

**MRS FLORENCE GIBBONS,
44 BURRAWAN STREET,
PORT MACQUARIE, 2444.**

0.39 My name is Florence Gibbons and I live at 44 Burrawan Street, Port Macquarie, and I was born on the 11/9/1908, and I was born at Regentville. I am married, a widow, and I am Australian and I have had four children, three living.

1.17 Well first of all I'll just ask you - how long did you live in the Penrith area?

Oh, 55 years. I was born in 1908 at Regentville, which is a couple of miles out of Penrith, and then we moved to Cox Avenue which was called Henry Street in those days, and we lived at 149 Henry Street in those days. My father was an overseer on the Council at the time and I had two sisters, and my first sister lived next door to me and to my mother and father and then I lived in the next house which was the site of the old hospital. They built a new hospital then up the back of our place, about two blocks behind us, which is standing there today which is called the Governor Phillip Hospital for the aged.

2.33 What sort of house did you live in as a child?

Weatherboard. A weatherboard house. It was a fairly big one too. It had two full size bedrooms ... they had to be 12' by 12' or 14' by 14' ... they were 12' by '12, and a big lounge room, a wall straight down the middle to the back part and a big kitchen, and a big ... we called it a verandah, but it was more like a family room they call today. And then a little tiny kitchenette was on that. Mum cooked in the fuel stove, toasted corn on the coals - it was beautiful. We had a big open fire place with logs on which was beautiful too. Washed up in a dish - no sinks! Washed up in a big tin dish and I didn't have to do much, 'cause I was the baby! The eldest sister was the wiper and the second sister was washer-upper! And my father had a nice ... well we had to be on an acre of land ... and Dad would have dug all of that ground. He would have dug with a fork - and it was clay and hard, you know - and he had the most beautiful vegetables. Mum never bought vegetables. Every kind of vegetable you think of he had and he'd be giving them away to everybody, 'cause he'd keep growing more than what he wanted. But it was back-breaking. We had our own chooks which was fun at Christmas time when Dad was cutting their heads off. I even had to have a go at that by the time I was eight. I would cut their heads off and was delighted when the head didn't come off and they danced around with their head flying with them, you know!

4.31 You did have a big garden. Did you have electricity?

We had no electricity. We had lamps and candles and the bathroom wasn't right in the house. It was on the side of the kitchen. We had to go out along the closed-in verandah to get to the bathroom which had a chip-heater in it and we always had to be careful of that. We were always told to be careful of that - of burning paper in it or not making too big a fire in it.

5.05 What about the toilet? Was that outside?

That was about 50 yards down the back bath! And my old grandfather, he used to have to take a chair with him to sit along road as he went because he couldn't walk all the way, so he'd go along and drag the chair and keep going until he got there. And we had the Sanitary Man - we used to call Sam - he only come once a week and he had to change the pans, and I can remember one day our dog, a cattle dog, Rattler, chased him and he dropped the pan. Well as luck happened the lid didn't come off. They were clipped on, the lids. He certainly went crook! But it was something I thought we'd never get rid of. I thought that was going to be it for the rest of our life sort of thing, you know!

When did you get sewerage? In that house? Or not until after you were married?

6.02 It was after we were married. We got married in 1935 and we built, as I said, the two houses up from Mum. Dad had put a cement path along the back of the three houses and when we built the house the sewer, the septic, all the sewer was put inside but it couldn't be used for ... oh, it might have been about 12 months - we had the first sewer in Penrith - and we had to have a make-shift behind the laundry of a hessian toilet, and Sam had to come there. If it rained you had to take an umbrella with you! So we were among the first ones that were already to switch on when the sewer was finished.

6.48 And did you have electricity in that house?

We had electricity in that house, yes, because we got the wireless in about ... the wireless come in about 1937 ... something like that, and we had to nearly prayed to Dad to let us have wireless. He didn't want that. No noise like that. Whatever it was, he wouldn't want any. But once he knew the races was on it, that was it! Dad was ... no noise, no noise when the races were on! No noise when the serials were on! And we got a lot of pleasure out of the wireless, with all the serials. And that was morning tea-time at ten o'clock, we sang out across the three houses, and the lady across the road joined in, so we had four of us on the doorsteps. And then the grocer man would come for an order and he'd sit on the doorstep and have a cup of tea and a hot scone, and they come and got your order and they brought your order back the next day on a horse and cart, and you paid at the end of a fortnight, those days.

7.57 Is this when you were married or when you were still living with your parents?

When I was single. I'm getting ahead of myself. When I was single. I didn't do that when I was married. But we even - when I was single, 'cause I didn't get married until I was 27 - we had a small-goods cart come round. We had the small-goods man started up then, and he'd come with cold meat and honey and butter and eggs and it was very nice if he'd just arrive at your place at a nice time for lunch, you know. We weren't far - we were parallel with the railway line, which was about 100 yards on the other side of the street that went past us. No curb and guttering, no good road, just dirt roads. The postman came on a horse, and he'd blow a whistle, and you got the letter. We called him "Damn" because if he dropped the letter he'd say "Damn", you know, and he'd get down to get the letter and he'd often do that. I can't remember ever seeing any letter boxes out the front of the houses! I think he blew the whistle and you came out and got it! And that was that part of it ...

