

NSW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

‘Millers Point Oral History Project’

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE:	Beverley Sutton
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INTERVIEWER:	Siobhán McHUGH
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00:03 START OF TAPE MP:SM14: SIDE A

00:04 Tape identification

So Beverley if you could tell me about your family history in Millers Point, how far does it go back on both sides of your family?

00:41 Well on mother's side it goes back to her parents. Now they weren't born here, they weren't born in Australia, her mother was Irish from Belfast and her father was a Highlander Scot from obviously Scotland, up on the west coast, but both her parents came to Australia as very young people. Her mother migrated at age of about sixteen and her father was round about twenty, I think, when they met. They were up in Queensland, so her mother migrated to Queensland, met my grandfather and then he was a seaman, but he stopped going to sea and became a, I suppose, waterside worker. They moved to Sydney and I'm not sure when. Some children were born in Queensland, so they would have moved to Sydney maybe ten years after they were married, so that puts them here in this area in the early 1900s. Mum was born in 1915, so I would think that they were here in 1920s. So on my mother's side it goes back to then.

02:12 Then on my dad's side they were country people originally, from Gulgong, and they had actually come out from the south of England in the early 1830s and had settled in the country. How far back it goes, their residence here in Millers Point, I'm not sure but certainly he had a couple of sisters that lived here and a couple of cousins. Now because they were all waterside workers I think that they graduated to this sort of area, round the harbour, because people didn't have cars in those days, they didn't have a lot of money, so it was prudent, I suppose, to live where you worked because you could walk to work. The same for my Scottish grandfather, he was what they called a stevedore. He wasn't really a wharfie as such - he did other things, but still to do with the maritime. But over a period of time, I guess, from my grandparents four generations of my family have lived in this area, but I'm the only generation left now.

In your own family then how many siblings did you have?

03:36 One brother and he is nine years younger.

Wasn't there a family tragedy with another brother?

Oh yes. There are nine years between us but mum actually lost another son, another brother, in the middle of that, four or five years earlier. But that was never really spoken about and it is amazing of course - families often didn't speak about death in those days. Mum only in later life told me that she had lost another child, who died some weeks after being born. She never really told me why he died, or what he died

from, just that they lost him and that was that. Hence the nine years between myself and my brother, there should have been another one.

I believe that your family, when you were born, your first years were spent in Windmill Street.

04:42 Yes we lived in Windmill Street at number 43. Prior to that we had lived at number 63, it was a boarding house and it was run by a lady from Manchester called 'English Mary' and she was a marvellous landlady. Mum and dad had a couple of rooms and a shared kitchen and bathroom and toilet up on the first floor and we had the rooms at the front of the house, so there was a balcony, then a bedroom and then a general living/dining area behind that, very small area really.

Was it unusual for a family? I have heard of single people and couples living in boarding houses but a family with children - why were they in a boarding house sub-let situation rather than in their own home?

05:38 Well they were waiting, they were waiting. They were certainly on the Maritime Services Board list to get a house but in those days I think the Maritime had a policy of not allowing you on the list until you did have children, so they basically didn't take single people and even though you were married; and I think I'm right here, it was only when you started to have children that they would consider you for a house and then of course there was the waiting.

06:16 Now how we came to move from the boarding house down to number 43 was that dad actually worked with a man whose wife had died and he was an older man, perhaps in his sixties, and he lived at number 43 Windmill, which of course was a three-bedroom house, and he came to dad one day and said, 'You've got a young family, you obviously need a house, I'm moving out, so why don't we go down to the Maritime and see if we can get it transferred to you,' which they did and that is how we actually came to get the house. My brother was actually born, came back to the boarding house, but it was not long after that that we were able to move to number 43.

So that was an interesting system whereby the tenants themselves could have a certain amount of say almost in suggesting what was appropriate in terms of sharing out the housing.

07:18 Yes, well they did do that. I mean my mother and brother and wife did that in later years. My brother married and eventually he and his wife had a flat around in Little High Street and it was two-bedroom, but they only had one child. Mum was still

living in the house in 43 Windmill Street, which of course was a three-bedroom family home. Dad had died, I'd moved out and married, so once again they went down to the Maritime Services Board and said, 'Look, it's silly with a little boy in a flat.' It is not as good, as say having a back yard, that was the theory, so they went down and said, 'Would you mind, mum wants to move from Windmill Street, she'll go around to Richard and Jenny's flat, is that okay?' Now the Maritime were very careful to make sure that mum wasn't being forced out, they said, 'Is this your own thought, there is no family pressure for you to do this?' 'No, no, no,' she said, 'I'm quite happy. I don't need anything as large as Windmill Street,' and she was quite happy to move, so once again that happened. Yes, that did used to happen, if you had bigger families that were in a small house and there was somebody in a larger house and they were willing to swap the Maritime did allow that, certainly.

If that didn't happen - I think you told me on the phone that they had a ballot system where they kept two books, can you tell me about that?

08:58 Yes. Well the normal system, and this happened when I got married, I lived in a boarding house in Lower Fort Street, so once I was married I was able to go down and put my name down on the Maritime list. They had two books: one had your name in it and the other as properties became vacant they used to put the street numbers in the other book. Now they'd rule it off every now and again, depending on how many names they had and how many properties, they would rule it off when they had an equal number. Sometimes they would automatically allocate a house, because if it were a large house, four-bedrooms, and then you had a family that was waiting then sometimes they would just get a direct allocation of that house. But where they had maybe just married couples, or married couples with one child, and they had several of those and several properties that would be suitable well then the system would be that they would have a hat with your name in one hat and the street number of the house in another and they would just pick that out. Then they would say to you, 'Well look you've been allocated that house, go and have a look at it and see if you are happy with it.' If you weren't you had the option of then going back into the next ballot, so you'd go back into the next book and you'd have to wait. But if it was suitable well then you chose that house.

10:38 When I got my house there were two around in Merriman Street, both very tiny but because we didn't have children that was all we were able to qualify for. We

chose the one that we thought suited us best and that was that. That is the way it used to happen and generally I think it was reasonably fair, it was a reasonably fair system. The waiting time wasn't that bad, I think in those days we might have waited a couple of years.

Did you ever come across anyone who protested or was very unhappy with their allocation?

11:17 Well you had the option at the time of the allocation to either accept it or reject it. No, I don't remember too many people being like that. I think you were so grateful to actually just have a place to live that you made the most of it, you thought well good, I've now got a house. The Maritime they were very, very good landlords but they only did the minimum, I might add. It was always clean, it was always freshly painted but you had to do a fair amount of things yourself. I don't think people were ungrateful, I think they were just happy to have something to live in. But I think that also under the Maritime there was always the feeling at the back of your mind that you could always go down to the Maritime and if your circumstances changed, with children or whatever, or a spouse dying, or children moving out, you could go down and say, 'Right, I don't need that big house any more, have you got something smaller?' and that was the way it went round.

It sounds like quite a benevolent relationship, not so formal as you'd expect from a housing authority.

