

**ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL INTERVIEW WITH UNA LAIRD
AND HER SON BRUCE LAIRD AT HER HOME IN KENTLYN
ON JUNE 17, 2015**

AA Where and when were you born?

UL I was born at Armidale, on 22nd February 1922

AA What are your earliest memories, how far back can you go?

UL My family lived at Allworth, which is 40 miles north of Newcastle until we came here; I had my 8th birthday in Campbelltown. I lived here with my parents until I married and we did a bit of running around because it was just after the war and housing was a little hard to find until we actually settled in Campbelltown.

AA Do you remember much of Armidale?

UL I left there at 3 weeks old so I don't remember a thing.

AA How many were there in your family?

UL Six, actually there was seven but one little boy died very young.

AA Can you tell me your parents' names?

UL Florence May Rose and Clement Thomas George Rose, he was the first teacher for Kentlyn School, when Kentlyn School the building, was out at south Campbelltown not where south Campbelltown is now but on the Wedderburn road where you go down the flat part along there where there's nothing on this side of the road, that's where the school was. He and the building were moved to here. I don't think that happens very often.

AA The school had its 75th anniversary last year, didn't it?

UL Probably.

AA I was reading a little bit about your mum, I found a few articles and an obituary about your mum. Can you tell me what she was like?

UL Well, I thought she was wonderful. She was a highly intelligent lady, my father was a teacher at the school and she was the sewing teacher, which was one day a week sort of thing, but she was also quite a nice singer and she taught singing at the school. She was interested in what was going on in Campbelltown, she was a member of this and that and the Red Cross and all the organisations in town.

AA She also wanted to be a school teacher herself, didn't she?

UL Probably, but I don't remember her saying that, she was a really intelligent lady but back in those days you didn't go very far with your schooling so she really didn't do any secondary schooling or anything like that but to my mind she was quite as clever as any University student and I know a few of those.

AA She wanted to go to China to be a missionary didn't she?

UL She wanted to be a Missionary yes, to me it sounds like hard work. (Laughs)

AA She moved around a bit in her life didn't she, before she came to Campbelltown I believe?

UL Well she moved around before she was married and after she was married teachers get moved around and when they were first married my father was a minister in South Australia.

5 mins

UL No that's wrong, he was a teacher in South Australia at a college but he really wanted to be a minister so he moved to into the ministry and came to New South Wales and that didn't work out too well. One of the reasons why was when my little brother died, drowned as a two year old so he moved back to teaching in NSW. Teachers didn't move all that frequently but there was a constant move and in the course one of those moves I was born. The family went ahead and mother came along with a new baby afterwards, they didn't allow you to travel on trains when you were about to give birth, they didn't like the idea of you having a commotion on the train.

AA I suppose she never got over the two year olds death?

UL Well, not really. I mean she did, she was functioning but it was something that was always there at the back of her mind.

AA When did your father die?

UL 1972.

AA So you were 8 when you came to Campbelltown?

UL No, I just had my 8th birthday just after we came to Campbelltown, so I wasn't 8 yet.

AA So around about 1929-30?

UL 1930 we came to Campbelltown.

AA So you lived in Condamine Street didn't you, where about on Condamine Street did you live?

UL At the top, on the corner, it wasn't a street then, Stuart Street goes across and we were the house on the corner. The Reeves were over here and we were diagonally opposite.

AA Is the house still there?

UL The house is now two houses, it was a big block, and it's ours, I own those houses there.

BL It was zoned back in 1990, so the original house isn't there anymore.

AA Do you remember anyone else like your neighbours in that area?

UL The Reeves were opposite; the Sidman's were down the road, they were originally the Campbelltown News, Bob Sidman and Gene Sidman that was all that was on that side of the road. On this side of the road was Paddy Hunt, have you heard of Paddy?

AA Yes I've heard of Paddy Hunt.

UL He lived right down the road.

AA What about Mick Daley, I've found a photo of Mick Daley's house in Condamine Street, I've got a photo of it here, can you see that?

UL Fetching house isn't it? There was our house, and then a vacant lot that was used to house a horse and then another house that was a boarding house, they had boarders and I think Paddy was the next one down, if he wasn't the next one, then he was the next one after that.

