

INTERVIEW NO. 31

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 26th February, 1992.

**MRS. THELMA MASTERS**

**43 Lalor Road,  
QUAKERS HILL. 2763.**

0.18 My name is Thelma Masters and I live at 43 Lalor Road, Quakers Hill. I was born on the 28th of the sixth 1927. My nationality is Australian and I'm married. I have two children, three grandchildren - all boys.

**0.46 First of all I'll just ask you a few background questions. What sort of work did your father do?**

He was a labourer.

**In this area?**

Yes. He used to work at Riverstone Meat Works. That was when I was married he was working at Riverstone Meat Works.

**And what about your mother? Did she work?**

My mother died when I was eight.

**Oh did she? So who brought you up?**

Well my father and I had three brothers and we had a good grandmother!

**Oh. That was lucky. And she lived with you?**

No. No, I went and lived with Grandma for a lot of my life and she practically brought me up - at Parklea.

**Oh, Parklea. And you had three brothers, no sisters, so ...**

No sisters, and I was the second eldest. When I was old enough to leave school I looked after the three boys and looked after the house and then I got a job and I worked at Bonds for quite a few years.

**Was that at Five Dock?**

No, Pendle Hill. And from Bonds I got married and then I left work and I haven't worked since! (Laughs) Only at home!

**2.17 And so when you were married, you moved here did you into this house?**

Yes.

**2.23 Right. So when you were a child, what school did you go to?**

Parklea.

**Parklea Primary was it?**

Yes. Primary school.

**And did you walk to school?**

Yes. We used to walk about five miles to school, and then after Mum died - before Mum died - Dad bought a block of ground not far from the school and they built a little old house on it and it wasn't far. I was eight when Mum died.

**2.56 And did you find it difficult?**

Yes. Yes, when Mum died Dad packed us all up and we went to live at Grandma's - and him too. And, like Dad being ... I've got an aunty nine months younger than me and there was quite a bit of friction at one stage, you know, amongst the children. Then we back home to the other place.

**How old were you then?**

Oh I suppose I'd be about 10.

**3.27 And so from then on you helped look after your brothers?**

Yes.

**So it must have been quite a hard life for you?**

Oh, it was.

**And did you have to help cooking and doing housework?**

I did all the cooking and the housework.

**What from 10 years of age on? Goodness! Then you went to school as well?**

Yes.

**And what age did you leave school?**

Fourteen and a half.

**3.50 And what did you do then?**

I looked after the house until the boys were old enough to more or less fend for themselves, and then I went and lived with an Aunty and Uncle at Pendle Hill and got a job at Bonds.

**And how old you were you then?**

Oh, about 16.

**4.05 So you didn't have a very leisurely childhood?**

No. We used to boil the old kerosene tin outside and do the washing of a weekend, and on the ... like an open fire.

**And did your brothers help at all and your father?**

Well dad had a market garden out there at the time. Yes. Like he had always had a garden with five acres, and he was busy. We only had tank water. We had no electricity up there then.

**4.37 What did you do for lights?**

We had kerosene lights?

**4.40 And what about ... did you have an ice box?**

Yes. An ice-chest. But the ice-man never came there as often as he did after we moved here. Even after I got married the ice-man used to call here - we never had a fridge.

**Didn't you?**

No.

**5.00 So what your daily routine have been as a child then? You know as a young teenager?**

As a teenager ... we used to ride a bike or ... we didn't do a great lot. When I got older I used to go to the dances and I used to dance a lot.

**That was your main entertainment?**

My main entertainment was dancing - or go to the pictures in Blacktown.

**5.30 When you were looking after the family, how did you fit in the housework?**

I used to do it when I came home.

**Did you feel hardly done by?**

Not really.

**You just accepted it?**

I just accepted it. Yes. And if the clothes didn't get dry at the weekend I used to try and dry them by the stove. We had an open fire - open fuel stove - and I suppose the boys used to get wood. We'd never go down into the bush without bringing an armful of sticks back for the fire. You'd always do that.

