

# **ANDREW ALLEN'S ORAL INTERVIEW WITH GLORIA HOAD ON 19 MARCH 2025 AT HER HOME IN CAMDEN SOUTH**

**AA** My name is Andrew Allen and today we are going to be talking to Gloria about her life and memories. Where were you born Gloria?

**GH** Binnaway

**AA** Binnaway, where's that?

**GH** Out in the scrub. Binnaway, Coonabarabran, Baradine out there.

**AA** I know where you mean. Can you tell me when you were born?

**GH** 23 December 1930

**AA** Before Christmas 1930 right. Do you have many memories of the depression. I suppose you were very young.

**GH** We were a bit young. We knew it was hard sort of thing but we were a bit young.

**AA** What did your dad do?

**GH** He was a plumber. All I remember is he didn't work much because the depression was on in those days, so he didn't do a lot of work. He was home a lot and went out rabbiting. It kept us alive. Because there were eight of us all together. Now there's only two left.

**AA** You've got a sister living.

**GH** Yes I've got a sister who doesn't like me.

**AA** She's the only one left.

**GH** Yes, she doesn't like me she thinks I'm Miss Goody Two Shoes because I go to church.

**AA** You had a twin did you?

**GH** Yes I did, she's only been gone about a year. She just decided 94 was old enough, so she refused all food and water and died. She did break her hip before, and I rang her to see are you OK. She said I'm going to the doctor to see if I can walk properly again. I think, she didn't let me know, but I think maybe he said she would be in a wheelchair for a while and she didn't like it. So she just refused all food and water.

**AA** I suppose it's a pretty obvious question but were you close to her.

**GH** Yes, we weren't identical, but I knew when she was sick and she knew when I was sick.

**AA** Were you close in so far as thinking what the other was thinking.

**GH** We were like that, we seemed to know that and we dressed the same. Mum dressed us exactly the same all the time.

**AA** What was the house like that you grew up in in Binnaway?

**GH** We were right beside the river in Binnaway. I don't remember a lot about that place because we moved from Binnaway to Coonabarabran, Baradine and then we came down to Merrylands. We lived in Merrylands for a long while. Dad built the house in Merrylands and the house in Minto. My brother used to sleep there in a tent while building the house. It used to flood like mad. It was alright, it was right on the creek. It never came in the house, it just went under the floorboards, we were lucky it never came in the house.

**AA** Have you been back there recently?

**GH** I've been past it just to see. But there's all units there now nothing like it was in those days. As you go from Minto to Leumeah there's a viaduct there and of course we used to run down and get under the viaduct while the trains were going past. Like stupid kids do.

**AA** Did your dad have a vegie garden?

**GH** Oh yes and in the war years in the Ingleburn Army Camp you would wake up and our cornfield was full of soldiers. They used to camp in our cornfield. I was too young but my older sister used to love it.

**5 mins**

**AA** How old would you have been when you came to Minto?

**GH** I went to school at Minto, so I was probably about 8 or 9.

**AA** So tell me about the school. So, you were saying off the recording before where it was, can you just tell me where it was again.

**GH** It was right on the top of the hill as you come from the station, you walked straight up and it was more or less nearly on the highway. Old Mr Oates was his name, funny how you remember that. It was only a big room and all the classes were in the one room. No dividing just all in the one room.

**AA** So there was just the one teacher, Mr Oates. Do you remember much about him? What was he like as a teacher?

**GH** He was a nice guy, really nice. His wife used to teach sewing and stuff like that and he did the other teaching. He was a really nice guy. I didn't know much about him, I didn't do anything, we never mucked up.

**AA** Who were your friends at primary school?

- GH** You know, I can't really remember them now because it is too far back and I never see any of them. I see /// from when I lived at Minto but I don't see any friends from school. I was a catholic of course and they were public. They used to post up what movies were coming and the girl across the road that I was friends with, we would get out there and she would say the public and say the Catholics and rip all the posters off.
- AA** Your family went to church every Sunday did they?
- GH** Nobody else, I'm the one that goes to church all the time. My sisters used to and Mum would go occasionally but she didn't go very much no.
- AA** Where was the Catholic church that you went to in Minto?
- GH** There wasn't one in Minto you had to go to Campbelltown. So we used to catch the train up there.
- AA** So you would catch the train and walk from the station up Cordeaux Street.
- GH** Yes, actually I was married in that church the first time.
- AA** Where was your house in Minto?
- GH** Lincoln Street, I don't know if it's even still there. We were on a five-acre block. Dad had a five-acre block, and we built our house on that one.
- AA** Do you remember the number in the street?
- GH** No, I don't think they had numbers actually, just lots.
- AA** There's been big changes in Minto.
- GH** I went past in the train and I thought oh God what a difference.
- AA** Where did you do your shopping? Where did your mum and dad shop when you were in Minto.
- GH** There was one shop at Minto that sold everything. We used to go down and get the bread every morning and they were the loaves that were joined together and by the time we got home half of it was gone. We would pull it apart and take all the nice stuff out of the middle and stick it back together.
- AA** Is that the one near the station? I know there's one near the station that's been there a long time.
- GH** It would be that one yeah.
- AA** What about things like doctors and things like that when you were a kid. What doctor did you see?
- GH** I don't remember seeing one very often to tell you the truth. There wasn't any there you had to go to Campbelltown to go to the doctor. Mum used to fix us up anyway. She didn't believe in doctors and the money wasn't there anyway to pay for things. As I said there were eight of us, it was pretty hard. We had our own cow, I used to have to milk the cow every morning which I hated. It would

