

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

'Millers Point Oral History Project'

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: **Lawrie Anderson**
TAPE NUMBERS: MP-FH7 & 8 (2 Tapes)
INTERVIEWER: Frank HEIMANS
DATE AND PLACE: 22 July 2005 at Woy Woy NSW
DURATION OF INTERVIEW: 65 mins 37 secs
RESTRICTIONS ON USE: Nil

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00:08 START OF TAPE MP-FH7 SIDE A

00:09 Tape Identification

Lawrie can I first ask you your full name.

00:39 Lawrence William Anderson.

When were you born?

26 October 1927 at Murrumbeena in Victoria.

So you are a Victorian - tell me a bit about your parents, what sort of people were they?

00:59 Well my father was always on the land and my mother was a trained nurse. We lived at a little place called Yulungah, which was where I first started school, and we had a small farm there and an apple orchard. Funny, you remember particular things about that place. There was a family that used to live at a little place on the Princes Highway, I think it was Longwarry was the name of it, and they came to do some contracting work for dad on the farm and they had rubber tyres on the tractor to travel to where it was going to work and then they had to take the rubber tyres off and put steel wheels on. During the process one of the wheels fell and pinned one of the Davis boys, his name was Reg, underneath the tractor wheel. Dad, with the help of what they used to call a Trawalla jack lifted the wheel off him. Phones were not as readily available as they are today but he got a message to his father and he came on a motorbike with a sidecar and took him to the Warragul hospital. I have never ever forgotten the turmoil, and the father arriving on the old motorbike and sidecar and putting his son in the sidecar, and the roads were only tracks, they weren't made roads.

02:48 We kept in touch with that family for many, many years afterwards. They ran a little service station on the highway and I think it has been taken over by the society and we got in touch with Reg and rang him up and he passed away not so very long ago. We were really good friends for many, many years although we didn't see one another for many years. It was what they used to call bayonet country, which was bush country, in those days and if you wanted to extend the property you just cleared a paddock by removing the trees and then planting whatever it was you wanted to plant, extending the orchard. In the later stages dad had some cattle and it just went from there.

03:43 We left there and went to live in Warragul and my father ran a wood yard in Warragul. 3UL was the name of the radio station there and mum ran a guest house and all the radio announcersone of them, his name was Dick Smith and I think Dick is still in radio somewhere. A lady by the name of Dorothy Jarvis, I think her name was, she was a lovely lady, I remember her, she had long blonde hair. They used to live right opposite the

radio station for convenience sake. We left there and went on to another farm at a place called Berwick, which is between Dandenong and Warragul on the Princes Highway.

04:39 I started to get itchy feet and dad and I didn't see eye-to-eye about certain things at that point in time, so I left there and went to work at Sorrento, which is down on the Mornington Peninsula, and I was driving buses for the Peninsula Bus Company that used to operate between Portsea and Frankston because the train line used to end at Frankston. There was a spur line that went off down to the Naval depot at Crib Point, which was where I finished up a few years later and used to travel on that train line when going on leave.

05:27 From there I joined the Navy - they were having a lot of problems at the bus company with an independent bus company trying to be taken over by the bigger companies and as they gradually took them over staff became a problem. So I decided that I'd do something else and one of the boys there by the name of Frankie Beitzel, one of the drivers, he said, 'I'm going to join the Army.' I said, 'I don't like the Army, I think I'll join the Navy.' So we did, he joined the Army and then transferred from the Army back to the Navy and we met up there. I haven't spoken to Frank for some time now but he went out to Marralinga, to where they were having the bomb tests and whether it is a result of that or not he became stricken with cancer and the last time I met him he wasn't very well. He lived at Sunnybank in Queensland but I haven't been in touch with him for a while.

06:37 During my term in the Navy I did some time on the HMAS *Australia*. I did a training course in bricklaying and a training course in driving and I was always interested in motor vehicles and got very good marks in my class in the training for driving section and so I was transferred to HMAS *Kuttabul*, which was a shore depot in Sydney. That is where I met Raelene, my first wife, and we lived in a little place down in Lower Fort Street, down underneath the Harbour Bridge. In those days there were trams and buses and trains all used to use the Bridge and the noise was horrendous and I thought to myself 'I am never going to learn to live here'.

07:43 A position became available driving Admiral Harry Showers and I put in for that position and got it, but I only stayed a short period of time with him. Then Sir William McMahon became Minister for Navy and Air and I was asked if I would like to be his chauffeur, still remaining in the Navy and being under Navy disciplinary rules and what have you, but being on Mr McMahon's personal staff. Wearing uniform when required to wear uniform and wearing civilian clothes when I was required to wear civilian clothes got me

into a bit of trouble with Naval officers in the *Kuttabul* establishment because I had the keys to the limousine car that he was allocated and the keys were in my possession, which upset a lot of the junior officers. He may want to go somewhere in the middle of the night, he would ring me and I would go down to the guard who would open the gate, let me in, and I'd take the car and it may come back that night, it may not come back for two or three days and that seemed to worry a lot of the Navy officers.

