

CITY OF SYDNEY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
REDFERN, WATERLOO AND ALEXANDRIA

Name: Dean Ingram

Date: 29 May 1995

Place: Waterloo

Interviewer: Sue Rosen

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SR:** Interview with Dean Ingram at Waterloo, 29 May 1995.

Dean, where were you born?

DI: In Sydney in Crown Street Women's Hospital.

SR: And what year was that?

DI: 1975.

SR: And where have you grown up?

DI: Well, lived in Waterloo/Redfern area since I think I was about three years old when mum moved back here. We was living in Peakhurst and Lugarno when I was a baby, then when we were three my mum moved into Raglan Street in Redfern. We lived there for about, say, seven years and then we lived in Elizabeth Street, moved over to Elizabeth Street in Waterloo and lived there for around about two years before moving back up into Phillip Street Waterloo so it's been all around here since I've been three.

SR: So your memories would mostly go back to, your earliest memory, probably 1980 or something like that?

DI: Yes, around about the early '80s, primary school, that sort of thing. I can sort of just remember my first day at school.

SR: Really?

DI: Just a bit sort of being out the front of my house in Raglan Street, getting me photo taken and stuff like that. Yes, but a lot of memories, yes.

SR: Do you have brothers and sisters?

DI: Yes, I've got two brothers and two sisters and they're all older than me.

SR: So you're the baby?

DI: Yes.

SR: By how much?

DI: Well, my eldest sister's thirty and then me other brother's one year younger than her, then there's about four years between me other brother and then a year between my sister so she's five years older than me.

SR: Well, what are your earliest memories of this area?

2.06 DI: Living in Raglan Street. There used to be an afterschool care centre just directly across the road from my place and I used to go there after school and holidays they had the holiday activities and stuff. And just like where I lived there was sort of like about four or five neighbours of my mates that I had and I can remember like just hanging around with them in the paddock next door to our place, making cubbyhouses, you know, stupid little things like that.

SR: Was there a paddock there, like vacant?

DI: Yes, just a block of land. Like I say about one or two houses away there was this big long paddock. It was only Housing Commission built houses on it around about two years ago but it was a paddock up until then. The area where it was used to be a bakery and actually my sister, one of her friends at school's parents owned the bakery and then once it closed down there was a big block of land left behind it – I think it might have been their property. They used to have a house just above the paddock and they had two German Shepherd dogs that sometimes when you're going through the paddock and they'd come running. That was one thing, we used to be worried about going through the paddock, worrying about the two German Shepherd dogs but it was sort of like a game, you know what I mean, to run around there and whatever. And catching grasshoppers too, that was one thing we used to love doing.

SR: Yes. You don't expect a big vacant sort of paddock in the city, do you?

DI: Well, I don't really know what it ever was but ever since we lived there it was always just this big paddock. And, actually, there was another one just up in Phillip Street. Where I live now, just down the road where there's more a block of Housing Commission places there, used to be a paddock, sort of just a big block of land and it just had this big fence around it. It was never, ever used for anything and I don't know if it was the Housing Commission's or whether they just bought it but then they built houses on it around about five years ago, something like that.

4.28 **SR: So has all the vacant land been taken up around this area since then, do you think?**

DI: Yes, yes. I think because it's changed a lot compared to what it used to be. Like now, especially with Redfern changing the way it is, becoming more sort of like a popular area with Redfern Street and stuff like that and you notice like with Surry Hills it's like the flats that they used to build around there sort of just growing and coming in because there's a lot of the new houses and flats and that that have been built around that just recently; like it's just sort of all come up.

SR: And they build on the old industrial sites, I think, some of them.

DI: Yes, a lot of them, yes, because just recently as well across the road, in Chalmers Street across the road from my place, there was an old factory there and I think they used to manufacture material or something like that and about a year ago they closed that down and started building – I think they may be Housing Commission but I'm not sure but a new lot of flats have just been built across the road; they've just finished them places.

SR: Well, what kind of a house did you live in, what sort of housing did you have?

DI: Well, when we moved into Raglan Street it was a big house. It was four bedrooms and it had like a backyard and a shed out the back and I remember we used to have a mandarin tree in the backyard.

6.01 **SR: Was it a two-storey sort of place?**

DI: Yes, two storeys, yes, a pretty old two-storey house, four bedrooms and a toilet out the back – that's how old it was.

SR: And what about the other houses?

DI: Well, when we moved into Elizabeth Street there was, I think, about five or six of us living in a two-bedroom flat and so like three of us, me and my brother and my sister, had a sofa bed in the lounge room - and we lived in the flat for about, I think it was nearly two year or maybe a bit more – that's where we had to sleep, me and my brother and sister because me older brother had a girlfriend and they had a baby so they had the room and my mum in the other room.

SR: Well, what kind of a place was Redfern and Waterloo for a kid, say in the early '80s, what was it like?

DI: I wouldn't say rough but sort of – like, I don't know, there was just always something to do. There seemed to be always something to do; you could always find someone you knew or someone you knew to do something with or someone to hang around or somewhere to go.

SR: Were there a lot of kids?

DI: Yes, heaps, heaps of kids. I mean Redfern School, I'm not sure how many kids there were but there was always – and being a lot of schools in the area as well, with Waterloo and Alexandria there was always heaps of kids around.

SR: Did you live near the big flats that mentioned where she grew up? She often talked about the kids playing in a playground.

DI: In the sand park, yes. She used to live in Wellington Street which is just up – well, it's two blocks away from Raglan Street. That's where we lived probably around about the time that she lived in Wellington Street and then probably when we lived up here she would have lived in Wellington Street but I know the flats that she's talking about.

8.19 **SR: Did you ever go and play in those areas?**

DI: Yes, yes.

SR: She talked about different playgrounds or compounds she talked about.

