

**NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING**

**‘Millers Point Oral History Project’**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

INTERVIEWEE:	<b>Agnes Phillips</b>
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INTERVIEWER:	Beverley SUTTON CROSS
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*Note: The opinions expressed in this oral history interview are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily represent in whole or in part the position of the Department of Housing, the Government Architect's Office, the Department of Commerce or the Oral History Consultants.*

00:05 START OF TAPE MP-BSC1 SIDE A

00:06 Tape Identification

*Now Agnes could you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?*

00:43 My full name is Agnes Keith Christie and I was born in Leith, Scotland in 1916. Now my mother came out here at the end of 1919, early 1920, and we lived up in Princes Street, I can't tell you the number, but it was just behind where the nursing home is in Lower Fort Street, up above that. She had a little flatette there and when I was four and a half she was able to get a little cottage in Princes Street but it was behind what was originally an officer's mess and the number was 39½ Princes Street, it went down by the side of the steps that came down in Argyle Cut. We lived there until we had to move down to Lower Fort Street for the Harbour Bridge business. We were in number 32 Lower Fort Street in those flats.

02:20 My father was drowned in, I am not sure whether it was 1927 or 1928 and I was ten at that stage. Dad was a cook on a ship named *Gunarva* and it foundered off Terrigal Beach, off the coast, and he was drowned there. Apparently he was a good swimmer and they made it into the beach but got washed out again twice and the third time he didn't come back in. So my mother was left with three children, my brother was eighteen months old and Jean was three and I was ten by then. She was given some compensation, which wasn't very much in those days, so she ended up buying the lease at 71 Lower Fort Street.

*That is how your mum was able to look after the three of you, have a bit of an income?*

03:41 Yes a boarding house. Then in the meantime the Depression was on so she was keeping the whole house, because nobody was working in the house, so she was paying all their electric lights and gas, so she was keeping not only three, she had two couples and I think three children. The Richards was one couple, Browns was another and they came from Kurri Kurri, looking for work.

*How big was the house there Agnes, that sounds like a lot of people in a smallish house?*

04:24 There was seven rooms and a big attic. One couple had the back balcony room on the first floor, with kids of course, the other couple had the front balcony room and the attic as well. We had four rooms because there was my brother, my mum and me,

and my sister. We had the room downstairs, the kitchen and a little bit of a dining room there.

*You had half of the house, the ground floor, and the other families were on the other floors. What did they do for food, if they weren't able to pay your mum for their board who fed them?*

05:24 The government were giving them coupons and things, I think they had to go and pick food up at the railway somewhere. I am not exactly sure where it was but they had to go.

*That was enough to keep body and soul together. Your mother sounds like a really good woman.*

05:45 Oh yes, she was, and she worked hard to keep the place clean and all that. Then she did get a job in the end, a job as a cleaner down at the Harbour Trust as it was in those days, down there at Circular Quay. She had that until she retired more or less, she kept that until she retired. She used to go five o'clock in the morning and be back, by I think it was a quarter to nine, get us off to school, we would have had to have had our breakfast and be tidied up and that. Then she had to go at five o'clock in the afternoon and she was there until half-past seven.

*That sounds very familiar, I think a lot of women in that area did that.*

06:42 Yes they did, they had jobs and had to look after their families too. We weren't allowed out a lot because we always had our tea before she went to work. We had to get home from school, there was no dilly-dallying and carrying on, and we'd have our tea and we'd have to wash up. We might have got out for half an hour or something, but we weren't supposed to go out because she used to like to know that we were in. We had games, Ludo and cards and things like that we used to play with it. Other than that we'd play in the back lane, they might have a bit of cricket with the Randalls next door, did you know Gracie Randall?

*I did.*

07:40 Well Gracie and her brothers Keith and another one, I have forgotten his name. We were all little mates there.

*So you basically stayed close to the house but you all played in the back lane. What about the paddock?*

There was nothing in the paddock, nothing at all.

*Was that somewhere you could play?*

08:03 No you weren't allowed. The Harbour Trust owned it and they had a workshop underneath part of it so you weren't allowed to be in there, but of course sometimes the boys used to climb over. There were notices up to say it was private property, not to climb the fences.

*Were there other areas that you could go to play, like the King George Playground?*

08:45 I was never able to go to the King George, that wasn't there, I don't think.

*So it wasn't there when you were very long, that came a bit later on.*

08:55 That came for my brother and sister, they came there. If we were allowed to go we'd go up to the swings, up there at the top of Watson Street, on the corner where they used to have the swings and roundabout and the see-saw and the chains, all that, but mum had to be around more or less when we went there. She didn't like us going right up the Point, sort of thing, because there were a few roughies around, the Sykes.

