

INTERVIEW NO.5

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 19 SEPTEMBER, 1991.

**MRS. AUDREY WATSON
26 RIVER ROAD
EMU PLAINS. N.S.W.**

0.30 My name is Audrey Watson, from 26 River Road, Emu Plains. I was born on the 23rd August, 1922 in Sydney. Nationality, I'm Australian, married with two children.

I've been in the area for - '46 from eleven - for 45 years.

1.02 Just to ask you a little bit about your family background, what kind of work did your father do? And your mother?

1.10 My father was a manager of an automotive engineering company, and my mother didn't work. Originally ... no, she didn't every work.

1.28 She was lucky! She worked at home though.

Yes.

1.30 And did you have any brothers or sisters?

Yes, I had three brothers and one sister.

1.38 How long have you been in the Penrith area?

Forty-five years.

Since 1946.

1946 - just after the War.

1.49 And you came here as a young married person did you?

Yes.

1.56 So what was the place like when you came here?

Well, it was a country town. We weren't married. My husband came in the May to join a firm of solicitors and then we were married in the December, and he said to me before we were married "How would you like to live in Penrith?" and I said "Where's that?", and he said "That flat place at the bottom of the Mountains". When you're getting married you don't care where it is you're going to live really. But Penrith was then ... they had ... it was all orchards and the road I live in now was a dirt road, River Road, and the Progress Association were trying to decide where they'd put the second the street light. There were horse and carts delivering things - I had a chair delivered by horse and cart - and there were posts on all the shops, you know those old fashioned shops with posts all the way down. And everybody knew everybody. There was only about 4,000 - between four and five thousand - population, and now it's 165. And I lived in Penrith in a flat because you couldn't get houses in those days, and on our wedding night ... my husband lived in a little bachelor flat ... and on my wedding night his partner came and said I've got the bigger flat for you. So we had to delay our honeymoon and move our furniture in, 'cause they were gazumping it in those days - if you didn't have your furniture in the flat, someone else could take it. So we came up and moved in and then went off on our honeymoon.

3.52 And then I came to Emu Plains. We built the house about '59 I think. But Emu Plains at that stage was connected to the Blue Mountains, not to Penrith. But in a few years' time they went over to Penrith.

4.11 It became part of Penrith. So you really lived in Penrith - right in the hub of Penrith?

4.18 Right in Station Street, on top of a shop.

Really.

Yes, it's the only accommodation we could get.

4.25 What was the shopping area like then?

Oh, very small and all privately owned. No big firms of any kind, you know. Banks and etc. - you know just one or two banks.

It was the day of the corner shop still I suppose?

Yes, small groceries. There weren't any big grocery firms in those days were there? No. No Red S's or Franklins, no.

4.59 So you lived there right - really through the 50's then, did you, in that same flat, until you moved here?

5.05 Oh, no, no. We moved here in '49, I'm sorry.

5.07 Oh '49.

Oh no. We built in an orchard, and I always remember the owners were Vincent Shepherd down there and Dick Shepherd up there - brothers - and they gave us part of the orchard to build on (that had been subdivided but they hadn't sold any) and they all said to me "Oh, we'll never sell any more, never sell any more", you know. And in ... I don't know what period it was subdivided ... it was covered in houses and ...

5.43 What size land did you buy?

Well we bought 65 feet, but then we bought 15 feet more. No, we've got 90 now, so we bought 15 feet more than the original when they subdivided the rest of the land. And even then she said "We'll never have anyone between you and I, Audrey" you know, like this.

6.11 And she's way up the other end of the street now I suppose?

No, she's dead now, but they couldn't afford to keep the land. The rates were too high. The orchard all had to go.

6.26 So you built this house - it's brick is it or weatherboard?

Yes, double brick. Yes. We built it ourselves really, let out our contracts to people, you know.

6.38 And I suppose in those days you had - well it was as it is now - you had the inside toilet and bathroom? You didn't have the out the back dunny?

No, I think they went out a long time before that didn't they?

7.00 Well not so much in Blacktown. And what about household appliances in those days? When you first moved here did you have ...?

