

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

‘Millers Point Oral History Project’

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: **Millicent Chalmers**
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INTERVIEWER: Siobhán McHUGH
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00:05 START OF TAPE MP-SM12 SIDE A

00:06 Tape Identification

[Talking about Shirley Ball]

00:22 She was like a lot of those characters who are reformers or leaders, but they are not necessarily attractive. She could be, she could be very funny and very witty and charming, she could also be very abrasive. But she was one of those black and white characters, but she did a lot of good and that was the thing that I respected and she worked really hard.

Was Shirley Ball healthy, up to the end of her life if she was so active, you said she was still in the Resident Action Group?

01:25 Well she was healthy in the sense that she got around. She had a sore back and hips and knees for years and years but she lived in a three-storey, four-storey, house. I took her shopping every Saturday, unless I was away for ten years, say, and she became increasingly stiff. Mind you, she'd led a hard life in the sense that she had the house that she lived in, the museum, and she had a boarding house down here and for a long time she did the cleaning. She was married to a chap called Harry. Harry came from Leicester in England, he insisted on her helping him move the furniture up and down when people moved and things. Now, she used to say that moving the fridges, her helping him move the fridges and things up and down in the houses - because the boarding house down there had kitchens in some of the areas - it wasn't a boarding in the sense of one person cooking for everyone, people had their own kitchens; they shared the bathrooms. That was terrible and he insisted and her back was bad right to the end, terrible.

Did she have any children?

03:40 Yes, a son and a daughter, Neil and Belinda.

Have they kept up a connection with the Point?

No. That is a sad story.

Well Millicent, just moving to when you came in to live here, just taking you back to your personal story of coming in here in 1990, can you just walk me through the house as you found it here at Fort Street and then what you did to it over those nine months of getting it habitable.

04:22 Well, as I say, it had been squatted in and people had urinated all through the carpet in there. What had happened was the Department of Housing had gone up and down the street taking out the dangerous gas fittings and things to make the houses safer, which was understandable, but what they had done here, the verandah had threatened to fall off and they replaced the verandah and built the bathroom on. Now there was no kitchen in the house, there had been a kitchen on the first floor and on the top floor there had been a little sink and there had been a kitchen here, on the verandah and that all fell off into the yard when they started to pull at it.

05:43 When we came the house had no kitchen at all because it had all been pulled out, there were the holes in the plaster where they had pulled all the dangerous gas pipes out and just left everything as it was. Weekend after weekend we would come and I'd come sometimes after work and do a couple of hours, dragging the rubbish down from the floors. We found things like a shopping trolley from Woolworths or Coles, or whatever and it had been cut in half across, strange, why we could never work out. It was dreadful, cartons and boxes and old clothes. Touchingly, up on the top floor some transient person, a man, had left his shaving gear in a little row there, laid out on the floor, but neatly in a row. He'd got drunk and forgotten where he'd left it, died, or whatever, we don't know.

So when Professor Ryan had it was he not living here then?

07:11 He still teaches in the University of New England and he lived here; he used to come down here and stay when he came down to give tutorials or to work at Sydney University, or whatever. He had boarders here and it was a good place to come, a little stopping-off point when he had to come to Sydney. But the Department insisted on taking possession and because he was away they moved in and took possession of it.

Did they countenance the squatters being here then?

08:00 Well it gradually fell in disrepair and it was during that period that the squatters moved in, it was terrible. I don't know the story and Professor Ryan didn't know what was going on so we don't know how that happened.

You mentioned that he was a bit eccentric so he wasn't the materialistic type who would be worrying.

08:27 Oh he tries to be businesslike but the point is, it wasn't so much worrying, it was the Department had possession. The landladies' battle went on in the courts but things happened in between and it was only at the end that he got the lease for the premises. See the legal problem stemmed from the fact that when the Maritime Services Board had the area they didn't have leases, the people had occupancies. Money changed hands for them but there was no legal documentation of it, it was one of those historical things. Consequently there was no proper protection until the courts and the landladies' battles in the courts, the landladies won progressively in different courts.