*There were a few families that perhaps she didn't want you associating with.*

I would say so.

*They were bits of tear-aways.*

09:45 Tear-aways, that's right. I was friendly with the Carolans, Molly Carolan and Frank and Billy and Shirley, do you remember the family?

*I remember the names.*

10:00 They were just round the corner. The Hodges were right on the corner of Lower Fort Street and Argyle Place and Lisa Jones, she was just next door to the Carolans.

*What else did you do as you were growing up, what sort of other activities?*

10:26 Well I went to the Bjelke-Petersen Gymnasium, I went there for about eighteen months, they were up at Broadway. I was getting a bit older, so then I started going to dancing. Used to go to dancing up at Trinity Hall, they used to have Saturday morning dancing, ballet and a bit of tap-dancing, but I was no good at tap-dancing. I was about fifteen when I started going to the dancing classes and I was able to go up to Lance Platt in George Street, just down from the Trocadero and those places. There was a little laneway and there was a locksmith and he was upstairs.

*So this was ballroom dancing?*

Yes, ballroom dancing.

*So this is when you started ballroom dancing and then as you got a bit older you and a number of other young people in the area would go off and go dancing a lot.*

11:41 Yes we'd go up to either Surreyville or the Palladium down in William Street. Occasionally, not a lot, out to the Albert Palais at Annandale. I never really went to Marrickville Town Hall, a lot used to go there but I didn't go there, I don't know why but just didn't seem to make it.

*You used to go in a group, there were a number of you?*

12:11 At least two or three would go each time and then of course you'd meet a boy or something or other, hoping you'd meet one.

*You'd get there obviously on the tram.*

12:26 Yes that's right. Yes you'd go with your long dresses on and have to be up-to-date with everything to go to the dances. Then of course the war came and that started to upset the routines, like the boys were all going to war, so there weren't the boys around so much. During the war I met my husband, well he wasn't my husband then, he was the boyfriend, he was an Englishman and he was out here on a ship and I met him. Then he went back and then after the war he came back, he got himself demobbed here, and then we married.

*When did you marry?*

13:23 In 1947. Then we lived with mum for a little while in 71 Lower Fort Street for about two years. Then we bought in to number 51, you know where Shirley Ball lived, well we bought into that and we were there for about four years. We sold that to a Dutch lady, Mrs Van they called her, but I think there was more to her name. Then we went to Mangrove Mountain on an orchard, hated every minute of it.

*You seem have such a green thumb - I would have thought having a bit of land around you you would like that.*

14:33 It was all right but it was just coming from the city it was so quiet and all you did was work, picking oranges or lifting up twenty-foot lengths of irrigation pipe and moving it, I hated it.

*When did you move back to Millers Point?*

14:56 In 1967 I think it was. We came back and mum was still alive then, so we stayed with her. I got a job with Brambles, down opposite Customs House and he got a job with the Navy over at Garden Island because he'd done boiler-making. We had a few moves, we went to Newtown and we lived in Newtown for a while. Then we lived in East Balmain, the top of the hill where you go down to the ferry, just along there, and we were there for a few years. Then we went back to mum. We were going backwards and forwards because she was on her own, though she did have a woman living there with her who took her dining room suite I might tell you, that belonged to that sideboard one time.

*So there were things that were bringing you back to Millers Point all the time by the sound of it.*

16:27 Yes. Mum was the main one. My sister of course had been married, she went to Morisset, she married a soldier after the war. Then he was drowned accidentally too, you wouldn't believe that would you? He was taking Morisset High School children, he started the bus run up at Morisset after he was demobbed and they worked pretty hard and got that going well. Then she became a widow, so she sold the business after about two years because it was too much for her to look after, having to organise drivers and they were taking down anyway, so she thought best get rid of it. Then she came back and was living there too. By this time I was divorced, so we were both living there and mum had gone by this time and we thought maybe it is time for us to move on again.

*When did you move?*

17:43 We bought the place up here in 1988. My sister died in 1996, so I stayed on there, it was a lovely big house, but too big to be looking after all the time so I thought it was time for me to get into something smaller. So then I sold that and came up here. Then my brother died in 2002, so they both went. I thought I would be the first to go and instead of that they beat me to it.

*Let's hope you keep on keeping on. Now with your mother and father - who were they and their names and where were they born?*

18:52 My mother's name was Jean. She never changed her name, she was a Christie and she married a Christie. She came from Anstruther in Scotland, which is close by to St Andrew's, the golf place. My father, he was Scottish and he was born in

Edinburgh. He worked in a grocery store in his earlier days and then he decided he'd go to sea. He was at sea during the war years in the Mercantile Marine and that is how he sort of came out here. He'd been out here and then when he went back, I am not sure of the date, but he said to mum he wanted to come to Australia to live and they'd get married if she would agree to come out. If she didn't want to come to Australia well there was nothing doing.