**6.00 And what about shopping?**

Well I think Dad did most of the shopping.

**Did he. He had a car I suppose.**

A motor-bike and sidecar.

**Oh, and so he did the shopping and brought it home himself?**

Yes.

**And you didn't get deliveries?**

No. Not out ... oh the butcher used to come out there. And Dad would order the meat from Quakers Hill as it was, and the butcher would bring the meat up a couple of days a week. And the bread was delivered.

**And I suppose he supplied his own vegetables from the market garden?**

Yes.

**Is your father Australian born? Because a lot of market gardeners were from Europe.**

No. He was an Australian born.

**6.49 So after you left home and got married ... oh what was the area like at Parklea?**

At Parklea? Oh very, very quiet and rural with quite a few poultry farms around. Dairy farms. Other than that it was very quiet.

**Did you know your neighbours?**

Oh, yes. Everybody knew one another.

**Were they close neighbours - close physically?**

Five acres blocks really - not a great lot, we didn't know them a great lot, you know. They were there - you'd say hello to them.

**7.29 And did you play with other children in the area?**

No, no. Going home from school we used to go home with a crowd that used to live further over. They'd call into our place and we'd get into the bread and butter and jam! And we'd have a feast! Of course all the children would be hungry. Dad would come home and we'd have no bread! (Laughs)

**Well it was a long walk wasn't it?**

Well, yes!

**7.55 And how did you get around? Did you have a bike yourself?**

Yes.

**And did you ride to school sometimes?**

Yes. In the later years we did.

**And your father never had a car?**

No. He got a car later when he retired?

**8.10 And what about public transport?**

Only buses.

**There were buses. And was it a good service?**

No. It was only about a couple of times a day.

**Really. So mostly you'd have to walk or ride a bike?**

Yes.

**8.27 And the roads weren't very good I suppose?**

No. No I can remember when they were only dirt roads from here to Blacktown - or from Parklea to Blacktown - they were only dirt roads.

**8.378 So when you got married, what year was that?**

1947.

**And you moved here to Quakers Hill?**

Yes. Well, Lloyd's mother and father owned this house and we ... I had my appendix out and I couldn't ride my bike from Parklea to work. I used to ride from Parklea to Pendle Hill.

**Did you?**

Yes. There and back each day. And the doctor said I wasn't to ride the bike for a few weeks, so I came down here and I used to go by train to Pendle Hill, and then from there I stayed here until I got married.

**8.17 Right. And so when you were married did you move in with your husband's parents to start off with?**

Yes.

**9.27 And what was this area like then?**

It was rural. There was poultry farms. If you sat outside you could hear the chooks cackling! Quite a few dairy farms. There was a picture show once a week in the local hall. We used to have dances in the local hall.

**9.50 Were there many shops?**

No. There was one shop and a butcher's shop.

**Was it a mixed business?**

A mixed business shop, and the Post Office was at the rear end of it.

**Was it. It was a tiny shopping centre!**

And that shop's still down here.

**10.09 Is it? And were the neighbour's houses close together? Or were there gaps between?**

The house was next door here, but there was none ... it was a tennis court. Oh they built the tennis court after we got married, but that was a block of ground and they had fruit trees on it.

**Opposite?**

Yes. There. No they were pretty scarce and sparsely built.

**10.42 So there was lots of space and air around!**

Yes.

**10.43 And what was the landscape like? Was it lots of fruit trees and bush?**

Yes. There was fruit trees and bush. We used to take short cuts through to the next street.

**Through the bush?**

Yes.

**10.56 What were the roads like? Were they dirt roads then?**

No. They were tarred.

**Were they?**

Yes.

**11.02 And what did you do for shopping from here?**

Well, we would go to Parramatta once a week. I'd take the baby in the stroller.

