

CITY OF SYDNEY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
REDFERN, WATERLOO AND ALEXANDRIA
TRANSCRIPT

Name: Bev Karonidis

Date: 26 September 1994

Place: Redfern

Interviewer: Sue Rosen

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SR:** Interview with Bev Karonidis at Redfern. It's the 26th of September 1994.

Bev, I believe you've lived in Redfern all your life.

BK: In George Street Redfern all my life.

SR: What year were you born in?

BK: 1936.

SR: What kind of a kid were you?

BK: Well, we weren't running wild like a lot of them but we played around here in the streets. We never got into any trouble or anything. Well, you didn't get into trouble those days as much as they do these days, I don't think. I wasn't game to get into trouble.

SR: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

BK: My next sister to me was ten years after me and the next one is two years after that.

SR: So you have virtually been an only - - -

BK: I was an only child more or less.

SR: What are your earliest memories?

BK: Mostly going to the Lawson Theatre on Saturdays and playing down in Coronation Park. The playground was called Coronation; we used to go down there in the school holidays and play.

SR: Were there any special events on there?

BK: No. They always had what we called Miss and a Sir and then if you wanted to play anything you were given balls or whatever and we did weaving and things like that. But we'd go down - because my girlfriend came from a very large family so she had to go down and take her brothers and sisters and it was closed - nobody was allowed in except the children and we'd go down there for the day and just play.

SR: That's almost like modern vacation care.

BK: Yes. And in those days you got free milk at school and in the holidays the milk was given to the playground. And, of course, there wasn't that many children there so we'd take a billy down and you could bring home milk and that.

SR: Did many kids go there?

2.00 BK: Quite a few but you were kept separate. The top end was the girls, the bottom end with swings and that were the boys and the bit in the middle at the back was like small children, and girls couldn't go in the boys' end and the boys couldn't go in the girls' end.

SR: Did you have swings in the girls' end?

BK: Yes. There were swings and other things that go 'round at the top end but they used to take them in every night and put them out every day.

SR: All the equipment?

BK: Well, the main equipment's there but the seat bits used to get put on every day and that. And they also taught us other things. I learnt weaving down there - they had a loom – and also when I got older I played basketball for them down there.

SR: Who ran it?

BK: I don't know. It was the council, I don't know, but they now have taken the fence down and they've taken all the swings and everything down except for the little part where the infants were.

SR: What years are we talking about here? If you were born in '36 would your memories go back to, say, '41 when you were five?

BK: Well, I do remember – well, I don't know whether I remember or whether I'm told about it but my mother always used to talk about the first day at school and that because I howled my head off and my mother said she came home and howled and when she went back I told her I liked that place and I was going back. And she said that she was very upset because she'd cried all day and I was all right. And I remember in those days, the early days, the milk came bulk and we all took a cup and my mother used to go down every day and they'd fill all the cups with milk and as you filed out you took your cup of milk sort of thing, then they'd wash up the cups and that. And then later on, of course, it went into bottles.

SR: And so you would remember the war years.

3.56 BK: I remember my father was what you call a warden and we used to have practice runs and he'd go out which didn't thrill my mother because she'd rather have had him home and I remember under the stairs we kept some food and that and that's where we would go if there was any problems. It's hard to know what you remember and what you were told and talked about but the night that the submarines came in my grandparents were 'round the Lawson Theatre and they stopped the picture and they came home. I know it was always talked about. I mean whether I really remember it I don't know because we lived with my grandparents always.

SR: And where was that?

BK: 37 George Street.

SR: 37 George Street and now you live in number 7.

BK: 7.

SR: What kind of house was that – was that a terrace?

BK: Yes, that's another terrace, almost the same as this.

SR: A two-storey?

BK: Yes, in structure, yes, it'd be the same.

SR: And so was that your maternal grandparents?

BK: Yes, my mother's mother and father. When my father married they were living in Cleveland Street, my grandparents, and my father lived in Manly – his mother was a widow. And anyhow they must have moved 'round here and then my mother and father always lived with them and most of the time later on her maiden aunt lived with them too.

SR: Gee, it must have been a big house or was it crowded?

BK: Well, see, we did things that they wouldn't do in these days. I mean my mother had the bedroom and lounge room upstairs. Well, I slept in the same room as my parents, always did when they were there. Then when the other two children were born I slept on the verandah. It was closed in and I slept there and they slept in the same room as my parents. We never thought anything of it. And then they had a lounge room and then there was another room at the back where my aunty lived and then my grandparents downstairs had a bedroom, a lounge room and then we had a kitchen. We didn't consider it crowded. I mean we never thought anything of sleeping in the same room with your parents.

6.05 **SR: And what nationality are your family?**

BK: Well, my grandmother's mother and father, he was Chinese and she was German. They had fifteen children, ten boys and five girls, none of them living now but I still see parts of the family that come from that side. But they were country people; they came from Armidale.

SR: And what about the other side?

BK: Well, on my father's side he came out from England in 1921 with his mother. He had a brother here in Australia but we didn't have much to do with them. We lived in Redfern, they didn't. We were a bit looked down on.

SR: Really?

BK: Yes. My mother always said my grandmother, his mother, because times were hard my father had to contribute to her living here because she didn't get a pension because not born here and living in Manly was

dearer. They found her a room over here. She wouldn't stay here; she went back to Manly. Redfern was a bit too low-class for her.

SR: Really?

BK: But we always liked it.

SR: And what did your father do for a living?

BK: He was an electrician.

SR: And who did he work for or was he self-employed?

BK: Oh, no. During the war he worked for the Australian Window Glass – they were at Alexandria. They were part of – is it ACI [Australian Consolidated Industries] now, the glassworks? They used to have a place up in Moore Park but he worked at Mascot - it was called the Australian Window Glass. Then he worked for the railway, then he worked for – it was originally called ANA [Australian National Airways] and then [Reg] Ansett [became Ansett ANA] took over, until he retired.

8.08 **SR: And what sort of man was he, how would you describe him?**

BK: A very soft but loving father. I mean all he ever lived for, really, was his family. I mean he did everything for us and that and actually I believe it was my sister that passed away, that from that minute his health went down.

SR: Really?

BK: Yes. I lost a sister. She was only thirty when she died and my father, he used to spend hours with her. Same with us, anything we wanted. If we wanted to go somewhere my father went, even with my son. Because my husband worked a lot of shift work to try and make a bit of money and that he would take my son out. But if my son rang me up and wanted something delivered where he was I'd ring my father. He'd drive me up, he'd stop what he was doing. For any of us, any of us, you'd ring dad and he'd come. That's why we miss him now because anything that breaks electrically we all go into a fit because we don't know what to do. Anything that happened, you'd just ring dad and he would take you or do whatever you wanted.

SR: And as a kid what sort of places would you go with your father?

BK: We always went for drives. We always had a car and we had family in Wollongong so we used to go to Wollongong a lot - my mother's sister lived down there – or we'd meet halfway and have picnics and that sort of thing. But it was mostly that. Sundays we'd go for a drive. My

father could just drive around a suburb, just looking at houses and things; you didn't have to go anywhere in particular but he would just drive 'round, up streets, down streets and looking and that.

10.03 **SR: And all the kids in the back?**

BK: Well, it would only be me. By the time my sisters came along I was pretty old sort of thing, ten, so I'd be with my friends mostly.

SR: What about your mother? What sort of a woman was she?

BK: Well, my mother, she was a good mother. My mother was not as emotional as my father but we got on very well. I mean, see, with my sisters I was like their mother because when they were born I took them over more or less and if they had any problems when they got older they would ring me and we'd discuss it and then I'd go and have a quiet word with my mother and let her know all about it and then they'd come and talk to her and I'd already have it organised and that sort of thing. And I looked after both of them, my mother and father, although they were down there while they were sick and looked after them till they died. But, as I say, my mother and I went everywhere together; we went shopping. People used to think she was my sister right up until she got sick. And my husband, after we married we lived with my parents for must have been the first eight years of our marriage. By then my grandparents had died and we had a room down there and I had my son and my husband got on wonderfully well with my parents.