*What about your grandparents - do you remember anything about them at all?*

I don't remember anything at all about grandparents on either side. Mum's mother died when she was a young woman and I think her father and the mother died within about five years of each other and her elder sister sort of more or less brought them up a bit, she was I think only thirteen or fourteen, so there was no grandparents on that side. Dad's, I don't know anything about them at all though mum did say that when she was coming out to Australia his father was very good to her, helped her do all the paperwork and took her wherever she had to go. I think he must have died just afterwards because I never heard any more about him, only what she told me. I have never had grandparents at all.

*Now when you were in Millers Point, when you first came to live there, did you belong to any church group?*

21:22 Oh yes I used to go to St Phillip's Church up on Church Hill and I was married there at St Phillip's. It was actually Church of England, although we were Presbyterians. There was a Scots church up there but I never ever went to that, I think that got pulled down somewhere along the line with the Princes Street business because I don't seem to remember much about it. I can remember mum saying there was a Presbyterian church there, so it must have got pulled down somewhere in the vicinity. That is how it got Church Hill because apparently there was St Phillip's and St Patrick's and the Scots church all there.

*The Scots church was like a kirk probably.*

Yes it was a proper church.

*It was back a bit about from St Patrick's?*

22:26 Near the park, somewhere near the park. Then I think they built that assembly hall that was Presbyterian after that but I never ever went there.

*So you weren't much of a church-goer really.*

22:41 Sunday School, down at the Sydney City Mission down in Harrington Street, we used to go to Sunday School down there. They'd have flick nights with the lanterns, slides, and a tea night or something like that and you'd go down to that.

*Now you talked about your mum having a cleaning job with the Harbour Trust, what did she do before she was married?*

23:13 She used to be a housemaid in the upper-class houses that used to employ them. While she was waiting to come out here, like she was married by this time, apparently she had to wait a long time, a couple of years or something or other, and she was a housemaid to a couple of elderly gentlemen that were businessmen and they were very good to her she said, and me, gave us presents, I got a nice necklace, coral necklace. They knew she wasn't going to stay there but she was there longer than she'd anticipated. In her day she was a housemaid.

*What about your dad what did he do?*

Well he worked in a grocery store until he went to sea.

*Where did they meet and marry? He came from Edinburgh.*

244:30 In Scotland? It is funny you should ask me that - I have no idea how they met, no idea whatsoever, I don't think I ever heard her say. When you are young you don't ask all those questions, do you, about how did you meet. I can't remember her ever saying where she met him, whether she'd been on holidays with a friend, occasionally they made a bit of a trip down to London or somewhere but it was very occasional, apparently. Whether she met him down there I have no idea, can't answer that one.

*Where did you go to school?*

25:25 Fort Street Primary and then went to Cleveland High for about eighteen months and then mum said, 'I think you'll have to get yourself a job.'

*How old were you when you left school?*

Fifteen, fourteen you could leave I think at that time but I was fifteen when I left.

*Where did you go and get yourself a job?*

25:52 Well I worked in Woolworths for about six months and in that time I was going to the business college down there in Daly Street, the Metropolitan Business College, I went to learn to type and to do book-keeping but I didn't finish the book-

keeping course, I wasn't terribly interested in that. I was more interested in the typing so I just sort of moved to typing. I went for about nine months and then I worked at Woolworths first and then I got a job with an advertising agency, Vincent H. Freeth was their name and they were in O'Brien House, just in Young Street, I was there with them for twelve years. In the meantime I was trying to have a family but I couldn't carry children so I didn't have any family at all. Then I went overseas, I had a trip overseas in 1949, mum and I went and we had six months over there. While I was there I got a job in a shop in Scotland.

*Did you go back and visit where your mum came from?*

27:29 Oh yes went and saw where she came from and met some of her sisters, a couple of her sisters.

*How many in her family?*

27:41 There was three girls and a boy and he had already died though, he was the eldest and he'd already died. There was Helen and Mary and mum, that was the three girls, mum's name was Jean.

*Your sister of course was called after your mum and what was your brother's name?*

John David, he was named after part of my father's relatives apparently.

*What about your husband's name?*

Tom Phillips. That didn't last forever either.

