

# ANDREW ALLEN'S INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN CHANDLER ON

10 AUGUST 2011

**AA** Sue, can I have your full name, please?

**SC** Susan Beatrice (or Beatrice as my mother would put it) Chandler, nee Wrightson. My name Beatrice comes from my mother's mother, who unfortunately died before I was born, and as my father used to tell me, I was so like her, I really wish I had known her.

**AA** Where were you born, Susan?

**SC** I was born at St Margaret's, but the family was still living at Douglas Park on a dairy farm.

**AA** How many where there in your family?

**SC** My Mum and Dad, and I had three brothers, or sorry, two brothers. John, who's the eldest, and Greg who was sixteen, and I was only two when he died, so I didn't really know him but I think I would have really got on well with him if he had lived.

**AA** How old was he when he died?

**SC** He was sixteen when he died. He used to travel to Parramatta High School on crutches for as long as he possibly could, from Douglas Park.

**AA** So you'd have no memory of him?

**SC** Not really, no, only what I have read and things that were left to me, notes, and letters, and things.

**AA** What work did your father do when he was in Campbelltown?

**SC** He worked at Cable Makers, a factory at Liverpool. Don't ask me what he did there.

**AA** Did your mother work?

**SC** No. She was independent of Dad anyway. (Which was probably good).

**AA** So, would he have gone to war?

**SC** No, because he was on the farm. They wouldn't allow them to go to war, because he was the main person running the farm. I think he always regretted it. He was in the local militia at Douglas Park. I can remember photos of him in his militia outfit.

**AA** This is Bon we're talking about?

**SC** This is Bon.

**AA** Bon Wrightson.

**SC** Or Edward Atholsten his full name was.

**AA** Was it? What was your mother's name?

**SC** Cora Alice. She took the name Blades from her stepfather, but her original name was McCarroll. But her father was a cigar maker, and he died not long after she was born. She and her mother moved to Western Australia, and that's where they met Mum's stepfather. He was a camel driver. Grandma worked in a pub. Then they moved and had an orchard at Castlereagh, and then bought the farm at Douglas Park.

**AA** Did they talk about their childhood much, your mother and your father?

**SC** Mum used to ride a horse to school. She went to Douglas Park School. Dad always said they used to walk to school. But I don't know.

**AA** He lived in Wolumla, we talked about it.

**SC** I don't know for how long they lived in Wolumla. But he got a job on the railway, and that's how Mum met him, he was at Douglas Park Railway Station. And they met at a dance or something.

#### **5 mins**

**AA** So your first house was at Douglas Park, is that still there?

**SC** Yep. The house that we lived in here is still here. It's the clubhouse at the Rangers Road Soccer Club out at St Helen's Park. Because when my son was playing soccer, I walked in there and I said, "Hey there's my house".

**AA** So that would have a fair bit of age on it, that house?

**SC** Yes, that's one of Sam Bursill's houses, fibro houses, and the council bought it for parking. And I was working at the council at the time, which didn't make my father very happy, not that I had anything to do with it. Then we moved up to Rosalind Crescent.

**AA** And you lived in Dumaresq Street too?

**SC** Yes, which is now a parking lot.

**AA** Okay, so which parking lot would that be? Would that be towards Oxley Street, Moore/Oxley?

**SC** No, no, no, it's only a couple of ones up from the shops, or the parking lot straight after the shops.

**AA** Right, near the picture theatre?

**SC** On the picture theatre side of Dumaresq Street, which had great big gutters with it and wooden bridges over it. There was a tunnel under Queen Street, which we used to go through.

**AA** So a sewer lane, you lived in a sewer lane?

**SC** Not when it was flooded. And there was a creek over the road from us, (which is now covered by a parking lot), where we used to catch tadpoles.