DI: Because a lot of the flats too, there's a lot of parks and a lot of – like with just I was talking about the paddock, well, just across the road from that there's two lots of flats so there's two playgrounds that you can go and they had swings and whatever and then across the road there's another two blocks of flats so up on the top flats there's a playground then, then down on the bottom flats there was a playground there. The flats was talking about is probably either them or there's another one, a block of flats, which in the middle it's got a sand park. Everyone used to call it the sand park because it's a park and it had all the sand, you know, with all the different things in it. And then another set of three flats up here, so there's a playground there but that's more for, yes, younger kids. And plus Redfern Park just straight across the road which is a huge park, Waterloo Oval where they play football.

SR: And did different groups of kids hang around different sort of playgrounds or have that as their focal point or did you just roam pretty freely?

DI: Sort of, yes. But I mean there wasn't like "This is where we hang out and that's where you hang out", it was more sort of everyone. Like at that age that I was you don't like doing the same thing over and over again so you're always finding out what happens if you do this so you're running around sort of getting into mischief wherever you can and finding new places sort of thing.

SR: O.K. Well, what sort of a family do you come from, how would you describe your family?

10.05 DI: Pretty good. Grew up with two older brothers and sisters. I wouldn't say that was good all the time but it is good having a big family but, yes, it was good, a good family.

SR: How would you describe your mother, what sort of woman is your mother?

DI: In what sort of a way do you mean?

SR: Was she warm, was she fun-loving?

DI: All that. O.K, yes. She was a heaps good mum, like especially with me being the baby I'd say I got favoured a lot and probably a bit spoiled. Yes, I wouldn't be able to live without my mum.

SR: In your family who controlled the finances?

DI: Mum. Mum always looked after the money. I don't really know, like because I was a kid I didn't really know about the bills or who really looked after what but I remember just waking up to \$1.20 for school and we'd all have our money set out on the table. As far as I knew mum always looked after the money.

SR: And managed the house, paid the rent and all that kind of thing?

DI: Yes, yes. Yes, she always was the one to pay the bills.

SR: Were your parents religious?

DI: Not really. I mean like my grandmother, my dad's mother, was a Christian and like my family believe in God and Christianity or whatever but not really religious where it was ever put on us all or anything like that. We didn't go to church on Sunday and things like that but we always believed in God and

12.21 **SR: Did you go to a Catholic school?**

DI: No. My mum did, mum went to a Catholic school. I went to Redfern Public School and then in fifth class I went to a Catholic school for about three weeks. That was it; that was enough, long enough.

SR: Were your parents politically involved?

DI: Not really. My dad, with the issues of land rights and stuff like that, my dad was really into sort of fighting for land rights and things like that but my mum, no, I wouldn't say.

SR: Did you go with your dad, say to any demos or stuff like that?

DI: Well, every year we used to go to the land rights march they used to have once a year. And I can't remember, I think it might have been during Aboriginal Week we used to march from Redfern into the city, into Town Hall, the Town Hall there in the middle part. Everyone used to march to there and just have this big march on the day and then they'd have all these speeches and people who'd get up and talk about land rights and things like that but they stopped having them, I don't know if it was about five years ago or more. I can't remember how long ago it was but I remember every year we used to get ready and dad'd

start making the badges and headbands and everything else, you know, getting ready to wear, flags and whatever.

SR: You know the 1988 celebrations - - -

DI: Yes.

SR: - - - or Year of Mourning, what can you remember about that? How important was that in your family?

14.03 DI: I mean it was sort of like a year where because it was the Bicentenary there was a lot of focus on that but I think that there also was a lot of focus on Aboriginals and whatever had happened and stuff like that but, yes, we was there, I mean like going to the demonstrations and the events, whatever they were having.

SR: Did you go to the big one on Australia Day? They had a march. They were doing all this stuff down the harbour and the tall ships were coming in - - -

DI: Yes.

SR: - - - and then there was this other march, I think, up Belmore Park.

DI: Yes. Well, we went down to Circular Quay and on that day of the marches went around and went part of the march and then just sort of drifted away and went looking around and just doing other things on the day of that march that I can remember. Yes, but other than that just, you know.

SR: What sort of discipline was used in your family if you were being a ratbag?

DI: Dad'd always get the belt.

SR: Was that just like a waist belt thing?

DI: Yes, yes, and just a whack across the legs. Nothing much, just one or two whacks across the legs depending how bad I was.

SR: What would you have to do to get that?

DI: But I never used to get hit that much. Well, I remember my brother, it got found out that he was smoking and he was in bed and was late for school and he wouldn't get up and my dad went and got the belt and went in and woke him up with the belt. He only hit him about two or three times on the legs but that woke him up all right.

- 16.00 **SR: Well, as a kid, growing up, were you expected to contribute to the family in any way, like paper runs, collecting bottles? I mean in earlier generations like people who grew up in the Depression they had to do everything they could – everything helped. What about in the '80s? If you got a part time job would you have to give the money to the family?**
- DI: No, not for me. Well, when I got my first job I was expected to pay board but I mean that wasn't till I was fifteen. I was fifteen when I got my first job.
- SR: And that was a permanent sort of job?**
- DI: Yes, and just pay board. But I mean like with paper runs and that I used to do a paper run but it was mine, that was just my pocket money and we used to get pocket money, like sometimes five, ten dollars a week, whatever mum could afford.
- SR: And after you got your paper run job did you still get pocket money too?**
- DI: Yes. I mean you didn't get much on a paper run.
- SR: Really? How much would you get for a paper run?**
- DI: Well, I ended up I think I done it for around about four weeks or five weeks and I think it was around about probably six dollars a week if I was lucky.
- SR: How many hours would you have to spend?**
- DI: I used to go like straight after school to the paper shop, then just have to walk around, around here, just around. That's right, we lived up here in the flats and I used to do a paper run all up Phillip Street, around the flats. Take me probably 'round about an hour to an hour and a half, maybe a bit longer. Yes, well basically you got so much per cent of how many papers you sold and that wasn't really ever much money. I think the paper was about forty cents at the time or something like that – might have even been cheaper – probably about forty cents, yes.
- SR: That doesn't sound like such a good thing. What did your family do for fun? Did the family do anything like together for fun much?**
- 18.14 DI: Not really, not much that I can remember, only with like family visits to places. Like I remember one place we used to go a lot was out to Campbelltown. I don't know why I can remember it but my aunty used to live out there with her husband and they had three cousins that lived out there. We used to go out there and visit all the time but I was only

like about four or five, four, five and six. We used to go out there a lot but we never really had sort of like weekly family outings or anything like that.