12:36 It was and it wasn't. They had a very patriarchal approach to the area and they were excellent landlords in that sense. Certainly the men used to come around each week collecting the rents, it was all done in cash, of course, and they knew the families that were doing it tough and there was always leeway in regards to paying the rent. You know if things weren't good they were very understanding, so if you couldn't pay this week well then maybe you were able to pay next week, or maybe you could just pay a little bit off over a period of time, they were very, very good like that, they knew that the people in this area didn't have a lot of money.

13:29 With wharf labourers, and my father was subject to this for instance, they had the system whereby all the men would go down to what they called the 'pick-up' of a morning and they would be chosen for the week, or the day's work. Now often dad would come home, and I can remember this - I certainly remember it at a young age, dad would be home and mum would say, 'No work today?' and he would say, 'No, just

appearance money today.' I can remember my mother saying to me later on as I got older, 'Well, there were weeks when the rent was a pound a week and your dad only earned seventeen and six pence.' Now her mother lived in Lower Fort Street at number 56, and if Nan hadn't sent us down food baskets there were weeks when it would have been rather light on at the dinner table. But that was of course what families did and that got us through some bad times. We weren't the only people that were like that.

Just for the community that must have been very demoralising for the men as well, to turn up and have this kind of system.

It was a dreadful system, it was a terrible system.

You didn't cut the mustard, you didn't get it.

14:58 Well dad didn't work in a gang. If you worked in a gang and they wanted a gang, well then you were probably more likely to be picked up for work than if you were just an independent or a single person working. For some reason or other dad didn't seem to work in gangs, he just preferred to work independently. He may have worked in gangs and I may not have been aware of it, but certainly I was aware of the fact that when he was working on his own, just as a single person, there was that demoralising thing about not being picked up. Oh yes it happened all the time.

Then I suppose the gangs that would mean that there would be a certain amount of power struggles, people who ran the gangs would be the head honchos.

15:50 One of the problems with the gangs, and I think this is why my father didn't like them, was that they were expected to kick back some of their money for being picked up. Dad didn't believe that was the right thing to do so he preferred to take his chances and be picked up honestly. I'm quite sure there were people that did do the right thing and did pick up those single men.

How did the gang work within the union structure, because the wharfies were a very powerful union, weren't they?

16:26 Well the unions weren't as powerful in those early days, they did gain more and more power. I mean the conditions were atrocious, they really weren't very good. I mean safety conditions, or safety precautions were virtually non-existent. Indeed my dad eventually did slip on some tallow on a deck and fell down the hold of a ship and was on his back for many, many years.

Did he get compensation?

16:57 Well no, he didn't get a lump sum. He certainly got compensation, he got wages. You could opt in those days to work for tax purposes as a single man or a married man - married men paid less tax. Dad always opted to work as a single man because then when the tax was done each year something came back and they viewed that as a bit of saving, they knew they would get a little bit back. Really, mum and dad lived from week-to-week, as did a lot of people in this area and for dad paying tax as a single man he paid more tax, but then he got a refund, so that was fine. But when he did get hurt and he was getting the compensation wages he was only paid as a single man, so he got less.

Who would have paid him, the shipping company?

Yes I believe so.

I believe he did some kind of supplementary work with a fruit barrow.

18:13 Well, yes. His sister was married to another Scottish man actually, uncle Jock, and he had a fruit barrow up in Barrack Street and dad would go up there when there was no work on the wharves. You know you could go for days and weeks and there would be not much work and all they'd get was appearance money, so dad would go up and help uncle Jock on the barrow. Of course the upshot of that too was that uncle Jock would then provide us with fruit and veg, so it was another family connection where they looked after you.

18:56 Then in later years dad was a look-out. This was after his accident and he had one leg shorter than the other, so he couldn't go back to work on the wharves, he was dispensed with by them and that was in the days when you didn't get any severance money. I mean he was very unlucky, three years after he was made redundant, if you like, they then started paying out quite reasonable sums of money for the men to retire, if you like, from the wharves, but dad unfortunately didn't come in for that. He used to supplement the income for the house, I guess, by being a look-out in the back lane for the local SP bookie, so that was his spending money. Dad was one of those men that always brought his pay packet from the wharves home unopened and would give it mum and then mum would give him his ration for the week. The man's name was Mr Moore, and once again he was very, very good to the family, he was very considerate of dad and he liked dad. Dad was a very nice sort of a man actually, he was a country man, but he was a man of good moral stature, I

suppose, and he was liked by people. So he used to bring in some extra money by doing that.

20:39 I should add that when dad got hurt and I was about ten mum had a job at the Maritime Services Board, cleaning the offices. A number of the women around here used to do that and they'd go twice a day. They'd go very early in the morning, five or six, and they'd be home by eight, eighty-thirty, and then they'd go again in the afternoon, they'd go at three-thirty, four o'clock, then mum would get home at about eight-thirty in the evening. They did two shifts of cleaning the offices.

Well, just going back to your childhood then, what can you remember about going to school, about who you played with and what kind of play activities you did. I believe you went to the King George.

21:31 Well I can remember being at the Lance Kindergarten, I mean all of the kids went to the Lance Kindergarten. All of the mothers were involved with the Lance Kindergarten, they would be down there on a roster system cooking hot meals and helping with the children and that was terrific.

Where was that kindergarten?

That was down in High Street, it is still there today. It is sort of in the middle of the street, in the dip, still there today. I remember I was born with a lazy muscle in my eye and so I was one of those little kids that used to have funny little horn-rimmed glasses and I had a brown paper patch over the good eye in order to force the lazy muscle eye to work a little harder. I remember I always used to bury my glasses in the sand pit because I hated them, but I only ever used to do it when my mother wasn't rostered to help down there because it meant if I was quick enough I could bury the glasses in the sand. The Council used to change the sand every day of course, because little kids would do unspeakable things in the sand as well, so they changed the sand every day and if I timed it right they would have changed the sand by the time mum came down and said, 'Where are your glasses?' they were gone with the sand. She told me about that years later, she said, 'You were a right little bugger,' she said, 'I was always having to go and get new glasses for you.'

23:06 I remember right from the Lance Kindergarten. I had a very, very good friend that I went to kindergarten with and she was the daughter of my mother's best friend at the time and her name was Kay Hogden. So we then went from there up to

Fort Street Primary School, up to the Kindergarten level and went through of course until we were eleven or twelve. Every afternoon, probably from an older age, we all went down to the King George V playground and there were always plenty of activities down there. You could make cane baskets, you could learn to sew, or if you were a little more active you'd go out and play softball, or rounders as they called it then, you would play basketball. We would often play with the boys because they would just get enough people together to make up a team. There were people there supervising.

It sounds quite ahead of its time, like an after-school service.

24:12 Well in a way it was, yes. Once you got there, there was a gate sort of two-thirds of the way up I guess and they used to keep an eye on you, they wouldn't let the children just wander off. You went in the gate and the gate was closed and then directly opposite the gate was the supervisor's little room, so there was always somebody there to make sure that children weren't just running off, yes they were very, very good.