09:08 On one occasion my mother was sick in Melbourne and we had an officer there, Lieutenant-Commander Cooper, God bless his little soul, he didn't like me and I didn't like him. I put in for some compassionate leave, which is where the problems used to get difficult because Mr McMahan was my immediate boss but the Navy was the people that I was working for. I put in for seven days compassionate leave and Mr Cooper rejected my request. I had spoken to Mr McMahan about it and he was very, very easy to speak to and we often had conversations about things that were highly irrelevant to anything in the Navy. I had approached him and said I'd probably be going away but I would make arrangements for him to have a departmental car available. I went into see him and he said, 'I thought you were going to Melbourne,' and I said, 'No, I can't go, Lieutenant-Commander Cooper said that it wasn't serious enough and I didn't have any doctor's certificate, so I couldn't go.' Mr McMahan said, 'Well you go home and pack your bag, garage the car, make arrangements for a vehicle for me, and be back here and I'll have your air tickets. I have some paper work to go to Navy Office in Melbourne and I want you to wait there, report to Navy Office every day by phone, and when the paper work is ready return it to my office by hand.' So that upset Mr Cooper even more but I did that and was very grateful.

11:02 Then things moved along, I was with him for quite some time, and I put in for a draft to a couple of ships going to various places that were considered combat zones because I wanted to qualify for a war service loan and things, which I never ever got enough time in an operational area to achieve. I got married during that period I was with Mr McMahan and I said to Val Kentish, who was one of his secretaries, 'Do you think I should ask the minister to come to the wedding?' She said, 'Well he can only say no and if you don't ask him he might think it is a bit odd.' So anyway I asked him and he said, 'I don't make a point of going to staff's private functions but leave it with me and I'll see, but don't make any special facilities available for me.' So halfway through the meal, after the wedding he just came, appeared, so they promptly made arrangements to give him something to eat. I was glad I asked him then because he made a speech and met a lot of people.

12:18 From there there was a ship, the *Queensborough* was going on a world trip doing hydrographics and doing water temperatures and oil temperatures in various conditions at sea. The object of the exercise was, say, if a ship was operating in the Antarctic and they wanted to send it into the tropics that they could equip it with an oil and fuels that would stand up in both temperature changes. It was a very interesting trip, we went to many places, we finished in Iceland and were there for nearly three months working in freezing conditions. It was a world cruise, came back via Gibraltar, went through the Suez Canal.

13:15 When we got back it was nearly time for me to re-engage, so I contacted Frankie Beitzel, the chap I spoke about previously, and I said, 'I think I'll go for another six years.' He said, 'Bugger them, I've had it, I'm that crook I just want to get out.' So he got invalided out on a pension, which was the beginning of the problems that he incurred the last time I saw him, and I thought oh well, I'll see if I can get a job. They had a program where if you were being discharged you went and had an interview and they endeavoured to find you a job and I got a job with the Mobil Oil Company at a little place over at Pulpit Point, driving trucks and delivering fuel.

14:09 I always wanted to work for myself so I scrounged around, saved a little bit of money. In the meantime Margaret came along and she wasn't very well she had asthma and infantile dermatitis. I had bought this sand truck and I was locked into paying that off and had a lot of mechanical problems with it, so I got a job of a night down at where all the bulk milk containers used to come in down at Dairy Farmers. So I used to drive my truck during the day and then work down there at night just to get money to pay the medical expenses. Eventually I sold that business to someone and I bought a hire car and I worked in the hire car industry and drove taxis on occasions to keep the money coming in.

15:11 Then we bought a little sandwich shop at Millers Point, which was right on the corner of High Street, which is the street my daughter lives in now, and we were there for quite some time. Then our marriage didn't work out and my wife went to Melbourne and I just continued with my hire car. Then Leila and I became friends and we got married and came up here to live. We looked at a unit down near the bowling club and it was exactly where we would like to have lived and everything was put in place but we just couldn't get the lady to come up with the final settlement at any time so we left The Rocks area and bought this place. I came up one day when Leila was working and I said, 'I've seen a little place but it has got a deposit on it. It is a fantastic view and I think you'll like it.' So she took some time off and jumped on the train and came up and we bought this little place and we

have been here twenty-six years.

That's pretty good. Lawrie can I take you back to Millers Point again, the first time that you came to Millers Point - which year was that?

That would have been approximately 1951, could have been early 1952.

What were your impressions of Millers Point at that time?