- AA** It's hard to imagine.
- SC** There were two service stations on the corner of Dumaresq Street.
- AA** On the corner of Dumaresq and Queen Street was there?
- SC** Coates were on one corner and Tripps were on the other.
- AA** So where the 7-Eleven is now is the first one you mentioned?
- SC** No, no over the other side. I'm trying to think what was on the corner there. I think they were just houses.
- AA** Yes, I think there might have been a house where the 7-Eleven is now.
- SC** Then there was Bursill's Grocery Store. On the other side of the road they had feed and things, where they had a carpet snake that used to get out all the time.
- AA** I have heard all about that carpet snake.
- SC** Well I found it in the strawberry patch, and came down and told Grandpa that there was a big lizard in the strawberry patch. And the man that lived next door, Rex Skelly, who worked at Bursill's, he used to get the snake, knock it out and he'd wind it around his arm and take it back. Finally after it escaping so many times, Dr Ivor Thomas that lived up in Cordeaux Street finally killed it.
- AA** Getting on to your childhood, what sort of food did you eat as a kid?
- SC** We ate home grown veggies. Mum made everything, beef and kidney pies, apple pies. Dad had a garden and fed half the neighbourhood. We had a choko vine over the side fence and kids used to nick the chokoes and come round and try to sell them to us.
- AA** Did you celebrate things like Christmas much?
- SC** Yes, we always had it at home.
- AA** Getting on to your school days, where did you go to primary school?
- SC** I originally went to St Johns and all my friends were boys. They had segregated dinner sheds and the Nuns wouldn't let me sit with my friends at lunch time. So I used to take off, Sister Louise in full flight after me. After two weeks of that they told my mother that I wasn't suitable so I was then enrolled over the road at the public school. I promptly kicked the Headmaster in the shins because he looked cranky and he was after that. I was quite happy in my own little world at home. I wasn't a good child at school.

## **10 mins**

- AA** So who were your friends?
- SC** Stephanie Jenkins who is married to Ron Streater who used to be Deputy Town Clerk at Campbelltown Council, I introduced them. There were the Longhursts who lived up in Lithgow Street; I think that Mr & Mrs Longhurst still live up there. There was Shirley Letonder up in Genty Street and some in Chamberlain Street. I used to

bring kids home after school who couldn't remember where they lived. My father would have to take them back to where their parents were waiting for them. I also brought home dogs, cats whatever I found. We had quite a menagerie there at one stage.

**AA** What would your parents say to all that?

**SC** Dad would probably do his nut but still he didn't worry.

**AA** What about a favourite teacher at primary school.

**SC** I had a favourite teacher, Miss Graham until we had a little Papua/New Guinea girl started. In those days if you even had somebody English it was even strange. Because she was black, some of the parents said she must be dirty. The teacher made her wash in the middle of the playground and I did my nut. I upturned the wash basin and I probably swore at the teacher and I wouldn't have anything to do with her after that.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Class teacher I had was horrible. I remember we went to the Museum and I lost my ticket and she held my hand the whole way round. It berated me. My 4<sup>th</sup> Class teacher Miss Brown was great and my 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Class teacher Mr Ellsmore was great. He was such a good teacher that you wanted to learn. He went on to be Principal of Campbelltown Central. When they were building some new classrooms, we had our lessons down in the Masonic Hall down in Browne Street. We would have concerts and play badminton and it was good fun.

**AA** Did they discipline you much there?

**SC** Not really, but I was banned from the boys playground because I won all the marbles. Apart from a tongue lashing, but you never got smacked or anything like that. I upset so many teachers. It was generally the wife of the Principal.

**AA** What sort of games did you play at school?

**SC** We had one girl who would always be the mother and we would be the kids, it was like happy families. We would play sport at lunchtimes.

**15 mins**

**AA** What about at home? What type of thing did you get up to at home?

**SC** I had a cubby house, I loved my cubby house. I was like an only child as my brother was so much older and he was away a lot anyway. We always had a place full of kids.

**AA** Did you go swimming much in the summertime?

**SC** We all learnt to swim out at the Nepean River at Menangle. We used to go out in an old double decker bus and if you could swim across and back and didn't drown you got a certificate to say you could swim. It didn't matter what style. After that we used to go out to the Woolwash as we didn't have any swimming pools here.

**AA** I think most kids seem to have gone to the Woolwash.

**SC** Not the first part, you had to go through the bush. It was better swimming there, until there were sex parties there and we weren't allowed to go out there anymore. Not that there were any there in the daytime, but we would find people buried in the sand and beer bottles everywhere.

**AA** What about Bow Bowing Creek?

**SC** No, we would only go to the Woolwash. We used to ride our bikes out there. Thank goodness for bikes because we used to ride our bikes everywhere. I feel sorry for kids now, because we just had so much freedom. Mum would pack a bit of lunch and we would be gone all day. We used to go to the old Woolf Schnapps ruins along Campbelltown Road where the old mill was, we used to play round there. We used to play in Hurley Park which is all fenced off now, the drains in the dam there. There used to be abattoirs along Appin Road; we used to go there because there weren't any houses there then.