SR: So that the tradition continued?

BK: Yes. But the young ones these days wouldn't consider it. It was all just automatic: you got married, you moved in home more or less. Well, you didn't have the money. The younger sisters, no, no, they had to have a flat when they got married and move out.

SR: Were your parents religious?

BK: Well, in a way. They didn't always go to church – we always did.

12.00 **SR: What denomination?**

BK: Well, my father was Church of England. My mother wasn't sure whether she was Presbyterian or Methodist – she thinks Presbyterian – but we were non-sectarian. I was rather religious; I used to teach Sunday school and that. Well, we always went to church. My mother insisted as children we went to Sunday school.

SR: And where did you go?

BK: Well, I was christened and went to the church across the road which is now the Greek church, St Paul's.

SR: You were at the Sunday school.

BK: Yes. Well, about when my sisters were born, just before then, some friends went to what was called the Methodist Mission – it was in what is now Cope Street – and it didn't look like a church outside. And there was a very good minister. He was Dutch, van Erde [?] he was named, and he was a cripple and he used to do a lot of work 'round here. He used to chop wood for the pensioners and he was very well thought of and my father used to go up there one night a week and they'd make toys for the Christmas thing. So my sisters were christened in his house which was the rectory in Pitt Street because he was one of those he never turned anyone away and he did a lot to help people. And he later left the church because he went to a peace conference in China and, of course, everyone reckoned he was Communist and everything else and ended up he left the church altogether.

SR: Because he was so upset at his treatment?

BK: Well, I suppose it was that in the end - I know he moved from here to another church. And he had children 'round about my age so we were friends and I used to run the Sunday school there for a while but he was very good and you didn't have to be real religious to be friends with him, if you know what I mean.

14.13 He used to marry a lot of people in his house who other churches wouldn't marry and that sort of thing and he christened both my sisters 'round there. But we always had to go to a Sunday school. My mother said "I don't care which Sunday school you go to, which church" but you had to go and I did the same with my son till he was confirmed, then it was his problem sort of thing.

SR: And what was the name of this minister?

BK: Reverend van Erde [?].

SR: van Erde [?]. And it was the what church?

BK: It used to be called the Methodist Mission. It's now Cope Street – it used to be called Botany Street. It later on became a factory and then the Aboriginals took it over, I believe. Now, I don't know, I've got a feeling it's pulled down.

SR: Were your parents politically involved?

BK: My father belonged to the Labor Party and we used to sit and fold up pamphlets and go 'round putting them in letterboxes and things like that but I mean he didn't talk about it much but he just belonged to them and, as I say, on voting day he'd take his car and go and pick up other people, take them to vote and that sort of thing.

SR: Most people would have been Laborites around here, wouldn't they?

BK: I would think so.

SR: You don't remember anything much?

BK: Well, as I say, nobody ever talked about politics, really, but I know dad used to bring home pamphlets and we'd sit up and fold them up and then we'd walk around the street with him, putting them in letterboxes and that sort of thing.

SR: In your family what sort of discipline was used?

BK: Well, father never did anything much but it was always a threat. She'd tell dad but I don't think any of us were ever frightened of dad. We got a good smack – it never did us any harm.

16.03 **SR: Who smacked you?**

BK: Mother. My mother used to always say father only ever hit me twice. I don't know what I did but he chased me up the stairs and picked up a bar of soap - they used to have long bars of soap you cut – I don't think he hit me with it; he might have threatened me with it. But it's funny. He was very soft but the thing is you didn't want him to be told, if you know what I mean. Mum would threaten you'd get a smack if she'd tell dad but it wouldn't have mattered I don't think; he was a bit too soft-hearted for it.

SR: And what would you do to deserve this? What was considered sort of a naughty thing in those days if you were in trouble?

BK: Well, answering back, that sort of thing. I mean you could talk back but if you spoke nasty sort of thing. I don't really remember getting into too much trouble because to be honest with you I was one of those children I was a bit too – even as I got older, even right up till my mother passed away I would never really go against my mother. I mean I didn't do everything she told me but I sort of wouldn't turn 'round and just say no to her type thing. I suppose it's a sort of respect that you don't have these days. I mean I didn't try to go against them particularly. I did my own thing but I wouldn't turn 'round and say it to

them if you know what I mean. And if they said something, well, that was all right with me.

SR: Were you expected to contribute to the family in any way?

BK: Yes. My grandmother ran the house when I was young. When I went to work I mean I just expected to. I put in part of my money. I gave her so much a week and I never had to be asked. When I got a rise I gave her more and I never thought anything of it.

18.04 **SR: But as a kid did you have to do anything like that? I think in the Depression time people had to go and collect bottles and wood and all that sort of stuff.**

BK: No.

SR: You never had anything - - -

BK: No, I never had to do anything like that particularly. I know my mother used to talk about the Depression because my father didn't have much work and he got a job in Cowra and we went down and lived in a hotel there but I got whooping cough and my mother had to bring me home and a few days later my father came home. He was never separated from my mother. If she couldn't be there, well, that was it sort of thing; he wanted to be together with us. And my mother didn't get on with her mother-in-law – I don't think anyone did – but she always made sure I went with my father every month or so to visit my grandmother. She made me go with him. She wasn't a very grandmotherly type woman but we went. And, as I say, like I was I think my father was. I mean he helped keep his mother even though he had no money right up until she got a pension and when she got a pension she told him he didn't have to give her so much, he only had to give her half of what he used to give her and that's when my mother stopped. She said she wasn't contributing any more because she expected a lot from my father and he just did it, if you know what I mean. These days they don't do it. The turn 'round and tell you no.

SR: You know in the evening, say we're looking around 1946 when you would have been about ten, in the evenings what did people do? There was no TV then.

19.56 BK: No. Well, I used to spend my time with my grandparents downstairs in their lounge room because my grandmother was a very country woman. She was very well-liked, everyone liked her; she always helped everybody. My grandfather was a very shy person; he never said much, he never showed affection but it was there. And I'd sit downstairs with them and he had a set program. We listened to certain

things on the radio at certain times and come a certain time it was switched off and they went to bed – didn't matter whether you wanted to or not. He was very regular with his set pattern and you just did it but I'd sit down there. We played cards. They used to often have friends over. A couple of men friends of my father's would come because my grandfather liked to play cards and they'd play - not very often but probably once every three months or so. But we listened to radio series, listened to the *Amateur Hour* – that's where my father got my sister's name from?

SR: What was that?

BK: Loris [?] and it's spelt unusual and he heard it on – and mum always said he woke her up to tell her he'd heard a name he liked. And my other sister was named Berys [?] because my grandmother liked it when I was born and my mother always promised her if she ever had another girl she'd call her Berys so we had to wait ten years.

SR: And would you be involved in the card games and things like that?

BK: Oh, we'd sit around and watch but we didn't play because they played, I think it's called five hundred and that which I don't know anything about but you'd sit around and listen to them talk and that sort of thing.

SR: Did your mother work?

BK: Never. Well, in later life she worked, if you could call it work. We had a friend who had a sandwich shop and she used to go up and butter bread. She'd go and spend the whole day there more or less but it wasn't a job. Her friend would give her a little something for helping and it was more or less something to do.

22.10 But I mean by then – well, I'm talking really the later years of her life after the children were grown. My mother was never out when the children came home from school, never. She used to go to town Thursdays, every Thursday, looking at the shops. She would be home before the kids got home from school and she would never be out. And every afternoon religiously we would be washed and she would put makeup on and get washed before my father came home.

SR: Every afternoon?

BK: Every day she would get up and get changed and do that and when we were children you'd get your hair done and washed and that before my father came home; it was every day.