16:54 I loved the place. I rented a little unit. The Maritime Services Board was in charge of most of the properties in the area in those days and they would let it out to a head lease and the head lease would then make the property into as many units as they could, and they would sub-let them out and therefore become landlords and make a living from them and that seemed to work very, very well. Most of the properties along Lower Fort Street and around into the Argyle Street area were all managed in that manner. The properties were treated as the people's own and if you had a maintenance problem the Maritime Services Board was contacted and they would come and repair it and it worked well.

17:51 But the people in the area were more like a big family, everybody knew everybody, everybody helped everybody. If someone had an illness or a problem and they were not covered by worker's compensation there would be raffles run in all the hotels and functions run in the hall, it was just like a big country community in the middle of town. In many places that I have been during my life I have never met a group of people that were a community like them, it was a marvellous place to live.

What was the number in Lower Fort Street where you first started?

Number 3.

Do you remember the name of the landlady?

18:34 The landlady was Mrs Hilly and her husband I think was Ted, he passed away not so long after we went there. Even though we were renting there, or sub-letting from her, you then went onto a list and they used to hold ballots when properties became available, which wasn't that often, someone had to virtually pass away for their property to become available, and in some instances they would hand it on to some of their children. Then things started to change when they formed The Rocks Redevelopment Group, which in my opinion was the beginning of the end of the original old Rocks. Instead of redeveloping it and keeping it in the atmosphere that it had they wanted to change things and different people moved into the area and that was always a sore point with a lot of the locals because some of the people that had been waiting on lists for some time were short-changed because somebody succeeded to get ahead of them to get a property. That was

when the family group of The Rocks started to disintegrate.

20:09 I went on a list and eventually I got a place at 18A High Street, which is where Margaret my daughter now lives, you have probably been there. It was quite a comfortable place to live and Leila and I lived there for some time but the ships were a bit of a problem when they built the wharves down on the lower road because they used to come in and they used to work all night. They had one ship, I can't recall the name of it now, it used to come in loaded with cars and it had this thumping big engine that used to thump all night, but you couldn't blame The Rocks for that, them being there.

20:58 Eventually I think that area will all go because it has now become so valuable and the people we call 'Yuppies' for want of another name, the young people with plenty of money that can afford to pay all sorts of prices to be where they want to be, are now moving into the area and it is not the same as it was.

Lawrie can you describe then the kind of families that lived in Lower Fort Street and High Street when you were living there? Who were the neighbours and what were their names, can you tell me more about them?

21:34 Well one of the ladies that lived near us was Shirley Ball and her husband. Shirley was always very active in any movement that was taking place within the area and was on several committees. Baz and Ess Thomas they lived there - Baz used to run an egg delivery service of which there were plenty about in those days. Round in the High Street area were Pat and Tony Bradford, they were very, very good friends of ours. Pat was a good dancer, she used to organise a lot of the activities if there was any fundraising to be done. Tony became Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, I can't remember who the Lord Mayor was at the time but Tony was the Deputy Lord Mayor, and that gave us a little bit of political pull in our area if we wanted something done.

22:48 Most of the people living in the area were either waterside workers or Tally Clerks that were connected with the waterside workers or Customs Officers. Some way connected with the maritime, like tug boat drivers and things like that. A lot of people were wharfies but there were so many of them, Tommy Donnelly and his father, they used to live next door to us in High Street, they were all waterside workers. Craig Roberts, he used to work on the coal. In those days they used to have the little coal boats go from Newcastle into Sydney Harbour and they used to go right up the river as far as they could get and unload their coal, that is where the ships used to go to bunker their coal for their trips. They worked on the coal. Nearly everybody in the area worked in something related to

the maritime industry in one form or another.

But you weren't working for the waterfront at all, how did you manage to get a residence in there?

24:08 Well because I lived there, I was renting the property for so long, or sub-letting the property for so long, that once you were there and you were considered to be a resident in the area you went onto this ballot and you gradually worked your way up to the top of the ballot. The only people that used to undercut us were people that used to come in and that came in the later stages when this Rocks redevelopment movement came along.

So you were living quite a while at 3 Lower Fort Street, how many years were you there?

24:49 Probably twelve or fourteen years, something in that field. Most of Margaret's life at primary school were there. Then we moved around into the place we got at High Street.
So where did Margaret go to school, which schools did she attend?

25:06 She went to St Pat's Primary School and then she went to St Pat's big school, down in the city. My mother-in-law, my first wife's mother, Daphne Stapleton, she was one of the real old stalwarts, anyone that was sick Daph was there. She used to live on the other side of us, downstairs. It was a magic place to live, you looked out the kitchen windows and you were looking at Luna Park across the water. I could lay in bed, when I lived at number 3, and watch the flying boats land down at Rose Bay - it was a really magic place to live, I loved it, most of all the people.