9.14 And you went to school in Penrith?

I went to school at Penrith Infants School, which is standing there now, down in Henry Street. I went there until I got to the high school stage, I think it was. They built the new High School up on the corner of Evans Street and High Street, and I think that's where I finished school. I left school at 14. And the new High School was built next door where the Towers used to be. A beautiful big cement building which had to be bricked in when the doctor died. They bricked the doors all in, you know, and it never got finished. The Education Department bought it I suppose, 'cause it was bulldozed down when the school was built there. They used to have a coachman and the old time horse and the carriage on the back - not a sulky - a carriage on the back, and Mrs. Barber used to ride in this with a tall topped black hat, you know, with a veil over, and long black sleeves and a bustle on the back of her skirt. I can remember that!

She was the doctor's wife was she?

Yes. She had a pew in church - what we call a pew now - and there was a box hung on the seat that was in front of her, and she had different coloured fans in it and she'd always be sitting up there with the lovely fans, fanning herself, you know. But she always had the high-neck bones - whale-bones - round her neck, you know, and dresses with leg-'o-mutton sleeves and that. I can remember those to start off with.

Were there many women who dressed like that in Penrith?

I can't remember the names of any of them. Only because it was just about on the way out. My mother was still wearing very full skirts, right down to the ground, even on picnics up the

river! We'd go up to Glenbrook Creek of a Sunday for a picnic and they'd have long white skirts on - yards in the width of them, very full, and long sleeves - to go for picnics! And big straw hats, you know. And I have a photo of the old 'combinations'. I think they must have been ... well they had to be a pair that Grandma wore - she died in 1904 - and they used to call them 'trapdoors' because they had a split - each leg was separate and very, very full, except they hung around like a petticoat. You probably wouldn't have needed a petticoat with them on, they were so full. They went over your knees and they were split at the back and they were buttoned up down the front. I thought they ... to me, they seemed like in later life, that they took the part of a camisole, a chemise and a petticoat! (Laughs) You know, that's how much material in it.

It must have been very hot, wearing all those clothes!

Well they would, and I don't suppose the climate's altered that much than those days because it's hot enough in Penrith now in the summer, and being long and that too, over your knees - I suppose they'd be probably eight or nine inches over your knees! It was a lot of washing and ironing. No-one seemed to complain about it! In those days it was the copper with the wood underneath and copper-stick which you had to stir it round with, and it must have been hard on women then, because you'd get wet sheets in a copper and you'd try to lift them and let the water drag out of them. It can get pretty heavy, 'cause I had a few years of that myself! Yes, in my new house we had the fuel copper, and then we got an electric copper. Then of course eventually - not in Penrith we didn't have anything, only the electric copper in Penrith - 'til we moved to Parramatta to a flat for 12 months or something like that - and we had a washing machine when washing machines came in. It would have been a fair few years I suppose after that. But the electric copper we thought was fabulous, you know, after the War time. I think they had to do it very, very hard. Harder than what I did it, because I know my mother did lots of things the hard way which were just becoming to be easier for us, like she only had the wooden fuel stove where she baked in the oven and what - all the vegetables and everything had to be cooked all over the top, and stews for hours and that, and the stove going all the time. And toast - you'd come down with the long toasting fork and you'd sit down in front of the ... and make your toast, and burnt some ... on the fuel stove. I don't remember Mum having a toaster! But she probably didn't!

14.40 She would have probably spent most of her time in the house, in the kitchen, would she?

I don't think my mother went down the street - if she went down once a fortnight, that would have all she'd have ever gone, because we were a mile from town and we never had a car. Dad used to ride a bike to work, and then the Council sported a little panel van type of thing, and he used to sit up in that like as if he owned the world, I think. And I suppose it was probably going about ten miles an hour and holding everybody up, but there wasn't any cars around then. We'd walk home up the main street from the pictures or a night and - no cars! No cars at all!

No buses?

Oh, no buses. Never heard of buses! No - and no lots of other things too, because I was allowed to go to the pictures and come home by myself, and I wouldn't dream of letting anybody do that now! But I used to play for the silent movies and that'd be from eight o'clock to 11 o'clock, somewhere. It could be half past 11 when I'd be walking home, and a mile from town and we didn't have a house on every block of land that you passed! There'd be plenty of big paddocks you'd have to go passed.

16.10 Did you have neighbours as a child?

We had neighbours. We had one about two blocks away, and one about ... well that was when ... I would have had to be about ten or 12, I think, before we had neighbours. And we used to have to go down Henry Street - down through a set of railway gates that had to be opened to let any cars or any horse and carts through, and they had to be kept shut so none of the stray horses got on the railway line - and down to the old school that standing there now, and I don't know that we passed any houses! I can't think of any houses down there. I think the houses

that were there are still there, so they couldn't have been built as early as, you know, when I first started school.