SR: Can you describe your mother's working day – did she work hard?

BK: Well, there was always my grandmother there. She always did all the cooking. My mother didn't cook until my grandmother died. My grandmother ran the house. We might go out and do the shopping but even, my grandmother, the last month when she was dying she'd sit up in bed and shell the peas. She would run the money from there, you know, give you money to go shopping and that sort of thing.

SR: And your grandmother controlled the money?

BK: Yes. We gave her money and she controlled the shopping and she did all the cooking. But I remember in later – well not too later years – I had an aunty who lived in Auburn and she would come in Mondays. On Sunday night we would put the clothes in the copper and Monday morning as soon as we'd get up we'd light the copper and get it all boiling and then my aunty used to come in and help with the washing and we'd put it all out and then we'd take turns doing ironing and things like that, that would be her day.

24.07

And then her husband worked in here and he would come up and they would have tea and then they would go home. Every Monday we did that but I don't remember my mother working particularly hard because there wasn't that much. But everybody went and swept the footpaths of a day and that's where you would all meet because the other women didn't work and everybody talked to everybody else. I go weeks now and I never see my next door neighbours but we all saw each other because everyone'd be out in the morning, sweeping the footpath.

SR: And that would be a morning thing to do?

BK: Yes. Everybody'd come out and sweep and you'd talk to the people next door and the kids would come out and you'd play with each other sort of thing but nobody sweeps the footpath these days.

SR: What can you remember about the war years – how did that affect your family? What was it like then?

BK: Well, my father didn't go because he was in an essential industry. I had an uncle in the merchant navy. We had friends in the merchant navy who used to come but we didn't have anyone. Well, there was a woman who lived two doors up and old Mrs Moore, she had two sons at war and they used to send me things. They used to send me things - I still have them upstairs – a handkerchief and it's got "Jerusalem" written on it and they used to live next door. And I don't really remember but my mother always used to tell me I'd go next door and

Mrs Moore, her husband, used to make them all move up and make room for me to sit down and I'd spend time with them and the boys, when they wrote home because they were a lot older than me, would write letters to me. And, as I say, I've got two hankies, another couple of hankies – I don't know where they come from – that they would send to me from the war. But I mean it didn't touch us very much except for the practice with the air raids and things.

26.02 **SR: Tell us about that. And I believe there was a siren or something that went off?**

BK: Yes, a siren would go off and then we would go – oh, I do remember the windows of the house. They had bandage glued to it in crosses, we had it all there, and we had to have blinds so that when the sirens went off you had to make the place so that no lights showed.

SR: Was it blacked out most evenings, wouldn't it be, blackout regulation?

BK: I don't remember - possibly. But I do remember the windows being all bandaged and I remember when the siren used to go dad used to go off. We had on the front door up on top a sign with "Warden" written on it and he had a tin hat and a gasmask and that and he had to take it off and go off, I don't know where. That's right; they used to go along the street to check that you couldn't see any lights and that. Didn't worry us particularly. I do remember we used to go across to Manly by boat and the lights used to go out crossing the heads. They always put the lights of the boat out when they crossed the heads so nobody from like out at sea could see the boats going across.

SR: Was there much fear? Like the Japanese got into the harbour. Can you remember any sense of what it was like when that happened?

BK: Well, as I say, my grandparents were at the movies and they were sent home and we had a blackout.

SR: Did you ever have to go into shelters?

BK: No. There was all shelters down here alongside the school in the park - I don't know whether they're still under the park - but we never had to go in them or anything.

SR: Did you have to do practice drills or anything like that?

BK: Don't remember doing any.

SR: No?

BK: As I say, the only practice was the warden thing dad used to do.

SR: He used to do that but that didn't - - -

27.55 BK: Yes, he'd go but then we'd all go out and sit out like under the stairs until the sirens went off and that and there were searchlights always around. And the other thing is in this park – I don't know why we called it Exhibition Park as well – there was a big building down where the swimming pool is and from what I remember it was called Exhibition Building. Don't know what it was used for - it was rather a fancy building and I do remember we used to run 'round it, playing – the Americans had it and used it as a store while the war was on. And I remember – I think that was after the war – we had coupons because my mother wanted a watch and she went down to buy a watch and she had a choice of two, a white face or a black face. There was only so many sold a day and you had to be there when they opened and so I remember my mother buying me a doll and there wasn't much choice. You went down and you sort of had a choice of one or two and they were only to sell so many a day and we'd save our things, your coupons. We didn't have much trouble with food because they found out my grandmother had a spot on the lung and she was a diabetic. She was given extra coupons. She lost her sugar coupons but we got extra butter and milk because she was to have extra.

SR: Can you remember much about the American presence in the war?

BK: Well, I was a bit too young - I didn't know too much about them. As I say, we had a friend who was in the merchant navy. My uncle was friendly with him and he came and became very friendly with my parents and I know he used to bring my father American cigarettes off the boat. He'd take my father on the boat and bring them off under their coat - they thought it was a great thing to get American cigarettes and that but we never mixed with anyone or anything. I don't think we really knew 'round here much of it going on, not as children; the adults might have but we never worried much.

30.12 **SR: And did the siren, the air raid siren, frighten you?**

BK: I don't remember ever being frightened of anything.

SR: Well, who were your friends? Now, we're probably talking a bit across the war period and a bit after.

BK: Well, I was friends with the Hylers [?] up the street and they were a very large family so everywhere my girlfriend went we had to take two or three children with us. And being an only child more or less I used

to go up there and I used to think it was great to help doing things and looking after the children and that. And then we had next door to us the Clancys -and they were quite a few children there – and I used to spend a lot of time there and we had people across the road, the Hydes and the Flanneys [?]. We always played in the street at night, we'd play hidings. We'd go up the lanes which you wouldn't do these days and hide.

SR: You were talking about the Hylers and the Clancys.

BK: Yes.

SR: Who else was there in the neighbourhood?

BK: Well, the Hydes across the road - which still one of the women lives there that was married to one of the Hydes I still see - and the Flanneys and the Johnsons up the street. And we all went on Saturday afternoons to the Lawson picture theatre. My parents used to give me two shillings to go and I wasn't allowed to go downstairs; my mother thought they were too rough down there.

SR: What would go on downstairs that was too rough?

BK: I don't know but I was to go upstairs and my girlfriend didn't have much money because being in a big family so we used to pool our money and she would come upstairs with me. It was sixpence downstairs and ninepence upstairs. I don't remember the price of buying lollies or anything but we never seemed to be short of anything but I got two shillings.

32.15 **SR: And then the kids they were just rough downstairs?**

BK: Well, my mother thought they were. I don't know that they were but she thought that. We weren't allowed to go downstairs; I had to go upstairs.

SR: And what sort of films did you see? Were they mostly American?

BK: Well, I don't remember the films much but I do remember we watched the serials. You know, you used to get Tom Mix and all those and each week it'd continue; you'd see a bit each week and that sort of thing. And then when we got older even up to when I was going to work we'd go three nights a week to the pictures because Monday and Tuesdays was one – well, two movies, actually – but one and Wednesday, Thursday, Friday was different and Saturday night was another different one and I'd go with my girlfriend and when we'd finished we'd

run home together as she lived up the street and she'd stand outside till I run down and she'd see me go inside my house.

SR: And as a kid you'd go, what, once a week?

BK: Well, yes, when we were small we'd go Saturday afternoons.

SR: And that was with your friends?

BK: Yes.

SR: All those families that you were talking about, what sort of jobs did the parents have in those families?

BK: Well, I don't know, I don't even remember. I remember the kids more than anything but I know the ones next door, Clancys, he worked at the tip. Like he used to see the trucks go in and out and we used to get things off them that went in that didn't go into the tip, sometimes things like chocolate that had got too close to the heat, you know, and it gets that white on it and he'd bring them home and, of course, everybody shared in those days, give you things and that type of thing.