24:46 Apart from anything else it was great physically because you were doing a lot of exercise. I remember Kay and I were very keen on the Roman rings and the tumbling horse so we used to do all of that. She lived opposite, actually, she lived in Gloucester Street. They knew the families whose mothers might have worked and could not come and pick them up until later, so they used to monitor everybody. I don't remember there being any nasty incidents from things happening to children that shouldn't have happened, certainly none that I was aware of.

Was it free?

25:32 Absolutely free, yes it was. They would have fund-raisers from time-to-time but usually that was to do with maybe having a Christmas party or whatever, they'd have raffles. No, it was always free, always free.

So apart from King George V in Windmill Street did you kids play in the street as well?

25:59 Oh yes we all played in the street, yes. We played cricket and some sort of ball game that we would play. Of course in those days too on a hot night after dinner - and dinner of course was called tea and was always early - people would then bring their kitchen chairs out and sit on the pavement and have a chat to each other and they would be knitting or doing whatever they would be doing while we played, once

again that was summer. Then of course as it started to get dark and people would go in and people went to bed early in those days because there was only radio, there was no television. So yes we did do all that. There were other nights, frequently or a lot of the time, we would go fishing. Mum and dad would pack us up and we'd go down to the wharves and we'd sit and there would be any number of families down there and we'd fish.

What did you catch?

27:03 Oh leather jackets and other sorts of little fish. I wasn't too keen on it, I didn't like the smell and I hated getting the hook out of the fish, I couldn't ever do that. But I had a cousin who was very good at it and whenever you caught anything Tina would always do all that and she'd put the bait on. She always maintained that her bait was better than anyone else's because you'd catch little yellow tail and you'd cut that up and that was part of the bait, but she used to roll it in her mouth before she'd put it on the hook and she caught a lot of fish, yes. But I never used to do, she used to do that for me, I was a bit squeamish about all that.

Did you go swimming?

27:54 Yes we did, we used to swim down there. Of course ships would come in to the wharf opposite and we used to have swimming races over to the ship, touch the hull and back again. Nobody worried about sharks much but yet when you think about it they used to discharge their rubbish just into the harbour, so I'm sure there must have been a lot of sharks probably coming up and eating that, but there were never any incidents of people sighting or having a problem. We did that a lot, we did that for years, and subsequent generations did it as well.

Is this the famous 'Met'Wharf?

Yes it is.

Can you tell me where that is exactly?

28:47 Okay. That's down the bottom. If you were to go from here and go around by Dalgety Terrace, follow that road around, it is that wharf immediately at the bottom which they use now for people having weddings and maybe having receptions on board a craft, a lot of them come and go from that wharf. It is where the Murdoch Magazines wharf is, though I think that has changed now.

I think the word 'Met' came from the metal.

Yes, the Metal Wharf it was and we used to call it the 'Met'.

29:35 END OF TAPE MP:SM14 SIDE A

29:37 START OF TAPE MP:SM14 SIDE B

So where did these big ships pull up then?

29:48 Well they pulled up all along. You see all of the finger wharves had ships. *Where Walsh Bay is now.*

Right, there were ships all the way along there. The other place that we used to go and fish a lot too was called the 'Chains' and the chains are still there now. That is down near Pier One and the next finger wharf, so in between there you've got the Chains and we used to go there, if we were allowed - it all depended. They did have night watchmen on the wharves, so obviously with ships being in the harbour they wouldn't let you onto the wharves while there was a ship there, but sometimes you could get onto the wharves and you could go to the end of the wharf and you could fish from there. Invariably it was either the Metal Wharf or the 'Chains' or people used to fish around just under the Harbour Bridge, there is another wharf there and you could fish under there as well, but the favourite was the Metal Wharf.

Were there big cruise liners, passenger ships, as well container ships?

30:57 They weren't up this end, they were more down towards Pier One because Pier One originally was a wharf that catered for larger ships.

I'm just wondering did you have a sense as a child of wonder and romance about those big ships coming in?

31:14 Oh loved them, loved them. I just love the sound of the working harbour. Yes it was always very romantic to sit and think 'oh, I wonder where that has been' or 'I wonder where it is going?' Yes there was always, I suppose, a sense of excitement about all of that.

Those big blasts of the ship's horn.

31:40 Oh yes. I remember when dad used to work, if he worked a late-nighter and they finished at midnight, especially as I was getting older, I used to lay in bed at night

and you would hear the wharves working. You'd hear the clanking of things and I suppose - not just the men working, but you'd hear the machinery that was there helping them load and unload and then you'd hear a whistle go and you knew that the shift had finished. I knew that within probably five to ten minutes I would hear the men, depending on who was working, in the street, walking along the street coming home and I always listened for dad. So I've got very fond memories, yes.

It is a very special place really I think, just from the way you are getting quite emotional about it now. You've got that harbour, you've got the sense of community, you've got the big imposing wonderful bridge, I know you feel very passionately about it. What else do you love about Millers Point?

32:53 Well I've always said that for a lot of my life I've had a love-hate relationship with Millers Point. When I was growing up as a young person..... I suppose hate is probably a strong word but it balances out, everybody knew your business and you go through a period in your life when you are a young teenager, as you are getting into sort of your late teens, where somehow you really want to be a bit private, but everybody seemed to know your business. If I came home late one night, and you were never noisy but it is very difficult I think, living in these sort of houses and not hearing other sounds from two or three doors up, I know every now and again Mrs Smith from next door would say to me, 'You got in late last night,' so you always felt that somehow, whilst that was a comforting thing that the community did notice and see what you were doing, because that also was a safety thing too in some ways, you always felt perhaps a little imposed upon. So I always had that sort of feeling, oh dear I wish people would mind their own business. But by the same token there was something nice about the fact that you knew you belonged and you knew that people knew you.

34:27 Even when you were younger and if you were being a bit naughty or doing something in another street which perhaps was slightly anti-social; I mean, I can't just think of anything on the whole we were pretty well-behaved kids; you'd hear this voice say, 'Your mother wouldn't want to see you doing that.' So there was always this sort of community big brother looking at you and noticing, even if they didn't say anything. You always felt that you really had to behave properly because you shouldn't be doing anything wrong in your community. I think there is a love-hate association with that, you feel that every movement is being monitored, but by the same token I

think that it gave you sense of belonging.

Presumably if somebody was sick or whatever one person would look out for another.

35:32 Yes they did and there was a lot of that. I mean mum had a lot of family. She had an elder sister living in Trinity Avenue, she had another sister who lived with her mother and father in Lower Fort Street, her dad's sister lived in number 21 Windmill Street, so they were just down there, he had cousins that lived in this street, in Argyle Place, so if anybody wasn't well everybody knew because they'd see each other every day. So there was a constant family presence as far as I knew and you were always in and out of the family houses because they were cousins. I had three cousins up in Trinity, I had one cousin in Argyle Place, then I had two more cousins down in Windmill Street, so apart from the children of other families that you had as friends that you played with and you went into their houses you were always in and out of your family houses as well. So if anybody wasn't well there was always somebody coming and going and dropping off some food, 'Don't worry about dinner, I'll bring you down a stew,' or whatever.