**On the train?**

Yes. The train service wasn't as good as it is today. But we used to go in the morning and come home in the afternoon, and we'd buy our meat.

**So it was an all-day sojourn?**

All day.

**And so you didn't get anything delivered either?**

We used to get our groceries delivered. There was a local shop. We used to put an order in to the local shop and he would deliver your groceries. And the fruit man would come once a week. The milkman, earlier times, you'd get the milk in a billy-can.

**He'd come with his horse and cart?**

And you'd get the milk in the billy-can.

**And bread was delivered?**

Bread was delivered.

**12.09 And what sort of electric appliances did you have?**

A fuel copper!

**That wasn't an electric appliance was it? (Laughs)**

No. A jug, I think, and a vacuum cleaner.

**So you washed with a fuel copper?**

Yes. Washed with a fuel copper. We had a chip heater in the bathroom just for hot water, and boiled the jug for any other things for the hot water - never had a hot water service. We had a tiny little portable stove, like a stovette, as they used to call them.

**Electric was it?**

Electric. And we used to cook on that until we got the bigger stove.

**12.54 How long was it before you got all the modern conveniences?**

Well we had a kerosene fridge before we got the other fridge, but we had a kerosene fridge up until 1954. Till Margaret was born, I think. And then we got the electric fridge.

**That would make a difference wouldn't it, because it gets quite hot out here?**

Yes. It made a big difference to things, especially your butter and cheese and that. It kept a lot better in the fridge.

**13.29 And what were the health services like out here?**

Well we had no doctors. We had to go to ... there was no doctors at all here. We went to Riverstone to doctors.

**Did you? How far was that?**

Riverstone is two stops in the station on the rail towards Richmond.

**So what would you do in an emergency?**

Well, put them in the car and take them to the doctors.

**You had a car when you were married?**

My husband had a car, but I never drove until about '58.

**13.59 Were your children born in a local hospital?**

Yes. Margaret was born in a private hospital - they were both born in a private hospital at Blacktown, and it cost me 20 pounds for her confinement in a private hospital.

**Really!**

Yes. I found the receipt yesterday!

**That's interesting. And did you find the service good there?**

Oh, yes. They kept us in bed for nine days with our feet off the ground. Not like today when they're out ... have their baby today and go home tomorrow!

**That's right.**

We went to ... the doctor from Riverstone delivered the babies.

**He came to Blacktown?**

He came to Blacktown Hospital.

**And so how many doctors would be here now?**

Oh, about five now.

**And is there a local hospital now?**

No. Blacktown ...

**Blacktown is the closest one?**

**14.55 And what about dentists? Did you have any?**

No. I found a receipt yesterday in some things, and it was from a dentist to have a tooth extracted - it was one pound and ten shillings.

**When was that?**

I don't know when the date was. Wait till I get it!

**All right.**

1955 - the 27th of the sixth. And that was from Webb in Parramatta.

**One guinea, I suppose that is?**

Yes. One guinea. And that's Margaret's confinement! (Laughs)

**And that was 1954.**

Yes. And look at the stamp duty!

**15.43 How far apart were your two babies?**

About five years.

**Did you plan to have them nicely spaced out like that or was that just how it happened?**

Just how it happened?

**And did you plan to have to plan two children, or did you ... ?**

No, I only planned to have two.

**So that was it!**

Yes. Well when I came, my mother-in-law had bad eyes and she was partly blind. Then she had cataracts on her eyes and I more or less took over the household for her. And then she died and then my husband's father was eighty-odd by the time he died, and I looked after him until then.

**So you all lived together for all of your married life? Until they died.**

Yes. And then we bought the place.

**And then you bought it.**

Yes.

**16.34 So when actually was this built? Did your in-laws build it?**

No. It was an inter-colonial house and I don't know when it was built, but I'd say it would be nearly a hundred years old.

**16.51 How big is this land?**

It's a quarter-acre.