34.04 The Hylers, he worked at STC [Standard Telephones and Cables]. I don't know what he did there. But we had the hotel across the road from us. I know my grandmother and mother were very frightened when six o'clock [pm] closing finished.

SR: They were frightened?

BK: Well, it was going to be till ten everyone had thought but we used to sit out the front on Saturdays at six o'clock. You could guarantee there'd be a fight over there.

SR: Really?

BK: It was our entertainment, watching the fights over there when it'd close and that. But my father never drank like at the hotel or anything. He'd have a drink at home but he wasn't a drinker ever.

SR: Now your friends, what did you do together?

BK: Well, we spent most of our time either at the movies or we'd go down to the park. I mean we were sent down to the park and we'd go down and you'd do your own thing. You'd get a ball off them and play a bit of basketball or just play on the swings and that. You didn't go anywhere that much.

SR: Can you remember any adventures that you had?

BK: The only thing I remember is my mother used to tell me the people up the street from us had ferrets and I went up and their daughter and I fed the ferrets stones and killed them, put stones in their mouth and killed them. My mother said she thought she'd kill me then.

SR: They ate them?

BK: Yes. I don't know how we did it because I don't particularly remember. My mother always used to say she thought she'd kill me; we went up and killed the poor bloke's ferrets, we fed them stones.

SR: Were there any other adventures that you had?

35.54 BK: No, we never got into too much – oh, well, I don't know about an adventure but I fell out of our car once while it was going. My father had taken me somewhere and we'd gone up the side street – he was going to do a job for two old ladies – when we got in the car the door only stopped on one catch. When he did a U-turn the door went and I hung onto the door and I went out with it, which wasn't very thrilling because I hurt my leg. And my father left the car in the middle of the road and grabbed me and took me inside and ever since then I've always been very nervous of car doors.

SR: Did you roam very far?

BK: No, because even now it's amazing if you mention streets in Redfern that are a few blocks away we don't even know about them sort of thing; we were very isolated. We did all our shopping down Botany Road and we really didn't go very far.

SR: Did you have toys?

BK: Yes. We were never deprived. I mean we were considered, I suppose, being deprived children or Wirth's Circus thought we were. But I know my friend because they were in a big family her mother used to buy – they used to have comics but they were like newspaper, that type, and they would go 'round every week and she would buy one of every one of them and they all shared them if you know what I mean because with a large family – but, see, I being like an only child it wasn't really a terrible problem. I mean I might not have had as much as my son has but I was never deprived of anything; we had dolls and things.

SR: Why did Wirth's Circus think you were deprived?

BK: I suppose because we lived in Redfern.

SR: Really? That was the reputation of the place?

BK: I suppose we were considered working class, not having much.

SR: Did you feel deprived?

BK: No. I mean even looking back now I don't see that we were deprived at all, we were never hungry, although I do remember my father used to bring home the chefs at work sometimes. We thought chicken was something special, not that I particularly liked it but my father, sometimes the chef at work would give him a bit if he worked overtime and he'd bring it home to mum and we thought it was marvellous.

38.16

But I mean we were never hungry. I had a grandmother who if people turned up, didn't matter how many turned up there was always enough but it was plain stuff like stews and baked dinners and things like that and we always had dessert. I mean she always used to make pastry and then she'd fill it with either jam or treacle and we had dessert every day. It was just part of life to cook desserts with the meals.

SR: What about books as a child?

BK: I was never a reader. I've turned into one in later life but I was never particularly interested in reading.

SR: Were there books in the house?

BK: Yes, not a lot. As I say, we used to listen to the serials and that on the radio. I wouldn't say any of us were great reading people but I can remember 'round near the Lawson Theatre there was a little shop and they used to sell things and they also had a little library and we'd go 'round and borrow books. And I can remember where dad worked they had a library because I used to read Georgette Heyer books and he'd bring them home from the library for me and that sort of thing.

SR: Were there places that you weren't allowed to go as a child?

BK: Yes. We weren't allowed to hang around anywhere if you know what I mean, sort of hang around the streets. We either went to friends' places or we went down the park; you weren't just allowed to wander or anything.

SR: Were there people you had to avoid?

40.00

BK: Not particularly, only the hotels, because in those days, especially with six o'clock closing a lot of people would come out. But what used to make me laugh because I wasn't a child then particularly but just before my grandmother and them died she was quite horrified with the New Australians moving in we're getting next door which I always thought was rather funny seeing her family background. And now I

know we had an Italian family move in next door and before they come she was quite horrified at the thought of it but we always got on very well with them and that.

SR: What year was that where the Italians moved in?

BK: Well, my grandmother died when I was nineteen so it would have been just before then. I mean the thought of New Australians moving in, foreign people moving in around; really she thought things would go bad.

SR: And she was part Chinese.

BK: Yes, and part German.

SR: Did she look Chinese?

BK: No, although now I look at photos I can see it in them, some of the relatives particularly, but my mother was blonde because she took after the German side of the family. All her sisters and her brother were much darker but I can remember nanna was quite upset. She thought things were going to go downhill fast which seems strange.

SR: Yes. Was that a common attitude in the neighbourhood, do you think?

BK: I would think so at that time but, of course, once all the New Australians moved in nobody really worried because next door to us the other side came a chap and the minute he came we went in, I can remember my mother going in - he was sort of roughing it there - and help look after it and that and as it turned out his wife came out and then we were very friendly, we always helped them and took them everywhere and then it's her brother that I married. He came and lived there and I ended up marrying and with three daughters none of us married an Australian born.

42.04

Well, one brother-in-law was Australian born but his mother was from Greece. So my mother always said she didn't care who we married as long as we were happy and that. She didn't worry about those sorts of things.

SR: So the reality when they moved in was that they were accepted?

BK: Well, yes. I can remember, as I say, the Greek people moved in the other side and they must have moved in just before my grandmother died or around about that time because my grandfather lived another ten months and in with my sister-in-law - who wasn't then - came some single boys and that - they used to live there - and my

grandfather missed my grandmother greatly because they'd never been parted either and we used to invite them in. We had a pianola and we used to have them in and try to teach them English and that and my grandfather who was very shy and didn't get on really much with anybody was greatly relieved they came in and were friendly because it sort of kept him occupied. And we had them in there and we'd take them out with us driving on Sunday to show them around Sydney and that sort of thing so we really took to them if you know what I mean, particularly I think as they turned up at a time when we'd just lost my grandmother and we were trying to keep my grandfather busy sort of thing, company and that, and they'd all come in and we'd play the pianola and that.

SR: And share food?

BK: Well, they would send things in but we were more teaching them things. I can remember when my sister-in-law came to Australia she was out there putting clothing on the line, tacking them on the line instead of pegs and things like that.

SR: Sewing?

BK: Yes.

SR: Sewing them on?

BK: Yes, running a stitch along and that or putting pins in them and things because when they arrived they didn't know where to go and buy things and that sort of thing. And they'd always bring us in things and I used to spend a lot of time with them but by that time I was eighteen.

44.16 **SR: Were there people that you were encouraged to be with?**

BK: Not particularly. As I say, my parents were never particularly – well, you wouldn't call them snobs or anything because we had a family just down from us, a Jewish family, and we got on very well with the Cohens, we always got on well with them because she used to always if my father was sick she'd send up soup and things. And, of course, my father was particularly well-liked in that he was a person that anybody wanted anything he'd go and help them and he used to do jobs for them and that and we got on well with them. And then the Clancys next door I suppose would have been considered a bit rough compared to others but I spent all my time in there with them and my mother never objected and we got on well with them.

SR: Where did you go to school?

BK: Cleveland Street.

SR: And what was that like?

BK: Well, I got on well with the teachers and things because my cousins had gone there earlier.

SR: Was it a big school?

