

**CITY OF SYDNEY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**  
**ERSKINEVILLE**

**Name:** Maureen Oliver

**Date:** 19 February 1995

**Place:** Erskineville

**Interviewer:** Sue Rosen

**TRANSCRIPT**

0.00 **SR: Interview with Maureen Oliver at Erskineville, 19th of February 1995.**

**Maureen, what year were you born in?**

**MO: In 1926, September of 1926.**

**SR: And where were you born?**

MO: In Erskineville. Well, actually in Newtown but they were living in Erskineville at the time and it was like a nursing home. Like I don't think women went to hospitals like as such and this was a nursing home and it was run by a Sister somebody or other and that's where mum had me.

**SR: And then you came home. And whereabouts in Erskineville did you live?**

MO: Well, at that time we lived down in Charles Street and, well, the house is still down there. It's just a little house, not very big and we lived down there. I think we were there for a good few years because when we moved we then went 'round to Wilson Street in Newtown which is now one of the main streets and then from there we went to Albert Street where we were there right up until I got married; my brother's still there. So we had three shifts in all that time.

**SR: And most of them were in your very early years.**

MO: Yes, oh yes. Well, I think when we left Charles Street, I think it was my brother – he would have been sixty-odd, Jack, so he was the third one so we left there when I was pretty young I'd say.

**SR: And what are your earliest memories of Erskineville?**

1.53 MO: Just nice memories. Well, of family, the noise and the aura, I suppose, that surrounds families, happy, music. Not so much music as my father singing - he had a beautiful voice. And busy, my mother was always busy and always wearing an apron. Isn't it funny? She always wore aprons.

**SR: And what position were you in the family?**

MO: I'm the eldest of nine so I was the eldest and then there were nine of us and there were five boys and four girls – it was a lovely mix, we were a good mix.

**SR: Yes. And was your mother having like children every eighteen months or something like that?**

MO: Well, it seems so. Well, put it this way: at this stage of my life I'm sixty eight and my youngest sister is fifty two. So what would be? Sixteen years mum had nine and plus the fact she lost a baby, the only baby mum ever lost and that baby would have been now forty two.

**SR: And how did she lose that one?**

MO: It happened during the birth. There was something happened when the baby was being born - I think the cord was around the neck or something – but that was the only one that mum had and that was in a time when I think the child mortality rate must have been extremely high and that probably was brought about by – I don't think they had, well they didn't have great medical facilities for them and I don't think the nutrition was the best and there were just so many things that were lacking for the ordinary mums around this way anyhow.

4.10 **SR: What kind of a kid were you?**

MO: I think I was a smartarse.

**SR: Yes?**

MO: I'm sure I was. Well, as I said, I've got nine brothers and sisters and we're all entirely different to one another and I always think that it always seemed as though I was a strong person. I mean my mother, as we got older and there were things that needed to be done or whatever, mum would always give me the job. I think I was probably a bit more responsible, I think that's what I was, plus the fact, as I said, I think I was a smartarse because that used to get me into a lot of trouble because I always had the mouth, you know. But I hoped I was a nice person. I think I was because I seemed to always be able to talk to people and I like people and I think I was even as a kid and I don't think I was ever pretentious and that at that time was very important because I mean you had nothing and you weren't going to get anything and all you really had was just yourself, your own honesty with yourself and I suppose in a way I always felt I saw things as they really were, you know, not as I wanted them to be. I think that's what I was like; even very early I think I recognised that in myself, I think.

**SR: You know the house you lived in where there were nine children? What sort of a house was that?**

MO: Well, it was a nice house. It's still up there, it's in Albert Street. It's a separate dwelling. Do you mean for me to physically describe the house?

6.11 **SR: Yes.**

MO: Well, it had a big lounge room which in the early days didn't have a lot in it but later on as finances and such improved my mother was able to because she had beautiful taste, she had marvellous taste, my mother, and the house then reflected her taste and it had three bedrooms. My sister and I, we slept together in a double bed. Mum and dad had the front room and then again came into play the greatest lifesaver of all

was double-decker beds and my brothers had double-decker beds. And by the time the others like my two younger sisters got older, well, I was married when I was twenty one so I was more or less out of the house and then they could move into the luxury of single beds. But it was a nice house, had a kitchen, nice backyard and we had a wisteria vine over the kitchen which always flowered in September just in time for my birthday and that was lovely. Years and years after my father bought one of my brothers a horse because he was only very little, Terry, my brother, and my father always, I think, envisioned him that he was going to be a jockey, you know, one day ride a Melbourne Cup winner - never happened. And dad bought him a horse and we used to stable it down the road in Burren Street and we used to bring the horse up and we brought it up one Sunday and the wisteria was in full bloom and Peggy, the horse, I don't know what happened, she went off her head and she pulled the bloody trellis down with all the wisteria on it and that was the finish of the wisteria. But it was a nice house and then we had an outside toilet which everybody did in them days, the poky little bathroom with the chip heater that used to go like as though it was the bloody train running through a tunnel, the noise of it but it was a nice house.

8.15 **SR: Were you sewerred?**

MO: Oh, yes, yes, we were, yes. Oh, we were very much inner city or the slum areas they used to call us. Yes, it was sewerred. I think in them days as far as I could remember I think they were sewerred out as far as 'round Sydenham, out that way, yes.

**SR: Well, how would you describe your family – what sort of family did you come from?**

MO: Volatile, all great talkers, a lot of emotional type of people. I mean if you had a fight, well it was a fight, it wasn't just "Oh, you know, don't do that". There was always plenty of living, you know what I mean. You felt it. I felt it as a kid and I think that was probably brought about by the fact that my father was a very earthy man. Dad again he had no pretensions. He was a very down-to-earth man and my mother, her expectations were always far beyond what she had at that particular time but I think with women like that and that kind of expectation you always felt that one day the expectations would kind of come to fruition with everything else in her life and I think it did in a way. But, no, it was a lovely family.

10.00 As I said, after all these years we're still all friends and we still see each other and enjoy each other and I think it was because my father loved

music. I mean we had singing in the house. My brother sang, Jack, my sister sang - I had a lousy voice – but there was always like music and my mother adored books and even if things were tough, and they were, we always had books or magazines. I remember when the *Women's Weekly* first started and I think it was thruppence and despite everything else mum would always make sure she got the *Women's Weekly*. Not that I'm saying that that was the be all and end all but we were exposed and I think it's like you need to have exposure to something else other than just the ordinary run of the mill things.

**SR: So even though it was volatile it was a loving family?**

MO: Oh, it was, it was a loving family. My brother, Jack, he's the only one in our family that's died like but he wrote beautiful poetry and he has written a poem on the family and it's really lovely. I mean Jack would have been sixty-odd when he wrote the poem about our family and it was so true. I think we were a very lucky family, very special kind of family.

**SR: And when you say "volatile" you obviously don't mean violent?**

MO: No, volatile as in, you know, Pat, my sister, when dad and mum took us to the beach Pat couldn't sit on the sand so that wouldn't have been a quiet thing, that would have been a case of everyone "Oh, why can't she sit on the sand? Why can't this?" and dad'd have to go and hire a deckchair to sit on. Or if you went home and your brother said something to you, you know, you'd argue. We argued, we talked and we related very well.

12.12 **SR: You know the poem that your brother wrote? Could you read it to us?**

MO: I've got it there. As a matter of fact that's why I got them out. This was part of the material they put out at his funeral but it hasn't got when he wrote it. It's fairly long.

**SR: That's O.K.**

MO: Do you want the lot?

**SR: Yes.**

MO: "My childhood and my manhood are precious times to me, being born into a family of great love and harmony. My mother and my father truly had no peers when it came to loving children and protecting them from fears. My father was the worker and my mother was the strength, combining in their efforts they would go to any length to provide us with

the knowledge of all things good and true and a love for one another that will surely see us through. The troubles and the hardships and every form of strife that has made us better people and has enhanced our way of life. As a family we have tried our best, knowing we have made mistakes and ask a little understanding from our kids who think we're great. We can't take on their failures, our family's not like that, but we will kill ourselves to help them and you can't ask more than that. My brothers and my sisters are of a rarer kind and you can search the world forever and their likes you'd never find. They are smart and they are funny, they are beautiful and kind. You can't count their worth in money, there's not enough for you to find. I remember them as children in our home in Erskineville in a house that rang with laughter and was sad when kids were ill. I remember times like Christmas when my parents late at night would get Christmas presents ready and turn on the Christmas lights. I could tell you many stories about the strength I found in them and my great love for my sisters and my brothers who are men. I could share with you the memories now that I am growing old of the most fantastic family that was blessed with love, not gold. So if you're a sister or a daughter of a brother that is mine or your mother is my sister I would ask you to be kind for they're the only family that holds me to my past and reminds me of my parents for as long as I may last. So if they disappoint you and you think that they're not fair and you blame them for your problems then you have no right to share. My brothers and my sisters who have given you their all in an effort to protect you from yourself if you should fall". Isn't that beautiful?

14.51 **SR: Yes.**

MO: I thought it was lovely, that. But really that summed up what our family was like, I think, and as he said through all the bad times it was always there, everyone looked out for each other: go down the street and bash a kid up who spoke nasty to your brother and come home and get into trouble.

**SR: Where did your father work?**

MO: My father worked up at Homebush in the brickyards, a really hard, terrible job. I mean he literally made bricks and I can remember him getting on a pushbike and riding from Erskineville up to Homebush Bay. It was just out of Homebush. It was on the bay, the State Brickyards it was, State Brickworks, and dad worked there and then of a night-time he'd come home and mum would literally have to lift him off the bike because they were working eight hours a day in them days and, oh, it was a hard existence, a very hard existence, and that's why like rearing a big family and the money was so poor, very poor money.

