced what was called an Oslo lunch. They would provide a sandwich and milk. It's a pity it disappeared. They were nutritious sandwiches.

25 mins

AA Who were your close friends at Primary School?

RM I can recollect those who weren't interested in school and when the teacher's back was turned would jump out through the window. The teacher would be unaware, so they left Primary School struggling to cope with their secondary schooling. Surprisingly enough the ones I can recall succeeded, more so in occupations such as carpentry. They survived and took up manual work.

AA Which High School did you go to?

RM Because there was no High School in Campbelltown in those days, my brother and I went to Liverpool Junior Technical College opposite the railway station. The girls' school was next door. In the lunch breaks, we would flirt with the girls next door as there was no co-education in those days.

We travelled from Campbelltown to Liverpool by steam train, in particular steam engine 3801 which is now in Thirlmere Museum.

I didn't always participate in sports days. One day two school friends and I decided to skip the sports afternoon and walk home along the railway track from Liverpool to Campbelltown. We got as far as Casula when out of sight we could hear a steam train approaching and we didn't know from which direction. As we had left the sport afternoon, we panicked, but we caught the train home from Casula, we weren't game enough to venture any further. I doubt if we could have gone much further, but we probably would have left the line and gone through Glenfield village and on to Macquarie Fields and so on.

AA Did you take the Campbelltown to Camden train when you were a boy?

RM Yes, on occasions. I have fond memories of the Camden tram or Pansy as it was nicknamed. It would only ever be on occasions. It terminated at Camden of course.

30 mins

AA Did you do fairly well at Secondary School? Did you like Secondary School?

RM After three years at Liverpool Junior Tech, I was hopeful of continuing a higher education at Homebush Boys High School where Alec Goodsell was then teaching. He didn't teach me, he was then a science teacher. I enjoyed the three years at Liverpool. I was not 15 when I started 4th Year at Homebush. I was going from Junior Tech to a High School. I was struggling with subjects such as Ancient History, which I would enjoy more so these days, and Shakespeare.

Harley Daley the Town Clerk knew the family circumstances. I was offered a job on the Council as a Junior Clerk. Because I hadn't reached 15 years of age, I had to be exempted from High School and I started work a month

before I reached 15 years of age in 1954. I was very much the junior, wet behind the ears.

AA Did you like the work at the Council?

RM Yes. I enjoyed the company of those I worked with, whom I still see on occasions. I was being taught basic bookkeeping. I became a self-taught typist using a Royal typewriter to type out what was called the vouchers. I was working under the direction of the Deputy Town Clerk, Bob Bloomfield. I was reconciling expenditure accounts journals and learning how to cross balance. I was Relief Cashier, so I was responsible for collecting monies over the counter and rates and that had to be balanced. I was progressing there. I thought at one stage that I would take the Local Government Course and was optimistic that by the age of 21 I might have qualified as a Town Clerk. But there was a lack of ambition, immaturity more so. Bruce McDonald came on the scene and he had the capabilities of completing the course and becoming a Town Clerk. If I had persevered, by the age of 21 I would have been a qualified Town Clerk.

35 mins

AA Did you have much to do with Harley?

RM I respected him for what he was, he was the Town Clerk. He didn't look down on any one. He employed a Secretary, whose brother Allan McClelland still lives locally. Allan's sister, who was Harley's Secretary, married a fellow employee David Miller. We were a close knit group. We knew the likes of the Health Inspector at the time and the Engineers because we would have some direct contact with them. The School of Arts building at that time was like a rabbit warren.

The staff were fairly congested there. At the front which was once the Council Library became Harley Daley's office, what was the billiard rooms became the Council Meeting Rooms and behind that was the Engineer and his Deputy, Health Inspector, Building Inspector and what was then called the Electricity Department. I spent five years between 1954 and 1959 after which the County Council was formed and I was transferred to Picton where I remained for seven years until 1966.

The School of Arts building was far from accommodating for the likes of the staff of the Council and obviously planning to build a Civic Centre was long overdue. The City had grown and the staff numbers had multiplied but we were a close knit group of workers confined to small working areas which would not be tolerated these days. However, we managed.

AA I guess it must have been sad to see the building demolished.

RM Yes, for what it was, the original purpose was it was built as a School of Arts building which Campbelltown was in need of when it was first established providing a recreation area for people to utilise the Library and play billiards.

AA It was on the corner of Lithgow Street wasn't it?

RM It was on the corner of Lithgow Street and Queen Street. Along Lithgow Street was an avenue of peach trees and at one stage the peach trees started dying off and it was reported locally that the possible cause of that was too much hot air coming out of the Council Chambers.

40 mins

AA Can you tell me where you met your wife?