BK: Yes. It was girls went there till they were twelve and then they went to high school but the boys' part was high school, it went to high school. It was mixed till you went to primary and then it was girls and boys.

SR: And were girls encouraged to go on to high school and further study?

BK: Well, I went from Cleveland Street to George Street but for only one year. They only had one year in high school at George Street.

SR: And then what?

45.55 BK: Then I was supposed to go - I think it was Gardeners Road - and I can remember the teacher. There was four of us, or was there six of us? The teacher had a little talk to us and she said the headmistress there doesn't like the girls from Redfern. She said "You'd do better to go to Randwick" so we were sent home in the middle of the day to ask my parents whether I could go to Randwick High School and then we found out when we went to Randwick High School the headmistress had changed there but it didn't make any difference. But I left before I did my Intermediate. I didn't particularly like school; any excuse to stay home, actually. If I was sick I had to have castor oil and I would sometimes have castor oil rather than go to school if it was spelling day.

SR: So were you a good student?

BK: No. Well, I mean I didn't muck up at school particularly but I did all right until I went to high school and that and I don't suppose I was into that much studying.

SR: Well, what happened that changed that?

BK: I don't know. I just didn't seem to – well, I was never good at spelling, I didn't like that, so that held up a lot but I was quite good at other subjects but I think when you got to high school it was much harder, we did things. I mean we were put in the wrong class to start with when we went to Randwick. We put down for domestic science and we were put in with typing and that which we'd never had any interest and then we were changed, they let us change after a while. But I was friendly

with a woman at the church because I was teaching Sunday school and she was the forelady at a small dress factory and so I left school as soon as my birthday was up and straight into a job.

SR: And so you started work in the dress factory?

BK: Yes. I stayed there for four years until I had a nervous breakdown and then I had to leave.

48.05 **SR: What brought the nervous breakdown on?**

BK: Well, I'd had one when I was very young, much younger, I don't remember. I went to a movie once and then I couldn't sleep after it and I ended up down at the Children's Hospital but actually it turned out I had a thyroid problem but what I suppose brought it on was my grandmother had died and my grandfather had died so that was a pretty nerve wracking time because we lived all together.

SR: And a very close family.

BK: Yes, very close to my grandmother. Actually, I was with her when she died. She died at home and I was holding her when she died. So we got on very well together. I think you have a different relationship with a grandparent because they don't have to make you do anything, if you know what I mean, so you spent a lot of time with them.

SR: And as a child what was the movie that you saw that's upset you?

BK: Well, the one I know, I went with a friend and I'm sure it was called – I've just checked on it recently – *Cross of Lorraine*. Don't remember anything about it but I know I didn't sleep after it.

SR: Really? That's a really unusual reaction, isn't it?

BK: Yes. I was told there were a lot of dead bodies.

SR: That film upset you.

BK: Yes.

SR: But otherwise your childhood was very happy, wasn't it?

BK: Extremely happy. I mean if I wasn't with my mother I was with my grandmother and in those days the family was close and I had an aunty at Auburn and an aunty in Wollongong. The one in Wollongong had a big family and we always visited.

50.08 **SR: And there was visiting between the houses in the street here with the different neighbours?**

BK: I wouldn't say – you met outside. You really didn't visit to go to each other. The children did. I mean we went in and out each other's houses but the adults wouldn't go down for cups of tea or anything like that, really, but if you ever wanted anything, if one was sick or the other, someone would always do your messages and things like that.

SR: And back to the school, what can you remember about Cleveland Street School, your primary years there? Any notable teachers for example?

BK: Yes, I always remembered. I went back to school after I left there because there was a couple of them. There was a Mrs Dickerson [?] and a Miss Shropshire which I always remember, Miss Shropshire. She used to have butterball lollies and if you were good you got them and if you were bad you got a feather duster and I used to tell everybody "And she didn't give the feather end either". She used to hold that end and you'd get it across your fingers but you would have deserved it. Well, I suppose these days you mightn't call it "deserved it", like talking in class or something, but I mean you would have disobeyed the thing.

SR: The rules were known?

BK: Yes. And she used to divide you into four rows and you'd get marks, like stars on the board, and the row that got the best for the week would get butter balls each when you went out. But you had more respect for teachers in those days. I mean you didn't call them by their first name like some of them do these days and teachers dressed not in casual clothes and you did what you were told. You didn't question it, I don't think, like they do today.

SR: And there weren't discipline problems at the school?

51.59 BK: No. Well, you could get kept in. I mean I don't know why but I know I was kept in once and so was the girl Clancy, and her mother decided she shouldn't be kept in and came down and told the teacher off and grabbed her and me and brought us home. It was like that, you know what I mean. If you stuck up for one you stuck up for the other one with you. I happened to be kept in too and she just grabbed the two of us, told the teacher what she thought and brought us home.

SR: And your mother didn't object to her liberating you like that?

BK: No, no. I mean she was sticking up for us. I don't remember mother ever saying anything.

SR: Well, it certainly didn't sound as if the parents were cowed by the teachers.

BK: No. And I've got a feeling my mother would have gone to the Parents and Citizen - I know I did later on – because I know she went down to help with the milk and when they had like fetes and things and that she always helped at those sort of things.

SR: Were there things like that happening in the community, like fetes? Before, you mentioned Wirth's Circus.

BK: Yes. That was one of the great things because they came every Easter to the park and you'd wake up, we woke up – the hotel across the road from where I lived - - -

SR: What's the name of that hotel?

BK: It used to be called the Star and they had a verandah upstairs. It came right out the width of the footpath, right over the footpath, and we knew the people there - I can remember playing up on that - and under that it had a horse trough. And we'd wake up, oh, probably about five o'clock in the morning. We'd hear the rattling noises and you'd get up and rush and look out the window and it's be the elephants pulling up the – they didn't use trucks - the elephants pulled into Alexandria goods yards by train and then the elephants would pull up the other animals and all the equipment up to the park.

SR: This is Exhibition Park?

54.00 BK: Yes, at Prince Alfred there. And we'd watch them go past and you'd see them. And then there was no water down there, apparently, because they'd bring up the horses and the elephants twice a day to the trough across the road and there was another trough outside Cleveland Street School and they'd bring them to these troughs to water them so we'd get sort of a free show, you'd see all the animals come up. But it used to be wonderful to wake up and you'd see them coming up because then every night after tea you would go for a walk down the park and walk 'round and look at the animals and talk to the circus people who we thought were rather wonderful and so you had something to do of a night. And then on Good Friday you would take a mug with you and line up and you would get ginger beer and a free hot cross bun and go in and then they'd put on a small circus for you.

SR: For the local kids?

BK: Yes. I remember it being said that they thought we were deprived so they'd give us a free show but I think from memory Mrs Wirth used to

come down there and speak to you before and give you the free show and then all over Easter the Salvation Army put up a tent on the other side of the park near the school and they would come down over Easter outside the hotel there with their band and we all thought it was wonderful. Everyone came out to watch the singing and that and they'd come 'round – you could stand at the front gate and they'd collect money and they'd give us little squares. They had little texts on them they used to cut out, like religious texts with a picture. We'd save them; we thought they were wonderful. And then we'd all go down on Good Friday and sit in the tent and watch – I don't know why – religious ceremonies.

SR: Do you mean Easter Sunday?

BK: Well, they'd come Good Friday. They'd be there all over the Easter weekend and they would stay the weekend and then they would go; they'd have a very big tent there.

56.13 **SR: Was it viewed as an entertainment or did you get converted?**

BK: I don't know.

SR: And so was the religious thing viewed as an entertainment or as a religious experience?

BK: No, I think it was more entertainment although I do remember another time a tent show came down. They were I suppose what we'd call evangelists but these used to play musical instruments and all and we all went down. I mean we always went to religious things. We lived a religious life in that we tried to behave sort of thing, be kind and all that, but we didn't go to church that much. Or I used to, I used to go with old Mrs Moore [?]. She used to take me to church and all that because I always hung 'round with older people which was a thing my father also did; we made friends as we got older usually with older people.

