

ANDREW ALLEN'S INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA FETTERPLACE AT HER HOME ON 7th DECEMBER 2017

AA We're doing an oral history interview today, at Barbara Fetterplace's place, and the date today is the 7th December and it's 2017. Okay Barbara, now you were saying that you came from Auburn, so you were born in Auburn were you?

BF No I was born in East Maitland, in the Hunter, and turned out the only child. My mother died when I was about five, in childbirth, and we moved down, Dad worked on the railways so he got a transfer down to Sydney, my grandmother was working in the kitchens at Prince Henry Hospital, and so I came down to stay with her for a while til Dad got his transfer to Chullora, Chullora workshops and we rented a house in Auburn. My Grandmother, my Auntie and my Dad. So I had a pretty secure childhood. I had a very good childhood, wasn't overindulged, was disciplined, in spite of all that, having all these old people, adults to rear me, and then that's where I went to school, in Auburn and along the line somewhere I met this Gordon Fetterplace, and sort of went from there in slow stages.

AA What do you remember of your mother, do you remember anything at all about her?

BF You think you do but then I wonder if it's just from hearing people talk about her. Possibly anything, I'd be doubtful whether it was fact or just hearsay. She came from a big family, she was the youngest in a big family of about nine I think, so yeah, I suppose at the time that was pretty tragic for everybody but I was so well cared for that you know, I think I just went ahead

AA And I suppose you were so young, I guess.

BF I was so young, had no idea of the implications of it, and so I never really did, because I always had people there who cared for me. Dad was great, he never re-married. The only time I thought it would have be nice to have my mother was when I started having my own family. And I didn't have her so it was no point in dwelling on that.

AA So you didn't feel like you kind of missed out, I mean I suppose you did in a way but...

BF I don't think I missed out on anything really. I never felt that I did. I always felt very secure. Knew exactly where I stood, we were pretty good kids in those days, there wasn't much you could get up to in those days, life was very simple. Went to dances, had a CYO at the Church at Auburn, the Catholic Youth Organisation, we had a ball. Hiking, beaches, we used to catch trains, nobody had cars. Catch trains, commandeered a whole carriage more or less, and make so much noise that nobody else would be game to get in that carriage. Or would want to anyhow. Not game. I think Gordon was 22 and I was 20 when we got married, and we just went from there. We had a pharmacy at Ulmarra on the North Coast on the Clarence River, for about, I had four children up there, or we had four children up there, so I suppose we were there 4 or 5 years.

AA So that was just after you were married?

BF That was, yes. Gordon actually bought the pharmacy before we were married, in 1955, and we got married in February '56. Lived beside the shop, just basic, we had a wonderful time up there, you know, country people, we were always out on dairy farms, the kids were taught to ride horses and everything that you do in the bush, the country. It was close to Grafton so we had a big town near us, life was good. It came to the stage, well we had three boys, and we wanted to send them to Catholic Schools, and there was a girls high school, St Mary's in Grafton, but there was nowhere for boys, only Woodlawn College at Lismore, and I was never going to send my children to boarding school, and so that was when Gordon started looking around for somewhere else to go, and Campbelltown was it! Didn't have a pharmacy at first for a while here, and then he set up a pharmacy, it was the bus stop pharmacy, and then more children came along, and seven of them were boys, so we had St Gregs up the hill, and the girls St Pats. The eldest daughter wanted to go to boarding school, so she went off to boarding school. I think she thought she was missing out on something, and it so happened that these boys that were never going to boarding school all boarded for six years at St Gregs, and it was close to home. And that was because we just didn't think they'd be able to handle study in a madhouse – kids everywhere.

AA How did you meet Gordon?

BF I think he was going out with my girlfriend, my best friend at that stage, so needless to say down the track we weren't best friends any more!

AA Okay (laughing).

BF Mmmm, pretty simple, we got married, we knew what we wanted to do. These days they wouldn't know what they want to do at that age. They're still finding themselves. That's fine, as long as they get there eventually.

AA And your father liked Gordon, did he?

BF Yes, the only thing he said to me was the night Gordon asked him could he marry me, he came out to me with a very severe face and said, "now is this what you want? Are you sure?". And I said "yes Dad, I'm sure". "Alright then", and that was it, they became the best of friends. Actually they were in cahoots; they used to get in strife together.

AA Okay. What was your maiden name by the way?

