

INTERVIEW NO. 11

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 18/10/91

MRS. RITA CAMILLERI

17 TARGO ROAD

PENDLE HILL.

0.39 My name is Rita Camilleri. My address 17 Targo Road, Pendle Hill. Place of birth, Malta
Marital status. I'm a widow. Nationality, Maltese. Number of children, four daughters.

1.09 **Now I'll just ask you first of all, how long have you lived in this area here?**

Since 1939 when we first came from Malta. My father rented a house on Pendle Way Then he bought a house with four acres of land down in Girraween, Mulgoa Road, and then we lived there. I lived there until I got married and then I came to this house here. Then my father, after a while, he sold the land he built a house here close to me because I was the only child in the family They were close to us here, and I have lived in this house ever since. I've always been here, brought up the family. We had a market garden which my husband bought. He was a cane cutter in Queensland. Then he came down here. He bought the three acres of land and he started to work in the garden. Then the War started and he had the contract with the Military to supply vegetables to the Military. So he wasn't called for services. And we always worked in the garden. We always worked together here. Then he passed away. I had a good life. It was very, very hard work. Real hard work. But if I had to do it, I'd do it again! I'd do it again!

3.08 **So when did you actually get married? What year was that?**

I got married in 1943

And you came to live in this house?

I came to live in this house. Three years after we arrived in Australia I was married.

And was he also Maltese?

Yes. He was a Maltese. He was in Australian twelve years, always in Queensland cutting cane He came in the big Depression, and my father - when we came - my father was here twelve years as well before he could bring us up here. Because he came in the big Depression.

He had to save the money?

So, it was hard to save any money and keep us in Malta as well, you know.

3.59 **So when you came to this house, the house was already built was it?**

It was just the bricks outside, and he fixed up a bathroom, he fixed up a bedroom, lined it and bought an electric stove so he can cook. And then we got engaged well he fixed it all up.

This is your father?

My husband

Oh, he lived here and cooked . . . ?

Yes. And the other house, which my father had, he make it in a market garden and I went there and worked in my father's market garden, and yet in Malta, you know, I was in College!

You were?

Yes. I came from College. When I came here I had no friends.

5.02 **So how old would you have been then?**

I was 15. It was a very lonely life. No friends.

Did you have any neighbours here?

We had neighbours, but they were all men. They were all men. Because then the War started and there was nobody coming to Australia any more during the War, so I was just here, very lonely, no girls my age. All the boys were after me. I couldn't go out the door! It was really ... I was very lonely at that time. Then I put myself working in the garden, my father's garden. He had men working there, because my father was like an agent at the Markets and we employed a couple of men, and I worked with them in the garden.

6.08 **And what was the countryside like? What was your impression of it when you first came here?**

When we first came I was scared. Because we came... in Malta, you know everything is so close together, building joined to each other sort of, and you know, no locking of the house and you go to bed, you don't lock your doors, horses all around the house and birds on the iron, you know it was very scary, very scary.

So that sense of space around you was frightening?

Yes. It was a bit frightening. But, at the same time I loved it. I loved the way it was. I loved that room around the house, the garden around the house. I loved it very much.

7.00 **Did that make you feel a sense of freedom?**

Till I got used to this different situation and environment, you know, but then I loved it. But it was lonely, very lonely.

7.18 **So when you first got married and lived here in this house, was this the only house in the street at that time, because it looks a lot older than the surrounding houses?**

This house was probably the first house that was built in this area. People lived in sheds.

Really!

Yes. And I think this was the ... maybe the one next door was built, the one next door here, but there may be the second one here. Otherwise they were all gardens and they all lived in sheds.

7.55 **The whole area was market gardens was it?**

All here was market gardens.

And what sort of people were they, Australian or Maltese?

They were all Maltese. All Maltese.

8.06 **So all the Maltese people tended to settle in one area?**

Well Pendle Hill was full with Maltese. They called it Little Malta here, and there's still a lot, but since it's been built up, you know, it's a mixture of people. But before, you can say all the roads were Maltese, because they bought the land from the Australians and they opened the land. Some of them were market gardens, some of them they built sheds and they had chickens, poultry farms. But that was really what Pendle Hill was all about.

8.46 **And did you work in the garden when you were first married too and helped outdoors?**

Yes. We worked together in the garden. Hard work, long hours

And very hot I suppose?

And long hours. I sometimes used to work, in summer, I'd get up at three o'clock in the morning and don't go to bed till twelve o'clock at night.

Really, and working all that time?