SR: Just a funny question. Sex education, was there any?

BK: Well, the only thing I remember, particularly with my mother, we came from a very shy family – my grandfather used to have a fit if you walked in the room and he was getting dressed or anything, not that we took much notice because we slept in one room and that – but I do remember we had a book, it was *Mother and Daughter*, and they had a thing at the Lawson picture theatre. One night was for females and one night was for men and the women took their daughters along. That's the only time I remember anything and I know mother, she'd give you a book and that was it. I mean we didn't discuss it.

- 58.03 **SR: Who organised this thing at the Lawson picture theatre?**
- BK: Well, I think it was a thing that went around different suburbs. I mean I've got a feeling it wasn't just there.
- SR: And tell me about that.**
- BK: Well, we were as embarrassed as hell, having to sit there through it with your mother but I still don't think I learnt too much.
- SR: Did they have a film?**
- BK: Yes, it was a film on it and then you bought a book. As I say, there was two books, one was *Mother and Daughter* and the other was *Father and Son*.
- SR: And was there a speaker who could answer questions like a doctor or something?**
- BK: I don't know. It was just a film that I remember.
- SR: Just a film.**
- BK: And that was it. Because I know right up until I was married I didn't know much at all. I mean you knew where babies come from; I wasn't sure how they got there. I remember being young, I used to wonder how your body knew you were married because in those days only married people had children more or less or you thought they did although I found out later that an aunty of mine had had a child years ago. We always thought of her – well, she always told us it was her niece. It's only in later years I found out all about it. But you didn't talk about it.
- SR: Would that have been a scandal? If you got pregnant before you were married how would that have gone down in your family?**
- BK: Well, it wouldn't have gone down very well, not at all, because, well, in later life my sister did and it didn't go down very well at all. I mean it just wasn't done; "What would the neighbours say?"
- SR: Was there a lot of that, "What would the neighbours say?"**
- BK: Yes. I mean it would have been a worry of what the neighbours said. It was very important, I think, that you sort of stayed the same; I mean they didn't do it so you didn't do it. And, of course, when I look back I was so good compared to some of them these days.
- 60.19 I often wonder how I survived in life because I can remember a boy asking me could I go to the pictures and I must have been sixteen and I

made him go in and ask my father. I mean these days they wouldn't consider that, you know, but I made him go. I said he'd have to ask my father if I could go.

SR: In the families in the neighbourhood you said that one of the entertainments was watching the fights after the six o'clock closing across the road at the pub. Would they have been locals fighting or was it other people?

BK: They weren't neighbours, if you know what I mean, they weren't people you knew.

SR: And if a neighbour had been involved in that, that would have been viewed fairly scandalously?

BK: I should think it would. Yes, I don't know who they were when you come to think of it. It was just that there was occasionally fights on Saturday night type thing, especially six o'clock when they would come out. They'd had a few quickly before they went home but I don't remember any of the neighbours.

SR: So if there were problems within a family they would try and keep it within the family, within the home? Like it wouldn't be publically known?

BK: I don't know that any of them particularly had – well, we didn't know of anyone. I mean we knew all the neighbours. The people across the road were relatives of a friend. She was my mother's friend when they were children. Her daughter and I knew each other and we have sons the same age. We still are friends.

62.00

We have friends that you don't visit, you don't see and that, but occasionally we ring each other, we keep in touch but if I had a problem I could go to them if you know what I mean, that type of thing, and it goes through three generations. And then they were related to the people next door and everybody knew everybody and people didn't move, very rarely move, so you all knew each other. I mean everyone 'round there lived for donkey's years together and we all knew each other.

SR: Tape 2. Interview with Mrs Bev Karonidis, 26th of the 9th '94. Talking about the neighbourhood, what sort of neighbourhood was it? It was working class residential but were there many factories?

BK: Yes. Well, there was quite a few working places. I mean on the corner here used to be Leroy Tracey's [?] and one of our entertainments was

– I only remembered it – I saw them last night. There were machines, they print office stuff. They pick it up, they pick up each page and we would look through the window. If you looked real hard you could see these machines. It was fascinating to us. I mean kids these days, that's nothing with video. And then there was the foundry down the road.

SR: What foundry was that?

BK: It used to be an iron foundry but it is now a brass foundry and I'm only told they've got to close next week because, see, the newer people coming in complain about it which annoys me because it was there before them.

SR: And they're closing because of complaints?

BK: Well, I know they have to move and they had to move and they have moved a big part of their operation but I've only been told that they're closing this week and I was told somebody in the back street, people put in a complaint of the pollution and noise. It's not that noisy. I know years ago when the new people started to move in – we've got a different lot of people moving in now, we've got a lot from the opera company [Australian Opera].

64.13

The house I sold, my mother's, I sold to a chap who and his wife are part of the opera company orchestra and there are another couple of them around. Also there was people living around down near my mother's, she was an artist. There was another one, I don't know what she was but he's a designer. I mean they're different to what were when I was young and they complain about things. I know they took a petition 'round to my mother about the foundry years ago and my mother wouldn't sign it; she said it didn't worry her. Years ago it used to be a bit dirty. One day a week they used to have black stuff come out, smoke and that, and you wouldn't put your washing out but they don't now and we don't object. I object to the parking and stuff now but I tell them all I was here before them so I've got a right to complain. I don't think the ones that come after have got a right to complain about things that were here for years. I mean the place was more alive. We had factories, not a lot but there were a few of them around. You'd have working people and that.

SR: Would most people work locally?

BK: Reasonably close but also you knew the people that worked. I mean the chaps at the foundry they would know you and just 'round in Cleveland Street here there's two nice cottages and one of them we

used to call Spruso House because they used to make Spruso hair oil there and one of the chaps from there – they used to also make a product called Peach Cream Beauty I think, it was a hand lotion, and the chap who used to work there used to walk a couple of dogs and we used to call him Mr Spruso and he'd give you sometimes a bottle of the hand cream because you knew them and that sort of thing and you knew people who worked around but there's not much around here now. I mean most things have closed.

66.11

I mean Botany Road – we used to call it Botany Road – it's called Regent Street, we always went down there for shopping. There was nothing you couldn't buy; there was Winn's and glasses, for shoes, when my son was young I'd walk down there twice a day just to take him for a walk but you didn't go into town particularly and everything you needed was here. Well, there's nothing there now more or less; it's amazing what is closed.

SR: And it was a safe neighbourhood, do you think?

BK: We felt it was safe. I mean as children we were allowed to play out even after dark and we'd go up the side lanes and things like that just within a small area.

SR: Even with a pub across the street?

BK: Well, it was six o'clock closing so there wasn't any when we were young.

SR: You weren't worried about finding people who'd passed out in the alleys or anything?

BK: No, we never worried about anything like that and we'd sit out the front of a night. You spent a lot of time on the front verandah, even of a day. I mean my grandmother would sit out the front and we would take the peas or the beans and we'd shell them out the front and people would walk past. And after tea you would sit out on the front verandah and I can remember the people that live next door to me now would walk down the street and they would stop and speak and they'd go for a walk and then walk back and you spoke to people and that; you mightn't visit them or anything but you always spoke to people and the kids run around the street and there'd always be people sitting around sort of thing. And I can always remember we'd sit on our front step and in those days the police walked down the street and particularly what we'd call the crown sergeant and that and they'd come and speak to the kids and you'd speak to them. You'd think it was wonderful that

they come and spoke to you. I mean you would never be rude to them; you thought it was nice that they spoke to you.