29:11 END OF TAPE MP-BSC1 SIDE A

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29:12 Start of TAPE MP-BSC1 SIDE B

*Now with the houses that you lived in, you lived in a couple in Lower Fort Street and in Princes Street, what can you remember about the layout of the houses? How big they were, how many rooms, what were they like?*

29:27 Well I can't remember like the little flat where mum started off when she arrived but I can remember the house, that 39½ Princes Street. There was a walkway to those steps that go down to the Cut and we had to go down that and then we went in a gate, it is funny I've got a gate there too, we went in a gate and it was a four-

roomed cottage with a separate laundry. It was two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs and we had a big yard and it overlooked Argyle Cut towards the church end. This was in Princes Street and I've got a photo of that here. Can you see the top of those steps and that wall sort of going up, there was no windows on that side.

*So that was your house.*

They were the terraces in Princes Street, the one with the red roof.

*I suppose the obvious question is how did your mum come to live in Millers Point anyway? How did your family get there, your mum and your dad?*

31:10 Well he came into Sydney, like he was a ship's cook and the ship came to Sydney. When he said about coming out well of course Sydney was the place, so he got a little flat because it would be close to the shipping. He didn't want to leave her on her own with me, being new to the country and not knowing anybody he wanted to be around a little bit. By that time he was on a ship that was going up to Queensland and he went up North Queensland way for quite a few years. I think he left that job and went to Jones Brothers, they were coal people, and he was on a coal ship that went from Sydney to Newcastle and back.

*Like a lot of people in those days they gravitated to the harbour front because the men were seamen or associated with the waterside somehow or other, so they lived locally.*

32:30 That's right. Like there were a lot of wharf labourers and coal lumpers all around Millers Point. Someone said to me at some stage Millers Point is not The Rocks. I mean The Rocks is up Gloucester Street and York Street, well it is not York Street - they renamed York Street North to Cumberland Street. Cumberland Street was the street that was demolished, I think, that just disappeared, didn't it?

*There is still some of it there but they have changed it over the years.*

33:17 I noticed in one of these books I was looking at there was a pub on the corner of Argyle Street, just up from George Street, it was a hotel in the early days, right on the corner, and they said that was Playfair's factory but that wasn't so, Playfair's factory was on the other side, not where that hotel was on that side. Where that tower is now - that was Playfair's.

*So where are you saying the hotel was?*

Just on the other side.

*There is a building there that looks like a hotel that is still there opposite where Playfair's was.*

34:01 That could have been part of Playfair's, it might have been their lunchrooms or something, early on in the piece. It mentioned they were there and I thought that wasn't the factory there, the factory was further up.

*Things sometimes get out of kilter with time, people think they remember where something was.*

Probably like me, I've probably forgotten. I do like to go round there and have a look every now and then, have a walk around and see all those big new units.

*It is very different. Now with the houses that you lived in - did they have a fuel stove or gas and what were the laundry facilities like, were they outside?*

34:55 Yes. They were outside, it was like a shed sort of thing, came down. In the first one at 32 there was a proper laundry and bathroom at the end of them. Then 71 (Lower Fort Street) the bathroom was on the ground floor but the toilet and laundry was down in the basement, down at the bottom, and you just went outside your kitchen door down two steps and you were in the laundry with the copper fire. We had a fuel stove in the kitchen, which was good in the winter.

*Did you have gas as well?*

We had both and electric light. Someone said, 'You wouldn't remember electric light,' and I said, 'That's all I can remember, I don't ever remember gas lights.'

*In a lot of the houses there were still the gas light fittings.*

Yes in the rooms, little round sort of wooden pieces with the little connection coming out.

*Of course they were all disconnected very early on for safety reasons, I suppose. If you think about it, it is a dangerous sort of thing to have.*

36:21 We had a fuel stove there. When I went to Mangrove Mountain I had a fuel stove too, plus a gas stove, you had to get the LP cylinders then, you used to have to pay for those. You had to pay a deposit on them and then when you renewed you had to still pay, I don't think they pay for the renewals now, they just put them in. I remember those things. We used to go on picnics when we were kids.

*As a family your mum would take you on a picnic?*

Take us either to Nielsen Park or Manly. Sometimes we'd get the train and go down to

Stanwell Park, go down that way.

*Up to the Blue Mountains?*

37:17 No, she never really took us to the Blue Mountains. I used to go when I was working and you'd go up for a holiday weekend with one of your friends and we'd stay at the place that had a dancing floor and Saturday nights outsiders could always come in too. It was about halfway down on the right-hand side, can't think of the name of it now, it was very popular in its day, this was in Katoomba. There was a Palais Royal on the other side, but I can't think of the name of it, it was very popular, it was a popular place, I think the dancing got everyone in because all the people that were staying there they used to have the dance nearly every night.

