



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Joan Jones, evacuees, tape one, side one.

Joan, could we just begin please with your date and place of birth?

Yes, I was born in Manchester in Lancashire, England, on 21st September 1933.

And I think you grew up in the area you were born in. Could you tell us the actual place name?

Yes, the place was Swinton-in-Pendlebury. It was a combination of two towns. Someone apparently wasn't willing to give up one name or the other.

The childhood that you had there, what would be the predominant memory of the period before the war?

It was living with my grandma. My mother and father, and myself lived with my grandma in a chip shop that she'd bought, which was on the main road through from Manchester to Bolton.

I know you were an only child until after the war. Your father, for the record, I think worked in a rubber factory. Could you tell us about that?

Yes. It was Greengate Newell. They produced rubber sheeting, raincoats - which was always necessary in England of course - and it was the kind of industry where he couldn't volunteer to fight in the war, had to stay working in this factory.

And I think you were saying as well as the factories of the area, it was also a mining area. Could you tell us about that?

Yes, about 500 metres from where we lived was the very first pit head, and then possibly about half a kilometre again was another one, and within, say, a five kilometre radius there were three other mines.

Was the mining/factory lifestyle the predominant lifestyle of the area?

Oh yes, it was because we were also surrounded with spinning and weaving mills.

Tell us about the neighbourhood, if you remember anything of it, either before the war or - I guess when you went back it was much the same. What kind of neighbourhood was it in terms of the buildings, the streetscape? Were there many trees?

No, there weren't, although we did have a large park fairly close by - a few streets away - called Victoria Park. But in the main it was terraced houses, maybe two up and two down, or three up and three down, and I imagine very few would have had a bathroom.

The neighbourhood that you lived in, do you remember was there a strong feeling of neighbourliness, of people coming together, or not?

I don't know that I remember that. The only neighbour we had, or the two neighbours that we had on either side .... One was a publican and because the entrance to his cellar opened in our backyard - my mother always felt it was dangerous to have the cellar door left open in case I fell down - this man apparently would insist on having it open all day long waiting for a delivery. So there were always arguments across the fence about that. The other neighbour on the other side, my mum kept as a friend for many, many years. Those are the only friends I remember.

You were saying, I know, that between your parents, too, there was a degree of argument, if you like, can you tell us anything about that?

Only that my life just seemed to be full of arguments between my mother and father, and my grandmother. I think in later years I learned that my grandmother would go out drinking and leave my mum and dad to look after - which was essentially my grandmother's business - the fish and chip shop, and I think that provoked a lot of arguments. And I just found it a very unhappy time with them.

I see, that your parents had been dragged into your granny's business. Was this, because it is important for the background and comparisons with Australia, was this a regular incessant thing, or a periodic thing, and what actually happened?

I think it went on fairly regularly - as I learned later of my granny's drinking habit - apparently she was a great worry to my mum and dad. But the arguments just seemed to go on and on and on. And I can remember one instance of my mother picking up a large carving knife and throwing it across the room and it sticking in the door of our sideboard and me running underneath the table, hiding out of the way.

(5.00) That doesn't sound very pretty at all. Did you do many things with your parents? Did you go on outings with them, that sort of thing?

The main things I remember are visiting our relatives. My father came from a large family and we used to go and visit my other grandmother and my aunties and uncles and cousins quite regularly.

Were they happy times, or not?

I think so, visiting them, because as long as I could remember I wanted a brother or sister, which of course I didn't have at the time, so I was always very fond of my cousins.

Were these occasions when the families would relax and get together in a very informal way, or were they more formal?

I think you'd probably call it more formal in that we went and did the rounds. We went and visited one aunty and uncle and then went on to another aunty and uncle and then went to visit my grandmother. I don't think there was an occasion where you just dropped in.

You were saying before, I think, that your grandmother, who I think was the one who lived in the chip shop, you were very close to.

Yes.

Tell us about her, what sort of person she was.

She was very tiny, she was under five foot, and she was an incredibly strong-willed, strong-minded person. She'd had a very hard life and - I'm stuck there. She took me everywhere with her. We went shopping, to the pictures, in later years when bikinis became the fashion for girls she bought me my first bikini against the wishes of my mother. She bought me my first watch. And I think from going with my grandmother I learned not to take bad service across a counter, if anything was wrong with anything you took it back and told them.

Was she a - with all this closeness, all these excursions - was she a kind of warm, loving granny or a more distant, aloof but still caring granny?

Oh no, she was very loving, although in our family no one kissed or hugged anyone, which I found quite different from one of my closest friend's family. Whenever you left their house you always got a lovely hug and a kiss, but that didn't happen in our house.

I think you were saying one of the other things you remembered about your granny was rice puddings. Tell us about those.

Oh yes, I started school when I was three, at a school that would only be a few hundred metres away from us so I came home every lunchtime for my lunch. My grandmother put a little rice pudding in the oven which was attached to the open coal fire - we didn't have a gas or electric stove in those days - and I looked forward to that, especially the lovely brown skin on the top.

Yes, I can remember that about rice puddings. They're a bit of a thing of the past. Any other memories about this granny because she was, I realise, in your later life a very significant character - childhood memories? Just on to one other thing before we get the war and so on, Joan. Do you have any clear picture of the house you lived in from when you were a child? Can you describe, or remember, its colours, its smells, anything like that?

Oh yes. When we lived in the chip shop which is the first house that I remember. We'd moved there when I was only six months old. The smell was always of cooking, which was right through the house. The shop was in the front, fronting on to the main road, and we had a living room cum kitchen at the back, and upstairs were two large bedrooms and a tiny box room. We had a huge old leather three-piece. You know the kind with the big backs and the broad arms. A red carpet on the floor. My mum always seemed to choose a red carpet wherever we lived.

(10.00)I used to have .... We've always seemed to have a cat. We used to have a lovely ginger tomcat which I was forbidden to take to bed but I used to open the window and he'd jump up off the coalshed and come into bed with me.

That's rather a sweet memory, and it's no doubt a comforting thing for a little child. Moving on a bit, Joan, on to the war. I think you were saying that after

the declaration of war you do have some memory of barrage balloons and the cellar that was used for an air raid shelter. Could you tell us about those?

Yes. I remember the first barrage balloon being able to be seen over our town - a big silvery grey balloon with what looked like little tail wings. I don't know who told me about it but I remember running out into the street and a number of people were out pointing, looking at this strange thing.

I remember one raid in particular where, at that stage, I don't think there were any shelters built - and if they were we weren't using them. When we heard the sirens we rushed down into our cellar where my father had made a little comfortable spot under the stairs with stools and carpet. And I know we always had a flashlight handy, and we used to grab that, put our dressing gowns on and run down into the cellar. All was peaceful one night when my grandmother said, 'I can hear a bomb falling', and it turned out to be the cat that I'd got underneath my dressing gown purring like mad.

What was the general atmosphere in the cellar? Was it one of - for you - do you remember it was an exciting feeling, or a tense feeling?

Oh, I don't remember being frightened at all, no. My dad used to get my mum up and run into the bedroom and help my mum dress me and we all ran downstairs. I suppose I thought it was exciting, as a child. I certainly wasn't frightened.

Gas masks, lots of people didn't like them, I think you were included.

Yes, they smelt dreadful, they had this horrible stale rubber smell. But you had to learn how to put them on and you had to carry them with you always.

How strictly was that actually followed?

Well, it was just accepted that every time you walked out of the house you had to have this blasted thing over your shoulder. Took it to school, everywhere, when we went visiting.

But I mean it was something that really was strictly carried out.

Yes.

Do you have any other memories of the period just after the declaration of war, of how it affected your family's life?

No, not really.

Well, let's move on to CORB, Joan.

Yes.

I understand that in your case you think something came back from school, a form. What did your mother say to you?

I remember seeing a white piece of paper with some black writing on it - because I couldn't read then. And my mother read it out to me and pointed to the page and said, 'You can go to Australia, or America, or Canada. Where would you like to go?' And I said, 'Australia'. And I really don't know why except that I think I liked the name Australia.

> And you had, I'd imagine, as a little girl of your age, no idea at all of where the place was.

No, none at all.

> The period leading up to actually going, you were saying you don't remember a lot, as you can imagine a five-year old or six-year old would not, but your mother, I think, was buying clothes and so on.