10 mins

AA Did you have much to do with Paddy?

UL No, I was a little girl, my friend was the little girl Sidman, and I don't know what happened to her, she went to Singapore, her sister was living in Singapore and she went to stay with her just before the War and so I have no idea what happened to them.

AA You would have remembered the Depression years then Una, what sort of things do you remember about living in the Depression in Campbelltown?

UL From our point of view, my father was a teacher so we had an income. We knew that there was a depression, he was teaching then at South Campbelltown, which isn't the South Campbelltown that exists now, and they were country people and they had orchards out there, still have orchards out there and when you live in that sort of situation you're not really that badly off because you eat, town poor people didn't eat, it was quite a big difference. From our point of view, as I said we had an income, we didn't go around

splashing money around, we didn't have lots and lots and lots of money but we had adequate.

AA Did you have swaggies call in?

UL Yes, not necessarily swaggies but all sorts of people would come and knock on the door and try get something out of you, mother would usually give them something to eat and send them on their way.

AA So what about your schooling?

UL Primary school I went to South Campbelltown where my father was teaching and high school I went to Ashfield Intermediate High School and then I went to Sydney Girls High.

AA So you would have had to take a train, gee that's a long way for a school girl to go from Campbelltown to Ashfield every day?

UL Yes it is quite a long way, the people who went directly to high school, not intermediate high school, went to Parramatta High school and I don't know why my parents didn't want me to go there, I expected to be going there but they decided I was going to a girls intermediate high school. I couldn't go straight to Sydney Girls High because I'm not in the district so that's why I went to Ashfield and why I went to Ashfield I have no idea because Homebush is the school that everyone went to so I was a little bit different which meant that I was home on a later train. The Parramatta/Homebush people got home at about 4 o'clock and I didn't get home till 5 o'clock. I quite enjoyed it.

AA How did you find having your father as a teacher in Primary School?

UL I ignored the fact that he was my father, I behaved for him, I behaved as if he was my teacher at school, at home he was my father but at school he was the teacher. You disassociate the two, school is different from home.

15 mins

AA Was he a strict teacher?

UL Oh yes, reasonably strict, he would go the cane once in a blue moon. It was a bit of an, well I wouldn't call it an occasion, but unusual.

AA Did your family have a car?

UL Yes, my mother was the driver. We drove down from Allworth north of Newcastle to Campbelltown, that's how we got here. We stopped overnight on the way cause that's how long it took us and slept on the side of the road.

AA What sort of car, do you remember?

- UL** Morris Cowley, not the fastest car in the world but most reliable.
- AA** What did you think when you got to Campbelltown, what were your impressions of the place?
- UL** I don't know that I had any.
- AA** I suppose you were only 8 weren't you?
- UL** We were living in the Soldiers settlement for the first six months but we couldn't stay there because my father wasn't a returned soldier, he offered to buy the place but they wouldn't sell it to him but we found another house and bought it instead.
- AA** So let's get on to when you left high school, what did you do after that?
- UL** Loafed for a while then went to work for an insurance company, MLC in Martin Place in Sydney.
- AA** How was that, did you enjoy that?
- UL** Oh yes, I liked the company. I accept what's going on around me I don't get all upset because I want this and I've got that, it doesn't occur to me and I made some friends there and I was always in a hurry because I was running late by the time the train got into Sydney, work had started so I had to make up some time at lunchtime because I was late and then I had to hurry to get the train again, trains don't wait.
- AA** And if you miss one you're in strife sometimes.
- UL** Trains were much the same as they are now, there are a few more intermediate trains but they're the same. The trains from Goulburn are still going that was going then.
- AA** So you married Reg that was your husband name wasn't it? What year did you get married?
- UL** I was 21 in 1944.
- AA** So towards the end of the War, the Second World War was still on.
- UL** Yes the war was still on. My husband was just discharged the day peace was declared but we were married before that.
- AA** So he got leave to get married?
- UL** He was on leave, we organised the marriage around what he was doing, you don't organise the Army around your marriage plans.
- AA** Where did you marry?

20 mins

UL In the Methodist church at Campbelltown.

AA On the Moore Oxley Bypass, where did your husband serve?