Well we had a lot of trouble getting everything, parts and everything. It was just after the War and you were restricted to 1250 squares to start with to build your house because that was after War - everyone couldn't build a house of enormous size because there wasn't enough to go round, you know. We used to have to ... we couldn't get a bath and we waited 14 months for the tiles, and the bricks were locally made and they were almost hot when they came here, you know, we were waiting on the next batch of bricks. We had friends with the department store, Fletchers, in Penrith which was a family store in those days, and he said "There's a truck going up the Mountains, just left something with us and it's got pipe on it" and Doug chased it up the Mountains and got pipe to put the water on, 'cause we pumped from the river in those days. No water or sewerage of course.

8.00 Well you were close!

Yes. It was bad when there was a flood though because we used to have to take the motor out when the water rose.

Really. And the water came right up?

Not on to the road, no. It was always about ... the highest one was six feet below the level of the road. But the pump was right down on the river bank, right near the river.

8.27 And no sewerage. Did you have gas and electricity straight away?

Oh, we had electricity - no gas. Oh yes we had that straight away, and we managed to get a refrigerator because we knew Warburton Frankie, the refrigerator man, you know, the first one we got. And I had my mother's washing machine, so ... I think they were available then, but not ...

8.51 Not readily?

No. We had a lot of trouble getting a bath. But that was because of the War you see.

9.02 What about shopping - what was your access to the shops? Did you have far to go to do the shopping?

Yes, you all shopped in Penrith - and we had a car. Actually we started off with a Jeep because my father was in that business and got a war-time Jeep cheaply for us, and when my daughter was born we got a car. And I used to go in with my husband - we didn't have two cars in those days - so I'd go in with my husband to shop and then drive home again.

9.38 And did you work as an early married?

No. That really wasn't the done thing in those days, you know. I used to say I'd go and get a job but Doug said "Oh my wife's not going to work". It's amazing how quickly it's changed hasn't it. It's just the thing to work now isn't it?

9.56 It seems to be. So what would your daily routine have been at home?

Oh, the same as it is now isn't it, you know, look after children and when they were at school age we used to have to take them to the station every morning at half past seven, and then the usual clearing up and gardening and sewing and all the things you did. I joined organisations like the Red Cross and Inner Wheel and CWA in those days. My husband was a Rotarian so I became a member of Inner Wheel, which I still am. And organisations like that were very well patronised by people in those days, you know. It's very hard to get young people into organisations these days.

10.54 And it would build a nice community spirit if you all knew each other.

Yes, yes, everybody knew ... we were actually the first sort of people from outside to come in. A friend of mine, who was a dentist, they came at the same time. Otherwise, you know,

that was the first influx of people that started after the War and then they started coming. But we were really the first in '46 - new people - and we found often that you'd be talking to someone and they be related. Everybody seemed to be related, you know, the big families of people.

11.28 You have seen such a huge change in that time. What did it feel like then to live in this area and to go shopping and ... ?

Well, I can tell you one thing. I used to belong to the Presbyterian Church in Penrith and joined the ... what do you call it? What do the ladies ...

Ladies auxiliary?

No, no, it's not auxiliary, it's called a ... oh I can't think of the name, isn't this awful. I've got old too since I've been here! Anyway the women's organisation there, and I used to have to take people home, you know, that were older ladies to take home, and I used to collect them and I used to say "Oh, I've got to go right out to Jamieson Road". Well Jamieson Road is almost the centre of the City now, of Penrith City, and that seemed to be way out in the country to me. It was! There wasn't a house or a thing - the lady lived on a little farm out there in those days. And see the shopping area was just two little streets. High Street where they've developed all up and down now, but they were just a little collection in those days.

12.44 And you must have felt living here that you were out in the country?

Oh, we were out in the country here. We kept chooks and the foxes took them one night. Yes.

Really rural.

Yes it was rural.

And when you say you kept chooks I suppose you had your own eggs and you obviously you were in the middle of the fruit area?