Yes. Working all that time, looking after the family

You had four daughters?

Four daughters. And look after the house, and oh, it was a full time job anyway. But when you are young nothing is too much for you.

9.27 **So what would your daily routine have been like?**

In summer you wake up very early in the morning and cut the lettuce sometimes early in the morning, and then I take the clock with me so I come up here, wake up the children, get them ready for school give them a good breakfast, cook a good breakfast- whatever they wanted, because they never used to eat their lunch, so I made sure they had a good breakfast. Then I send the children to school, make up the beds, quickly, quickly, go down again and then when, say we got a lot of work done, I come up and make breakfast for my husband again. And then, we start with the tying up, bunching and all the sort of things that makes you go in the garden and it takes you again till lunch. Then you come up, have some lunch, go back to work again. And then maybe, about three o'clock, I come and prepare dinner and then I just cook it and we'll be going till about ten o'clock at night. Come up, have dinner - that's eight

o'clock, nine o'clock - and my husband then started the watering, wait then for the carrier to come to load up, and that was our day.

11.03 And your vegetables went into Sydney Markets?

Sydney Markets, yes.

It was a long hard day wasn't it?

Yes. Sometimes he used to take vegetables as well to Katoomba Markets. He used to have big orders there. And we only had three acres of land.

I was just going to ask you how much land you had then.

Only three acres of land, but the stuff that came out of this place I We used to belong then to Katoomba, something like that - everybody used to pass by because they couldn't believe that it was only out of three. But we had two crops in one bed growing all the time. We worked hard. He was a very hard working man.

That's like companion planting isn't it?

You have lettuce that are half grown then you may put carrots in or you put beetroot in so they grow up. You cut the lettuce and you've got the beetroot almost ready just for turning. So that's how we'd work, say, eight acres of land, and then we rented another piece next door. We used to put cabbages and things like that in it. And just the two of us - I'd say we worked about ten acres of land. And we had no machinery, remember!

12.29 You worked the equivalent of ten acres, but really only three and a bit?

Yes. And we had no machinery, except the rotary hoe. That's all. Because we had no tractors or anything like that. Everything was done by hand. But it was done. We always had ... sometimes we had it bad, sometimes we had it good, it depends on the weather. Many times we had a hail storm and it took everything and we sowed back again and another one comes. But we always had food on the table and always had enough money to pay our bills And maybe we put a little bit behind us for a rainy day for winter.

13.15 Who handled the accounts? Did you or your husband?

I did. He'd just worked, and we worked together sort of, but I managed everything. Yes.

13.32 And the children went to school nearby?

Yes. The children went to school. First they went to the Catholic School. Then from there they went to the Catholic Schools in Parramatta.

And did they walk to school from here?

No. They always had to catch buses.

Did they? There was a bus service?

From Wenty there was a bus service. And then when the Maltese built this Church up here, Our Lady of Peace, the youngest one, she went there. She went to that one and then she went to the Mercy College in Parramatta.

14.15 **And so you had your family living around you, or close by – your father?**

Yes.

And you were an only child. Did your mother live here too?

Yes. With my father, yes

And did you have other relatives?

Then I had an uncle. An uncle who came from Malta and he lived on this road but a bit far from me, but we used to see each other. You know, he used to come here or I went there to visit him. That's all.

14.52 **What did you do for help looking after the children, after school or if they were sick or anything? Did you have anyone to help you?**

No. I did it. My mother used to come and help me when they were babies. She stayed with them up there and look after them you know, she used to do that for me a bit. But I did it all by myself.

And the Maltese community around about- did you get support from them if you needed help in any way?

Well you don't get support, but we were very, very close. If anybody is sick, you know that that man's sick. If there is a wedding everybody is invited. If somebody has a baby, everybody knows there is a baby. We were very close.

So that is a nice feeling of security?

Very, very nice feeling. Very nice feeling. And I always ... we started it because I was involved with the Lavalett Social Centre.

What name was that?

Lavalett Social Centre, and Mark, the one that ... we started to have some reunions. We used to invite all the oldies like that, so we all used to meet each other, because then when the children started to grow up, you know, then the Maltese sort of separated a little bit because then you have the families. Sunday they all come to your place and you're occupied with your families, and before it wasn't like that. Before when we had the children small we used to visit each other a lot. If she comes to me, then I go to her, and that's how we used to spend the Sunday afternoons -visit each other. But then when the children start to grow you get involved with your family. They come to you, you go to them, and so then it got a bit separated. But we always kept in touch until the new ones started to come after the War and then. I tell you, most of them I don't know.