16.14 And then in the Depression, well, dad worked. He'd have one week on and two weeks off but because of working one week on dad wasn't entitled to any dole benefits.

**SR: Gee.**

MO: So my uncle, my mother's brother who they lived up at Sylvania, because my uncle did not work at all he qualified for dole benefits so every week or every fortnight he'd come down and bring mum down a big brown bag full of potatoes, pumpkins, onions, all those kind of things. And my father, though, he supplemented our income with things like – I'd go over with him, walk over to the canals in Alexandria where they used to have the boat races. Men used to race matchboxes down the canals and they'd bet on them and dad would do that. He also used to sell dog cards where on the dogs of a Saturday night they'd have ten races so if you could pick the ten winners – I think it cost you sixpence – and dad used to get the bloke down in Sydney Street Erskineville to print all the cards up and we'd go and pick them up on the Friday and then you'd come home and he'd have so many people. Like say one bloke might've sold fifty cards and someone'd sell another fifty cards so they were all done up and then I'd walk around with dad on the Friday night and we'd deliver the cards and so if you won, for your sixpence on the card if you got the ten up, you got I think it was ten pound which was an absolute fortune in them days.

18.03 But dad was a punter too, he was a gambler too and I suppose often the mere fact that he could gamble and maybe win a quid used to help out a lot in them days.

**SR: Was he a good gambler?**

MO: I think he was up and down. You'd say to dad "Have you had a good day?" "Oh, you know, won a little, lost a little" so that said it all; you'd never know.

**SR: And he would be the one paying the prize from all those sixpence cards?**

MO: Oh, yes, yes. Well, he ran it, he ran it for years, that, the horse cards. And then, of course, later on him and his brothers and his sister, the four of them, they ran all the SP bookmaking in Erskineville. It was great. Well, I used to run the bets for them, and my brother, Jack and I, we used to run, and Terry, we all ran the bets. Dad and mum, they operated out of Albert Street, my aunt operated in George Street and my other uncle operated in Charles Street and my other uncle, he

operated up where he lived at Auburn but the other three did it all in Erskineville and we used to run around and get the bets for every race.

**SR: Was it fun?**

MO: Yes, it was serious but it was fun. I mean I know mum and dad bought Jack a pumped-up scooter. Well, I used to use that then to run the bets with but Terry got picked up one day by the coppers. He was coming out of the house and he got caught out on the footpath which meant he got charged with street betting. Had he been caught inside the house he could have been charged with house betting and there was a big difference in them days.

**SR: And what was worse?**

MO: Well, house betting was the worst but Terry got charged with street betting.

**SR: But what did he get caught with?**

20.01 MO: Well, you'd go in. Say I'd knock on your door, you'd have your bets written out, you'd have thruppence each way or sixpence in them days, and you'd give me the bet on your slip and give me the money and I'd put it in me pocket or whatever I had. Then I had a certain amount of streets to do because you had to be back before the race was run and then you'd give them to dad or mum and they'd look after the slips and then you'd take off again for the next race.

**SR: And did the police stop Terry and search him?**

MO: Yes, they found the slips on him, yes. Actually, that stopped Terry from being a JP for years and years. If you had a conviction you couldn't be a JP and it was just through Tom Cahill [Member of Parliament] that Tom Cahill said that it's ridiculous and he was able to become a JP. But in them days I think he got fined – I just forget now. But they were the ways that dad used, I suppose, supplement the income, putting it in a nice way.

**SR: Yes. But didn't you have arrangements with the police not to get raided?**

MO: No, dad never did, none of them did, never.

**SR: They didn't like the police?**

MO: No, no, they were just part of your life. I mean you'd see them. They used to do a lot of work, walking in them days but, no, it was just that they were lucky. Well, I mean dad never ever. My aunt, she got

caught twice and then they decided to give it up after that which was a good thing but dad and them had been at it for years and years. Mum used to do it herself, on Melbourne Cup Day mum'd do it herself. We used to have people like – you mightn't remember him but Frank Strang [?] run a theatre restaurant down in William Street years ago.

22.08 Well, his father used to bet with us but they'd have thruppence [threepence] each way, and sixpence each way, and my father had, I would say, no formal education as you'd know it today and yet he was a wiz. You know, you could say "Oh, they've had sixpence on a thing and it's eleven to four" and within a minute dad'd say "Oh, bugger me dead, from bloody sixpence each way" but he'd work it out. Never had a ready reckoner in his life; he was amazing like that.

**SR: Yes. I'm surprised that there wasn't sort of more competition, it was that easy. Well, the police must have known about your existence.**

MO: Probably, they probably did.

**SR: And they didn't bother?**

MO: No. Well I mean like let's face it, it was a good thing. I mean life was bloody hard enough as it was without them moving in and making out heavy about it because people were having a bet. I mean having a bet was a way of life in these areas and if you weren't having a bet you were drinking. Well, my father was never into the drink, never, ever, and so actually I still think SP bookmaking was a good thing myself, and it was part of the fabric of this area.

**SR: And how come you didn't have more competition? Like anyone could just sort of set up and run a book.**

MO: Well, I just think again it was probably the money. I mean, as I said, dad was a gambler and he took a risk and at the time when there was like the three or four of them, well my uncle, one of them, I forget, I don't know whether he'd just come out of the army or not but they obviously had a quid or two.

24.02 And I mean dad kind of with his gambling I suppose he always had a couple of quid around and you didn't need much to set up in them days. It's not like now. I mean you'd go around for the first race. Well, whatever you took for the first race – I imagine, I don't know, because as you'd even imagine yourself in them days, the parents didn't discuss their business with you but I'd assume that what we took on the first race and people coming into the house too to bet, they'd come in, well, that'd probably subsidise you for the next race, I gather. And if they

had a bad day, well, too bad, but I mean dad always had a little cunning kick [?]; he used to keep it up in the roof of the house.

**SR: For the bad days?**

MO: Yes, yes, and there were a few of them, I'd imagine. According to dad there were more of them than there were the winning days.

**SR: Well, the next question we've sort of covered but what sort of a man was your father?**

MO: Oh, he was lovely, he was lovely. He was earthy, he believed in God, he believed in the trade union movement and after that I don't think there was too much else that dad believed in. No, everyone liked him. He was a garrulous type of a man and he loved his family and he loved Christmas and he had a lovely voice and dad'd always be singing – not always be singing, like he wasn't an idiot but I mean he had a lovely voice. Like we'd go down to Grandma's; Grandma lived in George Street so we'd go down there and Auntie Nell, my aunt, would play the piano and dad'd get up and sing.

26.06

And he had played a violin when he was younger and one of the jokes in the family is "Oh, God, remember when Joe used to go to Melbourne with his violin under his arm?" He used to take the violin to Melbourne when he'd go down to relations and play the violin. But the song dad always sang was 'When the Great Red Dawn is Shining', very dramatic.

**SR: I don't know it.**

MO: It's very old. And my aunt, she used to sing and play the organ at the church. But he was a very basic man. Dad never had any pretensions and actually what you seen was what you got and I just used to love him. I thought he was a beautiful man, great father, always interested in what we did, you know, and I think he was a great husband to my mother, I'm sure he was. Mum was the boss but I always remember my mum saying to somebody – one of us were going mad one day – and mum always said "Well, in all the years of happiness I've had with your father and I had him a bloody sight longer than I've had you lot" and that summed him up. And he was always beautifully dressed, always, in an area to say that he was beautifully dressed because it was funny with mum, mum always made sure he had beautiful jumpers. And Ron Bennett [clothing shop proprietor], he's big into men's clothing and that now, but that's where his old man started up, in Newtown, old Ron Bennett had the shop up there and mum used to go up with the orders.

28.00 Dad, he had a pink jumper before men ever, ever wore pink jumpers, always had a beautiful overcoat and as I said to you earlier, I think dad must have thought those things just come and yet, see, mum had the order men [door-to-door time payment] and that's how she was able to do it.

**SR: Tell us about this order men sort of thing.**

MO: Oh, they were terribly important in these areas. We had Mr Pittman [?] from Direct. Mr Pittman used to come every week. He had a grey dustcoat on and a hat and a very precise man and I think mum used to give him two shillings a week. And then we had Reg, Reg Caldwell. Reg was a bit of – I suppose now I've got older – Reg'd be the really dashing type, you know, really fitted to that kind of work and Reg always sold the most beautiful handbags and stockings, good stockings, beautiful handbags and I just forget what else Reg used to sell - he'd come of a Saturday morning and he'd get two bob. And then we had another man – I can't think who he was – but he came from Universal Cash Orders. So what they'd do is they'd get a cash order for ten pound and they'd pay it off.

**SR: And they would buy goods from these people?**

MO: Well, the different shops. Like I'm not sure whether firms like Mark Foy's but I have an idea Mark Foy's might have taken them. The Hub, which used to be a big shop in Sydney in them days, I think the Hub took them and Snow's – that was also a big shopping store in Sydney in them days – they used to take them.

**SR: So you'd get an order - - -**

MO: Yes.

**SR: - - - like a piece of paper?**

MO: It was like a sheet and it had different little bits on it and they'd fill it in for how much you'd spent and they'd take it out and the more you spent, naturally the less and less your total become and then you would sit back and you'd pay it off.

30.19 **SR: Right. So you wouldn't pay it off to like the shop, you'd pay it off to the cash order?**

MO: Oh, no, no, you'd pay it off to the cash order company, yes, to Mr Pittman who'd come and Reg'd come and sometimes you couldn't pay them.