17.08 And you walked to school too, then?

Oh, yes. Yes we walked to school. We never had a car until ... we were married in 1935, and my husband had to have a motor-bike to go to work at Parramatta - he worked for a big timber firm and for Goodyears, eventually, when the War came he was at Goodyears - well we had a car round about then.

17.39 Did you build your house when you were married?

Yes. The house I lived in as a child - I must have brought into it I think just after I was a sort of baby - and it was a big house. And then when my sister got married in about 1923, she built a George Hudson's Ready Cut, and it cost 325 pound or 350 pound. That was the price of a two-bedroom, lounge room, dining room and a little small kitchen, and I think the verandah was added on at extra expense. But that was, say 350 pounds. Then in 1939 we built the house then next to her, and ours was about 30 square and a tile roof, a fibro house with a separate laundry and a garage with it, and they were tiled there. We had cement from the front gate to the garage door at the back of the house - down the side of the house, but like just behind the house - and that cost us 650 pound! And that was a big house. I think the lounge was 14 by 14, it was a six foot lobby between that and the bedroom which was 12 by 12, and I remember the dining room was 22 by 16. The back bedroom might have been 12 by 12. We had this 30 foot long verandah, ten foot wide, at the back adjoining on to the house, of course, so it wasn't small!

19.32 Did you have a bathroom inside?

We had a bathroom inside and we had an electric heater, and we had some hot water. Oh, it was fantastic!

19.43 And did you have a lot of land around you? What size block?

Nice size block. We had ... oh, I'd say about ... the average size. I think it might have been ... it went back probably 150 to 200 feet, I suppose, and the front would have definitely have been 60, 70 feet wide, perhaps 80 feet wide. That would have been the size of it! And my sister had the same. My father's was larger, 'cause as I say, the old hospital was on it, and I think it shows that in the records that would be at the Council, I suppose, or something - before they built the new one. Mum used to work for the hospital. The Comforts Club, they used to call it, and she had lots of card parties at her place and plates and plates of sandwiches, and always lamingtons! Never, never missed lamingtons! And one and six to go! I was put to bed, I know that. My sisters would help, and a great big boiler of coffee - which you would make on skim milk of course, not pure milk - but it was lovely coffee. I can always remember everybody wanted another cup. And Mum made quite a few pounds for the Comforts Club in that way. And I'm always saying I had never heard my mother say she never had enough money that week or anything! She was never short of money! And Dad would have got about four pounds something a week, and that would have been the wage. And whether they were paying off their house or not, I don't know. They didn't have a building society until we got married and one started, and we were the 13th one to get in that building society. But we were buying the timber for a good six months before we got the place, because we could put it on our land and store it, you see, and pay for it and we didn't owe any of that, and we only had to pay a pound a week back to the building society. Well that seemed a lot of money those days. But now - I just have to smile at myself - a pound a week! It was too ridiculous!

22.07 Did you work at all when you were married?

I worked at Fletchers which was a big store then. Mr Fletcher used to come round door-to-door before he got the shops, and ...

That was a clothing store wasn't it?

Yes. It was a general everything in the end. He only started off with haberdashery and all that, coming round to your door. And I used to be scared because this man came round to our door - I don't know why! He had a black beard - I never saw anyone with a beard! - and Mum used to buy elastic or tape or something, you know. And then I went to work for him. My sister went to work ... the eldest one. He had a shop in Parramatta first, and she used to travel to Parramatta, which - from Penrith to Sydney was a good hour and a half - and to Parramatta it was about three-quarters of an hour I suppose. And then when my other sister was old enough she went to work with Mr. Fletcher, and then when I was 14, I went to work for Mr. Fletcher, but in Penrith. He'd got a store in Penrith then. I used to sell Fuji silk, one and eleven-pence halfpenny a yard, or something like that, you know, and you never sold coloured shirts. It was all white shirts for men. White shirts - I'm telling you a lie! It was black shirts, because they worked on the railway. It was all railway men, and it was black shirts, and we wore black stockings. My sisters got married in two-plain, two-purl ribbed white stockings, and black stockings for travelling. And when silk stockings did come in, they were only nine inches of silk and the rest was all lyle - or cotton - your dress went down to meet the silk, and that was the first ones.

23.58 Did you make your own? Did your mother sew, and did you sew for your children?

No, I never sewed. I don't know why we didn't. We did fancy-work. We did a terrible lot of fancy-work, my two sisters and I, but Mum used to crochet a terrible lot. But she couldn't teach us - and we couldn't teach her to knit! And that was how it went. No, Mum only just did plain sewing - mending and sewing - and that's probably all I've done too. We weren't married to a machine. I've got a sewing machine - it's a Venerable machine which I bought when I was 17. It's a cabinet - and it still goes! But I made little things when the kids were little, that's all. I wouldn't say I was a good sewer or anything. But I still have that machine, and my sister had a White's machine and it was a real good faithful old thing. She used it a lot for kiddies' things only, and mending, you know.