BF Bourke – B-o-u-r-k-e. It would have been Irish back there, I think probably my great grandmother might have been Irish on the Bourke side, my mother's family were English way back.

AA Okay, so you came to Campbelltown, so the bus stop pharmacy was the first pharmacy you had?

BF That was the first one, yes.

AA So where was that? Whereabouts was it? It was in Queen Street wasn't it?

BF Yes, I'm just trying to think. Well, at least where Bagley's Newsagency was more or less across the road. What's there now? It was just down from Dumaresq Street. What is it, is it Allman Street? Where's the mall? The little mall bit.

AA Lithgow Street?

- BF** Lithgow Street, yeah. It was just down towards Dumaresq Street from there.
- AA** On the western side of...
- BF** No, on the eastern side.
- AA** On the eastern side. Okay, I've got you.
- BF** I don't go down the main street very often. I don't know, but that's where it was. And of course all the buses stopped, that's why it was called the bus stop pharmacy, they all stopped there. So it was an ideal location for the shop.
- AA** So, Gordon, he was a pharmacist was he?
- BF** Oh yes, he did it at the University of Sydney.
- AA** Okay, so how long did you have that for roughly, can you remember? Just roughly.
- BF** I'd say ten years, but I'm not even sure that's right.
- AA** Okay.
- BF** I'm not very good with years.
- AA** That's alright. So you moved out here in about '62 you said? I think before, did you?
- BF** Ahh, might have been '61. '61 or '62.
- AA** So while Gordon was at the pharmacy, you were I guess having children were you?
- BF** I was chief cook and bottle washer. Nose wiper and hair comber and all the rest of it. Oh yes, I've never worked since I got married. I worked, but not outside.
- AA** So where did you move straight away, where did you live? Straight away after you moved to Campbelltown?
- BF** Farnsworth Avenue. 19 Farnsworth Avenue I think it was. I think the house is still there. It had been built, it was brand new, we just bought it. It was quite a good house for a family. And then we moved from there, prior to that we went down to Ingleburn to live on 5 acres for a while, but we only rented the house out in Farnsworth Avenue, and finally we came back to town, back to the house. We also lived in, well we bought the old Glen Alpine house and went out there for a while, but it was, we had done a lot of work to it but Gordon came home one day and said he was thinking about buying a chook farm on Camden Road as it was then, he said I don't suppose you'd have a look at it, and I said "Try me. When do we look?" So it had a nice house on it so it was easier, easier living out there, so we bought that including the chook farm, and he had a while out of pharmacy, and ran the chook farm for a while. Don't ask me how many years, I don't know. We lived out there for a long time, something like about 19 years, and we decided we'd build at Kentlyn, we'd had the land out there for years, and so we built the house out there and moved there about 31 years ago.
- AA** Whereabouts in Kentlyn?
- BF** On Georges River Road. You go up Peter Meadows Road and turn left a kilometre or so along there. And I was there, or we were there, Gordon died in 2008, and I lived there about 7 years on my own, before I decided that I needed something smaller. Well I needed really to

be not as dependent on the boys to be doing a lot of things for me. That prompted the sale and the move. I've been here for three years in January.

AA Just going back to when you first came out to Campbelltown, what did you think of it, because I know it would be very different to Auburn. How did you find the move?

BF Well I'd lived in a little village on the north coast so coming out to Campbelltown was fine. I basically didn't care where I lived in those days. Gordon wanted to come out here, well okay, we were coming out here. I suppose you make the most of it and with Gordon around you we were always going to make friends. There was always going to be people.

AA That's what I was going to ask you, did you make friends straight away, was the town welcoming?

BF Well it was pretty easy through the pharmacy, because Gordon being the type of person he was probably got to know all his customers, and the fellows, oh and then the Collies Football Club, the Collegians Football Club got going and he got involved in that, and those fellows are still friends today, those families, what's left of them. That wasn't hard, that was really easy. And I think a lot of people took us under their wing, some older identities took us under their wing for a while, Glad and Harry Springfield, did you know them?

AA No.

BF Oh, he had trotters, they lived out at Menangle. Glad, she lives in Park Central, she's 90, I think she still drives herself around, she's great. And a couple of other families. There weren't too many places to go to, but there'd be dinners and balls at the golf club, the old golf club.

AA Where the new, just down here, where Park Central is.

BF Yes, yeah, that was the golf course and the golf club.