**SR: But Reg used to sell his own stuff as well?**

MO: Yes. He had, I always remember, beautiful handbags and, as I said, lovely stockings. Not that we were into stockings at the time but mum's cousin was and if mum wanted to give her a present or whatever and mum would never give anything that was cheap and tacky. So mum'd go into debt to get big Carrie [?], her cousin who had a ton of money, to get her a couple of pairs of silk stockings off Reg. The order men were part of the tapestry.

**SR: Did they charge interest? They must have.**

MO: Oh, must have, must have. All I know is that we just used to have to go to the door and give him the two bob and their book and it was almost like a religion because actually they were the ones if we needed school shoes mum'd have to get an order and we'd go up to Joe Gardiner's[?] on Newtown at King Street and you'd give it to Andy who ran Joe Gardiner's and Andy'd give you however many pair of shoes mum had to have – you needed socks. I mean when you're looking at money, well there wouldn't have been anything left over so that nearly everyone – I would have been most surprised, not that we ever knew because at that time you weren't aware of people's – you just knew everyone would have been broke or poor or whatever but you didn't know because actually I suppose it was more of a closed society.

32.10 Even among kids you knew that they was poor but no one ever discussed it. Well, it was just something you never talked about - I suppose you took it for granted and again what else did you know? You never knew rich so you didn't have the contrast to worry about. You just dealt with what you had and that was there wasn't a great deal of anything and people I suppose got things the best way they could.

**SR: And if you were to describe your mother, how would you describe her?**

MO: Oh, smart, extremely literate for those days – it was incredible – a lot of taste. We'd have things at school and if we couldn't go – as she would say “If you don't go as well-dressed as the next one you stay at home” and we stayed at home because we couldn't go; if we didn't have the proper socks you didn't go, you just stayed at home. And I mean there was enough of us in the family, “What do you need people in and out of the house for? There's enough of you lot”. That was probably only just to disguise the fact that, well, you know, we never had everything that mum would've liked. But she had tremendous taste in just about everything and she always read, she was a great reader. And she contributed a lot of things: she used to send in articles in them days as I said. Like I remember when the *Women's Weekly* started off mum

used to send in articles to them and her younger brother, when him and his girlfriend were getting married, she won them because of her efforts – they had a radio show on - and mum sent in on behalf of Johnny and Molly and they won it and it was a whole houseful of furniture or something.

34.27 Mum was terrible. And I think most of us, well, all of us, whatever we are, I think we got it. Mum always, you know, “You never settle for second best” and anything that was tacky was definitely not on. I was always a big disappointment because she said I always used to talk as though I was born in the flats that’s here. She was quite a lady, my mother, and in my husband’s words she was a bloody snob. She was a snob and if she didn’t like you that was the finish and she was never an easy woman. I think people with high standards never are but I mean it was just as well for us that she was like that because I mean as I say all of us are socially acceptable, we’re all very nice people and we can all put two sentences together and we are really nice people and I always think it was more or less because of mum. Well, as I say, if you were going anywhere and you weren’t properly dressed it’d just be “Well, you stay at home”. It was no use arguing and it wasn’t a case of “Well, you see your father when he gets home”. She was the boss and she didn’t give a bugger who knew it and she was the boss right up until I think the week she died; she’d be still telling us what to do.

36.05 They were great mothers in them days. We probably all ended up with bloody traumas of some kind or other but by the same token you never had any doubts as to who was the boss. My father was the heart. As my brother said, “Dad was the heart”. You could always go to dad and say “Oh, you know, mum”. “Oh, I know what your bloody mother’s like” but mum literally, I think she dragged us all through the bad times or the hard times and she had a respect for a quid but then when things got good she got the benefit because my brothers absolutely adored her no matter what. I know you’ve been up to Terry’s place. Don’t use that ever to think that was how the house was. The house was beautiful, lovely things. She loved good things like Waterford Crystal for instance and good china, all the best china and there was a time in her life where she was able to buy those things, which she did and good luck to her. She richly deserved it all, I thought. But my sister was a lot closer to her than I was. I was never close to mum but when the order men had to be paid, like when mum went into hospital to have my second youngest sister, Virginia, mum was very sick. She had gallbladder and she was very, very ill. In fact they didn’t know till she went in to have the gallbladder operation that she was pregnant with Virginia and, of course, mum was in hospital for about three or four

months. Well, of course, the order men had to be paid and of course I used to have to ask dad for the money and dad wanted to know what was all this for. I was working at the time so I mean I suppose I strayed a bit out of the childhood plan but I said "Well, they've got to be paid".

38.08 Oh, dad went off his head, couldn't believe it. So he paid them all up. That's where mum got out of hospital she started them all up again, yes. Dad couldn't believe it. I remember saying to him "But where do you think you got all your shirts and your ties and your shoes? Where'd you think mum got them from?" I tell you, they had a very blinkered attitude in them days. I suppose he enjoyed it and thought "Why should I ask?" He might've got a shock. But with order men just finally, I always remember this girlfriend of mine, I always remember this story she told me. We were talking one night about the order men and how important they were in your life and Betty said "Yes, I always remember" she said "mum couldn't pay the order man this day" and she said to Betty "When he comes tell him I've gone up the street" so when the order man knocked at the door Betty's mother just like hid behind the door but she sat on a chair and had her feet up like that, seem so when Betty went and she said "I'm sorry. Look, mum's just gone up the street" and the order man said "Oh. Well, tell her the next time she goes to take her bloody legs with her" because he'd caught her with the legs but they got paid in the long run. Everyone used to say at the time like to do business around Erskineville, well you always had to pay the doctor if the kids were sick. I can remember mum and dad, they would pay the doctor because if you didn't, well, you'd never get them down again, probably. And then you had to pay school money because we all went to the convent and that was sixpence a week.

**SR: Each?**

MO: Each and if you missed you always had one of the nuns get up "Miss Murphy, you haven't paid your school money". Used to think "Oh, you old grump" but they were great, the nuns, on the whole.

40.10 We had interesting nuns there. One of them, her brother-in-law was a bloke named JJ Leahy - he was a great grazier down in the Riverina. In fact, his horse, Sarcherie, ran second in three Melbourne Cups so Sister Augustine her name was, she used to let us go on Melbourne Cup Day, always let us go quarter of an hour early so we could run up the shop and listen to the race and on the way three Hail Marys for Sarcherie because if he did all right he'd come down. She never got anything for herself. He'd give her money and she'd buy food and vegetables for some of the really poor families at school. We were

poor but we never got anything because mum would never let us tell anyone.

**SR: You've mentioned that you're from a Catholic family.**

MO: Yes.

**SR: How actively were you involved?**

MO: Most every Sunday, communion every Sunday. All of us made our First Holy Communion. My father and my brothers all in Holy Name and as I got older and the girls we all were in the Children of Mary.

**SR: You mean the Holy Name Society?**

MO: Yes, for men, that was for men. My father was in that.

**SR: What did they do?**

MO: They just used to have a special Sunday for mass and all the Holy Name men would have the middle of the church and they'd just go to mass and have communion on that Sunday and they had a little black and white badge they used to wear.

42.02

I think they had meetings but dad never went to meetings. He was never a great one for structured type of things. I don't know what else they did. I don't know whether they did good works or anything like that – I don't think so.

**SR: They must have had to have been going to confession quite regularly.**

MO: Yes. You went to confession every week.

**SR: Even your father?**

MO: Oh, yes. My father, he was very basic, a very basic man. There was God, there was the church, you know. And then we used to have the missions.

**SR: We were talking about your involvement in the church and you were talking about the Holy Name Society that the men belonged to. What other -?**

MO: Well, the Holy Name. I forget what the women, like the married women, had - they had some kind of sodality – but the single women, we had what they called the Children of Mary. We used to wear a blue cloak and we had our one Sunday every month where we met, had mass and communion and then we used to have a meeting. I was secretary of it

for years and it was just a matter of urging everyone to have a good life or whatever, I suppose, you know, the usual platitudes that come with religion and all that rubbish, but still and all it was effective. I mean most of us when we got married from that group; we all got married with our cloaks and all the rest of it over our wedding dresses. I didn't but most of them did.

**SR: At what age would you join the Children of Mary?**

MO: Well, you practically went from about thirteen up to when you got married when you left it.

**SR: And what about younger children - were there church organisations?**

MO: No, no. Well, I mean they were still more or less under the umbrella of the schools and like the convent or the brothers and they were dominant forces then, they were very dominant, I mean the church, and the church was dominant.

44.15

That was some of our greatest outings was when the missions used to be held. They used to have a mission and they were usually held by the Passionates [Passionists?], like an order of priests known as the Passionates, mainly the Passionates, and for a fortnight you were exposed to such things as such high powered preaching you wouldn't hear the like of it today and hell and brimstone and what was going to happen to you when you went to hell. We'd go home and you'd be bloody frightened, you'd be scared. They scared the shit out of you, honestly they did. All these terrible things that'd happen if you weren't chaste – I think it was chaste – I was never sure whether they meant c-h-a-s-e-d or c-h-a-s-t-e, I wasn't too sure. Oh, and they spelled it out and you knew exactly what was good and what was bad and the church'd be packed, be packed.

**SR: What church would that be?**

MO: Up here, the one up here at Erskineville, just the one up here.

**SR: What's its name?**

MO: St Mary's. I was married there, I had the kids all christened there, made my First Holy Communion and confirmation.

**SR: And how old were you when you were going to these missions – the whole family would go?**

MO: Well, mum would never go because someone had to be at home with the kids because they didn't start till the night-time, about seven or half past seven, I gather.

**SR: And how old were you when you started going to these missions?**

MO: Well, I suppose I'd have been maybe eleven, twelve – we used to go down with dad.