25.04 And when you were married, you worked then too for Mr. Fletcher, did you?

I went to Parramatta for 12 months. We leased a flat down in Mays Hill at Parramatta, and I went to work for Grace Bros. down there. I don't think they'd been there that long. And then when the lease was up we went back to Penrith because we knew we were going to build. So we went back and lived with my mother and father for 12 months 'til we got the rest of the timber and got the place fixed up and built. And my girl is 53, and I think she was 18 months old when we moved into the house.

25.50 So you have lots of family support when you're children were small?

Oh, yes. And when the Depression was on, that was one thing that the parents ... that was Dad's garden! And my sister and her - she had four children - and my other sister, she came from Sydney and she came up for one and six in the train, and she always came with a little port and go back with lots of vegetables and that in it. And then we had lots of relations come on Sunday for the day, one and six, and they'd always bring a port with their apron in. I don't know what they had the apron for, 'cause they never washed up or wiped up. But it was an excuse to bring the port, I think, to go home with beans and all sorts of things, you know. But Dad had a marvellous garden. Mum was a marvellous cook, and we always had relations coming from Sydney, from as far as Bondi just for the day - Bondi, Croydon, Parramatta. Mum came from a family of about ten, I think it was. Father came from a family of 14. And we've still got those on my mother's side - what's left of the family - we're still as pally with as what we've been all our life, and we still keep in contact with one another.

27.17 And did you have lots of friends in the community in Penrith too?

Oh, yes. I was the founder of the CWA Younger Set. I can't just think was year it would have been. It would have been in the 1920's I'd say. It might have been getting nearer to 1930 - perhaps it was about 1930. No, it was before 1930! And I was the President, and I

went through the course of President, Secretary, the Treasurer. We had a nice club and some of the people that were in it are still here. And we'd have a ball, seven and six a double ticket, and a sit-down supper - knife and fork - and you decorated the hall with trees and goodness knows what you had, same as you'd decorate the church. It used to be all palm trees and everything, but it really must have been a pest with some of the frocks and that. But Mr. Ernie Orthow (?), the Town Clerk that was then, he was the organiser at the Church of England, and Mr. Ferrier was the Minister, and you always asked them all to the wedding. When you got married, you always asked all those to the wedding, and we had a couple of hundred guests at St. Stephens Church, which my mother catered for. How I wouldn't know, because she was at the wedding dressed up and in her seat. She had women serving the meal, and we had it in the old Dungowan Theatre where the pictures used to be, and I don't know, they tell me the Dungowan's gone now, in Station Street! A lot of our visitors and friends and that had to come by train, because they didn't all have cars then. In fact we'd been loaned a car from one of the guests to go for our honeymoon, and it poured the week before and it poured for the wedding! The only time it stopped was when it was time to go to church, and the guests - we had a big wedding, 200 as I said - and they couldn't get in the church some of them, and they had to stand outside - and it never rained! And we came out and we got down to the Dungowan Theatre and started raining again. It was very fortunate. We went out west way, but we couldn't get into a hotel first. There were no motels - hotel or boarding houses. And my husband went in one and they had no beds, and he went in another one. They wouldn't get up - once they're shut, they're shut! And this chap came along and asked him what he was looking for, and he told him. "We shall take you to a guest house!" so he came across, opened the door - it was a little single-seater car with a dickie seat in the back - and he got in! "Oh, fancy doing that today", you know, and we went where he told us, straight down Katoomba Street to the Tower in Quirinda (?) and we got a bed for the night there. Next stop we went on to Tarranah. You couldn't get a bed there 'cause the whole town was full of pea pickers. Oh, and there was a lot of pea pickers! So - that's the only time I've been through Tarranah (?) - we ended up at Oberon - we got a bed at Oberon. And then we made friends with some people who we went to see the next year, and they had this big house with dirt floors and they used to sprinkle them of a morning with a little water and sweep them, and they were like rock - it was just like rock! And the huge fireplace! Huge fireplace! And a big, thick, iron bar across it with two huge black kettles with taps on hanging there, and a long seat in the front - a stool - and I think eight of us or nine of us must have been sitting along this stool in front of the fire. I can't remember seeing chairs with backs on them. And the bedrooms had the dirt floors too, but they made us very welcome, and the next year we went back again. When we went they had to direct us from ... "The toilet's not down there, it's down this side this year" 'cause they had to shift it - they had great big pits, and we had to go ... we were told where the toilet was. You stand at the back door and eat cherries off the tree, right at the back door, and the big baker over was right there too with the loaves of bread, about seven loaves of bread at a time in it.

It sounds wonderful!

32.10 The big washing - the whole thing was down the back - a big tub thing that they used to make a fire under and boil all the clothes!

