

**NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING**

**‘Millers Point Oral History Project’**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

INTERVIEWEES: **Eileen & Bill Pearson**  
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INTERVIEWER: Frank HEIMANS  
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00:00 START OF TAPE MP-FHI SIDE A

00:02 Tape Identification

*Eileen we will start with your first, Eileen, could you tell me your maiden name please?*

00:30 Eileen: Eileen Kemp.

*When were you born Eileen?*

Eileen: 28 August 1913.

*That was in Sydney?*

Yes.

*Now can you tell me some of the background of the Kemp family, where do they come from?*

00:51 Bill: The Kemps from Tysehurst in Sussex, England and the first Kemp in Australia from my mother's family was Isaac Kemp who was a convict, he was transported for life for stealing goods worth twenty four shillings and sixpence. He was sort of working, as a convict he was hired out to work for different landowners around the district. When he got his ticket-of-leave he became a drover, ox team droving, and he had a child with an Aboriginal woman who was only known as Mary, nobody knew her, and she apparently just disappeared after she had the child and he brought the child up and that child's name was William. William Kemp, he married a woman who had come as a free settler called Emma Elliott and they had a daughter, Frances, who was my mother's father's mother.

02:27 They lived around Coonamble, Frances was eighteen when her father William was working as a blacksmith on this property and Frances became pregnant to the landowner, a guy called Samuel Elliott, who was also a convict made good, bought land. Frances married a guy called Atwood Gardiner and throughout his life my grandfather, Edgar, always thought that his grandparents were his parents, he was never ever told. She left the property and married this Atwood Gardiner and had about sixteen children. Ted left home when he was eleven and he was just hanging around the streets in Coonamble and this fellow that owned a string of racehorses took a bit of a liking to him and took him to New Zealand with him as a stable boy. I think Ted must have learnt shearing over there because he came back and was a shearer all his life and met my grandmother, Josephine, in Forbes and that is where they started off, but eventually moved to Katoomba. That's about it.

*Interesting story. Must have been a big thing in those days to marry a convict, was it still looked down on in those days?*

04:07 Bill: Well according to the family history Isaac, the only child he had was with this Aboriginal woman and then he married two ex-convicts after that but didn't have any children with them. I think the stigma was the half-cast child, William, when he married this

English woman, Emma Elliott, I think there was a lot of stigma attached to that.

04:53 Eileen: Who Dad thought were his brothers were really his uncles and they gave him a bad time and he ran away from home when he was eleven and like Bill said, he went off to New Zealand and became a shearer.

*Now tell me a little bit about your growing up here in Millers Point Eileen.*

05:17 Eileen: I didn't grow up in Millers Point, I grew up in Katoomba, my mother went to Katoomba and I grew up there. I came here when I was seventeen, 1930.

*Can you describe life as it was in Millers Point at that time in 1930.*

Eileen: It was much the same as it is now, only the Harbour Trust owned the houses instead of the Housing Commission. Maritime Services Board I think, it passed from the Maritime Services Board. Just before your father died, about a couple of years, the Housing Commission took over and we were in this house then.

*This very house here?*

Eileen: Yes.

*So you have lived in 5 Windmill Street since you were seventeen?*

06:04 Eileen: No, I lived with my mother, I didn't meet my husband until I was twenty-one, and his people lived on Millers Point and I came down here to live with him when I got married. His father got us a house from the Maritime Services Board next door to them and we moved in there. It was only a four-roomed house and we had six children and ourselves and we got their permission to move into this house in 1946.

*So where was the very first house that you lived in, in Millers Point?*

Eileen: 19 Dalgety Road.

*Can you describe the house as it was? Can you describe the lay-out of the rooms, how many storeys it had, a little bit about the house?*

07:05 Eileen: Well there was one room at the back that should have been the kitchen but Bill and his brother shared it as a bedroom. There was only two other bedrooms and a living room and the laundry served as a kitchen, it had a gas stove and a fuel copper in it and tubs and a wooden top that I used as a bench.

07:30 Bill: It was single storey, had a tiny little backyard out the back and an outside lavatory and Harry Lapham and his family used to live upstairs from us. It is like a terrace, they were separate places but one was on top of the other.

Eileen: They had to go up a stairway up the front, the stairway led to their front door, and we were down underneath them.

08:05 Bill: So all that houses in that terrace were like that, there was a downstairs, two separate houses, with a stairway going between them, and two on top and four separate families lived in them.

Eileen: All the way up the street that was.

Bill: That was a whole terrace like that.

*When you moved into this area, Millers Point, at seventeen years of age...*

Eileen: I didn't move here until I was twenty-two. I came to Sydney when I was seventeen and I lived out at Kensington.

*When you were twenty-two you were married?*

Eileen: I got married then.

*Were you married when you actually moved into 5 Windmill Street?*

Eileen: Yes. I had all my children.

*Dalgety Terrace, I mean, you were already married were you?*

09:05 Bill: Yes. They lived out at Kensington for a short while.

Eileen: With my mother.

Bill: Dad he worked in the wool stores here I think and he wanted to live on Millers Point. My grandmother wasn't very happy because it is a pretty rough area and she said to mum, 'If you move down there you'll never move out,' and she was right, she has been here sixty-eight years.

Eileen: I don't want to move out now. She was thinking of The Rocks as of the old days. I mean it was practically the same, well it was the same as it is now.

Bill: Oh no, it is a lot different, mum.

09:45 Eileen: Well I mean the Housing Commission people, instead of families that were born here. My brother went into the hotel and he said to another son, 'Your mother has been here so many years and yet she is only considered a 'blow-in'.' My son agreed with that. He said, 'But you're not.' He said, 'His head shot around as though I'd shot him, he said, "I was born here." I know the difference now from being a 'blow-in' and somebody that is

really born here.'

*Well you have lived here for about seventy years, are you still a 'blow-in'?*

10:24 Eileen: Yes. When the Housing Commission took over and people had to pay rent for their children people thought they may as well be buying their own house and moved out, so there is very few of the old people.

Bill: When I was a kid, it was after the war I guess, two or three times a week there'd be pitched battles in the street, wharf labourers that were locals fighting seamen off the English ships that used to come in. It was glasses and fists and kicking and God knows what, I mean you just don't see that now.

Eileen: Well I didn't see it then.

11:12 Bill: You'd walk down the street and you just got used to it, you'd just walk on the other side of the street while it was going on.

*Bill which year were you born actually?*

Bill: 1939.

*Eileen, you got married in 1930 something?*

Bill: 1935.

Eileen: I had the daughter in 1935.

*What was her name?*

Eileen: Marie Patricia. I had another son in 1937, Bill in 1939.

11:45 Bill: Shanna was 1942, John's his name but he couldn't get his tongue around John when he was a baby and he used to call himself Shanna, so that is what he is known as now.

Eileen: Nobody would know him as John now.

Bill: He was 1942 and David was 1944. David died when he was eighteen. Owen was 1946 and Owen just died last year, he was fifty-eight.

*What was the problem with David, why did he die?*

12:20 Bill: It was some sort of brain disease. I think the doctors think it was a measles virus, or something that laid dormant in his body for years.

12:34 Eileen: When the doctor told me he said, 'We don't know the cause of this, or the cure anywhere in the world.' He said, 'I give him six months to live,' well he lived two years

and four months and I was pretty hysterical by the time he died. I said, 'The doctor gave him six months to live,' and he said, 'Well he is young, there is nothing the matter with his heart, we've got no control over life and death,' but he died a week later after I said that, so he was close to the end when I was at that stage. But later on they found that something lays dormant in the body from the measles. All the others had the measles but in some people something lays dormant and attacks them later, like with polio, the same thing.  
*Did he die here at Millers Point?*

Bill: In a hospital at Glebe.