AA It's hard to imagine, Park Central was here when I came here, so it's hard to imagine a golf course and golf club being there.

BF Well the Catholic Club started off the tiniest little thing out, and it's just grown and grown and grown. There was nothing. There was nothing here, there was St Helens Park, there was just nothing, no Airds, no Claymore, none of that.

AA You told me a bit about Queen Street, when you first got here, how quiet it was.

BF Well, it was, it was quiet, yes, but there were always people. You didn't have a quick shopping trip because you bumped into people, all these people that you knew, and so you'd be having a chat. Now you could go to Macarthur Square every day for a week and not see a soul you know. It's different. It was good in those days, it was good back then, but it obviously couldn't stay like that. There was no Glen Alpine, none of that over there. The house is still there that we lived in over there, the chook farm of course is gone, across the road was just all paddocks, we were on the left hand side going across, the other side was just all paddocks. Very different.

AA So where did you do your grocery shopping?

BF At Coles, at the original Coles supermarket, and I think Woolies had a type of a supermarket up opposite the end of Lithgow Street, there, was something there, and Mamones had a big

fruit shop there too, and when the new Coles was built, well I did all my shopping there and when we were out at Kentlyn for a long time I did my shopping at Airds.

AA Did you?

BF Yeah, well Gordon had a pharmacy, went out to Airds in a pharmacy at one stage. I used to do the shopping there and then Macarthur Square was built and I started shopping there, and I've been shopping there ever since basically. I remember the night Macarthur Square was opened. And how many years ago was that, I've got no idea.

AA About 1979, where you there the night it opened were you?

BF I don't know who opened it, I don't whether Gordon had any hand in the opening of it or not. I don't know, but we were there.

AA So when Gordon first got onto council, was that something that he'd thought about for a while or was that sort of an overnight decision?

BF I don't know! He, I suppose he was just interested in the town, he was always interested in the town, he was on the show, he was tied up with the Campbelltown Show, he used to ride redcoat at the Campbelltown show when it was in the old showground.

AA Did he?

BF Yeah, he used to do that. I don't know, he got so involved with everything that was on, I suppose council was probably the next step.

AA And he was into football too, wasn't he, was that right? He used to follow the football a little bit?

BF Mmm, well he was in on it all with getting the Tigers to come out here, somebody else was negotiating with somebody else, but anyhow they got the Tigers out here. Oh, Jimmy Marsden, a lot of people in it. He was always interested in that, he was on the board down at the Leagues Club for a while, he was still on the board down there when he died. He hadn't been doing a lot, but I think he resigned but they asked him would he like to come back onto the committee. *(Pause)* A lot of the time I didn't know what was going on in his head. We didn't, just didn't have the chance to talk everything over so if he came home and said he was going to do something, yeah righto.

AA I guess he would have spent a lot of time, like being Mayor and everything, he would have been away, like and working as well, like he would have been away a fair bit.

BF He spent a lot of time away from home, I used to think that, but when, well I thought that the kids might have resented that, the family, but they didn't, they really didn't, and he spent quality time with them. We did things, we went out, we were both out a lot, an awful lot, I was out a lot at night and I didn't always like that but it probably was a good thing, we got to spend time together when we went out at night. We became really good friends with Cliffy Mallam and Alice. They were completely opposite sides politically, Gordon stood independently, and we came from Labour backgrounds, but Cliff was very anti of Gordon when he first became Mayor, and Gordon thought well this is no good, Cliff was the local member and I'm the Mayor, and we're both going to work for the town, so he went around to the house, Cliffy's house, and knocked on the door, and Cliff wasn't all that impressed, and Gordon said, "well Cliff, we're both working for Campbelltown, and we can't do it unless we

get on”, and gradually we became really good friends with them. And Cliff was a true blue Campbelltown man, he would do anything for Campbelltown, that’s my take on him, not everybody probably has it, and I used to see he always made a fuss of my kids, well our youngest was a baby, and he’d always make a beeline for her if I had her with me, and Gordon said to me sometime later, “what do you make of Cliff Mallam?”, and I said, “well I know politicians often make a point of talking to babies and being seen holding babies, but Cliff has kept doing it, so I think he might be for real”. And he was, he would ring up our place at night, and he’d talk to Gordon, and he’d be asking Gordon what I was doing, and Gordon would say, “here, talk to her and ask her yourself” and we’d be chatting for a while on the phone. No, we got on really well. Alice was delightful.

