

ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL INTERVIEW WITH ELSIE EVANS ON the 17th JANUARY 2018

AA Elsie, we will start from where you were born and what year you were born.

EE I was born on 24th May 1922 at Miss Fay's Private Hospital in Campsie.

AA How long did you live in Campsie?

EE I'm not too sure about that early age. I remember more about Kingsgrove. It opened up once the East Hills Line went on and started development. I remember more of my time there because I was only small in Campsie. Later on I moved over to Mosman and most of my teenage years growing up were there. I eventually commenced training nursing at Royal North Shore Hospital so I remained in that part until we moved to Campbelltown. I did my general training and then my obstetric training at North Shore and worked there until post war because it was mostly during the war years when we used to have the blackouts and shortage of everything. We worked until we were finished and I remember later on the unions coming in and bringing in a 48 hour week. We were working 72 hours or more because you just worked until you were finished with enrolments mostly going into the armed forces. The Land Army, the Women's Transport Groups, all those different groups that came up that the young women went into. So we were always short of enrolments in the nursing factor. So I stayed there and worked, the polio epidemic was a very big thing. After I'd finished my training I was to go into the theatres but then we had the polio epidemic so we had to go down to (manage) the iron lungs. I think it was the last of the very bad ones (polios) where we had a lot of quads and haemies and we lost a lot because it was so virulent, we didn't have enough iron lungs. Then eventually I did get into the theatres, I stayed there for quite some years. I have just previously been in hospital and to see the change in that side of things, it was extraordinary.

AA What time period are we talking about with the polio, what sort of years?

EE Well that year would probably have been 1946, post war. It seemed to affect people no matter where they were. I was nursing with the iron lungs but fortunately I never got it. It was very virile and we didn't have enough iron lungs, and we used to say, this is terrible. We had Sister Kenny's unit in the basement of one of our buildings where she went to the hydrotherapy, but the physicians here didn't accept her too well, she was accepted better in America. She did have these pools where she tried to keep the muscles, physio and hydrotherapy (but it wasn't accepted by the medical profession). It was a

drastic, drastic thing to see the little children with callipers on trying to walk. So we had to be very grateful.

5 mins

I think my eldest daughter was about five when the first Sabin vaccine came out. I think it's the same Andrew now, where people aren't having their children vaccinated. I worked in isolation ward 12 hours a day from midnight to midday with whooping cough babies, scarlet fever, and diphtheria. You would have the ambulances come up mostly in the evenings. We were segregated from the rest of the hospital. They had to ring a bell to come into our section. They would say the mother thinks that the child has croup and you knew straight away. I think now at 95 I would be one of the few people that would recognise a diphtheria smell as soon as you'd take the child. So straight to a tracheotomy room and we had all of our setups there ready to go because you would have to do it so quickly to save their lives. We should be showing more videos of that to the people who say no to the vaccinations. If you wanted to walk up and down a ward with a little child with whooping cough and stop breathing when they stopped breathing because there were no antibiotics and so it was a matter of just nursing. Today so many people are resistant to this and if you could see a child like that. Well even the scarlet fever was very bad as well and measles which people think it is only measles, we had so many that got encephalitis from that. So we are really fortunate our scientists have developed all this, I think.

AA How do you look back on your time in nursing? Did you enjoy it?

EE I loved it. I was always going to be a nurse. I walked across the Harbour Bridge in my Junior Red Cross uniform when the bridge was opened. All the schools went in and we all went in our Junior Red Cross uniforms, white frocks and white veils with a red cross.

AA So that was when the bridge was opened in 1932. So you were there for that?

EE As I recall it I don't think that it was day that it opened. I think all the schools went in another day if I was to look back in history, because all the school children marched across and I am pretty sure that it wasn't the day that it was actually opened. It was probably the day after or something like that but the big thing was we marched across the bridge in our school uniforms.

AA How did you feel about that? Was it exciting?

EE We didn't sense that I don't think Andrew. The big excitement in the home was is the bridge going to meet? That was the big excitement, and of course nothing was mentioned on radio and of course there was no television so the papers were the only thing where you got your information. That was all the rejoicing when it actually met. I remember it being talked about people falling off the

bridge. The riggers walked there, they had no support or anything like that. I can remember the big fuss when they had to take part of the gardens for the beginning of the bridge. I can remember fusses like that about the bridge and of course should it go ahead or not go ahead at that time because the depression years were terrible. So that was the main things that I remember about it. But on the day I think we just accepted that it was something to do, form up, march!!