68.04 **SR: There wasn't hostility at all to this?**

BK: No. Actually, you were quite thrilled they'd come over. You'd be a couple of kids sitting on the step and he'd come over. Because they were older men, being a crown sergeant and that and it was real thrill that they'd come and talk to you. It's not like now where you'd call them names probably. And in those days I don't remember, really, seeing any Aboriginals around here. I know they're down the other side of the railway now and we see quite a few 'round here now but I don't remember as a child but that doesn't mean – when I went to school one of my friends was an Islander. I don't know where she come from but I knew her and we had a couple of Chinese girls in the class - didn't think anything different of them if you know what I mean. Except I can remember when we had a project they'd help you because they were very good at drawing and things which I wasn't and they'd help you illustrate things and that but they were never thought any different of. I don't know that we played with them after school because they lived further down and their parents had a restaurant and that – they probably worked – but at school there was no difference in them.

SR: What smells do you remember? So this is Redfern in the '40s.

BK: Well, our biggest thing – and they're still there – is Francis' Chocolates. He's up in Stirling Street, the back of where I used to live and you used to always know when they were making caramels and things like that because you could always smell all that sort of thing.

SR: Did you ever go over and raid them?

BK: Well, you couldn't. I mean you can't get in their place.

SR: Did they ever give you any?

BK: No. The only time I ever had anything to do with them was when I was working at the school, like the P&C thing, they would make arrangements and we would go and buy Easter eggs off them and that but it was for the school; they'd give a special price.

70.06 And we got lollies from them because we knew people that worked there because they sold them to the employees and if you knew somebody they would often buy you things but as the factory, no, but we always knew them. I mean Mr Francis used to always drive – I think he had a Rolls-Royce or a Bentley car and we'd always know his

car and his son-in-law always drove an American car – we still see his son-in-law around and that – we knew them but only by sight sort of thing.

SR: And what other smells? So you had the smell of this chocolate factory.

BK: Well, the only other thing was up on the corner of Redfern Street there was a big barn sort of place and they kept horses. When I say horses, they were horses that pulled wagons. I think it belonged to the – what's his name, the politician's family?

SR: McMahan.

BK: McMahan, and they had a place in Pitt Street further down. But I've got a feeling, I remember that that had to do with McMahons because they were to do with transport but it was horse and that. And then where the Chinese Embassy's built just up the street here, it was next to the hotel, it was like a big hole, and it had a fence and that was a bottle yard.

SR: Did you ever collect bottles to sell for the deposit?

BK: I suppose we did a bit but not a lot. I mean we never had to do it but you'd collect them from home and that.

SR: What sights can you remember, any particular images? When you think about that time, what pops into your head in terms of an image?

72.02 BK: Well, we used to often go just down the street there and you can see the steam trains go along because the railway's just down there. That's another one that actually smells because you can smell the trains; you used to smell the steam and that. But my most memories is going down Botany Road and that sort of thing. We'd go down there always for walks, shopping and that.

SR: And that's Regent Street?

BK: Yes. We used to call it Botany Road because, as I say, everything we needed was down there because Winn's used to be a great place and Winn's before they built their new place used to have those – when you bought things they put your docket and money in a ball and it used to run by gravity all 'round the shop up to the office and then they would put the change in and you'd wait for the ball to come 'round and back. It was great sport just watching the thing.

SR: What about sounds, what sounds do you remember?

BK: Well mostly, as I say, from here we could hear the trains and also at times you would hear the boats, you could hear the horns - well, you still can because Darling Harbour is not that far – but particularly you would hear, in those days on weekends you'd often hear the train whistles blowing because they'd have a married couple on them, you know, people going for their honeymoon and that and they'd blow the whistles.

SR: Really?

BK: Yes. I suppose they'd tell the engine driver the thing but you'd often hear it and that. And in those days too, particularly at Christmas, they used to ring the bells. I think it's something to do with somewhere up near the university they have, I think you call it a carillon, and they used to play the bells. We used to hear them over like the Christmastime and the local church used to ring a bell.

SR: In the evening?

BK: I don't remember it being every evening. I think they only did it on Sundays.

74.08 **SR: Can you remember any local characters?**

BK: Yes. We had one chap lived behind us and he was called the Yank and I miss him terribly. They said he was called the Yank because he went to America and was in jail there. Now, whether he was I don't know. The story went that he still had the marks on his ankles from the chain gang and he used to tell you stories. And he used to work. He always looked like he didn't have two dollars but he always had money. He owned the house around there. He was very good to some of the local children. I know one girl later in life the family broke up a bit and he used to put money for her under a stone in the lane and that. And he used to go to the markets and help them loading and unloading. I think he nicked a few things but also some of the dearer shops would give him fruit that was like what we call speck fruit and he would bring it up on a barrow and he would sell it and he would always come to our place, my grandmother's, and then later on when I moved here he'd still come to me and if we weren't home he would leave what he thought. And you would get a big boiler full of fruit or a boxful and it'd be apples and you might lose half of it but you'd sit up and we'd stew them. We'd sit up of a night cleaning apples and cook them or we had mango and I've never got over the price of fruit changed because he'd leave it to you for two shillings and you'd get a box of maybe grapes. Well, some of them were going mildew, you'd throw them out, you'd

wash and clean the others and you'd get mangoes, they were going crook on one side. We lived on fruit and that.

SR: And this is in the '40s?

BK: Well, this is right up until after I came to live here, which I've been here about twenty five years, he was still alive.

76.07 **SR: And all through your childhood as well?**

BK: Yes. He always came 'round and, as I say, he and my grandmother got on well and he always left us fruit whether we were there or not. We always lived on plenty of fruit because of what he would bring.

SR: What was his real name?

BK: No idea.

SR: Just the Yank?

BK: The Yank. I know he had a house 'round the back and the story went that he had a beautiful bedroom suite that – mum used to tell me – he went into town and I don't know whether it was Mark Foy's, Anthony Hordern's [department stores] or something and you know how they had a display, he told them he wanted that and that was bought there. I know he died but I don't really know much about him - as I say, no one knew anything – but he used to stand out the front, he'd always talk to us and he'd quote poetry and things. And he'd tell you how when he was over there he'd poked his own teeth out and things like that, not seeing a dentist. And, as I say, he was very good at poetry, he'd tell you things he'd written and that but I never thought to ask him what his real name was; he was the Yank. And he had a wheelbarrow and, as I say, he would have been very well-known down the fruit markets. He said he used to do a bit of help loading and that down there and then some people would give him if they left anything. I think he picked up a few boxes along the way and he'd have boxes of fruit but some of it good and some of it all this speck fruit.

SR: Were there any other local characters?

BK: Well, particularly him I know but he was the best-known around here. I don't really remember any of the others. As I say, he only lived behind us. He lived not far from our local member of parliament.

76.01 **SR: And who was that?**

BK: Mr Cope. We knew his family. We were always friendly. His sister-in-law used to have a shop down here and my mother was very friendly

with them and they were a nice family. I mean they always talked to everybody and they never moved until he retired. They lived in the little back street here. And we used to often bump into him at the club and that or he'd see my husband. He'd always come over and speak to you.

SR: That's Jim Cope, isn't it?

BK: Yes, Jim Cope.

SR: Federal parliament.

BK: Mm.

SR: Did you ever go on holidays?

BK: Well, we'd go to Wollongong and stay with relatives but I'm a funny person - and my mother wasn't much different although she changed a bit in later life - I don't move from Redfern. I don't like to go on holidays; I don't like to sleep away from home.

SR: Did other people in the area go on holidays?

BK: Yes. As I say we did a bit. Relatives of ours had a bit of a cottage at The Entrance and we'd go up there sometimes but mostly we'd go when I was young to Wollongong. And the funny part is my relatives don't live very far from the railway station and they had rather a big yard. It was big enough they built a tennis court at the end and they had a big garden as well and they used to keep chickens and we used to go and throw the mash at them. And my uncle used to go out rabbiting and he'd have the skins all stored there and he kept goats across the road and I hated it. You'd lay there at night and these goats baaing and it was like country and I don't like that. I like to hear cars going past and that sort of thing and I used to hate staying down there because I like to hear movement. The funny part, though, is they're very close, they're almost right in the town of Wollongong but in those times there was a few vacant blocks around and it was like country.