Eileen: But only for a week.

Bill: He had only been in hospital a short time.

*What was the reaction by the community when that event happened, such a tragic thing, did the community turn up and go to the funeral and that sort of thing?*

13:43 Bill: Everyone was sympathetic and that sort of thing. I mean there was nothing anyone could do. I'd take him for drives in the car at the weekend, that was the only time he'd go out. My uncle, who used to live over in Dalgety Terrace, he used to take him on long walks in his wheelchair, take him for a walk and that sort of thing. Yes, it was a pretty sad time.

*Marie - is she also no longer alive?*

Bill: Marie died in 1970 with breast cancer.

*She was about thirty or forty by then?*

14:37 Eileen: She was thirty-eight when she died and she left two children.  
*You've had a fair few tragedies in your life.*

Eileen: And then my youngest son died eighteen months ago with cancer.

Bill: He was fifty-eight.

14:54 Eileen: I've lost three of my children, that is what it amounts to. As you say, I sat here one day and thought I had three brothers, three sisters and six children and nine of them have died, I've only got three living children.

Bill: Mum is the only one of her family left.

Eileen: All their partners have died, so you can live too long.

*You have lived a long time. You were born in 1913 so are you actually ninety-one or are you turning*

*ninety-two this year?*

Eileen: I'm ninety-two in August.

*Well you are fantastic.*

15:35 Bill: She is really good, she makes all her own meals and makes me nice lunches when I come down, I try to come down once a fortnight and she has always got a nice lunch for me.

*Going back to that very first house in Millers Point again, Dalgety Terrace, you lived at the bottom, you said?*

Bill: We lived on the ground floor.

*How many bedrooms were there altogether?*

Eileen: We had three but one should have been a kitchen, we had a living room. Of course when I got this place I got the opportunity to swap with a lady who only had one girl and her husband was mostly away at sea - we thought it was wonderful, didn't we. I think we even had a couple of beds on the balcony.

*Did you have a place to do the washing, did you have a laundry, a copper or something like that?*

16:32 Eileen: What was the laundry, I explained to you, was a fuel copper, the tubs had a top on them that I worked off, a sink and a gas stove.

*Was it enough to do all the work you had to do?*

Eileen: Yes. There was plenty of work to do. I remember I used to cook twenty-two lamb chops.

*Why so many?*

Eileen: Well, we had people come and stay with us.

17:07 Bill: We always seemed to have a guest. Mum's father, when he wasn't shearing he'd come and stay with us. Mum's brother, the youngest brother, Owen, he actually went to school at St Patrick's and lived with mum, there wasn't six of us. Mum's mother, my grandmother, she was working at Wahroonga, I think, as a domestic, a cook, and she couldn't have him with her so he lived with mum. Then David, he stayed there.

Eileen: He came back from the war.

Bill: He was the second youngest, he had malaria and he stayed with us.

Eileen: I thought he had a cold but he should have been in a military hospital because

living in a house with all those children, it must have been dreadful for him.

18:15 Bill: My father's sister, Margaret was her name and we called her Peggy, she was a bit of an alcoholic and she'd come and stay with us and cause a bit of disruption. She was always welcome, she was never ever turned down. She was very wealthy, had her own unit over at Kirribilli, but she preferred to come and stay with us.

Eileen: You wouldn't think so. Right opposite the Opera House there was one house with four units there and she lived in one of the units. They got such a small price for it, in comparison to what they'd get these days.

19:12 Bill: Well she died in the 1950s and her estate was four thousand pounds.

Eileen: That was a really shocking price for a unit there.

Bill: I suppose the unit was probably worth two thousand of it. She never married, she went to work for a stockbroker and he sort of set her up as his mistress. She lived in Singapore for a long time. His wife got sick and she thought he'd marry her but he didn't, he married the wife's sister and I think that led to the drinking and a few other things.

20:01 Eileen: Bill says she was an alcoholic but she only went out two days a week. She'd be all the morning getting ready to go out and she'd be home at tea-time. Nobody else in the family drank, my husband didn't drink, her people didn't drink, she knew she was walking into a kind of hostile atmosphere so she'd come in singing, 'I'm as free as a breeze, I can do as I please,' and it would get under my husband's skin. But she was kind to me, she was very kind to the family. I wouldn't class her as an alcoholic.

20:41 Bill: Probably wasn't, mum. She couldn't go out without coming home drunk, she'd always be drunk.

Eileen: She was a lovely girl.

Bill: You are right, the fact that she didn't drink in the house, or didn't hide or bottles and all that, she probably wasn't an alcoholic.

Eileen: She'd go out with Mr Smith and come home under the weather.

*Eileen, as a young mother and looking after a big family, what sort of food were you cooking for them in those days, what did you eat at home?*

21:19 Eileen: Oh, meat was a different price to what it is now. I used to get a sirloin roast of beef about that high for fifteen shillings and as I said, twenty-two lamb chops.

Remember old Jacko the greengrocer, pumpkin was fourpence halfpenny a pound. Fourteen pounds of potatoes for a shilling. So food was laid on.

21:47 Bill: Dad was a good provider, he always gave mum two-thirds of his income to keep house so we always had good food. We always had good clothes, mum would buy our clothes with a cash order and say you got thirty pound, it was usury really, you borrowed thirty pound, you'd paid back forty-five pound in six months, twenty weeks, it just wouldn't be allowed now. That is how everyone bought their..... by the time the forty-five pound was paid back...

Eileen: The kids would all want new shoes again.

Bill: We'd all need new shoes and you just never got off the treadmill and that was it was like, it was fifty per cent per annum.

22:40 Eileen: My daughter got sick of hearing me say, 'When I get the cash orders paid up,' she said, 'Oh mum, you'll never get them paid up,' but I did. I went to work, my husband never expected me to go to work but I was on the bus with a girl and I just sort of murmured, 'I wish I had a job,' and she said, 'I wish I knew somebody that would do my job when the school holidays are on,' because she had to leave her daughter up at Liverpool, so I was a tea lady up at Caltex for about two weeks and I'm counting up all the school holidays and everything and thinking how great it was. I was only home a week and they asked me if I would like to do the Managing Director's home one day a week, which suited me, you had to go twice a day to be a tea lady. I worked there for them, they were Japanese, he was the managing director of the Mitsubishi Company, and it was a terrific job.

*Which years was that, Eileen?*

Eileen: In the 1970s I think.

23:48 Bill: I was before Marie died so it would have been in the 1960s. When Marie died mum gave the job up so she could look after Marie's kids, so it would have been in the late 1960s.

Eileen: Bill said to me, 'How much have you got in the bank, mum?' and I said, 'Nothing,' and he said, 'You never will have while you put what you are earning in your purse, it just disappears out of your purse.' So he said 'put it in the bank.' I never looked back from that.

24:23 Bill: A funny story Frank, when mum was working for these Japanese she used to

get off the bus in Park Street, they lived out in the Eastern Suburbs, the Japanese, she'd get off the bus in Park Street. She is walking down Pitt Street one day and Pitt Street is a fairly busy street, whatever had happened there was no one around, only these two guys beating up this young bloke in the street, he had one of those calico bags full of money. She is walking down the street and these two guys have got this bloke and he is saying, 'Grab the bag, grab the bag.' Mum picked the bag up, walked off with it.

Eileen: No, I walked into a shop.