Their cause was upheld on the basis, I believe, of custom and practice, that was the legal term, the fact that they had had such a tradition of having the residential. So then what was your arrangement?

10:05 I bought a lease. Being a lawyer you can imagine I wasn't going to spend thousands and thousands of dollars because by then I had the money from the house, it wasn't a huge

amount but it was enough to buy the registered lease.

So what is your position now, can you tell me?

I don't think that is part of the oral history.

Okay. You were able to buy a lease from the Department of Housing?

No, from Professor Ryan.

But this house is still owned by the Department of Housing?

10:42 Yes, it was transferred into the name of the Department of Housing back in 1985.

So did you intend to have boarders yourself?

I did have boarders.

What were they like?

11:04 Because I had two children who were by then both at university I had in always at least one other university student and that was compatible. That meant they got along, they didn't always agree but at least they were comfortable with one another, so we had a succession of university students. Particularly one who was the son of a chap that I had met through the study of lexicography and he was a shy sort of chap. So that worked out quite well.

What is the layout, could you just tell me the structural layout of the house?

12:04 Well it is four storeys. There is a bedroom and sitting room on the top floor, or what used to be three bedrooms, one quite a good size and two very tiny ones. The second floor - there is a bedroom at the back, which is just above us here, and a long hall. All across the front is one room now, it was two bedrooms. It was a very rickety old wall and it started to get a bit worrying, so we took the wall down because it was quite recent and the Department was quite happy with that and made that into what is in effect a library because my sister and I both collect books. Then on this floor we've got our sort of study and the kitchen dining room. Downstairs, underneath us is a room much the same as this which used to be the old kitchen and that is my bedroom now.

When you had the boarders did you cook for them or were they self-sufficient?

13:37 No, I cooked for them, they sat at dinner with us. It was very different, we'd never had anything like that, you can imagine, we'd always lived in a house that was just us. But of course after the upheaval of Graham, my husband, departing and moving here the kids said, 'Mum, you mean we are going to have a stranger in the house?' and I said to them, 'Well, that is the terms of the lease so we'll abide by it,' and we did and it was good for them.

How did your children adapt? Your daughter was aghast at first when she saw this place, how did she adapt to living here?

14:18 Loved it. The point is that she had always lived in a house. My husband was, and is still very meticulous and likes everything in its right place and she'd always grown up with everything tidy and to come into a house that stank, with actually a good quality carpet but it had been badly treated, a dark rich brown carpet about the colour of this polished table, all through here because this had been a bedsitter, but of course fearfully abused, strange colours on the walls and all, and old mattresses with great cuts and rips in them along the hall and obscene messages on the walls, it was just awful for her. Well, it was awful for me but I thought if we are going to survive as a family - and I was working full-time - we had to do it, so we did.

15:54 It meant getting the place emptied and that helped. There were some bits of broken old furniture and once we'd got rid of those and then we washed down the walls and washed the floors and ripped up the carpet and took it to the tip, I spent half my life at the tip. We had an old station wagon called 'Dougall' because it was white and 'Dougall' was the dark one. Martin has a station wagon again and he is 'Dougall II'. We spent our lives filling Dougall up with rubbish and driving off to the tip.

Where is the tip from here?

16:40 Over at St Leonard's, Artarmon. We did that and then it started to feel better when you had the bare boards and the very cracked and dreadful ceilings. We have just had the ceiling redone and this room painted and as you can see there was a huge crack up there, so we've got to paint that. The mending of it there was done by a heritage builder that I know and he did that, it has got two layers because underneath that is lathe and plaster. This terrace was built 1834 to 1836 so we have to be careful of it and he came. The boys, when they first did the ceiling, you know those big tins of powdered plaster that you use to mend things, we used a tin on the ceiling just here, poor old thing.

Apart from the huge renovations and changes you had to make you were moving from Roseville, which was presumably quite a middle-class orderly sort of suburb, into what was still really a very working-class area and inner-city, how did you and the children adapt to that, or find that?