SR: Did you go on holidays every now and then ever?

DI: Not really, only to like if it to where my dad came from, where he was brought up to visit.

SR: Where was that?

DI: In Cowra, Erambie Mission in Cowra. My dad was brought up there so like sometimes we'd go up there for something'd be on or the [agricultural?] Show'd be on up there. We'd just go up there for a week or so but it wouldn't be all the family all the time. It'd be sometimes like my mum and dad and two of us or whatever.

SR: What would you do in the evening? Say you'd come home from school, did you have the main meal in the evening?

DI: Yes. Like when I'd get home from school I'd sort of go and play or run to the park or whatever till around about we had to be home at I think it was five or five thirty for dinner. Once we'd have dinner I remember I'd have to go straight, have a bath, get into my pyjamas and then was allowed to watch TV till eight thirty and we had to go to bed - unless *Prisoner* was on; I was allowed to stay up till nine thirty.

20.07 **SR: Aside from *Prisoner*, what were the favourite TV programs?**

DI: I'm just trying to think now. I remember like the shows that were always on like *Sons & Daughters*. I can't think – *Prisoner* was one of the main ones. I'll never forget that one. Yes, to tell you the truth I can't really think of them.

SR: Yes. It's almost like it's too recent. Did your parents work?

DI: Yes. My mum worked as a cook at Aristocrat poker machines. She used to cook for the workers and whatever.

SR: Was it a factory?

DI: Yes, a factory place and she'd cook; make all the lunchtime meals, hot meals or sandwiches, whatever. But when I was younger as well I don't really remember much about it but I know that she used to work for the Aboriginal preschool which started out as sort of like a lunch thing where they used to just give kids their lunch, you know, to make sure that they had nutrition and stuff like that, healthy food. So they used to feed them every lunchtime and eventually they got funding and

stuff and set up a preschool and mum used to work there as the bus driver and I don't know what else she used to do. Yes, but the one that I can remember from that would be the cooking in the factory.

SR: And what about your dad?

DI: Well, sort of not in the one job all the time. He used to just work around a lot, getting a lot of different jobs but I never really knew like where they were. Well, I wasn't really worried, you know what I mean; growing up it didn't bother me where they were.

22.20 **SR: Did your mum like her work, cooking?**

DI: Well, I think so.

SR: Do you remember how she felt it when she'd come home? Was she tired or was she happy enough in the job?

DI: Well, she was happy enough with the job. I know that she was happy with the job because I think she enjoyed cooking because she does a lot of catering - even still now she cooks. But, yes, I think she was happy with her job. When they called her in I think she was only meant to work for six weeks or something, filling in, and she ended up was there for about seven years and so I mean even just being there that long and the only reason she left is because the company retrenched so many workers and whatever; that's how she lost the job.

SR: What was a typical meal at home? Say the evening meal, what would you typically have?

DI: I can't remember sort of now but like now one night a week is a baked dinner, like Monday night we have baked dinners. I can't remember when that was before but we to have like one night we'd have a baked dinner and then meat and veggies the next night and something different the next night but it was always a good meal, just like a good, big meal.

SR: When you were growing up who were your friends?

DI: Well, from like the earliest I can remember when we first moved into Raglan Street there was a neighbour who lived just two doors up from me, a Greek boy named Con who was one and then there was like one across the road, a boy that lived across the road, and then another boy that lived just up the street.

24.12 We were sort of like not a gang but like we were always together, you know. We'd always meet up after school and go and do this and go and do that and that was probably up till around about second class.

And then at school there was like three boys, a different group of three boys that I grew up and we were friends from kindergarten till sixth class but in my last bit of schooling I didn't go to school much.

SR: In sixth class?

DI: Yes, in sixth class and then I went to high school for two months, Year 7, left and then went back in Year 8 for about three months, then left

SR: What happened, what went so wrong with school?

DI: I don't know. I just didn't like school and it started in fifth class. When I was in fifth class at school, when I got to fifth class what had happened was there was too many kids in the fifth grade in the school at the time so they needed to move, I think it was three or four kids out of fifth class and put them into sixth class just to make the classes whatever.

SR: Even out.

DI: Yes. So they ended up sending three – I think it was three – up into sixth class so from fifth class I sort of was separated. Not separated from my friends but like it all sort of changed then because it wasn't the same any more with me being in a higher grade.

26.11

At school just, I don't know, like at first it was hard because being in the sixth class. Like we was always taught slower and given extra help because we were only fifth graders. I mean at first the work was hard and then just everything and I just started hating school. You know, it just sort of started getting me in that state where I was just "I don't want to go to school any more". And that's when I tried another school. Mum put me into Alex [Alexandria school?] and I went there for about two weeks. Then I just stopped going again so she tried to get me to go back and go back.

SR: Did the truant officers chase you and all that sort of thing?

DI: Yes. I remember one day in Alex I walked into Alex School and mum took me to school and made me go and I didn't want to go so she took me into the office, into the front office of the school and held me there. And then she said "I'm going" and she went to work and she went out and got into the car so as soon as she left I walked out and walked out the front of the school but she was still sitting across the road in the car. So she come over and grabbed me and went off her head and dragged me in the car and straight away went home and started ringing up Mount Carmel School to get me into there and I still didn't want to go

but she made me so I tried at school for about a week and didn't like it, especially I think because it was religious that was even worse.

SR: It's a wonder the school didn't address the problem. If you'd been O.K. at school before and they put you up and then you hate it then it seems pretty obvious.

DI: Yes. Well, I ended up going back to Redfern.

SR: It's pretty insensitive.