25:15 Bill: Then saw the name on the bag, Howse and Howse, it was a clothes shop in Pitt Street. She walked into the shop, didn't look in the bag so didn't know how much money was in there, just gave them the bag back and they didn't even say thank you, no reward or nothing.

Eileen: They were belting him up and I went into a shop and I held up the bag and showed him that I had it and he said, 'Take it down to Howse and Howse,' so I did, but they never even said thanks.

*Not very nice. Coming back to your husband did he work all his life in the wool store?*

25:49 Eileen: No, he was a stove moulder when I married him, fuel stove, cast iron.

Bill: It was a trade when he was a young guy. They would make a moulding of sand and they would pour metal into it, make fuel stoves and things like that, that was his trade. He got out of work during the Depression.

Eileen: They closed the moulding shop down.

26:20 Bill: He eventually got a job in the wool stores and he stayed there until he was sixty-eight, they didn't want him to leave. It was very hard work and at sixty-eight he was doing as good a job as any of the young strong guys. They didn't want him to leave but he left and mum and him went down to Bowral for six months. They kept paying the rent here, went down to Bowral and they were caretaking a property down there for six months. I wish they would have stayed but he didn't get on with the woman and they came back, but he had never looked better, the fresh air and bit of exercise and everything.

27:06 Eileen: The boys used to say to him, he used to sit in a chair in the corner there, 'Dad, if you just sit there you won't last six months.' I saw this ad in the paper for a caretaker and so I interviewed her and I said, 'Just tell us what you'd like us to do because

we wouldn't like to go up there and not do what you expected of us.' She said, 'I've got a very good dog here, he is a working dog, and he is no good here, I want it up in the property. I just want you to put it in at night because if it joins others it will be a pack of dogs and get into trouble.' We got no pay but we had a separate cottage. Joan and Craig would come up in their school holidays, they loved it. The lady said to John, 'Your grandmother took to it like a duck to water but I couldn't understand you,' because they were at cross-purposes all the time. She never gave him any credit for anything he did, a tree would fall over the fence and he'd saw it off, she wouldn't acknowledge it.

28:16 Bill: She had a couple of hundred sheep, I think, on the property and one of the lambs was orphaned and they raised it, it was just like a pet.

Eileen: Soon as I opened the door it thought I was its mother. I cut the finger off a rubber glove and put it on a bottle and started to feed it, soon as I opened the door it would baa and run to me.

Bill: Dad wouldn't eat lamb again after that.

28:49 END OF TAPE MP-FHI SIDE A

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28:50 START OF TAPE MP-FHI: SIDE B

*Now Eileen, you were here during the Depression at Millers Point, right, in the 1930s. What was it like around here in the Depression for you?*

29:04 Eileen: Well, thinking back I hardly knew there was a Depression because the butcher, you know there were coupons, he said, 'You give me your coupons and you get what meat you want,' so I wasn't really on that. The clothing, I didn't have enough money to use all those coupons up. The fruit man, we were the last person on his run and the fruit boxes were made of wood and he used to throw about three or four boxes into my yard and there'd be half-a-dozen apples or something in them that he didn't want to bother taking home. He was a character, really, because this lady said she wanted a pound of pumpkin and he just cut off about two pound and handed it to her and she said, 'I only wanted a pound, I only wanted a pound,' so when he couldn't stand it any longer he

grabbed it off her and cut in half and that was a big joke to him, he said, 'You only wanted a pound so you got a pound,' no change. Wasn't he a character.

30:13 Bill: For some reason all of the tradesmen used to look after mum. There was the butcher, apart from giving her good meat and that sort of thing whenever she was having a baby he'd drive her up the hospital and pick her up when she came out of hospital. The greengrocer, Mr Jackson, Walter Jackson was his name, he would sort of come round and do his deliveries and he'd just say to mum, 'Send one of the kids up Saturday afternoon,' and whatever fruit and vegetables he had left over, I'd just go up with a bag and he'd fill it up for her.

31:00 Eileen: I said to his son later, he died, I said to his son, 'Oh, your father was very good to me,' and he said, 'He was good to a lot of people, Mrs Pearson, but you are the only one that has ever said anything about it.' He was generous to a fault, to everybody really.

*Apart from the shops that were selling things like the butcher and so on - were there any hawkers on the street, selling stuff with their carts and so on?*

Bill: Yes.

Eileen: There was a rabbitoh come around.

Bill: There used to be a Chinaman come round, we called him Charlie, big fat Chinaman. He used to have a big sort of port, like a large suitcase, and he'd knock on all the doors, I think the Bennetts used to buy clothes, he used to sell women's clothes and that. Remember him, Charlie?

Eileen: No, I don't remember him, Bill, perhaps I never dealt with him.

32:04 Bill: He came round for years and years. I know you didn't buy anything off him but the Bennetts used to and different people in the terrace. This was later, this was in the 1950s, used to be a guy come round the pubs, raffling chickens and he'd say, 'Do you want to buy a ticket?' and you'd say no, he'd say 'Hold this for me,' and he'd probably have twenty or thirty people that had bought tickets and he'd have all the rest. If one of the ones he had given you that you hadn't paid for and you won the chicken, you'd take the chicken and he'd give you two shillings to give the chicken back to him for another raffle.

32:54 Eileen: There was a shoplifter, Milly, in the street and I said to Marie when she started work, 'As soon as Milly knows you are at work she'll be down, asking you things,

don't buy anything off her.' Sure enough, she knocks on the door, poor Marie I think she would have loved to have been in it, she is suggesting all the things she can have, twin sets, gloves, and she says, 'No thanks Milly, no thanks Milly.' She said, 'That was your wishes, mum.' If you'd walk up the street and you've got a nice cardigan on oh, 'She got that off Milly.'  
*Now what year was it that you actually moved to Windmill Street from Dalgety Terrace?*

33:45 Eileen: Well it was a bigger house, we moved in here in 1947. Mum had died in 1946.

Bill: No, it was after I'd started work, it was probably in the 1960s I think, mum. I was up at Bowral from 1952 to 1956 and you were still living in the Terrace then. I started my first job at AEI and we were still living in the Terrace then, so I'm pretty sure it would have been 1959, 1960, 1961, something like that.

*Okay, we'll check that later on. Eileen, going back to the Terrace before you moved, what were the neighbours like, did you have good relations with them? Who were the immediate neighbours, their names and what did they do for a living?*

34:46 Eileen: Well my mother-in-law lived next door.

Bill: There was the Laphams on top.

Eileen: They were all long-time residents, they weren't Housing Commission people, they were Maritime Services and most of the people on Millers Point had lived there all their lives.

*So the Laphams above, your mother-in-law next to you, who was on the other side?*

Eileen: Her brother, my mother-in-law's brother.

35:20 Bill: On the side going up, 21, was Jack Lloyd. Jack, I don't think he was married, he was the tenant and he just had a couple of guys that used to live there, paying for a room. Then there was the Pearsons, my grandparents, they were in 17, 15 was the Stewarts, that was my grandmother's brother. Then there were flats, probably four flats, one of the Stewarts, Marcelle Stewart was her name, she moved in there in one of the flats.

36:13 Eileen: It was mostly locals that moved into the place, still is. Not that there is many locals around but Kath Burgess, when a girl got married you hardly knew her married name, she always remained..... Kath Reardon went to school with my daughter, and she became Kath Burgess, she lives up in Argyle Place. But then as I said, a lot of people, when the Housing Commission took over they had to pay for their children when they went to

work, thought they may as well be paying off their own house and moved out.

*To a different area?*

Eileen: Yes. You couldn't buy these houses.