AA So you were living in Mosman when it opened?

EE No, I was in Kingsgrove then. I moved from there later on and then when I went to training. I marched from Kingsgrove School with my Red Cross uniform on.

With all that I got away from all the infectious diseases that people seem to think today we should be accepting for our babies. We should be doing something but I suppose there is nothing much to show because we didn't take photos. Well cameras were expensive, especially during the bad years; no-one would have cameras. I don't think anyone thought of taking photos, look what they do now.

10 mins

I went from that to the theatres and I stayed in the theatres until about '48 and then I moved over to King George which was the obstetric hospital attached to PA. I stayed there until I was married because then you had to resign.

AA You had to, did you?

EE Oh, no choice. Well I have a photo which is in the archives at Shore of all the trained staff at Shore which would have been about '46 I think and not one married person. The Matron lived on site and not one married person in that photo because you had to resign. That's why you saw a lot of these obstetric hospitals set up by nurse so-and-so. They would just get a house and set it up as an obstetric hospital but you couldn't work in the public system. The teachers couldn't and I don't think the bank people could. You had to resign once you were married, for the simple reason you were expected to be pregnant. Contraception wasn't like it is today, it's controlled. Of course a pregnant woman wasn't acceptable at all. You had to cover yourself up to start with. So you could go into private sections and work but not into the public section. After I was married and before I had the children I did some work in the private hospital sections. But after public hospitals I didn't like it very much anyway; I was so used to the system in the public hospitals. I said to the Professor that I have recently been with that I was just astounded with the treatment particularly for abdominal bowel surgery. I had fluid to drink three hours before the surgery. I thought I'm going to die.

We had doctors coming back from the war who were astounded that they were still removing appendix by laparotomy, a whole midline incision. They came back from doing a four inch cut to remove the appendix. Our senior surgeons are saying this is going to be dangerous; this is going to be a problem going in through a four inch cut. They were predicting bowel damage and everything and of course nothing happened. So eventually they came round to it. It was only our doctors that had been in service coming back; obviously operating in tents wherever they were overseas didn't have the time to do it and probably thought we will take it out here through a four inch cut on the left hand side. So everything changed post war, absolutely, especially when penicillin came in, that was just the start.

I couldn't go last year but the year before at our graduate's reunion young girls were saying to me what is all this about nursing through a crisis. I said that is what we had to do and nursing was a caring profession. It's got a bit away from that now; it's a lot of technical work. We had to sit by them (the patients) sponge them, try and give them fluids to get their temperature down. That was the crisis, if you didn't get the temperature down. Aspirin was one of the things that we used. If you didn't get the temperature down they often passed away of course, and there was pneumonia and all that type of thing. What we did have to do was make linseed poultices and strap them around their chest. I don't really know what we were thinking it was going to do! I think we imagined that it was going to bring something to a head. When penicillin came in you had to have an injection every three hours and of course now it is modified so much but then it was a business. The patients hated you coming, every three hours with an inter-muscular injection. But it changed nursing, it changed everything. It was just marvellous when you look back at what we treated, with septicaemias they had no hope. So it was a wonderful thing, penicillin coming in. A lot of post war things were just marvellous in the treatment of patients.

15 mins

Of course today it is a different matter with all the miraculous surgeries and everything else and medications and treatments, just marvellous.

AA So you got married and you had children?

EE Yes, I got married and we were living in Neutral Bay near the big shopping centre there. We were fortunate because as we found with a lot of the stories here, accommodation was very difficult post war with all the men coming back and people getting married and starting families. We were very fortunate that a friend of ours was in real estate and so they were able to get us, what do you call when the houses are together?

AA Terrace houses you mean?

EE No no, they have one wall, they weren't called units, but anyway I forget the name of it, he was able to get one of those for us which was very lucky. A lot of people were just living with their parents. So we were there from '49, married in '49 and I think '50 we moved into that one, and stayed there until we came to Campbelltown.

