

INTERVIEW N0.12

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 22nd October, 1991

MRS. MARIE SING

1 PANORAMA PARADE,

BLACKTOWN, 2148

0.30 My name is Marie Sing. I live at No. 1 Panorama Parade, Blacktown. I was born on 10/3/1930. I was born at Wellington, New South Wales. Nationality is Australian. I am married, four children living, one passed. Period of residence in this area is 46 years.

0.05 **Well first of all, I'll just ask you a bit about your family background. What sort of work did your father do?**

1.49 My father was, in his married days, was what they call a 'borer' - you know in the old wells - the borer. He came from Moruya, down that way. And I was born in Wellington, but was only six months old when I left there. Well then we came to Wyong and there he was a mixed farmer- you know, a little bit of orchard, poultry, cattle - and from there he came to Blacktown and was a poultry farmer.

So that's how you came to live here as a child?

Yes. And then he left here and went back to East Gosford as an orchardist - a small orchard - and that's where he stayed. Well I stayed in Blacktown - the children sort of stayed in Blacktown. We were married by this time.

So you were married in Blacktown?

Yes.

And when did you actually come to live in this house?

Well we had two other homes. We originally lived in Fifth Avenue in Blacktown.

That's near the other side of the railway?

The other side of the line, yes. And from there we moved to ... in the main street of Blacktown, right opposite the store we had, and we've been here 31 years in this home here.

Yes.

2.43 **So when you first came to live in Blacktown, how old would you have been?**

Fifteen.

So you went to school here? For a while?

No. No I didn't. No, I finished school at Wyong, and my first job here was at a building called Burroughs Wellcome. It was a ... pills and things like that, you know, and I had many jobs after that.

3.17 **So what was it like? Do you remember when you came to live here at fifteen what the countryside was like and what the area was like?**

Oh, I cried my eyes out! I mean, it was country where we came from, but sort of open spaces. When I came to Blacktown, my sister and I, we cried and cried and cried. We didn't want to come here. It was very ... oh, a lot of houses close together, but not the open spaces, you know what I mean. Oh there was a bus service. We didn't live far away from the town, but there was a bus service to the railway and to where we worked, and it was just so different, you know, and I think being teenagers we felt like we were going to be hemmed in! Because there wasn't a paddock to chase rabbits in and go and swim in the creeks and things like this, you know.

4.11 **This would have been about 1945?**

1945, yes.

And so was it fairly built up around that area then?

Only with homes sort of out where we lived. The town was very, very small. It was only - there was a pub there, there was a little old picture show, three big grocery stores (which my father-in-law owned one) and I think three butcher shops and a little haberdashery shop and all-over store, you know, frocks and materials, and ...

4.50 **And whereabouts was your home? Was that not close to the town itself where you lived with your parents?**

With my parents? Oh, it was about ten minutes in the bus, if that.

And what would that area be now?

Walters Road. Well that's very built up now. You know the poultry farms all taken over by homes and it's very built up out there.

The poultry farmers had gone already had they, when you moved out, or...?

No. Dad was still there when we were married. I don't know the reason why he moved. I think it was something to do with the Egg Board, and you were only allowed to send so many eggs into the Egg Board and you were only allowed eat so many chickens (laughs) for the family. You know they were very strict in those days with that type of thing, and he probably felt a little bit hemmed in himself and wanted to get back to the open spaces. But, that's where he died. Well not in that actual farm. Mum died very young. She died at 59, and after that he moved to Kincumber and sort of retired, pottered around the garden and things like that.

6.02 So in your first house when you were married, that was in Fifth Avenue wasn't it? What was it like around there at that time?

Not very many homes around at all. We had a great big double block. It's still a big double block and nothing on it. But we had a little horse and grew our own vegies and all those type of things.

Did you? That would have been about 1950?

It would be 1952 - or 1951 - 1952 the first child was born.