27.57 DI: Yes. I mean at first I didn't see that as a blame. Well, I don't sort of still see it as a blame but it just sort of did start where I just stopped wanting to go to school any more because from kindergarten all the way up to fifth class I used to love school and mum even said she used to have to fight for me to stay home when I was sick because I just loved going to school all the time, you know, there was nothing else to do. But, yes, so anyway when I left school I went and got a job straight away.

SR: But when you didn't go to school, like even in high school and primary school, didn't the Education Department or somebody – I mean it was against the law. Didn't they actually put those, whoever they were at that time – was it welfare?

DI: Well, the welfare never actually got involved at all out of all that time. During the last part – I can't remember if it was when I was in sixth class - I mean when they put me up into sixth class or whether I was in sixth class – but I was going to school sort of like two and three days a week so it wasn't where I just wasn't going. So in sixth class it was like I'd go two or three days a week and then towards the end when I found out my grandfather was sick and because I wasn't going to school they sent me down to live with my grandfather. So for the remainder of that year I just didn't go to school anymore and just stayed with my grandfather because he was sick and I just was never questioned or anything by the welfare – I was lucky, I guess. And then that's why when I was fourteen my mum rang up and had to get a special exemption for me to leave school.

SR: You know when you were with your friends – this is probably taking you a bit back to when you were younger – what sort of things would you do together? Like how free were you to roam and what would you do with your mates?

30.15 DI: Sort of like from the after school, say from three o'clock till I had to be home for dinner till five o'clock the furthest I remember we was allowed to go was just to the park which is just like sort of just down the street,

the next block from where I lived. Well, at that age we just sort of stayed around the area but we'd just find things to do there. Like we'd build a cubbyhouse or go into the paddock and catch grasshoppers or just find something to do or make a cubbyhouse in our back shed or make a shop out the front of my house, you know, do stupid things like that. We sort of just always stayed around the main block of where I lived.

SR: What about in the holidays and when you were older? So when you were older and it was school holidays and you had, presumably, bigger blocks of time free what sort of things would you do?

DI: Well, like when we used to live in Raglan Street and even when we moved out up until around about twelve I used to always just mainly in the holidays go to the after school care centre. They used to have holiday programs so you'd go there. That was sort of like the only thing to do, you know what I mean, because mum worked and whatever. I'd just go over to the after school care centre – it was called The Factory.

SR: Did you like it there?

DI: Yes. Yes, it was good. They'd have different things. Like one day they'd go to the movies, the next day they'd go to the beach or they'd stay in, they'd stay and do this so there was always each day of the week you'd do something different and that was probably the main thing we did during the school holidays up until I was around about twelve, around that age.

32.23 **SR: Was it a free sort of place or was it like school?**

DI: Not like school but you wasn't free, you know what I mean. It was sort of in a way like school but it wasn't as bad. It was good.

SR: You enjoyed it?

DI: Yes, because they were taking me out and you was doing things, yes, I wouldn't say it was like school. I don't know how – you know what I mean.

SR: And what about after you were twelve you were going to say?

DI: Well, I remember after twelve and sort of thirteen or fourteen I basically just was allowed to do what I want sort of thing. Like I wouldn't hardly go out, running around the street, rah, rah, rah, but basically like just come here to the youth club.

SR: What was it like here at the youth club?

DI: It was good. They used to have a trampoline in the main hall and all these sort of like gymnasium bars and things like that and it was good. They used to be open till, I think, about nine o'clock so that was the latest I was allowed out till. I used to have to be home at nine o'clock anyway.

34.00 **SR: Did you have any adventures as a kid when you were roaming around with your friends?**

DI: Well, like what?

SR: I don't know, just something odd.

DI: I can't really think to tell you the truth.

SR: O.K. Well, what games did you play – can you remember the names?

DI: Well, cubbyhouse was one thing I liked. We always used to build cubbyhouses, that was one of the things, because like we used to have a shed when we lived in Raglan Street. We used to have like a little shed thing out the back and we were forever building cubbyhouses or, yes, basically just going to the park and running, playing tips and build-ups and things like that.

SR: Did you have any toys and books as a kid?

DI: Yes, not heaps. I mean not a room full of toys or anything but I mean like every now and then I'd get a bike for Christmas or we'd have the different games, games what all of us can play and things like that.

SR: Can you remember any fads? You know how these days kids get things like, I don't know, ninjas [Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles] or whatever and all that, was there any fads like that then that you had, that you were into? Barbies [doll]? Sorry, Ken [doll]?

DI: The one I can remember – but I mean this is like when I was about probably three or four – there was them things. It's like a skateboard, it's got four wheels and it's flat and you put your knee on it and you have to hold onto the two little bar things at the front.

36.06 You put your knee on it and you like scrape your foot and you go along and you can put your other knee on it and you just ride along the street. I mean that's a long time ago but I can remember them because I remember always scraping me knee on it; that's just why one of the things I can remember.

SR: Obviously nothing a big deal.

DI: Yes. No, I can't really think of many that were sort of that big to me anyway.

SR: Yes. Were there any places you were not allowed to go, where your parents said "You're not to go blah, there"?

DI: Not really. Just like we always had to say where we were going and basically just be there, like go wherever we was going and then come straight home. But there wasn't really any like bad spots or places where it was like "Don't go there".

SR: Well, what about people to avoid? Were there any people in the neighbourhood that you were told pretty well to steer clear of?

DI: Not really. I can remember one, just this one person - like we weren't really told to stay clear of him but we all did anyway. There was this Chinese man who used to be in the paddock all the time, used to go to the paddock all the time, and he was an alcoholic or something and he'd always be walking around with a bottle of wine and whenever we'd see we'd go somewhere else or we wouldn't go near the paddock or if kids used to see him in there they'd run because he was like he was. You'd just sing out and go off but, you know, being kids you'd just all run and, yes, we used to steer clear of him but there was really anyone where it was dangerous to us or that we thought it's going to be a danger.

38.08 **SR: So it was a safe neighbourhood?**

DI: Yes. I mean like, yes, we was told not to talk to strangers and things like that but not specifically any person that I can think

SR: Was there much crime in the area?

DI: I think there's always been quite a bit of crime.