END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

0.06 So when your children were born, did you have them at the local hospital?

Well we just had got a private hospital - our first private hospital - and it was in High Street, opposite the fire station, and of course my mother thought ... as she had always helped the district nurse, my mother for many years she used to help - I think she helped the district nurse's mother too - and she would have me go to the private hospital. But I wasn't very happy at all when we came home, and my mother wasn't so ... I lost that child. It was born and breathed, and that was all because a doctor hadn't been sent for in time.

Was that your first child?

That was the first one - and it was only across the road! But the nurse had gone out for the afternoon and left her sister-in-law there to keep me company, and when he came back it was really too late, it had choked - through stretching to put clothes on the old time clothes lines with clothes props and that! So the next time - I had another one about two years after - and I stayed home and the nurse came to me and I had a girl who is 53 now, and the doctor didn't get there quick enough the next time to the home because it was my second child. And then the next one I had, I had a boy, and that was in the new house too, and everything was good with that one. And the next one I had at my mother's house, because we still had the three houses there. And they grew up and went to the same school as I went to down in Henry Street, the primary school, and of course then I belonged to Mothers' Clubs and all this with the children. But eventually one would move up to the new school that was built in High Street and one would start down at the infants'. Then we got the new high school. I put in a tender for the new high school canteen and I got it. I had that for 13 years, and as one child left one school, the other one started at that school, so that's how they got through school.

2.43 Did they walk to school from home too?

Yes, oh yes. We weren't far from the school, the high school especially, and we weren't that really far from the primary school because the town was still on the other side of the primary school. The two girls loved music and my eldest girl now, she played for St. Stephen's here at church and she used to go in concerts and that. But she lives at Buderim now and she, as a matter of fact, is there at Buderim - and she plays for the church at Buderim. Maroochydhore I think the church is in, and she loves that. She plays the organ every Sunday morning.

3.33 And what did you do for recreation in those days?

We don't seem as though we did that much at all. The pictures started and they were allowed to go to the pictures, I think it was sixpence. It was only sixpence and you got a bottle of drink, I think, for about threepence. So they were allowed to go to the pictures on Saturday afternoons. Otherwise they ... I didn't let them go out to people's place to play - I liked the kiddies to come to my place 'cause we had plenty of room - we had a big paddock next to us - and the girls used to always seem to play with their dolls, and the eldest girl played the piano, and so she played the piano and she got a lot of enjoyment out of that. The next girl, she used to play with the boy. They were near one another - a bit closer to age, you know - and they just played around the place. They never went away to play or anything. There was no Scouts and that, that I know of, then.

They made their own fun?

Yes. They made their own fun with their story books and chased one another round the houses - Cowboys and Indians and that sort of thing!

Did you go on family picnics?

Not with the children. We had no car when they were real little. When they got older of course we had a car and we used to take them - they were still going to school then - but ... we didn't go out ... we just had ... I think No I'm a bit stuck for what we did when they were growing up. They seemed to be book fiends, and played with dolls and books and that, and I had thought in their early ages to find their amusement at home. I never thought about letting them go out, so they used to play at home. They would have perhaps the little girl across the road come over, and the little boy, but ... no they never worried me about wanting to go away anywhere like that.

5.34 And what would your daily routine have been when the children were little.

Well, I took the hobbies of doing handicrafts and I used to plait raffia on my big verandah I had, I'd plait that here and then I'd so it together in baskets. I used to make big coloured raffia flowers on the side of them, and I found a bit of a business in that, selling these baskets up as far as Lithgow, you know, and everybody seemed to have one of these baskets for their shopping. So that filled in my days a lot. As I say I did do the handicrafts, and I did belong

to three different Mothers' Clubs, but of course as the kiddie was getting that size I was still at the High School at the canteen. So my days were taken that way and their days were taken - they had their homework to do.

6.29 And you did all your own cooking and housework I suppose?

Oh yes. And I used to play the piano. I used to play for the silent movies.

Did you?

Oh, that was before I was married though, and my brother-in-law played the cornet, and my husband - he wasn't my husband then, he was my boyfriend - he used to play the violin. So that was a full orchestra on Saturday nights for 30 shillings.

Where was that? At the Dungowan?

At the Dungowan. Sorry, not the Dungowan. It was the Dungowan, I'm sorry. I'm getting mixed because the first theatre we used to have was an open-air one, you know, and you took your umbrella in case it rained!

Really!

Yes. It was the Dungowan and we used to play there. I played on Wednesday nights on my own, and Saturday afternoon I'd play and get five shillings for the matinee, and that was a lot of money. I wasn't married then, and I saved up and I bought a bedroom suite for eight pound, and it was a full size double wardrobe and dressing table and wash stand and all, for eight pound. When my mother's house was sold about, say it was sold ... eight or nine years ago, and that bedroom suite would have been in the house. So it's somewhere, perhaps around the district.