**A quarter-acre block. And you have a big garden?**

Yes. I grow vegetables. I've got some beans and tomatoes in at present, but I'm not picking them because we were away at Christmas time and they've just gone away.

**Oh, right. And are you the gardener?**

Yes.

**Your husband doesn't do any gardening?**

No. He digs the ground for me.

**He does the hard work?**

Yes. And I do the gardening.

**17.18 What about family finances. First of all how did your father manage finances?**

Yes. He managed all that.



**And then when you were married who looked after the household money?**

I did!

**And so did your husband give you ...?**

All his pay packets.

**Did he?**

Yes. Give me all the pay packets.

**And you managed all the accounts?**

I managed it all. And I used to get a five pound cash order once every five months and that would clothe us all.

**Really! For five pounds!**

Five pounds. Then gradually as it went up we got a ten pound cash order and you'd pay it off because when we were first married my husband's wage was only about eight pound a week.

**You couldn't buy much with that?**

No. But things were cheaper those days. Like we could buy a block of land for 150 pounds.

**18.20 And is the cash order like a credit?**

Yes. Well it was like a piece of paper and it had coupons on, and you take it to the shop and if you bought something for two pounds, they would tear off a coupon and just write two pound off it until your five pound was gone.

**18.42 And did you make any clothes as well - did you sew?**

Yes. I used to make most of the children's clothes.

**That would have helped. And did you make jams and preserves and things like that?**

Yes.

**18.57 And what about recreation - what did you do?**

Mostly dances. Yes. I met my husband at a ball.

**Oh, did you? Which one?**

Quakers Hill, the Country Women's Ball.

**19.13 And you were a member of the Country Women's Association were you?**

Oh, after I got married. And then I dropped out after I had the children and then went back to it.

**And so after you were married, what did you do for entertainment then?**

Well we used to go to the local picture show on a Saturday night, or we did go to the Speedway a couple of times - a few times - in Sydney. My husband liked the Speedway, so ... and he used to play cricket when we were first married and I used to go and watch him play cricket and then I got roped into ...

**19.50 And did you play any sport yourself?**

Tennis. We used to play tennis - competition tennis - on a Saturday. My son used to play Rugby League. My daughter I don't think played very much at all.

**There were no swimming facilities here I suppose?**

No swimming facilities here at all.

**Are there now?**

There isn't now.

**You'd have to go to Blacktown would you?**

Blacktown or Riverstone is the nearest swimming pool.

**20.22 What did your two children do for recreation?**

Oh ...

**When they were younger I suppose they just played at home with friends?**

Yes. Played at home with friends. And then they'd go to the pictures or they'd go to the club - now - not a great lot.

**20.50 And what about the Country Women's Association? When did you join - straight after you were married?**

Yes. My mother-in-law was a member and she took me down and I became a member and I was a member until after Margaret was born in 1954 and then I dropped out, and ...

**You went back again when your children grew up a bit?**

Yes. When they left school.

**And do you still go?**

Yes.

**Do you? So you've kept friends with them all there?**

Oh, yes. We've got some good friends and we go on outings.

**Did you belong to the Red Cross or anything like that?**

No.

**21.39 But you did work for the school?**

Yes. The P & C and the Ladies Auxiliary. And we earned a lot of money at the school. Seeing it was a new school we had to earn some money to get the things.

**21.54 So when your children went to school did they walk to school from here?**

Yes. They walked, and then my brother-in-law had the taxi and he was subsidised - the taxi - to take children to school. My son went over to the Quakers Hill public school until he came here and then they walked, it was only just up the road.

**22.29 And did your children go on after high school to University or Tech?**

No. My son got his School Certificate and my daughter got her School Certificate. But my son is an engineer now. He went on and did tool-making and followed the career through.

**Was he an apprentice?**

An apprentice tool-maker at Malleys at Auburn. His father worked at Malleys at Auburn for thirty odd years. And my daughter is a finance clerk and she's working now for Case at St. Marys.

