

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

‘Millers Point Oral History Project’

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE:	John Hawthorne
TAPE NUMBERS:	MP-FH47 (1 Tape)
INTERVIEWER:	Frank HEIMANS
DATE AND PLACE:	16 March 2006 at Cremorne NSW
DURATION OF INTERVIEW:	56 minutes, 28 seconds
RESTRICTIONS ON USE:	Nil

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00:02 START OF TAPE MP-FH47 SIDE A

00:02 Tape identification

John usually in these interviews we ask a little bit of background information about people so can you tell me when you were born and where?

00:31 I was born in Paddington Hospital in November 1945. My parents were living at

Millers Point, or Dawes Point for five years prior to me being born.

Where exactly were they living?

9 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point.

I know the house, it is next to the Brian Harrison, isn't it. Can you describe the house for me, what it was like in those days, in your early youth?

00:59 Well it actually had four floors with a basement, ground, first and second floor and a lot of people lived in it.

How many people lived there?

Twenty-seven.

In one house?

Yes.

They must have been everywhere.

Everywhere.

How big were the rooms then that they had?

01:30 Well they weren't that big but they used the verandas, they used to fill the verandas in and use those as kitchens. The lounge room and the bedrooms became a lounge room as well, two in the one, more or less like bedsitters today, only you didn't have room for a set of chairs, virtually you had to sit on either side of the bed.

What were the facilities like for those people, how many bathrooms were there?

02:04 One toilet and one bathroom, they were in together, and there was a broken down toilet in the basement but that never ever worked all the time I lived there, which was sixteen years.

How did you actually manage to wash and all that? I mean how long did you have to wait sometimes for that?

02:28 Too long sometimes if you wanted to go to the toilet and someone was in the shower. You just had your towel over your arm or the toilet paper and you just had to run for it.

Weren't there any regulations about that sort of thing in those days?

No.

So who was your landlady?

Mary Butler her name was.

What sort of person was she?

02:55 Well like all landladies in those days I suppose very tough. I remember she'd run up

the stairs and abused my mother when I was a kid if I was running around, that was even when I was a two or three year old, because our place was on top of hers. She was pretty tough.

She would have to be with all those people. How did she manage all those people, were they easy to manage or were there some difficult characters among them?

03:27 Well I don't remember - I was a baby then. But as I got older, seven, eight, nine, her daughter got married and she had a family, and they ran it for them then. There were some who got a bit drunk on a Saturday night and that sort of thing. No, it was pretty good.

What were the occupations of the men that lived there?

Mostly seamen or waterside workers.

Sort of people that actually had permanent jobs at Millers Point, were they?

04:10 Well round in the vicinity. Some were wharfies and some went to sea. The seamen's pick-up was only just behind the Harbour View Hotel so it was pretty central to everything.

What was the seamen's pick-up?

04:28 It was in Gloucester Street. It is where I think the Aboriginal art or dance studios are now, just on the east side of the Harbour Bridge. Seamen used to go there to get picked up off the roster there.

If they wanted to crew for ships you mean, to go away?

Yes.

Describe to me where your family lived in that house at 9 Lower Fort Street, what rooms they occupied, how many rooms and so on.

05:08 We had one and a half, you couldn't call it one and a half, one room and a baby's room where you could only get a bed in and one cupboard and a veranda which was used as a kitchen. As I said all the verandas were filled in.

So you had a makeshift kitchen or was it a proper kitchen?

05:29 It was a proper kitchen, it had built in tables and chairs at one end and a stove and an ice chest in them days was at the other end.

Was your room the baby's room?

The baby's room - until I was sixteen.

Not much room to swing a cat in there. That is all you could fit in, a bed and a little dressing table did you say?

That was it yes.

People would put up with things in those days would they?

06:05 I suppose I didn't know any different and just accepted that. Everywhere else you went to had similar sort of circumstances. Except if I went to the country where my relatives lived I'd notice any difference because they lived in houses, but anyone else we knew from the city well they had similar accommodation.

What did your parents do for a living?

06:41 My father managed the Harbourview Hotel, my mother worked there as a barmaid. Then eventually they both left and my mother became a cleaner at the Health Department, which was in George Street North, which became the Old Spaghetti Factory and I'm not sure what it is now. My father became a watchman on the wharves.

When he was managing the Harbourview Hotel, when you say managing, do you mean he was the boss?