80.07

The same as I have a relative that lived at Auburn and they had a vacant block next door and their next-door neighbours had a horse and a cow and they used to go out and collect the cow and I always wanted to stay there and then when night came I wanted to go home. And the bus stop was outside their place and they used to tell the story that when I was little I wanted to go home so they walked 'round the block, carrying me and undressing me as they went, put in me night things, telling me they were going to take me home to try to get me to go to sleep. But later on I remember sleeping there and I couldn't go to

sleep and a bus'd pull up and I'd say to my aunty "What bus is that?" and she'd say "It's the picture bus" and the next bus'd come and I'd say "What bus?" and they'd say "The picture bus" and, of course, my family was pretty straitlaced, they didn't swear or anything and I turned 'round and I said "Don't they have any other bloody buses but the picture bus?" I was getting exasperated because there was no other noises and we didn't swear in those days. And that was only at Auburn; to me it was country.

SR: What's your happiest memory from your childhood?

BK: Well, depending on what sort of things you think of, I was extremely happy when my sister was born because I always wanted a sister and being ten years old it was like it was a great thing. My grandparents always went for holidays; they went with my aunty and uncle. They used to go to Bathurst every year and when my grandmother was home she always bathed the babies on the kitchen table in the bath and when she went away I took over because I was always old enough to look after the kids. Didn't have to; I mean I liked it; I took over the kids and I was very happy when my sister was born.

82.06 **SR: Was she born in hospital or at home?**

BK: No, Crown Street, we were all born at Crown Street. She was born on Melbourne Cup Day, the day Russia won, and my mother, in those days, I don't really remember how, but we used to run racing things, not that we were gamblers particularly. But friends, you'd pick a horse for the races and you'd get three points for first and whoever got the most points in the day won the pot sort of thing - it was only a couple of shillings. And then we always run sweeps among the neighbours for Melbourne Cup and I can remember my father came down to the park to pick me up after school and the teacher wasn't too happy to let him take me.

SR: At the school?

BK: Yes. Well, we were at sports that day at the park. She wasn't very happy about letting him take me home. He came to pick me up because mum was going to go to hospital but she had insisted on waiting for the Melbourne Cup to be run before she went to hospital - she wanted to hear. I mean in later life we didn't know one horse from another but it was just those were the special interests.

SR: What's your saddest memory from your childhood?

BK: Well, there wasn't much when I was very little because no one in our family ever passed away or anything. My biggest upset was my

grandmother but, of course, I was eighteen, nineteen by then when she passed away but before that – well, I lost my other grandmother when I was about ten but we weren't close. I have funny memories about that more or less because she left what she had to my father – she didn't have that much – and her other son was more well-off. They lived at – well, I think it was Flemington but they didn't call it Flemington, they called it Homebush, because of the Flemington stockyards.

84.11

And he went to the funeral and he came over to help us go through the house and we had this friend with us - he was the chap that was in the merchant navy – and my uncle was saying “Oh, if you don't want this, I'll have that and if you don't want this I'll take it” and my father “Oh, all right”. And that and I have these cups and saucers still out there and he said “Oh, I like these” or something and this friend of ours said “Well, if you want” – it wasn't a full set either – said “You take two and we'll take two”. “Oh, no”, he said, “I wouldn't like to break the set” and this friend of ours said “Oh, you don't want them?”, quickly packed them up and I still have them. I don't know that they're anything special but I can remember. And then we came across the Harbour Bridge and in those days you paid for how many were in the car. It was so much for a car and driver – I think it was sixpence – and then thruppence for each passenger and we were in the back and it was great fun because we had all this stuff and Eric had a lampshade on his head sort of thing, almost you couldn't see him coming across and sort of how many were in the car. He was making everything - a great fun person.

SR: He was disguised as a lampshade.

BK: Just about. Well, we had the car full of all this stuff because we had to move it out of my grandmother's flat. But, as I say, even though my mother always sent me to her we were never that close because she was never a grandmotherly type; she didn't give us presents or anything and made me sit on newspaper when she gave me a biscuit, which had upset my mother.

SR: Made you sit on a newspaper.

BK: When I was little. My mother didn't take that very well. See, we were rather good children, if you know what I mean, didn't do anything but my mother didn't think that was very nice.

86.09

SR: Well, I want to thank you. It's been a really good interview. Is there anything else you'd like to say or anything that you'd like to add?

BK: Only that it's so different now nobody knows anyone. I could point to half a dozen houses across the road I don't even know who's living there; you don't see them. Same with my next-door neighbours. I mean I know them, we speak to them, but I go days, weeks, don't see them which is a shame, I think. It was better.

SR: Has the area changed physically much?

BK: Well, they built flats. That house across the road I believe is the first attorney-general's house or something but when I was young where they've built the units and all that 'round there, that was their yard and we used to go across there and get eggs because they had chickens and that sort of thing. I remember the propman used to come 'round and the chap selling rabbits came every Wednesday, ninepence a pair and that sort of thing but you knew everybody; I mean even the postman was the same one for years. Now people change, you don't get to know people like you used to.

SR: There was a real sense of community then?

BK: Well, that was it. I mean people stayed for years. Most of them didn't own the houses, we didn't own our house. My father never bought the house until just before I got married.

SR: You didn't have problems with rent going up?

BK: No. Somebody owned the whole four houses, I don't know, and the only reason my father bought it was it was a matter of they'd sold the other three and it was a matter of buy it or get out and they said make him an offer. The agent came 'round. We used to have an agent come 'round and pick up the money. He said "Make them an offer. Offer them seventeen hundred pound" and my father said "I'll offer them fifteen hundred" and they took it, and he got the biggest shock of his life. He didn't think they'd accept it, really, but he got the house very cheap.

88.10 But he'd always looked after it. Even though they only rented he always looked after the house but he never thought – whereas people these days all want to own he never thought of owning a house; he was quite happy to rent.

SR: A lot of people moved from this neighbourhood. Where did they move to?

BK: Higher-class suburbs.

SR: Like where?

BK: Well, the Currans [?], they moved to Maroubra which was funny because mum went out to visit the old lady and that and mum said "Could I use the toilet?" and she says "Yes, and when you go to flush it you have to push the button" and mum said "Oh, yeah" because they had them in town, if nothing else. And then she said "No. Look, Nell, don't you worry. I'll go and flush it for you when you're finished". My mother thought that was very funny because even though we didn't have one at home like that, you went into town and the shops and that they had them, because they had an outside toilet but she didn't think we quite knew how to flush a toilet that didn't have a chain.

SR: You would have had a sanitary cart man 'round.

BK: I don't remember it but I don't remember it at Auburn. I know my aunties, it was terrible. You used to have to go down to the toilet and there was spiders and everything and it was smelly and all because they still didn't have sewerage.

SR: Did you have sewerage here?

BK: As far as I remember.

SR: No pans?

BK: No. I don't remember it ever being but it might have been before me because that's why they had the back lanes, I believe, but I know at Auburn at Aunty Eunice's they did. I used to hate going down to the toilet there.

SR: Where else did people move from around here?

BK: Well, the Clancys moved to New Zealand, most of them. I don't know. A lot of them seemed to move – when I think of people and have heard of them since they moved interstate.

90.05 But all the foreign people that came, they came in waves. I mean we had the Greeks and then we had about four families of Portuguese. Now there's still a few Greek families, next door is there and that, but most of them move out because they want a bigger garden and that sort of thing, out into the newer suburbs but I tell them they've got to carry me out.

SR: O.K. Thank you very much.

BK: O.K.

Interview ends