6.34 So it was a bit different to what it is today?

Very much different. Oh yes. When we came here to live in this home we were the only home here. That was all bush up where the hospital is now. There was a little Bowling Club, which was just like a little garage, down the bottom here, and two doors up there was a home being built - a Hudson Ready Cut home - and they were the only homes around here whatsoever.

7.09 Was it trees or just grass?

Oh that was all bush! That used to be a bike race track up there and we used to ride the horses up there and chase rabbits and - didn't shoot them – but we'd chase them, and it was a terrible

lot of fun. But as you can see now we're built right out and of course we had a beautiful view here. We could see all the whole main road and sit on the verandah and watch my hubby play bowls all afternoon or a day, whatever it might have been. But now the whole town's built out. You can't even see a thing. I could see right up to the town and practically pick every car that went up the town and pick whose it was. But now the whole place has been built out you know. We never thought we would be built out here because we were so high. But as you can see, the two storey place next door has blocked all our view, and the same with the buildings down towards the big Bowling Club now- they've rebuilt it for us.

8.07 And of course the hospital too has taken all the bush!

Yes, the hospital's taken over. It's taken all the bush - and the traffic now - they used to come in the main street into the hospital. But they've closed that off and put this passway right through past our place - which you couldn't get through up there when we first built here - and there's about a seven-way traffic entrance here to the hospital now, in and out of the Medical Centre down at the bottom, and the Ambulance Station, and oh, the traffic!

8.40 It's always busy?

Oh, always. We cannot hear our TV at times with the traffic that's going by.

8.48 So did you build this house - when you were first married did you build the house that you moved into it?

Yes, we planned it and we built it.

Was it timber or ...?

It's a brick veneer. This one is.

This one is too is it?

Oh, the first home we had was a weatherboard, but we built that ourselves and I think we lived there five years, then we moved to Campbell Street and lived there about three years and then we came here.

9.21 **So in your first house, which would have been in the period we're really looking at, would you have had gas and electricity?**

Just electricity, yes.

And did you have electric appliances like fridges and vacuum cleaners?

Ah ... we started off very, very poor. I think we had a bedroom suite – a home, naturally - a bedroom suite and that was it. Nothing on the floor. We borrowed a little old table to eat off and we sat on banana cases. Our canisters were paper bags, and we gradually built our way up. I think the children today don't. They like to have their TV's videos and microwaves!

Did you have a radio?

We had a radio, yes. .And our entertainment was ... we'd sit up in bed of a night and play Chinese Chequers! (Laughs).

That was before TV!

Yes. Well my husband played a little bit of golf then, but I was too tied up with children so I didn't have any sport in those days.

And your husband played golf, and did he play tennis as well?

No. He played tennis as a child at school, you know, but he played golf – only at weekends or one day a week. Well, he worked six days a week so – he worked in his father's grocery store - so he didn't play a lot but he had his days out. We were family people.

11.03 **And was your house ... how many bedrooms was it?**

Three bedrooms.

That's a big house. And did you have an inside toilet?

No. No inside toilet. And to get to the laundry, it was a part of the house, but we had to go around to get into it.

No sewerage of course in those days?

No. No sewerage.

11.26 And when your children were born, did you go to the local hospital, or there probably wasn't one?

No, we didn't have a local hospital. The closest hospital was Parramatta. There was a little ... home or hospital or whatever, but some did go to with their children here, but we went all the way to Paddington.

11.53 Really, from here? And what about other medical services in the area? What about in an emergency did you have ...?

We just counted on our local doctor.

Did you?

Yes. I know I did have an emergency with one of my children after I came here. One of the little cousins had spilled perfume all over her and I didn't know whether it had got into her lungs or she'd drunk it! All we could smell was perfume! So I rang my local doctor and he said I'd better take her to Parramatta Hospital, so that's where we took her.

That was the closest!

She hadn't drunk any, but it had burnt all her hair out - all her hair fell out - and it scarred all her face, but luckily the scars went you know. So there was very little ... I think we did have a fire station. Yes we had a fire station, mostly voluntary firemen - because my husband was in it - and I think there was an ambulance.