7.58 Was there dancing in the local church hall?

Yes. Not in the church hall, we never had dancing. We had it in the band hall and we used to play the dance music free for the band, 'cause the brother-in-law was the band master, you see. That was before I was married, and we'd play there on Friday nights because we'd play the pictures Saturday nights. Real good, clean crowd! Nobody went out of the hall. Everybody came there to dance. Monte Carlo seems the most popular dance, and you had four cards you put round the room - clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades - and if you was in one of those music stops you had to stand still. And then somebody would open a pack of cards and if a heart was showing everybody on the heart square had to go off the floor. And that's how they'd find a winner out of it, you know. We might have had one through the week too, and there might be someone there who could play piano and give you a break, and you could have a dance yourself. And you got supper! I suppose it was one and six again - that was the popular price to go to it, one and six - and they'd have supper again and they probably had lamingtons again! My mind just won't take me back to what - but it was supper, one and six and supper - and we finished at 11 o'clock at night - the dancing - and everybody went their way home.

9.27 And what about in the '30s and '40s, the later '40s? How had the place changed by then? Very much, or was it much the same?

Well we're getting a few more shops in the town. We had Moran and Cato's and Green Coupons, and Fletcher's had expanded and made their store much bigger. They had separate men's wear and separate drapery department, all in the one shop, but like separate sections instead of everything in the one door. And I suppose he may have probably employed about eight people, and that was a big shop - eight people! And Keith Salter, the Produce Street next door, there was still plenty of horses around, and we had troughs in the street for the horses to drink out of. And the first taxi arrived in the town. A "sit-down" it was called - not a sedan, a sit-down. And of course everybody wanted to ride in it, but was wondering how much it would cost. I suppose it was probably about a shilling or something like that - one

and six again! I was playing at the picture show when that took place, but we had got quite a few shops in the town then, and Arnie Jay's shop expanded to two shops and I worked in one of those. I left Fletchers and I worked in Arnie Jay's and run one shop for him then. Every organisation that had been formed would have a ball during the year and that, and even the band which only started off very small but it got into a good size. Jamisontown - I don't think that progressed very much. The cemetery was at Jamisontown, one cemetery. The grandmother and grandfather - 1904 and 1916 they died - they were buried there, and the child I lost was buried there, and I think it is just all grass now these days. But I think there is still a fence right round the area.

11.41 And I suppose in the '30s it was still fairly unbuilt up around here? Around Penrith?

Yes. I'm getting mixed up, where I am - around Penrith! Yes well a lot of people lived out Luddenham on dairies and that, and Mulgoa.

12.03 When did you move to Regentville?

That's where I started off. I was born in Regentville.

Oh, right. And it was when you lived in Henry Street

I lived in Henry Street all my life, 'til I left there thirty years ago. I was still in Cox Avenue, Penrith, which was Henry Street. They've re-named it because the gates ...

Cox Avenue is a very industrial area now?

Right up the end it is, up over the hill to the cemetery. Yes. I'm still friends with a girl that lived up there near the cemetery, and I went to see her the day before yesterday, and she's only in Derby Street. And I went to one in York Road that married Price that had charge of all the petrol in the town. Heather, my niece, Heather Core - her husband was the carter, the carrier in the town for years and years and years. A well-known family name, the Cores. I visit quite a lot of people here when I come back to town, because as I said I went to school here. We used to have the funerals - the funerals were all horse drawn - and the sulkies were the mourning coaches. You could hire them on weekends for two shillings an hour, so we used to get one Sunday afternoon for six shillings for the afternoon, and a couple of the other boys and girls would get one. But we couldn't get one horse to pass the other! We had to follow one another. And we'd go right to Mulgoa and cross country to Orchard Hills and back in Kingswood way, so the horses didn't knock-up on us. But there was one chap, Clegg from out Orchard Hills, and his people had a horse and sulky to drive to catch the train of a morning - the 'Fish' train that used to come from the Mountains. 'Fish' and 'Chips' the two trains were called. One didn't stop and one didn't pick up and the other one did. They were called 'Fish' and 'Chips' on account of the guard and the driver and their names were Mr. Fish and Mr. Chips or something. So that's how they got their name, and these people used to drive in for that train. Mum would bring them in and go back. It was a little sulky and it was a little horse. And he'd come on the drive on Sunday afternoon and he'd gallop along on to Mulgoa, and our horses would never pass, as I said. But we could never catch him, and he'd get ahead and he'd sit and wait and roar laughing when we got there and then away he'd go and leave us again! Well, that was all the fun we had.

14.51 A bit different today isn't it?

Yes. And then in the paddock next to us, one of them had a motor-car - I think it might have been Geoff Gow's people might have had a motor-car - and he'd come in the motor-car and turn the headlights on and we'd go out in the paddock - oh, about 25 or us - and we'd play kiss-in-the-ring, drop-the-handkerchief, forfeits, and inside then to the piano and around the piano and sing. My husband played the violin and everybody standing round and singing. That was most of our fun was just standing round singing. And then of course Mum would put a nice supper on again. We used to her good old faithful!

15.44 Can I ask you, when you were married, who handled the household finances? Did you or your husband?

We did it between us because he only got - I think my father might have been getting more then - my husband got four pound two and six a week, and we had to allocate what to do with it and we had little bottles. This was the Lodge, two shillings a week, and that was the electricity and gas - down at Parramatta we started off. So we had little bottles with a label on them what they were. And two and six only for his tobacco for a week! A great difference now!