**AA** I was wondering where that old Woolf Schnapps mill building was.

**SC** The Woolf Schnapps building used to be coloured blue. If you see Bailey's History of Campbelltown, there is a picture of it in there. There used to be a mill where Fisher's Ghost Restaurant was. I think there was a mill along Appin Road too at one stage.

**AA** Getting on to your high school days, where did you go?

**SC** I went to Campbelltown High which wasn't a Performing Arts High School at that stage. We did get a music teacher later probably when I was in about second year at High School, because my brother was going out with her. I know I was thrown out of Sydney Town Hall for eating crackerjacks.

**AA** Did you have a favourite teacher at Campbelltown High?

**SC** We had all different teachers. I had a favourite French teacher, Miss Sage. Some we were friendly with. We had a gym teacher who came later on we were friendly with; she used to live at The Good Intent Hotel. We were sort of friendly with her out of school because she knew the people who owned the Good Intent Hotel and their son was in our crowd. Joan Brassil the art teacher, she was fantastic. She went and lived in the artists' colony out at Wedderburn, Romalis' property. She had this wonderful deep husky voice. She had the messiest classroom I have ever seen. She always knew where everything was. I am a bit like that.

## **20 mins**

**AA** How did you travel to High School?

**SC** By double decker bus. It started off in Allman Street; if I missed it there I could catch it on the corner of Queen and Lithgow Streets. It used to go up Allman Street, Grandview Drive, down Hoddle Avenue to Queen Street.

**AA** When you first left school where did you work?

**SC** At the NRMA in Spring Street in Sydney. Half the population of Liverpool worked there, a lot of us worked at NRMA there wasn't much work locally. I thought I am not going to be stuck filing for the rest of my working life, so I saved up my money and put myself through Liverpool Tech doing a business course seeing Dad wouldn't pay

for it. His attitude was he didn't have an education so why should I, which is generally the opposite of what most parents are like. He had to leave school at 14 to help pay for the rest of the kids.

**AA** Did your mum feel differently to your dad?

**SC** She wanted me to be educated. She was always the one who was at the school and in the canteen; dad never came near the school. It was the same with my brothers as well; he wasn't interested, only in what he was doing.

**AA** What did you do after the NRMA after you finished your course?

**SC** I went into the Bank of New South Wales. I started off in Hunter Street and then I moved to Haymarket which I loved. It was exciting down there. I asked for a transfer to Campbelltown but they wouldn't do that, they put me in the Share Department and that was enough.

I saw the job advertised for Campbelltown Council; I applied for it and got it. That was working for Bruce McDonald when he was Deputy Town Clerk. Another girl wanted the job and she got the job after and I ended up doing Zoning Certificates etc. and the girl who was originally Bryan Chrystal's Secretary wanted the job with Bruce McDonald and when the other girl went on holidays she got the job. When the other girl came back from holidays she was relegated to the Filing Department. I ended up as Bryan's Secretary. I loved working there.

**25 mins**

**AA** Did the job pay much then?

**SC** Compared to what I was earning in NRMA it was £3.3.6 and I got £8 something at the Council and no weekly ticket to buy. When I was travelling we were in town in 50 minutes on the steam train. It stopped first at Ingleburn for 1<sup>st</sup> class passengers, then Strathfield and then Central. You always had the same compartment with the same people that travelled every day. The steps over the railway were down the other end of the station in those days and the Stationmaster would stand up there and hold the train if he saw me racing down Patrick Street. They wouldn't do it these days. Bryan Chrystal used to drop his wife at the station, she used to travel in, and if they saw me they knew they were late. I used to say you could have stopped to give me a lift.

**AA** How long were you at Council for?

**SC** About nine years. Then I got married.

**AA** Where did you meet your husband?

**SC** He was a blind date. It was at a golf dance or something. I had introduced Ron Streater to his future wife Stephanie, that was at a Fishers Ghost Festival opening which I dragged her along to and they fixed me up with a date with my future husband. He told me he was going to marry me and I said like hell you are, I'm not getting married, specially to a bankie, he worked at the ANZ Bank. He was on auditing staff and he had to go to Queensland for two weeks. A red rose would arrive every day. He was just so nice, I wasn't used to fellows who were so nice and he's never changed. We have just celebrated 37 years.