We were looking at Caringbah, my brother had bought land at Gymea and that was opening up too. So we were looking out that way. My husband was working in the chemical section at Lincoln Electric and they said that they needed to move out of Alexandria and they were looking at Campbelltown. I remembered going through Campbelltown to Burragorang Valley, but that's all that I remembered about it. So we said well let's go and have a look at Campbelltown. A friend had a car, because no-one had cars then. Our friend was a solicitor who had to travel through the states. So we came out and found out about Mr McLean and what was going on. So then we went back and thought about it and thought, well that'd be good, it was a nice rural town, be nice, with nine dairies and poultry farms, everything, so that's how we came to decide on Campbelltown. What Lincoln Electric did then after we were building here, they went to Padstow. Here it was long distance phone calls, nothing here as we found out when we were building. There were so many things you couldn't have, I mean bricks were scarce, no tiles, so they put tilex on the walls. I insisted on tiles so they said to me you will have to get someone to come to Campbelltown. So I went to Johnson Brothers in the city which was about the only place or one of the few places selling tiles. Anyway I eventually got someone that came out and tiled the bathroom and the kitchen. It was a very big deal to get them to come out here. Campbelltown!!

AA What did your friends and family think of you coming out to Campbelltown?

EE Ridiculous!

AA But you had no doubts.

EE We loved the area. When we came out and looked around it was so countrified, kids were riding horses and we thought that would be lovely and he would be able to get the train to Alexandria which was pretty straight forward, at that point. But they all thought going all the way out to Campbelltown!!

20 mins

My friends that had gone to Burragorang Valley with me, we thought we had travelled half way across Australia when we got to Campbelltown Station, let alone get on Pansy and go across to Camden. We never really realised how difficult some things were going to be from the point of view of things like specialists, pathologies and different types things for the children. We never thought about that, we just thought that would be great.

AA You were telling me before about how you had to make the choice about the house in Lindesay Street where you are now. There was one up on the hill wasn't there?

EE We could have gone up to Grandview Drive, and I said that it was a lovely view. My husband said that I won't be interested in the view when I got off the train at night and I'm walking up the hill.

AA It's a fair point too!

EE There wasn't a person here that had a car because they were all back from the war. Some of them were from the later on times; they would have been in the Korean or Vietnam Wars. They were younger than us, we were Second World War. Mr McLean said that this one (land) had been put back on the market so we said that would be great because we could walk to the station for which I'm ever grateful, and the shops and everything. At the time I thought that's lovely up there.

AA So when you moved in here was there many houses around you?

EE No, Mr Walker's cows were over there (over the road) and there was a stream that ran through there and it flooded at the end of Allman Street when we had heavy rains. Bradbury Avenue had houses. I could look out my bathroom window and see lanes up on that side of the road and down here and from the back here there was one right over the back and nothing down this side at all

AA So there was nothing down Allman Street side, just Ivy Cottage.

EE Just Ivy Cottage was there, and we had no fences because everyone had not enough money to look at fencing to start with because to move in was a big thing. And he used to do their gardens, the women's gardens and he'd give me vegetables and everything, Mr Roser.

AA Mr Roser, okay. The Vardy women were still there weren't they?

EE Yes, it was when one of them passed away, I asked Mr Roser if there was anyone here that teaches the piano because I would have to get a piano for the children and he said do you want to buy the piano from there, and I said I would love to as it had beautiful timber. So that was how I came to know what was happening with them. Kathryn still has the piano, after she was married I gave her the piano, she was the only one who really ended up learning the piano. She remembers that I was pregnant with Denis which was '59 when we got the piano. That's how she remembers when it was. Then we had to find someone to teach the piano and Mr Barnes from Waminda Avenue used to ride his bike down after school to teach them to play. I was talking to Paul O'Loughlin and he said he used to put pennies on their fingers. He used to come down and teach

them until they moved and then we did find another lady after that. There was nothing like that to draw on.

25 mins

The girls learnt dancing. They were down in the old Masonic Hall, down in Allman Street. They learnt dancing, and then they did Bjelke Petersen (Physical Culture) I think that was in the old Church hall. We found things for them but it wasn't easy finding all of these different things for them. To go to the specialist was a day because we had to go into Macquarie Street. It was only after Gough Whitlam, with all they say about him, that he brought out all these clinics. Liverpool had one, we had one and there was one in Wollongong that you started getting other doctors coming out. We only had GPs at the time.