*Tea dances and things like that. In Millers Point what were the streets like when you were young? Were there trees in the streets or were they just bare?*

38:38 No there were no trees in Lower Fort Street, they all came later on. The only trees were down under the Bridge at the park down there, Dawes Point, and up on the Argyle Cut there were trees there and Observatory Hill.

*So the only trees that were there were really designated park areas but none in the streets that you remember.*

No, not that I remember no.

*Can you remember all your neighbours at the time?*

39:21 I can remember a lot of them yes because there was Wyburns that had the little corner ham and beef shop. Then Dolly and Joe Leonard had the greengrocer's.

Jackson had had that shop built for him because he had the fruit shop up in Princes Street and when they knew he had to go they built that specially for Jackson, so this was Joe Leonard's shop. Jackson was the fruiterer then and he had it and then he sold it to Joe and Dolly just not long after that. Then there was Mrs Ashmore, she was an English lady, who lived in 73, that is sort of coming down now, we were in 71, the Randalls were in 69 and Thelma Williams' people, mother and father, they lived in 67 before they moved to around the Point. I am not too sure who was in 65, then there was the Fords and the McDonalds, they were living in 63, that was on the corner of the lane. Those two families shared that one house and then they moved separately.

41:06 Then on the other side of the lane there was the Thompsons, Dolly

Thompson's people, Milly Thompson and Dolly Thompson and Mary Thompson and two boys, I've forgotten their names now, Jacky Thompson I think was one of them, I can't think of the second one. Then there were the Brittens, Timmy Britten, they lived in the next one to 61, 63. Then in the third one, there was three there, the Spragg family lived in that. In that place the Hickeys lived and I think Florence Ballard and her mother and father lived there for a while in that place too. Then there was Dalys, the tug people, they were in the next place, it was not the big place, I think there was two storeys in that one, they were tug owners and they had big windows that said, 'Tug Owners' on it. Then there was Shirley Ball in 53. I don't know who lived in 51 before I took it over, I think whoever had it, from what I can remember now they didn't live there, they just let it as a boarding place. I can't think of their name, I just can't think.

43:07 Hurley lived in the next one, which would have been 49, he was a school teacher at Cleveland Street Boys High. I don't think he would have been real early there, he was there when we took it over, but I didn't really know him until I went to live next door to him and his wife. Then there was old Mrs Brown, she lived in the end one before that brick stone wall was, before they built those places. I can remember the Jurgesons lived in Bligh House and I went to school with Sibyl Jurgeson, she lived there. I don't think they let the place at the time but after they moved it seemed to be let into flats, I don't know whether they sort of kept it or not and just let it off. Then I get a bit thin on the people, going down a bit.

*Well a lot of those houses as you are getting down in that area were residential, so people would come and go, you wouldn't necessarily know them.*

44:29 There was one lady she was a Miss, she was an elderly lady, and she had something wrong with her neck and she sort of walked with it on the side, I can't think of her name but she was there for a long, long time, all the time I can remember. The Bergens, Neville Bergen. I get a bit hazy there until I get down to the Wyburns' relatives, one of them when the epidemic was on had polio, the boy had it, I can't think of his name.

*What about other ethnic people in the area, do you remember there being any Chinese, Italians, Greeks, any people that would have come from anywhere other than Ireland, Scotland.*

45:45 No, I don't remember any there, but I went to school with a Chinese girl, Ida Cum Sing, she lived near the Sydney City Mission in Harrington Street, she lived in one of those houses down there. Then the other only ones that I sort of knew was the De Laceys, that had the fruit shop down in George Street, just around from the Cut.

*Did you go to school with them or just from the shop?*

46:17 No I think they went to St Patrick's, I just knew them through going in and out and talking to them. I didn't really know any more but I think there was a Chinese girl - they had the laundry up near the ambulance station there, somewhere there, but I don't know where she went to school. She might have been after my sort of time at school, I can't remember her going to Fort Street. No, there weren't too many around then, were there.

*Do you remember there being any divide between the races or the religions, were you particularly aware that some people were Catholics and others weren't?*

Oh yes that was very much a big thing, the Catholics and the Protestants.

*Did that mean that you weren't friendly?*

47:17 No, I was always friendly with them, I used to go to the Catholic church with some of them, but that division was there I think in the people before my generation. I can remember them coming to church on Sunday morning, you'd hear them tramping along from down the far end, there was a lot of Catholics down the other end. The Butlers, Betty Butler. I don't know about Maureen Stapleton, I don't know whether she was a Catholic or not. I know on a Sunday morning about half-past eight or nine o'clock you'd hear all the footsteps, all going to church.