Yes.

> Do you remember anything specifically about that, or just generally that there were clothes being bought?

I just remembered that she seemed to be running around buying a lot of new clothes for me.

> The secrecy aspect, I think you do remember something of.

Yes, I do. I was told I was *not* allowed to tell anyone at all, and I didn't.

> Was that difficult?

I don't know. I've always been able to keep a secret, maybe it stems from there.

> And how strictly was that secrecy thing put on to you in just ...? Were you really given the whole treatment on it, or not?

I was told that no one was to know, not even my aunties and uncles. And I know that even my mum's brother, my uncle, who lived quite close to us then, didn't know anything about it until I'd gone. They thought I was going to relatives in Preston to stay.

> The farewell, you were saying you don't remember much about the previous night or so on, but you do remember being on the station and the actual farewell. Tell us about that.

(15.00) Well, I remember the train. By today's standards, very old and rickety, I suppose, and I remember .... I know there were lots of other people there but I don't know who they were. My mother and my father and my grandmother were there and I can remember hanging out the window of the train asking my mum why was my grandma crying. I just couldn't understand why she was crying. And then that seemed to bring tears to their eyes, but I think I just thought it was a great adventure and really exciting.

> Yes, that's understandable, just given the age and all that, and I guess it was, too. Liverpool, I think, was a pretty brief memory, but the porridge.

Oh yes, the lumpy porridge (laughs). Yes, no one ever seems to be able to make proper porridge, do they, in schools and institutions. It's always lumpy. That's about the only thing I remember about Liverpool.

Moving on, to the ship, Joan, I think you do remember actually going down to your cabin.

Yes, I remember thinking it was really good because we'd got an outside cabin. A girl, I think, about thirteen or fourteen, was put in charge of me, even though my escort was Miss Osborne. And I asked if I could have the top bunk - there were only two bunks - which I did have.

Could you look out from the porthole, or was it normally shut?

Oh no, you could look out, yes. And every available opportunity, I know, we opened it. But they had to be closed, I think, about six o'clock every night. I think before we went to tea the portholes had to be closed.

Right. Because of the blackout of the ship.

I don't know. I thought it was so the water wouldn't get in (laughs).

Oh I see, right. There was an older girl in your cabin. Do you remember much of the other girls who shared your cabin, or not?

No, I know there were others. We were off the main corridor and there were at least two or three other smaller cabins besides ours. But I don't remember anything about the other children that were there at all, except the girl that looked after me.

Well, the girl who looked after you, amongst other things, I think did your washing in a rather slapdash manner. How accurate is that memory?

It's very accurate, because I can remember her throwing my clothes out of the porthole rather than wash them. I can remember I wanted her to wash a nightie of mine and she said, 'I'm not going to do that', opened the porthole and threw it out.

What did you do?

I didn't do anything at all. I think I must have just accepted it.

This is sort of normal, part of what older girls do, throwing clothes out portholes. Homesickness, was that a problem for you on the ship, or not?

No, not as far as I can remember.

And the escort that you had, do you remember her?

No, I don't, no. I remember her name.

What was it?

Miss Osborne.

> But you don't remember how .... You couldn't visualise her as a person, or think of things you did with her?

No, I don't remember seeing very much of her, at all.

> The Polish crew, I think you do have some memory of.

Yes, I don't remember them individually but I do remember this great feeling of kindness and warmth that came over from them. A story has always stayed in my mind that one of the crew who must have spoken reasonably good English told us, that he was the only one left of his family. He'd seen his mother and father and his brothers and sisters all shot in their garden and he was the only one that escaped.

> Do you remember that, as something that was passed on to you, or something that a crewman told you directly?

Oh no, it was a crewman that told us.

> Tell us about the red apple.

Oh that. It was something that one of - it was a lady - crew member gave me, and I don't know why she gave it to me but I do remember it being out of the ordinary. Maybe we weren't getting a lot of fruit on board, and I remember it as being something really special.

> Do you remember other little treats that were lavished on you by the crew, and perhaps particularly by the people in the - the stewards in the dining room?

(20.00) No, I don't, no.

> Crossing the line, I think something you remember.

Oh yes, being hosed down and ...

> Could you go back to the beginning, how did it all start?

Well, we all had to put our swimsuits on and go up on deck and I can remember being very excited because we didn't know what was going to happen. And then King Neptune appeared and a couple of his helpers. I remember a lot of blood being splashed around. I don't know what that would have been, something that they got out of the galley, I suppose. And then I think we all had to go through a barrel or a tunnel or something and be hosed down with this massive hose that almost swept us off our feet - but for a child it was really exciting.

> Sounds lovely. You can imagine the hot day and right on the equator and so on. Anything else there?

No, not just at - no.

Boat drills, do you remember them at all?

Yes, you had to put your life jacket on. In fact I seem to remember having a life jacket for quite a while. I don't know whether we had to ...

I think you had to carry them with you all the time.

All the time, yes. But you were always either sitting on them or putting your head on them. But I remember it was drilled and drilled into us how to put them on: over your head, tie the back ones first round the front, then the front ones round the back, tightly. And then whoever was in charge would come along and stick the fingers under the tape and pull them to make sure that you tied them as tightly as possible.

Nobody's told me that before, that's interesting. And the actual boat drills themselves, do you remember them clearly, or not?

No, I don't. Only that we had to rush up on deck and go to a certain spot and stand there, and be counted, I think. That's about it.

Rushing up on deck, I know you normally slept down below but you, I think, were saying that in very hot weather, once or twice, there was a dispensation.

Yes, we were allowed to drag our mattresses upstairs and sleep out on the open deck.

Did you remember that? Can you picture the scene?

Oh yes, yes. Lots of laughing and giggling, and it being really exciting because usually after a certain time - I don't know what time that would have been - you weren't allowed on deck.

Just going back a step, Joan, how hot do you remember the cabins being when you did get down into the tropics?

Oh, I think, very hot and steamy, and there's always that - well, for me anyway - that terrible smell of below decks of engines and stale food which really makes me feel queasy.

But you were never seasick?

Not that I could remember.

Well, let's go back to those nights, or the few nights that you had up on the deck, could you tell us anything more about them? Could you see the stars, or were you on a covered deck?

Oh no, we were on the open deck. Yes, well, now that you've asked me, I can remember lying there and looking out at the sea, even though - it must have been light or moonlight for me to have been able to have seen the sea. I'd never thought about that before.

There was excitement, I think you were saying, during the voyage. What the moments of the greatest excitement?

Apart from the crossing the line ceremony, which we did three times - although I don't think the ceremony was the same for the second or the third time. You'd already got your certificate and that was it. But I think pulling into port was very exciting. I remember Cape Town, and seeing Table Mountain. I think once you've seen that you'd never forget that sight. It's really marvellous seeing the mountain with the clouds just touching the top of it, just like a tablecloth. And then in Colombo ...

Yes, tell us about the Taj Mahal. I think that was a restaurant you went to?

Yes, the name fascinated me. And I thought for years afterwards I'd been to *the* Taj Mahal, but when I learned about what the real Taj Mahal was, I knew that we'd been to a restaurant called the Taj Mahal.

Do you remember the atmosphere in the Taj Mahal? Do you remember what you ate?

(25.00)No, I don't, but we sat out on a balcony which for a child - again coming from England - was quite exciting. Being able to eat and look over the balcony into the streets where they had horse-drawn carriages - like Blackpool.

Yes. I think you were saying you remembered the tropical vegetation.

Yes, when we were being taken through the Colombo streets all the buildings seemed to be light and white coloured, and the grass seemed incredibly green and the palm trees and all the other vegetation just seemed so bright and light.

Before coming on to talk about Australia, Joan, are there any other memories of the ship period that really stand out in your mind?

When we were at Cape Town - I think it was Cape Town - they put a big sports day. I don't know who it was - the governor, or whoever, put a big sports day on for us. We were in a big grassed arena doing all kinds of sports: running and jumping and what not. Gallons and gallons of orange drink and food, and we were all given a book which I still have.

Yes, you were saying that before. What about the period actually at sea on the ship, are there any other memories there that you've got or are significant?

No, I don't think there are.

Well, let's move on to Australia. I think you were saying that after you left Melbourne and the ship was approaching Sydney, for you it was excitement more than apprehension. Could you tell us about that?