Yes. He didn't own it, he managed it for someone.

What sort of life is it being a publican's son? How did you enjoy life there?

07:27 Well we used to live in 9 Lower Fort Street, which is only a hundred yards down the road from the pub, but I don't remember much about the pub. I just remember being in there a few times and going down to the cellar with my father, which was all pretty damp and wet. I remember him saying to me, 'Don't walk down the stairs frontwards you've got to always walk down them backwards.' That is about the only recollections I have.

Was there a ladies' lounge in the hotel?

Yes there was, yes. All the pubs had ladies' lounges in them days.

What did the women do when they came down to have a few drinks and so on?

08:11 Well a couple of times I have seen women there with their hair in rollers and shelling peas, but any of the pubs this was a similar sort of a thing.

So they used to carry on shelling peas for the pub or for their own houses?

Oh for tea that night in their own home.

Bring their work with them while they had a beer.

Yes.

Quite a few people had alcoholic problems, there was a lot of alcoholism around, what is your recollection of all that?

08:45 Well the pubs were full every night in them days, the husbands were in the pub every night and quite a few of the mothers were, not at night up to tea-time, as I said. It was a thing I think because when the ten o'clock trading had come in, was it in 1954, it was a carry-on from that I think. There was no fitness thing around for anyone in those days - that was just

what was done.

Did you ever see drunks walking around the street?

Oh, all the time.

People had too much and went home. At least they couldn't drive, they didn't have far to go, I suppose.

09:42 I remember one time on a Sunday morning I was delivering papers and I saw a bloke and the woman he lived with and he was blind drunk, it was a Sunday morning early, and he was into her, bashing her, in the street, in Lower Fort Street. I went home and told my mother and I said, 'Oh, poor woman,' and she said, 'Well it doesn't matter what happens, you never interfere with marital things, no matter what,' I was only about nine or ten and she said, 'You've just got to keep walking.' That was a good lesson for you, I remember that.

Were people in Millers Point generally fairly religious, did they go to church a lot?

No. Not many went to church.

So they would be pretty empty on a Sunday those churches?

10:50 I'd say after church went out on one o'clock on Sundays there would be only us kids just roaming around. You would hardly see any people on the street at all.

Tell me about some of the exploits that you did as a kid. Playing games, swimming, entertainment, that sort of thing.

11:19 We used to scale the trams over to North Sydney and swim in the North Sydney Pool and go to Luna Park, you weren't charged to go into it in those days, you only paid for the rides or whatever you wanted. They had a basketball game and you could win chocolates which were maybe six months old, but because we all used to play basketball in the King George Playground we could all shoot baskets and they knew us so we were barred from that, we weren't allowed to play that. We used to have a good time over there. We used to go to the movies at Crows Nest and the Orpheum Picture Show at North Sydney. We used to take two bob and it was eleven pence in the movies, I think it was four pence for a packet of chips, a drink of cordial was probably about five pence and you'd get two coppers for a penny and you would get your fare over and back for nothing on a tram. It cost you two bob for the whole lot.

In those days I guess two bob was something, was it?

I suppose yes.

Now people were living in a heritage area was there much thought given to that, of the history?

12:56 No never. No-one ever I ever contemplated that.

Now when I saw you earlier you told me a story about burning the cedar furniture, or something. Tell me about that.

13:15 My father told me it was cedar, this old furniture that Mary Butler had around the house. One Saturday everyone had to take their furniture down, not on one day but over a short period, and my father had to chop it all up for her, the whole lot up, and it all had to be burnt. Even if you wanted any part of it none of it was to be kept. She had got all this stuff like Freedom Furniture, plastic, it wasn't plastic but Macy-type of furniture, I suppose. Pretty fab stuff and all of that.

To replace the good cedar furniture. How did you feel about that?

14:07 Even then I used to like old stuff. I mean I have got a few old things at home and I had to sell quite a bit when I moved into a unit, but I sort of even appreciated it then, but to no avail. But my father had to chop it all up.

And burnt it all?

Oh yes it was used for the copper, which everyone used to use to wash their clothes in.

That is a good use for cedar furniture isn't it, oh my God. As a child did you ever go up on the bridge pylons?

14:45 I used to go into the pylons yes, they had the white cats up there and a big six or seven foot width (display) across how to milk cows, it, must have been mechanisation of dairy cattle must have come in around that time and it showed how they moved around and what was done. These little lead cows and things, they had farmers there, little lead farmers and things like that. It was just an explanatory thing.