13.08 So did you feel a bit isolated?

Very much so. But you get used to it. You sort of got used to it and then as the town built on I didn't appreciate it a great lot because, with children as I said, I mostly walked everywhere - and I was within walking distance of the shopping centre, which was very little anyway. My father-in-law owned a grocery store, so.... In those days it was fabulous! You just rang up

your grocery order - whether I was daughter-in-law or who - and they'd get the groceries up, pack them up and deliver them, and that's actually how I come to meet my husband!

13.50 **Oh was it? Was he delivering your groceries?**

He was the delivery boy! Yes!

Oh, isn't that wonderful!

And, you know, it was fabulous. You'd get your bag of broken biscuits for the children for nothing, and a bag of lollies, and they cooked their own hams, boil their own hams and cut their own cheese and it was really great! You know, it was really great!

14.11 **None of this pre-packaged stuff!**

None of this frozen stuff or pre-packaged, and you didn't have to get it yourself. Even when the ration was on, you know, you'd get your little tickets - your ration tickets- so much for each family. And you'd get a quarter of a pound of butter and you'd have to cut all that down, 'cause I did work in the shop for a little while. But the service - you just had service – it was wonderful! But now, you go to a store, you pick it yourself and you stand there for half an hour while they have a conversation before they say are you being looked after, you know.

14.59 **So, as the town's grown bigger it hasn't necessarily become better, do you think?**

Well, probably in a sense, you don't have to travel so far. To do any big shopping or get any variety we sort of had to go to town or Parramatta. Parramatta wasn't so big then either. But, you know, people sort of had their different views. I hate Sydney! You don't need to go to Sydney now because you've got such a big town here. But very busy. In school holidays you can't walk, but I only go shopping when I really have to. But the little town itself, that has been overbuilt, and then when they built the big complex that sort of went to a white elephant for a little while. I think we've still got two of the original - three actually – we've got a chemist, the men's-wear and a butcher of the old original people of the town, or the shops are still there.

They're the only three!

They're the only three of the originals that were there when we came here.

16.26 **So how did you reel about all the old shops being demolished and replaced by big modern buildings?**

Well I don't know whether - how would I put it? - hurt disappointed, or depressed! You know, you think 'oh gee it's been here so many years, now they're pulling it down.' I suppose when you look at it, it's really done good for this area but in my views it's just lost all that friendliness like ... once you could walk up the street and talk all day before you got your shopping done! You'd never get more than ten yards and you'd run into ... now you can go through the town and you wouldn't see anybody you know.

17.13 **So it's not as friendly and intimate as it used to be?**

Oh no. Not nearly so. No.

17.20 **And what about recreation? What did you do - especially the children - for recreation in the area?**

Well, my eldest son, we sent him to Holy Cross College at Ryde as a boarder at nine - which I sort of regret now because I lost all his baby years, you know, the young teenage years - because there was no recreation here. He went to school with American nuns at Marayong, and they didn't believe in football or soccer or anything like that for the children. And then my eldest daughter, she took up marching. And that was about all there was, because there was no swimming pool or bowling alleys or anything like that here then.

18.14 **What about picture shows?**

There was a little old picture show. Yes, but that was just their Saturday afternoon recreation.

18.28 **And what about churches in the area?**

Oh, there was quite a few churches, yes. All denominations.

And did they play a big social role? I mean did people go there for social activities as well?

No, not that I can recall.

They didn't organise anything?

No.

18.47 **There were, I believe, quite a few women's groups in the area, like Inner Wheel and the CWA and that sort of thing?**

Oh there was the CWA; I think the View Club was still back in those days. I really don't know because I wasn't interested.

You didn't belong to any of those?

No. You know, as I said, I had a young family and that kept me busy.

19.11 **You were busy enough! What would your daily routine have been say back in the early days when your children were small?**

Well I did take up lawn bowling, but our Bowling Club here wouldn't accept us, so we used to travel to Riverstone.