Really!

Yes, I don't know who they are. But we started to have these reunions as I said, with Lavalett and they were very, very enjoyable. Sometimes you don't see those people for years, and with these reunions you get together again and you talk about the old times and what's been happening. It was very, very enjoyable, but then we stopped it.

17.56 **Were most of the Maltese women doing the same sort of thing as you, working in market gardens?**

Yes. Most of them. Market gardens and poultry farms. Very few that went to work. Then when they started to come after the War with immigration, then the women they all went to

work in factories and things like that and they all lived ... people here, they took the chickens off the sheds and put people in them that came from Malta. They lived in shed!

Literally in chicken sheds!

And chicken sheds not like they are today, the old fashioned way, you know. Just a bit of wire here and there and that's the way they lived with four and five children. But wherever I go I always praise the Maltese people, because they are people that ... they want to do everything for themselves. They don't ask for help. They do it the hard way, but they get there. It's very, very ... I went to a seminar, as a matter of fact, at Macquarie University for three days. It was about the ethnic people and, you know, everybody moans. Who wants this, and who wants that, who wants holidays, who wants this! I could never find a thing to say that the Maltese didn't get by themselves. If they wanted a house, they built their house. If they wanted a holiday, they saved for their holiday and they went. Whatever they did, they did it by themselves. They came out of their sheds, they went into their homes, they brought up the family and they did well. For that I praise the Maltese because they are people that ... they do it by themselves.

Very self-sufficient.

Yes Because in Malta, when I was there, it was very poor and men would get maybe 15 shillings a day. They all had very big families. If you get sick, there was no money coming in, no pension, nothing. Nothing. If you get old, you know, you beg. They were those people that always managed under big hardships, and that big hardship saved them when they came to this country. Although they found, you know, there was land to be worked, there was hard work to do, they got into it and they did what they wanted. For that reason I really praise them. I've got great praise for the Maltese people really.

21.18 And did you find that things improved after the War in any way?

Straight after the War it was very hard for the people that came here because there was no homes to rent. There was some kind of accommodation. I had to make accommodation for a family of four and five. Well I make that accommodation for them, and then, you know, I can't keep them here for a long period, but there was nowhere for them to go! So they went and lived in a shed. You put them up as long as you can, until they find a home where they can get into.

So without that support from the community...

No you couldn't come up here. My father was in charge of all these things here. He did everything for the Maltese around this district. And, you know, it was hard. It was very, very hard. But that hardship paid in the long run, because they didn't come here and expect to find everything ready for them. They didn't expect to find a house ready for them. They came here to get better, to improve themselves, whatever comes - and they did.

22.43 They were willing to accept...

They were very willing to accept. No matter what hardship they had to suffer, they did it, because they know that at the end of the day... because this was a good country, and they knew that if they worked hard they will get somewhere - which they did. And I tell you today, these districts here are the richest people around. Up to Blacktown they all their land, they all sold it, and they really did well. And I can't say that the Maltese need anything that they will ask the Government to do for them. I can't see anything.

23.34 **So what did you do about shopping in the area? Did you have shops nearby?**

Most of the shopping, we used to go into Parramatta, but in those days the grocer used to come here, give it the order, she brings the groceries here. The butcher, he comes here. The baker, put the bread in the box outside. Milk, we used to get it from next door. They had the cows. Eggs, we had the chickens. So it wasn't hard. Some people say it's harder today for the people than it was in those days. We had everything done for us here because otherwise you wouldn't have time to go and do any shopping. But like that you've always got your shopping home. Many times, many times we never touched that cake for a month! We didn't have time to do it. But you managed, you know, whatever you've got you do with and you cook with. We had plenty of vegetables, so we never went hungry. We always had good food on the table for the children.

24.52 **Did you have a car to go shopping with?**

We had a little truck. It used to be an old Chev. He bought it for five pounds.

Five pounds?

Five pounds. Because it wasn't going. Men had it thrown in the paddock for an awful long time, and he bought it for five pounds. We fixed it like a little truck - just a little truck - and we had it for the garden here. That saved us an awful lot of, you know, money or when anything's in big boxes ... always bring it up, and it was good for us. It worked for us. And we did then buy a car and oh, gee, I'd say about five or six years after we got married. Then we saved - or even more than six years. We had the truck, but he registered it and it took us anywhere. And then we bought a new car and in our life, though, we only had two cars.