Where was that - in the bridge pylon itself?

15:31 Yes it was up where the cats are, where the telescopes are, there was a couple of rooms up there I think, it was all in that area.

So was this sort of an exhibition space was it?

Yes it was. It was the highest point in Sydney in them days and they'd go up to look and I think it was ten cents in or something and they'd have all these things up there

Is this the Milk Board that put this up do you think?

16:05 I'm not sure who it was but I remember the thing well. The cats, these white Persian cats.

We have heard of a cat lady who lived up there as well.

16:18 Yes, well she had the cats. It was a paid thing, she wasn't just living there for nothing, it was advertised to see the white Persian cats at the Pylon Lookout. As I said it was the tallest

part of Sydney. The next building they built then was near the Dunbarton Hotel, AMP built one there. But that was the tallest building in Sydney at the time, I remember that being built. That was the tallest lookout, the pylon.

So the cats were just like a tourist attraction too?

Yes.

That is stuff that doesn't exist any more.

17:21 I think now it seems a bit strange doesn't it.

People who look at cats and leaden cows - it is a bit strange. So where did you swim in Millers Point?

Well we'd go to North Sydney Pool, we would go to the Domain, which was the Boy Charlton Pool down at Woolloomooloo, which was a tidal baths in those days. We used to also swim down at what they call the Metal Wharf which was in Walsh Bay.

No sharks there?

18:00 I never seen any. Some of the others said they had seen a stingray that was that big it couldn't get between the piles but I don't know I didn't see it. I never saw any sharks. I suppose they would be there because in those days the crew would just throw rubbish over the side, toilet and all the refuse from the kitchen would all go into the harbour, so I suppose it did attract sharks there. Some kids did say they had seen sharks.

Apparently there is some fires that you saw - tell me about those.

18:40 Well there was one down opposite where my mother used to work which was the corner of George Street North and Hickson Road I suppose, it goes right around. There was a big fire there one weekend, it was a toy factory, it stocked all the kids' marbles and records, and we used them as frisbees, they were the big forty-five records, there were some bears and plastic dolls and all that sort of thing, cheap sort of toys at the time.

How come there were records in a toy factory?

19:33 I don't know. They must have imported them. They certainly wouldn't have made them there, I don't know.

Do you know the reason for the fire?

No I don't.

It was a big one was it?

19:52 Oh yes. It burnt all the inside of it. Actually they pulled it down there is another building on the site now. It is on the corner of a lane opposite the Observer Hotel, it was on that block there. It went up that lane up to Playfair Street.

What sort of things used to happen at Millers Point on Guy Fawkes Night, tell me about that.

20:23 Well they had the big bonfires at the bottom of High Street and the kids at the Point always hoped that they'd get one bigger than the kids at the 'loo. The ones at the 'loo used to get a mention in the paper the day after Guy Fawkes Day that it had so many brigades to come down and put them out. We never got a mention in the paper, or maybe once, but ours might have been twenty foot high and theirs seemed to be thirty foot high, they were massive. *Did it damage the roads?*

No. No.

So what sort of stuff did they used to burn then?

21:06 Well kids would get car tyres and bits of dunnage off the wharves, anything at all you could get your hands on to just build it up higher and higher.

Now you had some association with SP bookies, they tell me.

21:29 Yes I used to work for an SP bookie, Cec Moore, when I was eleven and he used to give me ten bob a week, which is a dollar today, and I would run sheets between the two premises, one in Windmill Street and one next to the Harbourview Hotel. I would go and get cigars and matches and run sheets for him down to the other betting place, or vice versa. I done that for a couple of years there.

So would you say you were kind of his assistant?

He had assistants inside, but I was only a kid. That is when I started punting.

As a child you were betting - how much were the bets?

22:20 Two bob each way, fifty cents, or five bob. If I didn't do well for ten bob he'd give me a big hiding in two or three races. In fact since I have been eleven I haven't been to work or school on Melbourne Cup Day, since I have been eleven.

So how did you go on the Melbourne Cup Days?

22:54 Well the first one I wagged and my mother found out and I said, 'Well I'm not going to go any more on Melbourne Cup Day,' so she allowed me to have it off. When I started working I have never gone on Melbourne Cup Day. I'm sixty now so I have seen forty-nine straight that I haven't been to work on. I don't know if that is a good record or not but it is my record anyway.

