

INTERVIEW NO. 35

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 10/3/92

**MRS. JOYCE McKELVEY,
30 Panorama Parade,
BLACKTOWN. 2148.**

0.35 My name is Joyce McKelvey. I live at Blacktown. I was born on the 16th of the eighth, 1918. My nationality is Australian. I am married. I have two children

1.01 So first of all I'll just ask you some background questions. How long have you lived in the Blacktown area?

Seventy-three years.

So you were born here?

Yes.

1.10 And what sort of work did your father do?

He was the bread-maker - what do you call it? Bakery - we had a bakery.

Oh did you?

Yes.

In Blacktown?

Yes.

1.27 And did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes. One sister and three brothers.

That was quite a big family!

Oh, five.

One of five - and where were you? Were you the eldest?

No, I was the eldest girl. I was the fourth.

The eldest girl, so you would have had a few more responsibilities would you helping with the house work and that sort of thing?

That's right. You always had to do your share!

1.57 And what sort of house did you live in?

We lived in the main street of Blacktown - half weatherboard and fibro home.

Was it a big block of land?

No. The average size.

A half-acre block?

The average block there then. Yes.

2.19 And did you have a garden?

Yes. We always had our own vegetables, until my parents started the bakery then. They built a bakery in the back of the residence.

2.35 And did your mother work there as well?

Yes. We all had a helping hand at that! Something for all! My three brothers delivered the bread and my father with the help of them before they went delivering they did it between them.

2.53 And so did you have grandparents or any other relatives living around you?

Yes. My mother's parents lived a short distance from us.

So they would have given your mother some support with ...?

No. Not really.

So how did your mother manage to keep up with the housework and the shopping and the family?

We did the shopping. You know, we were right in the town. But Mum did the housework, to begin with anyway. Later on she had some help.

3.35 And did your father grow vegetables in the garden?

Not then. That was prior to us having the bakery.

He was too busy then?

That's right.

Did he deliver bread to the local shops?

Yes. There were only about two local shops here then!

Were there?

Yes. Oh there might have been a few more. I think there would have been at that stage. The early part, you know, before they started the bakery, there was one other bakery and two fair sized shops.

4.20 And what are your first impressions, from when you can remember, of what Blacktown was like then? What would you say - it was a fairly rural place I suppose?

That's right. A lot of poultry farms. And everyone knew one another.

And you go shopping and find that you'd know everyone at the shops?

That's right. Whereas now you go down and you can go for days and you never meet anyone that you know. It's so different.

4.49 So you find that some of that friendliness has changed because of the population increase?

Yes. But you still had your friends.

5.00 So what would your mother's daily routine have been?

Oh housework. There was no washing machines, you know.

How did she managed then, with the washing?

Oh, she managed.

What did she use if she didn't have a washing machine?

A fire copper. A fuel copper.

Did you have to collect the fire wood for that?

Oh, yes, yes. My brothers used to get that.

Was there plenty of bush around to collect it?

Yes, we always had ponies and a little cart and the boys used to go and get the stump wood those times. Of course that was before they started the bakery. It was so different then, you know. You were sort of in business and things were entirely different.

5.58 What year would that have been that they started the bakery? Roughly, you know.

During the Depression. We were there in 1929.

6.10 So did you go to school locally in Blacktown?

Yes. My mother went to school here.

Oh did she?

Yes. They shifted from Enfield out to Quakers Hill - Maryong I should say - and they used to walk in the two miles to school. The five of us went to the same school but my Dad was reared in Windsor.

You were all more of less from the same area?

Yes. That's right. He came to work for the only bakery when he was 17 her was apprenticed to the bakery. Then in later years he started off on their own.

And did he do that until he retired?

Yes. The boys carried on then - the three brothers - for a number of years.

Is it still in the family now?

No. No. Not for quite a time now.

7.25 So did you walk to school?

Yes. We were close to the school.

And what happened about transport generally. Did you have a car - your family?

Later years we did.

When you were growing up you didn't?

Oh when we started the bakery they bought a delivery motor as well as horse and cart they had, so we used that for pleasure until they could afford better and then we had a car.

8.01 And so your father would have been one of the bakers that people talk about delivering the bread by horse and cart?

That's right.

Would he actually have done the deliveries or he would have had a driver to do that would he?

No. See there was my three brothers and he, and they sort of shared it all. The boys would get up early with him and help in the bakery and then they'd go and deliver. There was no eight-hour day then!