*Now you had your immediate family so close by - what was it like living so close with your family, any problems?*

37:08 Eileen: Well I think now I didn't appreciate my in-laws. When I see my granddaughter with nobody I could leave the children, knowing that their grandmother and aunties were next door. I only have to see my granddaughter shopping - life was different. McIlwraiths came and took your grocery order, delivered it, as I said the milkman and the baker called, none of that service is there now, you've got to go out. You even wait at the counters to get served, wait at the checkout to pay, life is different altogether nowadays. *So people used to deliver everything you ordered to your house?*

37:55 Eileen: Yes. Well, with the grocery order, come and take your grocery order and deliver it and no charge for that. Then the butcher, he was here on the Point. I have seen a write-up about him, he was here two years before my husband was born in 1908, he was there in 1906.

*Was that Duggan?*

Eileen: Yes, Joe Duggan.

*Was he a good butcher?*

Eileen: He was wonderful. I met him in the street one day and he said, 'I'm glad I got out when I did, I'd never get the prices that they get today.' I see a leg of lamb for about thirty-five dollars, I'd get a big sirloin roast of beef for fifteen shillings.

*Now how did people sustain themselves during the Depression, did they fish off the wharves and that sort of stuff, do you know?*

Eileen: Oh my boys all fished off the wharf but it was only a matter if they caught fish or not, we didn't depend on it.

39:10 Bill: Especially in summer time, the wharves down there, all the old people would have their step, they sat there and no one else was allowed to sit there. There was an old lady, Mrs Burns, lived in Hight Street and she'd fish every night, get down there and catch her bait, the little Yellowtail for bait to catch Taylor, and she'd be there probably five o'clock every night and fish until about ten, go home, never missed.

*Provide enough food for the dinner table the next day?*

39:49 Bill: Oh she'd get some decent fish, Taylor and Jewfish were the main ones they used to catch and they were quite good eating.

Eileen: What about 'Hicka' Morton, he used to catch Leathertail, about that big and my father-in-law would get about eight off him for a few shillings and he'd come in and give me four.

Bill: This fellow's name was Jimmy Morton and he had a speech impediment so he had the nickname 'Hicka', that is what they called him.

Eileen: Everybody had a nickname.

Bill: He was a bit, I suppose you'd say retarded and his speech impediment made it worse. I don't think he ever had a job but he used to go out spearing Leatherjackets. They are a flat, slow-moving fish and you just get the spear and he'd catch a sugarbag full and sell them.

40:55 Eileen: My father-in-law used to buy more than he wanted and give us some. *Were there any other such neighbourhood characters around, eccentric people and that sort of stuff?*

Eileen: Oh yes. What about Boy Doohan, what was his name?

Bill: Jimmy Doohan. Jimmy was slightly Mongoloid and he used to make his living getting wood. He had a big barrow and he'd just go down the wharf and get driftwood, or wood that was left lying around, just fill up the barrow and sell wood by the barrow load.

41:37 Eileen: They used to take the wheels off his barrow, torment him something shocking. David was sitting out on the front verandah and he said, 'Jimmy,' and I said, 'Don't David, don't, he might throw some wood over,' and over came a log that just missed us. So I spoke to his sister and I said, 'Tell him David is sick,' well from there on he used to come and put his hand in and hand and shake hands with David.

*Did the Millers Point people feel a bit different to other Sydneysiders, did you have a kind of identity, a village identity?*

Bill: No, I don't think so.

Eileen: Well when the girls put on a bit of style, they used to say they came from 'Point Miller', if they met some stranger, sort of thing 'Point Miller'.

*A bit like Point Piper.*

Eileen: Yes, a bit like Point Piper.

*Did it feel like a village? Was there a village atmosphere there?*

43:13 Eileen: I don't know how I felt. When they first told me where it was, I was working with some girls in Sydney and they told me, 'The Rocks, the Cut.' So coming from the country I imagined there was big rocks and a cut in the rocks, so I walked right around under the Harbour Bridge, expecting to get stabbed in the back or something. Having relatives here and that I just blended in, and I just want to stay here as long as I can, although I realise I will have to go somewhere pretty shortly.

43:57 Bill: I've been doing some family history for my boys, two branches of my wife's family and two branches of ours now. The ones that go back the furthest in The Rocks is my father's mother's family. Her name was Isobel Agnes Stewart, her father was Ninian Stewart and he was born in The Rocks, he was a bootmaker, he owned a shop in George Street North. One of the local tough guys was a boxer called 'Young Griffo', Albert Griffiths, he was Australia's first world champion boxer. He was a brilliant fighter but a drunk and apparently the only way they could keep him sober was getting him on the day of the fight and locking him the bootmaker's shop, in one of the back rooms and they'd just keep him there until the fight.

45:16 He won the world championship in New Zealand, fought a New Zealander called Murphy who had gone to America and won the world championship and came back. Apparently Griffo went over there and fought him and won the world title but the Americans didn't recognise a world title if it was fought outside of America. On the boat trip back they ran into really rough weather and he swore he'd never go on a boat again. They realised the only way to get him the world title was to go and fight in America, so they got him that drunk they put him on the boat and he woke up at sea. I have just been reading about him in the American Boxing Hall of Fame, he wouldn't come back. He died in America in 1927.

*Was he a Millers Point or a Rocks character?*

46:25 Bill: He lived on The Rocks. I think he was born in Newcastle but he came in here as a young bloke. These things I was reading on the Internet, he was a paperboy around here, used to sell papers, and the guy that owned the paper shop sacked him, he was too noisy. When he was a fighter he'd go back to the paper shop drunk, 'Come on, sack

me now. Get out here and sack me.'

47:02 Eileen: Another thing of interest - that house up in Argyle Street, opposite the bus stop, that has just been sold for over a million and a half, I think, not sold but leased out for ninety years, all the Pearsons were born in there, all Mrs Pearson's family, her two brothers and her. She had Bill's father and all her children in that house. Two of the brothers had the attics for boot shops and they were going to charge them more rent because it was a business, so that is when they moved down to Dalgety Terrace.

*What was the main occupation of the men of Millers Point?*

Bill: Wharf labourer.

Eileen: And coal lumpers.

47:59 Bill: My grandfather was a coal lumper, that is an extinct job now. What they used to do - the colliers used to come down from Newcastle with coal and they'd shovel it onto the wharf and then shovel it onto the steamships, that was the fuel for the steamships. A lot of them were wharfies and then a few storemen. My father, he didn't want to go on the wharves because they were always on strike and it was better money than storeman but it wasn't regular, he preferred to take less money and work a steady job.

*What about your father, Eileen, what was he doing for a living?*

Eileen: Shearer, wherever they were shearing sheep, mostly in New South Wales I think.

49:03 Bill: He came from Coonamble and he did most of his shearing in the western districts and that is where he met my grandmother, at Forbes. She was the youngest of thirteen children and they lived in Forbes.

Eileen: One grandmother had sixteen children and the other one had thirteen and when I was reading about them later I was getting them all mixed up because after they'd had all those children they became bush nurses. Mum's mother was a bush nurse for fifty years and never lost a patient. They just went out into the bush, nursed the women with what was there when they got there.

*Formidable women, weren't they. Now can I take you to the war years now in Millers Point - what were they like for you?*

49:54 Eileen: Well I had Shanna, I was in Crown Street and had Shanna in 1942.

Bill: David would have been born before the end of the war too, he was born in 1944.

Eileen: We all had to leave our houses and go down the lower road into a shelter, it was a false alarm really, but it was frightening.