**And when you said your husband worked at Malley's, was this as well as doing the ... oh, that was your father who was the market gardener?**

Yes.

**Right. So your husband was a tool-maker was he?**

No he worked at Malley. No he was a fitter and turner at Malleys.

**And he travelled there by train every day?**

Yes. And then he became Supervisor in the Machine Shop.

**23.27 What about the churches in the area? Did you find the churches played a very big role, say in the '50s, in the community?**

Yes. There wasn't a great lot of churches around then. They were mostly closed. We were married at Quakers Hill in the church on the corner of Eastern Road and the Navy - that little church there. But they were mostly closed and they've only just re-opened.

**Really!**

Yes. So we didn't have much.

**And that was just from lack of congregation?**

Yes.

**And so people are starting to go back now, and I suppose there is more population so ...**

That's right.

**24.12 And did they have social activities or anything for the children?**

There used to be Sunday School, and they'd have Sunday School picnics and things.

**24.23 And after the War, when European migrants started coming out here, did you notice them coming to this area?**

Yes. There was a lot in the other street - the next street back - it was a new street and they seemed to congregate.

**Did they? What nationalities?**

Mostly Yugoslav, Polish, German - mostly those sort of people. There wasn't any Asians.

**How did it effect you when they came to live here? Did it effect you in any way?**

No not really. There's a lady across the road - I think she's German - and we became quite friends.

**Did you?**

Yes.

**And I suppose they found it difficult, you know, learning the language and so forth?**

Yes.

**25.22 And did they get work around here - did they work locally?**

Yes. She worked at Riverstone - in the wool place at Riverstone.

**25.32 And what about industry in this area, around Quaker Hill?**

There's no industry at all.

**So people had to go out?**

Had to go out of here, yes.

**And most people would have travelled to Parramatta?**

Parramatta or further afield.

**25.50 So did your children have to go to Sydney to work? Oh your son worked at Auburn?**

Auburn. And Margaret has worked at North Sydney until two years ago. She worked at Blacktown before that and then they transferred her North Sydney, and she found the travelling was just too much of a hassle.

**It's a long way!**

Yes. And you used to have to get the red-rattler home. The trains weren't very good.

**26.17 Do you remember when the steam trains finished here and the electric line came through? That was in the '50s wasn't it?**

Yes. About 1962 I think.

**Was it? On the Richmond Line?**

Yes.

**So it was a bit later than Penrith?**

Yes.

**And did that make a difference in commuting?**

Yes.

**26.36 And so when you look back on your life here during the '40s and during the '50s and looking at what it's like now, what are the main things that have changed and how do you feel about them?**

Well, the schools teach the children a lot these days, but I think that children don't have the respect now the same as we used to.

**For their elders you mean?**

Yes. They don't have the same respect. They are taught at school to debate and they are taught to have their point of view. In our days we were seen and not heard.

**Right. And you had to respect what your father said, and your mother, without questioning it?**

Yes. And I've got a grandson now who will stand up and have quite a debate with you! It takes it by surprise sometimes.

**Yes. I suppose that could be good or bad?**

Yes. It could be good or bad. I think it's good for the children, to think that they can stand up and have their say.

**As long as they still respect their elders?**

28.09 There was no drugs in our days. I've never, ever seen drugs. And I've said to my grandchildren 'I've never seen drugs!'. Well they say 'You haven't been to school have you Nan?'

**Really! It's a different world isn't it?**

It is a different world. Our biggest worry was alcohol I think.

**28.37 And so you think the education is better in some ways?**

It is better. Yes in a lot of ways it's better. But I don't think they get the same education today as we got. I don't think the education is as good as we got. Because I know that my grandchildren never knew their twelve times table when they were leaving primary school to go to high school. So if you didn't know your tables you couldn't do maths!

**That's right. Something happens there with learning the basics doesn't it?**

Yes, and reading is the same.