**AA** Where did you get married?

**SC** At St Peters Church with Reverend Chandler who was tickled pink to be marrying Chandlers. He died later on which I was sorry for as he was a lovely fellow.

**AA** Where did you have your honeymoon?

**SC** Surfers Paradise and it rained. When we got married Ross had a Valiant. He sold it and we travelled around in my Mini but because it rained on the way up they couldn't get the Mini off the train. That was the overnight one that went up to Surfers. We always carried a can of WD40 to spray on the engine.

**AA** Did you have any children?

**SC** We have one son. I had a pituitary cancer when I was pregnant with one. He wasn't supposed to survive and neither was I, but we are both kicking. He is Andrew.

**AA** Before you had your son, what was a good night out?

**SC** There always seemed to be something on. Different clubs, because Ross was one of those that built the original Kangaroos Football Club which is now Wests Tigers. He used to play football with the Kangaroos and then he refereed later. When people used to yell obscenities at Ross I would go up and say, excuse me that is my husband you are yelling at and they would say sorry Mrs Chandler. Ross used to say they pay their money; I don't care what they yell.

**30 mins**

**AA** They get used to it I suppose.

**SC** If you didn't have a hide like Jessie the elephant, you wouldn't do it. There was always something on and growing up here there wasn't a lot to do. We started a Smith Family younger set where we raised money for the Smith Family. We used to take some mentally disabled kids from Bradbury out. I remember once we took them to where the Lion Park used to be. It was a circus place. We used to take them on picnics.

There were always balls. We might go to four balls in a week. We went a lot into Sydney as there was a younger set in Sydney. I also belonged to the Young Liberals which was more social than political. John Marsden was the President and I was the Secretary. I grew up with all the Marsdens. I worked on and off at Marsdens for about 30 years. I would work for maybe 12 months and get sick of it and go somewhere else. That was after I got married.

**AA** So you knew John pretty well then.

**SC** Oh yes, I could tell him where to go.

**AA** Did you go to the cinema much?

**SC** Yes, when we were young. The Macquarie Cinema which was on the corner of Queen Street and Browne Street. You would see the rats run across the screen. I got thrown out a lot on Saturday afternoons for rolling Jaffas down the aisles. Old Mr Eves who owned the cinema lived in Maclean Road around the corner from my

parents when they lived in Rosalind Crescent and he would still remind me years later of all the times that he threw me out.

**AA** What other things did you get thrown out for, was it just that?

**SC** We had lots of parties. There was always a party on somewhere. We knew lots of teachers and would go to parties with them when we got older. Then there was the car club. There was always something on with the car club.

**AA** So you were in that.

**SC** I wasn't in it, but some of my girlfriends were. I went out with some of the fellows from there. The only problem with living in a town, you can run into old boyfriends.

**AA** Can you tell me a little about what Dumaresq Street was like when you were younger?

**35 mins**

**SC** There was Pope's Garage then there was old Mr Walker's place. He was a retired Bank Manager from the CBC Bank. Mum and I used to keep an eye on him after his wife died. Then there were the Thompsons, they were a wild Irish lot. Jack the father was always belting the kids up and the kids were always belting each other up. Mrs Thompson used to look after Greg Percival's kids; no she was a nanny to Mrs Percival. Then there was us, and then Skelleys then people called Joyce. There was a mother and she had a daughter called Colleen and Skelleys had a daughter called Colleen, so we had a big Colleen and a little Colleen. Then there was Benjamins and then Naylor's on the corner. They had two Pug dogs called Minty and Tony. Next to them was Newhams and then Hardimans. Then around the corner was Norths and they had big mulberry trees and we used to get into trouble from Mr North for nicking the mulberries. Then there was Houghtons going down Lithgow Street. Then there was Patricks and Mrs Patrick used to make the morning teas at the Council when I worked there, that was on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor in the tall building. We used to go up there and she would make scones with jam and cream and all sorts of yummy things.

**AA** I believe you used to go billy cart racing. Was that in Dumaresq Street?

**SC** Yes; going down from Lithgow Street, straight down Dumaresq Street across Queen Street. There wasn't a lot of traffic then.