18:34 Well, luckily for the first six months we were so busy that we didn't have too much time to be worried about it. I was worried that things like the trains would keep everyone awake and they all knew that they were going to be kept awake.

You are literally a stone's throw from the Bridge here.

19:06 Yes. After two weeks we didn't notice the trains. The kids drove me mad and there

were various things that happened. We'd had to move from the house at Roseville because Graham and his lady friend were buying us out, they wanted to move in so I rented a house at Chatswood and that wasn't very good. So when the house was all painted and carpeted and the lino laid and all that the kids became a bit more comfortable about moving in. Of course, before the furniture came in it looked huge, I mean it is huge but it looked even larger, so it started to get a bit exciting for them. Of course, it was close to the uni so that was a great relief, so we had that advantage, which was good. We were buoyed up by the novelty of it for a while.

20:31 We had a couple of bad times, for instance, the first St Patrick's Day, it was terrible because in those days the police allowed people to get a lot drunker than they do now and there were people unconscious across in Dawes Point Park and it was hideous. I'd never seen anything like that, of course, so that was frightening. There were a couple of student pub crawls that really upset me. There were some medical students and they had been going through the city and they were drinking at the Harbour View, not with the present owner, a previous owner, and one of the girls fell down unconscious across on the corner. They were all wearing their white medical coats, as was the style of the time, and they walked away down the street. I had gone out on the verandah to hear what all the shouting and yelling was and she was just lying there and they were walking away. Anyway, I tore across the road and called them and they sort of turned back and I said, 'What about her?' and they laughed because they were off their face and said, 'She's drunk.' I said, 'Well, you get her a cab and get in the cab with her and take her home or I call the police.' Then we had to convince the cab driver to let them into the cab and I said to him, 'You can't leave an unconscious girl out in the middle of the road,' goodness knows what would have happened to her.

What about the publican, wasn't the publican interested?

22:50 I didn't bother going in remonstrating with the publican - there was no point, I knew that. That was one of the things that you did learn. That was also something that came up at the Resident Action Group and the police started to clamp down.

What about the interaction you've had over the years, apart from the community, with tourists, what sort of level of interaction do you have with them?

23:34 Well that's good, it's nice, people ask where things are. One of the things that we find entertaining - and my sister and I have travelled quite a bit and we are both used to using maps - is that they can stand there with the Harbour Bridge and say, 'We've come

along George Street - where's Central Railway?' A lot of them don't orient themselves well. They don't think the sun is there, that's the west, there's the bridge over the harbour, Central Railway will be that way. Most of them are very cheerful and appreciative, so it is nice, it is good.

Just when I was coming in there was a big bus across the road, does it ever get irritating?

24:28 Well we have difficulties and one of the things we have to do is to constantly work with the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the City Council and the Police to see that the coaches leave enough room for the public bus to turn, things like that. Also that they don't sit there. Years ago you could have three or four tourist coaches lined up in the summer, belching out carbon monoxide for an hour while they waited for the tourists, well, we don't put up with that any more, we ring the council, or the police, or the authority to get them to move and park down in Hickson Road. That is the thing about the Resident Action Group - there is always something to be worked on.

What range of people do you have in the Resident Action Group?

25:40 Well the wonderful thing about it is, we have some eighty-five, ninety year old people who have been working-class people, who have lived here all their lives, whose parents lived here. We've got various people who have moved in who are on a more professional educational level. One of the things that we were very wary of was when the high-rise people came, when the flats like the Georgia and Highgate and so on came in, how it would all work, they've been marvellous they really have. They are a mixture of retired people, people who have had businesses, property developers, all sorts of people and they are good friends.

What about the Walsh Bay redevelopment, has there been much integration of the people there into the community?

27:02 That's taking a while because a lot of them haven't moved in that long. In fact I am just about to do another newsletter to distribute because a lot of them don't know we exist, so it takes a bit of time. That is the next stage, the next group to bring into the community. Darling House has been a good thing for that.