Yes. The citrus orchards. Yes. And we had on the block of land part of the orange trees that ... that block of land next door to me there still has those same trees and they're still bearing oranges and they must be 60 or 70 years old. We took ours out and put new ones in eventually, because they were 27 years old when we came here, the orange trees.

13.27 And I suppose you made your own jams and that sort of thing too did you?

Oh, always, yes. But I was a city girl and I wasn't very countrified, you know. I hadn't been used to cooking and doing things like the country people do.

13.46 And did you exchange food and eggs and so forth and fruit for other things with your neighbors?

No, not really. It wasn't an area that .. oh, well there were orchards and all the people that had orchards, well they always gave us things, you know. There'd be pumpkins and Mr. Shepherd always used to come by at night from the orchard and the children would be waiting outside. He always handed them oranges or left a pumpkin on the front fence or pumaloes to make jam with. Yes. That went on, but there wasn't any bartering sort of system. Actually the poultry farms just down the road here would give us a chook for Christmas, but that was because we were friends, you know.

14.44 And I suppose you had milk and bread deliveries did you by horse-drawn ... ?

Yes. Milk. No we didn't have bread did we? Yes, we did, of course, yes there was a bakery in Emu Plains.

And they'd deliver by horse?

Yes.

And what other things were delivered to the house?

Green-groceries, and I still have that man delivering.

Really!

Yes, well it's the son, yes. He still comes across Friday morning. He only does a small area in Emu Plains and Glenbrook. But he was coming then and still is. I still buy my vegetables this way.

15.27 It's one of the things that hasn't changed?

Yes.

15.32 What about for clothes and that sort of thing? Did you shop locally or did you go to the City?

No. There weren't many very good clothing places. Miss Elliot's I think was about the only one that sold clothing in those days, and I went to Sydney because I'd been always used to buying things in Sydney and I had my shops that I'd always gone to, you know, so that I didn't really ... and I'm a bit like that still. Because, although Grace Bros. has come to this area, they're not ... they don't keep the same level of stock as they keep in Sydney. They cater for a different level. Oh, there are a couple of boutiques now, that's right. I could ... yes, I have bought things ... but I always feel I have to go to Sydney to have a look anyway, yes.

16.36 And did you travel by car to Sydney in those days or did you catch the train?

No, caught the train generally. But I didn't go to Sydney very often, only to meet my mother. No I drove because I used to leave my car and park and her unit at Drummoyne, that's right. And I used to visit every week, once a week, when they became old, at Cremorne and Drummoyne, and I drove. That's right.

17.12 So you didn't have any family support here when you were bringing up your children? Your parents lived in Sydney?

Oh yes.

And how did you get on with that sort of thing, with child-care, if you were ill or if you weren't here when they came home from school?

Well, you didn't ... you were always here. That's right. Well, I had a neighbour. My neighbour used to look after them for me sometimes. Actually I didn't have a license 'til I came to live at Emu Plains and she minded my children, well the little boy, while I went and got my driver's license. And my mother would come up and stay. I remember on one occasion that Doug went to hospital, my husband went to hospital, she would mind them. But that was the only child-care - your friends would mind them. My friends - I went away for a weekend, that's right - and my friend in Penrith looked after one and my friend down the road looked after the other one, you know, Doug's partner's wife.

18.30 You had friends in the community to help, rather than the extended family.

Yes, that's right.

18.37 Did your children go to school nearby?

The boy was ten when he went to Newington, and Elizabeth was eleven when she went into PLC Croydon.

18.51 So they both boarded?

No, no. They were day ...

They travelled all the way from here to Newington?

Yes. That's right. They said they'd never do that to their children, but I notice that they are. They're travelling a long way to school.

They travelled on the train I suppose?

Yes they travelled on the train. Yes. I was really the first one to send my children out to school and I encouraged other people to do it because ... I just noticed that all around ... my partner's children started to go before mine, because I encouraged them to go to PLC Croydon. I'd gone to PLC Croydon and my daughter was going, and I just always recommended that "Oh you want to send them to a good school" you know, the old school tie came up all the time.