Bill: I remember going down there, the air-raid siren would go and everyone would have to leave their houses and go down to the shelter.

Eileen: They were all singing *Roll out the Barrel* and all these songs.

Bill: The shelter had all sandbags, packed up against the walls.

50:42 Eileen: Going down, I had a baby in arms, a couple of other young ones, just thinking if a bomb was to fall the kids had to scatter. It was terrifying going down, but when you got down there they were singing those songs and it was different. It was a false alarm, I think.

Bill: Used to have all the windows with this brown paper covering so the lights wouldn't show.

Eileen: We lived through it.

*Were people quite worried about the Japanese invasion in those days?*

Eileen: I don't think so, I don't think I was.

Bill: Well I was only four.

Eileen: Yes you wouldn't have thought about it. We didn't have much of a threat from the Japanese coming, did we.

*There was a submarine in Sydney Harbour - that is as close as they got of course.*

Eileen: We had to read about that in the paper.

*So you had ration cards again during the war?*

51:35 Eileen: Oh yes we had ration cards during the war.

*Did you use them all up?*

Eileen: No, as I said, the butcher said, 'You give me your ration card and I'll give you all the meat you want.'

*You told me earlier but that was during the Depression, I thought.*

Eileen: No, that was during the war, we didn't have ration cards before then.

*Did you knit scarves for soldiers overseas?*

Eileen: No, I knitted jumpers and that for my own children.

*What entertainment was there in Millers Point for families, how did you entertain yourselves?*

52:15 Eileen: I don't think I entertained myself at all, I was busy cooking, washing, ironing.

Bill: We used to go to the pictures on a Saturday afternoon, it was more or less our entertainment. At home we had the radio and we'd listen to the fights, or the cricket.

Eileen: Making barrows out in the backyard.

52:38 Bill: Sunday night they used to have a radio show called the *Lux Radio Theatre* and no one was allowed to talk while that was on.

Eileen: You dare not breathe while that was on. The kids were different to what they are today.

*What was your favourite radio show, Eileen?*

53:03 Eileen: I don't know that I had one, I can't remember, probably that Sunday night one. We didn't sit and listen to the radio, like we might after tea. But everybody was in bed. Not long ago I went up to one of my sons and I said, 'Oh, I was lucky when you kids were born.' They were all born healthy, the hotels closed at six o'clock, we never heard of drugs, they could all get a job when they left school, nobody came home with tattoos on themselves or anything like that. The next morning the son that was visiting his brother rang me up and he said, 'I worked from the time I was fifteen until I was sixty-five and you just think it was a matter of luck.' His brother had to explain to him that that was only an expression. He said, 'Does it ever cross your mind that all your grandchildren are working and are all doing well?'

*That's good. Did you ever go to the Tivoli or vaudeville shows, was that something you did in the 1930s and 1940s?*

54:16 Eileen: No. When Bill's aunt would stay with us if she'd go to the movies and she would tell us if something was good, she'd mind the children, it was only a very odd occasion we went to the movies. We didn't have a lot, we didn't expect it.

Bill: Dad was a good provider but he wasn't lavish in taking mum out and things like that.

*What about people like Roy Rene, people like 'Mo', people like that, did you ever see them perform?*

Eileen: I didn't see him but I saw a few shows, but not when the children were young, probably when we come over here I saw a few shows.

*In the 1960s. What about dancing, did you ever do any dancing at the Trocadero?*

Eileen: No. It wasn't my thing and not my husband's thing either.

*Did the men have much social life in the pubs and so on?*

55:13 Eileen: Well my husband didn't drink at all until we came here into this house. Then the fellow living next door he was really, really nice, he coached the boys in football, he brought your father out a bit. Every day when Bill would come home from church he'd have a couple of bottles of beer, so Bill would have a drink with George until his wife would call out that dinner was ready. 'There's the voice of doom, Bill,' and in he'd go. They'd talk about the sport and that and it was good for your father.

55:53 Bill: He didn't go to the pub, like most of the men around here. Mum's brothers would come down at Christmas time and take him up the pub and he'd have a few beers then.

Eileen: They'd nearly fall down.

Bill: He'd go the rest of the year and wouldn't have a drink until he moved round here.

Eileen: Never heard him use a swear word.

*He sounds like a perfect man.*

Bill: He was pretty good, he probably had his faults, like everyone else.

56:27 Eileen: All his faults I blamed onto his family because of the way you are reared. I don't think he thought it was the right thing to enjoy yourself.

Bill: He was a bit of a gambler before he got married and during the Depression he had to sell his bank book, he had a few hundred pound in that and had to sell it for about a tenth of its value because the banks were closed. He never had a bank account after that but he always had money, always had a couple of hundred pound or a few hundred dollars in his wardrobe. Mum would buy something on hire purchase and one time he was going to have to pay it out or something and he said, 'The pessimists always have to pay for the optimists.' Instead of just keeping quiet she said, 'Well, who'd want to be a pessimist?'

57:45 END OF TAPE MP-FHI SIDE B

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00:00 START OF TAPE MP-FH2 SIDE A

00:04 Tape Identification

*Now Eileen, tell me a little bit about the schooling of the children at Millers Point, when they went to school here.*

00:23 Eileen: Well, Bill won a bursary when he went to school, Marie won a bursary. Frank was very good at tech drawing and the Brother told me that the other one had a very high IQ but no interest. He stopped him one day and he said, 'Who came top of this subject,' and he said, 'I don't know.' 'Well go and have a look,' he didn't care where he come. The other two weren't so bright, were they.

Bill: The two youngest ones, no.

*What was the school like and where was the school, which school?*

01:06 Bill: The boys went to the Marist Brothers at St Patrick's in Harrington Street and Marie went to the Sisters of Mercy at St Patrick's also, it was the girls' school over the road from the Brothers. It was only a very small school when I was there, there would have only been probably not many more than a hundred - that was from third class primary up to third year high school, there would have only been a hundred kids.

Eileen: Mostly made up of the Pearsons and the Bergens, they were related, weren't they.

01:54 Bill: We went in the Sydney Eisteddfod, a fifth class choir from the school and we didn't have enough kids in fifth class, you had to have a minimum of twenty-five kids in the choir, so we had to get kids from sixth class and fourth class to make up the minimum number and we won the Eisteddfod.

*Were they good teachers at school?*

Bill: I guess so.

Eileen: If you were a good student.

Bill: As mum said I won a state bursary and Marie won a Catholic bursary.

Eileen: Tom Pearson, he had the next highest marks to you in St Pat's, I didn't know that until later.

Bill: They were strict but they were pretty good teachers.

*Now you were a Catholic family - did you go to church much at all, Eileen?*

Eileen: No, I didn't.

Bill: No, dad was the religious one.

Eileen: He went every Sunday.

02:58 Bill: Used to take the plate up at St Patrick's, eleven o'clock Mass. When he was a kid he went to school at St Pat's too. My grandfather was a gambler and they were always short of money and that and the first pair of shoes that he had, the Brother at the school took him to St Vincent de Paul, he was in third class. Winter and summer, he just didn't have any shoes, went to school with bare feet, and the Brother took him to St Vincent de Paul and bought him a pair of boots for two shillings out of his own pocket. I don't think my father ever forgot it because he worked for St Vincent de Paul for years and years and was a pretty committed Catholic, used to take up the plate at church and what have you. *Do you recall any strikes or any industrial disputes involving the men round here in this area?*

03:54 Eileen: Yes. Well the last big wharf strike - my youngest son, Owen, who died eighteen months ago, Owen wasn't in that strike, he had left it, but it was a big industrial strike.