26.10 And what about clothes, shopping for clothes?

Oh I used to go to Parramatta and my mother made most of the clothes for my children, and I knitted a lot, and whenever it was a rainy day then I'd do a bit of sewing. And they were very well dressed children. I looked after them - washed well and looked after their clothes. Whatever that was for - for good they had their good clothes, for home they had their home clothes, and wherever I took them they were always beautifully dressed. I mean to say, you know ...

26.50 And what did you do for entertainment, or didn't you have enough time for that?

Well once in a while we used to go and see a film. Not always. Maybe in winter mostly. And then the children -the three - used to go to sleep. So it wasn't much fun. So then we decided that if there is a good film. I go say in the afternoon, and he stayed with the children and then he goes at night and take the eldest one with him, because she didn't go to sleep. So we managed like that. Otherwise, you know, you go visit people or something like that. They talk about the garden and the women talk about their families and that's what it's all about. You get it all. The radio -we had the radio as well.

27.53 And did you have time to do anything of your own interest?

No. That's how it was. No. No interests. Never your own interests. I didn't even think of it, you know, because you'd be so busy that you can't really make it, and there wasn't any at the time. The Maltese - there was no Associations, nothing. So everybody you know is there at work from morning till dark, and that's it.

28.35 And when did you notice the change start around here with the market gardens being sold and people building more houses?

Well this started since ... this land here was one of the first that came out of the green belt, and we sold this land for next to nothing. Five thousand dollars we sold three acres of land. Mr. Askin has a lot to do with it.

What would you have paid for it when you bought it, do you remember?

Well he paid 700 pounds.

Seven hundred pounds He sold it how many years later?

Oh, gee, I'd say 20 years later for five thousand. But to what is going today that was nothing. You only get it for half an acre or one acre. But, oh well we managed.

29.41 **So you had the three acres for the vegetable gardens as well as the area that the house was on, did you?**

Yes we had all this right down to the creek, down to Wyeena Road.

29.58 **So did you find the churches in the area played a big role in your life?**

The school did, like we used to, you know, bake cakes and send them for the fete and the schools they have a fete or something like that. I used to take part in it where the children were involved. I always did. That's the only thing really, but the Church was the Parish of Wenty. And then when the Maltese were all around here the Maltese started to think that they'd build a Club and they started - my father was the Treasurer and the President - and they started and there was 700 pounds. They got 700 pounds, put them in the bank, but then the Association didn't keep going. So my father said those 700 dollars would stay in the bank till something turns up the Maltese want to do, and they decided to buy the piece of land up here at Pendle Way, on Old Prospect Road, and they wanted to build a Church. And so that money was the first money that went in there and they bought the land, they built the Church. The Church was paid before it was finished.

Now is this a Catholic Church?

This is a Catholic Church, and now this church here is one of the best churches in, I'd say, New South Wales. There's schools, high school- there's everything in it!

Was there a Catholic Church ... ?

Wenty.

Oh you had to go to Wentworthville.

That was the Parish. But before I got married we used to go to Toongabbie, and the Toongabbie Church was the Catholic - the Catholics owned it. But we'd go to Church in the morning and it used to be a picture theatre – showed films and all that - during the week and on Saturday, and the Monseignor from Parramatta, McGovern, he used to come and say Mass here every Sunday. But we always had a Church.

32.40 **And so when you went to the movies, that was where you went was it?**

No. We went to Parramatta when I got married...

END

SIDE A

SIDE B

0.03 **Was there much industry in the area?**

0 05 At that time there was only Bond's.

Bond's clothing?

Bond's Cotton Mills. I don't think there was any more industries at that time. And during the War the Manpower got me. They didn't want me in the garden so I had to go to work at Bond's.

In the cotton factory?

In the Cotton mills, yes, and I didn't like it at all. It made me a bit sick. I was always very thirsty. I was sick. But I worked very hard.

What, because of the cotton?

Yes. It didn't agree with me.

0.47 **What did you do there?**

Well I had to run a machine. I was running a machine, and today there's men on it, not women. It was very hard. What we called the card room. I worked in the card room.

And that was turning the cotton into yarn?

The cotton into yarn, yes. The spinning wasn't as bad, but the card room is bad. It's really a man's job. But today there's men in it.

Why do you say it's a men's job - is it a heavy job?

Because you have to carry heavy cans and things like that, and the machines are very .. makes a lot of fluff, and I found it hard.

How long were you there?

I was there till I got married. I used to work from seven o' clock sometimes till eight o' clock at night with overtime, and Saturday as well, for five pounds.