UL He was overseas at Palestine, Egypt then Ceylon; they came home and then he went off to New Guinea and eventually around about then they started to discharge people who had been in the Army five years but he was actually discharged on the day the war ended, it takes a little while to go through all the procedures.

AA How was he after the war; did he have a hard time in the war?

UL Well he went through some pretty hairy stuff but it didn't really badly affect him in any way. There were times he quite enjoyed, he enjoyed looking around Palestine and all that sort of stuff, he was very easy going your father wasn't he, he could cope with things.

AA You were in Campbelltown before that, do you remember the blackouts, did Campbelltown have blackouts back then?

UL I wasn't living in Campbelltown at that time, when we were married we lived in Fairfield.

AA How many years were you in Fairfield?

UL 13.

AA So what made you move back here then?

UL Our eldest child was going to start school and my husband was itching to get back to Campbelltown. His mother hadn't long died, I don't quite follow what his reasoning was but the fact that his mother died seemed to make him want to get back to where he'd grown up and I thought to myself, Rosemary is starting high school it would be better if we were living here and she starts not a month down the track but starts new with everyone else. So that's why we moved to Campbelltown at that time, the house was only half built, this house, we didn't have any positions between the rooms, the inside was done after the outside and he worked on that in between whatever else he was doing.

AA So he had his childhood here, in Kentlyn?

UL Well not really his childhood, he was almost an adult, you would call him an adolescent. His family moved from here to there to here to there, he was on the move.

AA So he built this house, he was good with his hands, he used to build things did he?

UL He was an electrician by trade.

BL Yes he was good with his hands.

UL That was one of the things I felt, just before he died, he couldn't do things and he was obviously aggravated by the fact that he couldn't do this and couldn't do that.

AA And he was active in the fire brigade, is that right?

UL Yes, because the fire brigade is just down the road. I don't know whether he was going over talking to the chaps or to work but he was.

AA I believe that you had a bit to do with the wartime welcome home committee?

UL I was the secretary.

AA How did that start up; you started it up did you?

25 mins

UL No, my mother. She was involved in lots of things. She was good friends with the Marlow's, he was the Mayor and he was the centre of that organisation and she was the Treasurer and one of the local bank managers was a secretary for a while and I have no recollection of why he left but I took on the job right through the war.

AA You had a bit to do with the Sunday school at Kentlyn?

UL Yes, that was my mother, mum started that up and I went along and played the piano for them and be the teacher, that's how I met my husband. My mother was involved with the school here and she'd heard about this young chap who was involved with a Sunday school previously over in the hall so she went finding out about him and brought him along to help in our Sunday school and that's how we were married.

AA So religion has played a fairly major part in your life, because your parents were religious too so it's been with you pretty much all your life?

UL Yes.

AA So how many children did you have?

UL Four, my eldest child died when she was 37.

AA And they went to school at Kentlyn, any other activities that you were involved in Una in your adult life?

UL When my children went to school I became involved in P&C's and that sort of thing and I was the sewing teacher over at the school for a while.

BL You did a lot of things with the church; you seemed to be out every night at one stage.

UL Oh, I was out every night was I? (Laughing)

BL Meals on wheels and she was going to people younger than her, you were well into your age when you stopped doing it and it just got too much for her in the long run and she couldn't handle it.

UL Not really, I originally was going with my friend, you would have heard of Bev Harrison possibly?

AA Yes I have.

UL She and I used to do meals on wheels together and then she died and she stopped doing it. I did it for a while but part of the point for doing it was the companionship we had together. She was quite a lady; she did quite a lot in Campbelltown.

AA Yes I believe so; I was only just talking about her a day or two ago with another lady, she was friends with Margaret Crystal wasn't she?

UL Yes

AA So Kentlyn, you obviously love living here. Has it changed much, I suppose it hasn't changed much has it?

UL This little spot hasn't, we didn't have great big houses down the street, this was a depression area, people were living in little huts out here.

BL A lot of vacant land and Airds was Kentlyn once.

UL Yes, Kentlyn went right back to the creek

30 mins

AA What about Campbelltown, of the buildings that have been demolished over the years, do you remember some of them, did you have much of an association with buildings that have been demolished like any hotels or cafes or shops.