*This was going past the house in Lower Fort Street they were coming from down the other end of Lower Fort up past you to go to church, probably to St Brigid's do you think?*

48:16 Yes St Brigid's or St Pat's, could have been to either one depending on what time the Mass was on, I suppose.

*Now what about the hotels in the area, there certainly were a number of them, did you ever go into them and drink?*

48:33 No, never. I was thirty-five before I ever had a drink. Look in as you were going by and have a look but I never ever went in, I wouldn't have known what they were like. I know they were all there, the Lord Nelson and the one down the bottom, I

saw it has just been re-done up too.

*The Orient?*

No, that was down George Street.

*The Harbour View?*

No, we are round the Point at this stage. There was the Hero of Waterloo and then the Lord Nelson, the Palisade. Then you come back up and there is the Captain Cook and there used to be one along a bit further, I've forgotten the name now.

*Dunbarton Castle.*

That's right.

*Block of flats there now.*

49:35 That's right. Well there was a hotel on both corners down at George Street, wasn't there and then when you went along there was the Old New York which was near the pictures, the Old New York Picture Theatre.

*Where was the picture theatre?*

You know where the overhead bridge is more or less underneath that, just there, the Old New York. We used to go there on Saturday afternoons, sixpence.

*So that was feature films, it wasn't just newsreels?*

No, full feature films.

*How old were you when you went there?*

Oh, about nine.

*So this was in the middle 1920s to late 1920s, do you remember when they pulled that down?*

50:21 To do with the railway business that goes down to the Quay, the Cahill Expressway.

*So how long did that operate as a movie house - was it still going when they started to pull that down? They started pulling all of those places down for the Cahill Expressway in the late 1940s, early 1950s, so was the movie house still going?*

I don't think it was going in the 1950s, I just can't give you an exact date on that.

*But certainly in the late 1920s.*

Into the 1940s I'd say it was still there.

*So you didn't have far to walk to have a bit of amusement.*

51:15 Oh no, I looked forward to that, to go there.

*What about Luna Park and places like that, did you go there?*

Oh yes but I was more like a teenager, more into the twenties probably, going to Luna Park.

*You didn't go into the hotels but do you remember whether women were allowed to drink in the hotels at that stage?*

51:46 Oh yes because in that Hero of Waterloo there was a little side part and they could go there. It was in Lower Fort Street and they could go down and sit in there, it was only tiny from what I can remember from passing by.

*This is what they called the Ladies Lounge or the Ladies Parlour. Do you remember any of the ladies at Millers Point that went in there?*

52:12 Oh yes. Gladie Baggott was one, Florrie Hannerman I think was her daughter, lived in Windmill Street. One or two I can't remember who they were now, their names, they lived in Steven's Buildings.

*So they'd be mainly local ladies.*

Oh yes, only a few of the local ladies. I don't know much about the Harbour View though, who went there, because you couldn't see anything there, they just had a doorway and they walked in through another door and you couldn't see there.

*They were hidden away, they weren't allowed in the main bar.*

53:10 Oh no, no way, no bar ladies then. I think in those days you weren't much good if you went into pubs, they'd sort of say, 'She's not much good, she's always on the drink.'

*What about hawkers and things and shops - there were plenty of shops there that sold everything you didn't have to go out of the area to buy groceries?*

53:40 There was Webbs down in Windmill Street, they were quite good in the early days. The butcher's shop was Grubbs, down in George Street North and Duggans around the Point. Then there was Doughton and Dyer's down there too. So you had a bit of a choice as to where you wanted to go. The greengrocer was there of course, and as I say Wyburns on that corner, they used to have sandwiches and what have you for the workmen around.

*There was a lot of workmen in those days, earlier days, all of the men that worked on*

*the wharves would come up for lunch, or somebody would come up and buy all the things.*

54:25 Or come up and go to the pub. They had counter lunches in those days too, they used to have counter lunches. I don't know what they were made up of but I've heard them say they were going for a counter lunch, so it must have been all right.

*With a couple of pints to get them through the afternoon. There was always a fish shop in the area, did you go to the fish shop?*

55:00 Not a lot, just occasionally, but there was always the fish and chips shop round the Point.

*Was that the one in Kent Street?*

In Kent Street, that was there for years. Plus Marie's shop, the Greeks, Greg and Marie, that had the milkbar.

*Do you remember much about the time of the Green Bans, when that sort of trouble started in Millers Point?*

55:40 I don't really remember too much about it, but they used to have meetings and things about it. I can't say I had any interest in it, like I wouldn't have gone to meetings or anything like that about Green Bans.