19.48 And what schools were here? They went to the local primary school I suppose?

They went to the local primary school, yes.

In Penrith?

Emu Plains. It's a very very old school, lovely school, and there was a very good teacher there who I knew very well. She'd come back into teaching. You know, there was a shortage of teachers and she was an oldish one, and she'd actual taught me in Sunday School where I lived in Strathfield.

20.16 Did they walk to school from here?

Yes. Walked or, when they could ride, they went on their bikes.

How far would it have been?

Oh, it's only about two kilometres.

20.29 When they went to high school did they travel into Penrith by bus?

No, my husband took them in the morning and I picked them up in the afternoon from Emu Plains railway station.

20.49 That was electrified, of course, by then wasn't it to Emu Plains?

Yes.

20.55 What about the local churches? Did you find the churches had a lot of ... they were important in the community?

Oh very important. That's why I can't remember the name of the organisation - that's how important they were! But they were important. Everyone .. you met everyone there. It was quite a social thing, the church gathering.

And most people in the area went to church?

Yes.

21.38 So you didn't work, but you did work at home ...

Yes, I did voluntary work.

Your unpaid work in the house too!

Yes.

21.45 And can I ask you, how did you manage your household money? If your husband was working did he give you housekeeping money to manage or did you just pool your expenses?

No, he gave me household money, I think. I can't remember how we managed. I don't think he had to ...

Did you buy on credit perhaps and pay bills at the end of the month.

Yes, that's right. But no, for grocery shopping and all that kind of shopping, yes he gave me a certain amount of money, that's right, yes.

Because I did have the cleaning lady a bit later on, and I remember that cheque came straight from the firm. See we both had it, we were both partners, and I was thinking of that - how did the money come to me, but that's right. And then ordinary bills were just paid off by cheque.

22.50 Your husband did that kind of thing?

Ah ... actually I took over gradually because he wasn't very organised, he was always busy and I seemed to take over that organisation in the end.

23.07 And you were busy doing the voluntary work which must have kept you on your toes.

23.14 Yes, we were always very busy... I don't know ... well people say they don't know what they did when they went to work, but they always seem ... retired people are always busier than ... I think it was the same. There was always a lot to do, which you wouldn't have done if you'd gone to work would you.

23.34 You said you sewed. You made some of your own clothes and for the children?

I made always for the children and just a few things for myself. But I started off with the children because I was self-taught. I made all the curtains in the house and things like that. I was very brave and made velvet curtains but I didn't make any boo-boos.

23.58 And what about health services in the area? Did you have a local doctor?

Yes. There was a medical centre in those days. Well, it was a place with two or three doctors in it.

At Emu Plains, or Penrith?

No, no. I don't think there was a doctor in Emu Plains. Penrith. No, there wasn't a doctor in Emu Plains. I keep on forgetting back that far, you know, I think of all the ones that are here now.

And the hospital was accessible?

It was a very small hospital, Governor Phillip District Hospital. I had my daughter in Sydney, but I had my son in the little hospital, and it was a wonderful way because you knew everybody there. You knew all the nurses and they were wonderful to you. It was a very small hospital and it's now the geriatric hospital - they built the Nepean.

25.06 And did you plan to have two children, or did that just happen?

No, I planned to have two children. I was going to plan to have more but I ... I was thinking of having more but I didn't have a very good time with Douglas so I thought "That'll do me".

26.21 Well you were clever to plan them, in the days before the Pill and so forth. I thought that most people in those days would say oh, it was an accident, or ...

No - definitely planned it. He was conceived on my wedding anniversary. My daughter, not my son, my daughter.

25.45 And you found bringing them up in this area lovely for children I suppose they had a lot of freedom?

Yes. It was nice. Not so good now I don't think.

Why is that?

Well there are so many children roaming the streets and homeless, and out of work, and taking drugs, and ... you know ... there's a lot of trouble with the children in the area.

26.17 The security in the area would be different too. You wouldn't have locked your door like today?

No. Left the doors all open. Everyone just came and went and "Oh, I left something on your table" or ... yes, you never thought of locking anything up. Isn't it an awful thing these days.