AA Who was the doctor when you first moved out here?

EE It was Doctor Thomas and then Dr Wajnryb, we had mainly Dr Wajnryb, and he used to come to the house if the children were sick. You never took a sick child down to the surgery, they came to the house. Then Dr Parnell came later on, he was very good too. In the early days we saved up and ran raffles to build the ambulance shelter so we could get an ambulance. We got Hank Kruitt – do you remember him?

AA I've heard of his name.

EE But we only had a driver. So when we had that terrible accident here with the two boys here, Hank came and so I said if I could get in the back with them and he said yes because he had to drive. When we got across to Camden we still only had a Matron there. There was a surgeon at the bottom of the hill there and the GPs would come up but there were no doctors at Camden (Hospital). I'm in the back of the ambulance, what did I have there, only oxygen.

AA Can you tell me a little bit about the accident with the boys?

EE What happened, we used to go to Liverpool to Woolworths to buy cheap papers and different things for Christmas and that. The commercial group in Queen Street, Downes and all of that group there decided that they would put on something to try and bring the people back to shop in Campbelltown. So they had this aeroplane coming over to drop leaflets, and if you got a lucky leaflet you got a prize. So the plane was coming over and the boys were coming down here and we had no tar sealed roads, they were dirt roads, they were coming from Bradbury Avenue on their pushbikes down here and they looked up to see the leaflets coming and the car collected them. We never had many cars but we did ask for a stop sign there years before, they soon put in one after that which always happens. So they were looking up and the car collected them. All we had here was Hank to come with the ambulance to get them across (to Camden Hospital).

AA So you heard the crash did you? It was just outside the house was it?

EE Oh yes, actually we were going to accidents, my friend on the corner was also a registered nurse and in the end the doctors gave me Coramine to inject to try and get the patients across to Camden. These days this would be most unacceptable. Hank was there and he said, yes, you get in the back with them. These days you have two of them and look at all the equipment that they have today. We had nothing much then.

AA Did they survive?

EE Oh no, one of them was almost gone when we left here. Unfortunately one of them was one of my friend's sons. She was one of our leaders in the Guides. It was a very sad time. We had very limited everything from that point of view. You had to get across to Camden Hospital.

AA It's a long way in an emergency.

30 mins

EE But then there was nothing on Narellan Road. There was the water race, Nash's dairy and Sedgwick's house was about it. The doctors here had to go over to give anaesthetics. (Sergeant) Slattery pulled Dr Thomas over one day and said "Dr Thomas you're going 90 miles an hour." I won't tell you what he really said, but he said "I thought I was doing 100". (laughter) They had to race across to give the anaesthetics. Even many years later it was probably about 1970 maybe, I still got in the back of an ambulance at Liverpool. As we were coming past Casula and a car came out and another car hit it, a Volkswagen, before seat belts. The young boy went through the windscreen and the other boy and the mother were injured in the car. The ambulance came and I said could my husband drive, because we came just as it happened and I got out to help. I said, could my husband drive, park our car, can he drive and I'll follow, and he said no, he can't drive, so I asked if I could get in the back. He said yes, so I got in the back with a depressed fracture, a woman with a cut head and a boy bleeding from his arm. I think it was only Mr Packer, after he had the heart attack at Warwick farm, gave the defibrillators, that they made the issue of having two in an ambulance. I think that was the 70s and they still only had a driver with nothing much in the back compared to what they can do today.

AA What was Narellan Road like to drive on back then?

EE It was just a straight road through to Narellan. You didn't have the new bridge of course, you had to go to Narellan and then down whereas today you can cut across. But then they couldn't do that, they had to go right to the end of Narellan, it was just a straight road, there wasn't any problem. Today everyone tries to avoid it. That's what happened to poor Warren, he went Menangle Road to avoid Narellan Road! Which was disaster! (laughter)

AA Was everyone friendly then?

EE Oh absolutely, because we had all moved away from families. It was probably the beginning of when people started moving out in a way. For us to get to my mother-in-law's at Hurstville it was a three hour trip. We would walk to the station, changed at Liverpool, changed at Sydenham, got the bus from Hurstville and walked. That was a three hour trip to get there on a Sunday and back. That was after the men were leaving very early mornings to go to work. We never thought of that part of it, but here everyone was for each other, that's what was so nice. It was like a village in a way, everyone was here to help. Like when the boy was drowned in the dam up here (in Hurley Park) everyone was there taking food, looking after the children and all that type of thing. We all worked very well together. We would have parties within our groups every so often we'd have a party for everyone and their children to get together. It was very friendly from my point of view, I never had any problems.