Five pounds a week?

Yes. Five pounds a week. But sometimes I was earning more than a man - but I worked all that. And then when I got married, my husband didn't want me to go to work, and he said 'No'. He said 'We work here together, you don't have to go out'. He said 'I've been by myself most of my life' he said 'and now I got married, you're not going anywhere!'. So I stopped going to work. I told them I was going to finish, but the Manpower didn't let me.

Really!

No. And one of the men, I said to him 'Look he doesn't want me to go to work'. He said the only thing that will exempt you from going to work is to get pregnant! So I said 'I wish I can!' (Laughs). And I did!

Oh, that was good.

I did. I got pregnant and I stopped work then.

3.02 **Did you do that 'specially so you could stop working?**

No, no. We wanted children straight away anyway. But I thought that I wasn't one that would fall pregnant straight away. But that helped anyway at that time, and I did, and then I left work. But then there was plenty to do here, you know, and we had to send so much vegetables to the Military all the time, that we were keeping the Military going with the vegetables and things you know.

3.40 **Talking about having your babies, did you have them in local hospitals?**

There was no local hospitals. I had three in Crown Street and one at St. Margarets.

Really, that's a long way to go.

A long way to go, yes. And when I had, 'specially the first one, you didn't pay anything. You go in and go out, but I tell you, you suffer. Because the food - no food - they used to give you one decent meal a day, say for lunch, and then tea you have a piece of bread and jam and a cup of tea.

Really!

Yes. And your sheets never changed. You know, after having a baby.

Public wards?

It was all public. For us it was public. But I didn't suffer, because although it was in Sydney, he came to see me every day. Always visited every day.

He must have been very busy while you were in hospital.

Tired. He was very tired. But my father used to go to the markets and he used to visit me as well and they always brought me food in, you know, but people that didn't get food from outside, you know, they suffered. Because you have to feed the babies and ..

It's not enough nutrition?

No, not enough nutrition at all. When you used to come home you could hardly walk you were so weak.

5.20 **What about doctors in the area for other health treatment?**

Oh, our doctor was in Parramatta. We had to go to Parramatta to see a doctor

So if there was any emergency, what did you do?

You go to the hospital.

In Sydney?

In Parramatta. The Parramatta Hospital, but there was no Maternity there, see. Only just the hospital. It was a small hospital at that time anyway, just a big house. But oh, we managed as well. We had the children and we came home.

5.53 **What about the dental service? Did you have to go to Sydney or ... ?**

Parramatta. Yes

6.04 **And what about the roads and the transport around here, when you first came here?**

Oh, there was a bus. You catch a bus. You seemed to manage with whatever you got, you know, you don't ask for anything else. If there is a bus every hour, you make sure you catch it at that hour, and catch it back. You don't complain. People never ask for anything at that time. They were happy with what they've got.

Were the roads all dirt roads?

Most of them were, yes. Where we lived with my mother and father, if it rained, you couldn't go down there. You know, it was very, very bad. Very bad. Water was bad, because at that time when we started our garden over there, there was a drought very bad, and we couldn't even water the garden. We only had half an hour to water in the morning. You couldn't grow anything.

7.05 **How much land did your father have?**

My father had four acres of land.

7.12 **And what about electricity and gas services and sewerage?**

We had ... sewerage, no. It's about 20 years since we've had sewerage here. We had the toilet outside.

Until the 1970's?

That was the hardest thing that I found when we came here, because I was brought up with sewerage, and the toilet I couldn't get used to it. And Mum used to stay in the door to see if anybody's watching me going to the toilet. (Laughs)

The gardeners?

Yes. I used to say 'Mum, I want to go to the toilet' and she'd go and stand in the door and say 'No, nobody's looking. Go!' (Laughs).

7.59 **And you had gas and electricity?**

We had only electricity. We had electricity, no problem

You said you had a stove ... ?

Yes, my husband had a stove to cook on and for the bath we had a chip heater.

So where did you get the wood for that?

Oh, you get it where...

Collect it yourself?

Yes. You go across the creek there, there was a lot of branches and trees.

Who did that?

I did it and he did it. We always had a box full, so we always had plenty of hot water that way. And we had the copper outside to wash. That's the washing machine the copper.

8.43 When did you get a washing machine?

Well during the War I had two children and didn't have a fridge You couldn't get a fridge from anywhere. I don't know how many places we had our names down, and even in Sydney –Farmers - because with two children, you know, you had to have somewhere to keep your milk and things, and we couldn't get it, nobody told us. Then one day my husband went to Parramatta and he saw Wattmuffs on Jewell Street going in with some fridges and we had our name down.