19.29 **Why wouldn't they accept you?**

Oh, you know, what do they call it?

Discrimination?

Well not discrimination - no women!

No women!

So, there was about six, eight of us went to Riverstone. I was only 27 when I joined - I was the baby of the Club! I used to get a baby-sitter up the road here. She'd mind the children for me - in those days I only had two - and they were school age. So, I think I was bowling five years and then I fell pregnant again, and...

20.12 **Could I just interrupt you for a minute? Did you plan to have your children- or did they just "happen"?**

Well naturally, we didn't care about the first one, so it happened. And the next one happened. Well that was the little one we lost, she was only ten days old. Well the next one I did plan and she was only twelve months after I lost the baby. .And the next two, I lost the recipe! (Laughs). They came five years later, and so they weren't planned at all, but I wouldn't be without them!

And then we bowled up there, and of course quite a few of us had husbands who were bowlers here, and they got talking and stirring and they ended up allowing us to form a Ladies' Bowling Club. So we've been bowling down here for 27 years I think now we've been bowling here.

21.15 **And you had to fight to be accepted! That's interesting.**

Oh, yes. And then we moved to the new Club, they wouldn't allow us in the bar area. We had to just stay in the auditorium, and...

Really!

Yes. But now that discrimination has all gone. They wouldn't be without us now. We've got quite a big - we've got about 150 lady members, and we've got about 260 altogether or something like that. But I was very sick and had a big operation and I gave up bowls for 17 years, and I took up ten-pin because I could take the children over there and I played over there for many years.

Was that in Blacktown?

Yes. Just on the other side of the line to where we first lived.

22.13 **Is that one of the main sporting activities for children in the area?**

It is now, and they've got a nice skating rink over there now too.

Have they got a lot more facilities for children generally than they did when your children were growing up?

They've got a lot. They've got the big swimming pool, they've got the skating rink, they've got the ten-pin bowling and we even allow the school children to come down and have a game of bowls.

Oh do you?

They are just taught of a Wednesday afternoon. We have quite a few there. We had different schools, but now I think it's only the one school, the Catholic school. They were all just mucking up and spoiling the greens and this type of thing just makes a joke of it. But they're being taught and we've got a few young junior members which are very, very good, you know. Not girls - they've dropped right out now, but we did have a few girls come. But there's quite a lot of recreation for the younger ones, and this is what annoys me. They say "Oh look they scribble on walls and they break this and pinch that because they're bored!". They've got much, much more than we ever had as children. You know, as I said, we ran out and played hopscotch or skipping ropes and made our own fun. But now they've got too much, like videos and TVs and all the recreations which we never had, and I don't give any excuse for what they do.

23.48 And how do you think it is for young mothers in the area now compared to what it was when you were bringing up your children?

Much, much easier. Like they have their bus - if they don't drive, which the majority of them drive - they have their bus passes which we didn't have. It was walk or drive, which I never did, I've never driven. I think it's much, much easier, but then again as I say I think the young ones want much, much more than we ever wanted. We were happy to plod along and build ourselves up. I don't think the young ones of today do. They've got more than what I'm still trying to get! (Laughs).

24.34 And talking about finances, who was the manager of your household finances? Did you keep your household accounts or did your husband?

Oh, I think it was a mixed thing, you know. Of course there wasn't much finance then in those days. It was just a matter of paying the house and that sort of came out of our wages, being the father-in-law you know, he worked that out for us. He handled all that and in those days, as I said, I think we were earning '30 pound a week or something. (Laughs). And we still managed! Much better than we're managing today!

25.19 **And did you have any time to do things for yourself? Were you very tied up looking after the family and helping your husband working? Would you have had time to follow any interests yourself of your own?**

No, well as I said, I would have been married six years and then I took up bowling. Well that was a Thursday. So that was it. Thursday was my recreation day, and in those days we'd sort of go driving a lot and visiting a lot which we sort of don't do a lot now. We just wander down to the Club. My husband's the Chairman of the Club and I'm on the Men's Social Committee.

