

INTERVIEW NO. 36

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 10/3/92

**MRS. DOROTHY JOAN JEFFERY
38 JULIE STREET
BLACKTOWN. 2148.**

0.25 My name is Dorothy Joan Jeffery. I live at 38 Julie Street, Blacktown. I was born on the 21st of the sixth, 1926. My nationality is Australian. I am married and I have two children.

0.46 First of all I'll just ask you some background questions. What kind of work did your father do?

My father was a policeman here in Blacktown. There were only two policemen here at that time and he used to travel around in a motor bike and side-car and he used to have leggings and a different uniform completely to what it is now.

So would he have been fairly busy being one of two?

Yes. He was always very busy and they had a very big area to cover. They went down as far as Toongabbie, up as far as Rooty Hill, Riverstone and all in the Blacktown area, which was quite a big area to cover. And during the War they used to have to keep a record of all the cattle and sheep and pigs on their properties and if anything happened to any of these animals they had to be reported. And also during the War the New Australians had to report in - I'm not sure now if it was once a week or once a fortnight. So, he was always very busy, apart from all the domestic problems that there were in the area, 'cause he had such a distance to travel too.

2.21 And did your mother work at all?

No my mother was always busy at home because there were seven children for her to look after, and also people used to come too, when we lived at the Police Station, my mother was always there to answer the phone or to answer anybody who came looking for the police at that time. So she was always very busy.

2.49 So you were one of seven - where did you come in the family?

I was the second eldest. I had a brother older than myself, and then I had twin brothers and then there were two girls, and then years later I had a younger brother.

So you probably had to help your mother quite a bit with the children?

Yes. I did, yes.

And did she have other family around to help her at all?

No. She didn't. She did it all on her own. She was always working my mother.

3.21 And whereabouts did you live? Was it right in the main street?

Yes. We lived in Austral Street. Austral Street doesn't exist any longer. Since they bought Westpoint it was built and so therefore there's no Austral Street - it was built right on top of where Austral Street was.

And right top of your home?

Yes. Exactly! That's right.

3.45 So was that actually demolished for Westpoint to move in, or had it been demolished earlier?

Oh, no. Not until Westpoint came in.

So how did you feel about that?

Oh, sad. But then at that time when Westpoint was built my parents built a home in Kildare Road which was right opposite Westpoint, and of course I was married and I lived in Patrick Street, which was right opposite Westpoint and also opposite K-Mart. We saw both of those buildings go up.

4.20 So you've seen a lot of change. Were you actually born in Blacktown?

No I was born at Mudgee, but I was eight years old when I came to Blacktown, so I've lived in Blacktown for over sixty years now.

So you were here in the early '30s.

Yes. We saw the original hotel pulled down - the Robin Hood as it was known - and as a little girl when I used to go past the Robin Hood that was being built, it used to fascinate me very much to see the bricklayers laying the bricks and a man by the name of Frosty Steed helped to build the Robin Hood Hotel. And it was quite a point in Blacktown, because it was right opposite the station and it was like an English style hotel/motel ... yes, hotel really. Motels weren't around in those days.

No.

But it was a real landmark.

But that's gone now hasn't it?

Yes. That's gone now and the Water Board, they built a big building there.

5.39 So what were your first impressions, as far as you can remember, what would your impressions have been of what Blacktown looked like - the landscape and so forth?

Well there wasn't very many shops. No big stores here in those days. There was a paper shop on the corner and across the road on the opposite corner was what we used to call the Bee Hive, and they used to sell groceries and feed and mostly all that type of thing. And then on the opposite corner to them again was Greenaways, and I worked in Greenaways Store. And we sold clothing, wool, shoes, menswear, all that type of thing, you know. Then there was a chemist next door and I think, nearly next to the chemist shop, there were two or three homes. Little small homes right on the main street there, and then there was a bakery behind those shops. And apart from that there wasn't very many shops. There was the School of Arts and the Rivoli Theatre.. and oh, Sing's grocery shop. They later built on the opposite side of the road after the War, but ... oh and there was Robinson's grocery store. It was smaller than Sings. And I think that was about all the shops. Oh, there was the butcher shop - Timmins' butcher shop - and the greengrocer's shop owned by Bubble Sing. But in those days everybody knew everybody! And when I was a young girl working in the shop I used to have to go out the front, sweep the footpath, and then once a week I had all these windows to clean, and apart from this we had to sweep the floors and maintain all the shop work, wash all the shelves and everything like that. And if we were in the shop and you'd hear people talking out the front you knew who was going to come in the store because you knew everybody by their voice, in those days. And you'd know before they came in 'Oh, yes Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Brown - she ordered so and so' and you'd have it all ready for her when she came in the store.