Who was it?

Wattmuffs

Wattmuffs?

Yes. And he saw them going in with some fridges and he went in and said 'Am I going to get one of those?' and he said 'Have you got your name down?' He said 'Yes'. And then he went on and on and on and he said 'There's plenty before you'. And he said 'Look, if you can give us one of those we will pay you cash.' And he said 'No', he said 'we can't do that.' He said 'But we've got two little babies because my second baby was born not even quite 11 months after the other one so we had two little babies. And he said 'I've got two little babies at home and we haven't got anywhere where we can keep their milk.' And he said 'Well anyway' he said 'we'll see.' And George said we might have a chance. He came home and said, real happy, that we might get the chance to get the fridge, and we did get that fridge.

What sort was it, do you remember?

It was a nice fridge at that time.

Was it a Westinghouse or a Colda?

No, it was one ... they've got it here now, still going.

Kelvinator?

Kelvinator. Anyway we got this fridge and he didn't want cash money.

He didn't?

No. He said 'Don't give us cash money.' He said 'You've got the two children you might need that money.' He said 'But we don't have time to come and pay the money every month sometimes' He said 'It doesn't matter' he said, 'pay bit by bit'.

1 1.31 Did you pay interest?

Oh you pay a little interest I suppose, but to please him, George said 'All right then.' And then we were going 'Oh, gee. Today we have to go and pay the fridge!' You know, always on your mind. And George would look at it. 'Take that money that we saved for the fridge and give it to him · And we did about three or four payments, and I took all the money and I said 'Take all this money and it will be paid' I said 'because we don't have time to come on the day'. He said 'I told you you don't have to come on the day '. I said 'Please take it' and then he took it. I said 'Take the lot.'

He probably wanted the interest!

He didn't want it really. He was a nice man.

Was he.

Yes he was a very nice man. And then even the washing machine ... oh, I washed in the copper for an awful long time after that. And then George put our name down as well for a washing machine and then we got a washing machine as well, one with the rollers.

12.43 And that was after the war was it?

Oh, yes after the War. Oh yes, I had three children then. But they always were clean. A lot of washing with the garden, you know, the children were...

12.55 What did the children do for entertainment when they came home from school, for instance?

Well they always had their friends here. They never worked in the garden. We never put our children in the garden. Never! We always did it ourself. I used to say to him 'Look they're all running around out there. Tell them to bring you a box in.' He said 'If you think you're tired you go and I'll do it by myself. I don't want the children in the garden.' So they used to play, do their homework, they used to get some friends. They had swings. Children, they entertained themselves very well like that. They had each other.

That was before television!

Before television. But they had the radio. They liked the radio. And they had to do homework. They never complained. They still say for today that they had a beautiful childhood.

13.52 They enjoyed it?

They enjoyed every minute of it and they grew up and they got married. They had each other, the family. One sewed for the family, the other one Saturday polishes all the shoes – everybody's shoes. And that's how it went, you know, and they were very, very satisfied.

14.12 They all did a little bit to help with the chores?

Yes. They helped with the chores in the house. Sunday I'd stay in the kitchen. They did the house, like everybody did his own room, and we managed very well. They were very happy. Sunday was family day then. Sunday George used to say 'Today is God's day and the family's day.' I'd cook and off we'd go, take them for a drive and they enjoyed it.

14.41 Did you go for picnics?

Yes. We used to take them for a picnic near the beach in summer.

Which beach did you go to?

We liked to go to La Perouse. Sometimes we went to Manly. Oh, you know, they always had...

14.56 So your husband must have enjoyed having the day off on Sunday?

Yes he did because when we did work right through Sundays, which most people did, you know by the end of the week you are so sick of the garden. Always your face in the mud, always your face in the lettuce, and that one day break, it do you good. You start fresh on Monday. See, Sunday a lot of people cut just the same and send it for market on Monday. We never did. We never did. Whenever we had to do it was because my father had big orders or something like that, and he depended on George - on my husband - virtually it was because if he had say some customers, and they were very good customers, he depended on George's stuff. Because we never put the small lettuce underneath and put the nice ones on the top. It would be right through. If it's a smaller one it goes in a different box. So he depended on his stuff a lot. But we really had to work, really needed that stuff whatever it was, to work on a Sunday. And when we did we used to wake up in the morning, cut whatever it is till about eight o'clock, and come in here and go to Church, get dressed, take the children to Church, we go to Church - and the day is ours which was very good. It was very good. It was family day together. And the children looked forward to it. Oh, I can't say we had a bad life. It was hard, but it was good.