Bill: That was when Patricks were locking out the wharfies.

Eileen: Changed the conditions.

Bill: I remember a couple when I was growing up because a lot of my friends from round here were wharf labourers and they'd be on strike. I think the longest one went for about six weeks and there were a couple of shorter ones but they'd be without pay all that time. That is why my father didn't want to work on the wharves because you had to go on strike, you were a scab if you didn't, so he preferred to be in the wool stores.

04:57 Eileen: Your father and I went to Melbourne, to the Melbourne Cup once and when we came back he was expecting to go back to work and there was a five week strike. That is why he used to like to save his money because he thought if he didn't have the money that is how you got beaten in the strike, if you had the money you could stay out. The Showground and all was filled with wool and they had a vote and they voted to go back because the men had no money and the wives were telling them to get back to work. There was only about six that voted not to go back.

Bill: I can't recall that strike.

05:45 Eileen: I do, it was straight after the Melbourne Cup that we went down to.  
*Which year approximately would it have been?*

Eileen: About 1970.

Bill: It would have been 1970, do you remember what won the Melbourne Cup?

Eileen: No. He'd be listening to the races and he'd want to go down to the toilet and he'd say to me, 'Now listen for this horse, see where it comes.' By the time they'd run every horse I wouldn't know which one was his.

*Talking about strikes again were there any that you remember earlier than 1970, were there any in the 1930s and 1940s?*

Eileen: Well there was that strike in the 1970s. Bill, can you remember any before then?

06:40 Bill: There were a couple in the early 1960s that my friends who were working on the wharves were involved in. I think the longest one I can remember was about six weeks and that Patricks one that was quite recent, five years ago or something.

*What did the other mothers used to tell you about those sort of things Eileen, when the strikes were on?*

Eileen: I don't think we talked about it. I didn't talk about them.

07:14 Bill: See, the wool stores wouldn't be on strike when the wharfies were, they'd be working, so she really probably didn't have the same shortage of money as they did, the wharfies' wives.

*How has the area changed, what has happened to the physical look of Millers Point in all the time you have been here?*

Eileen: Oh well there is a big change since the Housing Commission took over, big change.

Bill: All the houses are the same.

Eileen: Oh the houses are the same but I don't know hardly anybody in the street for one thing, where you knew everybody, everybody grew up here, big change.

Bill: The actual buildings there hasn't been much change.

08:08 Eileen: No, but the Housing Commission workmen don't do a good job, they don't do a good job at all. If they did a good job, well one thing I needed a new light in the

kitchen, and my grandson is an electrician, and their man had to come three times, and only because my granddaughter was here, he couldn't do anything the twice he come. The light was on when he left but it didn't go on of a night when you switched it on. He had to come back and it didn't go on when he came back, so he had to fix it again. Then Craig said it would have cost the Housing Commission more for him to come three times than if he'd done it right in the first place. If they put up new guttering there is more paint to be seen than there is solid guttering, if they put good quality stuff into it.

09:08 They steal everything in your house - one of my sons said, 'Don't let them in, mum.' I had a good hair broom, a proper hair broom, and they took it. I went over to a hardware store and asked for a hair broom and he said, 'You won't get a hair broom now. I can get you one fifty-fifty,' well I have watched that broom every time anybody come in because the plastic ones, the dirt sticks to the hairs. They took Owen's knife, he had a knife there, he was building a toy ship on the table. I went to close it but it was too tough for me to close so instead of hiding it I left it on the table and it went. This man brought in about four boys with him and I took the number of his car, I didn't know that the knife had gone then but I still took the number of his car, I rang him up and I said, 'Don't say anything to the boys, just see,' I thought it would be a boy, 'just see which one produces it.' He didn't ring me up, I rang him up, and I said, 'Have they found out anything about that knife?' because it was worth about four hundred dollars. He said, 'Yes, and I sacked him.' Well if he found the boy he should have made him bring it back to me, so I thought probably he himself took it.

*Did it ever come back?*

Eileen: No.

*So you don't trust them much.*

10:43 Eileen: No. See that mantelpiece, every house had that in. A lady came in here, like the next door neighbour that had lived there all the time she'd died and somebody else come in, she come in and she said, 'Oh I envy you your mantelpiece,' I said, 'You've got one.' There are three mantelpieces, one in the front room, one upstairs and one here. She said, 'No they took it, they just put a board across.' It is not very nice just having a board across there. The cedar doors, they put these kind of doors on. They just took the cedar doors to sell them because they would be worth three times these. No, they don't do a good job.

*You are in a Heritage area here, is your house also classified as heritage?*

Eileen: Not that I know of.

Bill: Don't think so.

11:37 Eileen: The house that Tommy Pearson lived in is Heritage and the one that Bill's father was born in, up opposite the bus stop there, and one at the top of Windmill Street. As I said, they have paid millions for them, and they are not sold, they are only leased for ninety-nine years, and it will cost them that much to do them up.

*There were lots of boarding houses in the area, the boarding houses for the seamen, were there any around you?*

Eileen: No. We weren't allowed to take boarders.

Bill: They were all tenants of the Harbour Trust and then Maritime Services Board.

Eileen: There are a few down under the Bridge there, Lower Fort Street.

Bill: There were always boarders in those places because they are really big places round there.

*What do you remember about the Bridge being built?*

12:41 Eileen: Well the Bridge was opened two years after I come to Sydney and you couldn't have put another person around the area the day the Bridge was opened, I will never forget that, never. Never seen this area packed with people so much. I didn't live here then, I wasn't married.

*Did you go to the opening day of the Bridge, were you there?*

Eileen: Yes. I was working down Circular Quay and it was just packed. Never seen so many people.

13:23 Bill: I remember the day the war finished, I remember all the American sailors and soldiers and everyone was dancing in the street. Actually, there used to be a lot of US servicemen who used to hang around this area and my brother Frank ran out of the butcher's shop across the road in Argyle Place there and went under a taxi cab, a cab hit him, and he had to go to hospital, damaged his leg, but it wasn't that bad. The cab had an American soldier in the cab and of course mum ran out of the shop hysterical and my brother is laying there and the soldier gave the cab driver a pound and said, 'Take them up to the hospital and back again.' Never saw him again, just an extremely good guy.

14:48 Eileen: One of the girls went out with an American, one of Marie's friends, and she

was saying how polite and how nice, helped you up the footpath. I said, 'Oh Barbara, don't tell me you can't get up the footpath on your own.' She had been getting up the footpath all of her life and she is appreciating the fact that they helped her up the footpath.

*Was there a good relationship between the Catholics and the Protestants at Millers Point or was there any friction?*

Eileen: Oh yes, I think so, I don't know.

Bill: We had a few run-ins with the kids from Fort Street Public School but nothing deep-seated about it.

15:40 Eileen: My neighbour next door she wasn't a Catholic she belonged to the Trinity, she used to ask me to make a cake for fetes and that that they had and I'd do it, I didn't care, we were good friends.

*Now when you came here to number 5 Windmill Street in the 1960s was the house much the same as it is today?*

Eileen: Yes.

Bill: No change.

Eileen: The nun that taught my daughter at school was born in this house and when my daughter got cancer she said, 'I don't know your married name,' as I told you we didn't, she said, 'Marie, I don't know your married name so I am writing to the address that I went to school from.'

16:28 Bill: Actually the pastoral team at St Patrick's Church, three of the nuns there that sort of do community work around here, they are all local girls, all grew up on Millers Point.

Eileen: One is Tommy Pearson's sister.