8.22 So it's very different shopping today isn't it?

Oh, completely different. Completely different.

Much less personal.

Yes. That personal part of it's all gone.

8.33 And did you go to the local school at Blacktown?

Yes. I did.

And what about High School?

Well we had to go to Parramatta because there was no High School in those days. I went to the girls' High School - it was called the Domestic Science School in Parramatta and it was later Macarthur Girls' High School. But it was many years later before there were any High Schools built in Blacktown.

9.03 And so when you left school you went straight to Greenaways?

Yes. I went to work in Greenaways, yes.

And did you work there until you married?

Until I married, yes.

9.16 And what year would you have been married?

1947.

9.19 Oh, right so that was just after the War, and so did you build a house then?

Yes. My husband built a house in Patrick Street and at that time when he built the home you couldn't buy a bath or a stove. We always had to put our name down and hope that in time we would get a bath or a stove or any of that type of thing.

Was this because of just being after the War?

Just after the War, yes. There was nothing. You had to just wait for everything, you know.

9.58 So when you did set up house, what sort of house did you ... did you build a house yourself?

Yes. We had a fibro cottage and we lived there for 28 years, until the Council resumed our land and home to put a park there. It was zoned park-land. And so then we moved up to Julie Street and we've been there ever since.

Which street was that in?

Patrick Street.

Oh that's right, Patrick Street. That's right in the heart of Blacktown?

Yes. We were right opposite Westpoint and K-Mart.

Was there near where the Council Chambers are?

No, no. The Chambers are in Campbell Street and Flushcombe Road and we lived in Patrick Street. That's one street down.

10.49 So did you feel sad about that too, when your house was resumed?

Yes. We were very sad because we'd lived there, as I said, for the 28 years. And our children went to school at Blacktown Central - the same school as I went to - and from my kitchen window I used to be able to watch them go up the hill and go into the school grounds.

11.13 And they went to Parramatta too to High School I suppose did they?

No. They didn't. No. My eldest son, he went to Rooty Hill because in those days they zoned the areas and if you lived in a certain area you had to go to Rooty Hill, even though Blacktown High School had been built, they still hadn't built sufficient class rooms to take all the children in Blacktown in those days. And then my second son, he did go to Blacktown High School. And I might say, too, that when we lived in Patrick Street that was the happiest time of my life, and my children, because all the people that lived in Patrick Street all had children round about the same age group and we all got on so very well together. There was never any disagreements. The children all played well together, and we still have those people as our friends to this day.

Do you?

Yes.

12.24 I suppose being a smaller community it was a fairly tight-knit one too - or close-knit community?

Yes it was. It was really lovely in those days. More friendly. Whereas today you go down Main Street or to the shopping centre and you don't see hardly a soul you know. Whereas in those days everybody was so friendly and they'd always stop and talk to you. But today no-one has time.

Everyone's too busy!

Too busy, yes.

12.53 And so when you were bringing up your children, what would your daily routine have been?

Well I used to - after they started school - I was in the Mothers' Club and we used to have stalls and so I was always busy making things for the stalls to raise money to buy gestetners and pictures for the school and anything that was needed for the school. The Mothers' Club used to provide, and then when they grew older and they were in the higher school, I belonged to the P & C Association, so I was always involved with the school. After a time, when my children were older, I went to work in the local picture theatre.

Oh, did you?

As an usherette.