**And spelling!**

Yes.

**29.23 And what about other things that would have changed? What about the more crowded ... it's not so crowded just here, is it, in Quakers Hill ... but in the surrounds, the bigger shopping centres and the parking stations?**

Yes. Well Blacktown is very crowded now. And I can remember when Blacktown only had five or six shops when I was a girl. And there was a chemist shop and five or six shops in the main street. And you knew practically everybody, but now you go to Blacktown and you never know anybody!

**What about here in Quakers Hill?**

Oh we did know most of the people.

**You still would or ...?**

Not a great lot. It's changed then - it's changing more.

**30.14 What about security?**

Well we used to leave the back door open and the ice-man used to come and put the ice in. But we wouldn't go and leave the back door open now. And we've got two iron bars behind the back door if we've got to go out at night.

**Really, so that's not so good is it? That's a change that's not been for the better!**

It's not pleasant to think you've got to live with that. We haven't been robbed, thank goodness. My son has, be we haven't.

**It's good to take those precautions.**

**30.50 And what about the friendliness in the area? Have you noticed it's not so friendly?**

It's not so friendly as it used to be.

**Is that because it's bigger?**

Yes.

**It's not so personal and you don't know everybody?**

No. It's not as personal. I have a friend that comes around a couple or three times a week for a cup of tea of an afternoon.

END SIDE A

SIDE B

**1.29 And what about the general landscape? You know, changing from a more rural place to a more suburban area - how do you feel about that? Has that actually happened here very much?**

Yes. There's been a lot more houses go up. They're getting closer together. I feel the Council could do a lot more for the older area where we live. I think that ... we've lived here for 40-odd years and we haven't got a footpath on our side, but the new areas, when they're developed, they all get footpaths on both sides.

**Straight away?**

Straight away. And we haven't got one yet! We've got a garbage service now.

**You didn't have that?**

We didn't have it in the early times. But the garbage ... we've got now, which is good.

**2.29 And what about the sewerage? Did you have ...?**

We had to put the sewer on and that would be about 15 years ago. Yes.

**But before that?**

We had a pan.

**You had the old out-door toilet down the back?**

Outdoor, yes. Toilet down the back and the toilet man used to come once a week. And you were lucky if you didn't get caught! (Laughs)

**Didn't they come at night?**

Or early hours in the morning! But ... like when you had to travel to Auburn, we were up at five o'clock in the morning, so ...

**That would be a bit nervous-making on that morning?**

Yes.

**3.12 And you didn't have a telephone either?**

No we never got the telephone until '74.

**That's very late isn't it?**

Yes.

**And was that the manual exchange? The automatic exchange didn't come through till then?**

Yes. Didn't come through till about that time.

**And what did you do for telephoning before that?**

Well if ... the neighbour one, or we'd have to go down to the public telephone. There was a public telephone down near the Post Office.

**And you never felt the need to have one really before that?**

No.

**3.46 Oh, well I think we've just about covered everything. Is there is anything else you can think of that ... ?**

**No. I don't think so.**

**Did you have any animals - any pet animals?**

We used to have chooks, a few chooks. We've always had a dog and a cat.

**And did you have a cow?**

No not here?

**Did your father have a cow?**

Yes we used to have cows at home.

**Did you milk them as a child?**

Yes.

**And he had chooks too, so you were fairly self-sufficient?**

Oh, yes.

**4.21 Well just one last question. Looking back on your life - you had a fairly busy life as a child - do you feel that you were hardly done by, that you had a hard life? How do you feel about it?**

No. I don't think I do. I think that I had a life of what I ... like I was expected to do it and I did it! I wouldn't have changed it! And I wouldn't have changed any of it!

**Which is a bit different probably - if a young girl today was left in the circumstances you were at the age of eight and having to look after a family ...**

Oh they wouldn't do that now.

**They'd find it very hard to do that now.**

**5.12 Well I think that's it. Thank you very much.**