17.00 Hard but enjoyable. And when the place started to change after the war, in the 50's or 60's would it have been, when the land was sub-divided and houses started to be built?

That's when it started to change. Then the people separated. Like, before, three houses away was my next door neighbour, but we saw each other every day, we talked every day to each other. Then when the houses ... as it is today - we don't see each other like it is now. You don't see each other for four years sometimes!

And you're right next door!

And opposite which we used to see three times a day each other. And then one day I went shopping at Woolworths and my neighbour opposite, she said 'we had to come to Woolworths to meet!' I said 'What a change, Doris!' She said 'Yes '.

18.08 It's a different way of life now?

Yes. A way of life. Really different all together. Got good neighbours. If I know or she knows I need something, they all come and they tell you , you know. But we are not families that we go into each other's houses. No, it's different.

18.31 **And what about when the shops started turning into supermarkets rather than the little corner shops and things like that? Did that affect you very much?**

Oh, well it took a day, you know say Friday At that time when they first started my father used to take me and my mother to do the shopping and you have to take that Friday that you go and do the shopping. Which before you didn't, you had everything behind the door. But then we didn't have the garden.

19.08 **When did you stop the garden?**

Oh, the garden stopped ... about 28 years

Twenty- eight years ago. So that would have been in the '70s.

In the '70s. yes.

19.31 **And why did you decide to give that up?**

Because then you can't ... if next door sells, you have to sell yours too. Because then the Council, say if you have 14 blocks, you have to pay rates for the 14 blocks, so where are you going to get that money from? You had to sell.

So it was really the place being suburbanised and being subdivided forced you to sell?

Subdivided, yes. You had to sell whether you liked it or not

20.06 **And what did you do then for a living?**

He went out to work. He went. First he worked in a rubber factory and then it closed. Then he worked down here and it went broke And then he ... that's it. He worked there. Then he went with Playtex, in the garden, he kept the gardens and all things like that and he worked till he was about 67. He worked.

20.52 **And were things very different for you then?**

Yes. It was harder. It was harder to manage because you had to buy everything, sort of, and in a block what can you get? It was harder. Whatever he used to get, you know we had to really be very careful. Because everything had to be bought.

21.18 **Did he give you housekeeping money?**

No. No, whatever there is. He used to put it there and everybody takes what they need you know. Say if I have to pay the registration I put the money away for registration, and what's left we do with that. Or if you pay rates, the time to pay rates, which is always the same. Always prepared. And that's the way I still do things.

You must be a very good manager with all that experience!

You have to be, you have to be. Otherwise, you know, you'd be ... oh, no. With a little pension, with a little bit of pension and a little bit behind you, you know. Oh, I live quite comfortable. I don't mean I go and buy anything I see. You know, I mean I'm the same. Even if I had a million dollars I will be just the same. That wouldn't change my life. But I'm not one that I say 'Oh, gee, today is Thursday and I haven't got money. I have to go for the pension.' I could live here for three or four days and then I'd go. Because when I do the shopping I get as much as I can, and I always have plenty here to live on, because today I can't go out much because of my legs and I always got everything here that I need. And I'm not close to a shop either. I have to go Pendle Hill or to Parramatta, and to go to Pendle Hill it's a bit far for me to walk.

23.00 **Do you go on the bus or ... ?**

I have to call a taxi and usually to go shopping, my daughter takes me. Like last night I go shopping late.

23.14 **And what about animals? Did you have ... you had chooks, did you have any other animals?**

We had chooks, we had rabbits.

Did you? As pets?

Oh, no. We had ... not pets, no not pets. Because. Maltese people- that's a very good ...

To eat?

Yes. Rabbits, yes. 'Specially you grow them. That was my husband's favourite meat. Don't give him steaks, don't give him anything, but rabbit – he loved it. And we cook it very nice. We cook it really nice.

So you kept them in the garden?

No. We had a shed and we had in it the chickens and the rabbits and we had ducks as well, but we got rid of them because nobody likes ducks. They are messy. Clean them every day, and they were right. We had pigeons. A few pigeons there.

For eating?

Oh we didn't ... just a couple to eat. But Maltese eat the pigeons but we didn't like them.

24.25 **And what about ... did you have any cats or dogs?**

Oh yes. We always had two dogs. We always had cats. And there was something else that we had ... we had goats!