AA His wife?

BF Yes, a tiny little thing, she wasn’t political really at all. I had a reputation for falling asleep at official functions, on the table, at the main official table. Remembering that I had to get a whole lot of stuff done before I went out, you know I had all these kids at home, and I used to go to sleep, particularly if the lights weren’t really bright, and I could go to sleep no trouble at all. And Gordon would be going (demonstrates), digging me in the ribs. So I developed this (demonstrates) and I could have a little snooze. And Alice Mallam said to me one night, ‘cause the men had got up to mingle, and Alice came down and sat with me and she said, “I saw you having a little sleep dear, but don’t worry, I’m sure nobody else noticed”. (chuckles.)

AA What about the social side of all that sort of thing, did you enjoy that, or was it something you didn’t look forward to.

BF I enjoyed that once I got there, sometimes it was hard work. It was hard work to organise to get to these things but yeah, I enjoyed meeting all the people, met a huge range of people, as diverse as could possibly be, and I think it did me good. Gough Whitlam!

AA I was just about to say, you just beat me, I was going to ask you about Gough Whitlam.

BF We got on famously with them. Gordon and Gough got on like a house on fire. No question about it. When Gordon got his OAM medal, he got a letter from Gough. Socially they were fine...they were fine. He never talked politics to us or anything, it was just an acceptance on both sides that they didn’t follow the same thoughts that way, but no, fine, really good.

AA So Gordon was a littlebit more on the conservative side then, was he?

BF Yeah, but I think if Gordon thought the opposition were on the right path well he would have agreed with them. He wouldn’t be anti just for the sake of being anti or anything. He respected everybody.

AA Well he must have enjoyed what he was doing because he lasted a long time didn’t he, he had about 4 different terms, I think, 3 or 4 different terms?

BF Ah, 3, I don’t know, 5 or 6 terms as Mayor. No, he did enjoy it, he enjoyed it. He seemed to handle it. I used to often wonder how this kid from Auburn, that came from nothing, how the heavens did he manage all this? ‘Cause he did, he came from a family of seven, who struggled.

AA Did he talk about what he achieved, what was his best achievement or what was he most proud of that he’d done?

- BF** I don't know. No, he never spoke about it, but his kids, yeah. They were, yeah, I think so.
- AA** Yeah, that's good.
- BF** Well he never blew his own trumpet. He got things done but would never have told anybody what he'd done. He helped a lot of people, I know, but I don't know who he helped. If he'd say to me, you know, it might have even been a customer in the shop, he'd say oh, so and so needs a bit of a hand, and I'd say oh, okay, do what you've got to do, do what you want to do. We were fine, we had a roof over our head, the kids had an education, we had three meals a day, what more do you want? You know, that was his outlook, he was never out to make millions and do all that, as long as we had enough, that was it. Sometimes I really chewed him out and vice versa, (chuckles) I probably wasn't...I wouldn't have been the easiest person to live with, none of us are perfect. But when he retired we had a ball. Land cruiser and a caravan, all around the country, the Northern Territory, and that was fine. We were out somewhere at a function one night and Gordon must have been talking about that, he would always talk about that, and this fellow turned around to me and he said, "What do you do when Gordon's off gallivanting around the country?" I said, "I sit right beside him!" "Do you like it?" I said "I love it". I've travelled in a motor home three times in recent years, up to the territory, but I've tagged along with my other son. But I do my own driving. Dirt roads.
- AA** So what were some of the things that you were personally involved in, apart from being busy with children and everything and running a house? What were some of the social things that you were doing? Nothing? (laughing)
- BF** I went with Gordon, I supported him, but there was only room for one person to live that kind of life in the family and whether that's contributed to the fact that the kids have turned out amazingly well, they're really good, I don't know, but I just think there's got to be a parent around, there's got to be one around. Yeah, and I don't think Gordon would have wanted me to go to work, he probably would have thought that it was a slight against him, that he couldn't support us, that I needed to go to work. He was very proud.
- AA** Right, right. Some of the people that you remember from your days in Campbelltown Barbara, you were talking about Arch Walker, you had a high opinion of....
- BF** I did, I had a very high opinion of Arch Walker, one of nature's gentlemen, just a nice bloke, just a nice man. Interested in everybody, down to earth.
- AA** What about Clive? Clive Tregear? Did you ever have much to do with him?
- BF** Oh yeah, we had a lot to do with Clive, yes. Gordon and Clive got along famously. Genevieve, yeah, we got on well with them. Outside of the council we didn't have anything to do with them, but no, Clive was fine.
- AA** Do you remember any characters of the past? Colourful characters?
- BF** From the council?
- AA** Just Campbelltown in general. I suppose you were sort of away from the town a bit weren't you?
- BF** I was away from it and there was one thing about Gordon, whether it was work, or council, or whatever, he never brought it home with him, which I think, looking back, was a really good thing. He never came home and said what had happened at a council meeting, not in the