35 mins

We used to play tennis at the Church of England. We had a mother's group and play tennis there because children didn't go to pre-school, so your children were home until they were five. So we had lots of groups with the little ones.

AA Did you go to the movies?

EE Oh yes, we went to the movies (laughing) and we used to take the children down there on Saturdays for the children's movies. I would take them down and I made them sit upstairs and they have never forgiven me because downstairs they had all the fun, throwing Jaffas down to one another. But that went once television came in. That was a big shame, I loved the theatre but it never survived that. Everyone eventually got television because Waltons came round with your "add on" account. You can get this and add on, so everyone was getting televisions but I wouldn't do it. They came to me and said we can give you £500 and I said have I got to pay it back? so I said I don't want it. So we were a bit later on getting television. The couple across the street, he was still in the Navy and he brought one home from Japan, so we were all over there to look at television.

AA How long after you arrived here did you get a car? Did you go long without a car here?

EE My brother was the one that drove down with my husband the day we moved in. He had a car, but I had to bring the children by train. My brother would often take us around. We would have been without a car, we came here in January '57, probably in the 60s. What happened was Lance's firm then moved to Padstow so instead of getting the train direct to Alexandria he had all that changing to do to get to Padstow. So then he had to learn to drive because we

never wanted to drive because we could go to Musgrove Street, Cremorne Wharf, Old Cremorne, Mosman, and Neutral Bay and get a ~~tram~~ ferry. Why ever they took the trams out of Sydney I will never know they were marvellous. We could get a tram anywhere or we could get off at North Sydney and get the train if we were going somewhere. We never really needed to drive. Of course pre-war no working person owned a car. My brother was in transport so he learnt how to drive. In the army at least he was in transport. But pre-war no-one had a car. If anyone had a car father did, and no-one else would touch it, let alone a woman! It would have been in the 60s that we eventually got a car because he had to drive into Padstow so he had to learn to drive. There was no teaching how to drive here so the other men used to take him out. (It wasn't easy as all cars were manual drive).

AA You didn't drive?

EE Not at that point no. You had to go to Camden Police Station to get your licence, so eventually he got his licence. So then he had an accident at work with the chemicals and he was blinded and was taken to Bankstown Hospital. That is when I learnt to drive because I would have to get to Bankstown Hospital and the car was sitting there and I thought I am going to drive that car. So I said, I want to learn to drive. Lance wasn't too happy about that but we proceeded and I had to learn to drive going to Hurstville up and down those hills. I said when can I go for my licence and he said well it's like this do you want to learn to drive or be a good driver. What could I say to that, nothing?

40 mins

At this point I was working at Beverley Park. I worked Friday night and Saturday night if I remember correctly when Matron Robertson was there. Neil Clarke then came into the area and he was teaching people to drive. The Rotarians would come on Sundays and take the boys out so I said to Neil do you think you could take me out for a drive and see how far off I am from getting my licence? And he said, yeah no probs. So one day we went out and he said, Else, you could go for my licence now. So I said great book me in, he booked me in and over we went to Camden. (Sergeant) Slattery takes me out and we did all the tricks. You know where you go up to the hospital, well then it was holding the car. We were sitting on the hill and if you slipped back you were done. When he said go you had to go. I got through that and we came back down. He then said to go to the centre and stop, which I did then I thought I have to get back to the station so I just went right and left and back to the station. We went in and he never said a word then he came out and said well you've got your licence. I said thank you and gave him a big hug. I didn't think I was ever going to get it. I went out and said to Neil "that was strange Neil, he never said another word to me, he said to go across there and stop". He said you know why, he said last week he said to this woman go to the centre and

turn right and she did right into a lorry. They weren't harmed, but the lorry driver got out and by this time Slattery's standing beside the car, and he said how did you get here that fast? And he said "I was taking this lady for her licence". He just sat down and roared laughing. So that's how I got my licence because I was determined. Prior to that there was one chap here who was a taxi driver and he used to come and pick me up at 11.30 from the hospital and bring me back. It was called the Crippled Children's Hospital then which they have taken away now, and he used to come and pick me up to bring me home. I used to know his wife and she said he would say "well I'll have a cup of coffee and then I am going to pick sis up". I stayed there for a while and then I went to Frank Whiddon in the 60s as a casual. I didn't go permanent until Dennis had left school. I used to do night duty there and weekends. Then I went on the permanent staff and I was there about 28 years. I ended up Director of (Nursing) the place for some years. I retired in 1988 which was 30 years ago which is incredible.