36:55 My grandmother was wonderful like that. She had of course a very nice Irish accent and there was always a softness about her and I used to go every afternoon from school, used to go up the hill from the school, and I would go and have afternoon tea with her. We'd sit in the kitchen and we'd have a cup of tea and a piece of cake and we'd chat. I can't for the life of me think what we would chat about but she was quite a nice presence in my life.

You told me an interesting story about her, that although she was a staunch Orange woman, a Protestant from Belfast she sent her children to Catholic schools, why was that?

Absolutely yes. She believed that the discipline was better and that the standard of education was better.

But in those days, before multiculturalism really became big, there were strong divisions between Protestants and Catholics in Australia, did that happen at the Point?

37:51 Well yes and no. I mean all of my good friends, say all of the girls that I was friendly with, bar a couple - they were all Catholic. No there was never a problem. I mean this area I remember at Bible Study I used to go up to Holy Trinity Church and I'd go to Bible Study and I remember the Minister one day saying, 'Now do you realise that in this area 83.4 per cent of all the families are Catholic?' and we'd say, 'Oh, right,

okay,' but nobody ever bothered about it. The Catholic kids went to St Brigid's and to St Pat's, some Catholic kids and the rest of us went to Fort Street, but we'd all gone to Lance Kindergarten and then we branched off when we got to the age of five, but nobody worried about it too much.

38:54 I always thought the Catholic kids had a much better deal, you know, because we were always being railed at by the Anglican Minister of how Sunday was God's day and a day of rest and that up to a point too much frivolity and going dancing and doing things like that, playing Housie, because the Catholic church always run the Housie Housie as it was called in those days, and of course mum and I always used to go up to St Pat's. Everybody went to St Pat's of a Saturday night to play Housie Housie, but the Anglicans of course were always a bit down on that and gambling was not quite right. So the Catholics were a little bit beyond the pale, the Anglicans thought but nobody took any notice of that because we always thought the Catholics had more fun.

39:49 Also one of my really good friends in Windmill Street was a girl called Carol McMillan and there were three in the family, there was a boy, Rodney, and a younger sister called Marie, and I was always down at Carol's on the weekend and on a Saturday night, that is if Housie Housie wasn't on, and often on a Sunday night and we'd play Monopoly, we'd play draughts and what have you and the local priests used to be down there too because they had a pianola and they all loved to sing around the pianola and they used to drink whisky. She had a grandmother lived there and her mum lived her and her dad was dead, so there was just granny and there was Mrs McMillan and then the kids and I was there and the priests were always down there having a lovely time and knocking back a few whiskies and singing around the pianola, for all I know they might have been Irish priests, but I don't know, and I used to think: I don't know, they are having a nice time there can't be anything wrong with that, I mean there is a priest here and he's having a nice time what's wrong with that? But the Anglicans of course were always a bit fire and brimstone and hell if you gamble, if you go dancing, so you were always a little bit circumspect about all that.

Did the two intermarry or have romances?

41:14 I think they did. I mean it was never made an issue of. Yes, in my family my cousins married Catholic girls and nobody took any notice of that, it was never a

problem. My aunt, my mother's eldest sister, she married a Maltese man, he was Catholic. The children were sort of brought up a mix of both, but they went to Fort Street school, they didn't go to Catholic school.

41:50 I don't think religion.....although it played a part, because going to church really was like having a community centre. All of the Anglican kids would go to church, we'd go to Bible Study, when we were younger we went to Scripture of a Sunday, but as we got older, into your teens, you used Sunday night church as a sort of meeting place, you'd all get together and you'd meet. Then in the summer they used to have a band up in the bandstand, up on Observatory Hill and the Minister used to get a bit peeved with that, but he eventually organised it so that he had his sermon over and done with by the time the band started up. Then, as young people we would wander up to the bandstand and we would listen to the music and it didn't go on until very late.

What sort of music?

42:57 Oh it was jazz, or it was semi-classical, light classical, it was a brass band. So that happened in summer. We didn't hang around corners in those days and certainly the girls would never have done that, that was frowned upon, so church was a good place to go to meet your peers. There were little romances that went on from time-to-time, sort of 'oh he's nice', but I think teens were a bit more innocent in those days. There might have been the odd girls who shall remain nameless who were a little bit racy, but that was their business.

You didn't hear of people getting pregnant?

43:55 No, no. I think there certainly were a couple of shot-gun marriages but they always ended up in marriage and there certainly would have been some, but I can't for the life of me think of who they were now. I mean we were terrified, you were terrified. You were brought up to believe that it was not the right thing to do and certainly going to church there was a rub-off effect there of the right and wrong thing to do as well, but you were terrified of the pregnancy thing.

What about the idea of marauding sailors, drunken sailors, coming off the ships - was there any sense of being afraid of that?

44:44 No, no. I think there were hotels down in George Street and George Street North that I think probably they went to, more so than coming into this area.

Certainly when I was growing up the hotels closed at six o'clock, there was early closing. I can't remember now when ten o'clock closing came in but I think I was well into my teens and probably out working by the time that happened. My dad used to go and have a beer. If he worked a normal shift and he knocked off at four, or four-thirty, he would meet locals in the pub, they usually went to The Hero [of Waterloo], and he might have one or two beers and then he would come home because tea was always early you see, it was always on the table by five-thirty. I think whilst there might have been some families whose fathers might have been bits of drinkers, generally it was fairly quiet around here. I don't think the sailors made a problem and as I said, I think that they tended to frequent the pubs more along George Street, down there, that are still there, you know, the Mercantile, some of those down there - they are still there.

So going back to the house in Windmill Street that was your own, 43 Windmill Street, can you walk me through that?

46:24 There was six rooms and the bathroom, the laundry and the toilet were all outside, so you had to go outside the building to go to those. So as you came in there was a hallway, they were all semis, and to the left you had the front parlour, if you like, the living room, then you had the middle room which you had to walk through, that was generally the dining room, then there was the kitchen. We had a fuel stove in the kitchen which mum used every winter and that was great because (a) it warmed the house up; and (b) the cooking always was terrific, you know she would make cakes and there was always a lovely smell of cooking coming from the house in winter because she'd make stews and soups and all of that. We would sit around the fuel stove in winter because it was always kept alight to keep the house warm.

Was it fed with wood?