16:50 Bill: Tommy's sister, that's Marie Pearson, her name is Sister Gemma. There is two de Montford girls, Judy and Jill de Montford, they are both nuns, I don't know what their religious names are. They are a family that'd be probably be worth interviewing, the de Montfords. You would have to contact them through the church, either Jill or Judy de Montford.

Eileen: One of their brothers was a jockey.

Bill: There were three boys and the three boys - all played first grade cricket for Glebe.

The youngest one, Alan, he played for the State Colts, New South Wales Colts. The two girls both became nuns. Very interesting family.

*Would Sister Gemma Pearson know about them?*

Bill: Yes, she lives with them.

*What is the relationship of Gemma to you?*

Bill: Cousin. Second cousin. Her father and my father were cousins.

*Now Eileen, I'm interested to find out about what there was available in this area for medical facilities in the days when you were younger?*

18:12 Eileen: I used to take the kids up to Sydney Hospital.

*That was the closest and the only hospital? Was there a doctor who lived in Millers Point though?*

Eileen: There was Dr Johnson.

Bill: Dr Johnson lived up in York Street, or had his surgery up in York Street, he was the nearest. There was a St John's Ambulance lady, we used to call her Nurse Williams, she lived up in Argyle Place. If any of the kids got hurt, nothing serious enough to have to go to the hospital, she'd always put a bandage on you and that sort of thing.

18:54 Eileen: She was like my grandmother, every child that my mother-in-law had she nursed her with them. She'd send up for Nurse Williams.

*So no emergencies every really happened to your kids, did they?*

Eileen: Bill got his nose broken in football.

19:27 Bill: Frank had that run-in with the cab that I told you about, that is probably the most serious. I fell off a gate, we were trying to get into this kid's backyard to play with his toys, and I was climbing over the gate and my brother Frank, he got the gate open and pushed it and I came down flat on my face on these cobblestones.

Eileen: Guess what I said when he came home with nose broken, 'Oh, you had the best nose in the house.'

*What about crime, was there much crime around, were there gangs and so on, was it dangerous around here?*

20:09 Bill: No, not in our day. There was the odd petty crime, I suppose you'd call it, like this fellow I was telling you about, Jimmy Morton, he'd do a bit of thieving to supplement his income. Can't remember any really bad people.

*There was The Rocks' Push.*

Bill: That was in young Griffo's day The Rocks Push.

Eileen: This girl came and she had come with her boyfriend and she said, 'When Nan,' she called me Nan I wasn't her Nan, 'when Nan first came here there was this and that.' I said, 'Donna, you are tacking a hundred years on to me.' That all happened a hundred years before it was much like it is now.

*Now very early on in the century before anybody here was born there was an influenza epidemic and there was the Plague.*

21:18 Eileen: That is what my mother knew about, but my mother came from Forbes and she heard all these things, that is why she thought Millers Point was such a dreadful place. 'You'll go in there with one baby in your arms and you'll never get away from there.' *So you didn't hear too many stories about those very early times from anyone? Was it still strong in the memory of people the Plague?*

Eileen: Oh no, I don't think so, they just seemed ordinary people.

21:46 Bill: I remember my grandfather talking about Frog Hollow and I just thought it was something he made up. He would say it in a sort of joking way, 'I came from Frog Hollow.' I have since read there was an area in The Rocks called Frogs Hollow, which they pulled down when the Plague was on, so there was an actual area within The Rocks that they called that, I don't know how it got its name, but they pulled it all down and rebuilt. *For those people who don't know what this house here, number 5 Windmill Street looks like, can you describe it for me, Eileen, especially as it was when you first moved in here?*

22:42 Bill: Well you walked through the front door, down a hallway, on the right was a lounge room, TV room, then the living room which we are sitting in now, kitchen. Then you walked down, that is covered in now but it wasn't then, there was an outside laundry and bathroom and toilet. Then you go upstairs and there are three bedrooms and an upstairs verandah, which doubled as a bedroom for a while, especially in summer we'd sleep out there.

23:23 Eileen: It had louvres but we took them down and glassed it in. One son said to me, 'Why did you take the louvres down for?' and I said, 'The kids were breaking them and they could fall into the street and would have fallen on them.' He said, 'Well, I don't want to wake up and find somebody standing over me with a knife.'

*So three bedrooms upstairs, so where did you sleep?*

Eileen: I slept in the front room, me and my husband we had the front bedroom. The middle bedroom, David and Marie slept in that - David was a lot younger than Marie. Frank and Bill slept in the back room and somebody slept on the verandah because it was closed in.

*Was it comfortable, was it big enough, the house?*

Eileen: Oh yes, I was very happy with the change.

Bill: Compared to other one it was lovely.

Eileen: See, we only had four rooms in the other house and six rooms here.

*How do you think living at Millers Point has influenced who you are now today, how has it influenced your life?*

24:35 Eileen: I just couldn't describe that. I am happy living here, I don't want to leave here. But I realise, I am ninety-two and I am just suggesting to Bill places that I might go because somebody is going to have to put me there.

*You are talking a nursing home?*

Eileen: Yes. I'm willing to go but I don't want to go before I have to. I don't want the kids to feel they put mum in a nursing home, I want to go in when I have got to.

*You haven't decided to that yet, obviously.*

25:15 Eileen: No but I am interested in different places. Did you say Harry lives up in Darling House, I met him and I said, 'What is like up there Harry?' and he said it was good. The boy that runs that, he knew my family and he said, 'Tell your mother if she ever wants to relax she is welcome to come up there.' I said, 'Why would I go up there to relax, I can relax as much as I want down here, I wouldn't go up there to relax.'

*You are not ready yet, I think, but it is a very nice place, we've seen it.*

Eileen: I've been up there because I knew a lady that was there.

*Do you think you would have been a different person had you not sort of lived in Millers Point, do you think your outlook on life might have been different?*

26:04 Eileen: No, I don't think so, I can't imagine it being different.

*What about you Bill, how do you feel about having grown up here at Millers Point, would you be a different person do you think?*

Eileen: Did you feel it was a disadvantage growing up here?

Bill: No, I don't think my values or anything have altered at all or would have changed if

I had lived somewhere else.

*But the values that you live today are from here, they are from Millers Point, you might have had different values had you lived in another part of Sydney.*

26:47 Bill: I may have, but I think all of us kids got our work ethic from our father. None of us were ever out of work and we all achieved in our chosen careers. I was General Manager of Life Administration at Westpac. Frank was a first-class tradesman. John, Shanna, he had ordinary jobs but he has always been an investor and speculator and he is the wealthiest of the lot of us and done the best.

27:41 Eileen: I took him out to the Motor Transport Department to get a job and he passed the thing and we are sitting there waiting, and he said, 'I suppose you'd say that fellow had a good job,' and I said, 'Well, I suppose he has John, because he is interviewing boys that are going to be there for the rest of their life.' He said, 'Well, I'd hate that job. What is wrong with being a garbage man?' I said, 'Nothing, but you know yourself, if you are not doing well the Brothers will say 'you'll end up being a garbage man.' 'Oh I don't know, you are out in the fresh air and you've got no worries.' But the Brother told me he had the highest IQ in the class and I thought for all that I know this might be his IQ at work because he has enjoyed his life, hasn't he.

28:30 Bill: The three youngest all finished up going to public schools. Shanna, John, he wanted to go to Paddington Junior High School because his mates went there. He didn't do any work but he was very bright and he passed his Intermediate. They had to do a book, one of Charles Dickens' books, for the Intermediate English exam and he was away from school more than he was at it and the day before the exam he went and bought a classic comic with the story in it and got an A in English in the Intermediate.