be freezing cold and you're trying to milk the cow. My fingers would be numb and I used to dip my fingers in the nice warm milk, they didn't know that. It was terrible. My twin sister wouldn't do it, she said I don't like the feel of the teats.

**10 mins**

**AA** I know what it's like, I come from a dairy farm and I had to do that myself. So what about the show. Did you go to the Minto show when you were a girl. Was there a Minto show then?

**GH** No there wasn't, I don't ever remember going there. We used to go up to Campbelltown show. They did have a show there at Campbelltown at one stage.

**AA** Until reasonably recently I believe and they went to Menangle. So what about high school then.

**GH** I only went to 6<sup>th</sup> class and mum said it's no good going any further they couldn't afford to pay. I know it was only sixpence and they couldn't afford it so I left and went to work at Campbelltown. Do you know where the nursing home used to be.

**AA** In Lithgow or Dumaresq Street is that what you mean?

**GH** In the main street right down near Fisher's Ghost, there was one there so I went there. Gala Sports Wear it was and I worked in that factory for years.

**A** So it was near the hospital was it?

**GH** Yes, the hospital was across the road, maternity hospital it was at that time. There was a big building across the road and that was Gala Sports Wear. They made things for David Jones.

**AA** So across Queen Street from where Milby Hospital was.

**GH** Yes

**AA** OK so I didn't know there was a shop there. So when did you work at the station at Macquarie Fields. That was later on

**GH** Yes, I worked at Minto, Glenfield and Macquarie Fields.

**AA** At the stations, so not just Macquarie Fields.

**GH** I was on the railway for 22 years.

**AA** How did you like that?

**GH** I loved it. All the people every morning, you get to know people, it was good. You had the morning shift, I mostly liked the morning shift because you went real early and opened up and it was nice and peaceful. Monday morning was a rush, everyone buying their weekly tickets that you used to get. That was good, I really liked that.

**AA** You were on your own were you?

**GH** Yes

**AA** So you would sell tickets and also ...

**GH** Clean the place, clean the toilets and when the trains came in, I was pretty good at it. I would jump down onto the line and run across and climb the other side instead of running over the bridge. I enjoyed working there it was great.

**AA** So you were married twice were you.

**GH** He was in the army and not a very good guy. He was a gambler. You couldn't leave money around for five minutes and he would take it, that was terrible and a basher.

**AA** Right, we will move on. Your second husband .....

**GH** Bill he was on the railway. He used to fix the brakes on the trains and things like that. He was a good guy.

**AA** So you had children did you?

**GH** I had three

**AA** You lived in Queen Street did you? Have I got that right?

**GH** Yes, it was like a factory, Gala Sports Wear.

**AA** So where you worked was where you lived was it?

**GH** We lived next door to it. It was sort of joined together if you know what I mean.

**AA** There was a house that had an attic. It's name was Miss Raymond's Cottage I think.

**15 mins**

**GH** I do remember that one. I know across the road from us was a little shop where you could buy anything. Lollies and things you weren't supposed to eat. We used to deal a lot with her.

**AA** Was that Miss Taylor, that was across the road was it? Your maiden name was Mitcherson. So you were related to Eve Mitcherson.

**GH** Yes

**AA** And her father was Cec Jarrett OK I've got you placed. I was going to ask you before do you remember any characters or people from Minto when you were a kid that paid an impression on you?

**GH** Not really, I know there was one woman she was that big she could hardly get on the train. We would say here comes Mrs. Wise, she had to get on the train sideways, she couldn't fit through the door. We used to have big bonfires down there because the ground was pretty big and everyone would come down and put the bonfire on our paddock. I loved all that, it was great when we could do all that.

**AA** So you would celebrate cracker night.

**GH** Yes, very much so.

**AA** You later moved to Leumeah.

**GH** Yes, there was a block of flats sort of thing, so a lot of us moved into those flats but I had the best one, I had the one at the very bottom of the place. Because there was only one bathroom in that building and I was the one that had the bathroom. That was good. My second daughter was born there. She just decided she was coming you know, six pains and she was born. I was at home and my twin sister delivered her.

**AA** Was that the house that is now in Burraneer Street?

**GH** Yes

**AA** So that used to be on its own. It was isolated.

**GH** Yes it was

**AA** What number was that?

**GH** Oh gosh I wouldn't remember the number. Probably I've got it somewhere, old photos or something. But I don't keep old photos, I went through them not so long ago actually and I thought what am I keeping these for.