UL Not really, all that happened after I moved to Fairfield and when we came back we were here, it's a long way away from town. I'm not really a Campbelltown person at all.

AA So you're more of a Kentlyn as opposed to a Campbelltown.

UL I'm isolated from any of that you'll look around and see space all around me.

AA You lived in Condamine Street though when you were a kid.

- UL** Yes but I went to school out at south Campbelltown; I didn't go to a Campbelltown school so I didn't have that association so I was always a bit away from Campbelltown.
- AA** What activities you've been involved with in recent years, I guess it's still the church is it, and you mentioned meals on wheels.
- UL** No I don't do any meals on wheels anymore, I really do nothing, go to bed, go to sleep, get up, "here's your breakfast".
- AA** You look really well, you look fairly fit, fairly healthy.
- UL** Yes I'm quite healthy but I'm just plain lazy.
- BL** That's not a hundred per cent true; she gets worn out very easily nowadays.
- UL** Well I am 93.
- AA** You look pretty good for 93
- UL** Thank you.
- AA** You're involved in the Historical Society, you go to those don't you?
- UL** You have done your homework haven't you?
- AA** A little bit, but I remember seeing you at the historical society meeting I spoke there last time, last month and I think you were there then?
- UL** Yes actually I enjoy the Historical society that was another place where Bev used to be. But it's interesting to see Campbelltown, what has happened in Campbelltown. Did you find it interesting, the meeting?
- AA** Yes I did, the one on Anzac Day, I spoke at, and I think you were there, I spoke about Bulla Vardy, the WWI soldier, and I didn't go to the last meeting.
- UL** Now I haven't got a licence, I have less choice what I do, while I had my licence I could go to meetings or whatever but now I have to be taken which is a real pain in the neck. If you think about if you didn't have a way of getting somewhere. Where do you live?
- AA** In Bradbury.
- UL** You have a good supply of buses there don't you?
- AA** I've got a car so I can drive.
- UL** But if you weren't able to drive.
- AA** Yes you are pretty isolated out here I guess without a car. No buses or anything like that?

UL There are buses but not a lot of buses, the bus is up on the main road which for me nowadays is quite a walk.

BL The front gate is a fair bit of a walk.

UL Don't be cheeky.

AA Ok, well it's been really good talking to you Una. I think that's all we needed to talk about, is there anything else you wanted to talk about?

UL No I don't think so, I can't think of anything.

35 mins

BL Dad, his first job was in fire wood.

UL He used to deliver fire wood, he would go around to people and say would you like a load of firewood, I've forgotten what they paid for it, and he delivered firewood to my parents place, those days we had a wooden fire.

BL Back in the T Ford times (laughing)

AA Bruce you were just saying your dad was at the Russian monastery.

BL The family used to live over there and it was just a windy track through the trees and they had saplings and canvas and whitewash for something to live in and then my grandfather sold that land to one of dad's brothers and then he sold it to someone who gave it to the Russian people and they lived across at this corner.

AA The corner of old Kentlyn and Georges River Road.

BL When you go back out and look to the left you can see a shack right in the middle of the paddock and when his wife died he went back to Scotland in the 50's and came back and moved up to Woy Woy(??)

UL That was only to visit his family because he hadn't seen his family for a long, long time.

BL That's about as far back as I remember, I just vaguely remember it.

UL What he really enjoyed was the trip over he had a lovely time on the ship going over. He was a bit of a party boy.

UL I presume you've got something else to do today? (laughing)

AA Yes, I do. So just to end you were saying about Georges River Road.

UL It dwindled out very quickly, Junction Road, roundabout there was just a track.

AA Georges River Road, it's changed, it used to come down past Waminda shops?

BL Yes it did. They used to call it Twin ways, at the top of College Street. It used to go across there, down, wind over a creek and come back out where the bus depot used to be.

AA There was a big water tank there; I don't know whether you remember, where the shops are now.

UL That was the tank to supply Campbelltown, it wasn't where the water came from but it was the fall. To get a supply of water, you need to have a fall and that tank was the supply.

AA They used to have the pumping station down near where Hurley Park is.

UL Yes that's right.

End of interview