Yes, I was excited because, I think, I was coming to something new. I certainly wasn't - well, I certainly don't remember being apprehensive. Maybe I was just too young to realise just what was going on. I daresay the older ones had a better grasp of what was going on at the time. But I just remember it being exciting in those last few days and not knowing what was going to happen.

Do you remember actually steaming up into Sydney Harbour?

No, I don't, no. I mean, how I could ever forget that, I don't know.

> There was I think, though, an interview after you did arrive in Sydney which you've since seen on newsreel film. Do you have any actual memory of the interview itself?

I don't think I remember exactly what they asked. I mean, I suppose they asked the usual things: what do you think of Australia, and how long are you going to stay. But I remember sitting there with a friend - we had our hats and coats on, and I had this doll over my arm - and a chap sitting in front of me with a huge microphone talking to me. That's about it - and the sun streaming down.

> I can imagine that. Do you remember anything more about where the interview was? Was it on the deck or down in a cabin?

Oh yes, it was on board, on a top deck, out in the open. And I think I was actually sitting on one of the wooden life rafts.

> And it was a lovely sunny day.

Oh yes.

> Well, we'll come back to the sun later. Because you were to go to, not to a family person, you went to the Quarantine Station - although I think we should put on record that I think an aunt of yours had wanted you to go there but .... Why had your parents decided not to send you to her?

I don't know why, except that my aunt had left England many years beforehand when she was then eighteen - against the family wishes. She was my grandmother's youngest step-sister, there were a lot of years between them. She'd asked my grandmother for five pounds to help her on her way and my grandmother had refused because she didn't want to get into bad books with the rest of the family - and my Aunty Elsie had never ever forgotten that. And she never ever forgave my grandmother for not giving her the five pounds, so maybe that had something to do with them not asking.

> Yes, it sounds quite likely. And I think you were also saying, Joan, that in reality, given her age and work, et cetera, that it quite possibly would not have worked well, your going there. Could you tell us what you know of her family situation?

Yes. She was then on her own. She was widowed, and she was having to work to support herself, and she had one ...

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

> Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Joan Jones, tape one, side two.

Yes, you were saying about this aunt's children.

Yes, she had one daughter who hadn't been married very long, perhaps a couple of years, I think, and had a young baby of her own.

Well, you went to the Quarantine Station - we might skate over that, except I think it was generally a kind of happy, carefree time. Was that ...?

Yes, it was, yes. I thought it was great living in this lovely big room with a verandah around, which I'd never seen before, and being able to go down to the beach. There was a little beach there.

This is a little beach within the harbour?

Yes, it is. It's on the Quarantine Station itself.

Did you do any particular things like, perhaps, ferry rides, or excursions, anything like that?

I don't remember that, no.

Well, let's move on. I know you don't remember Roy and Phyllis Lucas - these were to be your parents for the duration - you don't remember them actually coming to pick you up. But you did, I think, go home in a friend's car. Is that right?

Yes. They didn't have a car - all the way through the war - and their next door neighbours, with whom they were very friendly, used to run them everywhere. And they'd brought them to pick me up. When I was speaking to my aunty last night to tell her about this interview she said that I got out of the car, looked at the house, and said, 'I like this house very much and I'm going to stay here for the rest of my life'.

Tell us about their family situation in terms of children when you arrived.

They didn't have any children, and it was some time later when I found out that she'd recently had a miscarriage. She wasn't working. She stopped working when she got married and my uncle was working as a public servant with the Health Department. After I arrived, some time after I arrived, they had two children, a boy Peter, and a girl Pat.

When those children arrived, was there ever any question, do you think, that you were a bit less a part of the family, that you were in some way in the way?

Oh no, not at all. I was always made to feel part of the family.

Tell us about - and this is perhaps talking about the whole period with the family, Joan, not just the early period - what if you had to think of ways in which you were made to feel part of the family, what comes to mind most?

I think how much they gave me, probably not only in material things, but the amount of love and caring that they gave to me, which probably wasn't appreciated at the time, when the discipline was handed out, but of course it was in later years.

My uncle seemed to be a very handy person and he made me the most beautiful dolls' house. The best dolls' house that any little girl could ever wish for, complete with furniture. The front came off and had four beautiful rooms and a staircase. And he built things for his own children such as slippery dip - a beautiful slippery dip - and see-saw.

In his and his wife's treatment of the children, are you saying it was a totally equal thing, that you were just absolutely one of the family, or not?

Oh yes, well, I felt I was. I wouldn't have thought about that then, but looking back to how I was treated, there was absolutely no difference at all, and all their friends treated me exactly the same way.

Were you ever talked about as an evacuee, or always as 'Joan'?

Always as Joan. I don't know that the word evacuee was ever mentioned except maybe when I was introduced to someone new. I hadn't really thought about that.

Right, okay. I remember somebody else talking about how they were always talked of as 'the evacuee', as a bit of a put down.

Really. I'm sorry that happened to them, but it certainly never happened to me.

You were saying before that in your own family back in England, kisses and hugs weren't part of the normal daily life of the family. Was that different here, or not? Were they a more emotional ...?

(5.00) I don't know that my aunty and uncle were over demonstrative, but you always had a kiss when you left and you got a kiss goodnight. I think people can show their caring without actually putting their arms round you. You know that they're close to you.

Sure. Were there bedtime stories?

Oh yes, and I was a great reader. I was allowed to read most any books in the house, except the medical books that the chemist next door kept in his bookcase. I was forever having them taken off me - as 'little girls do not look at those books'. It had specific drawings in, you see, of the human body and I suppose they didn't want me to look at things like that.

Well, that would have been par for the course in those days.

Yes (laughs).

If you had to characterise the discipline of the family - parents towards the children - along a spectrum from relaxed to strict to severe, how would you remember it?

Oh, relaxed. Yes, very much so. I was smacked. In fact my aunty - I think it was probably when I got a bit older - took the feather duster to me. I can remember, I don't know why I was being chastised, I was probably being a pain in the backside. I can remember her smacking me with this feather duster and me jumping up and down on the bed saying, 'I'll tell my mother what you're doing to me', but of course I had no intention of doing that at all.

And I can remember wandering off to get the paper from the paper boy one Sunday and stopping to listen to the Salvation Army band. I think it must have been a good hour later when I wandered back home and my uncle took - I think it was the leather case that used to keep his loose collars in - and he took that to smack my legs with. And he didn't hurt but I thought I'd better cry anyway (laughs).

> Just to give him the satisfaction. The house that you lived in, I think, you said is it Hurstville?

Yes, Number One, Woniora Road, Hurstville.

> Right. Do you remember the house and how did it differ from the house that you'd grown up near Manchester?

Well, the house near Manchester didn't have any garden, none at all. I mean, we fronted straight onto the main road and it had just a small paved yard at the back. The house that I lived in here had been designed by my aunty and it had a large garden at the front, long driveway, a garage, large garden at the back where my uncle grew some wonderful vegetables, a big orange tree. It was in dark brick, I suppose you'd call it a double-fronted house now. Large front bedroom with half bricked-in porch at the front. The lounge room fronted onto the front garden and we had a large entrance hall.

> I was just going to ask, perhaps without getting into the precise details of the architecture, that was my fault, where was the life of the family centred around? What room, and could you describe that room? Did you all live in the kitchen or the living room, or where?

Oh, I spent many happy hours in the kitchen with my aunty because in later years she tried to teach me how to cook. She had one of those Early Kooka stoves on legs, one of these wonderful modern electric stoves, and there used to be two tall stools that we would sit at and discuss recipes. And the next door neighbour would come in and we'd have morning tea and I was always included in things like that. Meal times were very happy times in the dining room, and a lot of time was spent in the lounge room 'cause that's where the books and the piano was. I was sent to piano lessons. And I spent hours reading in that lounge room.

> Tell us about the piano lessons, and was the piano used for the family for family sing-songs?

(10.00) Yes, it was, yes. And as much as I enjoyed playing the piano I would only do thirty minutes a day, no more and no less. But if I played around instead of playing the piano and doing scales and work that I had to do, that time was taken off Children's Hour which I liked to listen to on the radio. But my aunty was a very good pianist and she would often come in and play and we'd sit around in the lounge room and sing.

And did her husband join in?

Yes.