8.30 What did your mother do in the bakery? Was she cooking?

No, not really. She had enough to do with the washing, ironing and the housework, see. Because my sister and I we were still at school. I was about 11 when they started the bakery on their own.

8.49 And what sort of things did you do as children for entertainment? Ride your horses I suppose?

That's right. We lived on it! That's right.

And where did you ride to? Very far?

Oh we used to go to Riverstone to friends of ours, most Sundays. My friend and I we'd ride up to Riverstone - think nothing of that!

9.15 There was no traffic then I suppose?

No ... quiet. No tar roads.

9.22 And no worries about security or anything?

Didn't have to worry, no.

That's changed now hasn't it?

My word. Getting very serious isn't it?

9.35 And what about in school holidays, did you go away to the seaside or anything like that?

No. Not really.

The bakery kept you here I suppose?

Yes. That's right. We'd go to Windsor swimming of a weekend.

What, to the pool there?

No. To the river.

Blacktown didn't have a pool in those days did it?

No. Nothing like that.

10.00 And what about health services in the area? Was there a doctor locally?

One doctor for a time and then one nursing sister and later on there was two doctors and two nursing hospitals.

So what happened in an emergency? There wasn't a hospital at Blacktown then, so what did you do?

Parramatta was the closest.

That was the closest?

10.38 And did you have a telephone at home?

Not at first. Later on we did for the business.

So it would have been rather difficult in an emergency to ring the ambulance or ... there probably wasn't an ambulance?

There was an ambulance - later - and Tony Power, but he was a very capable man. He was a big help to the community.

11.14 And what about the other little hospitals that you mentioned? There were two?

Yes. There was two private hospitals. Sister Rawlings and Sister Overton.

Were they general hospitals?

No, just in their own homes.

They were maternity were they? Both of them?

That's right, yes.

So that was the only thing catered for, the maternity part of the hospital.

11.45 And did your mother ever have any emergencies with the children?

No.

That was lucky wasn't it, with three boys?

We just didn't seem to get sick! I never went to a doctor till I was expecting the first child at 30.

Really!

12.00 So did your mother have any electrical appliances in the house?

Our home was all fitted out with the wiring and so forth for when the electricity was turned on. Quite a time I think before we had an electric stove. But anything that was available, we had the comfort of that.

Did your mother cook on the fuel stove, did she? Until then.

Yes. That's right.

Which would heat the house at the same time?

Yes.

Was it good food on the fuel stove?

Oh, yes. I think so. When you didn't have any different, or knew no different, everything seemed to fall in line with everyday living, sort of thing, as it was.

12.54 So when you finished at primary school did you go to high school in Blacktown?

No. I went to Parramatta for a time. But I left it when I was 14. And then when I was 16 my parents bought a property further down right in the main street and started a cake shop and small goods, mixed business, which we did very well at. My sister and I served in the shop and my friend, Joan Watterson, she'd come in and she was nine years younger than I and she always had her two sisters with her - there was seven in their family - and Joan would have her youngest brother always on her hip, and I used to think 'What a little mother she is!' And I hadn't seen Joan then for quite a number of years. Of course she'd got married and I didn't know her as Joan Jeffery until another friend of mine made known that it was Joan Watterson! And I've been quite friendly with Joan since I've picked up again. But that nine years makes a big difference when you're young especially. And Joan's dad was one of the policemen here. There was two policemen at the time.

So it wasn't a very big community for them to have to look after I suppose?

No. So different.

There would be a lot more now wouldn't there?

My word, yes.

But I suppose that kept them busy.

14.50 So, when did you get married - when did you meet your husband and get married?

Yes my husband was reared at Toongabbie. That's only about five miles from here and I just met Greg at the local dance, really.

Did you?

Yes. Got married. Stayed here.

What year would that have been when you got married?

14th of June, 1941 we were married.

That was before the War ... during the War really?

That's right. I was 23 and Greg was 26 or 27.

15.53 So when you got married did you move into your own house?

No. I lived with my mother. After they sold the shop - the mixed business - then my mother built a new home. It's still in Main Street, but further out, and I lived with Mum and Dad. The rest of the family got married before I did and Greg and I lived there for a number of years. Then we bought a property of two acres, just half a mile from the town, next to Dickens's.

Oh, right. Yes.

And we lived down there for about 30-odd years.

So you would have been living there during the '50s and that period just after the War?

That's right.

16.53 And what sort of house did your build?

No, we still lived in the home. It had a home on the two acres.

Oh, right. It was already built?

Yes. That's right. And we renovated it in later years and we lived there until we shifted up here 16 years ago.