AA Do you miss the work?

EE I missed it terribly, I just loved it. I was always going to be a nurse from when I was in kindergarten. When I took my son to the education advisor I said he doesn't know what he wants to do. He said Mrs Evans how many people do? I just thought you know what you want to be or what you want to do. She said very few do, you are very fortunate if you do because you know what you are aiming for. But if you don't know what you want to do it is very difficult.

45 mins

AA It does make it very, very difficult, I know from my own experience.

EE These days you can change Andrew. We were reared to the fact that if you were in a good position you stayed there because security is the main thing. Because of depression years and war years we had nothing. That was the main thing, security. So if you thought of leaving one thing to go to another that would have been horror. But today, I have one daughter that started off speech pathology then she went into business and she has been project leader for child protection for Red Cross throughout Australia. She changed completely from what she set out to do. It's been a value to her. Speech pathology has been a value to her with children. You can do that today with all these courses you can do. It was very difficult otherwise.

AA Elsie, getting to a bit of Campbelltown, the main street, Queen Street, what were some of the main places that you went to in Queen Street to do shopping or....?

EE We did all our shopping in Queen Street. You walked down Allman Street, you came around the corner, you had New's Butchery and they would deliver which I had two or three times a week. You had the fish and chips shop.

AA So that was next to the butchery was it?

EE No, a bit further down. Somewhere there.

AA Do you remember what it was called?

EE No, like the name of the place? No. But I think, was it Johnson? Would Johnson's have owned it?

AA Was it the Monte Carlo?

EE No, the Monte Carlo was a restaurant. We had a sports shop, Mr Middleton I think, Blooms was like furniture and carpet, that was on the right hand side, over, say, just up from Subway from my memory. Bill Sullivan used to work there. There was Blooms there. And of course we had Tripp's garage on the corner of Dumaresq and Queen and the lady with the horse, the horses who was I think at the back of that.

AA What did she do with the horses?

EE She just used to ride around on the horses with her hair done up, she was a lovely lady I never knew what her name was but I know that she had a horse there that she used to ride. We had of course Warby's Bakery, Miss Lloyd's private library.

AA I've heard about Miss Lloyd's private library. So was that a separate building on it's own was it?

EE It was in that group there from what I can remember, down from the Post Office.

AA So was that just a small building?

EE Just a small building. Then there were also those two ladies who had a mixed business; you could buy buttons and cottons and things like that. They were two unmarried women, I can't think of their names now, they were there for many years. Bursills of course.

AA Did you shop there at Bursills?

EE Yes, I used to shop at Bursills, and of course we had Downes was the big place. There was Bagley's Newsagency and there was Romalis's.

AA Did you ever go there?

EE Oh yes, and Bagley's had a milk shake bar, I think it was Bagleys and most of the kids used to go there when milkshakes were in. Of course you had Lack's Hotel, I can't think what else there.

AA There was a butcher there wasn't there.

EE That's right, the butcher.

AA Do you remember he had one arm didn't he?

EE Yes that's right, did you grow up in Campbelltown?

AA No I didn't, but because of my work I know these things.

50 mins

EE Yes, I remember him with the one arm.

AA But you went to the other butcher didn't you?

EE Yes I got my meat from New's because it was handy for me. But Downes was our big shop though, our big store, other than going to Liverpool. (laughs)

AA Did you go to Kelly's?

EE In Dumaresq Street, yes I went there.

AA There was also a dress shop on the corner.

EE Oh yes, that was Carolyn's was up towards Lack's really, she was on that side. Then Zetta's opened up on the other side of the road. That was Betty McCarthy and a group that had Zetta's. Carolyn's was our lovely dress shop, she was great.