SR: But would that be locals directed against locals or would it - - -

DI: Both, I think, locals and people coming from out of the area as well.

SR: Were your parents security conscious, like locking the house and all that kind of business?

DI: Yes, yes. I mean out of all the time we've lived in here we've never once been broken into - touch wood. We've never once been broken into or had anything like that, not that I can remember anyway.

SR: So what sort of crime were you aware of - was it drug related?

DI: Yes, not really. Mainly like car thieving was the main one and probably still is the main one.

SR: Well, that'd be mostly kids going for joyrides.

DI: Yes, yes. I mean I don't really remember any – like I mean I know there was a lot of crime but not really what.

SR: We've talked a bit about your schooling. Is there anything else you wanted to say about schooling, your school experience? We've sort of covered that a bit. You really liked it for the first, up to about fifth grade. You must have been quite bright or you wouldn't have been one of the ones who got promoted into the sixth grade.

39.58 DI: Yes. Well, I don't know because one of the reasons we were told that we were being moved up because we were the naughtiest. But I mean like when I did go to school for that certain amount of time in high school I always loved maths and I couldn't stand English and I was always sort of pretty good with me work, wasn't slack or anything but, yes, I just didn't like school full stop.

SR: Did most of the local kids go to Redfern?

DI: Yes.

SR: Redfern Central is that what it was called, Redfern - - -

DI: Redfern Primary School.

SR: Primary.

DI: Yes. I mean most of the people that I knew were from Redfern School, growing up most of the people I knew were from the school. There was a couple that used to go to Waterloo Public School but most of the kids I'd say that I knew or hung around or whatever were from Redfern School.

SR: Before, you said actually from about the age of second class through to about fifth grade that you had the same friends and you were together.

DI: Yes.

SR: I mean that means that the population around here was pretty stable. Is that right, people lived here for a long time?

DI: Yes. I mean because I can remember with the sort of group of kids, like the group of us the reason why probably that there was them three,

the main ones, was because they were the ones that sort of lived here and, I mean, they still do, the three of them. But there was always like another couple of kids who'd hang around with us and be in the group who like moved in later and then moved away and things like that. Like I can remember this one boy that came to the school and ended up was there from about third or fourth class and he became best mates with us too but in the end of fifth class he ended up leaving as well.

42.20 **SR: Do most people in the area own their own homes or do they rent?**

DI: Rent.

SR: And is that from the Housing Commission or from private landlords?

DI: Yes. No, Housing Commission. I mean I wouldn't be able to say for sure because I'm not sure what the per cent is or whatever but I'd say probably sixty to seventy per cent of the houses in Redfern/Waterloo would be Housing Commission anyway so, yes.

SR: That's a lot. Next question. Did you get any sex education, either from your parents or at school?

DI: Not at school, well, not at primary school, but in high school there was sex education. Never, ever got it off the parents. And then I didn't go to school much but I actually was involved with a youth project with South Sydney Services and Family Planning Association where we had three months of training to work on the 'Making Sense of Sex' hotline and so we had to sort of do three months' training in sex education so that when other kids rang up to ask us questions we'd be able to answer their questions or refer them onto help.

SR: Did you have anything to do with that Fact and Fantasy file?

DI: Yes, that was it. What it was was the project was called – well, I can't remember what the project was called – but what we done, we started doing workshops. Like we'd go a couple of afternoons a week and do workshops where we started learning about this and that about sex education and certain things, STDs and all sorts of stuff like that.

44.09 Then we had a four day camp where forty seven kids from – there was so many from, I can't think, Randwick and then Matraville, I think it was – Randwick, Matraville and I think it might have been Cleveland Street, I can't remember - yes, Cleveland Street, I think it was. And anyway we had this camp with forty seven kids and we all just met and we had the four days a whole lot of different sorts of workshops training us to both learn about sex education so that we knew a lot, so that we knew

to answer questions, and learn how to answer questions on the phone to the people asking. And then one of the things was to start designing My Diary because the diary was what we were using to launch the hotline. So after we got back from the camp we had more workshops. Like we used to set up certain groups like editorial group and different things like that and all starting putting it together and when we launched the diary that was actually to launch the hotline but the diary was to sort of let everyone know - you know, had the phone number for the hotline and stuff with it.

SR: That was a good project. What was the average family size when you were growing up?

DI: Well, from what I can remember like a lot of the kids that I went to school with were single, one only kids, but there was probably more per cent of bigger families. I couldn't really say how many. I'd say probably like four and five, three to five kids in a family.

46.09

It's just funny now that you mention it. Come to think of it I know at least three of the main people that I used to hang around with in school were the only kids.

SR: What was the ethnic mix of the neighbourhood?

DI: All kinds. Like especially at Redfern School it was really like just multicultural, there was all nationalities. Like even from kindergarten all the way up - I can remember a girl that went to the school the whole six years, she was Russian, her family was Russian, and then there's like the Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek, Macedonian, Fijian, Greek, Lebanese, whatever.

SR: Incredible.

DI: There was all sorts of nationalities at the school.

SR: If you were to describe the neighbourhood, would you say it was residential or industrial or mixed? How would you describe the neighbourhood?

DI: Mixed but I'd say more, yes, residential I would say, 'specially because if you look there's three blocks of flats up here which has got like sixteen floors and twelve flats on each floor and there's three up there and then there's like four down there and then there's two pensioner high-rise flats. That's got about twenty four floors, I think, with about probably say six to eight flats on each and then there's like other big lots of flats so, yes, it's more residential definitely but I think it gets more industrial around the Alexandria area and that sort of thing.

48.15 **SR: Was there a social focus of the area? Was there a place where people like your mum would go and have a chat or a pub where the men would mix or a community organisation or anything like that where if there's something going on in the neighbourhood that was, I don't know, a crisis or something or other where people would go and talk?**

DI: Not really. No, I mean not that I can remember there wasn't really like a central sort of - - -

SR: What about organisations, support organisations? Like was there a neighbourhood centre or places like that?

DI: Well, there was The Factory Community Centre.

SR: And what's that – who?