Tell me about Darling House because I know that you are involved, you are on the board of it now.

Well I was on the board of it from 1991.

Darling House is an aged care facility, just in Trinity Avenue and it was a long struggle to get it, wasn't it.

27:56 It was, yes. When I came here the local community had been granted the right to

use the derelict Darling House that was on the block of land and they'd managed to get support for Darling House to be built. I was in a part of the group when we were negotiating about how many units we could have - first we thought we might be able to get sixteen units but we could only get nine because the planning requirements changed. In a way that has worked out well. It had been a terrible struggle, I went to one of the jumble sales and got talking and of course it was part of this thing of joining in.

Do locals get priority placement there?

29:08 Well we try and get the locals to come in but the locals have been so independent. We've had lots of locals, we've had some marvellous people there. The point is it is very important to keep it full so we've had periods when we haven't had anyone local in there, then other times we've had quite a few. After all it was basically meant for the locals.

How is it funded, is it expensive for somebody local to go there?

29:51 Well what happens is there are several ways you can go in. A pensioner can go in with a government subsidy but people who have assets, there is an asset test and you put in a bond. Now the bond goes into an investment and when the person either dies or goes into a nursing home or goes somewhere else that bond is refunded, less an amount. They pay also a weekly amount, but that also is subsidised by the Federal Government.

30:26 END OF TAPE MP-SM12 SIDE A

30:27 START OF TAPE MP-SH12 SIDE B

It must be very important for local people to feel that they can stay in the area as they get older because of the emotional ties.

30:39 It is, but you know this is a group of really sturdy independent people too and we have found that they will stay in their flat, or wherever they are to the last minute and struggle up and down stairs, totter along to the shop. They are wonderful, they really are, they are wonderful. It used to irritate Shirley into the ground, which was very funny because she'd done all that work, she had done years of work, agitating with the local state government and with the council and with the Commonwealth government and getting the money to have the place built, all of it really, really hard work. I drove her around and we went to places where we could get crockery of a good quality, but cheaply and she wanted

it with flower patterns and homely things on it so people didn't feel they were in an institution, it had to all be comfortable and homely.

32:05 She went out and chose herself to make sure it was done, there was no business of it will be all right. Then of course, people would get to be older and older and she would think, say, Nancy would come in, no way. Nancy would have trouble getting in and out of the chair and all of that, 'I'm all right.' Part of it, I'm sure, with some of them was that it was Shirley Ball's Darling House and part of it also a lot of them are very strong people. They came from a period when life wasn't easy, the things that people take for granted today didn't exist.

Do you have a special feeling or affinity for the place because I understand your grandfather had a maritime link on a clipper going to China?

33:16 He was the Captain, for only a couple of voyages, mind you, of the clipper ship *Yalleroi* which came out here from Aberdeen and then on to China and they'd take wool and tea for the Nicholson Line. He told stories about this area and there was a lane, as you can imagine, lined with brothels and they made a sign and put a nice frame around it and called it 'Yalleroi Street' and put it up and the girls all thought it was lovely and they sailed away. When they came back another group had painted over 'Yalleroi Street' and had done raised letters of theirs, so the *Yalleroi* boys thought right, and by this time it was well and truly bolted into the rock, so they filled it with soap, finished it with oil paint and it was 'Yalleroi Street' again. Apparently there was a terrible fight, like a fist-fight, in the street over it. So it was a funny feeling.

It is interesting that it has come full circle in a way, that you are back here. Do you feel any sense of romance, seeing the big ships coming in and out?

34:50 Oh, absolutely. I'll talk about my sister. When our mother died my sister moved in with us and she joined the Navy when she was eighteen and she left thirty years later as a Captain. So Marc and I here and the ships are going and we watch them berthing there and then we walk out the front and watch them going out. On summer afternoons we will sit out the front and we can see the ships, very good. We feel strongly about that.

So how do you feel about what is going to happen next year then, when the Patrick site closes? What would you like to see happen?