And now you do?

Oh, security. Everything's locked. Well the insurance company told me that I should lock my door when I go down to the washing ... put the washing on the line.

That's terrible. So, how does that make you feel, from what it used to be?

Oh, horrible. Well we've been burgled five times, so the thought of it ... and since we've had the alarm it's been wonderful to think that you can go and leave it and someone's not going to roam all through the place.

27.17 What did you do in your leisure time, your family too? What were the main forms of recreation back in the 50's?

Well we played tennis every Saturday, and when the children started to go to school of course we'd have to follow all their sporting things. We swam in the river.

Did you?

Yes. We entertained ourselves here in every way really.

What about theatre and cinema and that kind of thing?

There was a theatre. One theatre in Penrith. We went to that. I was thinking what else there was. There weren't any ... when did bowling come in? ... we didn't have any bowling or anything. There were bowls, not for women but for men. And what else did they ... golf of course.

28.30 Women weren't allowed to bowl in those days?

Well they bowled, but they didn't go to the men's bowling club. They bowled way back didn't they? But .. I can't remember any women bowlers.

Maybe they were segregated!

Well, they were.

Like the swimmers!

No, no. They weren't segregated, but some bowling clubs took them and some didn't. I can remember the time when Penrith took in women bowlers.

They might have been associates before that.

Yes. So we just did all those things. We went for lovely walks and picnics and things because there was lovely bush and mountains and we went away for holidays, places.

Up to the Mountains quite a bit I suppose?

No, really we went always to the seaside when we went on our school holidays. Or in the September holidays we did long trips round New South Wales or something like that.

29.32 Where did you go to the seaside? To Sydney?

Well, we went ... I hate telling people this, but for years and years and years we went to Kim's at Toowoomba Bay. I had a friend who used to write to me and she was always going overseas and doing things and she lived in Canada, and she said "When are you going somewhere else for your holidays".

It's lovely there - I've been there.

Yes, oh it was a lovely place. My children grew up there. They have Kim's reunions still and the children are all friendly that were there, and they would never have met those people because they all came from different areas. And we just loved it. It was an ideal place for children, and it was wonderful for adults.

- 30.18 We used to sail on the river. Yes, and that was an unheard of thing. My husband was a sailing man from Sydney, so he built boats, and my children lived on boats. They started with canoes and dinghies and they built a little dinghy and a sail. They weren't very successful sailing because it's not very good to sail on, but there is a sailing club here now. But there was not all this cry about, you know, putting things up for children to play in and do things, and be entertained and be looked after. It was just natural to live. And that was in every area. Everybody just did everything around them that was possible but your home was the place you stayed and did things wasn't it.

SIDE B

1.12 We've talked about the fact that you had a car, but what were the roads like? You probably needed the four-wheel drive did you?

No, we didn't really, because the place is flat and everything. But they were ... River Road was quite a good road after it was tarred. Before we built our house it was a proper tarred road. It only went so far ... and Penrith roads were not very good, all around, but the main road was all right, you know, there were pot holes. There was a tremendous amount of work done on roads in the ... we've had fairly good Councils really, all along.

2.07 I noticed a ferry, a paddle steamer.

A paddle steamer - yes, that's a recent development.

Oh, it's not an old one?

Oh, no. It's been here about ten years I think. It was built by a person who lived in Emu Plains and put on the river for excursions. It's a lovely river, it's wonderful to go ... oh I know

what we did also for ... but this is getting a bit later when my children were a bit older, oh ten, my son was ten ... we used to ski on the river. We had a ski boat, and there were no ramps or things in those days to put your boat in. You put it in the best way you could and we used to start out early and go right up the river so that we could get our own little beach, because a lot of people started to come and ski - people from Sydney and everywhere.

When would this have been?

Well Doug was ten and he's 39 now, so ...

So that would have been 29 years ago, in the '60's.

- 3.16 Yes. That's right. But the river in those days ... now, they have beautiful ramps to put their boats on, the ski club and everything ... but they didn't in our time.