You are, on the Men's Social Committee?

Yes.

Oh, well that's a step forward isn't it!

Yes. And you know, I'm close and I volunteer to go down there and do anything they want me to do. I enjoy it, you know, it gives me something to do. I think I need that now, more than when I had the children. The children was your recreation, or mine were, and as I said you did a lot visiting or had a lot of visitors we did in those days . . . And especially when the children grew up a bit my house was newer empty, and it was always parties or a card night, you know. My father-in-law and his friends they loved cards, and big gamblers being Chinese, you know, and I'd put the supper on for them and they'd play their cards and they'd take so much out and send it to me for lights and supper and that, and I think I was a winner every time. But I loved doing that, and as I said, we entertained a lot, a very, very lot.

27.19 **And did you do all your own cooking?**

Yes. I always did my own cooking, still do. But I don't know whether it's TV, videos, or what - but all that's gone now, you know. Or whether it's because the children are not with us anymore, but very rarely you seem to have visitors or a card night or a party. I've always - up until two years ago - I always ran a big New Year's Eve party to allow the children to bring the grandchildren, rather than say "Oh, I can't go. I've got the children and the children aren't allowed there!" So, for many, many years ... but I just felt it was getting a bit much, especially I'd had a very bad heart attack six years ago ...

Did you?

... and it was getting a bit much for me, and I made the suggestion that we have one at the Club of a New Year. So we do that and our first year was last year and I think the Club was a quarter full of my family and friends, you know. (Laughs). .And they thought it was fabulous to be able to take the children and, you know, the parents and the grandparents and even people who didn't have children or grandchildren there, they thought it was wonderful to see them all enjoying themselves together. Our social life at home is "Dad and Dave!" (Laughs).

28.50 **Did you sew too when you were ... did you sew clothes for your children?**

No. I'm very dull.

Not a sewer!

No. I did a fair bit of knitting for the children, but never a sewer. Mending - that's about all.

When you had to!

Yes.

29.10 **What about help with your children? You said neighbours used to babysit for you?**

Whenever we wished to go out we always had neighbours mostly, because my family was sort of spread around, so it was ... but we didn't go out a lot. You know, if we went out once every three months - it may have been a ball - that was fantastic. We enjoyed that. As I said, my friend and us, we used to play cards with a couple of other friends and we loved that. That was sort of our entertainment until we came here. Well then our neighbours were sort of very few, as I said, only one home up the road. And I sort of had children's friends. We did have a big pool in the back yard and the house was always full of school children. I preferred that rather than mine go away and I couldn't see them. I was a bit of a coddler with my children.

Entertainment, as I say, was the Bowling Club down here. That was our Friday night's recreation, still is. My husband sometimes ring you up and say "Oh Mum the Association's coming up. Can you cook a baked dinner?" You know, this was eight o'clock, nine o'clock in the morning. So we'd rush round and cook a baked dinner and take it down to them. Of course it was a much smaller Club in those days. And that was all a bit ... I'd wander down with the children and we'd watch Dad play bowls.

30.55 **And how has the change to a much busier suburban place – how has that changed your life apart from the traffic and that sort of thing? Have you felt a sense of not being so free or not having so much space around you?**

Well I feel living here, as I did say, the traffic and all that beautiful - being a country child - the country has gone. You know, to me it's nearly as bad as living in the city. Because I love the country. But it hasn't changed much as far as the shopping, as I said, we've got everything here and I only shop when I really have to which I don't enjoy very much, shopping. I get frustrated. You've got no chance of shopping up here of a Saturday morning. It is just so packed. Or school holidays, because they have the Civic picture show there. There's two theatres and that's full sort of at weekends and they do different shows. They have little shows up there for the children. But that's already been refurbished up there now too. You get used to these big complexes and you know just where everything is. Now I get lost up there in the last month or so because they've put so many little shops in and these little cart stalls they hire out around the floors. It looks nice, but as I said, to me it's a lot like [the city].