**SR: And what were the big no-nos, what were the big things that were bad?**

46.05 MO: In the religion?

**SR: Yes, the Passionist fathers.**

MO: Well, I don't think anything was ever good. I don't think anything was every happy or right, I mean even your thoughts. It was very repressive, very repressive but they'd scare the bloody hell out of you, they would; you'd be frightened. That's why all of us, I suppose, all ended up with some kind of bloody trauma or something.

**SR: Would you discuss what happened at these missions or would you discuss it at home?**

MO: Probably, I don't know, I suppose we did. I can't really remember. I suppose we might have said "Oh, God, wasn't he cranky on this or that", you know. But they were terrific speakers, they were never lost for a word and, as I say, you'd come out of church and be frightened to look at each other.

**SR: And did your father endorse those views?**

MO: I don't know. I don't know whether dad was ever, I don't think he ever was kind of taken in but he just believed in God and in the church but he wasn't like a churchy man. I mean you wouldn't hear dad saying anything about church from one week's end to the other. It was just like part of his life. You know, like dad'd get up and go to work and that was like Sunday you went to mass and he went to mass and he believed in what the priest told him. At that time I think people were ripe for that type of thing, you know what I mean.

48.00 I think it probably acted as some kind of solace for them, maybe. I mean I don't know but my father wasn't a churchy man, I mean he just wasn't. He just was a nice, really nice, earthy kind of bloke. He used to have his "buggers" and "bloodies" and that was the extent of dad's language and he used to help everybody or help where he could.

**SR: Well, what about politics?**

MO: Yes, well that was the Labor Party and that was it. They used to come 'round in them days and talk off the back of trucks and all that kind of thing. I mean dad voted but I think he was pretty much like the average Australian today: I don't think he ever believed in any of them. I think dad always thought politicians were pretty low down the scale of things. Probably he was right, I don't know.

**SR: So he wasn't actively involved in the Labor Party?**

MO: No, no, never. No, it was only when Terry joined the Labor Party and I joined it and the rest of our family never, ever did, none of them.

**SR: And did you ever hear them talking about – well, in the Depression you had Jack Lang and all that.**

MO: Oh, yes, I remember my aunts, dad's sisters - they lived in Erskineville. They were on about Jack Lang because my aunt, they had no children and I think she might have had a few bob, I don't know - I just had the impression and it's when they closed the banks or something - I can only remember all the hoo-hah that went on. I wouldn't have remembered any of the specifics but you heard Jack Lang's name being mentioned and by the same token on their dining room wall they had a photo of the great Parnell, the Irish patriot and his great speech.

50.12 I couldn't even think of it but Parnell made a great speech and they had the speech printed underneath Parnell's photo and they had the photo of O'Connell, the great Irish statesman.

**SR: Really?**

MO: Yes. And then on the other side of the family when we were kids mum and dad used to take us up to Auburn where mum's side, most of her family, her aunts and uncles lived up there. They were very old and we used to go up there and I remember sitting outside in their backyard of a Sunday night and they'd all recite and they'd recite Patterson, the poet and Henry Lawson and I remember the first thing I ever remember was about *The Colt from Old Regret* and they'd sit out and they would recite poetry just like that, just sitting around. And Uncle Jim, it was Uncle Jim's turn and he'd recite [Henry] Lawson – I forget the poem he used to do – *Faces in the Street* and then the others, Auntie Kate, she'd recite *The Man from Snowy River* but that was that Sunday night and you'd get the poetry. And then dad's family, we'd go over to one of his sister's and they had a piano and again everyone'd have to get up and do something, everyone had to get up and sing, everyone. It was very easy.

52.00 **SR: You know you're talking about the Irish heroes. How did your family feel about the British and the royal family?**

MO: Well, my grandmother, my mother's mother, I remember her famous saying which used to be trotted out on occasion. Now, wait a minute, I've got to get it right. "They killed the Germans for a shilling a day and killed the Irish for ten bob a day". I think that was her political comment on the English scene. Yes, "They killed the Germans for a shilling a day and they killed the Irish for ten shillings a day". I don't know, ma used to always say that.

**SR: A shilling a day and ten shillings a day?**

MO: A shilling to kill the Germans but ten shillings to kill the – the English would get a shilling a day to kill the Germans and ten shillings a day to kill the Irish, you know, better to kill the Irish for ten bob a day than kill the Germans for a shilling a day. I suppose at the time it was pertinent to whatever they'd have been discussing, probably the Black and Tans or the Sinn Feinians and all them. All talk; they were always all talk, the lot.

**SR: And you know when they were talking politics, who did they speak of with admiration?**

MO: Probably not many. I don't know, I can't remember anybody.

**SR: Well, who did they loathe and detest?**

MO: I think all politicians generally speaking.

**SR: What about Jack Lang?**

MO: Well, I can't remember distinctly, I just cannot remember but I can't remember there'd be a lot of talk but whether it was for or against I wouldn't know but I know my aunt, this aunt, she was always bitter about the banks because I think she must've lost money or something.

54.09 Well, that would be the only reason that'd make her about anything is if she lost a quid, I suppose, and I think a lot of them did in them days, I don't know. We weren't political. Like, as I said, dad always voted and mum voted but I mean as to having strong beliefs, I think as long as they were Labor and had the blue and white up, well that was enough because people really didn't go and I think mainly they mistrusted them but I think they trusted them to do the job they were elected to do. There wasn't much soul-searching I don't think went on particularly in these areas.

**SR: Can you remember much of any political campaigns, any election campaigns?**

MO: No, not much, not much. But I think probably what we all saw probably gave us some kind of entre into having a social conscience. I think any one of us – well, I know my social conscience was more aware because of the times we went through. I mean you knew there had to be a better way of living and you knew that the haves and the have-nots, that division had to be shortened up a bit and probably Terry's social conscience it was also heightened by what he saw because he used to be out and about all over the place. He'd be running everywhere and knew everybody pretty much as he is today and I think you saw the lack and you knew that there had to be something better.

**SR: In the house or your home what sort of discipline was used? Like you said that you were a bit of a cheeky kid.**

MO: Well, you know, yelling and a clout. Oh, you'd get a clout.

56.03 **SR: What, across the head?**

MO: Oh, anywhere. They didn't care, weren't too fussy, wherever, wherever they could grab you, I suppose. Dad never disciplined anybody, dad didn't; mum'd do it all. She did it on the spot, not like today "Wait till your father comes home", you got it as soon as you deserved it. If it was one across the face, well, you'd get it. I remember I was sixteen and I'd been working. I went to work when I was thirteen years and ten months – I went to work at Anthony Hordern's [department store] in the mail order. I loved school. I was at St Patrick's downtown and things were getting a little easier then and dad and mum sent me to St Patrick's and I'd come home on the Thursday and I loved it. I came home on the Thursday and mum said "You'll be going in in the morning to Anthony Hordern's. There's a job advertised" and I said "Oh, I didn't want to go to work". Well, she said "Well, you've got to go" because dad was supporting. She said "There's a job there. You go in", so I got the job and I went to work. But I was about sixteen and we had visitors one night and they were in the loungeroom and I must've been holding forth as I always did and my sister came up the hall. She said "Mum wants you to give her a hand" and I didn't go straight away, I kept talking. Pat come up again "Mum wants you to give her a hand" and I finally – and mum used to say when I was cranky I'd dig my heels in. Mum said "The blasting's started" – that was me, I was making a noise coming down. As I got to the bottom of the hall mum was waiting there and hit me right across the face. I said "What for?" "You in there with

the adults. You're a child. You keep a child's place". And I had plaits till I was eighteen, I had long black plaits.

58.08 **SR: It seems sort of a brutal and shocking thing now.**

MO: Now, mm, but it wasn't.

**SR: Did you sort of get over it?**

MO: Yes. Well, what was to get over? That was my mother. I didn't like getting smacked in the face at sixteen, I just didn't like it but I wasn't going to tell my mother or I got another one and I mean you kept a child's place. That was the dictum in our house: if you were a child you kept a child's place and I don't think it done any of us any harm. It sounds brutal because that's putting it into words but I didn't harbour any resentment or anything.

**SR: After the punishment was it sort of quickly forgotten?**

MO: Oh, yes, that was it. Mum smacked me across the face, "Now get out here and help me" and that's what you did.

**SR: Well at least there wasn't a bad vibe around the place for a long time.**

MO: No, no, there wasn't. I remember one day when something happened, I don't know, and I got outside and I muttered to myself "Shut up" and mum saw me. She was in the shed, doing the washing and in them days you did the washing in the big thing and you had the big thing to lift all the washing out and mum was in there and she saw me mutter "Shut up", which I did say. Well, she come straight out and gave me a whack. That was it, I got caught, too bad; I wasn't as smart as I thought I was.

**SR: You were born in '27.**

MO: 6.

**SR: '26.**

MO: M'mm.

60.00 **SR: So in the Depression, '32, '33, you would have been six and seven.**

MO: Yes.

**SR: And really the Depression went well beyond that. I mean it took until World War II really for there to be much of a - - -**

MO: Yes, for it to be over, yes, exactly.

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

MO: No.

**SR: Well, I suppose you went to work very early at thirteen.**

MO: Yes. How do you mean “contribute”? Like what would you mean?

**SR: Well, odd jobs. The SP booking running.**

MO: Well, I suppose running the bets would have contributed but we didn't put it like that. It was just the fact that dad was doing it and we were there to help, you know. It was like if your old man was lucky enough to own a shop, well, the kids all worked in the shop or things like that. It wasn't as though it was made out you were financially contributing to the welfare of the family; it wasn't like that at all. It was just that you helped your father or helped your mother and probably that terminology determined your attitude to what you did. I mean if I was told, you know, “You're helping us out financially” I could have got real big-headed, I suppose, and thought “Gee, I'm supporting the family”. They never gave you that much of an edge. Just you helped, which is true.