3.35 Was this bridge here? For a long time?

Yes.

It has been updated I suppose?

No, it hasn't. That's just how it was. It's an ugly bridge isn't it? You can't see the river from it but I believe ... there're all sorts of stories and I don't know what's true ... that it was brought out from England because it was left over and it wasn't needed or something, and it was brought and put here.

So it was here in the '40's.

Yes, just exactly as it is. Yes. They've done up the railway bridge since then I believe. The railway runs along beside it you know. But it's all closed in and they wanted to open it up so you could see through as you went over the bridge, but it depends on that for its strength apparently.

- 4.26 What about the introduction of newcomers to the area after the War, like the displaced people who came from Europe? Was it noticeable to you in this area.**

Yes, very much so.

And how did it affect your life? Did you make friends with these people?

Yes we did. Actually we had some very good friends, Yugoslavs, that ... actually she worked for me, but she was a great friend too. You know, we used to have boat race parties and things and she always came to help me. And they invited us to all their organisations and they had a lot of family - the whole family went - when they celebrated Anzac Day ...

Did they?

- 5.21 Yes - and the whole family was there. If they went to a wedding - we went to all their weddings, we went to the opening of their church - and it was all the family involved. It was wonderful how they all went together to everything they did in a family sort of way that wasn't quite like Australians.

And they included you as well.

Oh yes, and they included us. I can remember going to the opening of the church, The Serbian Orthodox, I think it was, church at Fairfield. That's where they went to church.

All the way from here to Fairfield?

6.07 Yes, that's where they built their big church. And I can remember going into the big church and you stood all the time and it got very hot and the incense was terrible. I thought "I have to get out for a little while", so I went outside and they served you a chicken sandwich while you were outside there, and people were coming and going all the time, but I didn't know that and the service went on and on and on and in the end, after we'd sat down to lunch with all the people - they had lunch - and we'd eaten lunch, the minister from America was there, the priest, who was head of the church there, and he came out visiting for the opening, and he said he wanted Mr and Mrs Watson to come into the ... you know ... with the VIP's and we sat down to another lunch, and they asked Doug to speak. He didn't know what to speak about - all on the spur of the moment- but he did and he said something. We were not the only people there - there were a lot of people that they invited that they became friendly with. They were very sociable sort of people, especially the Yugoslavs I think.

7.46 What other nationalities were there that you remember?

I can't remember. It was only because I was associated so much with all the Yugoslavs.

And you visited their homes and they visited your home?

Yes. And they had young children that grew up with mine. And that's how I remember all the Yugoslavs, because it was always that you met them all in Penrith. But there must have been others. Dutch, yes, we had several Dutch friends because they went to the Presbyterian church. I'm not a very good person to interview because I forget.

8.39 And this little gallery down the road, when was that established?

That's ten years ago.

Oh, so it's recent. But the lady who lived there ...?

Oh, Margot and Gerald Lewers came in about ... well they owed the house when we came, but they were living in Sydney and used that as a week-ender, and they came in about '48 I think. Gerry was killed quite young from a horse. He was a wonderful sculptor, Gerald Lewers. And Margot died about ten years ago, ten or eleven years ago

And she was a well-known artist in the area too was she?

Oh well she was well-known everywhere. Yes, Margot Lewers, she sold a lot to America for one thing. She originally had a shop in Rowe Street. She worked in many medias. She had pottery and she worked in plastic and of course oils and beautiful windows, she did wonderful wall hangings, and the material it was a very wide range of things she did. It was an old house and of course, as I told you, it was taken over by the Council after a lot of bother to get them to take it over, and she had built Anchor House which is called Anchor House because the architect was Anchor, a well-known architect. And it's in a very big block of land - a lovely rambling garden and when the Council took it over they built a regional gallery across the back. So it's really three galleries in the garden and it all fits in very well, and the two daughters, Tania and Dorani, are still on the management committee, and they have ... it's a lovely gallery and it's lovely to work with. You know, you're always working for something that's, you know, the people are poor, or there's always ... working for a gallery is something more pleasurable, you know.