*Do you remember what the Black Bans were?*

56:04 Not really, but they put bans on if something didn't suit workers, if they were losing a condition, or they weren't going to get a condition or something like that. I don't really know a lot about that because of not having a dad coming home. If you had a father coming home every night, or once a week or something you'd hear different things, but mum wouldn't have been interested in any of that.

*She wouldn't have been directly affected in a lot of it.*

No, that is right, you'd have to have a man around the place.

*What about the trams to Millers Point?*

56:53 I remember the trams, oh yes, they were great I used to love the trams. When I was going to work..... I didn't start until nine when I was going to the advertising, or any job I had I never started until nine, even when I worked for Woolworths I didn't start until nine. There used to be younger sort of fellows on it and if I wasn't outside - because the trams and the buses stopped outside our place - if I wasn't outside they'd be ding-donging the bell as if to say, 'Come on hurry up.' If I wasn't going to get on

it, I'd be running late or something, I'd have to run out and say, 'No go.'

*That was really service.*

57:42 Yes a real service. They were all youngish blokes, probably in their thirties, or something like that, and they'd wait for you. I suppose they got to know all the ones that caught the bus every morning.

*Were these trams the open trams with the running-boards on the outside, or were they enclosed by the time you were going to work?*

58:13 They had the running-boards on them and then two carriages on the front and the back would be open, they'd have a canvas blind that you could pull down, and then the others would be closed in. You'd get in separate but you could close the doors, they were like a sliding door and you could close the doors. I can remember those. If you were up town and you saw the Millers Point tram coming you'd be running after it and hopping on, it is a wonder we weren't killed.

*I think we all did that at some point, I can remember doing things like that, even on the buses when they were open at the back, the double-deckers. Of course they never liked you to do it but if you were nimble enough you could get on and they really couldn't throw you off.*

59:25 END OF TAPE MP-BSC 1 SIDE B

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00:01 START OF TAPE MP-BSC2 SIDE A

00:02 Tape identification

*We were talking about the trams. There weren't a lot of cars around Millers Point so do you remember when there started to be an increase in cars and the impact that it might have had on Millers Point and how it might have changed the feel of the area?*

00:43 Not really, except I used go out on a motorbike with Neville Bergen and Frank Butler and a couple of boys from over at Pyrmont, I can't remember their names now but one of them, his father had a grocery shop over there and he had a Ford, one of the early Fords that came out, about in the late 1940s.

*A Model-T Ford?*

01:24 I don't think they called it a Model-T, it was like one of the more up-to-dates. His father used to let him have it on a Sunday night and so he'd pick us all up, about eight of us, I might tell you, in this car, and we'd go out to Bondi and traipse around out there and he'd say, 'Don't scratch it, don't leave anything in the car.' His father let him have it, but if he'd have mucked up he wouldn't have got it. That was a Sunday night thing with us - we used to go and we'd have a milkshake along the promenade or something or other, just have a good time in general.

*Just have a chat and walk up and down.*

A bit of a cuddle, I suppose, after all we were human, you know.

*So he would have been one of the few young men, I suppose, that you knew at that time that could afford a car, or at least borrow his father's.*

02:35 Borrow his father's. He had a motorbike too and we'd go out on a Sunday for picnics, out to Parramatta Park or somewhere, which was a long way out in those days. We always used to say anywhere past the railway was like in the country.

*How many of you would do that?*

About eight of us, four boys on the bikes and four girls on the pillion. You would have your haversack on your back. Of course we didn't have to have hard helmets on then and I used to wear a beret, just anything you had, if it was cold you wore an extra jumper or something. Yes, that was good fun.

*We've talked about your job and your training to equip you for that job - were your working conditions pretty good at the time?*

03:37 Oh yes, very good. I never had a job that I wasn't happy in, always had reasonably good money. I went for one job once and they only offered me the same money as in the advertising, so I wouldn't take that just for the same money because I had a good job anyway. I just thought I'd been there for a while and perhaps a change would be all right. I told them I was already earning that much and they wouldn't come to the party, so I just tootled off back and settled down again.

*But generally wherever you worked you were quite happy?*

Oh yes, and I always was treated well.

*So conditions were fine?*

04:34 Oh yes, we didn't have to go on strike about anything. All my jobs I was quite

happy in.

*Now we might have covered a bit of this but where did you meet your husband?*

I met him at the Trocadero and he was an Englishman.

*What sort of a person was he, you obviously liked him when you first met him?*

05:05 Well he was very considerate but as he got older we just sort of grew apart, we just didn't see eye-to-eye about various things. He tended to be a very jealous person and I had a lot of nice friends that were reasonably well-off and he couldn't stand them having more than he had, that type, he had that chip on the shoulder. Then he met someone else and went out with them and that was it, I thought well I don't want any part of that.