**SR: Well, as the eldest you would have had to help your mother a lot with the younger ones.**

MO: I don't remember doing a lot of that. I was never great with the kids and that. I remember I had to polish the floors and all that. We polished floors because mum had lino [linoleum] everywhere - I only hope there's lino in heaven for mum to be bloody polishing – but we used to have to polish the floors and we used to come home at lunchtime from school and do the messages.

62.09 **SR: Interview with Maureen Oliver, 19th of February 1995 at Erskineville and this is tape 2. Maureen, you were talking about the sort of jobs you'd do around the home and how you'd assist the family and there was polishing floors.**

MO: Definitely polishing the lino floors and doing the messages and that was about it. I don't ever remember doing a lot of things. I mean none of my sisters, we can't dressmake, we can't knit so we didn't get any skills off our mother as far as that was concerned because mum herself didn't dressmake or didn't knit which was rather, I suppose, a bit unusual for women at that time. But that's about all, didn't do much else.

**SR: So as a family what did you do for fun?**

MO: Fun? Well, I don't know. We seemed to do things. We used to talk a lot, argue a lot, play cards with the cigarette cards up against a wall, win and lose cards.

**SR: How would you do that, cards up against the wall?**

MO: Well, the house opposite us had a great big wall and we used to hit the cards up against the wall and I don't know how it came about but if they'd come up one side you'd win it, if they'd come up the other side you'd lose it. The cards like were two-sided. One side had the history of say all the American gangsters like John Dillinger and Pretty Boy Floyd and Dutch Schultz.

64.01 And ask me about American gangsters and I know all about it because we read about them when we were kids. And then they used to have such things as like cricket cards with all the cricketers of the day on them and on the other side of the card was probably – I can't remember but it was probably like a coloured, maybe a logo of whatever the cigarette company, you know, what they were advertising. And then when the war was on we had the trains all went past because mum's house was right on the railway line and the trains used to be going past with all the troops that were going into town to go on the troop ships. We used to sit up on the toilet roof and we'd all sing. My brother had a beautiful voice and he used to sing 'When there's a Rainbow on the River'. There was a singer 'round at the time named Bobby Breen and Jack used to sing this 'When there's a Rainbow on the River' and we used to just sit up on the toilet roof and wave to the troop trains as they were going. And then dad used to, not early in the piece, but he always used to take me to Bondi with him and he used to go out there surfing with mates of his from Erskineville. I suppose they were only young men at the time - to me they seemed terribly old – and we'd go out there and we'd catch the tram from the railway and go out to Bondi and they'd all surf. I can always remember coconut oil because they used to put coconut oil on themselves to stop the sunburn and then if I got sunburnt mum used to put a tomato on me, cut a tomato and rub it on you but to this day if ever I smell coconut oil I remember Bondi Beach – isn't it funny?

66.06 **SR: And did the whole family go out there?**

MO: No, no. I used to go out with dad. He'd occasionally take Pat and I but, no, all the family didn't go. Mum stayed at home and she minded all the kids, the rest of them. And we used to go up to the pictures. The pictures was up the top of the street – I think it was thruppence in.

**SR: What theatre?**

MO: It was The Hub and they had the Hoyts up on King Street so we used to go to the pictures. And, as I said, I think it was thruppence in and before we started running the bets or after – I'm not too sure of the timeslot thing – but we used to go to the pictures of a Saturday afternoon and take all the kids with us. I suppose that was to get them out the way while mum and dad did the betting, I suppose.

**SR: What movies did you see?**

MO: Oh, I forget now. I always remember *Ming the Merciless*. That was the serial.

**SR: Ming?**

MO: *Ming the Merciless* was a serial - it was like an outer space type of thing. And I just forget. You know, they say about the great movies of yesterday. I don't remember all that many of them to be quite honest. I think there was one – I forget what it was called – the *Blue Danube* or something like and Sonja Henie used to be the [ice] skater. Shirley Temple, I couldn't stand her: she was so bloody good and perfect. And Jane Withers, she used to always be in pictures - Mickey Rooney in the Hardy things. But, no, we used to go to the pictures a fair bit. And then we had a priest up here at the time, a Father Breen [?]. He was a lovely old priest and it was the first year before the war that the Viennese Boys' Choir come out here and Father Breen paid for all my class – I can't remember which class it'd be – to go in to the Town Hall to hear them and it was just magnificent to go and hear a concert like that; it was beautiful.

68.18 I never forgot that and I never, ever forgot how great it was to think that a priest in them days would have given us an opportunity to go and hear something like that. And the school, like every year St Patrick's Day sports used to be on. That was the highlight of the year because all the Catholic schools attended the St Patrick's Day sports – I think it was at the sportsground – and I always remember St Anthony's Clovelly always won the prize for the best choir and they always had cream skirts and brown blazers, very upmarket, oh, very upmarket.

**SR: What were they doing having a choir at a sports day?**

MO: I don't know, I really don't know. I mean, you know, you never, ever asked; it was there and that was it. But, no, there was always something to do though and, as I said, we were all readers. We had whatever books were in the place and we all read. Nearly all of us read, I think, and there always seemed to be something to be doing or was getting done.

**SR: So you'd come home from school and would you have your main meal in the evening?**

MO: Yes. That's when dad was home from work, yes.

**SR: O.K. What would you do after that evening meal?**

MO: Well, we had a long table and on each side of the table we had long stools so that's where we sat - dad sat at the top of the table. I don't ever remember mum sitting down, having a meal, don't ever remember. And we'd sit there and we'd all talk and talk away and then we used to have to do homework - that was always insisted upon, we did our homework. Then I gather we must've gone to bed.

70.11 **SR: What about in the summer holidays?**

MO: Well, I think we just played around at home. We didn't go anywhere; we didn't have such things as a holiday. And my grandmother, mum's mother, Ma, she was very good. She'd take you into town and she always took us to the ANZAC Day march. Well, not so much to the march, she'd take you in afterwards so you could see the cenotaph.

**SR: That must have been - - -**

MO: It was, it was great because there was always the aftermath of the march going on. Like the pubs in Pitt Street, like there was the old - Adamses, I can't think of the pubs - they always had something going on upstairs, either someone was fighting and that was always great to watch or there was always two-up games. So we used to go in and look at those things, all mill to the grist or grist to the mill or whatever, again so simple.

**SR: Did your father like his employment?**

MO: I don't think so, I don't think so. Dad left there. I don't know how old he would have been but he went to *The Mirror* [newspaper]. He got a job down at the *Mirror* when Ezra Norton was running the *Mirror*. It wasn't the *Mirror*, it was *The Truth* and dad got a job there in the old days in the machine room and he was there till he left work and dad was about fifty eight when he left work. And then he saw the *Truth* then become the *Mirror*, the *Sun-Mirror* and the old man died and Ezra Norton took over and dad was there then.

72.06 And then when dad was there he got Wal a job, he got his brothers jobs. It's still the same: dad got everybody jobs down there. At one stage there was Wal, I had three or four brothers working there so it

was a real family type of thing: everyone just went to the *Mirror* and got a job there.

**SR: Well, can you describe your mother's working day?**

MO: Oh, it would have been terribly hard, I would imagine, very hard I'd say, because, you know, forget about modern appliances. I mean just a thing like doing the washing would've been just enough in itself. There was nine kids and then there was dad like with work clothes. And I mean to stoke up the bloody copper, I mean that would've been a job in itself and then there was beds to make and meals. I mean we used to do the messages. Mum never went and mum never done messages. We used to come home in our lunch hour and mum'd have it written out and we'd have to go up to the butcher's on the road. And David's, I think mentioned earlier, David's who now is one of the biggest grocery – well, they're into everything, David's Holdings – well, that's where they started, up there on Erskineville Road where there's a hairdresser's there now and David's had a grocery shop there, old Mr and Mrs Davis [?] and you'd put your order in it'd come to a pound and they'd deliver it and there was always a bag of lollies in there. But we did the messages and there was the old ham and beef shop. No mettwurst or salami or polish salami, it was pork grits and Devon and ham and he used to slice the ham off the bone.

74.12 And so we used to go up and do the messages and take them home and mum was a very good cook. Mum could make a meal out of nothing; if mum had three eggs and a bit of cheese you'd end up with a meal and mum was really good at cooking.

**SR: Did people mostly do their shopping sort of virtually on a daily basis then?**

MO: Yes, we did. Well, there was no supermarkets. I mean the concept of supermarkets you couldn't even imagine when you see supermarkets such as today. Never had anything; just mainly everybody shopped in the local shop.

**SR: And what about the variety, so in things like fruit and veg – was there much?**

MO: It was pretty standard. I mean you had just the ordinary potatoes and pumpkin and peas and beans. I can remember them sitting doing the beans. Actually, I always imagine doing beans and peas was like a social activity. I can remember my aunt sitting there and doing the peas and beans because you had your colander and you had your

knife and you had your peas and beans in front and they'd be sitting, talking and doing the peas and the beans.

**SR: And would people go over to other people's houses to do that?**

MO: We didn't. Mum never did, we never, ever did, we never, ever went into anyone's house, no.

**SR: So your aunts would come over?**

MO: The aunts. My grandmother and my aunt lived down in George Street and my aunt's sister-in-law lived just up so they used to, I gather, would get together and when they got together would do the vegetables and things like that while they were talking and then take them home and have the meals ready for when their husbands got home from work. No takeaways, of course, not even the mention; no one'd even know what a takeaway was.