17.17 So what sort of house was it? Was it a timber house?

Timber with an iron roof, yes, on two acres.

And what did you do with the two acres?

Well my husband at that time had trotting horses, for a time, and then later on we bought a milk run and worked the milk run for Maryong. See it was all zoned at that time and we delivered the milk around Maryong for 12 years.

And did you do that as well?

I had to help at times, yes. It was a seven day a week job, you know. If anyone was sick ...

Someone had to do it!

They called on me - someone had to do it. I was the one that really knew the runs, so ... I often had someone to help with the delivery though. I could drive the truck and get through that way.

Did you deliver by horse and cart at all?

No we had a motor vehicle.

18.28 And so what would your daily routine have been like? Did you have your children fairly straight away?

Yes. They were still at school too in that time. Yes.

You had two children?

Yes. Just a boy and a girl.

A pigeon pair?

That's right.

So what would your daily routine have been - did you take them to school?

Yes. But it was local.

So they could walk?

That's right. Marie went to school just not far down, and then Gary used to go to the High School. Well we got him a bike and he used to ride his bike across to Mitchell High. And Marie went to Grantham High School down at Seven Hills.

19.21 How did she get there - by train?

No. She got a bike.

Oh, did she?

Yes. She used to ride a bike.

19.31 And were the roads sealed roads by then?

Yes. When they were riding to school they were sealed.

And was there a bus service that they could use?

Yes, there would be buses but we never had to rely on buses. There was only bus at Blacktown at that time and it was called the Parklea bus. It just went from the station out to Parklea.

And that was the only bus?

That's right.

20.09 So did you belong to any community groups or anything like that, like Red Cross?

No, not in the early days.

Or school P & C groups?

Yes. Would be. Yes I think we paid in at school to the Red Cross, but later on I don't remember being involved in anything like that.

You didn't belong to the CWA or the Bowling Club.

The Bowling Club in later years, yes. Still do, but I don't play bowls.

You just belong to it for social activities do you?

That's right. Yes.

21.02 And what about when you ... how did you manage to do the shopping? Did you have to go and get your own shopping or was it delivered?

Yes. You could have it delivered, but we always lived right close in the town and managed just to go down and get whatever we wanted.

21.24 And what about your children, what sort of things did they do for recreation after school?

Oh, yes. They were taught swimming during their early days at school and then they went to ballroom dancing at Wentworthville and learned the ballroom dancing which they were very interested in.

Both of them did that did they?

Both of them. My son's always been interested with motor cars - still is! Eastern Creek interests him a lot these days.

22.14 And was there a local cinema or picture show?

Yes. The first one was the Rivoli Theatre and it was burnt down and it was rebuilt. The same people that ran it -owned it - rebuilt a new theatre.

And did your children go there on a Saturday?

Yes they used to go there. In our earlier days we used to go a lot to the Roxy at Parramatta.

Oh, did you?

Yes. That was a favourite.

22.55 Was that before the Rivoli was built?

Oh, no. The Rivoli was built ... oh ...

That was always there?

That was always there. The first one got burnt down. We only lived two doors from that.

23.12 And what did your children do in the school holidays? Did you ever take them away or go camping or anything like that?

Oh, yes. My parents had a caravan and later on, when they retired and we used to go to The Entrance a lot and spend the holidays up there at The Entrance.

23.35 What about household finances? Who managed the household accounts, you or your husband?

I did.

You did? You were the money manager?

Yes, that's right.

So did he give you a certain amount for housekeeping and you managed it or ... ?

I was really never on an allowance, I've got to be honest about it.

But you did all the paying of all the bills?

That's right, yes.

24.11 And did you have any hobbies yourself? Did you do dressmaking or ... ?

Oh, yes. I used to dressmake. I'm very fond of knitting. We always used to go to the local dances. Greg and I shared our pleasures in that respect. Oh then we were interested in trotting. Greg used to train some trotting horses.

You both shared that interest in horses?

That pleasure too. Yes. We were always able to take the children with us, although they were never very keen on horses. More the motor car!

24.59 And what about Churches in the area. Did the Churches play a big role socially in those days back in the '50s?

There was the Church of England Church in Flushcombe Road and we used to go to Sunday School there, like when we were young. And the K-Mart bought that property and they shifted across the road which Church of England Church is still there.

But the old Church was demolished was it?

That's right, for the K-Mart building parking area. There was always the Catholic Church down where Patrick Mall is built now. It was a school adjoined at the Catholic Church.

The little school that's across the road from that, is that the Public School you went to?