And no credit or anything like that in those days.

And it was no good you asking, anyhow, you wouldn't get it. Never thought of it ... you had to live with what you wanted. Whatever you wanted that you couldn't pay for you had to have a lay-by, and we never wanted anything unless we owned it. So you always sort of had a lay-by for your linen and that, for your household things.

17.01 After the War, when things started to change, how did you feel about that, when the area started to become more populated and more built up?

It was amazing where the people came from. My broth-in-law used to have a boot shop, and he would only get paid half as many times as what the shoes were that he did. And even when the War started, nobody ever asked for credit, everybody always had money. And they never had so much money. And you didn't have to live with a ration. You just had more. And I had a sister-in-law who had a business and she really made money while the War was on when all the different soldiers from different places came to town. It was a bit of boom thing then.

17.51 It was a bit of a tourist area then, was it, Penrith?

I don't know about that then. The women all had to go to work. They didn't have to go, but they wanted to help. They wanted men, and they didn't have the men, the men had gone to War. So the women used to go out on the field here. Even up in Port Macquarie they have a Land Army that they used to have - they have a reunion. And they used to be out in the fields, picking or pulling and that sort of thing. I can remember when the War was on, and I think I might have been about eight or nine, when the troops marched from Cowra to go on their boat to Sydney, my mother got permission to make little bouquets and give each troop a bouquet as they went past the Reservoir - that's halfway between Penrith and Kingswood - and she got permission and she was told that the Sergeant would slow them down a bit when they got near the Reservoir which is just out of Penrith. So, my two sisters were 17 and 19 then, or something like that, and they got up early and made all these little loop buttonholes.

19.16 That's the First World War isn't it?

Yes. That one, yes. And of course I was given a tray too and we run in and out the soldiers gave them all - everyone had a bouquet. And of course then when they went to the War they knitted socks and put their names and addressed down in the sock and they used to get replies!

19.36 And after the Second World War - when the War was over, what was Penrith like then? How had it changed?

The Second one?

Yes. Say, looking at the 1950's. What was it like then?

It was really getting a go on. When the troops came home, the town started going mad when the troops came home. When they were going they were all waved away, you know, on the long carriages that they had too, and when they came home well the town really turned it on! We never saw so many young fellows in the town as what came down into Penrith then, wherever they came from - whatever places they came from. Pictures were getting on three

nights a week. That was probably fabulous for pictures to be on three times a week. And of course there've always been plenty of dances on in the halls, they'd always have dances on and that. But there'd be a lot of house parties on and boys would come up for the weekend from Sydney that'd made friends with somebody down our way.

20.57 What about the shops? Had they changed a lot by then?

Oh, the shops had gone through the boom time with the War on. They'd probably all expanded and we had more shops. We had a good lot of shops by then.

21.12 And I suppose you had a lot of neighbours too by then?

Oh, we had ... all the streets got taken up with houses, and I can remember my mother wanted my father to buy a house up the road a little bit on the other side. It was only 350 pounds and it had a big block of land. When the War finished Dad wouldn't buy it. He said "You've got your deeds. You keep them. You don't put your deeds in and lose them perhaps." So he wouldn't buy it. Someone else bought it and eight houses went up on the block of land and our street got full then. That was 1950 and we got the new high school then too, I think, or a bit before that.

22.05 And how did you feel with all the new houses around you? Did you feel hemmed in at all, or did you feel less free?

Oh, no. I just thought it was lovely, all the people. I didn't mind the people and we never, ever minded the people - my family - because we just love people and we still do to this day. Anyone that comes to our place is welcome at any time. I forgot to mention that in the older days, the tramps were around those days, you know. "Tramps" we used to call them and they'd be walking from wherever to wherever, and they'd come to your back door for you to give them something to eat, and Mum would always make sandwiches. And the next day perhaps another one would arrive and he'd say "Oh, I met so and so down St. Marys" or somewhere, and he'd come for something to eat. That was what used to go on in those days. But ... 1950's ... all the dancing teachers were here then, all dancing classes and concerts and oh, I think there were clubs of all sorts through the War. The Women's Auxiliary had started and something else for the women, and then all the ones that were in the War, they made up another club when they come home - the WAFS and all the different things. I just can't ... you made me think now about 1950 ...

23.26 Jumping forward isn't it? Yes. I just wondered - when you are, you know, talking about all the old days and feeling the atmosphere of the place then - how it's changed, say in the '50s and '60s?

Oh, I'd much sooner have the 30 years ago than today.

Why is that?

Well I'll go down the street now when I come to visit, and I don't like it 'cause I don't know anybody. (Laughs). And I knew everybody! And I don't ... I hardly know anybody now unless I come to visit my relations at their houses. I have been in the street twice since I've been here this week and I've met one person to say hello to - and you miss them. It's really sad! Now of course we have so much culture and that around that there is as much of that in the street as what there was our own lot, you know. That helps to make you feel that you don't know anyone.