Would you build up a piggy bank of savings?

23:26 Oh yes. I could do no wrong when I was kid punting until I was about sixteen and then I've never been able to do no right since. Always had between thirty and ninety pounds in a

little pink pirate's chest. I had papers inside it and the money underneath and I used to give my mother money at times. My father was getting five pounds a week and I was saving somewhere between thirty and ninety pounds in there. I sort of thought back over the years - I had a fortune in there at that time. As I said once I turned sixteen the luck ran out and I could count on one hand the amount of winners I've backed since.

Oh what a shame. An absolute fortune then wasn't it. Ninety pounds was a lot of money, you could buy house almost for that.

24:34 Yes probably. My mother told me that she bought a block of land, just a little bit on the wayside on the headland between Harbord and Curl Curl Beach, somewhere there, and she bought it for thirty pounds and sold it for ninety pounds. That was before I was old enough to remember so I was probably four or five. My father told her the north side would never catch on over there and she sold it to a copper who had a block next door. Years later I saw a rate notice she had and it was ten bob a year rates. I've still got that rate notice, actually.

Ten shillings. People would like to get back to that one. So you left school pretty early did you, what age were you when you left?

Fifteen.

Why did you leave so early?

25:50 Well everyone left school at fifteen in those days, no one went on. I don't remember anyone going on. Russ Taylor went on because he was extremely smart and he had an opportunity school he went to. There was an Opportunity Class at Fort Street Primary where we went. But a lot of the kids left and went to sea or got trades and that was the sort of the way it went.

Was it expected you would get a job on the wharves or something?

26:28 Probably. Eventually when you were old enough - you had to be twenty years old.

What did you want to do?

26:38 Well I wanted to be an auctioneer at first or a race broadcaster. I tried to do both and it didn't work out. I finished up, I went to work at Goldsbrough Mort as a clerk for about twelve months or fifteen months. The auctioneering thing wasn't going to work out for me and I'd already been knocked back for jobs at radio stations to get in the ground floor to be a broadcaster. I used to go to the races and call them myself, hire binoculars out there and call them myself. My mother would tape the races, when I got a tape recorder, and I would come home and I'd listen to them to see how I went. When that never happened I got a job as an apprentice painter and then I eventually got on the wharves when I was nineteen. You had to

be twenty but I used somebody else's birth certificate to get on at nineteen.

27:54 END OF TAPE MP-FH47 SIDE A

27:57 START OF TAPE MP-FH47 SIDE B

Now John you started on the wharves at nineteen - were you still single or had you met someone by that stage?

28:15 No I was married, I was married at nineteen, and I was on the wharves. I was there a couple of years and permanency came in on the waterfront, which was all casual then, permanence came in in 1967 and we were getting \$2.80 a day, which was twenty-eight bob, or one pound eight, a day. I couldn't live on that and then I became a painter and docker. I did that for a few years and then I came back on the wharves as a tally clerk.

Tell me a bit about those early years on the wharf, the first years, what were you doing?

29:09 Well in those days they had fifteen-man gangs and they always had half a dozen below and you'd put the cargo in these giant nets and they'd send them out. If you were on the wharf everything was all mechanical of course. They had a yard-arm and a midship as they were called for the derricks to bring the cargo over to drop on the wharf. You would put it on big wooden barrows, because there were no forklifts in those days, and the barrows were sort of around seven foot tall and very thick framed things and they would stack them up and you would wheel them into the sheds. There was no pallets of course and everything went on the ground - it was all marked out for you by tally clerks in the shed and was stacked in there by stackers in the shed. When the trucks would come down to pick it up they'd back the trucks into the shed and then the poor old truck drivers would have to stack the whole lot back onto the truck and take it back all the way up again.

What was the merchandise?

Just general cargo, anything. Bags, cartons, cases.

Did you carry the wheat bags as well?

30:35 Well everyone had a hook and your mother's petticoat, or your wife's petticoat, for the flour jobs. You couldn't work without it if you didn't have a hook. In fact I remember now I think they would send you home if you didn't have your hook.

What was the petticoat for?

31:03 Well on flour jobs, which would run for three weeks you would have the flour bags on your shoulders and your shoulder would wear out quickly if you had a T-shirt on or even a singlet or whatever and you needed a petticoat for it to slide on it.