What was so special about the people that you liked so much?

26:03 They were just like a big family. There were the Kayes and the Lucks and the McCuddens. I think the McCuddens, they lived a little bit further round, near the Palisade Hotel and there were two or three boys, two for sure and I think the other one moved away. Their father was the last bare-knuckle boxing champion in Australia and the boys used to try and live up to that reputation, which sometimes got them into a bit of trouble. Up past us were, as I say, the Kayes and the Lucks, they were all big families, three or four people all living together. The young people seemed to stay at home in that area, mainly because their work was there and the cheapness of living there in those days. I can't recall the rents now but I know down in Lower Fort Street I was paying something like seven pound a week, which was reasonable accommodation in those days.

Seven pounds would have been a lot?

27:18 From memory it was seven pound a week. I can't recall what it was when we went around to High Street but I know it was nothing like what it is today.

How many rooms did you rent at Lower Fort Street?

27:34 I had a bedroom, a lounge room and went down two steps into a kitchen, which was just a closed in balcony, and shared a bathroom, which was on the middle floor. That was a three-floor place, one was below ground level, one was ground level and we were the one above ground level. It was a magic place to live. In those days the hotels used to close at six o'clock and then they got to the stage where they used to close at six o'clock and open again at seven o'clock, they used to have the hour's break to send the drunks home. The drunks used to get a bottle of beer or a bottle of wine and sit under the Bridge and drink it until the pub opened again at seven o'clock. They used to close from six until seven p.m. and then they'd close at ten.

That is strange, isn't it?

28:37 Well it was supposed to be to send the drunks home and then people could go home that weren't working the area and come back at seven o'clock and have a quiet drink, but it didn't work.

29:01 END OF TAPE MP-FH7 SIDE A

29:03 START OF TAPE MP-FH7 SIDE B

Lawrie, Mrs Hilly, your landlady, what was she like? What was her life like as a landlady?

29:14 A little short fat lady, like mum to everybody, everybody that knew her. Very helpful, never caused any stress for anyone, she was a lovely old lady.

Was her life a hard life?

29:33 I wouldn't think it was a hard life. They didn't ever want to move from there, I think they could have moved. I think he worked for the Customs Department, from memory, and he always had a good job and always worked and they seemed to have everything they wanted to have and they had the income from the rent-payers. Their daughter moved to a place in Seven Hills - I think in the early development of Seven Hills, and I know she wanted her mother and father to move into that area to be near them but they couldn't be moved, they wouldn't go.

So once you fell in love with Millers Point you liked Millers Point.

I loved it, yes, but they have spoiled it, they've ruined it.

We will get on to that in a second. Now you said that neighbours would always help each other, were you helped in any way by the neighbours?

30:33 Oh yes. If I had any mechanical problems with my vehicle or my truck there was always someone to come and help me. Fortunately in those days I kept pretty good health. You had to feel it, it was just a great place to be. When we used to have the Argyle-Rocks Centenaries that they used to have every year I would venture to say there wouldn't be anybody living in the area that wasn't involved in one form or another. That was a marvellous thing, they used to have contestants - whoever raised the most money became the king or queen for the next twelve months which entitled you to a beer in any one of the hotels or something, it was more of an honour than a financial gain.

Tell me a little bit about the hotels, did you frequent any of the pubs?

31:31 You bet. When I lived at Lower Fort Street the Harbour View was my water hole, which is still there underneath the Harbour Bridge. I can't remember the names of the licensees now, it was so long ago. There was no shortage of hotels in the area and most of them, for history's sake are still there.

I believe the hotels even had their own bookies, SPs?

32:09 I was never a punter but you could always get a bet on. Everywhere had SPs in those days but every hotel had their own SP and if he wasn't there he'd have someone there. I knew one chap that used to work on the waterfront and he was a runner for the SP bookmaker who used to work in the Palisade, that is when Pat Armstrong had the Palisade. This chap's job at work was to take the money and run the bets to the hotel and put the bets on and then collect the money and take it back and return with the bets again. Every hotel had their SP bookies in those days.

Were the cops onto that?

33:00 Everyone used to say, 'It is not a big problem, we usually know when they are coming.'

They were tipped off, were they?

Well that was the general opinion of people. My wife might be able to fill you in a little bit better on that a little later.

Your wife was a publican's wife so she'd know about all that.

33:26 Well everyone knew about it, it was no secret. Actually while I was living there we had Armstrong, he was a Member of Parliament, and he used to live in Manly and it was common knowledge that he ran several bookie shops around the area.

Let's talk a bit about the waterfront, did you ever go down there to see what was happening down there in terms of work and conditions?