47:21 Wood and coal, a bit of coal was thrown in. What is the other thing, there was coke too, wasn't there. So we would sit around the fuel stove at night and listen to the radio because it was only radio. We'd knit, or read, or do whatever. Supper was always at eight-thirty or something, so a cup of tea would be made and a Sao Biscuit with cheese and tomato, with a little bit of pepper on it for dad. There were three rooms there and then there was a door at the side of the kitchen and you would go out there and then there was the bathroom, then the laundry and then the toilet. That was always a bit horrendous because the bedrooms were upstairs so that if in

the middle of the night you had to go to the toilet there were never any outside lights so you'd have to come downstairs and you'd turn the kitchen light on and then you'd run like the devil up to the toilet and turn the light on, go to the toilet, turn the light off and then run back because there is a back lane at the back of those houses in Windmill Street and I suppose there was always that feeling who was lurking. I don't remember any nasty incidences of people hopping over the back gate but you always as a kid thought I've got to get up there in the dark and then I've got to run back in the dark.

What did you do for hot water?

49:01 Ah well, hot water - there was a copper in the laundry and that of course was always stoked up to do the washing. Then there was a pipe that ran through into the bathroom and that was the way that we used to have our baths. So maybe a couple of times a week the copper would be stoked up and washing done and then we'd always have a bath in there. I certainly can remember dad giving us a bath in there. We always used to complain, my brother and I, we say we've got such dreadful skin now because the Persil and the Rinso - the washing would have been done in it and then we got to use it because it was hot and you didn't waste it. But when I think of it, you know, your skin used to really tingle, but still waste not want not.

So you used the recycled washing water.

49:59 Absolutely yes, that's right. Although now and again maybe dad would just stoke the copper up and we would have just a normal bath without the Rinso or Persil in it, but certainly washing days we used to use it, yes, you never let it go to waste, no.

That is another thing that is coming back into vogue, except that they use that grey water in different ways, they don't use it for bathing people.

50:25 Eventually when they could afford it they did get a gas heater, no it was electric, they got an electric heater in the bathroom, but of course it had a limited amount of water in it, you would turn it on before you wanted to have a shower. That was a shower, you'd have a shower then, so we got that eventually. I think we only got that when I was in my early teens.

Did you help your mother with washing day?

50:56 Yes, although she was a hard taskmaster. Her washing was absolutely spotless

and of course everything got boiled, everything got blued and most things got starched. I always had linen sheets because my Irish grandmother always used to have bolts of linen sent out to her from Ireland when she could and she would make these lovely sheets, only single bed, she would make these lovely sheets for us. She made beautiful things actually - she used to make lace. I used to have little lace collars and cuffs and she would always make Irish linen hankies which were all lace and hand-done embroidered. I actually still have a double-bed bedspread with an undersheet where it is all cut-out work and all embroidered and she made all of that, so I have that. She used to knit us socks and jumpers and things.

52:11 But I always loved the linen sheets, nobody else in the house liked them because they always felt they were a bit cold to get into, but I loved that, I loved getting into bed and they were cool and they were nice, so I always had linen sheets and they got starched. I always had to iron those, I suppose, when I got to eleven or twelve I used to do all of that for myself. My mother announced when I went to high school I was old enough now to look after myself. She would do the washing, but I had to do my own ironing and look after my own clothes and do all of that and I used to iron my sheets, starch and iron the sheets.

I wonder how she got away with that.

You think in this day she'd be up for child cruelty or something?

Well, I wish I could make my son do something like that.

53:05 Well I think that we were always very aware of having to help because you see, dad had been hurt and was sort of virtually bedridden and she was working, so you were aware that you had to help her. I mean we had brass rods that we had a carpet runner that went up the stairs and along the hallway, so all of the brass rods every week that was my job to clean the brass rods. Also I used to scrub the kitchen floor, the lino, every week, that was another one of my jobs. I used to take things to extremes sometimes and I remember one day I got up very early in the morning and I decided that I would polish the front veranda. The front veranda and little entrance bit was always painted with Solpar paint, which was a glossy sort of paint, and I got up one day and I decided that I would polish that which of course made it very slippery and my mother was not impressed because she almost had an accident, so I wasn't allowed to do that again.

54:13 I always did the brass on the front door and the letterbox and then the runners, what do you call those that hold the carpet in place on the stairs. Solid brass and as heavy as lead and I used to polish all of those. Of course the runner in the hallway had brass ends on it as well, so that all got polished. We had a number of chores. Of course my brother didn't have to do much because as my mother used to say when I would complain, 'Well, men don't do that. You're a girl so you get to do that.'

Were all the houses as houseproud or was yours particularly so?

54:56 I seem to remember that most of the women in that street they always got out everyday and swept their front and hosed the front, so the dust was kept down. As I said the fronts were always painted with Solpar, so that was always kept looking nice. I don't remember too many that weren't well looked after. Indeed my mother today unfortunately would turn in her grave if she saw my front because it certainly wouldn't be up to her standards.

So just going through with your schooling, Bev, you left at Intermediate Certificate was that a normal kind of thing?

55:37 Well my best friend, Kay and I, we went through Fort Street Primary together, then we sat the exams in what we called Sixth Class and she and I went to a sort of a merit thing in those days, that depending on your results you were allocated a high school to go to. Now Kay and I were allocated to Fort Street Girls' High, we were the only two, and our parents; both her mother and my mother were not happy with that because they knew that as soon as we were fifteen we had to both get out and work. It was naturally assumed in those days that if you went to Fort Street Girls' High you technically were university material and that was the way the curriculum was structured, but our parents weren't happy with that because they knew there was no way in the world they could afford for us to go to university and we both had to leave school at Intermediate age and get a job.

56:54 So I remember them going up, actually, this day to the Department of Education and the headmaster up at Fort Street school, his name was Mr Reinhardt, he was furious with both of them because he felt that we should be given the opportunity for a better standard of education, but they were being practical. So they went to the Department of Education and we were then both re-allocated and sent

to Dover Heights Domestic High School. At that high school, although it was a good standard they also taught you to cook, which we'd been learning at home anyway, but you had those sort of classes, and you did other things that were sort of more domestic, that would equip you for going out into the work force at the age of fifteen. So that is what happened to Kay and I, we went there, we left at the age of fifteen and then we both went to a business college where we learned shorthand and typing. Then after one semester of that, three or four months, we then went out and got jobs.

I know in society generally that was the norm, that women were expected not to have a higher education, but did you ever feel any sense of being thwarted or frustrated at that?

58:31 Probably not at the time, but yes as I got older I thought what a shame. But still we are all victims of our times in some way, shape, or form, and there was no way that mum or dad could have afforded for me to go to university. I mean in those days there were what they called Commonwealth Scholarships, but you had to be in the top 6 per cent of the State to qualify. Now Kay and I might have been smart, but we weren't that smart. Maybe we might have been but I think we were smart but we weren't brilliant, so I think our parents were just being very practical and you can't blame them for that, you know they were doing what they thought would be best for us, which would equip us for just going out into the work force at the age of fifteen.

59:34 Actually, interestingly enough, my mum at the age of twelve had won a scholarship and she went through Fort Street Girls' High, but once again only went until she was fifteen. She had won some sort of bursary, or whatever they called it in those days, which sent her to Fort Street Girls' High and she was the only one in her family that did that.