What do you remember singing? What did you sing?

I don't know. I just remember happy times in the lounge room.

And Children's Hour, do you remember much about that?

Children's Hour, yes. If you wanted to you joined the happy band of Argonauts. I still have my certificate somewhere, filed away in one of my books.

And what do you remember of being an Argonaut?

Nothing at the moment.

Well, on from the Argonauts, I think to an Aboriginal book.

Yes, there was a serial called 'Takoni'[?]. I don't know whether that was the full title or not but that was his name. And it was the adventures of an Aboriginal boy. And you were forever being taken on - every day you were taken on a different adventure in the bush with this Aboriginal boy, which I thought was really good.

What was the appeal there? The difference - the interest of the Australian bush as against the English countryside, or the Aboriginal aspect, or what?

I think it was probably the bush and the animals and the plants, which I'd been encouraged to learn about by my aunty and uncle, especially my aunty.

Right, well, we might come back to them. The bush aspect I was going to ask you about afterwards, Joan. You were saying before that meals were a happy time. Could you tell us more about a family meal? How it was set out, perhaps? Was it relaxed? Formal? Lots of talking?

It was my job to set the table which I used to do while I listened to Children's Hour. I think maybe the trains were a bit more reliable in those days, so my uncle always came home at exactly the same time. I set the table, usually with a white cloth, a knife and fork, and a spoon and fork for sweet, a side plate and a knife. The side plate went on the left, the drinks, whether it was a water glass or a cup and saucer always went on the right. We all had our own serviettes and a serviette ring.

So each meal, even the weekday meal, was done with quite some decorum?

Oh yes, it was. Our evening meal was in the dining room but our breakfast was eaten in the kitchen - but the table was set out the same. I enjoyed evening meals when we were all sitting round the table because there was a great deal of chit-chat across the table with each other. And the more I've been speaking to you, the more I realise how much I was included in all their conversations.

So their meals were a real family meeting time.

Yes, they were, a happy time.

That was a very interesting description of laying table, we'll come back to that when we get to England perhaps at the end. I think you were saying you also remember the foods being very different to the foods you'd had in Britain. What would stand out in your mind?

Well, the different variety of fruits. I loved passionfruit because my uncle always had a passionfruit vine growing - and of course no one had even heard of passionfruit when I went back to Manchester. And of course there were rockmelons - they didn't know what they were. Mangoes - they didn't know what they were either: and fruit was rather scarce when I went back. People were still having to queue for a banana, and bananas were only available to under eighteens and pregnant ladies.

Of the period in Australia, if you had to think of one or two things that would really stand out in your mind as very special foods, what would they be?

Oh, rockmelon with passionfruit over the top of it, that was my favourite. That and my aunty's lemon meringue pie. She was a great cook - still is.

Christmas in Australia, I think you were saying you actually had a Christmas meal with somebody else. Why was that?

(15.00)I don't know why but it just came to be the norm that I spent Christmas with our next door neighbour, Mr and Mrs Cummings, with their family. Christmas morning was spent opening masses and masses of presents. And then for lunch I was dressed up, always in a new frock, hat, gloves, and a matching handkerchief, and a handbag. Off I went with Mr and Mrs Cummings to her mum's house in Strathfield where we had this typical English Christmas meal, complete with plum pudding, with silver threepenny bits in it.

So this was the real English thing in the heat of the summer. Did you go to church?

No, I didn't, not at Christmas, but my aunty sent me to a Methodist Sunday School. And I can remember when my aunty's children were born, they were both baptised at home, but I don't know why.

Right. Just going back to Christmas, Joan, is there anything else that you remember about Christmas?

Oh yes, the toys that I used to get. The last great toy that I had before I left here was a scooter with blown up tyres and two brakes. And I just loved that scooter, and I desperately wanted to take it back to England with me but I had to leave it here.

And that had been a Christmas present, had it?

Oh yes.

From the ....

From my aunty and uncle, yes.

Where was it? Was it under the tree or at the foot of the bed?

Oh, that was under .... All our presents were always put into a pillowcase which hung on the end of our bed and those that wouldn't fit into the pillowcase were piled at the bottom of the beds. So that when you woke up before you opened your eyes you stretched your feet down and you touched with your toes to see how many extra presents you had at the bottom of the bed.

During those Christmases in Australia, did your mind ever go back to England and to what would be going on there?

No, not at all.

So you were really living in the present there in Australia?

Yes.

Anything else about Christmas?

No, not that I can think of at the moment.

Just going on to some other things that we talked about before, Joan, one not so pleasant - head lice. When did you know you had them, and what was done about them?

I knew when I came back from the Quarantine Station with my aunty because the following morning I was put in the small tin bath in the laundry where kerosene was poured over my head. The help of the next door neighbour was enlisted and my head was scrubbed, soaked, scrubbed and combed and combed, and I don't know how many days that went on for.

I see, but for quite a number of days.

Yes, course there weren't the potions then, that there were now to get rid of them easily.

Right, and so was your hair shampooed after the kerosene bit, or not?

Oh yes.

It doesn't sound too pleasant but ....

I suppose I was fortunate in that I had very short blond hair and it was easy to look after.

Sure, I can think of worse things. Just some general things now. You were talking about swimming and you were talking about barbed wire at Cronulla, tell us about that.

Yes. Cronulla was my favourite beach. If we didn't go down with our friends in the car we would walk to Hurstville station, and go down on the train, and then walk down to the beach from there. The thing I liked about it was that you could - I've never liked sand - and you could sit on the grass, and then run over the sand and jump in the water. The waves were always marvellous, great for surfing. And I used to have a surf mat, where I would swim out beyond the waves, and just lie in the relatively calm water before they broke into rollers. And then when things sort of hotted up round Australia barbed wire was put all over the sand. I don't know what that was going to stop, but it certainly didn't stop the swimmers.

(20.00) And what, there were little passages you could get through to swim, were there?

Yes. Apparently whoever was going to land wouldn't be bright enough to work out how to get through the sand, but the locals knew.

> They wouldn't follow all the little children carrying their surfboards. You're out there on the waves, so different to Manchester, I mean it couldn't be more different. Could you picture the scene in your mind's eye now, out there on your little yellow floater?

Oh yes, because you lay there. You could hear the waves crashing on the beach. You could hear the chatter from the people on the sand. You knew that the chap watching for sharks was sitting on his tall seat. And yet, you were a million miles away because you were lying there in this lovely peaceful water, with not a thought of what might be swimming underneath.

> That's a lovely feeling, I know, that, of being off on a beach and you really are in your own world. Did you daydream? Did you have little fantasies out there?

I suppose I must have done because I know that I used to lie there for an awful long time. I just loved lying in the sea.

> You were talking about the sounds, were there any smells?

That sharp smell of the sea, yes. And the smell of this rubber - rubber seems to have followed me all my life. The surf mat was made of rubber and that had a most revolting smell.

> What about sunburn cream, was that a thing in those days, or not?

I think my aunty did used to rub something .... Something that we did use to rub on ourselves was citronella to keep the flies off. And if you've ever smelt that you don't want to smell that again either.

> Yes, sure. Well, those days at the beach, is there anything else that you recall that would really stand out in your mind about a day at the beach?

Only that was one of - apart from going to the museum - it was one of my favourite places to go.

> One other thing is, I would guess you couldn't swim in England, is that right, or not?

I suppose you could swim, if you wanted to swim in freezing cold water, yes.

So you'd learnt to swim in Australia?

Yes.

Who taught you?

I went to Carss Park and I went to special lessons after school - no, I think it was during school holidays - and that's where I learned to swim.

So this would have been organised by your foster parents?

Yes.

Let's talk about school just for a minute. Two aspects of school, Joan; the social aspect, mixing in with other children, and doing your studies at primary school. Was that by and large a good experience here, or not?

Yes. I can't remember the first days in kindergarten school, but I know - it must have been a happy one. I remember enjoying going and my first teacher who was called Miss Eggar[?]. And I remember moving up into primary school. I enjoyed that - even the lining up every morning showing your fingers and hands, and inspection of your shoes. My aunty even ...

Just explain that - your fingers and hands, what do you mean?

Yes. You had to stand in a line. I think we had to salute the flag and sing 'God Save the King', or was it 'Advance Australia Fair'? It'd be 'God Save the King' then, wouldn't it? And then it was inspection time and the headmistress would walk up and down the lines inspecting your life-line of soldiers. And you held out your hands to make sure you had clean hands and clean nails, and that your shoes were looked at to make sure that they were polished.

What happened if they weren't?

I don't know. Mine never were.

You were organised, or good.

I wasn't organised, but I was being organised by my aunty. Uniform wasn't compulsory there, but my aunty insisted I wear a navy blue, three box pleat, serge uniform with white blouse, proper school shoes and socks. In the summer a straw hat and in the winter a navy felt one. My biggest thrill is the last day of school before holidays, I was allowed to wear an ordinary frock to school - that was a treat.

Yes, I could imagine that. The other children at school, did they welcome you as, well, as somebody who was a bit different, or was that turned against you at all?

(25.00) No, I never ever felt uncomfortable at school here. I think I was a bit of a wonder for the first few weeks and then I think that gradually disappeared.

And the school side, the academic side, I think was fairly straight forward.

Yes, it was. I know before I left I'd passed - the nearest high school to Hurstville then apart from St George was at Sutherland - and I passed to go to Sutherland High apparently.

Just first of all, is there anything else of your school days in Australia that would stand out in your mind now as really significant?

I don't know whether you'd call this significant, or not. But I think our headmistress was very forward thinking and on a Friday afternoon we would make up our own radio broadcasts. She had a husband make up a microphone, which in those days was huge, weren't they, not like today. And we would work out, probably an hour or an hour and a half's radio broadcast of stories, songs, poems that we'd written, and I really enjoyed that.

That really sounds fun. Who would you broadcast them to?

No one. It was just for the class.

I see, a kind of mock broadcast.

Yes, make-believe, but for us it was real.

Some other aspects about life in Australia. You were saying you used to often go for walks locally around Arncliffe, but I think you also went up into the Blue Mountains. Perhaps thinking of the Blue Mountains, what do you remember of those days up in the mountains?

My aunty and uncle would rent a house, either in Leura or Katoomba, which I've always loved. I love the Blue Mountains. We would go for long walks. On those walks my aunty, in particular, would explain what every flower was, marks of animals. She knew the name of all the plants and all the waterfalls, so I was being educated but didn't realise it.

The smells, the sounds, the colours, if you like, of the Australian bush, how did they strike you?

I've always loved the Australian bush and I can't understand anyone not liking it.

It wasn't a bit threatening after the more ordered countryside of Britain?

No. The only time I ever found the bush threatening was when I went down to the National Park at Audley with our next door neighbours and some other neighbours. And this boy who was my own age, Ron Grey[?], had gone with his father in a rowboat, along the river. And I thought I'd walk through the bush and meet them. Well, to this day there is no path through this particular part of the bush, away from the picnic ground. And I walked off and I walked away from the river, realised I was walking away and went to turn down to the river. Somehow or other found myself enclosed with some small bushes about my head height at the time - I'd be probably about eleven then - which were full of spiders and spiders' webs. I

screamed and screamed and I don't know how I got out of there. Ron and his father came back and Ron jumped out of the boat and came up, grabbed me by the hand and ran back down to the river and to the boat. That's the only bit of the Australian bush that I didn't like.

I see. I thought you were going to come on and say that you'd got yourself lost.

No.

But it was these spiders. Yes, I can imagine that.

No, my aunty always instilled it into me that you don't wander off in the bush, otherwise you get lost.

Perhaps going back to the Blue Mountains. The creatures of the Australian bush, the beautiful ones, but also some of the ones that are, well, beautiful but perhaps dangerous - snakes, et cetera. Do you remember much of that? Did you see many animals?

No, I don't think we did. Talking about animals reminds me of ...
END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

Identification: this is Ed Stokes with Joan Jones, evacueé, tape two, side one.

Joan, you were saying about the Blue Mountains and the Japanese submarines.

My aunty and uncle, and our neighbours, took a house up in Leura for a month because they were frightened the Japanese were going to invade Sydney. The Japanese, had got through the nets that were put across the harbour in Sydney, in midget submarines. So we went up to the mountains out of the way.

We're just beginning again because there was some outside noise coming in. Could you perhaps just begin that story again?

My aunty and uncle, and our next door neighbours, took a house for a month up in Leura, because they were worried about the Japanese coming in to Sydney. They did eventually get through the nets that were put across the harbour, in midget submarines.

Had they let the house before the submarine attack into the harbour, or afterwards?

I'm not sure about that. I do know that we were up the mountains when we heard about the attack on Sydney with the midget submarines.

You were just telling me the story about your aunty's uncle, I think.

Yes, he had been Chiang Kai-shek's right-hand man, an adviser, when war broke out. He had been put into a prisoner of war camp. The Japanese were looking for him all through the war. They did actually come across him in a camp but didn't realise he was the person they were

looking for, as they thought he was much younger. And when he was released at the end of the war by the Americans they took him back to America, where he died shortly afterwards. So he was never seen by the family again.

> That's sad. Was there much talk about him during the war, around meal tables? Was there much talk about the war generally?

Yes, but the war not in England, but the war here in the Pacific. I think that's what concerned us more than anything. And of course the whole family was very concerned about him and what had happened to him.

> But as a child, how conscious do you think you were of the different events in the Pacific war? Did you listen keenly, for instance, to the wireless, or look at newsreels, or not?

I know news time was always a big thing in our house, where everyone stopped talking and listened to the news, but I don't remember a great deal of what happened with war events.

> Just going back to some more general things perhaps, about life in Australia. Do you remember any other things that stand out in your mind that you would remember as really being - of evoking the kind of life you lived in Australia? Things that really were different to England.

Well, the sunshine would be one, wouldn't it? And I think even though I probably led a very structured life here and my aunty and uncle were, I thought then, quite severe in their discipline in that I had to be in the house at five o'clock. I was not allowed to play outside after five o'clock like some of my friends were allowed to do. I think life here was much more relaxed. We had different food. We had the sun, the sand, the beaches, the bush to go to. I mean, I know that there are beaches in England and that there are forests but I don't know that we ever went to them.

> Yes, I guess living in Manchester you're not hardly in the best part of England for that sort of thing.

No, it's a highly industrialised city.

> Yes, one other thing I was going to ask you about, Joan, bathing and so on in the house. Did you have hot water in this Australian house, or not?

(5.00) Yes, we had a bathroom that had a bath and a shower, and a wash basin, all beautifully tiled. The toilet was a pan toilet which I'd never seen before in my life. That was a great ritual when the pan man came every Friday to empty the pan, everyone shut the windows and the doors and stayed inside. The sewerage was held up because of the war, you see. They dug the trenches and put the pipes in but it was never connected up until after the war.

> I see, whereas in England you'd had an inside, properly connected up toilet.

Oh no, the toilet was outside at the bottom of the yard. The only time we had an inside toilet was when we moved into a new council house.

Did you shower or bath in Australia more often than you would have in Britain?

That's a leading question for a Pom, isn't it (laughs)?

It probably was a bit of a leading question but you're free to answer it or not.

Yes, of course we did. Here it was bath or shower every night - every morning or evening. During the war, water was limited here and I thought that was wonderful. We were allowed to put, I think, six inches of water in the bath, and as a child I thought that was great that I didn't have to use too much water. But in England when I went back with no running hot water, certainly no bathroom, it was the old tin bath carried in and kettle after kettle, after hot water poured in the bath and .... It was nice getting bathed in front of the fire on a cold winter's night.

Turning to a different aspect, Joan, the CORB organisation in Australia. Do you remember any officials ever visiting the Lucas' house to check on your welfare, and if they did, did they speak to you directly?

No, I don't remember anyone at all, although my aunty tells me that someone called fairly regularly for about two years after I arrived. They checked both at my aunty's house and at the school.

Just finally about the life in Australia, is there anything else that really springs to mind, either a sort of general pattern of things you did, or any specific incident that really stands out in your mind?

I think, looking back, I realise how fortunate that I was to come to the family that I did, and for that family to have such great friends who treated me as part of their family as well.

That's interesting. So you were kind of shared around and treated equally all over. The family back in England, how much were they in your thoughts? All the time, or just now and then? And how did that change during the war?

I think they were probably in my mind just now and then. About six months after I arrived we did a radio telephone link. I had lost - hard to think now - my Lancashire accent I was told in about six weeks, and I found my mother and especially my father's accent extremely difficult to understand. My mother wrote to me, but I think the memories faded as the years went by and I thought of them very little.

When you came to write letters back, was that done with a kind of sense of joy and of wanting to be in touch, or was it something of a chore, or an obligation?

It was definitely a chore. I can remember my aunty standing behind me and, you know, 'finish that letter or else'. I enjoy writing letters but - I think a lot of us are like that - it's that sitting down to start the letter, isn't it, that is the difficult part.

Sure. Did you think at all of the war in Britain, or did you know much about the damage that had been wreaked on Britain, and did that worry you in terms

of your family's safety, or that perhaps you'd run away? I'm not suggesting you had, but as a child did you perhaps see it that way?

No, I didn't. I don't know that I was terribly aware at any time of what was going on in England, although I do remember thinking that perhaps my parents were dead and that that had been caused through the war. But I don't really know why I would think they were dead, and I didn't know who was then writing to me.

(10.00) Yes, I meant to ask you about that, I'd forgotten you'd said that before. Is there any link there that you can get onto as to how you'd first got that thought?

No, and I think it was about two or three years after I'd arrived here that I began to doubt whether the letters I were getting were actually from my mum, or not, and I don't know why I would think like that. Certainly nobody here would even think of planting that idea in my head, so where that came from, just a childish thought, I suppose.

I wonder if it was perhaps that you had found this very happy family and in some strange way you perhaps knew that if your parents were dead then here you could stay forever, if they were alive you would eventually go back?

Yes, I suppose that's one way of looking at it.

Just a theory. Could you communicate that thought about your parents perhaps being dead to your aunt? Did you ever talk about it?

No, I didn't, no.

Well, let's move on, Joan, the war ended, what was your initial reaction when you knew the war was over?

I think at first I thought, 'Oh great, I'm going back home now', but when I realised just what that entailed, leaving the family here, I didn't want to go home.

I think you were saying things were better when you had a fixed date of departure, but things rather got put off and .... Tell us about that.

Yes. Shortly after the war ended my aunty was contacted and told to get me ready, pack up, that I'd be leaving on a certain date which I think was two to three weeks down the line. So my aunty told me and apparently that had a very unsettling effect on me, so much so that I was very disruptive at school and I was put on the back seat in the classroom so that I wouldn't disturb the rest of the class. And then this happened again, and it was cancelled, and apparently my behaviour didn't improve.

Do you think you could say at this stage, or it might be impossible, that that was because you simply could see yourself wasting time in school, or that in some way you resented this move in your life and you were taking that resentment out on your schoolmates?

It was probably a combination. I probably felt that why bother with school life when I wasn't going to be there, and the realisation that I really didn't want to go home. Home was England, as it always is for a Pom, but my real home was here.

> Well, let's move on to actually leaving. I don't think you have any clear memory of the night before you left, but you do of the actual departure on the ship. How does that stand out in your mind?

Again another brilliantly sunny day. And our friends took us down in the car, we got lost somewhere around the Rocks looking for Pyrmont. We left from a wharf at Pyrmont on the *Stratheden*. I can remember when I saw the ship being quite excited but not wanting to get on it, and not wanting to say goodbye to everybody. My last memories are crying and hanging over the rail, waving goodbye.

> Joan, I know this is not the easiest part of this story for you, but you were saying about your aunt, that she had had other plans if you had stayed in Australia.

Yes. Well, my aunty always said with the dramatics that I carried on at home, the stories I used to tell to get out of scrapes, that I should be on the stage. And she told me recently that had I stayed she'd have sent me to a drama school - which I would have loved.

> And you were also saying that there was some confusion about the possibility of your parents coming out here themselves. Can you tell us about that?

Yes. My mother said that while she was waiting for me to come home on the train in Manchester she learned from other children's parents, while they were talking, that she could have let me stay here and gone on paying towards my upkeep, as she had been doing all the time - and there was a migration scheme that they could have come out and joined me.

(15.00) Just going back to Sydney to that difficult day. The final goodbyes with your aunty and uncle, can you recall the scene, or not?

Oh yes, I can remember hanging round her neck crying, and not wanting to get on that blasted ship, and her children, Peter and Pat, standing there waving. I know now that they didn't realise what was going on and I learned later that Peter was desperately asking, 'But why does Joan have to go?'.

> Yes, that's interesting, because of course they were born during the war so I suppose you had, unlike in some families where there'd been a child before the war, you'd always been there for them.

Yes, I really loved Peter and Pat. They were lovely kids anyway, and we were all spent a lot of time together. My aunty was one, as I've said, for involving me so I was allowed even to bath them when they were little. So we just spent a lot of time together.

> Tell us about that actually, perhaps a theme that I should have picked up on before - the births of those little children, the boy and the girl - how some mothers in those times push children away, others draw the older children in. How was it with your aunty?

I can remember I didn't know too much about her .... I didn't know anything about her pregnancy with the first one. Things weren't talked about like they are, you know, in those days. But I was taken to - she went to a private hospital in Hurstville and I was taken to visit. And then when she came home I was allowed to hold the baby and just take part in a normal family life. I always felt part of the family.

> That must have been special, especially for a girl of eight or nine. That would be, I'd imagine, an age where you could have the responsibility of that kind of caring for a little baby.

Maybe that's why I was never really interested in dolls, because I always had two live dolls to look after.

> Did you see those children as your brother and sister, or did you know they really weren't?

I suppose I always looked on them as a brother and sister, yes. I'd never thought about it until you asked me.

> And I think you're quite close to them today still.

Yes. We don't see Peter and Pat. Peter's in Canberra, as I've said before, and Pat's in Sydney. But I see my aunty, of course.

> Just going back finally to the farewell, had there been any little mementoes, any presents, and was there ever any talk of the possibility of your coming back to Australia?

No, I don't think there was ever any talk about me coming back at all. I don't remember anything like that. And I know I was given presents but I know I had one pinched on board ship. In fact one was given to me by someone who had been on the *City of Benares* who came to live in Australia, but it was a little toilet set that someone pinched off me going back.

> Well, let's move on to the period back in England. I think we might skate over the actual journey back by sea, unless there was anything that stands out in your mind that relates to leaving Australia and getting to Britain.

No, the only thing that really stands out is going through the Suez Canal, which I thought was marvellous, and being absolutely forbidden to go to one side of the ship where the local natives were diving naked into the water. We just weren't allowed to go and look at that, but of course we found a way to get round that (laughs).

> Oh dear, things people get hung up about. Arriving in Britain, Joan, how do you remember Southampton, where I think you berthed?

Yes, we came up Southampton Waters and I remember thinking what a terrible, dull, grey and dirty looking port or city it was. But of course that was nothing to the dirt and the greyness that I saw when I got to Manchester.

Well, let's go on to Manchester. You went, of course, up by train and then approaching Manchester .... At that time do you think you could picture in your mind your parents and what they looked like?

(20.00)I thought I'd remember them. I don't think I had any doubts that I .... I may have had a fleeting doubt that I may not know them. But I can remember walking down the - it was night-time when we arrived - and I can remember walking down the platform and there was a crowd of adults at the other end, and I knew which were my parents. I think it was probably a great relief to see them there.

Yes, I'm sure. Joan, you were saying your parents were standing under a light.

Yes, it must have been one of these massive lights that hang down from these huge ceilings that .... Well, it was then London Road Station.

That first meeting, I think you went straight home, how do you remember that?

Yes, we went into a taxi which I learned later was a great treat in those days, and as we got out of the taxi my mum said, 'Look up, Joan, look up'. And I looked up and what she wanted me to see was a Union Jack and different flags - bunting, I suppose you'd call it - and a huge sign that said, 'Welcome Home, Joan', but what I saw was this row of very dark, miserable looking terrace houses.

That must have been very difficult, being aware of what she wanted you to see and being unable to see it.

Yes, it was, because I just felt it all looked so dreadful.

You were going on before, I think, and saying the next morning you opened the windows. Tell us about that.

As you know, we arrived at night and it was quite dark. The following morning I woke up, got out of bed and pulled the curtains open. And all I could see was this, again, the row - the back of terraced houses, no gardens, and only an odd bush here and there, and in the next street a huge building which was - I found out later - was a big mill, spinning mill. And everything looked so grey and miserable and I wondered what on earth I was doing there.

The first meal, I think, came as something of a shock, too. How do you remember that family meal?

I was asked to sit down at the table and there was no bathroom for me to wash my hands. I had to go into the scullery and wash my hands in the scullery sink. And I sat down and I had a small plate with a slice of boiled ham, which again was a treat, but I didn't realise that at the time, and I looked to the left and there was no bread and butter plate or knife. I had no napkin, and in the middle of the table was I think a bowl of tomatoes and a huge plate of buttered bread, sliced and buttered, and cut up in halves - and I'd never seen that before. And that was the meal.

That's interesting. Was the striking thing, do you think, the kinds of food on the table or that you had become used to, if you like, the middle class decorum of the family in Sydney?

Well everything was just so different. I mean I had never sat down to a meal of just a piece of meat and some tomatoes and someone already buttering my bread before.

What about the conversation around the dinner table? What was that like?

I think that particular night that they just asked me about the journey - but all I remember was this dreadful table setting and the food.

The next few days, Joan, how did they go? Did things ease up? Did things become familiar again, or not?

No, I don't think anything really became familiar. It was a case of getting used to everything again: the cold, because I'd arrived back in winter. I can remember going out when it snowed and my fingers and my toes tingling and I'd come home and my father would get a kettle of hot water off the fire and pour it into a bowl and put my hands in and rub them warm again.

That sounds rather a loving thing to do.

(25.00) Yes, you see, he was quite thoughtful in little ways like that. But if you were the one that filled the kettle and took it back and you'd put too much water in and when it boiled it boiled over into the fire then you were in trouble.

The arguing that had been going on before you left, was that still going on, or not?

Yes, always about things that happened about twenty or thirty years previously. And I can remember once in the middle of a very heated argument saying, 'Look, you are arguing about something that happened ten years ago'. I was told to shut up, it was none of my business and what would I know anyway. But I just couldn't see the point in arguing about things that happened so long ago.

Yes, it's obviously futile. I guess maybe they're arguing about other things in reality though, were they?

I don't know, I really don't know.

You were talking about the cold, tell us about the fuel heating of the house and your collecting coal.

We were allowed so much coal, I don't know how much coal, a week, I think it was. And to supplement that, because you had to have a fire going day and night to keep you warm. At night you would let the fire die down and then back it up with tiny, tiny pieces of coal and shovel fulls of slag. I mean it's that that produced all this terrible smog in England years ago. And to help out, my grandmother and I used to take an old stroller and some bags and go to where the trucks from the coal mine tipped the slag, and we'd pick out pieces of coal. I quite enjoyed doing that with my grandmother and probably, as a child, getting filthy dirty. But it's

not something that my mother would take part in. She said that she'd sit in the cold first before she would go and pick coal off the picking rucks, as they were called.

The 'picking rucks'?

Yes.

Would there normally be quite a few people there, or just a couple of solitary pickers?

Oh no, there'd be anything up to a dozen people at a time. And the really smart ones made it a full-time occupation and sold the coal, which they weren't supposed to do, but they did.

That's an interesting memory. You were telling us another memory about buses and - related to coal - cleanliness, sitting down on buses.

Yes, the mines in those days didn't have any washing facilities and a miner would get on the bus in his dirty clothes. Before you sat down on the bus, of course, you always looked at the seat to make sure that a miner hadn't sat there before you. Because you knew when the mine shifts ended and we only had three buses, three different buses that went along our main road. So you knew when to expect a miner to get on board.

That's most interesting. Just going back to the family, Joan, after a period of a couple of months, say, when some things must have evened out a little at least. Did you again feel really part of the family, or did you in some way feel you were an outsider with the family?

I probably felt like an outsider because I don't ever remember feeling as though I fitted in. I just felt so different from everybody else around me.

And the stories of Australia, of your travels and the things you'd seen, could your family relate easily to that, or not?

I don't think so. I know not, because they hadn't travelled then. They travelled later on in life, around Europe, but then they had never left England. And I imagine at that time they couldn't see themselves doing any reasonable travel at all.

So were they, I mean, when you told your stories, or wanted to tell your stories, were people open or did the shutters go down a bit?

I don't know that I ever really made the effort to tell anyone anything.

What about talking to other people - children at school? Were you welcomed back, or were you made to feel that you'd left?

A number of children said, 'Oh well, you weren't here, were you, during the war?'. And in a particular incident I'd gone to join the Guides and I don't know how the conversation started but one of the kids turned round to me and said, 'What would you know, you weren't here in the war anyway, were you?'. And I got really annoyed at that so I just walked out and never went back.

So it cut fairly deep. But did that sort of taunting ... That was an isolated episode, was it?

There were an odd one or two snide remarks at school but it didn't last for long.

What do you remember of rationing and food? And how did it differ from Australia?

You had to have a coupon for everything. It didn't matter what you wanted to buy, you had to have a coupon for it. And things like fruit that I'd taken for granted here ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

Identification: this is Ed Stokes, Joan Jones, tape two, side two.

You were saying about bananas.

Yes, we'd always had bananas here, but in England they were almost non-existent. And if the fruit shop had bananas the word got around like wildfire and you picked up your ration book and off you went. You could only get a banana if you had a green ration book, that meant you were under eighteen, or you were pregnant.

That's interesting. So they were discriminating in favour of young and pregnant people.

Yes.

Just turning on to some other things. Just two final things perhaps about your parents, Joan. Did you ever manage to talk to them about the heartbreak that they no doubt experienced having you go away?

No, I don't think that was ever discussed at all.

And did they realise how much Australia had got into your heart?

I think so. I think my mum understood although it was never vocalised.

The other thing I wanted to ask, Joan, is, did your parents take much interest in the Lucases, or was there perhaps some resentment that they'd had you for all that time?

I think there was a little bit of resentment, and I think that's possibly understandable. Things like when my foot grew to a horrific size, it was the size eight and a half by the time I was about thirteen or fourteen, my mum had said, 'That's because you ran around without any shoes on out there', which really wasn't the truth. But obviously she'd seen some photographs of me without my shoes on. And looking back, something like that made me realise that my mum was probably quite jealous of the wonderful time I'd had out here.

Did your parents ever exchange letters with the Lucases during, or after, the war?

Yes, they wrote for quite some time afterwards, and I did.

Going on a little bit, Joan, I do know that you met your husband, Roy, who's here now in May '46, soon after you arrived, and you married in 1950, I think aged sixteen.

Yes.

And having a baby - and that in the early '50s. I think your husband went independently to Africa and then back again, and then I think you had another child.

Yes.

So by the late 1950s you'd had two children. During all that period did Australia ever go out of your mind, or not?

Oh no, never. I always hoped that some day I would come back here.

And what were the images of Australia? What were the things that were drawing you back?

Well, I'd have to say the sunshine, wouldn't I, first. But I think I'd had such a happy time here. Who wouldn't want to come back to a place like Australia?

Just some specific details on this. You were saying, I think - and this in the period of the late '50s, early '60s - that you used to often make visits to Australia House in Manchester. Tell us about those days.

I used to go there and sit and watch other lucky people, as I considered them then, going for interviews. I'd watch them come in the doors and go up to the counter and then disappear through a door for their interview. And I'd sit there and I'd go through the *Women's Weekly* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and I'd look for jobs, hopefully, for Roy. I'd look through the English papers for jobs, and I'd sit there thinking, 'If only it were me that was going for the interview', and 'If only we were emigrating'.

I understand you did put quite some pressure on the family, and I guess in particular your husband, to come back.

Roy says he had twenty years of nagging, yes.

And there was this episode with the library books.

Yes. We had our allotted six library books from the library. Roy went to pick one up to read one day - he knew I'd just come back from the library with them - and every book he picked up was either by Jon Cleary or Kylie Tennant or was about Australian history or geography or

paintings. And he got quite irate and grabbed hold of me and said, 'Isn't there any other bloody book on - besides Australia in this house?', and he grabbed hold of me and he said, 'If you even mention Australia again I'll hit you'. And it was at that stage that I felt that I would never ever get back to Australia again.

(5.00) Just to sidetrack here, you were saying that Christmases in England were a particularly difficult time, I think.