DI: Well, it's an after school – I can't remember what it actually started out as but it used to be after school care and then like two nights a week they'd run a youth centre. See, because I don't know if that had that before but now the youth centre has separated and become a big youth centre now and it's open five nights a week and is their own place incorporated and the community centre's still going and they have like a toy library for kids and they have day-care and still have after school care and things like that.

SR: We asked if it was a safe neighbourhood.

DI: Yes.

SR: Where did most people work in the area?

DI: I don't know, really, because I mean like my mum never worked in the area - I mean Rosebery it was sort of the area but, you know, out of there – but I'm, you know, being at school I don't know where mainly people worked.

50.17 **SR: O.K. What were the main businesses in the area that you can remember?**

DI: Coles probably is the biggest and Flemings in Botany Road – it used to be Flemings, Food for Less now – but that was always like one of the main shopping sort of places where go and shop. I remember Saturday mornings, every Saturday morning, get up early and Botany Road to go shopping.

SR: And did people shop every week or did they shop on a daily basis?

DI: No, more the weekly sort of, as far as I know, the weekly sort of shopping or the fortnightly shopping, whatever, yes, rather than bits and pieces.

SR: Did most people have cars or were they reliant on public transport?

DI: I'd say quite a few had cars but I mean then again a lot too had to rely on public transport.

SR: Did you have a car in your family?

DI: No. I'd say my mum's had a car probably most of the times. Like there's been times where she has not had one but most of the time she's sort of managed to have a car or my grandmother and so my mum sort of used to use that one as well.

SR: What smells can you remember, any smells you associate with this area from when you were a kid?

52.02 DI: Not that I can remember.

SR: O.K, all right.

DI: Not really.

SR: What sounds, what particular sounds - can you think back?

DI: Just I remember at night because you can always hear the horns and I don't know if it's from the boats, the carriers or the trains but you can always hear, like late at night or when it's quieter at night you can always hear the echoing and I think it must echo through the flats or something and it's pretty loud.

SR: Were there any local crims that you knew of in the '80s? Was there anything going on – see I'm asking this question about two-up schools and all that kind of thing but they were more popular in the '30s and bootlegging, sly grog, prostitution, moonlighting, you know, It was the preceding generation. I think they were much worse than yours. You know, there wasn't that sort of thing around, really. Was there any prostitution in this area?

DI: Well, I know that there is one, there is a brothel around here now and it's been there probably for - like I can remember about five years but I don't know how long it's been there before that.

SR: And did most people shop locally up in Botany Road?

DI: Yes. There was always like Botany Road and Coles Shopping Centre up in Surry Hills. They used to call it Redfern Mall but it's now called Surry Hills Shopping Plaza.

SR: O.K.

DI: I mean it's better business if they're Surry Hills rather than Redfern. Anyway.

54.00 **SR: About the different neighbourhoods, were there different suburbs like Alexandria or Waterloo or Redfern, just neighbouring suburbs that had sort of a different social status? Were some looked down upon and some were considered more affluent - was there any of that kind of rivalry?**

DI: Not really. I think with Redfern and Waterloo there is a lot like with The Block at Redfern.

SR: What do you mean "The Block"?

DI: The Block. That's Eveleigh Street Redfern where all the Kooris live in Redfern. They call it The Block because it's like Eveleigh and Louis Street and that whole block belongs to the Aboriginal Housing Company. And, yes, that's one place where when I was heaps younger I wouldn't go because it was always like a rough area.

SR: Was there rivalry between the kids?

DI: And, yes, I was told not to go and it was rough and I mean there was always the odd fights but never like the real big rivalry. Like most of the time people could get on from the two suburbs or whatever but sometimes there'd be like a fight between this person and that person and so he'd go back and get his mates and he'd go back and get his mates so then it'd be sort of like that.

SR: We've heard hilarious stories about the Erskineville kids and the Newtown kids in the '30s and '40s throwing chunks of blue metal at each other across the railway line and they used to have these gang wars with all these ten year olds, thirty or forty ten year olds on each side. I mean you never had any sort of like the Waterloo kids will go and belt up the kids in Redfern or Erskineville? Did that not exist in your childhood?

DI: I mean not that I'd remember. Like I can remember fights - I mean I don't think it'd be that bad. Sort of like we'd be at the youth centre and a couple of the kids from say Redfern will come up looking for this one certain person to have a fight with and then they'd go up and find them

and that person would be with like four or five of his mates and then all of a sudden they'd all be out the front and these two people fighting.

56.15

But it was always sort of like them two would fight and then if this one jumped in then that other person'd jump in - it was never really like bottles thrown, well, not that I can remember. I mean there was one time where there was this fight in one of the parks and one of the kids threw a bottle at this other kid's head so he went and run up to the flats and grabbed a knife and then come back down and chased this other lad with a knife and he run, he took off and I don't know where he went to and then he ended up chasing one of his other mates with the knife and then caught him and was going to stab him and then someone else come up and kicked him and started getting into him. And then one of the boys, the boy who went over and was trying to get this other lad off, stop stabbing this other lad, ended up getting cut in the leg but it wasn't sort of bad. It was just two stitches and then once he got cut everything just sort of settled down because there was blood.

SR: Like when we're talking to these people about Erskineville and Newtown they're saying "It was good fun, we didn't mean it" but it was just sort of organised on Saturday that they'd have these things and they weren't necessarily sort of serious. It was funny.

DI: No, I can't, yes.

SR: What were the most popular newspapers?

DI: Gee, the only two papers I can always remember is the *Sun*, the *Sun* that used to be, and the *Mirror*, the *Daily Telegraph* now or whatever it's called, whatever it used to be called and the *Sunday Telegraph* because I always remember the Ralph and what's his name, the commercial, two dogs commercial(?), *Sunday Telegraph*.

58.17 **SR: What about magazines?**

DI: Well, I can't remember because I hate reading. I don't hate reading, I just don't like reading.

SR: Comics?

DI: I don't know. I wasn't really into comics or anything so I'm not sure.