**AA** You should have given them to us.

**GH** To tell you the truth I never thought about it. You probably would have enjoyed some of them. Because where we lived in Broughton Street with mum and dad and across from there was a weir or something. It was nearly always full of water. Somebody drowned in it.

**AA** The one in Allman Street.

**GH** That's it.

**AA** A couple of girls drowned in it.

**GH** That's right.

**AA** We're in the process of getting it fixed up a little bit, restoring the place a little bit. If you were in that area in Leumeah, do you remember Alf Cooper?

**GH** Yes, he used to go to church with us.

**AA** He was explaining that there was a racecourse in Leumeah back when he was younger in that sort of area near Rudd Road.

**GH** I don't remember that no.

**AA** We've covered a few things haven't we. What about buildings in Campbelltown that aren't there anymore. Did you ever go to the cinema?

**GH** Yes, I used to go there. That was great, we would get in for sixpence.

**AA** Was that on the Wednesday or the Saturday?

**20 mins**

**GH** Well if we were good and did all the work that we had to do for mum she would give us sixpence, threepence to spend and so much to get into the movies. That was good.

**AA** So you still did that sort of thing even though times were really tough.

**GH** Yes, we did it tough. Threepence was a lot of money on those days.

**AA** Yeah, I guess it would have been.

**GH** It was sixpence into the movies. Eves owned the movies.

**AA** Geoff Eves, I've heard lots of stories about it. Did you buy stuff after the movies at the shop next door.

**GH** We used to go in and get our ice cream there. You didn't buy much. My twin sister was a bit bossy. I never pushed my way in, she did. I would be standing there and she would say you're next and give me a shove and shove me in there. She was a bugger of a woman.

**AA** It's funny that she was your twin sister and she was different in personality.

**GH** Oh entirely different. We weren't anything alike each other. She was real bossy. The kids would be coming past you know and she would say don't come past here. I never said anything, I kept quiet all the time. We went to school in Campbelltown, the catholic school there.

**AA** How did you get on with your brothers?

**GH** I didn't see them that much you know. Len the eldest one, the first one, he just used to come round every now and again. He lived away and married some city girl. I remember her clearly when she first came down to Minto to see us all done up and I thought oh God we weren't game enough to open our mouths. You didn't say much in those days. You didn't interfere in grownups talk.

**AA** I believe that was the case. Children should be seen and not heard.

**GH** That's for sure.

**AA** What were your parent's names?

**GH** Mary Kathleen and William Henry Mitcherson.

**AA** So they died in Campbelltown, did they?

**GH** Yes, they did.

**AA** Are they buried in the catholic cemetery?

**GH** I can remember where mum was buried and I'm sure dad was buried first and mum was buried on top of him in the catholic cemetery.

**AA** You moved out here to Camden. How long have you lived here?

**GH** About 6 or 7 years I think. I can't say I like the place, I don't. It's alright but I don't particularly like this place. It's nice and quiet and everything like that but they are a little bit snooty and of course I never see anyone being right down the end here.

**AA** That reminds me, did you ever take the Camden to Campbelltown train.

**GH** Yes, you could get out and walk alongside it up the hill. It slipped all the time. They used to put sand on the line. I used to go on that quite a bit.

**AA** It's hard to imagine having to get out of it and walking up. Did you ever go to Sydney much?

**25 mins**

**GH** Only a couple of times, not many no. Mum and dad couldn't afford it anyway. We had an old car, it was made out of aluminum, all silver, no roof on it of course and we all piled into the bloody thing. There would be about ten kids all on the floor, no seat belts in those days, we would all be squashed in. Dad's mother lived out at Ben Lomond you know out near the Georges River. She was a cranky old cow. She was Spanish and his father was French. She didn't like us because we were Catholics. Mum married a catholic, so she didn't want anything to do with us. It's silly when you think back what difference did it make.

**AA** Do you remember what type of car it was that you had?

**GH** I sort of do, it had no roof I know that. Is there a Dodge or something like that?

**AA** I'm not great on cars.

**GH** I'm not good with them either.

**AA** So you had the car and the train to get around. You also walked a lot didn't you?

**GH** Oh yes, we went for an hour walk on a Sunday after we had been to church and come home. We would walk from Minto right through to Ingleburn out along the line and over the hills. From there back home to Minto again. We used to go mushrooming. We would take a big basket like a clothes basket and people would pull us up and ask if we would sell them. We would say no, we want them ourselves. That was good.

**AA** Did you swim as a girl?

**GH** No, I can't swim still. I hate the water, I don't like it. My husband took me once and when he knew I couldn't swim he pushed me under. I never got in the water again after that.

**AA** That was your first husband.

**GH** He was a mongrel.



**AA** Ok then, we covered a lot of subjects didn't we in that time. Thank you for having a chat with me.

**GH** That's alright, that's good.

**AA** I've enjoyed it.

**GH** I'm sorry I got rid of those photos now, I could have showed you.