34:04 Well I tried for some time to get a job on the tug boats, I thought my experience in the Navy might have helped me but I'd probably still be on the list because it was a very, very popular job. If you were there you got your son a job there, if I was there I got my brother-in-law a job there, that is the way it went, it didn't go off the list, like through the union movement like it should have. I gave up because I just couldn't get a job there and I didn't fancy being a wharfie. I could have got a job on the waterfront as a wharfie but I just had this desire to work for myself so I went off on the other tangent. I'd have probably been a lot better off had I worked on the waterfront, knowing some of the chaps that I now play bowls with that were wharfies in that area are far more comfortably financially than I am. I enjoyed doing what I did and it was interesting, I have never regretted much of what I've done.

Now you said you bought a hire car and you had a business running this hire car. What kind of car was it?

35:15 It was a Mercedes Benz. I had a Ford first and I converted that to a Mercedes Benz because a chap that lived at Rose Bay, Les Brown, he had a Mercedes. Legion Cabs had just gone into a co-op situation where they were taking in hire cars to do wedding work and Les contacted me and he said, 'One Mercedes is not much good, I can't afford another one at the moment, will you and I work together doing weddings and have two Mercedes instead of just having one and other cars?' So we both joined Legion Hire Cars Co-op and we used to always work together and sometimes do two or three weddings of a Saturday. Then it got busier and busier and busier and the hire car business went very well for Legion and for all of us, we did very well out of it. When I bought my hire car plate it was reasonably cheap and when I sold it they had gone up quite substantially in price, which gave me the opportunity to get another truck and a better truck.

36:37 Then someone came to me with a proposition to sell my truck and be a sleeping partner in a real estate business out at Rockdale and I did that and that promptly cost me twenty-seven thousand pounds in a very short space of time. So it flashed before my eyes - a saying my father had, don't ever go into anything that you don't understand that involves money and it is true.

Now while you still had the hire car I believe you drove some pretty important people around. One of the stories Margaret told me was that you drove Johnny O'Keefe around.

37:24 Johnny O'Keefe and I became very, very close friends. I had a key to Johnny's house

when he lived at Castlecrag and he'd ring me. He was one of my customers initially when he used to do *Sydney Tonight* and he used to get a lot of his acts from Chequers, the nightclub down near the Tivoli. He'd say, 'Go down, pick up a car load of girls, bring them to the studio,' which was at Epping, 'they are going to do a spot during the break in the Tivoli show.' So the girls would do the early show at the Tivoli, I'd pick them up, sometimes as many of six of them in the car, and they'd get in wearing one outfit and get out wearing something else for the TV show because they only had a limited amount of time to do the spot they were doing on the TV show. Then I'd take them back to the Tivoli and then I'd go back and wait for Johnny, or if he was going out somewhere from there he might contact me and say, 'Don't worry about coming back for me.'

38:50 That usually meant I'd get a phone call about three o'clock in the morning to say, 'I'm at the 729 Club you had better come and take me home I am a bit drunk.' 'Elephant's trunk,' he used to say. He was very good to me, never queried his account. When he went overseas I used to look after his unit for him because his marriage had broken down at that stage. Sometimes he'd ring me and say, 'Go and get me a brown suit,' or a blue suit, 'and the accessories you can find to go with it, you know how I dress. Meet me at the 729 Club, I've got to do a show.' I'd meet him there and many is the time we've been swept out of the 729 Club in the very early hours of the morning.

And I drove Don Lane quite often. Secretary-Manager of South Sydney Leagues Club, I was trying to think of his name only on Thursday and I can't recall his name. He fell on hard times when South Sydney started to go bad but I used to drive him a lot.

Getting back to Johnny O'Keefe, Margaret told me a story about him throwing a television set through a window, can you tell me about that one?

40:21 I didn't actually see the television go through the window, I saw the results, I saw the window. He wasn't the easiest person in the world to get on with unless you were on the same wavelength as he was.

They called him the 'Wild One' didn't they.

40:38 The funniest chap, the chap that used to do *This I Believe*, Eric Baume. He used to go to the studio and do *This I Believe*, which was a news commentary and I guess the tapes would still be around. He used to do this program and then I'd drive usually back into the city, he lived at Kirribilli. I'd drive him into the city and he'd either go to City Tatts or the Cycle Club. This particular night we were coming down through North Sydney and a chap came out in front of us and cut us off and what have you, and Eric Baume said, 'Get up

alongside him, get up alongside him, I'll bloody tell him something.' When we got anywhere near him we were on the Harbour Bridge and he produced a revolver and I said, 'What are you going to do with that?' and he said, 'I ought to shoot the mongrel for talking to me like that.' I said, 'He is probably talking to me.' 'I don't care,' he said. He was a real character.

Anyway, the revolver I didn't see where it came from or where it went but it disappeared but it was a sure as hell a revolver. He was quite an eccentric person.