SR: O.K. What were the big issues of the time? Can you remember any big deal sort of things that people were concerned about? Not necessarily just in Redfern/Waterloo but world events.

DI: Not really. I mean 1988, I can remember it was sort of like an important year of with fighting for land rights and things like that, like with

demonstrations and things like that. Like that was one time where it was sort of a major thing, like a major event or however you want to call it but I'm not really sure what line you mean, you know what I mean.

SR: When you were a kid did you go to the pictures by the way, the movies?

DI: Yes. I mean not all the time, it wasn't like a weekly thing where we'd go but every chance that I got I could go. I remember I always whinged to go with me brothers and sisters because they'd never want to take me but most of the time they'd end up having to. So, yes, I'd say probably a couple of times, at least two or three times a month go to the movies.

60.05 **SR: What did you know about the outside world outside your local area – how aware were you?**

DI: What do you mean, what the areas was like and all that?

SR: Well, just what was going on in the world. I mean were you aware that there were other countries? You know what I mean.

DI: Yes. I mean there was always the news and you watch the news and you'll find out what's going on here, there and everywhere else but I've always just lived in Waterloo and Redfern and never really bothered much about what's going on.

SR: Can you remember any sort of rituals? Can you remember Cracker Night, for example?

DI: Yes, yes. I remember Cracker Night at Alex Park [Alexandria Park] now that you mention it. I actually forgot all about that.

SR: What would you do?

DI: Well, well, I remember before Cracker Night, a couple of weeks before Cracker Night we'd always find the bags of firecrackers - mum'd start buying them, collecting them up before the night - and then get all excited. I can't remember what night it used to be but they'd go down to Alex Park and the whole family and heaps of kids would go down to Alex Park and just set off all their crackers.

SR: Did you make bonfires?

DI: Yes, they'd always have a bonfire at Alex Park.

SR: Would the neighbourhood organise that or the council?

DI: I'm not sure if it was council. I think it might have been the council who organised it. To tell you the truth I'm not sure but they used to have a bonfire and all the fireworks at Alex Park.

SR: Can you remember anything else where it was sort of almost ritualistic, where they'd have ceremonies and the flag would be raised and singing anthems or anything?

62.03 **SR: This is tape 2 of the interview with Dean Ingram on the 29th of May 1995. Can you remember what illnesses were common in the early '80s?**

DI: Within the area sort of thing?

SR: Yes, and just what people were aware of and kids' diseases that they got?

DI: I mean I can't really even remember much. I mean probably the biggest disease that I heard about was like AIDS and that first come out in like with doing the sex education and things like that but I mean other diseases like cancer or things like that I don't really know what people dying of or what diseases people had in the area.

SR: Can you remember any deaths?

DI: How far back, what do you mean?

SR: Well, just as a kid can you remember like either friends or kids that you knew who died or kids' parents who died?

DI: Well, actually one kid I can remember who died – it wasn't from a disease – when we was at one of the – talking about the youth centre before, the holiday school care group – one day they took us all out to the National Park and I went with The Factory and the church across the road also had a bus and the church bus had gotten there first and were swimming at one part and The Factory bus was going up to another part of the National Park to swim and I remember going past the others where they were and there was just an ambulance and everything going on and one of the kids that went with the church – I think was only about six years old – drowned in the water.

64.01 **SR: That was at Wattamolla.**

DI: Yes, yes. I can't remember how old the kid was but I remember that day. I don't know how old I was – probably about say, seven to ten or something – but I can always remember that day that it was a freaky thing to happen. And then later on, like most recently, a lot of drug related deaths have been happening. Like I think it was '90 my cousin

passed away of a drug overdose - she was only seventeen years old - and there was like three that was close. Like within a month's period there was another girl who also grew up in the area with my cousin, that girl, and with all of us, that we all knew, she also passed away. So that was four around that time of close and then since then there's been a few and like most recently a brother and sister, two good friends of mine, both passed away within eight months of a drug overdose.

SR: Was there a lot of drugs around here? I mean how young were you when you first encountered sort of like hard drugs being around the place, where you knew you would be able to get them and that stuff?

DI: Me, see, I've never really been into drugs myself, any of that scene but I know marijuana – “yarndi” I call it – has always been around, I mean that just always has been. And I didn't really know much about hard drugs until probably like say six to eight years ago but I wouldn't have ever known where to get it or anything like that until probably most recently where you know this person goes there or, you know. If you wanted it you could get it easy.

66.15 **SR: But it wasn't being waved in your face or anything as a young kid?**

DI: No, no.

SR: Can you remember any of the politicians of the day?

DI: Not really. Bob Hawke's probably about the last one I can remember; probably can't remember any before that. No, not really.

SR: In growing up, did you see or experience sort of a time of major change, did you notice any change in the area?

DI: Not really. I mean it's always sort of been – like there's been a lot of changes. Like when you look at it now there's a big sort of change but it hasn't sort of all just changed, a big change in sort of like over a space of years, it's sort of like changed bit by bit, you know what I mean. There's no sort of like major point where it all of a sudden was something different to what it used to be sort of thing. Yes, it's always been the same, the way I see it.

SR: Now, I want to ask a funny question. Can you remember any favourite ads and jingles or things like that?

DI: Come to mention it, like I remember one ad and I can't remember exactly how it goes but it was for Levi's jeans and I was probably about

seven or eight, I think, and the people'd have the Levi's jeans and at the end of the commercial they both turned around like that.

68.04 And me and my sister, every time we seen it we'd just laugh and I just always remember that commercial because it was sort of like a commercial that I liked, you know what I mean. What's some more? I can't think.

SR: I know what we were asking before. I was trying to get onto rituals and things. Like we had Cracker Night up at Alexandria Park and was Christmas a big occasion?

DI: Always, yes.

SR: How would you celebrate Christmas?

DI: Well, always we'd have the Christmas tree and we'd always get quite a good amount of presents, I reckon. We'd always get good presents and just spend Christmas at home with the family and then wake up, open all the presents and stuff. And then I think earlier we used to go to different families at different years. Like sometimes one year we'd go to this family and another year we'd go to this family but most recently, within probably say the past eight years, seven eight years or something like that, just go to my grandmother's and have lunch there and spend the rest of the afternoon with all the family and whatever.