shop. My best friend could be really sick, and been in the shop, and I'd hear it from somebody else. He just left all of that behind when he came home. How he was able to do it I don't know, but it didn't matter what was going on, what he was doing, he just didn't bring it home. Mind you sometimes he came home with a couple of carload of fellows late at night, they'd want a cup of tea or another beer, or get me out of bed to get them a cup of tea or coffee,

AA Did he? Right.

BF Yes, um, but no, oh look there was so many people. None of them stand out above the others. I think there was too many. I'm just trying to think.

AA That's alright.

BF (*noted: pause*) All the senior staff at the council, they were always good, you know, easy to get on with. Well, Town Clerks or General Managers, we were very good friends with Macdonalds, Bruce and Dolore, and still friendly with Dolore. Ian Porter we got on great, I think everybody probably got on well with Ian.

AA I believe so.

BF Yes, Tosi, well we've known Tose for many years when he first came to council to work. I don't know the General Manager there at present, I don't think I know anybody down at the council anymore.

AA Yeah, we've had a bit of a changeover of staff so...okay then.

BF I can't (*noted: pause*) pull any names out of the hat.

AA That's fine, and your children are all, they've moved away have they? Are some around?

BF I've got some in the area. I've got a son out at Lakesland, I've got one at Werombi, I've got one out here on Appin Road at Inghams Farms, got one down at Cecil Hills. Mark's...no he hasn't got it, Mark had a vet practice at Ingleburn, he lives at Coledale, Paul at Picton, and then they're spread out, there's Binalong down South, the oldest fellow lives down there, a daughter up in the Hunter at Maitland, two daughters in Melbourne, and that's about it.

AA And none of them are interested in politics at all?

BF No, I don't think so, the girls definitely not. Well the eldest fellows' 61 and he's still working, the next one, the vet, they're about to go over to Sweden and live for a year, they've got 3 sons over there, and two of them married Swedish girls. Kieran – if ever I thought anybody might do it, it'd be Kieran, but he's flat out, I don't think he will, he's flat out, absolutely flat out, he's got a plumbing business. And Gerard, no, I don't think so. Kieran and Gerard both have boys at St Greg's and they pull their weight up there well and truly, they both do things. There's two granddaughters at St Pat's and then four grandchildren in Melbourne go to school down there. No I can't see it at this stage.

AA Oh, and I didn't ask you about the Fisher's Ghost Restaurant. I know I've asked you in the past about it.

BF Yes, Gordon bought that building years back and actually it was a residence, and wanted me to go and live in there and I said no way, no way. I wouldn't do that. And then I don't know

when it became the restaurant. It was great for a long time, the restaurant but then it got to the stage where people, there was so many fast food outlets I think around, that people weren't going and paying the money in good restaurants I think. It still ran as a restaurant I think after we sold it but nobody made a go of it. Gordon just had a manager in there, not all the time, feller by the name of Peter Smith I think ran it as a restaurant for a long time and when he pulled out, another one of the things "I can do this" and put a manager in, and had it and it was still going really well. Down the track it just petered out. I think it will get bulldozed one day. It's a damn shame.

AA Yeah I'm not sure what's going to happen, it is a shame.

BF Well, I think what Gordon said, they couldn't force them to retain it and do it up, but it was worthy of restoration, was that the story?

AA I think the problem at the moment is they can't get it State listed. If it's got State listing then it's got some sort of protection, but it doesn't qualify for that, there's only so much the council can do.

BF Oh yeah. It was a hospital wasn't it, way back after the mill. Well, the mill house I suppose it was. There was another building beside it.

AA Yeah, that was pulled down in the late 1920s, I think it was. Then it became a hospital.

BF I don't know who's got those, I had paintings, I think Steve Roach did them, I had a painting of the old one and the modern one.