60:02 END OF TAPE MP:SM14 SIDE B

00:02 START OF TAPE MP:SM15 SIDE A

00:05 Tape identification

What did your brother do?

00:21 Now of course nine years further on mum and dad probably were in a slightly better situation and it was naturally accepted that Richard, if he wanted to go to university they were prepared to support that. I might also add that I know that my dear dad, who I did love very much - he was a very nice man, did have that typically male attitude at the time that there is no point in educating a girl too much because she was only going to get married and have children, so really it was a bit of a waste. But nine years further on, of course, it was accepted that Richard, if he wanted to could go to university. He originally wanted to be a vet, but he was a great surfer and he and a friend, Kevin, used to surf all the time. Anyway, came time for enrolment at Sydney University he was accepted, qualified for that, and he just got back a day late from a surfing holiday to enrol and they wouldn't accept him and he was absolutely gutted, but come back next year. He was also bright, he went to Fort Street Boys' High and he was very bright, and he had qualified for a Commonwealth Teacher's Scholarship, so second prize, he did that. Never liked it much and as soon as he qualified he came out and he did twelve months and then he bought himself out. You could do that, you could pay the government back some money and you didn't have to work as a teacher to pay off the debt, a variation on HECS, I think.

What did he end up doing?

02:08 Well he did a variety of things, but Richard was very physical. He was a good sportsman, he played cricket, he played rugby; played rugby for Manly Colts; he was a very, very good surfer, I believe he was number two over in the Manly District where he surfed a lot. You know, typical Australian surfer boy, six foot one, blond curly hair, blue-eyed and big shoulders. He went to work, I think, for the Water Board and lasted about three weeks because he said they used to come around every day and they'd drop files on the desk and you had to deal with those files, you had to do whatever was needed, and he said, 'By about ten-thirty or eleven each day I'd dealt with whatever I had to deal with and then there was really nothing much else to do.' He was told after a few days, 'Well, Richard you've got to make that last all day. If you don't make it last all day you make the rest of us look bad.' So he couldn't be bothered with that, so he left after a short time and he worked for IBM for a while.

03:30 Basically Richard was an outdoor person so he decided that he wanted to build himself a boat. As a young fellow actually, he had built himself a little dinghy and

he used to go down to the Metal Wharf and he would go under the wharves and he had a spear, a three or five-pronged spear, and he would spear the leather jackets. So of a Sunday morning when we got up for breakfast he would have speared enough, if there were plenty down there, and he'd bring them home and he would clean them and get them all ready and so we'd get up to these fresh fish of a Sunday morning - not every Sunday morning but a lot of the time. Sunday breakfast was a big thing in our house. Mum always had a sleep-in and dad would get up and he would make the breakfast and Richard and I always would sit in the kitchen and have breakfast with dad but mum would sit up in bed and read the paper and that was her morning of rest, so it was always a nice sort of little ritual thing. So Richard would often have the fish there that he had gone down and caught for us.

04:44 He decided as a young man, probably nineteen or so, that he wanted to build a yacht. He married at twenty-one, he had met his wife - she was nineteen and he was twenty-one, they got married quite quickly, still together, didn't have to, they weren't pregnant. She was a mothercraft nurse, or training at the time, a very nice girl, not from around here - from the Northern Beaches. He'd met her of course at the beach. He then decided that they needed a project, so together they built their first yacht, took them several years. They lived over at St Leonards, because she was doing her training I think at the Mater, so that was convenient. When they finished building the yacht they lived on it for quite some years over at Wollstonecraft and that was a wonderful time for them, they loved it. It was only when she became pregnant with their first child, well actually Rafe was born, that they decided that really they had to move. By then they had moved here though. They had moved from St Leonards and they had actually secured a flat around in High Street. Then they decided they couldn't live on the yacht any more once she became pregnant, so they became landlocked.

What I was interested in was whether it was an unusual thing to aspire to go to university in such a working-class area.

06:27 Yes. Certainly in my day, yes. I can't think of anyone that I would have gone to school with. No, I tell a lie, there was a family down in George Street North, the James family and they were Chinese and Alan, who was a few years older, he went to university, he became a doctor. His sister, Mavis, she went on to university but I'm not quite sure what she did. I think that was because the family were determined. They

ran the Chinese laundry, and it was called the 'Chinese Laundry' and they worked very, very hard those people. They didn't speak English very well, but they wanted their children to have every opportunity, so yes, they were pushed to university. I can't think of anyone else off-hand who did go, no.

Just moving into your married life, you got married in 1964 at twenty-four, what then happened in terms of your accommodation, where you lived?

07:50 Well as I said the Maritime had a rather patriarchal approach to things but there was an approach that said you can't live in the area unless you were either born in the area, but you had to be living in the area for them to put you in the book. *So as you said it was a bit Catch-22, you had to live here to be able to live here.*

08:12 That's exactly right. So when we got married we got a small flat down in Lower Fort Street and we were there for a couple of years. Then we were allocated a house around in Merriman Street and we moved around there.

What was that house like?

08:31 That was a very tiny little house, that had four rooms each ten by ten, and it was a little cottage, door in the middle and a window on either side. You stepped straight from the veranda into the living room, through the living room into the kitchen, then another door an off the living room on that wall and that was into that bedroom, and then off the kitchen; but you had to close the back door of the kitchen to get into that bedroom. So it was a little ten by ten, cut into four. Masonite walls, masonite floors, brick construction, but timber floors, very tiny. Then out the back a little veranda and out the back there was your bathroom, then your laundry, then your toilet all out in the open. Then off the left-hand end of the veranda they had built like a little lean-to. There was the back wall of the house and then in brick they had built it and it sort of sloped down and that was also used as a bedroom. We didn't use it as a bedroom but there had been a family called Bergen who had lived there for many, many years and they had something like eight children in this tiny, weeny little house. There were bunks in that second bedroom, which ran off the kitchen, and I think that is where the girls were and then the boys were in bunks out in the little lean-to bedroom out the back. But of course as far as the Maritime were concerned they did classify that as a sort of three-bedroomed house, which was stretching a bit because the rooms were very tiny anyway, but that is the way a lot of

people lived in those days. There was a little back garden and that faced north, north-east, and that was quite nice because it did get a lot of sun.

10:43 Next door were a family called the Pearsons and they were related. I can always remember thinking to myself no wonder the Bergen girls went off and became nuns because anything to get out and get a little bit of space I would have thought, because they would have had absolutely no privacy whatsoever because everything was so tiny if somebody coughed in the living room you'd hear it out in the back garden.

Did Merriman Street have a different feel from Windmill Street?