76.17 **SR: Well, with your mother what time would she get up in the morning?**

MO: Well, I would have supposed she'd have got up when my father was going to work because they got up and I imagine dad would've had a breakfast. I don't know but maybe it would only be a cup of tea and a bit of toast but mum would have had to get it. Dad would never have been able to make himself a cup of tea, never. As mum used to say, "Your father couldn't hang a bag up to a lavatory wall", which he couldn't have. I don't think men did in them days because there was always the wife there and that was what she used to do, do the work and look after the house. That's why now I see my sons, they go out, the kids go with them, the wife goes with them but when we were growing up or when we were little dad'd take me to the beach, which must have been a big concession on his part and mum'd be home with the kids.

**SR: Were you a favourite or was it just to get you out of the house?**

MO: I don't know, I don't know. That was never explained to you either. No, probably just I could imagine dad saying "I'm take Maureen". I was the eldest, I suppose I was house-trained and I suppose I knew how to put me pants back and forth if I had to go to the toilet and I wasn't going to cause him any bother, plus the fact I loved the water and I suppose that's what it was. Again, I suppose it was just nice and convenient.

**SR: And your mother, in those days did they have special days for doing particular tasks, like washing days?**

MO: Well, I think washing day was usually a Monday, I don't know why. I always have it in mind that Monday was the wash day and then the rest of the week always seemed to me as though they were working. Well, they always used to tell you about how much work they had to do.

**SR: Well, what time would she go to bed?**

MO: Oh, I don't know. I suppose ten o'clock at night - no TV. The wireless, I suppose, I don't know, I don't know whether the wirelesses were that interesting. As I said, mum was an avid reader so she probably would always be able to find something to read but maybe ten.

**SR: Can you remember her having much time off or what she would do in her spare time?**

MO: No, I can't really, I can't. Like it wasn't like as though Saturday afternoon mum will do this because it just seemed to me as though it was an ongoing thing; like every day it was the same. It mightn't have been but from where I was at my age I looked on it as every day was work, work, work. It seems horrible, doesn't it?

**SR: Well, how did the Depression affect your family, say your father?**

MO: Well, I'd imagine it would have affected them badly because, as I said, like when dad was getting one week's work and he'd be off for two weeks, so that meant he couldn't get any dole or any assistance at all so I would imagine that the Depression would have affected them greatly.

**SR: But you can't remember anything like the impact on your mother?**

MO: I can always remember my uncle bringing down the big bag of potatoes. It was always like a real gala event with Big Jack'd arrive with the bag - I always remember the vegetables coming out of the bag. But I imagine the impact. I know my uncle was living with us at the time.

80.01

Now, however he come into the family – he was my mother's younger brother – I don't know but I remember at one stage he was living with us. In fact, I think he lived with us up until he got married. And he used to start work on the Monday and I always remember all this here was all park and it was very heavily wooded. There was trees everywhere and my uncle fell out of the tree up the top end there where they had tennis courts and he broke his arm and I remember that was a tragedy because he was to go to work the next day and earn some money and, of course, he couldn't go to work: he broke his arm. I always

remember that was a terrible thing, it was one of them real big things that happened so it had a big impact, definitely.

**SR: And are you saying that actually in the '30s here where the Swanson Street flats are was actually wooded?**

MO: Yes, it was all a big park - they had tennis courts up the top. You know the church up there?

**SR: Is that St Mary's?**

MO: Yes. Well, that was all tennis courts along there and then down on this end on the Ashmore Street end they used to have an oval there where Metters was one of the big industries here at the time. And they used to have an Aussie Rules[Australian Rules football] team because my grandmother, my father's mother, she used to follow Aussie Rules and we used to go over to this oval here and they'd play Aussie Rules there, the Metters' side – they had a good side at the time or I always remember they told me they were. So, you know, they were there. But this was all a beautiful park and then they decided on this slum clearance project and this is where it started, in here.

**SR: And how did the locals feel about being referred to as “slum dwellers”?**

MO: Well, that was it; that was a fact of life.

82.00 **SR: They weren't insulted?**

MO: No. I think again you weren't aware. I mean you knew there was the differences but you were never made to feel the differences, not all that much that really what was to be insulted about. You did live in a slum area. I didn't like the idea that we were less than anybody else but it was a fact of life. You know, I think we were a lot smarter in some ways and yet a lot stupider in others. I mean we were prepared to accept whatever anyone told us but then I don't think we were in the minority. I think it was the majority of thought in them days. You live in a slum area and you belong to the slums. You never questioned what right did people have to say that to you or to label you as coming from the slums, you know, what right did they have. Then I guess if they were paying the bills - and there was a lot of factories and such in these areas, a lot of factories privately owned like rotten soap factories over on the canal and things like that and they were paying the bills, I suppose they were the ones who could say what were slums and what wasn't. And yet a lot of those people that had private businesses, they were the people – and people in this area today wouldn't believe it but they were the ones that they can thank today for childcare as it exists

today in this area because a lot of those women who they would tell you come from silvertail areas and were silvertails, they were the women who could see the need.

84.01 And they could see the need because they were outside of it. I mean we were here. They were people who were very rich, very wealthy people and they could see the need for childcare in these areas and it was through them women getting together that was the cause of the onset of childcare in these areas and yet today people wouldn't believe that but they were because they had the time, they had the money and both those things brought the expertise that was necessary. And I mean I remember I met one of them years ago when I was involved with the council and it was through them. It was like the rich women or the more dedicated women, professional women, who started off the Rachel Forster Hospital up there at Redfern which even today despite all this, you know, knocking the hospitals it still would be a landmark among hospitals. It was there for women at the time – only treated women and children – it was there for women, looked after them beautifully and answered a need in this area for that particular type of hospital. So in them days, despite what people said, there were people among the wealthy who had a social conscience. Well, this nursery over here, the Lady Gowrie, that was brought about by a group of women similar, like professional women as well as very wealthy women and there's only one of these Lady Gowrie's, or there used to be, in each state of Australia and this was always the showpiece, this one. Well, Lady Fairfax – that was Vincent Fairfax's wife – she was the President over there for years and years and years and put so much of herself into it and, of course, now I don't suppose they even remember those things but she was marvellous, that Lady Vincent Fairfax.

86.01 I was with her years after on the board of the Rachel Forster. It was when they widened the board to include like a representative for the neighbourhood or whatever and I was a representative from the neighbourhood but, as I said, I recognise the work that she did for years over here at the Lady Gowrie but that's changed now altogether.

**SR: Just to finish up on your family, would you say that your mother and father were happy?**

MO: Yes, I would - my father was. Dad was ecstatic. I think mum always thought the grass was greener, you know, and I always felt that mum probably would have been quite happy with maybe two children. I don't think mum was ever the earth mother type, she wasn't really, and you didn't blame her. I mean I always thought mum was well before her times in so many ways and I think like all women mum had a longing

for the nice things and the good things and I just think mum like with a man, like with my father, mum was happy there but I think as far as the big family – and yet she always recognised none of us ever brought her any grief or any worry and actually I'd say we really added to mum's life in so many ways but I think always mum could have imagined herself as being up there with the gentry, I always do, and that's not a bad way to be anyhow. Much better to have those kind of expectations of yourself than to have none or to do what so many poor bloody women in these areas did, just caved in. Used to see them around and they'd have the slippers on and everyone wore shapeless dresses.

88.12 That's why Nan, my sister, and I laugh. We still get dressed up and we'd go out and I said to Pat, "I think we saw that many shapeless dresses and slippers". My mother never wore slippers outside the house, never; you'd never, ever see her. And she'd have aprons on but anyone knocked off'd come the apron. But so many of the women because they didn't have expectations of themselves so how could they have expected the husbands to. And my father never drank and I think drink in these areas at that time was a killer and I never blamed the men. What else did they have? Bloody working eight or nine hours a day, putting up with crap from everybody. No one had cars. How did they get to work? Like my father, on a bloody pushbike in bloody pouring rain and freezing cold, coming home and having his wife to have to lift him off a bloody bike. Most of the men worked like that; housefuls of bloody kids. What else would you do if you were a man? Course you'd go and have a few drinks and hope to God it'd soon be over. And worse for the women, worse for women. I mean what did they have? There was no softness, no gentleness, no sharing. I mean if a man shared the housework with the woman in them days, well they'd think there was something wrong with him, not that we were aware of queers or gays or homos or lesos or whatever but I mean it's just the fact that men didn't help. And financially where would women have got a quid to go to get a decent dress or go into town and keep up with things?

90.02 They had bastards of lives – I don't care what anybody says – and I mean they talk about the good old days. I always remember my mother saying about the good old days. She said "I can remember when potatoes were a penny a pound" and she said "I never had a penny to buy a pound of it". So everything is in relation to whatever it is at that particular time. I can remember this woman; she used to live just around the corner from us. She must have been six foot tall and she used to wear her hair drawn right back in a little skinny bun about that big she'd have on the back of her head, three great big strapping

sons. She was just ugly and yet I often think of that woman and she just existed, I'm sure she only existed. I could never imagine there'd be any joy in her life or any happiness and I thought "Now, you take that woman and bring her up to the present day". I mean look at the changes. I don't say they're all for the good. I don't like a lot of the changes today but I mean her life would have been a lot richer than what it was in them days. And even now looking back as you've forced me to do, which I have done the last couple of weeks, I mean I can sit here because I'm sixty eight and I'm talking to you through what I still believe the eyes of say a five up to a thirteen year old kid was and naturally it's different. I didn't have to juggle the money, whatever come in, and I didn't have to try to make like meals for eight or nine kids and a husband. And I mean they had no such thing as birth control so what joy would that bring into your life?