END SIDE B

TAPE 2

0.05 **You worked in your father-in-law's grocery shop before you had children did you?**

No, it was after I had the children, and of a rushed Friday or Saturday I'd come over and help them. Once the children went to school I'd go and help Yvonne. In those days we weighed up our own sugar and biscuits and all that type of thing, and we'd do that. And I'd just go and help them out when they got very, very busy. But in the meantime I had many jobs. (Laughs).

What else did you do?

Oh, I worked at Bonds, and then I worked at Havalah Children's Home at Normanhurst.

What were you doing there?

Just minding the children, like they were sort of orphan children. And I worked there three years I think, then I had a nervous breakdown so I sort of had to get out of that. And in the meantime I went to Melbourne for twelve months - oh, that was before I was married - well all this is before I was married. And, oh I worked at Fostar's Shoe Factory. I did say, Burroughs Wellcome pill factory.

1.33 **So you've done lots of work as well as being a housewife!**

I've done lots of work, yes. And I worked at Concord Repatriation Hospital, a bit of wardswaive nursing sort of thing, you know.

You've done a lot of different things!

Yes. I'm quite experienced at all the things.

1.53 **And your husband didn't object to you working when you wanted to?**

Oh, in the shop. Well as I said, that's the only work I've done since I've been married. Oh, no. I was helping the family out, so...

2.10 **Yes. And after the war, when a lot of European migrants moved out here, did you come in contact with them very much or did they make much difference to your life?**

Oh, in the shop we had a lot of ... I don't know what they called ... 'Balts' I think in those days -migrants - they were more of the Dutch and that type of thing. They were very hard to try and understand but you get used to it. No I'm one for migrants. I'm not anti-racist at all, and I get very hurt and very depressed when I hear people downing them, and the same with our own Aborigines. I'm no real church goer, but I think we're all God's children and we all deserve a chance! And after travelling over the East, and seeing the poverty and those poor children, it really breaks my heart, it really does and I think how rich we are here in what we've got. Not money-wise, but what we've got here, and why can't we share it? But, you know, probably the politicians and that don't see it that way. They think of the financial part of it. But I just think that we've got so much here and ... at least help some others out.

3.43 **So you must have been - it must have been quite something at the time you were married for an Australian girl to marry a Chinese man too?**

Oh yes.

Was your family happy about that?

No, not at all! Not at all. No, not one of my family came to my wedding. It took them a few years before they'd even speak to me. It wasn't so much – a couple of my sisters agreed with me, but they just weren't game, you know.

4.20 **What about your husband's family? Were they happy?**

Oh, they were happy. They were lovely, lovely people. Yes, they were quite happy. But I think they sort of had their doubts whether it would work out and whether that was what we wanted, because as I said, and as you said too, in those days oh, you were frowned on. Well now a mixed marriage is just a common thing! But my parents realised later on that - of course there were eleven children in my parents' family - that he was one of the best sons-in-law and that financially we were better off than most of them.

5.02 **So you were one of the eleven children?**

Yes. Yes, and you know, things came round and they were quite happy.

Eventually.

Yes. Oh, it was after I lost the little girl. That sort of started them coming back round. But I'm afraid my husband's mother never forgave my mother, but they talked and passed the time of day. But that was it. But you know, you've got to live your own life. Even when my first, eldest children, started going to school they were getting "slant-eyes" and all this thrown at them, you know. But as I said, these days it's just a common thing and you're just another Australian! I think most of them take you as now. I think you get the odd one, that's still - like in the Maltese and Italian - I don't think they like the mixed marriages.

Yes, they tend to marry within their own people don't they?

Yes, still. But I find them very nice people. If you want to make them nice. I mean we've got bad Australians, we've got bad migrants. It just goes with ...

There's good and bad in everyone isn't there.

Yes.