More uplifting?

Yes.

And you work for the gallery do you?

Well I'm in charge of catering and the tea-room.

11.24 And it's open to the public all the time?

Oh, yes, yes. It's a regional gallery. It's open - Monday closed - six days a week.

11.29 And did she teach art classes in the area, back in the earlier days?

No, no. She was too busy painting I think. She used to advise other artists and it was a meeting place for artists way back in those days. A meeting place - you know, they got together and talked about art and she helped a lot of budding artists in their time. And of course now they've started, which is interesting - I was telling you - that Allister Brass was an artist and doctor and editor and a very clever young man who died very young, and he apparently was a friend of the Lewers. And his father started this foundation which has been under the auspices of our gallery to study and document art from her period, her painting, which is from the '40's to the '80's. It's never been documented before, so we're trying to raise money to do that at the moment.

13.02 And you'll have an exhibition?

Yes, actually the exhibition's on at the moment and we've had a large dinner, the Allister Brass dinner, to raise money and that exhibition is on now. But we have changing exhibitions on all the time.

And did she paint the local area?

No. She was a contemporary artist, you know, with the Impressionists. There's no traditional sort of painting that she did. He did beautiful sculptures with wood that he found on the river bank, and his sculptures are really beautiful with flights of birds, and for the scouts he did an emu - a staff which had an emu on it - bent down, beautiful. And he didn't only work in wood, but his wood really came from this area.

14.02 You have a scouts group here?

Oh, yes, my children both belonged to Cubs and Brownies and Girl Guides. Yes there were all those organisations going in the area, but I think they always did in country towns. We started a music club, Allen Mullens', but that's only in the last 20 years. And Dr. Mullens had a very beautiful tenor voice and he was very strong in the leiter society, and he started the music club and we had very nice concerts which were often held in the Lewer's Gallery because they raised enough money for a piano. So in the last ten years they've been going to the gallery, but that led to the building of the Performing Arts Centre. The music club were behind that all along the line. Dr. Mullens died of a heart attack, very young, but they have got one of the rooms called Mullens. But it's the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre which is really wonderful for this area. The acoustics are superb. The ABC is recording in it. So that went from the very small music club, and a long time ago he used to meet in the Memorial Hall in St. Mary's right 'til the present day with this Joan Sutherland ... that's the only building that has her name, you know. Yes and Joan Sutherland actually sang and opened the Performing Arts Centre. It was just before she retired, the opening.

16.06 I think we've almost covered everything. What about pet animals, did you keep pet animals?

Yes of course we always had a dog. You didn't keep cows for milk or anything like that. We really came at the period when everything was just starting to develop. You know, it was getting filled with people from outside Penrith. You know, most of the people here when we came in '46 had been born here and there mothers before them, and we were the first influx and from then on it was people coming from other places that came into the district, and naturally, built up that high population. And they came in their hordes you see, it went from, in that time to 165,000. It's an awful lot of people. It was developing very quickly from '46 on.

17.16 And were you aware of it at the time? Did you have a feeling of the encroaching suburbanisation?

Oh, yes. It was happening all around you. It was happening ... another subdivision would be opened up in Penrith and what you used to call country was now covered in houses. Yes, you could year it happening. It was very quick, you know, happening. Shops being rebuilt, shops coming down, and the roads were getting done very quickly in those days - curbs and guttering. Because it had been such a little place before.

18.00 Lots of car parks in place of demolished buildings?

Well, not really. You see, Penrith was a railway town with a lot of weatherboard houses and there were no lovely homes in Penrith itself. They are all outside like Glenmore and Glenlea and all those were lovely places, but ... and Fernleigh, and out there, those were lovely places ... but there were little cottages that were all tumble-down and they were coming down. You could feel it happening all the time. You can still feel it happening, you know, it's growing so tremendous. There were green belts everywhere. Mistakenly they've built on a lot of those. They've been released, you know, which is a shame, which makes it houses from Sydney right to here. - that ribbon development instead of having space.