**AA** Who used to make the billy cart?

**SC** We all had a go at it. We would use old fruit crates and we would have old prams and take the wheels off them. It was great fun. Also, I broke my ankle roller skating down Dumaresq Street from Oxley Street. I had the kid next door's roller skates on. I tried to stop and jumped onto the grass but I hit my ankle on the concrete. Poor old Mr Whitby from around the corner piggy backed me home. In those days the only x-ray was at Dr O'Dowd's surgery down in Railway Street. That was on a Saturday so I had to wait until Monday to get an x-ray. I think I had the plaster replaced about three times cause I went bowling one night and broke it, I went to a ball and broke it and I think I went to a bar-b-q and got it wet.

That was when I was working at the Council and to go up to morning tea a couple of the fellows would grab me under the arms and race me up the stairs to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor as the lift only went to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Harley Daley was the boss then. His youngest daughter Cheryl and I go back to when we were little kids.

**AA** Did you know Harley very well?

**SC** Yes, my brother used to go out with the eldest daughter for quite a while. That was when the Council was originally beside the Old Town Hall and then it was on the corner of Queen and Lithgow Streets. The RSL Hall was behind there because I remember going to ballet there. I hated it because I wanted to do tap dancing and they didn't teach tap, only ballet.

**40 mins**

**AA** Who were the characters of Campbelltown that you can remember?

**SC** There was a Miss Payton who was always drunk and she would walk along with one foot in the gutter and one on the footpath. Then there was another old lady, I don't know where she lived, but if she wanted a lift she would sit on a box in the middle of Cordeaux Street and Queen Street. I can still picture her there. There was Mordie Clissold who owned the barber shop. Above him was Des Churney who was the local dentist. Another dentist was Dr King who was in Lithgow Street. He was originally down where the Bank of New South Wales was in the old colonial building.

**AA** Next to about where the 7-Eleven is now do you mean?

**SC** No, further up. It's a shame they knocked that down, it was a lovely old building. That was the first Bank of New South Wales here.

**AA** They have knocked a lot down unfortunately.

**SC** I know. My husband and I used to run Campbelltown Co-operative Housing Society and we had Richmond Villa. We did it all up.

**AA** It's beautiful isn't it?

**SC** We originally did it all up. The Historical Society put a roof on it, but there hadn't been much else done. The only thing we had missing was the lions that went down beside the steps and I found out that Mrs Jenkins who was the local Real Estate agent on Campbelltown Road had them in her garden. I loved working at Richmond Villa, it was good. I used to do guided tours through there as well.

**AA** There were a whole lot of houses in Lithgow Street. Do you remember those?

**SC** Oh yes. There have been a lot knocked down. There were a lot of houses in Queen Street in the middle in between shops that were knocked down. Kids I went to school with lived there.

**AA** Where did you do your grocery shopping?

**SC** In Bursills. That was the only one there. I can remember the big old counters and we would get broken bikkies. Rex Skelley my next door neighbour worked in the hardware part of Bursills. People called Drydens lived up above them.

**AA** Do you think that Campbelltown has changed for the better? Was it better when you were a girl?

**SC** It was better then. It was a nice little village then. I can walk down the street now and not see a person I know. I can walk in Camden and see old Campbelltownians because they all live over there in Carrington or Camden Nursing Home. I have wonderful visits to the supermarket because I meet up with lots of people I know. A lot of us that grew up here have moved to Camden. I was contemplating moving to Macarthur Village, but I don't know if I really want to move back here now.

**45 mins**

**AA** Where do you live now?

**SC** We're at Camden. We have been there 23 or 24 years. We moved when my son went to High School. All his friends went to different High Schools, some went to Hurlstone, some went out to Airs, and some went to Broughton College – or Broughton Hall as we used to refer to it. Originally kids went out there who couldn't cope with ordinary school, so being unkind people we used to call it Broughton Hall. You might be too young to remember Broughton Hall – it was an asylum in Sydney.

You made your own fun here. Kids didn't get into too much mischief. The local policemen would give you a kick up the backside if you did anyway. We used to have parties at Marsdens after closing hours. They had Lacks Hotel, which was Mrs Marsden's maiden name. Have you heard of Jack Knapp? He was a real estate agent here. His mother used to play the piano beautifully. She had a big grand piano in the lounge room. Everybody would have a party every so often.

I have very fond memories of the old Council building.

**AA** That would have been a big thing for Campbelltown when it went up. It would have been an impressive building then.

**SC** I was on the first floor up this end.