11:19 Oh yes. You talk about the difference perhaps between Catholic and Protestant - when I was allocated the house in Merriman Street my father was absolutely horrified and he said to me, 'Well I don't want you going around to that street. I don't like that street.' I hope I am not doing him a disservice here, but I think the inference was, 'Well, they are mostly Catholics around there, that's not a Protestant Street.' Funnily enough there were streets here where the Protestants seemed to live. The Protestants seemed to live in Lower Fort Street, Windmill Street, I mean I think this is stretching it a bit quite frankly but there was some sort of demarcation, this street was sort of Protestant. Then the Catholic streets were sort of Kent Street, Merriman Street, High Street, Dalgety Terrace. I wouldn't like to take a poll on that but, that seemed to be it. He wasn't too fussed on that, we didn't care less and mum didn't care less and at the end of the day neither did he really, the main thing was that we got a house.

Was your husband from the Point?

12:38 No. He was a country man and he came from a place called Coonamble. He was a country boy but had been in the city for quite a lot of years, but basically his family were from the country.

How did you meet?

12:56 We met on a bus going to Bondi Beach, used to go to Bondi Beach, and he sort of struck up a conversation. He was a journalist and he used to work all sorts of hours, he used to work on the *Sydney Herald*.

So you were there in Merriman Street for about eight years I take it.

13:21 About that, yes, from the age of about twenty-four to thirty-two when the

marriage broke up and I moved out. Well we both moved out really, yes.

You went to Dee Why then.

13:35 I lived in Dee Why for a while, yes I did. About ten months later I met someone else and I didn't live with him immediately, but after a couple of years yes I ended up going and living in Dee Why with him. Eventually he came back to the Point because in the meantime I had sought to..... in 1977 I had bought number 46 Argyle as a boarding house because I always wanted to move back here. I eventually handed the small house in Merriman Street back to the Maritime Services Board. What I did initially was that friends of mine who were down on their luck they moved in. I suppose I thought that I would always move back to Merriman Street but it didn't work out that way, so eventually I handed the house back to the Maritime Services Board and in 1977 I bought this place as a going concern with a view to moving in whenever there was enough space available.

So you bought it as a boarding house and bought what they call the head tenancy?

14:51 Yes. The Maritime referred to it like that, yes.

There were other people living here?

Oh yes. It was full of old-age pensioners as a matter of fact and this living room that you see was cut in half, there was a masonite sort of partition about six inches in from the fireplace. There was a wall and there was one man on this side and one man on the other side. Then upstairs that area up there was cut in half and there were two people up there, there was a lady in the back room and another man in the front room. Then in the attic there was another man. They used to share the kitchen and all the conveniences such as they were. I used to come every week and they each paid about twelve dollars a week rent, so I used to get about sixty dollars a week rent out of the place. I used to pay the Maritime forty-three dollars a week rent and for my seventeen dollars profit I used to come every Saturday and I would clean from top to bottom, change the sheets, change the towels, clean the bathroom, clean the kitchen, clean everything.

16:16 So yes, it wasn't what you would call the great money-making venture. The house really was too small. I mean a lot of the boarding houses here were big houses and they may have had ten or twelve rooms that they could let, well, when you are looking at that sort of thing you could live in the house; have your own area; and then

have an income from the other tenants, but that was never possible here. But I didn't buy it to make money, I bought it because I basically wanted to keep a connection with Millers Point and I always wanted to have the opportunity to be here and to live here.

So when did you move back in?

17:01 Probably early.....well I moved back to the area late 1970s and I actually lived down at number 9 Lower Fort Street at Sally Clough's place, I had a flat down there. She was another landlady and she was marvellous, so that was a nice time living down there and it meant that I was back in the area. In the meantime the lady that actually lived in the back room up here had a drinking problem, she was an alcoholic, and she was a real worry. She was a worry to the men in the house and a worry to me because I just felt that at some stage I was going to find her dead. She had a club foot and a paralysed arm and she would come in very drunk and she would fall down the stairs. The only toilet was downstairs and out into the back yard. When I'd come each week they would tell me, 'Oh she's fallen down the stairs again this week,' and she'd be bruised and battered, but she surprisingly never broke anything.

18:28 About the early 1980s when the Department of Housing started to take over, that was a real problem time but it was also an opportunity. It sort of coincided with the way the Department of Housing approached things. When they came in and decided that they would take over from the Maritime Services Board they decided that the residentials were not something that they dealt in and therefore we all had to cease and desist. Now that is another story and we can go into that, but just to cut back to Miss Ellis - I was able to go to the several doctors and get some letters from them saying that it was not a suitable place for her to be living: (a) because she had a club foot, she had a paralysed arm; and (b) her drinking problems, her health problems. I also went over to the centre over there, she used to go and have her meals over there, and the social worker over there also wrote me a letter and I was able to actually present that to the Department of Housing and say, 'I think this lady really should be re-housed because something terrible is going to happen,' because her drinking seemed to be getting a lot worse. Anyway, to cut a long story short I was able to actually get them to re-house her, they gave her a nice little flat down at the end of this street, so that was fine. Do you want me to talk about the boarding

houses now?

Yes. Did you move in when she moved out?

20:22 No, not at that time. I actually took that room over, but there was another man here at the time too, he had been in the attic for some years, and he decided to move on. What happened, when the Department of Housing took over they were very disruptive. The Minister for Housing at the time was a fellow called Jack Ferguson and one rather silly residential owner, or landlady, down in Lower Fort Street for some reason had decided to put up a 'For Sale' sign out the front of her residential. Now she couldn't possibly be selling the property because none of us owned the property, we just rented from the government body, which was the MSB initially. He apparently was driving around the area one day and saw that and then started to investigate the situation and then discovered that there were all of these boarding houses and how dare that woman think that she could do this, so really the proverbial hit the fan and we were given three weeks to move out. We were sent a letter on a Friday evening, not much before Christmas and we had to move out. Well, we obviously were able to offset that, we got some legal advice and we were able to stay those proceedings.

22:00 Then of course we entered into an eight year battle with the Department to actually maintain our interest and our residency in the area. Over a period of time what they did was that the Department then went to our tenants and they said, 'Well these people are running these properties illegally because we don't condone it, we don't accept sub-lettings in this way, so if you don't want to pay your rent don't. They are running the places illegally, so therefore you are legally not bound to pay your rent.' A number of tenants, I might add, took advantage of that. They also said to the tenants, 'We will accept you onto our list and if you want to pay your rent to us well then you can become Department of Housing tenants,' so some of them did that. Some of them were very cagey, didn't pay the Department, but also didn't pay the landladies. Obviously we weren't in a position to know whether they had gone across to the Department or not and the Department weren't going to give us any information as to who was paying them and who wasn't, so a lot of that went on. But by the same token you also had tenants who did the right thing because their landladies had been good to them and continued to pay their landladies.

23:45 I never had any real problem here. I had one man that was a bit of a problem but eventually they continued to pay their rent. Because we then had entered into a legal argument with the Department - the Department then stopped accepting our rent, so once again through legal advice we set up our own rental accounts at the bank and we put our rent into those accounts so that if and when this was sorted out any back rent that needed to be paid at least the money was there.

Also you couldn't be accused of not having paid rent.

Absolutely. Without prejudice. It was the sort of thing where we actually were doing the right thing legally and we couldn't be accused of taking advantage.