35:55 Well the Resident Action Group is part of the Working Harbour Coalition. We would very much like to see that stay as an active wharf for two reasons, well there is a whole lot of reasons. We think it is important to keep the Harbour with the facility because we think it is a bit vulnerable, particularly in these uncertain times, to have your sea

transport separated out from the city, up in Newcastle and down in Port Kembla because explosions on the road cut you off. I know that sounds highly dramatic and all that but it can happen.

36:55 With the weather becoming increasingly uncertain that is not such a good idea, so we would like to see the deep anchorages. See, the deepest part of the harbour is over in front of Luna Park, all this area around here has very deep fissures, now to get the big ships in to the nice deep anchorage grandfather used to say that down at Circular Quay it was so shallow that for the big ships manoeuvring was awkward because in shallower water the ships move more quickly than they do in deep water. This anchorage is excellent.

Where the site is. Just a few things to clear up from before, who got rid of the squatters when you came in?

38:05 Oh they'd gone. The police had been in, so we gather, we didn't know, and the Department also had work done and the workmen had come in and changed the locks. While we were working and doing things someone jemmed open the doors and stole some fireplaces and all of that, but then we changed the locks and locked it up again so it was safer.

Was the verandah closed in when you got it?

Yes.

In terms of the big changes: you took down the wall - this is just for the purposes of the architecture and understanding what changes have been made - you took down that inside wall, have you done anything else?

39:07 It started to creak and we looked at it and thought we could do one of two things, repair it or get rid of it, so we got rid of it. It is much as it was. When they replaced the back verandah, the back verandah was closed in and they said to us, 'Do you want it closed in again?' and we said, 'No, leave it open,' because we thought that was better.

How do you find the Department of Housing now as a landlord?

39:40 I don't think that is a thing to comment on. As you can imagine Shirley Ball and I wrote a submission to the Department of Housing, we went in and spoke to its Director, years and years and years ago. As a result of that and various other things the State Advisory Groups were started and there have been times when Shirley and I have had to negotiate with them about various things. It is like dealing with any government department.

What about the Resident Action Group - what would be the main issues that you deal with? You mentioned the buses and the noise but what are the other sort of issues that come up that you

are in charge of?

40:51 Well what happens, we have got the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority have authority up to the Harbour Bridge, the City Council has authority beyond that. That is as far as being the authority for approving changes to things and all that, so we negotiate with them about all sorts of things that they are doing and things that they need to be doing. We keep in touch with the City Council as far as trees that need to be lopped, dangerous fences and things on the cliff. Of course we have built up a relationship with the Walsh Bay developers and that took a long time and a lot of work but it has been well worthwhile. They have become very good supporters of the community, including Darling House.

What about the social issues, is crime a problem?

42:09 It is better than it was, much better. It depends on who is living in the area, we've had various families from time-to-time that have been a serious problem. But the families have different characteristics, some of them mug people, some of them do break and enters, some break into cars, and that changes over the years. We are going through a good patch at the moment, there is less going on but it just depends on who is out of gaol. Leigh Farrell, who is the girl from the police, is our local Community Liaison Officer, will say to us, 'Be very careful at home. I can't tell you the name but we've had someone come out of gaol,' and we think I know who that is, right, be very, very careful, lock everything within an inch of its life.

Sound at bit like Rumpole territory.

43:28 It really is like that, I have never thought of that, yes, it is exactly like that. Some families, boys, that is their *modus operandi*. James was home studying one time and came down the stairs and there is this chap taking the money out of his wallet, which was on the sideboard. Luckily James startled him and took the money back from him but the chap hit him before he left, bizarre.

Without necessarily mentioning their names could you give me a thumbnail sketch of the people who live in this street? Are they single? What sort of ages? What sort of occupations do they have? What sort of ethnicities?

44:35 Starting at the bottom, well, you will find that the people who are home during the day will be able to give you better information than me because I leave for work at twenty-past seven and I get home at about half-past six. If they are still there - in the first house there was a girl who was a solicitor and I think her parents. Now there is a boarding house and I know the people to nod to but I don't know their names. There are a number of elderly people, for instance, further up there is Sally Clough and Dawn Fitzroy, both

marvellous characters. Sally went all through the landladies' battle and she is well worthwhile talking to. Dawn came down from somewhere up on the North Shore and she is wonderful. Then further along is Brian Harrison, who you really must interview.