6.22 **And did the migrants who came out here after the War start up market gardens in this area?**

Yes. A very lot. They were more in the Maltese - like round Parklea area, the suburban places of Blacktown - mostly market gardeners or poultry farmers. There's still a lot of them around, but I think the town has benefited by the majority and the expense that it's done to a lot of people. But the little person - there's so many little shops empty now, like they may rent it for 12 months and then they're closed down because they can't afford the rent. So really, like as a business person, I can't say whether they're profiting, because you go up and you see a lot of those little - as I say there's lots and lots of Chinese restaurants now - or a mixture, you know, there might be Italian and I think there's a Mexican one too now. You never see anybody in there and you think "How do they keep going?" So, whether they've got other restaurants outside that are sort of backing them up, I don't know. But you get the restaurants that there's always people in there, you know.

7.52 **And was there much industry in the area apart from the market gardens and that sort of thing? You mentioned Bonds, were they in Blacktown?**

Pendle Hill. Yes, so they're not actually in Blacktown. There was Whitmont's shirt factory over here, I think, and the Burroughs Wellcome laboratory, and that was about it that I can recall. We had our own bakery shop. We had two bakehouses and they made the breads. They're gone now. But around the area, the outskirts...

You have the fire brigade as well!

Yes that was the fire engines that just went past then! We have that just up the corner there and we've got the Medical Centre down here, and opposite the Medical Centre nearly all those streets now are doctors' surgeries, and the Medical Centre next door here which was a private home until about four years ago, and the hospital at the back of us.

So you get a lot of sirens too!

Yes. Lots and lots of sirens, and as I said, the great way into the hospital now is just past here. Then they come round the back of my place to come out now, where before it was all straight down the front. So, as I said, we've got about probably a nine-way traffic path coming past here! (Laughs)

9.20 **It must have been much more peaceful in those days?**

Oh, it was beautiful. You'd hear the bird tweet up in the bushes up the back. Now they're building an extra part on the hospital. I think it's something to do with the mentally retarded rehabilitation or something like that, and the soil and the dust that's coming from up there, it is shocking!

All in the name of progress?

Progress, yes. Well once the hospital came - we didn't have sewerage when we first came here.

Oh, didn't you?

We had the gas and the electricity of course and the water, but the hospital came about four years after we did. Well then they put the sewerage on the hospital, so they joined us up to their main for the sewerage.

10.13 **When would that have been? In the '60s would it?**

Oh, 21 years I've been here, so ... yes. Late '50s, '60's.

So you were one of the first to get the sewerage in Blacktown, would you?

I would have been the first one in this area other than the hospital, to get sewerage, yes. But remember when we first got it we still had the outside toilet. We made it sewerage and the children wouldn't use it! They got so used to the old pan! (Laughs). And of course we've got one inside now as well. But...

10.58 **And what about the animals? Did you keep any animals?**

Oh I always had dogs. A little dog of some description. And as I said earlier, yes, my husband had a horse and we used to keep it in which was a spare block there, and of course then when it got built on, we had to get rid of it, but we always had an animal. But nearly every animal I had got pinched! So then I had a beautiful Collie dog, and a little Australian Silky. The Australian Silky was 14 years old and she went blind and her legs went on her so I had to have her destroyed, and my Collie had been hit by a car and he had a bad leg and I had a little

nephew here that pulled his tail one day and he bit him. So my husband said ... so we had them both destroyed the one day, and I've never had one since. I love animals. We had a lot of fish, tropical fish, too. But they were sort of a bit of nuisance when we wanted to go away. Not that bad, but you'd come home and find there would be two or three dead, you know.

And did you keep chooks?

Never. No, never.

There were enough around without you keeping them!

Yes.

12.29 **Can I ask you, how has your husband's family influenced – you know, has there been a lot of the Chinese culture influencing your life as well, being married into a Chinese family? I notice that decoration on the wall ...**

Well that did come ... actually that came off - you can't see it properly - there's a big bird at the back there and another one at the back there. That came off ... it is a Japanese picture, yes.

Oh is it?

Yes. But I don't know if it was just through that or we just liked it. That was painted on a plain piece of white wallpaper, and the chap that painted our home - he was a friend of ours - and he had one of his men who was a Dutchman actually and he hand painted that all on there.