92.03

I mean it's all right to say now – mum died at seventy-odd – we gave mum a different dimension in her life which we did. There was nine of us. Every one of us were loving, every one of them they were great to mum but I mean, as I said, why shouldn't we have been? I mean anything we are I think we owe to mum. But I think mum had things right. We always felt that mum would've been happy with two kids and a lot of other things in her life but that didn't happen but they were happy. Well, I think they were because we're a reflection – I think we are.

**SR: In the neighbourhood generally – you know your family with the nine children – were there many other kids in the neighbourhood?**

MO: Yes, there was a lot of kids. That's what we say now with Christmas: you don't see kids around anymore.

**SR: And did most of the families have lots of kids?**

MO: Well, I think we had the most – I'm pretty sure we did. [break in recording].

**SR: How did they manage to achieve that with no birth control around the place?**

MO: God knows.

**SR: Wasn't there gossip about that kind of thing?**

MO: No. No one ever gossiped much about anything. Well, we didn't hear it in our family because, see, mum never kind of – the lady next door who was, I think, a victim of getting bashed up about every week, well, mum used to just say "Hello" and that was it. The woman across the street

whose son got killed down at De Burgh's Bridge in Lane Cove; that was the first time I ever remember my mother walking across the street. She walked over with my father to express their sympathy and I think dad had a pound and he gave her the pound.

94.02 **SR: How'd he get killed at De Burgh's Bridge?**

MO: He was diving off the bridge down at De Burgh's Bridge down at Lane Cove and somehow or other he hit something and he died and that was a terrible thing.

**SR: As a kid?**

MO: Mm. And mum went over and that was the first time. Mum never visited anybody and even when she got you'd never see mum pop in. She was never a popper-inner and was never, ever, never, ever a great visitor.

**SR: Well, getting onto your friends and everything, who were your friends as a child?**

MO: Oh, just girls I went to school with, that was all.

**SR: Can you name any of them?**

MO: There was Jean Reynolds – she died.

**SR: When did she die?**

MO: Only very young, I just forget - I think it was after we were married she died. And there was another family of Murphys down in Charles Street – that was Valerie Murphy. And there was a girl, Loveridges, that was Val Loveridge, and that was about it. You know, there were other girls but I couldn't remember their names now.

**SR: O.K. Well, what did you do together?**

MO: We didn't do anything really spectacular. I mean with school we used to do physical culture and I remember going to Langridges which was down in George Street - that was the big studio of Langridges. They were called a health studio or something in them days and we used to have physical culture displays and that and the school was picked a couple of times and we went down to that.

**SR: Was it like gymnastics or something?**

MO: No, just like physical exercises, you know, hands on your shoulders, up in the air and out and all that kind of thing and that was it. I think we all got a badge or something which was a highlight, I suppose.

96.05 **SR: And was it all coordinated in time to music or something?**

MO: Yes. Oh, yes, we did it all to music and we had a uniform, a blue pleated tunic with white socks or sandshoes or something and that was about it. I suppose we used to talk, I don't know - I think talk was the greatest and cheapest commodity around at the time.

**SR: What about say out of school?**

MO: No, we went straight home.

**SR: What about on the weekends, did you go and visit your friends?**

MO: No, no, we didn't visit.

**SR: Really?**

MO: M'mm. Well, we didn't visit friends. We might have, as I said, we'd do this terrific journey up to Auburn when you think of it and we used to do a terrific journey to Sylvania which meant you went to Kogarah by train and then you had to wait. I think it was a trolley car or something very old fashioned used to take us out to Auburn and you used to go over the Georges River Bridge and my uncle lived the first house over the bridge and we used to go there for Sunday. And my aunt'd be there. She'd see the trolley coming and she'd put the scones on and she never wore shoes. Real hicks, oh, God, hicks, you've never seen anything like it - they come out of the bloody hills, I think - but that was mum's brother and his wife and their kids.

**SR: And they were at Sylvania?**

MO: At Sylvania, yes.

**SR: Well, with your friends did you have any games, special games that you'd play?**

MO: Not really, no. I don't ever remember any.

**SR: Well, how far could you roam? Did you roam around the neighbourhood at all?**

MO: I never roamed further than the school up there.

**SR: Did you ever nick school?**

MO: No. Oh, God, no, I'd have been terrified. Like if you come from over here like, which was Alexandria to us, that was really foreign. It was so insular, it was insular. Actually, in a way, you lived in your own street

or even in your own backyard. Like a lot of kids roamed around, I'm not saying they didn't, but we weren't ever encouraged to roam around.

98.23 **SR: Was it just the girls in your family?**

MO: No, no, with the boys as well but as we grew older, of course that changed. I mean we did extend ourselves. I think I was about thirteen and I was allowed to go up to Newtown. St Joseph's up there had a big debating society and I was allowed to go up there and join the debating society. I was about thirteen. I think it was before I went to work I was allowed up there so you could extend yourself. The only time I come over to Alexandria when dad used to come over to the canals to go to the boats as they used to call it and to bring the dog cards around, when we used to do that. He had some blokes right over here that used to take the dog cards.

**SR: What was your school life like?**

MO: It was interesting, interesting; we were exposed to a lot of things at school. The nuns were old fashioned nuns. If you did anything wrong, well, you'd get the cane and you'd get a slap across your wrist. And I learned music at the time. I wasn't very good at it but that was one of mum's, you know, you could learn music - I don't know why they thought you learnt music suddenly you become a bloody lady. But I learnt the piano and my aunt played the organ at the church and because I didn't play like her, well, Sister'd give me one across the wrist or the fingers. But they were good. As I said, we had nuns like Sister Augustin who was related to JJ Leahy who every year had all these magnificent things he used to do.

100.11 And we had nuns who were determined that we'd wear uniform and get us out of the slum area, like out of the mould of being in the slums so they'd put you into a uniform.

**SR: And when you said you learnt a lot of interesting things at school, what exactly?**

MO: Mainly the basics, although we were exposed to Shakespeare - I was reading Shakespeare when I was ten. And we were exposed to music: as I say, Father Breen sent us in to see the first of the Viennese Boys' Choir. And, as I said, English: I was reading the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* when I was eleven.

**SR: But did the nuns encourage you to continue with your education?**

MO: Yes, they did, they did.

**SR: Well, when your parents pulled you out of school at thirteen, didn't they have anything to say about that or you don't know?**

MO: No. Well, I didn't because that was at St Patrick's. I'd left the convent here and gone into St Patrick's and that was a commercial college in them days where you learnt typing and shorthand and I came home on the Thursday, on the Friday I got the job and on the Monday I started the job so I imagine the turnover of pupils at that time would have been quite large. I imagine a lot of parents did it.

**SR: Where did most of the local kids go to school?**

MO: Either to Erskineville up here, the Erskineville Public School, or to the convent.

**SR: Was there any rivalry between the two schools?**

MO: Only, you know, we'd go past the public school on our way to school and the kids'd sing "Catholic, Catholic, go to hell while the publics ring the bell" and things like that but that was all. And then of course we in turn would - - -

102.04 **SR: What would you say to them?**

MO: Oh "Public, public, go to hell while the Catholics ring the bell", you know, and there'd be great laughing and running and all that. Nothing nasty or rotten, just that kind of thing, I suppose just to let them know who you were.

**SR: Were you happy at school?**

MO: Yes, I loved school, I loved it.

**SR: I'm asking about sex education.**

MO: Non-existent.

**SR: Anywhere, even at home?**

MO: Anywhere. Oh, none at home - they never even knew the word. Not a word. My sisters and I, we always break up about it; we laugh when we talk about it. Just as well we can laugh. Yes, no, non-existent. I got my period and I told mum in a furtive kind of fashion because I thought I was bleeding to death and mum, she took me in and she gave me a napkin and she said "Put that on".

**SR: What?**

MO: A napkin, like a baby's napkin, "Put that on and you'll be like that till you're fifty" and I thought "Geez, every day of my life I'm going to be like that". That was the extent of my sex education.

**SR: Well, I bet you were relieved when it stopped after a few days.**

MO: I was, I was that happy. Oh, none at all.

**SR: And you couldn't ask her any more about it?**

MO: No, no, not mum you couldn't, no.

**SR: And you didn't know it was related to reproduction?**

MO: No. Reproduction I never heard; I wouldn't have known the word -no wonder I ended up with eight kids.

**SR: You must have figured it out somewhere.**

MO: Yes, by hit and miss, I think. No, we all laugh. Virginia, the one that just rang, well, Gin's fifty three and she said to me, "You know, mum never improved in all those years, never". I don't think anybody ever heard of – you know, there was no sex education, not in the schools, not in the Catholic schools.

104.15 **SR: No.**

MO: Oh, my God, no. If anything, it was more to turn you off. If you looked at a boy or, God forbid if you looked at a boy, well, you weren't even allowed to think about it. And certainly, I don't know, some homes might've been a bit more aware but our house wasn't. As my sister said, "Sex was always that number between five and seven".

**SR: Well, you would have noticed pregnant women around the .....**

MO: My mother was pregnant most of her life and all of my life and I never, ever knew, never. The only time I did was when mum had Virginia and she went to the doctor in Macquarie Street – we were affluent by then – and he told her that she had to go into Lewisham [hospital]; he was going to take the gallbladder out. And mum was very sick and my aunt took her up and when my aunt come home she told us, she said "Your mother's having a baby" and we nearly died, couldn't believe it, and mum had Virginia. She left Lewisham – she was in there for nearly two months or more – after she had the operation because it had to be done a different way because of her being pregnant and she went straight from there to St Margaret's [hospital]. Sister Ann [?] was in charge of St Margaret's at the time and mum was in there for over a month and she had Virginia there.