He does the ghost trips.

He does the ghost trips. He is Shirley Ball's nephew.

We have spoken to him.

46:11 Then in one of the houses beyond that is Julie, I can't think of her surname, who was working so far as I know at Sydney University. She has a daughter. Also John Bassett, who has one of the boarding houses over here did have a lease down there, now how that arrangement is I don't know. John is a sound engineer at the Opera House. He also has a feeling for wanting to change the community at all but he is a bit more confrontational than I would prefer. I tend to think we should try and integrate everything and try to get along together and work together and he tends not to be quite like that, but everyone has their different view of how things are done. The house after that is let, I think on a 5A lease. Some of the characters, for instance, in Brian's house there is a marvellous character Bob, who buys and sells bric-a-brac and stuff but I don't know how long he has been here but he is a character and very helpful.

I saw somebody with bric-a-brac out the front as I came up Fort Street I thought it was Norm, it had a little sign saying, 'Norm's Bric-a-Brac' or something, just a few doors down from you.

Oh down that way, right.

In Milton Terrace somewhere I think.

48:29 Well that is interesting, I must go and have a look. On the corner is Geraldine Thomas and she has been here for many, many years. She has only just retired from working at *The Telegraph*, writing all sorts of things but particularly their cooking series, column, and she was here through the landladies' battle and all, so she would be a good person to interview. The house next door is vacant and that was funny. I went in there to look at it because there was a suggestion that they might sell the lease and I thought I would have a look.

49:36 I had no idea how expensive it was going to be and it was obviously far outside my range. What was funny was in the cellar the flooring had been taken up. It had had wooden flooring, the cellar here has concrete, but the flooring had been taken up and the dirt was bare. It turned out that a lady had lived there who was a Polynesian and she hated having to always live with these wooden floors, and she wanted a dirt floor, so she took up the floor.

Maybe she had a hongki there.

50:31 Well no. I wondered about what else was there but luckily no, it was just that she could walk around in her bare feet on the dirt, strange.

Takes all kinds. You mentioned earlier that back in the days of the battle of the landladies there was a fear that the government was thinking of selling off the houses here, the Neville Wran Government, and that really that could have been at the heart of why the landladies fought so hard to hold on to the leases.

51:07 No, they fought because that was their livelihood and this was where they lived.

They lived here and they didn't want either themselves or the tenants to be turfed out, so it wasn't about, as some people have said that they were trying to make a living out of the tenants or trying to exploit the tenants.

51:31 Well, they were supplying something the tenants needed and I have met lots of the tenants and there were some landladies that they didn't like and some landladies that they stayed with for fifty years. I mean, I don't think that the landladies were angels in disguise, I think they were just normal people making a normal living. I think a lot of it was exaggerated for the sake of a good story.

Just on that idea that the government might sell off the houses - is that still a fear or a potential threat?

52:28 I don't know. The Department, as you will have gathered from the newspapers, has sold various houses. I feel sorry for the public servants involved because most of them are career public servants, they have never been in anything else. They don't have much idea of the real estate market, they don't have much idea of how to manage communities. That is one of the problems that we have at the moment with the City Council. The City Council thinks that it is in favour of villages and that is a romantic idea and they have withdrawn the various things that were being done which were supporting villages. We have been making representations to the council about that.

By trying to maintain the status of a village?