Carried on your shoulders or your skin would chafe off without the petticoat?

Oh yes. Everyone used to have them.

Interesting use for a petticoat. What were the facilities like for the men, like washing facilities and cleaning up afterwards, that sort of thing?

31:45 The showers had been in a while in some of them. At some of the older wharves at 24 and 25 Pyrmont they still didn't have facilities, amenity rooms, and just nails in the shed and you'd just hang it up and took the odds of pigeon shit or whatever over your clothes. You couldn't have a shower after work or anything like that, you'd just have to put your clothes back on. Some had cars and some didn't in them days, so if you used public transport you got on as you were.

Is that because there were no showers?

32:33 Well they hadn't been built or provided for at those certain wharves.

Was there much of a movement of agitation towards getting those sort of facilities?

32:43 Oh yes. The union movement was becoming strong then. In those days Jim Healy was the Federal Secretary and things were pressing on to get all those sorts of things and conditions. Probably only ten years before me, maybe not even that long, eight years before they had a system which they called the bull system where they used to come to the gate and the foreman would come out and just pick heads. If you were a boss's man or a good worker you got picked and the others were sent home and never got picked.

Never got paid I suppose.

33:39 Well never got anything. They just never got picked up at all.

That was the bull system.

That was the bull system.

Do you know why they call it the bull system?

33:49 Yes because you had to work like a bull to get picked up again. You had to be bullish in your work attitude.

Was it the big guys that got the work?

Oh no. Well it wasn't in my time. It was a big thing to be a bull.

Now the bull system was replaced by the gang system wasn't it?

34:24 The gangs come in yes. Well I don't know if they would have had the gangs then. You didn't work in gangs because it was all casual but they would have worked probably as a gang and just put in different things. In the gang system where you joined a gang and you worked with your gang and if you were sick any time and you missed you didn't go straight back into your gang you had to go back onto the roster and wait until your gang was off and got picked up again in the same day so you could join them again.

Were you also part of a gang?

35:03 Oh yes. Used to work the Union Company ships, mainly all the Darling Harbour run, which was the good run. The Island ships and the Kiwi boats and the Deep Sea as it was termed was all along Walsh Bay which was the heavy duty sort of work and it wasn't as good as where we were.

Was it dangerous work on the wharves?

35:37 Oh yes. Well I mean plenty died there, I mean plenty had to dive off logs on midnight shifts when they have been at Snails Bay or Birchgrove. Even in them days they used to have them in front of where I used to live at Two Walsh Bay. The logs used to be taken off at most of the wharves actually if they had that bit more clearance between the adjacent wharf. I have nearly been speared with steel pipes and things coming out of a sling that broke loose. On the wheat, it was a job the foreman used to do, spraying wheat in ships at Glebe Island in the wings of the ship, and you would sit behind him and watch him. A couple of times, one time in particular, I thought a foreman had died and pulled the little blowing machine that fell off the big hose, which was probably about a foot to eighteen inches wide, and I thought it had flattened him and I'd rung the bell to cut the wheat off. He was sitting there watching it, it had just left him having a bit of a blow himself and I got abused for that. Plenty of people I have seen - a bloke got his finger chopped off one night on a hatch when we were closing the hatches, not in a gang I was in. There was plenty of men killed.

How many men were working on the waterfront when you joined?

37:35 I think about 8,000. I think probably now there is probably 800.

So what was the big change on the waterfront, was it the mechanisation that came in?

Containers.

Tell me about that. You must have been there when they came in.

37:53 The first ship was the *Discovery Bay* where I worked as a tally clerk at Seatainer Terminals at Balmain, that was the first of quite a few of them. Bay Boats was in Counter Bay. I can't think of them now but there was a succession of those.

So what affect did it have on the work force at Millers Point when those container ships came in?

38:24 I think everyone was sort of already on the waterfront then in my era. Once naturally the jobs started to disappear well no one picked up off the waterfront, no one went into those industries because it was harder to get into them. I mean they didn't ask for wharfies recruitment as often and tallies, everything was the same, I mean the work just dropped so there was naturally less need for the men.

Was there a lot of unemployment then in Millers Point and people couldn't find jobs? What happened?

39:05 When I was a kid or in this time with the waterfront?

Well the changes due to the containerisation, you said when jobs started disappearing.