Now Lawrie what was it like parking a very expensive Mercedes Benz in Millers Point, did you get some funny stares from the people there?

42:08 Oh no. My car was always parked in the street because there are no parking facilities in the area, which you would know. My car was always spotless, I am sorry to say it is not the same with my present car, I seem to have lost interest. It wasn't there very long because we used to do a lot of government work for the Department of Supply, they found it was cheaper to use us to meet aeroplanes late at night than it was to pay their drivers and operate their cars. Legion had a contract with the Department of Supply and we would get a list of work that would probably take you most of the night to complete. For some of the politicians that go to meetings and functions at night and were entitled to a car it was cheaper for them to use our vehicles than it was to use the Commonwealth drivers because of the overtime involved.

Now Lawrie, when you lived in 18A High Street, that's upstairs, how many rooms did you have there and what did it look like up there?

43:23 There was a balcony looking out over what is known as the lower road and that led into a dining room, which we had as lounge room. Then there were two bedrooms, then the dining room which was virtually the kitchen, then there was a little laundry behind that. Then you went up some stairs onto an open air area where the clothes lines were on the roof.

Now were the Maritime Services Board the landlords when you were living there?

43:55 Yes. It was during that time I think, or just about when we left, that the Housing Commission, as it was called in those days, started to become involved.

Do you know anything about the big battle that the landladies had with the Department of Housing over that?

44:15 No, I never got involved but I know Shirley Ball was. I don't know whether Shirley is still with us or not but she would be the person to talk about that era because she was very much involved in it.

She has passed on now, Shirley.

Unfortunate, because she would have been able to give you a lot of good material.

We have got her offside to speak for her. Would you say the people at Millers Point were fairly well-off or were they very poor families as a rule, when you first came, especially?

44:54 There were some people that were comfortable but I think the majority of them were just ordinary medium income earners, I don't think there was anyone there making huge amounts of money. It was just a 'in' place to live and it was a great place to live. I have never met a community of people that I got so attached to. I have been here for twenty-six years and I couldn't tell you who lives in the third house from here. I know the gentleman next door on my right because we go fishing together and we play bowls together but I couldn't tell you the name of the lady that lives next door to him. In Millers Point I would have known everybody. The main problem was if you went anywhere, 'Oh, are you going to have a drink?' and you'd go and have a drink, there was no shortage of hotels in the area, as you know. You just knew everyone because everyone was involved in whatever was happening in the place.

Were there any other ethnic groups in the area, were there Italians, Chinese?

46:07 No, very, very few and mainly all Australian or English nationalities, I don't know of any people that were Asian. Of course there wasn't the number of them in the country then that there is today so I guess they are pretty widespread now, because of our migration system - they seem to let more and more people in every year.

Now I believe that the residents used to organise Christmas outings or parties, can you tell me about them?

46:43 They weren't really parties. New Year's Eve was the big occasion, Christmas parties were usually organised between two or three groups of families. But New Year's Eve, particularly in Lower Fort Street and High Street, about half-past eleven people used to start emerging out in the street with a couple of bottles of beer or a bottle of wine, a plate of sandwiches and what have you and they'd just sort of stand around and talk amongst themselves. When it came midnight everyone would go around and wish every one else a happy New Year and watch the fireworks, usually some fireworks going on somewhere. Then someone might say, 'Come back to our place and have a couple of drinks,' a few would go off and go to some party and someone would go off and go to another party, nothing seemed to be organised but it just happened and it was great.

What about for your children - was it safe for them to walk around the streets alone?

47:47 Well they did and it wasn't a problem. I wouldn't like to be walking around there on my own at night now but I walked around there and used to go and have my few beers and

go home. Particularly when I was living on my own, I was probably going home later than normal and I never felt unsafe in the area at all, but I wouldn't like to walk around there at night now, or a lot of other places either.

So would Margaret be able to stay out until nine o'clock at night in the summer?

48:19 Margaret used to go to her girlfriends' place and come home, I never went to pick her up, she would always come home. Or they might walk home and the other girl would go home. Actually the crime rate in the area - I think you didn't hear of cars getting stolen. You might hear there has been a bit of a blue in one of the hotels, particularly if there was an English ship in for some reason. It might have been a flow-on from something that happened on the ship when it was here previously and a few of the boys would go looking for the crew to make them feel a bit unwelcome.

I believe, Lawrie that you have a story to tell me about a murder at Millers Point.

49:06 I can't say too much about that but it happened. The person who was involved is no longer with us but I wouldn't repeat his name, I know his son quite well.

You mean the killer?