Oh, did you?

We had two goats, but we got rid of them after we reared the children because when I had my first one she couldn't take any milk at all. She used to bring it up, and she couldn't put an ounce on. I fed her for three months but when I took her off the breast she couldn't drink any milk at all We took her to different doctors, you know, and everybody say 'Give her this', 'Give her that' , 'Give her Glaxo, 'Give her Lactogen'. Nothing worked! So I went back to my doctor. No I called him. The baby was sick. And he was an ugly man and he came here he said 'You know what is wrong with this baby?' He said 'This doesn't take any fat!' He said 'It's the fat, she's allergic to fat.' And I said 'What are we going to give her then?' George said 'I tell you what to do with it, buy two goats', he said, 'and we'll try her on goat's milk.' And George went looking to see where he'd find two goats, and he did. He bought two goats, four or five pounds. They were starving. Skin and bone! The first thing he did was give them a really good scrub. (Laughs) He really brushed them. They came nice and dean. Then he went and bought some food for them, like chaff and a lot of things, bran and give them all vegetables and I tell you, they had milk! And we put her on goat's milk and in a fortnight she put on so much weight and never brought up a drop. It was easy. And she used to cry an

awful lot - she settled in. Then I brought up the other two on goat's milk, no worries. And then I didn't have any children for six years because I was pretty sick after the third birth. Then we sold the goats - and I fed the other one anyway. And that's how it was. Everything turns out for you, you know, you try.

27.13 Did you belong to any organisations in the area?

No. I did before. Now I did, lately, but I gave them up too now.

27.28 Well I think ye've just about covered everything. After talking about the old days and what it was like then, how do you feel about the changes that have taken place in the area with the suburbanisation of the area?

Well, I don't feel as safe, that's one thing. I don't feel as safe as we did then. We never locked our backdoor at that time. The children used to leave their toys around. Never anything was touched. But today you don't feel as safe. I live here by myself and the children they wanted the alarm and they wanted this, they wanted everything locked up for me - or 'You won't live by yourself! And I don't know if I have to leave this area if it's going to be easy for me. You know, I was talking to the doctor the other day and I suppose my daughter was talking, because she's a friend of hers, and she said 'When are you going to get out of this house?' She said 'You've lived in that for so long?' 'Why should I leave the house?' 'Because of your legs you know" she said. 'You won't be able to look after the house like you did before. And I said 'While I still crawl I still stay in it.' And she said 'Go and have a look at these villages that they have now, retirement village'. I said 'It's going to break my heart to leave this house!' 'No it won't', she said, 'No it won't. It will be easier for you ' I said 'It won't!' My daughter talked the same thing. She said 'Mum, come and have a look at some.' I said. 'One day' but really, I never got there yet.

Well this is the house you've lived in so long.

It is part of me. It's part of me. I feel that whenever I leave this house I'm going to leave part of me here. Most of my life's here, so it's not easy to separate. Maybe, maybe if I go I will be better. Maybe one day I will have to go.

When the time is right, maybe then you'll know.

Yes. I know I'm getting there.

You've got a long way to go yet!

Oh, my legs are pretty bad.

30.19 **Did you feel, when the area started to change, when it became more built up and more crowded, how did you feel about that?**

It upset me. It upset me. I could have got out of here any time. It was my husband that wanted to stay. I cried a lot. He used to go to work. Although I used to look after the grandchildren. When they started to have children they had to go to work, I looked after the little ones, even not my children's. You know, we had friends, they worked with them and they used to bring them here. I always had little children around me. But then I found myself so closed up. Even in Malta we used to live in a built up area, but as soon as I used to have a bit of time I'd go out. I loved the open spaces.

31.24 You miss the open spaces?

I do. If I don't have that garden there, I go crazy! I'm not one to stay in the house all the time. In the morning as soon as I wake up I'm in the garden.

So you felt you were being hemmed in?

Yes. And I felt that, well if I looked out of the window, the lady used to say I was watching her at the back, when they started to come here, which I wasn't. And if I had the sewing machine, and I used to leave it in that verandah - I had a little verandah there - she used to come on the fence and say 'You're always watching my door.' Which wasn't true! We used to have those two rabbits and George said to me, you know, that if it gets hot he has to cover them. 'Just put a little water on them. Wet the things on the top, the bags on the top.' And so I did. And she used to come over and say 'Haven't you something better to do with your water?' She was on my back all the time. And that really, oh, ... he used to come home and find me crying and saying 'Let's get out of here , let's get out of here!'