RM We met at a dance in Hurstville. I used to travel around to dances as far as Strathfield more so at Hurstville. These were known venues for popular dances on a Saturday night. We met in 1969 and married in 1970. We have been married for 42 years. We have a son and a daughter. We now have four grandsons and a granddaughter under five. We were married in Punchbowl. We honeymooned on Norfolk Island. After moving to Narellan Vale we went on a long waited cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam

45 mins

AA What about social nights out in Campbelltown? Did you go to dances and movies?

RM We went to the Macquarie Cinema. It was very popular. We would go to the Saturday afternoon movies to see the likes of Tarzan movies. Sometimes we would go mid-week.

In the main street on the corner of Queen and Dumaresq Streets there was a bakery called Williams. The local pictures would be advertised in their front window. We would get our bread and milk delivered by horse and cart. It was unusual that the shop didn't advertise the bread and pastries that were sold within but advertised the local cinema.

AA That would be on the corner opposite Tripp's Garage.

RM Yes, that's right. This brings to mind the day that Williams Bakery caught on fire. We left school to come and look during school hours. We would often walk down Dumaresq Street under the roadway during storms, which was then known as Sewer Lane, and wade through the stormwater just for the fun of it. Some years ago that Council dug all that up and replaced it all.

AA Can you tell me about some of the shops or cafes or hotels in Campbelltown that are now gone?

RM One in particular was Romalis's Fish and Chips shop. We would go there after school and buy 6d worth of chips, not that we had much pocket money in those days. The boys all went to Kings School. You could sit and have meals. There was Fairbairn's fruit shop near Romalis's. Val Hephher, the sister of Jack worked there. When they had concerts in the Town Hall, Val would do bird imitations, kookaburra in particular. Val grew up in the settlement.

50 mins

Next door there was a bicycle shop. I used to ride a Speedwell bike in those days. There were two brothers. Next door to them was a haberdashery place owned by the two spinster Macpherson sisters. Miss Macpherson used to ride a push bike to work. They lived in King Street where we eventually moved to.

Coming along further, there was Solomon's department store, then a two storey building with a veranda upstairs and a garage below run by Cec Jarrett who only just died at 91 years of age. We lived opposite at that stage.

There was a menswear store on the corner of Patrick Street next to the Fire Station. Hayes Cordials factory was in Patrick Street. Next was Daniels. Next to the Fire Station was the Balalaika Café opposite Cordeaux Street and Grallelis's, then Coogan's butcher shop and then Lack's Hotel on the corner of Railway Street.

Where we lived in Queen Street there was a shoemaker's shop on the street frontage and he moved up to where the Balalaika Café was. He had a crocodile in his front window display for many years. There was a carpet snake in the produce store.

55 mins

The Police Station was in Railway Street and there was an SP bookie shop at the back of Lack's Hotel. We grew up knowing the Police because they had families that we went to school with. We had respect for the Police.

AA Do you remember any characters in Campbelltown that stand out?

RM One Everett Langdon who dabbled in real estate but in the main he sold motor cars. He had a car yard in Queen Street. Everett was engaged to a local girl for ten years.

There was a fellow who used to go around picking up cigarette butts out of the gutter. At the same time my father said that when he played billiards, he had the touch of a lady. He was not so much a vagrant. There was a lady who also did something similar.

AA Did you know Mrs Payten?

RM There was a rather sophisticated lady who lived in a two storey house on the corner of Cordeaux Street and the By-Pass named Miss Lysaght who rode a horse and taught Allan McClelland to ride. Miss Lysaght was a lady who was respected.

60 mins

Another lady was Betty McCarthy who I used to work with. She knew me all my life and having worked with her I had a lot of regard for her.

My brother and I used to go the milk depot to collect ice. We had no refrigeration only an ice chest. We used to take our billy cart to collect the ice.

I recall the slaughter yard. The cattle was driven up the main street and down to the slaughter yard which is now Hoddle Avenue. It was about half way along Hoddle Avenue.

We would celebrate bonfire night. Behind Romallis's was vacant land and the locals would make up a bonfire there. When I was involved with Apex, we once painted a cow and chased it up the creek when we were celebrating Fisher's Ghost and everyone saw this white apparition.

AA The fireworks factory was up in the soldiers settlement wasn't it?

RM The one I'm familiar with was located at Menangle Park. I don't recall one in the soldiers' settlement. One time teenagers broke into the property and set the building on fire. They fled, but one of the teenagers ran into the home opposite us in Fitzpatrick Street because she was a relative. However, he subsequently died from his burns. The fellow who owned the factory at one time came from the settlement but I'm not sure that there was a factory there.

AA That concludes the interview today and I would like to thank Bobby Moore for giving such an informative and interesting interview.