Really! It's beautifully done!

It's absolutely beautiful, but ... you know, everybody admires it and it's been up there for 30 years or so. I just wash it over, but it'll never be taken down or ... I've never seen another one like it! Usually murals are just wallpaper, but that was painted on a plain white piece of paper on the wall. Yes it's lovely. But you know, we all love our Chinese meals. (Coughs) Excuse me. Some of the children are real Chinese looking, but others like me - eldest son there (indicates photo) he's got the Chinese features, but he's fair like me, and he is the only one of the children who are fair. Although the two sons of the children are fair. The young one, the little girl- she's five months old now- he was real Chinese, as you can see, that's him born and

now he's as fair as fair and fair- and then there's the little girl. Well she's still probably around the same colour. She's only five months old now.

They're the youngest two grandchildren?

Yes. He's two and she's five months. But my other daughter - the two in the middle there - one's as fair as fair and the other one's as Chinese as Chinese! So there's a whole mixture - three children in Tassy, my daughter's children - they're dark, they're more Chinese, the three of them. But they all love their Chinese meals, 'cause we all do it.

You cook Chinese too do you?

Oh, I always have! Yes. They prefer it to English meals.

Do they?

All the children do, actually. They love their rice! And if the two son's wives don't cook it, they cook it, you know. They just pick it up and they'll say "Mum would you write out that recipe for so-and-so for me?" and so I'm always writing out recipes. It's quite easy done. But they love it, and as I said, we've done a lot of travelling over the East and we just love it because it's a different world and as I said to you before, we've just got so much here and we don't realise it. When you see the poverty over there.

16.04 Well, I think that just about wraps it up! Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to say about how the changes that have taken place here after the War, how they've changed things for you?

Well as far as the War, as I said we came here at the finish of it. But being from a big family, I can remember poor Mum making cut-downs with clothing. That was mine, so the younger sister wants a dress, so it got cut down or cut out and toys were made out of rags - rag dolls - and pegs and things like that. I don't think the children of today really realise how lucky they are to what we had when we were in the War days and what we had as children.

Just even the restrictions from the War.

That's right yes. Yes. And I really don't think either the children have got the knowledge really of what ... we did all past history at school - history and geography and past history.

Well none of my children seemed to go in to that at school. Whether they've brought it in with the grandchildren now I don't know, but you know, I used to love it. I used to think it was great to be able to learn back to Burke and Wills and what all the history of our own Australia ... you know.

18.01 And did any of your children go on to university or tech or anything after school?

No. They're all well off. The two boys ... my eldest boy he went to college and he was lucky. He went to college until he was 19 and he was lucky, he got a job at the Reserve Bank straight away and he's been working there ever since. The two girls ... my eldest daughter went to a bank in town. She worked in town, the ANZ Bank in town, until she got married. And my youngest daughter, she did go to college. She went to Ladies' College at Auburn, and she went into dental nursing and stayed there until she got married. The youngest son, he wasn't a school lover and he wasn't real bright but all of a sudden in the last three months he just went way ahead with maths and he's worked with Harvey Norman - it was Norman Ross to start with, Harvey Norman, and he's second in charge - more or less ever since he left school. So they've all had good jobs and all quite comfortable.

19.33 Do they all live in the Blacktown area or have they moved out?

No my eldest son's at Springwood, and my eldest daughter's in Tasmania. She married a navy man and that was his home, Tasmania, and so they went over there. His family's - a cray-fish fisherman, you know, and Tasmanian scallops - and he's got a business over there with what they call the slip. He's a boat mechanic and welder and all that type of thing. And my youngest daughter, she lives at Penrith, and my son at Marayong.

So they're not far away.

Not far away, you know, within a matter of an hour except for my daughter in Tassie.

20.21 Well thank you very much; I think that's just about covered everything.

Thank you Robyn, I hope that helps.

I'm sure it has.

It's a pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW