

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

‘Millers Point Oral History Project’

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: **Kath Burgess**
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INTERVIEWER: Siobhán McHUGH
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00:02 START OF TAPE MP-SM7 SIDE A

00:03 Tape identification

So Kath, maybe we could start at the beginning with when your family first came to Millers Point.

00:29 Well we how we came to Millers Point was my uncle was a coal lumper and he got

a place down there in Lower Fort Street. Then my mother and grandmother, who was blind, they came and lived with him. After that my mother bought into a residential in Lower Fort Street, that is the beginnings of my life.

Was it hard for her to find the money to buy into the residential?

01:05 Well, she worked for the Maritime Services Board as a cleaner and she was a good saver, my mother, so she was able to. It wouldn't have been very much, I don't suppose in those days to buy into a residential.

You talk about a residential for people who aren't from the Point - can you explain what a residential meant?

01:28 It was just a big house and they had a landlady and she let rooms out to people, or little flatettes. She didn't have to cook or service, she serviced the single rooms but not the double rooms. That was how it was, shared bathrooms, shared washing facilities.

That's where you grew up?

That is where I grew up, for twenty-six years I lived there.

So tell me a little bit about your family background, I believe they were Irish.

02:03 Yes, my father was the only one of his family not born in Ireland, all his brothers and sisters were, he was born here and my mother was Australian and her mother was Australian.

Your father, what kind of work did he do?

He worked in a brewery, more or less labouring work in a brewery.

That as in Resch's I think, where was Resch's at the time?

02:31 I think it is where that development is going up there in South Dowling Street, I think that is Resch's Brewery.

Can you take me back then and describe what the Point was like when you were a child, your memories in the 1940s?

02:49 The Point was a lovely place, it was a safe place, I think like everywhere in those days was. You knew your neighbours, you knew everybody and it was just a wonderful community.

What did you do in terms of playing?

03:09 Well I think just the normal things. We used to have our hopscotch out the front drawn up and we were allowed out to nine o'clock at night and we'd play hidings, hiding on people's verandahs, 'get the whippy.' There was the King George Playground, which

everybody went to and that was the mainstay of the children around here, but that has all gone now, that is a corporate affair now. The King George Playground was up in Cumberland Street, which was York Street North in those days - it is Cumberland Street now. It was just a drop-in centre that you could go in and there were always people to supervise you and all the kids went up there. As soon as you'd come home from school, do what you had to do and race up to the King George until dinner time, it was lovely.

I believe your brother had a billycart.

04:15 Yes, he had a billycart and they had billycart races down at the end of Lower Fort Street down the big hill. He used to sell wood, he used to get wood. When the tramlines were dug up they had those big wooden blocks and he used to get those and go round selling them to the ladies that wanted wood for their fires and their washing implements.

You must have had a fair bit of washing in your house - how did your mum do it?

Mum did. By copper, fuelled up the copper.

How many children were there in your family?

Three.

Can you remember what the tenants were like?

05:04 Oh they were like family, they used to stay with us for a long time. There used to bewe had a 'Grandpa' who wasn't really a grandpa. There were a few seamen and they'd go away to sea because the rents were very low and they'd pay for their room while they were away, they were quite good. Mum was pretty good at screening people, she wouldn't let anybody in that was at all suspect.

Were there other people that might have been? What kind of people would have been suspect?

05:45 Well I suppose it is just by looking at a person, I think that is the only way they could tell.

I believe one of the families was Italian.

Oh yes we had the first Italian migrants who had come out here to work. No, he came out to work and he had a room in mum's place and then his wife and little baby, they must have had a baby when they came out here, they lived here for quite while at mum's place.

It must have been very strange for him in those days.

06:23 Well he was out for a while and then he brought his wife out and then they had a baby and they moved on, I don't know where they moved on to.

Did he speak English?

No, he was Italian and he came out here to work I think on the Snowy. I don't know where he worked initially but he was here and then he brought his wife out and they stayed for a while at mum's place.

So what was your kind of normal weekly routine when you were, say around eight or nine, what would you do, obviously you'd go to school Monday to Friday? What kind of life was there around the place that you remember, around the shops and all that sort of thing.

0:21 Well that was our little village, we'd buy everything at our local shops. You couldn't buy clothes, of course, but all our food was from the local shops, we had butchers and greengrocers, not like it is now.

What would you have for your normal evening meal?

07:40 Oh my mother always saw to food first, before clothes or anything. We'd always have meat and vegetables, always. She was a good cook and made apple pies and steak and kidney pies. Coming home from school in the cold and wet she'd have some beef tea ready for us and the fire was always going, it was so nice.

So she was able to be there for you, even though she was also working?

She stopped working at the Maritime when she bought the residential and she was home all the time from then on, she was always home for us.

Where did you go to school?

08:25 I started at St Brigid's, which is no longer there. Then in third class we went up to St Patrick's, which is no longer there.

That was up at Church Hill, where is Church Hill?

You know St Patrick's Church up there, the approach to the Bridge going up.

Near Grosvenor Street.

08:49 Yes. Then I went to commercial college up there, they had a commercial school, and that is where I finished up my school years.

Did you get a job then?

09:04 Yes, they got you jobs. I worked for two or three years at the Electrical and Radio Association in the Scots Church building there in York Street. Then from there I left and went to Australian Knitting Mills, which was taken over by Holeproof and I stayed there until 1959. Then I went overseas, it was just a trip, my mother was going on a trip and the brochure looked so beautiful I decided to go, she paid my fare, actually. Went over there for

four or five months.

Where did you go?

09:48 To England, to London initially, and then right through the Continent and it was magnificent. In those days there was no fighting, no nothing, and it was about the first trip they had, like an organised tour, and all the places on the way, Malta and Colombo, Singapore, it was just lovely, all the places you'd call into on the trip, took us five weeks to get there. Then we went through the Continent. We went through the Suez Canal and we got off and we went through Cairo overland. Coming back we went through the Suez Canal and it was lovely.

That must have been a huge thing for your mother - did she look forward to that for a long time do you think?

10:39 Yes. She was looking after her blind mother and she went with my dad for about nine years and it must have come to that point where he said to marry him or they wouldn't get married, so she decided to get married and in the meantime my nan died. I don't think mum would have settled down to life, I think she would have been the traveller, because when we were only kids she took us for a plane ride, well I mean in those days, 1945, we were up in a plane.

So she was adventurous.

Yes and she took us out everywhere, she was good.

Did your dad go with you on that trip?

No, he was pretty staid. Oh no, dad had died by the time we went overseas.

So it was just you and your mother.

Well her sister went with us.

Just going back again to the beginnings in Lower Fort Street - can you describe for me maybe what you remember of the other families in the street and their names and who they were?

11:56 We lived in number 3 Lower Fort Street. The people in number 1, it was owned by a Miss Dayden but she wasn't there very often and there was a family by the name of Millens whose kids were about our age, my brother was a good friend of their son. Next door there were the Kerrs, they owned that, then Mrs Hilly in the next one, then a Mrs Butler. Then I think it was Harrisons owned number 11, then Miss Delmore and Miss Burke. The Dooners lived in 17 and I'm not sure who owned 19 there. That was Milton Terrace, that was our terrace of houses.

You can still remember them.

I can yes.

The ladies that were Miss Delmore and Miss Burke, they obviously were spinsters, were they? So they never married?

No. We weren't allowed to hide on their verandahs because they were pretty nasty to us.

What sort of things do you remember during the war?

13:25 I can remember us going out looking for a house at Strathfield, that was when the Japs came into Sydney Harbour. That frightened us a bit so we went up there, but we never moved, we stayed there. We were right on the Harbour there and that frightened mum.

Can you remember that incident? Did people talk about it or did you actually see the submarines?

I can't remember much talk about it, I was only young, but I can remember going out looking for a house.

Did other people move out of the area because of that?

14:04 No, I don't think they did, not that I recall, I don't know. Not those people that I mentioned, that had the residential.

Did you see the troop ships coming and going during the war?

That I can't remember, no.

A lot of people in the area, like Harry Lapham and Frank Hyde, they remember swimming down at the Met.

14:36 Yes, I do but only in my later years. All my kids did but I didn't swim down there until I was old enough to have more sense, I suppose I should have done it but I didn't when I was young. I wouldn't have been allowed and I would have been frightened that my dad might have went crook on me.

So what did you do of a hot day?

15:01 Oh we used to get down the yard with a hose, I think that was it, while mum was doing the washing. I think that was our big thing on a hot day. Mum would often take us out on a picnic to Bronte and dad take us out in the trams and then mum would come out with a basket of food, I can remember that, and we'd have our dinner out at Bronte in the night, which we liked.

Just staying with St Brigid's - your family background was Catholic, wasn't it, so what do you remember about the Catholic church and the activities they used to put on?

Well they didn't put on any activities.

Didn't they have movies in Harrington Street?

15:56 Oh that was in the later years. We just went to school there and mum did a lot of work for the nuns 'round there. When we were seventeen, eighteen, they had movies up at the hall at St Patrick's.

Father Nolan - do you remember him?

Yes he was the main one in our growing up days.

What was he like?

16:28 He was quite nice, a good friend of mum's. They were often down there, they visited a lot in those days, the nuns and priests used to come around a lot. You don't see any now, I think they are too busy now. Yes, he was very good, was good around the area.

What would happen if a family had a problem, like say somebody got sick or the man was out of work or something, would the neighbours help? What would happen if a family got into trouble somehow?

17:06 I don't really know. I can't recall anybody really getting into trouble and that is true. I don't think there was any charities to help people, I'm not sure, they could have privately went to the priest or someone but I don't know.

Just moving on to when you actually moved, when did you move out of Fort Street?

When I got married at twenty-six, I stayed there until I was twenty-six and then I moved to Bettington Street.

What sort of house did you have there?

17:49 Oh I hated it around there. It was a two bedroom cold windy place, right on the tip. They pulled our house down to build that tower, Bettington Street goes right down. I didn't like it. I was married by then and I had three children, I think. I had three around there and then when my daughter was born they pulled the house down and I moved then.

Was your husband local?

No, he came from Darlington, inner-city, that is why I think that we never ever moved because he didn't ever want to move and we weren't financially in a position where we could buy a house.

So just tell me a little about the relationship with the MSB, when you got married were you automatically entitled to a house then?

18:55 I wasn't automatically, I had to live in the area. You had to work or live in the area, I am not even sure about working in the area. I was entitled to a house because I lived there

with mum. That is how a lot of people got houses around here because they lived in residential and automatically they'd get a place around here.

Was there a waiting time?

I didn't have to wait very long, a couple of years, I suppose, which wasn't that long.

Did you stay with your mum while you were waiting?

I had a flat in there yes with my husband. I had one child, I must have had two children in there.

So when they pulled down that house at Bettington Street where did you go?

I went to 52 Argyle Place, which is two doors down.

What was that like?

20:04 Oh I thought I'd won the lottery when I moved to there. It was like a four-storey house, but only small rooms. That is why we moved because the rooms were small with five children and a lot of stairs.

What condition was it in?

20:23 Terrible condition. Like they moved me out of Bettington Street. I mean I loved the Maritime but seeing what people are getting now you think back. They pulled the house down and they never even helped you move. When you went into a house there was not a carpet on the floor, not a cupboard, there was just a little cold water tap in the corner, that was all you ever got. No cupboards in your kitchen, no nothing. But we still didn't care, we just loved to live around here and we were willing to put our own money in.

So is that what you did?

21:09 Oh yes. I only had lino in those days in Bettington Street, and you had to paint it. Oh they weren't bad on the painting, the Maritime, but we had to do all things. When I moved into Argyle Place that is when we had to spend a lot of money and do it up.

What would have happened if you'd asked the Maritime to do it, to look after the plumbing or something?

It was either you take that or nothing. You just felt so pleased to get something, really that is how you felt in those days.

Then you had to move out of there, didn't you?

21:53 I didn't have to. The people that lived in here, this had been in the Carolan's family for years and years, and when the last one was in here they came to me and they said that

Billy Carolan would like us to have it and to come in if we were interested because it was such a nice big house. So we went down to the Maritime and they said yes, that I could do it, I had to go before a meeting or something but they said I could be in here and they would gradually do it up for me. But they didn't do much, we did spend a lot of money in here.

Why was Billy Carolan leaving, was he old and going to die or something?

22:40 He wasn't living here any more, I think he had got a flat out Maroubra or somewhere he moved to. Then his nephew was living here and then they bought a house and that was the last of the Carolans. So they came and saw me and said, 'Would you like this house before we move out and put it on the market?'

That seems to have happened a lot, that people kind of moved only short distances and swapped houses around between themselves.

A lot of people did.

That would have kept the community very tight.

23:23 Yes. I can't imagine anyone now coming and saying, 'I'm moving, would you like the place?' We had to go down before the Board.

Why is that? Is it because you don't know people as well?

I don't know many people at all now.

You have said several times that you were happy with the houses because you loved the place so much. Can you describe for somebody who has never been here what you love about Millers Point?

24:02 Well I loved the atmosphere and the people because you knew everybody. I think that was the main thing - it is the people that make a place and it was just that you could go anywhere. We all used to go on picnics together, well there was a mob of us, four or five families, and there was just that nice friendly atmosphere. It was safe, like most places in that time, and it was just a lovely place. Close to our work and town and everything, it was lovely.

How do you think it has changed since those days?

24:54 Well it changed because the people moved out of the area. When the Department of Housing came in they put the rents up so terribly, terribly high, compared to what we were paying, which was based on your income. Well our children moved out then, they thought why pay that much? It was a quarter of their income, I think, and that was before tax and they thought we can move out and get a flat for that. So that is what happened and

it broke up a lot of families. I suppose when you look back it is probably fair now, but it was one big hit at the time and a lot of families moved out. A lot of people were able to move, they had a bit of money and they could put a deposit on houses, or already had holiday houses. See it wasn't a Housing Commission settlement it was people you'd grown up with. I am still friendly now with people I went to school with, the few that are left around here. My children are still friendly with their children and our grandchildren are friends. That is how it was and still is for a few of us.

Where did your children end up going?

26:32 Well, two of my sons are at Woolloomooloo, Mark bought houses out there. I've got two working in London and one is at Pymont.

So the ones who are in Australia didn't go far outside the city, they stayed close.

That's it, they wouldn't. My son always said, 'All you need in life, mum, is a dog and a pushbike and you're right.'

So they didn't want to go to the suburbs with all the big sports fields and parks and things?

27:09 No. They had it here. I have got three of them that did Triathlons, they have been to Hawaii doing them. They played football. They had all that here.

Where would they play then?

27:24 Some played at Pymont Colts over there, some were with the North Sydney group. See it was easy to get to those grounds and that. Basketball - mine never played too much basketball but my grandson did. There was plenty to do for them around here, more so than for me because I wasn't allowed to do that much. They loved it around here too they said, growing up around here. They have walked across that Bridge, where you pay a hundred and something to walk across they did that years ago, all the locals did it. Not all, but a lot of them. Up the Bridge Climb - they said they did that years ago, something I didn't know. I sit down with them with a couple of glasses of wine and you hear everything that they did when they were young.

Obviously there were no accidents?

28:35 One went under the wharves in a boat and he got all his finger squashed, it was bad at the time but no accidents, they were good.

29:02 END OF TAPE MP-SH7 SIDE A

29:04 START OF TAPE MP-SH7 SIDE B

So Kath, you mentioned the Palisade golf club - what was that about?

29:18 We weren't in it, I was never in that, but I was asked about any social activities around here and I can remember the Palisade Golf Club. They used to take their kids out on picnics and even though I wasn't in it my boys used to go with their friends and their fathers used to take them out there.

Did they play golf?

The men played golf.

Where would they have played golf?

I don't know, I don't know where they played. It was called the Palisade Golf Club.

Just going back again to when you were little, do you remember hawkers coming around at all?

30:07 You mean people that sold you things? Yes, we had the ice man and the rabbit man and the milkman. There was a man that sold clothes in later life, but not when I was young. Yes, the rabbit man. The ice man, mum used to put a bag over the verandah and pull up the ice in it save us going down the stairs.

When you were there at Fort Street did she have to do much working repairing, keeping the house maintained?

30:49 No, the Maritime did that. See she bought the goodwill of the place from them, not the house, the goodwill, and they maintained it, did the repairs and everything.

So they were good in that place, better than for you?

When I got into these places then they helped you if you had any repairs or not, but they never put a thing in like a hot water service or anything on the floor, anything like that.

How does the Department of Housing compare to them as a landlord, maintenance-wise and things?

31:31 Oh they are very, very slow, the Department of Housing are, except if it is an urgent thing. My ceiling fell down before Christmas and I had been telling them for twelve months that the rain was coming in. How do they compare? Nothing like that happened in the Maritime time. I liked the Maritime, you knew all the workmen, you'd have them in for afternoon tea, it was a lovely, friendly atmosphere.

How do you feel about tourists coming through here and looking round?

32:17 Oh they are no trouble, tourists are all right. It is the drunks that get on your nerves and they've been around forever, these drunks. Coming out of the hotel of a night, noisy. But I am getting half deaf now that I don't hear them too much now.

What about the Green Bans - do you remember those days?

32:49 Yes. I wasn't involved in the Green Bans, in those days I didn't get very involved. It was more or less down The Rocks but I do remember it and they fought hard. It stopped a lot of high-rise, I think that is all it did, but those people were still put out of their houses and shops were made of their houses and all that, but it did stop them from being pulled down. That is why they built Sirius, those big flats up there so that people could go from their houses that they pulled down.

Well it has left a lot of houses intact here that might have gone, there is a lot housing left here that is very similar to the old days isn't there?

33:54 Yes, but there is a lot too that have been made into shops. All along Harrington Street, they were all houses, up George Street North there, they are not houses any more for people to live in, they are shops.

How is Millers Point to live in now, I notice that the butcher has closed.

34:21 Well we've got one local shop who is very, very good, they have been around here for years too. Like her father owned the corner shop and they were lovely. We've got that shop and then they have built a little corner convenience store, that's all we've got around here. A dry-cleaner, a doctor who was put out of his surgery by the Housing Commission, now he has got a smaller one over at the Council buildings. But that is all we've got.

What would you like to see? Would you like to see other things in the area?

35:06 I'd love to but I don't think there is enough people living here. Like, I can see their point of view. The butcher was first class around here, he had the best meat that you could buy, but he might have been a bit dearer and people won't pay extra. Well now we've got a couple of buses that take them out shopping so where does that leave you? It wouldn't be viable, I don't think, but it would be nice to have a butcher. There is a few more people coming around here now.

How would you summarise the changes in the last sixty years?

35:59 Vast changes. I think it is just the people that have changed, really I do. The shops, as you just mentioned, we had quite a lot of shops along here, a greengrocer, grocery shops, one butcher and a bootmaker, things like that, that would be nice, to have a few more

shops. How do I summarise it? Well I still love the area because I'm kind of out of it. You'll hear a terrible lot of people complaining about fighting with neighbours, drunkenness, drugs, well I haven't yet had that because I'm a bit out of it. The people that have got houses on both sides, not all, but there is a few of that around. I guess that is just changing and you will probably find it in every suburb.

You said before we started something about that it used to be a working community.

37:22 That's right it was a working man's area, now it is more a welfare area. I mean I'm on a pension now, otherwise I couldn't afford to stay in this house. If you work you are not entitled to a house around here, or you pay a quarter of your income and wages are pretty big now. That is how it has changed.

What do you think will happen when the Patrick's lease expires next year, that will be more workers gone out of the area down the waterfront?

38:05 Well there's not too many wharfies around here now, I don't think, I don't think there is. They couldn't afford it. If you are going to pay two or three hundred dollars for a flat you may as well go out somewhere and buy your own, try to get your own. I don't think there is many wharfies left around here.

Have you kept up with what is happening down there? Do you know what is going to happen in the future?

38:33 Yes, I went to the meeting up the Town Hall about the working port, is that what you mean? I hope it doesn't happen, I hope it stays as it is, but I don't know what will happen there. By the amount of people that were protesting they might think about it.

What happened to the house in Lower Fort Street that you grew up in the end?

It is still there.

Who has it gone to?

39:06 Well, my mother sold the lease out when she left, she sold the lease and somebody else bought it. When the Department of Housing came they just wanted those people to just hand over their leases but all the landladies got together and they fought, there was a big fight for them to retain their leases. A lot of them just walked out and couldn't be bothered. Now that is owned by the Department of Housing, that residential, and they call them boarding houses now, which they are not boarding houses. They don't put a head tenant in there and they put anyone in and they can do as they like. There isn't a landlady in charge, or anybody in charge of the people any more and that creates a few problems too.

Some of the tenants, would they not be paying less though, would that not be a good thing for the tenants?

40:17 Probably, because they are welfare tenants and they would be paying a proportion. My mother never charged a real lot for rent.

Did your mother ever have problems with someone who didn't pay?

In the Depression they used to fly-by-night. She said only one man came back and paid what he owed her, a seaman came back. She didn't worry too much because dad was working through the Depression.

So you weren't as badly off as some of them.

What year was the Depression?

1932.

That was before I was born.

1929 to 1932. Where did your mother go when she sold the lease?

41:11 She got a little place out at Telopea, a little Housing Commission unit. My sister lived at Epping and it was close to her. She came and lived with me for a little while until she got that place.

That must have been a big change to go as far out as that.

But she was near my sister and Eileen was able to visit her and take her shopping.

So do your children come back here much?

Yes, they love it.

You have really got quite strong roots going back.

42:05 Yes, it is a long way. I've got one son who would dearly love to live around here but I have tried everything with the Department, but he is working and he is earning too much money for them to allocate him a house. He is willing to pay the money but he is not allowed to live around here. He could probably live here and probably after a while he'll have to live with me, like he is very good, he'll come back and do the work and things like that. But he is working and he is not entitled to a place around here, which is breaking all ties with the area. There is not many of the children that I grew up with their children live around here, not really. There is no continuity any more because they have all been taught to work.

So you are here all on your own?

Yes.

It's a very big house to manage by yourself.

43:13 Yes. Well, when I was here we had five kids, and my husband and I. Yes, it is a big house but I wouldn't like to move.

Is the Department happy to let you stay here?

I don't know if they know - they must know by the rent I am paying, but nobody has said anything.

So tell me about the people in this street, you've been here in Argyle Place for a long time, who do you know and how far do they go back?

43:54 Well, they've all moved out. When the Housing Commission took over there were the Rochfords on the corner, who had been there for years and years and years. That house, the rain was coming in so Ronnie moved out, he got a place around in High Street. Then I was in the next place to them and there was a lady in the next place, that is the third place along, Alicia Peach, she was there for many years. Then the Carolans were here and I didn't know too many others along here. I knew Joan, who lived next door, Joan Thompson, knew her very well, she is still around here. She is an old lady of ninety but she never grew up around here. That is about all I knew along this street. That is how much it has changed since when I was kid, you knew everyone, and I have been living in this street over thirty years, I don't know how long.

So if you go for a walk out to the corner shop do you meet people you can talk to?

45:19 Yes, you still can, a few people. But of course we are dying off now, we are getting a bit old, we have lost a lot of really nice people just recently. Yes, you get in a bus and you know a few people, a couple of people.

What about all the traffic that is coming through now, the cars, does that affect things? Does that affect your lifestyle?

45:54 The buses. The buses here of an afternoon - there could be thirteen buses, we've counted, just lined up. Not always to service us, they are just here. There was a Palm Beach bus the other day and an Earlwood bus, they are just laying about here and that disturbs you. I don't like to see that because all those fumes and that and the dirt and dust and grit and grime. Other than that the traffic, I guess, is normal city traffic, it is not a lot of traffic really, I don't think. The parking - you can come home here of a Sunday afternoon and you can't get in because people have come to visit the place and you can't get in. Some Saturday

nights you can't get in until midnight.

That would be a real problem.

Parking is a problem, yes.

They can't reserve places for residents?

47:02 They don't reserve them, they give you a resident's sticker but there is no specific spot for your car.

You just went out to get the post - do you know the postman?

Yes, we say hello to him, get in the bus and have a talk to him.

I was just wondering whether there was ever a problem with asbestos in the houses?

47:29 Not that I know of. It wasn't a big issue in those days and I don't know. I think these houses are too old, asbestos - would it have been around?

I think you might be right.

About a hundred and fifty years old, this house.

Maybe you could go back again and describe for me the shops that you remember when you were young that used to be here in the area.

47:58 At the end of Lower Fort Street was Leonard's the greengrocer. I remember going up there and buying a bag of mixed fruit, a big brown paper bag, for two shillings. There was the grocer's shop on the corner, Wyburns, and then the Wassafs got it. Down in Windmill Street there was a little bread shop, another little small-goods shop. Around at the end of this street there was a greengrocer and Holly's was here for a long time, he was a grocer. Then Conrans the greengrocer was next door. Around the corner there was a butcher and a hairdressers, they had a hairdresser here, a bootmaker. There were no big supermarkets in those days.

Of all those shops you have mentioned are any of the people still here?

49:09 Well only Wassafs down here. Wyburns had it, then Wassafs bought into it after them and they are the only ones here now, all the other shops have gone. There was a milk bar on the corner over there and that was kind of a local hang-out for people.

What did you do on a weekend yourself when you were young?

What age are we talking about?

Ten, eleven.

Probably go to the King George Playground. I wasn't allowed to run out much, on the

streets all that much.

What did your mother do for leisure?

50:00 Oh she was a workaholic, I reckon. She was great on the knitting and sewing and making things. She took us out a lot, we'd go into town. I remember going into town to the coffee shops in town, to Maccera's store, Sargent's tea and pies.

What was your father's interests?

50:38 Oh the races, dad loved the races. He'd go out every Saturday to the races. He liked the football, he liked the soccer, never went there though much, he just listened to it on the radio. Like, dad was fifty when I was born and mum was forty, so they were older than the normal run of people.

Where did you come in the family?

Third. I was the last one.

That was quite old to be having a baby.

It was.

Were there ever any health problems in your family?

Oh yes. My family or my mother's?

Well both.

51:33 My brother had slight epilepsy, not very bad. My sister had juvenile diabetes, she died at forty-two. After whooping cough I got bronchitis and I've had it all my life. So mum was very busy with us, running to hospitals.

That must have been a bit frightening for her when you had whooping cough.

52:03 She had to put a needle in a little girl's arm and eleven and twelve, she said that was difficult. It wasn't these automatic needles. She had to give injections two or three times a day. She nursed a blind mother for all those years until she got married and then she had a baby straight away then and she never stopped, she had a busy life.

So it was great that she managed to get that holiday overseas.

52:41 Oh she loved it. She went to the Barrier Reef. She had never had a lot of time to do much, I suppose, and by that time she was older. She was about sixty-six when we went away.

What about the local pubs in the area, did only the men go to the pubs?

53:09 Not very many women. I can remember a few going to the Hero, they had a room

at the back there, which is their dining room now, see a few women in there but mainly men.

Do you remember the six o'clock closing days?

My father wasn't a drinker and I didn't have much to do with pubs. Like I've been myself into them but not when I was young, mum never drank, so we never had much to do with pubs.

Would there be fights after the six o'clock closing?

I can't recall that.

It is interesting that your father worked in a brewery but he didn't drink.

He didn't drink, no.

Where would he go to the races?

54:00 Oh, at Randwick, it was mainly Randwick, I think. I don't know where else they were on in those days, I suppose Canterbury. I know that he used to love the races but he wasn't a big gambler. I don't think we never ever went without anything.

What about with your own children did you have any health issues with them?

My first-born was born with dislocated hips and I had a heck of a lot of trouble there, because it wasn't picked up until he was twenty-one months or something and he'd walked on it - he had to have a couple of operations and that. Tony had a touch of asthma. My youngest one had dislocated hips too, but they picked those up in hospital and he was out of it in twelve months' time.

Did you go to Sydney Hospital?

54:57 He was born at St Margaret's and St Margaret's picked it up straight away. No, I used to go the Children's Hospital with Mark at Camperdown, Camperdown Children's Hospital. They have moved it now to Westmead, which would have been a drag for me.

Your neighbours when your children were young did you help each other?

55:25 Well, I had my mum, she was great she helped me. When I had my third child I had three of them not walking and that is when I bought a car and that helped a lot. I was able to get out more and do more things.

Was it unusual for people to have a car, for a woman to drive, in those days?

There were a few women drivers. They weren't automatic cars, they were gear cars.

Where did you learn to drive?

Around the lower road here, around Hickson Road, that was the main drag where you learned to drive.

Did your husband drive?

No, he never drove.

That was quite independent of you to do that.

56:12 Well I had to, it was either that or a nervous breakdown with three of them not walking, so I thought that was the best decision.

Was it difficult to find the money for a car?

Well, I don't think it was that dear. If I could have afforded a car I think anyone could have because I didn't have a lot of money.

What was your husband's line of work?

He was only a labourer.

Where did he work?

56:48 Well in the latter days he worked for the Maritime, he was there for quite a while.

Is there anything else you'd like to add that I haven't asked you, Kath?

As long as you know that I still love the area.

How would you like to see it go in the future?

57:09 I suppose it is a bit late now but I'd like to have seen the continuity of families still living around here and it being a mixture of people. They are nice people up the top of Kent Street that have bought too expensive apartments, they are nice people, and I'd like to see three classes, the working class and then the people that are on welfare. When I go, when my age group goes, it will just be the welfare people, I suppose. Not that I am blaming anybody or I'm not criticising them but I just think the Department is doing it all wrong, especially these residential - they should have somebody controlling them.

So that you get a more diverse mix of people?

58:09 Yes. Like I'd love my son to get a place around here but he is earning too much money, but he is willing to pay the price that they are asking. He had a young son and I tried very hard to get them a place and he was supporting his son and they still wouldn't give him a place, which was really bad.

What sort of work do your children do?

58:38 Mark went through and did a sports course but he was working up the rec centre

at King George in the olden days when it was a good centre. Well it turned corporate and he left there and he is working on the ferries. My other son works on there too, he is a painter by trade, and my daughter works in an office. My son over in England is a painter and my other son does everything, but he did an apprenticeship in horticulture.

Okay Kath we might just leave it there. So thank you very much for being part of this, it has been great to talk to you.

60:04 END OF INTERVIEW WITH KATH BURGESS & END OF TAPE MP-SM7 SIDE B