At night, or during the day?

No. During the day as well. You know, during the school holidays they used to have shows on the children and it was always a very busy time too because most of the children went to the pictures in those days. You know, there wasn't very much other entertainment for them, and also when my children first started to learn to swim there was no swimming pool here in Blacktown. We had to go to Parramatta.

Did you?

My husband used to take my boys to Parramatta to be taught swimming, you know.

A good trip, wasn't it, to do something like that. You'd have to be keen.

Yes. Oh, well - everybody did it! You just accepted it, you know.

14.38 And in the school holidays did you take them away at all?

No. Well because my husband was working we didn't go away a real lot. We used to visit my aunt down at Canberra. But apart from that, you know, we more or less stayed here, because as I was saying earlier, the children in the area all got on so well together that they just made their own fun. And in those days there used to be a creek at the back where the park is now. That was a creek there and it was a play area for the children and they had swings down there and of course all the children played down in the park.

15.30 So they had a nice sense of freedom still in those days?

Oh, yes. It was really lovely, yes. They never wanted to go anywhere really. You know, as I say, there was the pictures and ... but everybody just more or less made their own fun.

15.47 And so what were the health services like in those days?

Well there were two doctors here in the beginning. There was Dr. McKenzie and Dr. Donellan. And where we lived, we were just down the bottom of the hill from Dr. McKenzie, so it was very handy there. And then they later on built Blacktown Hospital so it was quite good. But when my children were small, we had to go to Parramatta Hospital. Because I remember my eldest son had hepatitis and I had to take him into Parramatta Hospital to have blood tests and that done.

So in an emergency you had to travel?

We had to travel to Parramatta, yes.

16.42 And when you were growing up yourself, in your mother's home, did she have electrical appliances?

No. No, we only had a fuel stove and fuel copper.

And what about a telephone?

Yes. We had a telephone because we lived at the Police Station.

Oh, of course, for your father.

17.04 And so when you were married did you have electrical appliances?

Yes. I did, although I did have a fuel copper to start with.

Did you?

Yes. and then we had the electric copper, and then of course came the washing machine.

17.22 And did you have a telephone?

Not at the beginning. It wasn't until my husband joined the Bowling Club and he was Bowls Secretary to the Bowling Club and he had to have the phone on for that reason. But when I had my children, the people next door, they had a phone on. So we were very fortunate, you know, they used to let us use their phone.

17.52 Were your children born locally?

Yes. They were born here in Blacktown in the hospital over on the hill.

That's the new one?

No. It's only a little private hospital. No, before Blacktown Hospital was even thought of!

18.19 So what about family finances? Who managed the family finances?

Well I think we both did really.

Do you? You shared it?

Yes.

So did your husband give you housekeeping allowance or ... ?

No. It was just more or less, you know ...

You just paid the bills as they came in, jointly?

Yes.

18.41 And what about animals? Did you keep any pet animals?

Yes. We always had a dog. And when the children were little we had a cat, but, apart from that ... oh, and then my son, he had pigeons, and he still has them!

Oh, has he?

Yes. Racing pigeons. Homing pigeons really.

And did you have chooks?

Yes we did have chooks to start with, and then when they built a kindergarten at the back we could no longer have the fowls there.

19.16 So how did you feel about the area changing after the War when it became suburbanised and changed from the rural place it had been when you were younger?

Well it changed quite a lot after the New Australians came. They made a big difference to the area. A lot of them went into farming, although there was always farming, but it was always friendly, you know. But then again progress has made a big difference. It has made it so much easier for everybody. You can go down to the shopping centre, you are under cover, it's all air conditioned - so, it's really lovely.

Those sort of facilities are better?

Oh yes.

But of course then there's the traffic and noise, I suppose?

Yes. That's right. But then again when my children were little there was all just dirt roads, and when it rained it was just turned into clay and, of course, the cars would go over it and it would be all uneven. And I can remember going up the town to do my shopping and the wheels of the prams would be covered in clay, and you'd have to bring them in and run around on the front lawn or put the hose on them to clean them, because there were no footpaths in those days. And even when we lived in Patrick Street, right up until the time we left, there was no footpath. Not a proper footpath with curb and guttering - and yet that was in the main town, like right in the town centre. It wasn't until Westpoint and K-Mart came that they had to do something for the traffic, you know, so by that time we had moved up to Julie Street.