Yes, I think it was shortly after Christmas - Christmas that was so different in England from the ones I'd experienced in Australia - maybe that used to bring it home to me just how much I wanted to come back to Australia. And I would get this terrible urge and that would be when I would wander back to Australia House and sit there again - knowing that all these people were tripping off to the sunshine and I was stuck in the cold.

Your granny had been a great figure in your childhood, when you came back from Australia were you close with her again, or not?

Yes. In fact seeing her on the doorstep as I got out of the taxi was an exciting and happy time for me.

More than seeing your parents?

I think so, yes.

And you went collecting coal with her, you told us about that. Did you do other things with her in the years ahead?

Yes. She just took me everywhere. We went to the pictures. We went shopping. We'd disappear for hours.

And was she still part of your life when you married and had children?

Yes. I was always .... I may not see my Gran for weeks but we were always very close.

Well, I asked you that because there was this strange connection. Your decision to migrate was - at least in time - it happened after her death, I think. Could you tell us about that?

Yes. My gran had gradual failing health and for the last three years, just before we came here, had been in what they call an old folks' home, a geriatric hospital, in England. And she'd got to the stage where she barely knew us. We had arranged an interview in Australia House in Manchester - at last. And the funny thing was that this interview turned out to be on the very day of my grandma's funeral. And as we came back from Manchester to go to the funeral I realised that I could now leave England quite happily, as I didn't have to say goodbye to her.

If she had not died, if she'd been, well, healthier, would you have still gone to Australia then, or not?

I think so. I think the pull to come back here was just so strong.

But her having departed made it easier.

Yes, it did, a lot easier.

And was that a bigger obstacle than saying goodbye to your parents?

Yes, it was.

Is there anything else you remember about that weekend, or that period of the funeral and also the decision to come here? How did you feel after it?

I felt it was a relief that I didn't have to explain to her that I was leaving. It was difficult enough telling my mum and Roy's mum that we were leaving. I'm stuck now.

Once all the papers had gone through, the arrangements and what were made, goodbyes said, you were on your way, how did you feel?

Saying goodbye was a lot harder than I thought. We'd had a get-together with Roy's family and with my mum at the local British Legion. When we'd walked in my mother looked at one of my sister-in-laws, who she didn't particularly like, and said, 'I'm not going to sit with them'. So here were Roy and I torn between who we were going to sit with - his family or my family. So I ran away. I couldn't face a big scene so I ran away and stayed with a friend for the night. The following day I went back to my mum's - we were staying at my mother's overnight 'cause we'd had to move out having sold all our furniture. And so she made what was already a very difficult night - saying goodbye to everyone - even more difficult. But we got to the station, said goodbye to everyone - aunts, uncles - and I can remember .... I mean we were all crying, but I can remember when we finally sat down that it was some kind of relief that at last I was on my way back.

(10.00) Back to Australia. Do you think people who have not migrated, who've always lived in one place, do you think they understand the difficulties perhaps both of travelling and of saying goodbye?

I'm quite sure they don't. Whether you have a house to sell or not you have to get your choices, whether to pack up, get rid of your furniture, sell it. People know that you're emigrating, they don't want to pay you what the items are worth. The actual strain of packing up is terrible. And then saying goodbye is harder than you ever imagine, because you leave thinking that you'll never see them again. And I've spoken to other migrants and they seem to think the same thing.

Do you really believe you would never see those people again?

We thought that it would be so hard to get a house - because we imagined that we would have to buy a house here which we'd never been able to do in England. We thought that it would take us so long to save and buy a house that we would never have the money to spare to go back - certainly not in twenty years we were visioning.

So it was a long, long time and the people might be gone. Has Australia matched your hopes, Joan?

Yes, it has. The only disappointing thing I found was that this great national pride had disappeared in the time that I'd been away. But then it was slipping in England, too, where nobody stood when they played 'God Save the Queen' after the pictures or at a show.

That's an interesting point, that the Australia you came back to was not the Australia you left, perhaps.

No, it wasn't, and I had people saying to me, 'Ah well, you knew what to expect'. But the Australia of my childhood was not the Australia that I came back to as a migrant.

What were the key differences?

Well, the differences were that English people weren't quite as popular as they had been when I came as a child. I don't know why, maybe there were too many 'whingeing Poms' as migrants.

So you got a bit of that, did you?

Yes. We had things like, 'Well, you only came out here for ten quid', and 'We've paid your fare', and lots of little digs about being a migrant from England.

Could you explain to people the heartache of all those years of wanting to come out here?

No, and I didn't even try for a couple of years. I knew that this was the place that I wanted to live, and even though what they said annoyed me, I was not going to get into great arguments about why I was here. But after I'd been here a couple of years I did start speaking up and telling them to shut up and ...

What did you say?

I'd say things like, 'You had no choice, you were born here' - if they were Australian - 'and I chose to come here'. And to one person I said, 'It's people like you that make me wish that Captain Cook had turned right instead of left when he got to the end of the map and never found Australia'.

You yourself now today, Joan, do you see yourself as an Australian, or as an Englishwoman who happens to live in Australia?

I'm not an Englishwoman who *happens* to live in Australia. I'm an Englishwoman who *does* live in Australia and who chose to live here, but I'm quite sure I'm more Australian than British, even though I must confess to still having a British passport.

Are your roots in Australia, or are your roots in Britain?

All my roots are here, certainly not in England. I like to go back for a visit but I could never ever see myself settling down there again.

Just perhaps some final things, going back a bit if you like, going back to CORB. I wanted to talk about coming back here because it's somehow part of

a whole story, but going back now to CORB. Did CORB change you and if it did, was it in a positive or in a negative way?

Oh, it would have to be in a positive way.

Could you say why?

(15.00)I learned what a happy family life was. I lived with some marvellous people. I had a wonderful time. And if you had a choice of whether you would take that experience or not, of course you'd choose that, even if it was for only four or five short years.

Well, I was actually just going to ask you, if you'd have known how the long the war would last, not the one year people expected, but five years or so, would you still have gone?

I didn't have any choice to come here initially. But if I'd known what it was going to be like I'd have probably been first on the boat.

This is a very difficult question but I do want to ask it. As a parent, and you've been one, if your children were as young as you were and you were placed in a similar situation, what do you think you would have done, say, when your boy was seven years old?

I don't think I would have done the same as my parents did because I don't think they fully understood how dangerous the trip might have been. Perhaps if everyone had understood that, maybe no children would have left England at all. But again, I think as a parent I would want to give my child the very best chance possible.

I see, you're saying if you felt the journey itself was not dangerous but staying in your home country was, you would send the child away?

Yes, I would.

Do you think the CORB experience affected at all the way you yourself were a mother?

I don't know that it affected how I was a mother because I feel that I got into motherhood far too young and neither Roy nor myself were really ready for parenthood. So I can't really say whether it affected me, or not.

Sure, I understand that. Just finally, was the CORB experience generally something you could talk about easily with people you were close to, for example, your husband?

I don't know that I've ever sat down and really talked about what happened, to anyone for any length of time. I think that after going back and finding that people weren't terribly interested after the first few weeks, I think I just buried those memories and just kept them to myself.

Of course all those memories have rather come out recently in both Sydney and Brisbane with the reunions and so on. How have those reunions affected you?

When I was getting ready to go to the Sydney reunion - I was just so apprehensive. I didn't know what was going to happen and, unusual for me, I had this terrible apprehension. And at one stage I was going to say to Roy, 'I'm going to be sick and we're not going'. The very thought, of meeting a number of people who had gone through the same experience that I had, so many years ago, I found overwhelming. I wanted to meet them, but I wasn't sure what we were going to be able to talk about.

Could you talk, and was it worthwhile?

Oh yes, it was, yes.

Why?

It made me realise that other children didn't have such a marvellous time and that upset me because I'd enjoyed myself so much. And here, I was talking to someone who had a really miserable time here - I was sorry for them.

So it created a balance.

Yes.

It's been a very good session, Joan, and thank you very much. Is there anything that you would like to put on the tape that you feel's not on it at the moment?

Probably the only thing I would like to add is that I feel that I was probably the luckiest child out of the 477 that got off the *Batory*.

Well, you certainly did have a good time. Joan, on behalf of the War Memorial for making this tape, thank you.

And thank you for asking me.

END OF INTERVIEW