53:57 Well, the thing is that we have worked for years and years and years and we have got to the stage where they had a liaison officer who went around to the various resident groups around this city, listening to the sorts of things that needed to be done and alerting the various departments within the council, or saying to us, 'Talk to so and so. Talk to Con, talk to Wayne.' That was efficient, partly because they got to know the community and could work out the difference between a ratbag ringing up - and we have ratbags - or someone seriously saying 'the bows are falling off the tree near the children's kindergarten it needs to be pruned', just simple things. Then someone advanced their career in the

council by economising and dispensing with the idea of the community liaison officer, so it was rather galling to receive some of the council papers with 'City of Villages' on it and you think to yourself 'oh yes'. I mean, the simple things that make the communities work were taken away to advance someone's career and then they do all the PR exercise of the 'City of Villages' and you think to yourself: how naive.

Does it feel like a village for somebody living here?

55:41 Oh yes. You see, I was brought up in Pymble, not in one of the wealthy parts of Pymble, in fact we lived opposite the pig farm when I was little, in Bridge Street. We used to take the scraping of the plates and the peelings across the road and the cows would come down to the fence because they liked the peelings. The owls would sit up in the branch to get some meat scraps, so you'd put the meat scraps outside the fence and put the peelings and everything inside the fence for the cows. Every now and again we would be allowed to go in and up to see the big mother pig, marvellous. We regarded that as normal, mind you this is 1945 or something like that, and it is a bit different now.

56:50 Where we did that they built a swimming pool. We knew all the people up and down the street and that was great. We knew the man who drove the bus and we knew when the poor girl down the road had the baby without being married, all those things, well that was fine. But then when I went from there and got married and particularly lived at Roseville they were very much more reserved. Now to come here, where you know people, I know so many people and they know about us, there are people we are really fond of. There are some people that I don't like but there are some people I really admire and there are times when we work all together.

Do you think it is viable to maintain this sense of a village when the heart of what really established Millers Point was the waterfront-based employment?

58:22 Well that hasn't been here for fifteen, twenty years. I still know about a hundred and thirty people.

But is not inevitable as those older people, who used to work here die off people who don't really have a sense of identification with the place come in?

Oh yes, and there probably will be fewer people who know one another, that is life.

Does the fact that it is a historic area mean something personally to you?

59:09 Oh yes, very much so, goodness. I very much appreciate the privilege of living here, it is a privilege, it is a wonderful place to live. Of course, we worked very hard to have it declared a heritage precinct, the whole area is now a heritage precinct, so it is protected,

but it was a lot of work.

Just to move wrapping up, what would be the biggest changes you have seen in your fifteen years here?

59:55 Well, the Walsh Bay development, because when I came the wharves were falling into the water it was terrible, it was awful to see. But it was lovely to have them there sort of grand and fading, but it is good to see them retrieved and used. You don't want places becoming museums and I agree with Phillippe Robert, the French heritage architect, he talks about adaptive re-use. Some of the adaptive re-uses like that awful pyramid on the Louvre I hate, but I like the way Walsh Bay has gone. Patricks' involvement with the wharves has been a mixed blessing. The gradual increase in it being lawful is a help, has been good.

You think the reduction of crime?

Yes.

The sort of mix of public and private seems to work quite well here because it is considered a bad social thing to have only public housing, because you clump people from disadvantaged backgrounds very often, but this sort of ad hoc thing seems to make for a healthier community.

Yes, I agree whole-heartedly.

Just to finish, unless there is anything else you would like to say, what would be your hopes for Millers Point in the future? How would you like to see it go?

62:04 Well, I think it is becoming gentrified and that can't be escaped from and in another fifty years I would think it is quite likely to be more so. Purely selfishly I would like the atmosphere and the relationships of the community to last as long as they possibly can but that needs local people to spend the time, to take the trouble to do things. Now it means, for instance, in this next three or four days I have to finish preparing two fliers to letterbox drop all the people here and all through the high-rise. We have to prepare a newsletter, which means I have to prepare a newsletter, Marc will take the photographs, we'll letterbox drop the newsletter around, particularly down on the wharves to keep everyone reminded of what the issues are, what we need support on, what is going on. It is a lot of hard work but it is well worthwhile. It won't last forever but while it does it is a good thing.

Well thank you.

64:05 END OF INTERVIEW WITH MILLICENT CHALMERS AND END OF TAPE MP-SM12 SIDE B