19.09 That lack of space is something you feel strongly?

Yes. And we have such a lot of traffic on the road. No-one drove along River Road once, and now it's like Pitt Street.

19.28 Do you think it's a good thing? Would you say it's progress. this urbanisation?

Yes it is progress and it's inevitable. It has to be I suppose. But I think they'll have to stop soon. You know, there's trouble with the river and the pollution and it can't take any more really.

Do people still swim in the river, or is it too polluted?

No, they don't. They've got a swimming pool, of course, in Penrith now. But there's people who dive in, but you wouldn't go knowing what it's like. You see, all the holidays, I used to hurry up and do my housework and - I don't know how I did it - I'd have it all finished and done by 12 o'clock and we'd go down for lunch on the river bank for a picnic in the school holidays and stay in the water. My neighbour and I would be in the water the whole afternoon, you know, with the children.

You wouldn't do this now?

Certainly not. Even if I were young and could do it I wouldn't.

20.34 And I suppose the changing landscape is the most noticeable change?

Yes.

How would you describe it then, just in your mind's eye?

Well, it was lovely. I used to look out my kitchen window in the morning and look straight up the Mountains and see the little steam train, and you could see the steam going over the old bridge, and I used to follow it right up the mountains in the mornings, yes, while I was washing up. And of course it was all green orchards and you looked over the trees up the mountains. And now I'm blocked out because I've grown trees all round to block out the view of houses. But then there's no steam train going up there - all electrified. I used to see the steam going up through the trees.

21.37 Well looking back and reflecting on your life during the '40s to the '60's, how do you feel that the rapid growth has effected you personally, for better or for worse?

Well, it's not for better. I loved that quiet way of living. It was a country town and country towns are nice and slow and nice to live in, and now it's just the hustle and the bustle of the city. You dread driving into Penrith to do your shopping, so you go to the little market that's up here in Emu Plains.

But you have to go into banks and things, and you don't like that. And there's nowhere to park and you get on a queue to get out again, and, you know, the cars are bumper to bumper. It's not well planned, Penrith, 'specially since they built the mall and you've got to go round each way, and to do your shopping you have to go to one end of the place to the other. The Plaza's down here and the MBF's way up there in K-Mart. It's such a big spread out area. Also it was a nice friendly place, now it's just like a place with a lot of people in it you don't know. Many people. You couldn't walk up High Street - it'd take you all day because you'd meet someone that you knew all the time. It just hasn't got that nice slow pace.

23.25 Well, thank you very much. I think we've covered everything now. So thank you very much.

It's been my pleasure. I just wish I could have remembered better. I just remembered - the Women's Guild! I really am getting Alzheimer's disease aren't I? Well, they do exactly as they do today. They had fetes to raise money, and of course in the early days then, our church was very old and it was pulled down and we sold the land to an oil company, because we owned the land behind it, which provided us with enough money to build a new church and my husband was very involved in that. And building the church ... there were a very keen lot of men in those days working for the church and it was a very nice atmosphere. My husband really wanted to be an architect in the early days but they were selling boot laces on street corners in those days weren't they? And so ... when he was going to University ... so he did Law, but he was always very keen on architecture, so building the church was a wonderful thing for him. Also he was very involved when the old Masonic Temple came down in Penrith area and they built up in Orchard Hills, just out of Penrith. And that new building ... he was involved with that for a long while which was right up his alley.

15.16 I didn't ask you about industry in the area. Was there very much industry in the '50s in Penrith?

Well, no in Penrith actually. St. Mary's was the industrial area, and it has grown tremendously in Penrith. I think the Nepean Milk Co-op was the only really big thing. But of course now it is tremendous areas. The three areas in Penrith - along Castlereagh Road, Cox Avenue and York Road. I can't remember the names of all the big ...

So there wasn't very much there? Were there some factories in the area? Clothing manufacturers?

No, only St. Mary's were clothing manufacturers. I think they had kept it to that area because there was the munitions factory there, which is just moving out isn't it? No, Penrith didn't have very much at all. There was the

26.16 brickworks. Yes I can't remember anything else.

22.19 Good, thank you.

END TAPE