*So how long were you married before you separated?*

06:11 About thirty-five, thirty-six years actually, quite a long time. I could have really divorced him before that but I just tried to keep the marriage together. I just felt it wasn't going to work out and I didn't want someone else in my life, you don't want a third party around, do you?

*When you say you met at the Trocadero was he a good dancer, is that what attracted you to him?*

06:47 He was a good dancer and quite a personable type, he dressed well and had nice black curly hair, he wasn't a bad-looking fellow.

*We are nearly at the end, how much of your life has been influenced by living at Millers Point, going back to your early days? How much do you think Millers Point has influenced you?*

07:24 I think we had to fend more or less for ourselves, kind of thing. You didn't depend on your mother for everything, you had to think for yourself and do for yourself and take it from there and I think it gives you more character. I think you just don't need people telling you what to do and what not to do, you had to make arrangements yourself, be responsible for yourself.

*Do you think that Millers Point per se has had an influence on you in those ways or do you think you might have been the same sort of person no matter where you lived? Because of your mother's upbringing do you think Millers Point as an area to live in and the people that you knew there - do you think they influenced you in any way, the community?*

08:40 I don't think they influenced you but I think you made a lot of friends that you

could have over many years. I think your own character, what you do is what you do, kind of thing, you can't rely on other people you have to make decisions. I think probably your upbringing with your mother or father.

*But the fact that your mum was on her own?*

09:16 We were very close.

*Did the neighbours play a part, the community and the neighbours that were there nearby, did you rely on them at any stage for anything?*

Oh no.

*Basically you just kept to yourselves and your mum gave you good advice.*

09:37 That's right. She'd give you what she would tell you, I mean they didn't tell you everything in those days like they do today, you had to find things out sometimes for yourself.

*What do you think of Millers Point as a community?*

10:02 I don't know about today but in our day people would help one another, they wouldn't see people really hard-up, if they could help they would help. That is how we always felt about everybody, if it was possible to help. I mean sometimes they couldn't help because they didn't have it, money-wise they couldn't always help, but knowledge-wise sometimes they would help you.

*Like your own mother, who helped the people who lived in her boarding house when they were down on their luck and they couldn't pay her the rent, you felt that there were any number of people in the Millers Point community that did the same sort of thing?*

Yes, I would say so.

*So that they pulled together when that was needed.*

10:59 Well it was the times you know, that was in the Depression sort of years when all that would have been taking place. You might as well say everybody was on the same level in a way, mum was probably one of the few that had people in there that weren't paying any money and she was more or less helping to keep them.

*In relation to that, was the Harbour Trust, to whom you paid your rent at the time for the houses, were they very understanding about the fact that people were doing tough and perhaps the rent was running late? Were you aware of anything like that?*

No, I wasn't aware of anything like that.

*Your mum would have dealt with that.*

11:54 Yes. Possibly they would give them so much help, but I suppose like any government business they've got to get their money in, haven't they? I don't know how they worked it out because I don't think there was any handouts in those days, like there was no government subsidies given. Only, like as we said earlier on, there were coupons for food but that was only to keep body and soul together.

*Now Agnes is there anything else that you can think of that you might like to add that we haven't covered?*

12:44 No, I think we've covered most of it. We didn't touch on any of the schoolteachers at the school, did we?

*Were they good teachers?*

13:05 There were two that I particularly liked and I think one was in third class and that was Mrs Starr and Mr Gould, who was the man teacher, he was very considerate to the girls. He had the Vigoro team, he used to take out to the various schools. I didn't play in the Vigoro because I couldn't always go and not be back home for mum, like. He used to help the girls and buy some of them sandshoes to play in, a very compassionate man he was. He was a returned soldier too, he only had one arm. He taught sixth class, he was very good. There were the two of them up at Fort Street that I liked very much.

*So you think they had an impact on your life in some way?*

14:15 I would say so, explained things to you if you asked him. Never backward in not answering a question, he'd always come up with something. Yes, a very nice teacher I would say.

*So he was somebody that you respected. Not having a dad did you feel that he was somebody that you could speak to in a similar vein to get some advice.*

Yes.

*That is good, it is good that there are people around like that.*

14:58 Oh yes, he was a very nice man.

*I think perhaps we have reached the end at the moment, I am sure that there are lots more things that we can talk about.*

We've covered a fair bit.

*These things are never really over, there is always something else that can be added to*

*it.*

Something else that we'll probably think about. Kath will come up with her lot.

*Well I think that we'll call that a day.*

15:50 END OF TAPE MP-BSC2 SIDE A AND END OF INTERVIEW WITH  
AGNES PHILLIPS.