39:17 Well I had left then. I went back to live at Millers Point. When I was married I went to one overlooking One Walsh Bay, I Lower Fort Street, and it was only one big room and a kitchen/veranda. Then I moved up to No. 57, next door to Shirley Ball where she lived, whatever number she is, it was on the lower side of hers.

All in boarding houses?

Boarding houses yes.

Even after you got married?

Yes. That is where my wife found the body, did you ever hear about that?

No tell me about that.

40:18 My wife used to clean the stairs and do the rooms once a week. She went up one morning after we could smell something sweet for a few days and the chap up the top had put a rifle under his chin and blown his whole head off, virtually, he was backwards on the bed. My wife came running downstairs and she said, 'He's got a gun,' and I thought somebody had gone berserk and we slammed the door up. After a few minutes I got her calmed down, she was hysterical, naturally, and I found out that it had happened a few days before. I was talking about landlords being tough, the landlord wanted my wife to clean all the shit off the walls and clean the mattress up even, and naturally she refused and we just left, we were gone within days - we went to Balmain.

Was that at No. 1 Lower Fort Street or 57 Lower Fort Street?

At 57.

Terrible, tragic thing. Now you became a tally clerk on the wharves, now we actually haven't interviewed any tally clerks yet, you are the first, so can you tell me what kind of work that was, what you had to do as a tally clerk.

41:49 Well the tally clerks on the water, before I get to mine, what they used to do when I was wharfie on what I call the conventional side, non-container area, the old way, they used to mark the shed out with white chalk and all the tallies always had chalk, a pen and a grey dust coat and it was their job to keep track of the cargo. When we went to White Bay, to containerisation, we used to load trains, inbuilt crane on the wharf, and they'd take them up to the depots, there were depots at Earlwood and Chullora and another one by road only at Alexandria. We used to just used document the incoming and outgoing of containers. *You used to keep a track of what went in and out you mean, was that the job of a tally clerk?*

Yes.

How many tally clerks were there in those days?

42:58 There was 104 when I was at White Bay, that was three rotating shifts. It never closed. It closed for an hour between six and seven of a morning.

So you used to work the shifts?

Work the shifts, yes.

Now was the job of the tally clerk really to stop things disappearing from the wharves, like pilfering and this sort of thing?

43:24 No the watchman's job was that. The tally clerk's was just to count what had been brought in and tally what was going out. If you bring containers on trucks you would have to have documentation for that. On the other side you had to count how many bags or how many cartons the truck driver was taking was the right count.

Did you know about the timetables of the trains and that sort of thing, did you have to know all that?

43:59 No, they had a station master there, he handled all that.

So your job was basically to mark the number of containers that came off a ship?

44:09 Yes we used to do it all in little blocks and things, it was all done with that type of thing. Tell the wharfies and the cranes which one to put on the train. They used to have ITVs, internal transit vehicle, that would bring them from under the wharf. Getting dropped on the ITVs from the ship and then they'd come into the shed and then other cranes would take them off and put them in stacks. You had stacks piled high. You had to keep track of all those and you had to have someone there documenting that, where they went in, what position, when they came in.

So they were numbered and you knew what was in them did you?

44:55 In the export they did, the stuff coming in we didn't know.

Your job was to put them on the right train or the right trucks was it?

Yes to go out.

The facilities weren't very good in those days for the trucks were they? Tell me about that.

45:15 Well sometimes it would be a couple of days truck drivers, even in Hickson Road lined up. Say on the other side as they'd call it, the conventional side, trucks could be there two days waiting in line and if anyone tried to push in there would be some arguments about that. Even where we were at White Bay when it initially kicked off because everyone was foreign to everyone, the work, they were there a couple of days as well for some months.

How would you be able to stay in line for two days? What about having to go and eat and have breaks and things?

46:02 Well they didn't move very quick and they could use the pubs around to go to the toilet and back up the road. Some would leave their keys and someone would move their truck up for them. They could be six or seven hundred metres long, the queues.

Just huge lines of trucks waiting there? Is this before the container port terminal was built in Botany?

Yes.

Which years are we talking about now?

46:39 Well Seatainers opened in 1969 and closed in 1981 I think, might have been 1982. It wasn't like that then but in the early part it was.

An interesting time down there, they really needed to improve that. There was nowhere for the trucks to be I suppose. Did they take up most of the street or what?