AA There was one on the corner here wasn't there, Allman and Queen Street. I'm just trying to think what it was called.

EE A dress shop? No, lingerie, in Dumaresq Street.

AA I think they moved to Dumaresq Street. But they were on the corner.

EE They were on the corner first where they? Well I don't remember that but I remember them in Dumaresq Street, just up from where the Post Office is now, they were there. That was Marie Kelly's. That was a very valuable shop to us when we wore corsets. (laughs)

AA And there was a chemist?

EE Oh yes, Blooms, not Blooms, Washington and Soul was one. And Green, when we first came here Mr Green had a chemist shop then Washington and Soul's and there was one other who was on the board of the Catholic Club, I can't

think of his name now. And there was a chemist further up too, near Lack's but I can't think of their name but I know May Haddon worked there.

AA Was that Veness?

EE Yes. May Haddon worked there for years.

AA What about a dentist, which dentist did you go to?

EE Dr King, when he left whoever followed on there and ended up with Mr Warren who is now at Camden, I am still going to him. So I went through the group. I know a lot went to the other dentist around in the arcade. He's still there I think.

AA Are there any other interesting people or characters that you can remember apart from the lady on the horse?

EE I remember her because she always looked so elegant. She either lived behind Tripp's or behind on the other side where the car park is.

AA The Tripps lived behind the shop there.

EE We had all our different Councillors. Harley Daley was a very big character in the town. Mrs Whitton, I remember when she got the position of Mayor because they were all busy voting each other out and they found they had voted her in. She lasted a year.

AA That would have been a big story though wouldn't it, when she got in.

EE Oh yes absolutely, and a shock because they were all trying to keep each other out and didn't realise that Kath got in. (laughing) The first thing she did was to go to Harley Daley and tell him to get rid of all that grog. (laughing) So whether he did or not I don't know.

AA Did you know her personally?

EE Only through the school, her son went to school with my daughter. Lady Macarthur-Onslow was the one I knew because she was Patron of our Guides. She was a very nice person and I forget the name of the people in St Helens Park, I know they were with an electric company.

55 mins

AA Yeah, Brookes.

EE Brookes that's right, I remember Mrs Brookes.

AA So you knew her did you?

EE Just from coming down to the church. She would give us things to raffle when we were raising money to build the hospital. She'd give us things to raffle, only

from that point of view. But Lady Macarthur-Onslow, we used to have the girls in camp out there and everything. She was very involved with the guiding movement.

AA Where was the Guides hall that you went to?

EE The Guides Hall, I've forgotten now, where was the Guides Hall? Kathryn will remember. I think it was up here, because when she got her Queens Guide we had everyone up here, see the Scout Hall is up this end of Hurley Park. I will have to ask Kathryn that, I've forgotten. The Brownies, the Guides and the Cubs and the Scouts, now where were the Guides? She'll remember. I guess there is still Guiding in the area but it was very active then. The Scouts were too. It started to fade away when Jennifer came out of Brownies there weren't enough leaders, because the women were working. Whereas pre-war and early post-war women were at home, so you had more people involved. Mrs Willett was very involved in it. Mr Willett used to work out at the Foti's fireworks place that went up in smoke. He was one of the people here that used to help out with the Guides. Everyone helped out, that was the same with the football my husband used to mark out the rugby league ground. The men all became involved in whatever the children were doing.

AA Did you go to the football with him?

EE Oh when Dennis played, yes I did. He played with Bradbury/Lithgow Street.

AA I've heard about that. So was it just a small league club?

EE They never had a club but it was a group.

AA Did they play in Group 6 or were they just local?

EE We used to go to Canberra and to Robertson and quite a few places like that in the league. I forget where they met now. When he was in the Collegians they met at the Catholic Club.

AA Did they have a home ground? Where was their home ground?

EE Their home ground I think was down where The Mall is now. That's where Lance used to mark out so I guess that was their home ground.

AA That's funny, the name of the club - Bradbury/Lithgow Street.

EE They gave my son a lifetime badge because he was training a lot of the juniors. I don't know if it still exists, probably not. He played basketball, league and cricket, he was into everything in sport. So it was supporting all those areas and the different people were very good. We always had a good support group. I must ask Kathryn

that, after all those years of taking them I can't remember where it was. I remember when she got the Queen's Guide we had the Federal Member from down the coast, he was a real character. His wife was a socialite but I can't think of his name now, she married again, he came up to present her with the Queen's Guide Award. But what I remember, he couldn't remember how many stars are on the flag. That's what stuck in my mind.