24.39 And do you also feel sad to see all the old buildings, all the old land marks that have gone?

Oh, I hate to think of some of them! Levy's building, you know - we always said Levy's - it'll always be Levy's building to the older people I suppose. And the Fire Station! We used to sit out along the fire brigade every Friday night while Dad was on duty, you know, and the shops

were open until nine o'clock. Now they're back to where they started again, you see, the shops are open.

They're opening late again.

And the band used to play then though, and of course there wasn't the cars. The Band would play on the road - not on the footpath - on the road, in the gutter sort of thing.

You couldn't do that today!

They'd probably get knocked over today if they did that!

**25.32 What about the space around the houses and that sort of thing?
Do you miss that too?**

Oh yes. It's getting shorter, the area around the ... getting narrower and narrower.

But I was going to say that they never had a swimming pool, I don't think, until 1940 or '50. I can't remember, but I know when I was little we were taken to the river with a teacher and we had to walk the mile down to the river, and we wore one-piece black costumes, but we had to wear sandshoes because there were so many stones in the river. The doctor's daughter would have a black Italian cloth top on with a girdle round the waist with about ten or 12 inches hanging on the bottom of the top. But then she had long bloomers on under that - black Italian cloth - they went over her knees with elastic in and she had sandshoes on and black stockings.

Really! To go swimming!

And a little black cap! And that's how she had to go in. We didn't have to do that. We had the one-piece black - you didn't have any choice of coloured costumes - you just had black! But we were always frightened because the stones could make you slip over easily. But that's how we had to learn until the younger generation got a swimming pool. So now that's fine for them now.

27.02 And the river probably wouldn't be too nice to swim in now either!

Well, perhaps not. I suppose the stones would still be there. And we did have, a couple of times, there was somebody washed over the weir after rains had been and all that - little bits of dare devils.

27.21 So do you think that the changes that have taken place here - after the War - the rapid change when the population really exploded out his way - do you think it's been a good thing? Did you cope with it all right yourself?

Well seeing we've got such a population now, I suppose it was a good thing. But myself - I prefer it the way it was before the War.

Did you find shopping harder?

No, and I walked to town a mile and walked back a mile. And when I was younger I'd be pushing a pram, and you'd have afternoons the girls came and brought their babies. But, of course, it's a different generation altogether now, and as I say, you look at people to smile at them if you pass them, but everybody doesn't look at you to smile! We had a thing going in Port - 'Whoever has the Best Smile?' You smiled at people, you know, to try to get it going, and people were saying, you know, what a lovely town it was because everybody was smiling at them. And it should be done more often, I think, it doesn't matter who you pass, just smile at them. If you don't want to speak, you don't have to speak. Just smile - and it'll sort of grow on you.

28.45 So you think one of the main things is that it has become less friendly, and more crowded?

I think so, yes. The washing machines and the different things they have - all these labour-saving things are fabulous, especially for the women, but all these other things are bad for the young ones that are growing up. All these fast cars and all that sort of thing. I think they should be cut back to only be able to do a certain speed or something like that, you know. I think this ... and now that the children have grown up - the way they've grown up - they've got to be entertained all the time no matter whether they're six or seven or eight! They find themselves move to the television and it's not always good for them - and this Turtle thing that they have on - well we know that is not so good because we know of different accidents that have happened with that, and only recently. But good, nice movies on the screen - well not movies for the little ones - but comic strips, nice ones. It should be ...

There's more violence in entertainment?

Yes. Too many war things and things like that.

30.08 And what about security? You don't feel so free to walk around the streets at night or anything like that?

No. I used to walk the mile home when I was 17, 18, 19 - and Mum would just be lying in bed just waiting to know I was home, no other reason. And I just walked home. I never thought anybody might be chasing me or anything like that - it wouldn't enter your head. And that's only with population and the wars and that too. No I think the country was a lot better living that way. It's brought a lot of badness with it, all the population and that, it has brought a lot of badness and the TV and the movies, you know.

31.05 After the War a lot of migrants came out from Europe too. They would have helped the population expand. Did you have much to do with European migrants in the community?

Well not much. I never, ever thought after the War that I would have a Japanese in my home, but I did! I had a lovely exchange student. And she was beautiful! And beautifully spoken and beautifully mannered and quiet, and I thought to myself "Oh, goodness" you know "I'm a bit scared about having her" but I thought "I've got to put on a brave face". But she was really beautiful. And I've got Chinese living beside me now and they are lovely, and you don't here that noise that you might hear from your own lot. Your own Australian boys - you might get four or five of them in a flat and the noise is terrible! But there can be four or five of these in the unit next to me and they're nice and clean, and we always smile at one another. I don't always speak. I do sometimes, but I know one of them has a bit of trouble making me understand. But no ...

32.28 I think we're running out of tape, so ... I think we've just about covered everything, so thank you very much.

I hope you can use some of it.

END OF INTERVIEW.