47:14 Well they used to park down the middle of the road, in Hickson Road, they'd park right down the middle. Coming into White Bay they could park in the middle of the road there as well and it was a couple of hundred metre run in. Right up the road - it would be six hundred metres.

So how much did the containerisation change the practices on the wharves do you think?

47:41 Oh totally. Totally, everything was just different.

Did people adjust to that, the people at Millers Point, to those big changes that happened?

47:55 Well as I said I'd moved away then. I had just got on the waterfront, I mean like everyone adjusted.

How many years were you a tally clerk?

Nearly thirteen.

So you left the waterfront and then what did you do?

48:15 I bought a pub.

You had saved up enough to buy a pub?

Oh yes. I had a home that was worth a lot of money.

That was your home in Millers Point, or where?

No, Balmain.

Which pub and where was it?

48:37 Cricketers Arms in Balmain. It has been the Monkey Bar the last six or seven years.

How did you take to running a pub?

It was good at first but the last eighteen months I'd had enough.

Profitable?

Yes.

Now you talked to me earlier about some of the things that you witnessed at 51 Lower Fort Street, was it 51 or 57?

49:17 It was 51, you are right. I also lived in 38 Lower Fort Street when I was a kid. We went from 9 Lower Fort Street and my mother bought the key money to the premises. A woman was moving out and she bought the key money for fifty pounds. We were only in there six months and we got kicked out by the Maritime, we hadn't gone through the right channels.

I see what you mean because they owned everything. So your mother for a short period became a landlady did she?

50:08 No, number. 38 was just two-storeys but it was a set of flats - you had your own place in those. Each floor was different. It was different to 51 and the other side of the road, in these you had your own autonomy on each floor, there was no landlady. The Maritime owned each separate flat.

This was 38 Lower Fort Street.

You had no shower in it and you had to boil up a copper for a bath and that.

Tell me about another tragic event at the Dunbarton Castle that you witnessed or heard about.

51:02 Well I didn't witness it because I was a kid. A chap, Jacky Carolyn, who used to drink at the hotel and used to train greyhounds, Jack. He gave the publican something to mind for him and some months later he asked him for it back and the publican denied it and an argument took place and he went home and came back and jumped the counter with a small axe and the publican emptied the gun into him on his way over the bar. The publican was charged with murder at first because he put so many bullets into him, emptied the gun completely.

He was charged with murder was he?

52:02 I think so, it might have been manslaughter, but it finished up that he beat the charge

completely. Something he was lucky to do, emptying a whole gun into a man, six or eight bullets, whatever it was.

Was Jack Carolyn an underworld figure?

Oh no, but he knew how to get a quid for himself.

Some interesting characters have come out of Millers Point, Danny Chubb is one of them. Any other stories you can tell me about the boarding houses, any interesting little anecdotes perhaps?

No, not really.

So how long did you actually live in Millers Point altogether?

Total years? Would be going on nineteen.

After you left Millers Point you said you bought the pub, what did you do after you left the pub?

53:28 Just been working at a air freight depot checking air freight now, just like tally clerk work again.

You are doing that today?

Yes.

This morning?

Well until three o'clock.

So conditions are quite different from those old days are they, the work that you are doing now with what you did before?

53:54 Oh yes. Things have changed. I mean the wharfies had a very tough struggle. If it wasn't for them a lot of other people wouldn't have got the conditions that they get because it was a flow-on to all other industries.

How do you look back now to your years at Millers Point, what kind of an image do you have of Millers Point now?

54:22 Well it was good to grow up there, I'm glad I did grow up there. We had fun there I suppose in those days. There wasn't much for kids to do in them days and I suppose we used to have fun. I am glad I did grow up there.

Kept any friends from those days?

55:00 Oh yes. Russ Taylor, we go away our families on holidays. Just went away three months ago with our families up to Byron Bay and in previous years. We go out to dinner. Craig Roberts, Dessie Gray. Boris, we see Boris from time-to-time. They were all at my sixtieth birthday which was four months ago, except for Craigie, he is up in Queensland at the moment. Still see some of the others from time-to-time yes.

Do you think your life has changed a bit since you lived at Millers Point? Did it influence who you are

now?

55:50 Probably not no. Probably not, probably just got older.

We are coming to the end of our interview - is there anything else you want to say here?

No that is about it.

Well thanks very much John for your recollections, it is much appreciated.

END OF TAPE MP-FH47 SIDE B AND END OF INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HAWTHORNE.