49:32 Yeah. I don't know who the chap that was unfortunate enough to be on the receiving end, or if I did know I can't remember. I know who the chap was, the murderer was, but nothing ever came of it, I never ever saw anything about it in the paper. That is the way it was down there, you used to be able to go into Leila's, my wife's hotel, when she was there. You'd go in on Wednesday and there'd be a particular person - again I won't mention any names because families might still be living in the area - he'd say, 'Do you want something on Friday?' 'Oh yes, I'll have one of rum and one of Scotch.' 'How are you off for shirts?' 'Oh yes, I could do with a couple of shirts.' 'I've got some good radios, do you want a portable radio?' Most of the stuff was stuff that had been stolen or contraband and I suppose we all could have been put in gaol for receiving stolen goods because though you never saw them being stolen you virtually knew that they were. You just put in your order and got what you wanted, an electric stove, or a radio, or whatever. 51:02 The whisky and the rum you used to get was Bond rum and Bond whisky, it wasn't lolly-water you buy over the bars today. You would have a list and you'd go down on Friday afternoon and you'd pay the money and get the goods. That went on in other hotels as well, there was a tremendous amount of stuff. But I think they clamped down on the wharf, that is where most of the stuff was coming from, wharves and warehouses and things. You shouldn't have done it I suppose but everyone else was. As a matter of fact I only recently threw out a

radio that I had acquired thirty years ago.

It had a good long life. Going back to that murder, do you know why this man was murdered?

52:00 I've got no idea. I just pulled up in my truck and it happened and that was that. I just got out of my truck and the chap walked into the pub and I walked into the pub and the next thing all the ambulance and police and everything were there, 'Did anyone see anything?' 'No.'

Was he shot in the pub?

52:20 No, out on the footpath.

In broad daylight?

About five o'clock one afternoon.

You didn't see it actually happen did you?

Well I saw the bloke falling to the ground, I didn't actually see the bullet.

You recognised the killer?

I recognised him, yes.

The police didn't do anything about it?

52:43 Well they probably interviewed a lot of people, they never interviewed me but I wouldn't have seen it if they had. That was the sort of community that was there, you looked after one another but you didn't dob in your mates. You daren't not buy a raffle ticket if Joe Blow was home sick and he couldn't go to work and he wasn't getting compo. You went into the pub Friday or Saturday, and this would be any pub in the area because they would all be running raffles, and the money would go into a group and then they would sort it out and make sure he got his wages every week out of it. If you went in you weren't very popular if you said, 'No, I'm not going to buy any tickets today,' it was just done and you never knew when it was going to be your turn. I could have been hurt somewhere and they would have looked after me just the same.

So the community had expectations about what they wanted you to be and contribute and so on.

53:45 Yes it was more or less 'that's the way we do it here'. I can remember when one of the Luck boys, can't remember the boy's name now.

Was it Albert, there was an Albert Luck?

54:09 No, it wasn't him. There was Jimmy, Perc and the other one, it might come to me in a minute. Jimmy Luck. Anyway, he was cleaning out a gutter or something and he fell and got injured on a spike that was part of the fence that he was working near and he was

therefore not covered by compo or anything. He was off for quite an extended period of time and Pat and Tony Bradford started a fund going for him and there was Gail Bradford's husband, Sale, can't think of his first name either, and they formed a committee and all the money from the groups were put into this fund and any expenses that he had were all paid for out of this, it was all raised by people in the community. You just hoped it didn't happen to you, but knowing in your own mind that if something happened to you, you would get the same sort of assistance as you were giving someone else and it seemed to work very, very well.

Wonderful community.

It was, it was a great community.

Now I believe the pubs also organised picnics and other things, what sort of things did they do?

55:39 They used to have social clubs. The Palisade always had a very, very strong social golf club and they used to have days where they used to go to a golf club and have a picnic and the ladies would turn up afterwards and the golfers would come back and they'd meet at Narrabeen Lakes or something like that. They'd have a couple of kegs of beer on the back of a truck and prizes and ran events for the kids, ice-creams and drinks and things, plenty of food. They used to have one nearly every year, a big one of those. I think the ALP had something to do with running that, Harry Thompson was involved in getting us a lot of stuff through sponsors and things through the ALP. It was a very, very strong ALP area in those days, I am not familiar with what it is today politically.

Do you think you are a different person from having lived in Millers Point, do you think it has influenced your life?

56:47 It didn't do me any harm. I wasn't the best fighter in Millers Point, I got myself into a few situations where I had to take evasive action because I was unable to take care of the situation I had probably created but you always knew you had some mates around you. Ronny Rochford was a great mate of mine, he has gone now, he was one of the known identities around the place and Ron and I were very good friends. You didn't feel intimidated by anyone, it was just a great family atmosphere. I have rued the day.....I would have liked to put a big fence around The Rocks, kept everyone else out and let the community stay where they were and leave it alone. That would have been something unique in the world and it would have been a unique group of people.