21.23 And did you belong to any community organisations or anything like that?

No. Not really. Not in those days.

21.36 What about the Churches. Did they play a big social role back in the '50s?

Yes. When I was a young girl I belonged to the Girls' Friendly Society and we used to meet once a month and we used to do sewing and make things and then we'd have a stall to raise money for the Church. And we always went to Sunday School and to Church. You know, that was part of growing up, you know, in the area.

Do you think that's changed today or do you think the Churches are still quite popular?

Oh, I think it has changed. I mean my children always went to Sunday School as well in the same Church. Well I don't think they bother so much today. I think that side of it has definitely changed.

Although there are still lots of big Churches around aren't there, but then the population is also much greater!

Yes. But, I mean, when it was a small community, I think everybody more or less went to Church of Sunday School in those days.

22.50 It was another way of meeting up with everyone too?

Yes.. There was the social side of it too. They used to have flower shows. They used to have competitions, you know, to see who brought the best flowers you know. Then we'd have an Apron Day and see who made the prettiest apron and then of course that was donated and sold to raise money for the Church.

23.20 And did you have any specific hobbies yourself or any interests?

Well I always did a lot of sewing.

Did you?

Yes and I had knitting machines and I used to do a lot of knitting. It always made my sister's clothes, her children's clothes, my children's clothes. I was always busy that way. And I love gardening. I was always busy in the garden.

So you were never bored?

(Laughs) No. Never bored.

23.54 So looking back on the changes that have taken place since your childhood and to what it is today, what would you think are the main changes that came with suburbanisation?

Well, it certainly has made a big difference! The shops are all so different, you know. It's a different ... whereas when I was a girl working in the shop we had to attend to the customer, and the customer was always right! Whereas today I think that side of it's changed. You don't get that personalised attention and they don't seem to care, whereas we were made to care. If someone came into the shop and asked for something and you didn't have it - like, if you said you didn't have it - then there'd be trouble, you know. So that side of it's changed much to the pity, I think.

24.54 Yes. It's not as personal as it was and not as friendly, but then there's probably more variety and better shopping conditions?

Oh yes. The shops are much better.

25.07 And what about security in the area? That has changed a lot since you were growing up here yourself?

Oh yes. It certainly has changed. Well, as I say, we were living at the Police Station and our front door and back door was left open all night. You were never afraid to go anywhere at night. Not like today. I mean you make sure your house is securely locked and you wouldn't dare go out and leave it open. It's certainly changed that way.

And I suppose living at the Police Station would be an extra security anyway, wouldn't it. People would be less likely to burgle a Police Station?

Oh, I don't know. We had so many people coming to the Police Station, you know. But, no. People were different in those days. It was never even thought of in those days to do anything wrong, you know.

26.07 And you didn't have to worry about your personal safety if you went walking and that sort of thing?

No. Not really, no. And my father was always very well respected in the area. Even with the young fellows that used to sit up the main street, as I was telling you about earlier, the Beehive had big wide steps on it, you know, and they used to congregate up there and my father used to patrol the area. And even to this day a lot of the young fellows - that were young then - have said to me, 'Joan, we always respected your father.' He used to say 'Go on on along home now', you know. They just respected him for what he did, you know.

(Friend) He was a gentleman policeman, Joan.

Yes he was. Everybody liked my Dad.

27.05 And so do you think generally speaking that the changes have been for the better, or a bit of each?

Well, I don't think you get that nice friendly atmosphere today, that you had in those days. People are too busy. Everybody's busy.

27.29 That's sort of the change from the country village atmosphere really to the bigger suburban area!

I mean it had to come. Progress has to come. And it really is for the better, but you do miss that friendly atmosphere, I think.

Well thank you very much.

END OF TAPE