29:18 Eileen: The teacher would say, 'No matter what you do I won't pass you,' because he was paying no attention. So he has gone over to the paper shop and got this book and read it and come top.

Bill: *A Tale of Two Cities* I think it was. They used to have these classic comics, which was a comic telling the Dickens' story, or whatever.

29:45 END OF TAPE MP-FH2 SIDE A

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29:48 START OF TAPE MP-FH2 SIDE B

*You were talking earlier about the values of Millers Point, what are those values do you think?*

30:01 Bill: I think neighbours would always help each other and never steal from each other. You could walk out and leave your door open, leave your door open all night, no one would ever go into your house. If anyone was having hard times there was always someone to help you, so there were very strong neighbourly values, I think.

*Is there anything about living at Millers Point that either of you dislike?*

30:47 Eileen: No, I think we are living in a really good spot. Well, they are paying millions to live here now, not in houses like this certainly, but all the wharves that have been done up. The man that has got those people walking over the Bridge paid about five million but he is getting a hundred and fifty, I think, for each person that walks over the Bridge. They are all paying big rents and they are only living in the same area as us. They are not living in the same type of house because these houses have just been built, they are still building them.

Bill: I never wanted to live on Millers Point when I got married, I just didn't want to bring my kids up here.

*For what reason, Bill?*

31:35 Bill: Oh well, I think it is just pretty rough area and it is worse now, there is drugs and things like that around and I just didn't want my kids to grow up here. I was happy enough, got no qualms about having lived here myself but I think you can get in the wrong types and there is a lot more chance of that now, or when my kids would have been young.

Eileen: It has changed since the Housing Commission took over.

*When were the biggest changes to this area, is it only since the Housing Commission?*

32:16 Eileen: When the Housing Commission took over because they were all families that were born and bred here and knew each other.

*So what happened when the Housing Commission took over?*

Bill: They moved people in from the outer suburbs, some really bad types moved in.

Eileen: They wreck the houses for one thing.

Bill: Some doing drugs. One person who has never done anything to my mother, he has done some stupid things to other people that he hasn't got on with, sort of super-glued up their doorway and things like that.

Eileen: It is a wonder they have left him in the house, really.

33:08 Bill: He is a bit of menace, really. He is probably the worst example but there are some not very nice types around.

Eileen: I think they have only left him in the house because his wife has got the tenancy. *How have your relations been with the Department of Housing, have they been generally good, apart from the problems you have already described?*

33:30 Eileen: Oh they are very slack in their repair thing. Like before the Olympics, I am sleeping in the front room and they put a new roof right down the street and I could feel the rain. Luckily my bed was on casters so I was able to move it out of the way. They said, 'Well, will wait until the Olympics are over,' because something was going to come down Windmill Street - they took two and a half years to come and fix it. *So you had a leaking roof.*

34:12 Eileen: Yes, I waited until after the Olympics before I even asked them about it because they asked me to wait. It was my granddaughter who told them how to fix it. She said, 'Well, seeing you've been three times to fix it and it is still happening why don't you take it out.' Somebody who didn't know the job drilled holes about as big as an egg in a corrugated iron roof to put a television thing up, so naturally it has come through. *Are you worried about traffic or noise or pollution here?*

34:50 Eileen: Well, the whole of Millers Point is because two men had to be shot dead down on the lower road before the police would take notice. I rang them up four times, Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday night. They don't live on Millers Point but they come with these really good cars and tear around the streets. Each time I rang up they said, 'We've got no cars for the police to come up.' They confronted the police and the police shot them, down on the lower road, on Hickson Road. *I've heard about that.*

Eileen: All other people are trying to sell some of the houses they have bought. I don't

hear them now.

35:41 Bill: I stayed here one night, mum had had to have something done to her eyes at the Eye Hospital and I brought her home from the hospital and stayed the night and I could never live here with the noise, it was kids out in the street. I went to bed about eleven o'clock and these kids started playing touch football about eleven-thirty, out in the street, out the front there. They went to about one o'clock. I just got off to sleep - mum takes a tablet and doesn't know thing - just got off to sleep and then all the cars started arriving, people pulling up in their cars, slamming their doors, they get here early to park so they can go to work. They park here and walk down into the city. I couldn't handle it.

*When did you actually leave this area Bill?*

Bill: When I got married in 1966.

*So you haven't lived here since?*

Bill: No. I lived at Jannali and then we built a house at Loftus and then when my kids grew up and moved out we moved up to Woy Woy.

*You are not used to living in the inner city any more obviously.*

37:02 Bill: No. I didn't mind at the time when I was here.

Eileen: Well it was a different type of place. As I say, when television come in, there was nothing for them to stay up for before television came in. Now I watch Andrew Denton and that.

*How do you feel about the proposed redevelopment on the Patrick wharves, when Patricks finally leave there they are going to build things up there - do you know much about that?*

37:40 Eileen: Well, I think if they build high-rise it won't be too good, I hate the high-rise. We go over that Anzac Bridge and I just think no matter how much money I had, I wouldn't like to live in one of those flats. At least what little bit of backyard we've got, I can hang out my washing in the sun.

*So what do you think, either of you, is going to be the future of Millers Point from now on?*

Eileen: The hotel keeper said to one of the boys, 'Our rents wouldn't even pay the rates, but then the rates never get paid, they just get passed from department to department.' The land is so valuable around here I can't see them keeping these houses.

38:33 Bill: Mum had her rent reviewed, she inherited some money from my young brother, the one that died, he had a small property in the country, which we sold. We had

to tell Centre Link and the Housing Commission, report a change in your assets, and they increased her rent, but they tell you what the market rent is.

Eileen: Four hundred and fifty.

38:58 Bill: It's four hundred and fifty dollars to rent them. Didn't you have an Asian woman knock on your door once and offer you five hundred dollars a week for the house? My mother said, 'Well, where am I going to live?' She said, 'You can just get a place somewhere else.' If she did that the Housing Commission would cancel her tenancy straight away.

Eileen: There is a bit of that goes on, I think.

*Do you still have many friends in the area that you see, are you friends with lots of people that you know?*

39:36 Eileen: I am friends with everybody I know. Mr Hansen stopped Jane the other day and said they thought a lot of me, and anything they could do for me they would, but he minds his own kids. He is very good to his own, he had three boys, they have minded their children so they can get homes for themselves, the boys.

*Is that Bill Hansen? He has contacted us, he wants to be interviewed as well.*

Eileen: He is a nice man.

*Lives in Toukley.*

Eileen: He has got a house in Toukley but he only lives a couple of doors down, his wife. He had a crippled brother from birth and I think he was up there, Bill had to carry him around all his life. He actually cried when he died.

40:27 Bill: I think Bill is a tenant here but his brother lives at Toukley and I think they all threw in and bought a place, like a holiday house, so he spends time up there.

Eileen: He had to carry him.

Bill: He is a permanent resident.

*What number Windmill Street is he living in?*

Eileen: About eleven. He is a nice man.

*We are just about coming to the end of our interview, is there anything else you people want to talk about, about Millers Point?*

Eileen: Not that I can think of. If I was to state my case I think I am very happy here, I just

know I will have to leave it some time but I just want to stay here as long as I can.

*And you Bill?*

Bill: No, I can't think of anything else I want to say.

*Well thank you very much both of you for the interview.*

Bill: Pleasure.

41:39 END OF INTERVIEW WITH EILEEN & BILL PEARSON AND END OF TAPE MP-  
FH2 SIDE B