Yes. The one in Flushcombe Road - the brick building.

Not far from the library.

No. One school backed on to the other.

26.16 And did the Churches have social activities? Did you or your children go to any youth groups or dances or anything at the Church?

No. Not in the early days I don't think there'd be anything, no.

26.36 After the War, there were a lot of European migrants came to live in Australia and quite a few settled out here in the Western Suburbs. Did you have anything to do with any migrants that came out here? Were you aware of them?

They never made any difference to us?

You didn't know there were any or they just sort of fitted into the community?

They just fitted in.

They didn't change your life in any way?

No. Not so ever.

And what about industry in the area? Where was there much industry in Blacktown back in the '50s?

Not very much. After the War a lot of the returned soldiers settled on poultry farms. That seemed to be the main thing.

That was really the main industry?

Farming and so forth - and then later on a lot of Maltese bought properties and a lot of market gardens with the Maltese.

And they're not around anymore are they, the market gardens?

No they've sold out well and a lot of the farms have been developed for housing.

END SIDE A

SIDE B

0.08 So when you look back over your life in the area, 'cause you've lived here all your life, you must have seen a lot changes take place - when you look back over your life in the '40s and '50s and then look at what life's like now and how it changed after the War, what would you say would be the main differences or the main changes you'd notice?

Progress in every way. Blacktown was ... one time if you went to Sydney and you had things delivered and you mentioned Blacktown, they'd have to look at the map to see where Blacktown really was, and then when the delivery came to Blacktown.

And so Blacktown's really established itself on the map now!

Oh, terrific, yes.

1.16 And what about ... how did you feel about the landscape changing from the bush and the more countrified environment to being a busier shopping area and more houses? Did that worry you at all?

No. It didn't worry us. I think it's, you know, it's nice to see the progress that ...

Shopping facilities would be a lot better now?

Really good shopping, yes. We've got everything here when you're shopping. Yes. Got everything here in the shopping.

1.50 And what about the traffic?

Well, you've got to learn to live with that!

That's one of the prices you pay for progress?

That's right. We've got it here, but we don't ... you get used to it. You just take no notice of it.

2.07 And how do you feel about the old buildings that have been demolished and some of the old landmarks that have disappeared?

Yes. It's a shame to see some of them that have been demolished.

Does that make you feel a bit sad to see them go?

That's right. It does so. Yes.

2.30 And what about the security in the area? That would have changed a lot since the early days wouldn't it, where you didn't have to lock up and that sort of thing?

That's right. Yes. You'd go out and never turn a key on the house or anything or the likes of that. Never bothered locking your cars, but today you've got to lock your house up and ... it's so different. It's a bit frightening in a way - what you hear, what has happened.

3.08 And so generally how do you think life is, say for a young mother living here now bringing up her children, compared to what it was like when you were bringing up your children. Do you think it's better or ... ?

Well. I think a lot depends on the parents. Course some have troubles - even good parents have troubles at times don't they, with their children?

Do you think it's easier though for the mother, you know, to shop and do her housework and all that sort of thing?

Of course I think when two go to work it's asking a bit much of the household in general.

And a lot of women do work now.

My word.

Have to I suppose.

Not much choice is there?

4.03 And not a lot of women did work in the '50s did they?

Not really.

No. A lot of women were at home doing domestic work.

With the family.

**So generally speaking then, you think that most of the changes have been for the better?
And some of the other things you have to put up with?**

I think it's for the better.

4.29 And you look back on your life here in the '50s and think you had a reasonably happy life even so, you didn't feel you were hardly done by?

No. Not really. We were always in ... my parents were in business. We always had full and plenty in that respect. But I think times are better on the whole for young ones and all.

5.00 Well I think that's about it. Thank you very much. Unless you can think of something else you'd like to add.

5.07 During my school days I remember the Thursday night after the cattle sales at Flemington, or Homebush, was finished there was three drovers and they'd have their couple of cattle dogs and they used to drive the cattle - they used to leave apparently at midnight at Homebush - and drive the cattle all the way through to Riverstone Meat Works. They used to come through the Blacktown Main Street and across the railway line.

And they were going to the slaughter were they?

To the slaughter at Riverstone Meat Works.

And this happened regularly did it?

Every Thursday night. Friday mornings they'd be here at Blacktown. You'd hear them calling out to their dogs and so forth as they went through the Main Street because we lived in the Main Street.

It would be like the Wild West!

Yes. That's right. Big herd of bullocks!

OK. Thank you very much for that.