When you say The Rocks you also include Millers Point, do you?

57:55 Millers Point and The Rocks. We used to say The Rocks was from Argyle Place,

down to the Bridge, back up past the Garrison Church, around to the end of High Street and back down Gloucester Street, I think it was. That was called The Rocks, the whole area, not just what they call The Rocks today. If they could have just kept that and left it alone and let the people have the cheap rents that were living in there, most of them had to move out because they couldn't afford the rents.

58:36 END OF TAPE MP-FH7 SIDE B

00:05 START OF TAPE MP-FH8 SIDE A

00:06 Tape identification

Lawrie, you lived in Millers Point from 1951 to 1979, about 1951 or 1952, that is twenty-seven or twenty-eight years, can you tell me about the changes that happened even during that time when you were living in Millers Point? How did the place change in twenty-seven, twenty-eight years, was it very different from when you came to when you actually left there?

00:44 It was just beginning to start to change when we left. Not building-wise and not architecturally or anything like that, most of that is the same, but you could feel the infiltration, like an undertow, coming into the area that weren't locals. The old days you used to have to live in Millers Point for a given period of time to be accepted as being a local. I can't recall exactly when the Housing Commission took over but there started to become an influx of people into the area, residentially, that were different types of people than what the people were that lived at The Rocks.

01:39 The people who lived at The Rocks were very proud of living at The Rocks, they were very proud of that area of Sydney and if you wanted to get yourself into some sort of trouble you'd just come down there and start rubbishing The Rocks. They were dedicated people to that area and the area was good to them as well, we never wanted for anything. We were close to hospitals, close to shopping, close to the city, theatres, entertainment, everything, it was an ideal place to live. I wouldn't like to live there again today, not with the element..... I don't go down there very often for no reason, except that I don't particularly like going to Sydney, I don't like Sydney any more. It is probably a great city but I am happy here where I am. Leila went for a trip overseas and I could have gone with all expenses paid but I don't like aeroplanes and I just like being here. I am not one to travel, I've done all my travelling.

02:42 I can't tell you much about The Rocks except to say that I only wish they had put a big wall around it and kept it as Millers Point and The Rocks and it would have been somewhere for anyone in the world to come and see how people should live. They looked after one another, they were a big family, they had their problems from time-to-time but if there was a movement afoot to try and do something in the area the people soon let them know that it wasn't popular, if it wasn't something they didn't want. Because it was the Mr. Mundy era in those days there was some development to take place in George Street North, down a little bit from the Mining Museum, near where the old Coroner's Court used to be. Because our area was such a domesticated working-type area in those days they all got behind Mundy and it just didn't happen. No one would work on the site, no one would do anything to make it happen.

So you were there during the time of the Green Bans, were you?

Yes.

Did Millers Point get affected at all?

03:59 Well only the lower end of George Street, between Circular Quay and the Harbour Bridge, where the Harbour Bridge crosses the road. I know there was an old toilet, I don't know whether it is still there, that used to be directly underneath the Harbour Bridge, this old cast iron toilet above the ground and you went down the steps to the toilet, which was only a urinal, underneath the steps, it was virtually a men's convenience. Someone wanted it moved and there was a tremendous fight went on over that. Eventually they won the right for it to stay there but they closed the toilet and let it stay there as a memento to what the old toilets used to look like. That is what they used to look like, there used to be some of them down at the Quay too. I don't know whether that is still there but somebody took it away and repaired it all and painted it and they put a cement slab down over the top of the old toilet and mounted the structure back there so people could see what the old street toilet facilities were like.

Not very useful as a toilet any more.

05:15 Well it was pretty old and dilapidated, but it was a toilet and you tell me where you find a toilet in the street today.

You have to go in a pub really?

That's right you've got to go into a building somewhere to find one, they are just not available any more.

Okay Lawrie is there anything else you want to talk about, about Millers Point?

05:40 I think I have covered most of my period down there. I can't emphasise enough that I think they should have left it alone and the deterioration, in my opinion, started when the Housing Commission became involved and the people started to be forced out of the area because of costs.

How is Margaret doing there?

06:02 Margaret likes it there, she has never lived anywhere else. She was born when we lived at 3 Lower Fort Street and she went with us to High Street. When we moved I applied to have the tenancy transferred to Margaret and that was achieved, strangely enough it was achieved without any key money or anything else either, I think they felt she had lived there long enough to qualify to be there. She seems to be happy there.

Well she has lived there fifty years now.

Yep. She has lived there all her life, she has never lived anywhere else.

Well okay Lawrie thanks very much for the interview.

My pleasure, thank you.

07:02 END OF INTERVIEW WITH LAWRIE ANDERSON AND END OF TAPE MP-FH7, SIDE A.