SR: Can you remember any time in your life when there was sort of ritualistic stuff, either organised by school or church or, I don't know, Scouts or Brownies or somebody where they'd do like gymnastics or big displays or anything like that? Was there any sort of event where they had lots of kids, I don't know, saluting the Queen?

DI: Well

70.01 **SR: That sort of thing.**

DI: South Sydney Festival was always a big thing. They still have it. They have a parade sort of thing on – what's it called?

SR:

DI: They have the South Sydney Festival anyway and they have, I think, a week of events or whatever but they end up having a parade and a whole big thing in the park and whatever. And I remember before the way it used to be because I remember dressing the bus, the youth centre bus. They'd put big ears on it and decorate this bus to go into the parade; we'd all go into the parade once a year. That was like a big

thing and they'd have different things to do at the park on that day and whatever.

SR: What about at school - did they ever have any sort of things where you do something? There used to be years ago physical culture and maypole dancing and things like that.

DI: We used to have, once a year we'd have Aborigines' Day at school on Aborigines' Day. We'd have a thing at the school where parents would come down and they'd have like stalls, all different stalls, with food and whatever else.

SR: This is a funny question but did you have to do like corroboree type dancing and stuff like that/

DI: Yes. I remember one year – I can't remember, I think I was in kindergarten or first class – at Redfern School and I can't remember why but on the Aborigines' Day the Aboriginal kids from the school, like the older kids from third class to sixth class, were doing a show and then the ones from kindergarten to second class were doing a show after it and they had like all Aboriginal kids - - -

SR: Body paint.

DI: - - - yes, and like the older ones sort of dressed up in their costumes and stuff and had a dance to Solid Rock, that old song, and they done sort of like a dance.

72.03 I can't remember what theirs was but then us younger ones done like a corroboree thing where it was just like a quick little five minute sort of dance of a man chasing a kangaroo and catching him and that was it, yes, but I remember that.

SR: And how'd you feel about that?

DI: I was excited at the time because performing and things like that, being able to do it was fun and plus it was good to do, a good thing to do.

SR: Did you do anything on ANZAC Day – did you go to the march or anything like that?

DI: No. One year in school they invited kids, two kids from Redfern School, to go down to the dawn service in one of the ANZAC Days and they picked me but I slept in and the taxi come and I was asleep and it went so I didn't actually get to go but that was, yes, once with the school.

SR: Is there anything I haven't asked that I should have about growing up here?

DI: Not that I can think of, another question now.

SR: Do you think I've covered it all? Is there anything that you wanted to say about your childhood?

DI: No. Just in a way I'm glad that I grew up in this area, sort of like an area where not everybody knows everyone but you know practically mostly everyone and I think being multicultural and that a lot of people can get along and I don't think I'd ever really want to live anywhere else. Just by growing up here my life I'll probably just stay.

74.22 **SR: What do you think about the reputation? Like every now and again on the news there's these things about riots at Redfern Station by Kooris and all this sort of stuff and they really build that up but you come 'round here and it's a pretty peaceable sort of neighbourhood. How do the locals feel about that?**

DI: Well, see, that's just what it is: they only ever show the bad and it probably happens in a hundred other places as well but it's just never picked up as much, you know what I mean.

SR: And here it's a 'riot' whereas elsewhere it'll be a 'bit of a fight'.

DI: Yes. I mean if a big fight like that happened in Marrickville – not Marrickville, say anywhere – I mean it probably wouldn't be as much of a big thing than if it's a big fight in Redfern. Because it's Redfern and I reckon that blacks are probably a lot louder they make it a much more bigger thing than it normally is.

SR: You could probably describe something like that as a fight or a brawl but it's usually described in terms of a riot which is sort of a completely bigger kind of word.

DI: Yes, yes. Well, that's what I mean. And recently, lately, it's been pretty good. Like they've got the CDP program going now and a lot of the trouble now that when there is trouble here it's mainly from kids that don't live on The Block, you know what I mean, they don't live in that area.

76.05 Because they've got the CDP [Community Development Project?] program going now a lot of the kids, the youth or whatever, they work for the CDP and do all sorts of different things. They've got the café up the top now and they've got a screen-printing shop and they've got their own company where they make all their clothes and everything and the CDP runs a removalist thing and they go 'round and clean up - they've fixed all the park up and things like that - so that just never gets shown of what they are doing in the area. The only part that ever gets

shown of it is like – I mean I notice that a lot too with working now because I work just not far from Redfern and you see a lot of the attitudes of the people. Like for instance one of the people at my work was like “Yeah, when I first come to Sydney and I was driving somebody to the airport and I accidentally drove down Eveleigh Street and I was just like ‘Oh, what am I going to do? I have to get out of here’” and sort of got out of there as quick as she can and I was like “If you walk down there, if you go down there at five o'clock in an afternoon you see a hundred different people of a hundred different nationalities walking up the street to walk up to the train station”. Yes, I think some people from what they see on the TV and stuff do exaggerate a bit about how bad it is.

SR: Just freak.

DI: Yes.

SR: I was just looking over my questions. There's one here I forgot to ask you. Can you describe your mother's working day from what you can remember when you were growing up?

78.00 DI: O.K. Well, normally when we'd get up mum would always be gone to work already because I think she used to start around eight o'clock or whatever and we'd always get up and our clothes would be ironed and our set of money each to take to school. So she'd get up, iron all our clothes and stuff and get them all ready. Then she'd go to work and then I think she used to finish about three so when I'd get home she was normally home and if she didn't have shopping to do or whatever she'd clean the house and then go and have a sleep if she can before dinner or whatever and then cook dinner and then after dinner clean up, yes, and then relax, I suppose.

SR: O.K. Well, I think we've just about covered it. Have you got anything else?

DI: No, that's it.

SR: O.K, great.

DI: That's fine.

SR: Thanks a lot.

DI: Thank you.

Interview ends