**SR: What about girls who got into trouble or got pregnant then? I mean it was viewed as “trouble”.**

MO: Well, you never, ever knew. We only knew of one and she got married very early in the piece. I think all the ones you heard of had appendicitis; I think that was the word for if they'd had an abortion or anything. And I don't know that for a fact. I've only put that together as the years went on because, gee, there seemed to be an awful lot of women with appendicitis.

106.25 **SR: But if they were having abortions they would have had to have backyard jobs in those days.**

MO: They were all backyard jobs, oh, yes. Even when we first come here – and I've been here over forty years – a woman up there, she had a backyard job done. They were all backyard jobs. The only one that was ever in practice was that doctor out at Coogee and I don't think that was generally known. Probably among the rich women it would have been but it certainly wasn't generally known but I suppose every place had their backyard abortionist.

**SR: And were you aware of people that didn't survive them?**

MO: No.

**SR: O.K, getting onto the general community, what sort of ethnic mix was there?**

MO: None. No, just Australian.

**SR: O.K.**

MO: Had some Chinese right over near Mascot with Chinese gardens and there wasn't any. I think we did have people who ran a porn shop up at Erskineville – I was only a kid. I was trying to think of their name the other night. Couldn't think of their name but I have an idea they would've been probably some kind of ethnic, I don't know, but they'd have been Australian whatever, you know. But there was no ethnic mix at all.

**SR: Were there any Aboriginal families?**

MO: Not so much in here but out around over here near Alexandria there was but they were like us, they were assimilated into the community.

108.06 **SR: Do you know any of the family names?**

MO: No, no, I didn't know any of them, never, no.

**SR: Were there Aboriginal kids at the school?**

MO: No, not when I was there.

**SR: In terms of describing the neighbourhood, was it residential, industrial?**

MO: Residential and industrial, both, and often side by side. Over here was all Metters. Down there in Ashmore Street, all Metters. Further up was factories. We had a couple of factories up from us in Albert Street.

**SR: What sort of factories?**

MO: I don't know what they made, like little machine shop type of things but it was a mix, both residential and industrial.

**SR: What was the social focus of the area? Where was the place where people would sort of meet to talk?**

MO: None really. They had the town hall which occasionally would have more or less a social function but that would be a private type of thing.

**SR: Was there a local pub where the men would get together?**

MO: Well, there was a lot of pubs. There was The Rose, there was The Erskineville. What's that other one up there that's now a day place? I forget the name of it. There was The Kurrajong over here and there was The Parkview over there.

**SR: Wasn't there one next door to you?**

MO: Hartigan's was next to us, yes. The blokes used to drink there and then they'd buy the quarts, quart bottles of beer, and they'd leave them there and the next morning we'd duck in and get the quart bottles and get thruppence for them - it was great. But that was like just a big open paddock next door to us and then Hartigan's, the pub.

**SR: Right.**

MO: But I think men just drank wherever. We weren't really conscious. I had uncles who drank. I had one uncle who was one of the local drunks but he used to drink up here at The Rose.

110.05 **SR: And these bottles, what are you talking about there?**

MO: They'd have a quart bottle of beer - I forget the size of a quart - and they'd sit in the area. Next door to the pub, next door to our house was all this open space. They'd sit there in the night and drink the quart because pubs, they had to close at six o'clock and they used to call it

the six o'clock swill. They'd close at six and then they'd leave the quart bottles and we used to duck in the next day and you'd get them and you'd get thruppence each back off Moya [?] Hartigan for them.

**SR: That'd be all right.**

MO: Yes, it was great, a real little bonanza.

**SR: Was there a corner shop or anywhere where women would gather or talk or would they talk in the street?**

MO: No. We had a corner shop and we had one around the corner but I never remember women gathering as such, I never remember; everybody more or less kept to themselves.

**SR: Would you say that it was safe?**

MO: Yes. We used to leave our front door open in the hot weather. We used to walk down here. Well, I used to come home from work of an afternoon and nothing ever seemed to happen.

**SR: Who were your neighbours?**

MO: Well, the people next door were people named Rollinson [?]. He'd worked on the railway. They had a big family and that was a railway house - it was a great big house, beautiful old home. And on the other side was just the hotel, Moya Hartigan who was a friend of my mother's, and mum used to do a lot of beading for Moya.

112.05 Moya was very social and mum used to embroider like chiffon evening dresses and that for her and mum used to make them – I think they call them now Tiffany lamps and mum used to do a lot of the beading and that on them for her. She was always very handy like that, mum. Never dressmade or never knitted but with beading and embroidery and things like that she used to do a lot of it for Moya.

**SR: And what about on the other side of the street, across the road?**

MO: Well, there was the Humphreys used to live there. They were a very active family - they all used to drink, the mother and the father and the lot. And just up from them was the Cusacks [?] and they were just a nice, ordinary family - it was their son who got killed at Lane Cove – and it was just a mix of people.

**SR: Where did most people work?**

MO: Well, I think that a lot of them worked at Metters down here. I don't know, I think most of them, the rest of them, probably worked on the

railways. Eveleigh was just around the corner and Eveleigh was like just a huge big place. I had uncles work at Eveleigh and I think most of them worked at Eveleigh. And see as kids too – that was a thing I forgot when you said about what did you do – we used to go to the railway picnic over at Clifton Gardens and the railway used to put on a big picnic for all their employees and you'd go over. Mum never went – my aunt used to take us – and you'd go to Clifton Gardens and they used to have a little rowboat there and used to sing "A penny a ride on the rowboat". And, of course, the hit of the day was if you were invited to take all the pennies off the kids so you'd be on the boat, you'd go 'round and pick up the pennies and he'd row you out as far as the end of the wharf was and then he'd bring you back.

114.13 And they used to have dancing there in the afternoon and you'd all get a bag. You'd have an apple, an orange and lollies and all that. That was a great day, that. And sports, they'd have running and that was a great day and everyone used to love to be invited to the railway picnic. They'd give the men the cards and you could take your family so we used to go with my aunt - it was lovely. But they were, I'd say, the biggest employers of the lot, the railway.

**SR: What smells can you remember?**

MO: Coconut oil and coming down the cutting to go to Bronte Beach I could remember the smell of the surf, the sea. Always as you come through that cutting on the tram and straight away you'd get the smell of the sea – it was beautiful. And coconut oil from Bondi Beach where my father used to put it on himself. And when we were kids when we used to go to picnics at Bronte Beach when we got older I can always remember washing the tomatoes and lettuce under the tap. Isn't it funny?

**SR: When you think back to Erskineville in the '30s what sights or images come to mind?**

MO: The milkman in his cart with his milk things where you had to go out and take your milk jug out, the baker, his horse and cart, selling the bread and the rabbitoh man and the man with the clothes props. Sixpence for a rabbit and sixpence for your clothes props. I always remember them coming up the street and singing out. And the order men.

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

MO: Not really, no. Only the local shopmen like Harry – what was his name – Burton. He was the barber and that's when you just said about them, that's where all the men used to sit out there. And dad'd go up and see

Harry Burton – he was the barber – but I think that’s where a lot of the men used to go and talk. And old Jack Cincotta [?], he owned the big fruit shop and everybody’d go to Cincotta’s for their fruit and whatever, vegetable. He used to have the big shop across the street; then he moved over to this side of the street. But they were characters only brought about by their line of business, I think.

**SR: Were there any local crims?**

MO: Probably plenty but we never, ever knew of any of them.

**SR: Were there any people that you had to avoid or that you were warned about?**

MO: No, never.

**SR: O.K. What were the most popular newspapers at the time?**

MO: I suppose the *Truth*. We weren’t allowed to read it, oh, we weren’t allowed. Mum used to go off her head: we weren’t allowed to read the *Truth*.

**SR: What about magazines – what were the popular magazines?**

MO: The only one I ever remember, as I said I remember the start of the *Women’s Weekly*.

**SR: Can you remember any jokes from your childhood or riddles?**

MO: No, not really.

**SR: Tricks?**

MO: No.

**SR: What about songs from that time?**

MO: Oh, plenty of songs. Just all the old standards, you know, like *Brown Eyes* and *Am I Blue?* and *When there’s a Rainbow on the River*. Oh, God, there’s so many of them and now I can’t remember them. A lot of the old Fred Astaire songs, that would have been about that time, a lot of what you call them too, Al Jolson songs.

118.32      Everybody did Al Jolson. If you had a party or anything everyone was an Al Jolson, *Mammy*, you know, all those old ones of his. What was the other one? Have a party and I’ll remember them all. No, the music was good in them days, great.

**SR: Was it as polluted at that time? How do you remember sort of the condition of the atmosphere, if you like?**

MO: Well, it just was non-existent as far as we were concerned.

**SR: Pollution?**

MO: Yes. We didn't even hear the word. The word wasn't in the vocabulary in them days.

**SR: But it must have been pretty smoggy with everybody having fires and what have you.**

MO: Probably, probably. Yes, we all had fires but it wasn't a big thing.

**SR: O.K. What did you know of the world outside your local area?**

MO: Very little, very little.

**SR: In terms of status, how did Erskineville rank with Newtown or Alexandria – what was that situation?**

MO: Probably on a level with Alexandria. Probably Newtown might have been a little bit more upmarket.

120.00 **SR: Did you look down upon people from different areas?**

MO: No. No, well, I didn't. Maybe it did go on but I don't know.

**SR: You can't remember that?**

MO: No. It wasn't a big force or anything.

**SR: O.K. Well, I'd like to thank you very much for your time. It's great, it's terrific.**

MO: Good.

**SR: Sorry to cut like that. She just told me I had two minutes.**

MO: That's all right. Yes, that's right, yes.

**SR: That's why I suddenly started going like a maniac.**

MO: Good, yes.

**Interview ends**