60 mins

It was a good life for the children; the high school was really great, and the primary school. It was Campbelltown Primary School until Norths came, then Easts came and now look. When Kathryn went there, there was just a little brick building which they pulled down, they pulled the original brick building down, then they made it a boys and girls school, then it was the boys over there and the girls over here. They should have left that original building there.

AA I often wonder why they pulled it down.

EE Because they decided they were going to have a boys and girls. They used to have a big shed with seats around where they used to sit to have their lunch out of the sun and they pulled that down. It was excellent because they could play there in the centre of it as well. Anyway that all went when they redeveloped there. She started there in '57. She had been at Neutral Bay Primary and then transferred to here and that building was still there in '57. They must have pulled it down in the 60s.

AA It was 1965 they pulled it down I think.

EE Something like that, yeah. They still used to have the maypole and all that type of thing.

AA Was the new school built on the same site?

EE More or less I think. They had to divide it up then for boys and girls whereas it had been one section before. Now they are fenced to protect them which is sad isn't it when you think about it. It was never fenced not like it is today that you can't get in until the gate is opened. It had a little fence around it but now it is a protective fence, that's the difference. I think they lock the gate, that's how it has all changed.

I know when I first started at Frank Whiddon Homes on night duty I used to patrol those grounds with a torch and it had no fence around it. It had a dairy at one end and I would walk around there at night. The nurses would ring me and say "I've heard a noise up here" and I would walk up there with a torch. I don't know what I was going to do. (laughs)

AA Did you feel scared?

EE No, that's the thing I wasn't. We weren't scared in those days, really. Just out and about. We never locked doors. I could go out and leave the doors unlocked. If anyone arrived they would have to get in and have a cup of tea if they got all the way to Campbelltown. (laughing)

AA It's hard to imagine.

EE You never locked the doors. It was the same with the cars. Never locked the car. The police tell you now you have to lock your cars. I had a friend who lived at Windsor and he went somewhere and they said have you locked your car? He said I never lock my car and they said well you had better lock your car here. I think now with the new keys it's very hard for anyone to break in isn't it? It's a different thing now.

AA There's one more question I want to ask you. Do you remember when you got here, you know the old reservoir and cattle tanks down here in Allman Street, was there water in them when you arrived?

65 mins

EE Up there, that is where the boy drowned.

AA Oh was it? I thought he drowned a little bit higher up on the oval.

EE Marj O'Brien lived absolutely opposite that and it wasn't fenced. That's where he drowned. What happened, he was six and a half and the younger brother was five and they used to have billy carts. They went over to the dam and there was water in it and he said to his brother to hop in, we're going to go into the water, and Kevin said he no, I'm not going. So he hopped in and the billy cart turned over and of course he drowned. His brother ran up to the oval screaming out for help and someone came down and they saw this and he said my brother is in there. So Kevin was lucky he didn't get in it or they would both have drowned. That's where it was. Then it was fenced I think after that.

AA She lived there for a long time didn't she?

EE Oh yes, Marj died about four or five years ago. She never recovered from it really. It might be five years. Yes about five years since she passed away, the house got sold. But then Kevin told me there were tunnels there that used to bring the water down, they go up to St Pats and down to Queen Street and they used to crawl in those tunnels. They would get in those tunnels and the police would hear them, the police paraded up and down Queen Street then. They would hear them through the grille and yell to them to get out of the tunnel. When water came down they would hop on the ledge. I said did you ever think that you might end up in Queen Street dead. The tunnels used to go all the way up to St Pats. They thought it was a great experience. No-one thought of the

danger of it I guess. Look what happens in the stormwater drains, they just think it's good fun.

AA Okay Elsie, thank you very much for that interview it was very good, thank you.

EE A pleasure. It probably doesn't matter but I will ask Kathryn about that Guide hall, I'm sure it was there but it has probably been pulled down.

AA Yes, it probably has been.

Afterword –

EE Kathryn confirmed it was in Hurley Park facing Allman Street. It burned down but she doesn't know when. Her last memory is 1971.