While these people were paying, or not paying you were still liable for the rent of a big property?

24:46 Well yes. Also business went on. I mean I used to come and make sure that everything was okay and that the place was cleaned and what have you. So over a period of time the man in the attic decided to move out, he was a German man actually. I had a real League of Nations here, I had a German man up in the attic, I had a Russian in the front bedroom up the top, Miss Ellis of course was Australian, then I had a Polish man down here in this half of this room and then the man here was Hungarian. I believe at times it became quite volatile in the kitchen when they were all having their arguments, because of course traditionally the Russians and Poles really didn't like one another, although I have to say that the Russian man, Mr Troohoob, was a very nice man and he actually came from Kiev, so he wasn't really Russian in that sense.

Were they all seamen by the way?

25:50 No they weren't. They were single men, obviously, they were older men. The Hungarian man was probably the youngest - he was in his late thirties, early forties. Miss Ellis was in her late fifties, early sixties, as were the other three men. Mr Troohoob didn't drink. The Hungarian man had mental health problems and eventually I had to get the Police to him, but once again his dissatisfaction was fuelled by the Department of Housing unfortunately, or officers that worked for them, but that is another story. The Polish man, I will think of his name in a moment, he had a drinking problem. I think the German man in the attic kept to himself pretty much, but he eventually moved on.

27:00 I had a partner by then and we moved into the attic and we used to sleep in the attic and then we had the back room here which became available as our living, dressing, whatever room, and then we shared the kitchen and the bathroom and the toilet and all other facilities with the other people in the house. They weren't easy times because, as I said, this gentleman here didn't work - he was on some sort of invalid pension because he wasn't that old, and he used to come down of an evening when I was getting a meal ready and he would just stand on the other side of the kitchen and he would just stare at me and watch everything that I did. This man up here, Mr Troohoob, who was as I said very nice he said to me one day, 'I want you to be very careful, he wants to force you out of the house and he is going to make mischief.'

28:20 Anyway, I had a couple of run-ins with him, one night I was down in the kitchen and when I cooked it was always good, it was summer, to have the back door open because there is no exhaust and heat would build up, so I had the back door open. He, as I said, would come down and he would stare at you and I tried my best to ignore him. I asked him several times, 'I won't be long, would you mind going back to your flat and leaving me alone,' and he wouldn't do that - he insisted that he wanted to use the stove down there. Now there was a stove, this was like a little flat, because the veranda was built in and he actually had his own kitchen, running water, stove, fridge, everything, but he just wanted to be difficult. He kept closing the back door and I said, 'Would you mind opening it,' anyhow, he would close it and I would open it and a couple of times this happened and I went to open it the third time and he elbowed me out of the way, which was a bit upsetting.

29:40 Just at that moment some friends who live in Lower Fort Street had rung the bell and my partner had come up to answer the bell. He was smart enough not to do that while my partner was in the kitchen, he wouldn't have done it if he was there, but he was up in this room here. So he came down and opened the door and then they came down into the kitchen and the husband, the friend said, 'You look a bit upset, what's wrong?' By this time of course as soon as he heard people coming in he came back up. I said, 'Oh I've just had a horrible experience.' He said to me, 'Well you can't have that happen. We will go down to the police. I'll take you down to the police and you go down and tell your story.' So I did that. The first time I had a rather young

sergeant who was on the desk and he sort of said, 'Oh well, you know, we don't like to get involved in these sorts of matters and I suggest that maybe if you talk to him you can come to an understanding.' I said, 'Well, I'm prepared to do that but I still want to make a report.'

31:00 The police didn't act on that at the time so it happened again a bit later on, only this time he threatened to hit me over the head with a pot. I went down to the police again and this time I got an old-style Crown sergeant and I told him about the first time and he did make the comment to me, 'Oh yes, all those young police all they want to do is talk.' He just got a couple of policemen to come up with me, he told them what had happened and he said, 'I want you to go up and bring that man down for questioning,' which they did. He sort of admitted what he'd done because I think he got such a shock that the police had actually come to pick him up and they actually came in, they wouldn't let me back in the house, they actually came in and handcuffed him and took him away. It was on a night when my partner wasn't here and he knew that because my partner used to belong to Rotary and he would go off on a Monday night and do good works.

32:27 With that, he was charged and the police were taking him to court and I then got in touch with the Department of Housing, because I decided that the Department of Housing had incited him to reject the fact that I was the landlady, so I got in touch with them and I told them what had happened and they were very hohum about it, but as soon as I said that the police had charged him and the police were going to prosecute him for assault they had this man moved within twenty-four hours. They obviously had received some legal advice and I in turn had to take legal advice and I was told that because of the way the Department were acting at the time and telling these people that we were illegally running these places, they were the people in charge, that they were then hog-tied legally to be in charge and to do something about it. Had that man done something to me, had hurt me, I could have sued the Department of Housing, so that was the way that ended up.

33:40 This man had a heart condition, he was the Polish man, and they eventually moved him out and then Mr Troohoob, my Russian man who was here for quite some time, he eventually decided he would move to Western Australia. I remember the day he left, he was going by train, so we went up to Central Railway and off he

went and we used to correspond for years and he would always let me know how he was getting on and we'd exchange Christmas cards and gifts. Then one year I had sent him a gift and it came back and I can only assume that perhaps he had died and I never ever was able to find him again. He was well into his sixties.

Does that mean there was nobody left here then, no more tenants?

34:42 There were no more tenants because we were in the middle of this massive fight with the Department so you didn't want to take anybody else in, you see because what other problems were you going to have.

35:04 END OF TAPE: MP:SM15, SIDE A

35:06 START OF TAPE: MP:SM15, SIDE B

Just tell me a little bit about how you organised the fight. I know that Shirley Ball and Sally Clough were very key figures.

35:19 Well we were all in it together. Yes Shirley and Sally were the guiding lights, Shirley pulled it all together, so immediately this thing happened right from the time we got the eviction notice we said, 'Right we've all got to get together because we are all in this together.' There were sixty-three of us and so we formed this fighting fund and this group.

Did all the landlords join?

35:43 Mostly. There were some that capitulated over a period of time because they got frightened, they got scared. Some of them handed their residential back to the Department, walked away, some people just walked away. Some people didn't want to know because they thought it was going to cost them too much money to fight, so they gave up. But the rest of us hung in there and it went on for about seven or eight years.

How did you fund it?

36:22 Every time we had a meeting, which was fairly regular, we used to put twenty dollars in and that built up over a period of time. In the meantime we were maintaining our rental fund as well, so we just did it that way. It was twenty dollars a

week, that's right, it was twenty dollars a week and we would pay that in regularly.
Now you had a couple of set-backs in the courts but you persisted, didn't you?

36:55 We persisted, yes we did. We were trying to go for a class action thing, which of course was not something that you did in Australian courts. What happened eventually was that it was basically tested on one landlady, who was Shirley. I am just trying to think, you know you forget, as time goes on you forget a lot of the detail, although it was indelibly etched in your mind, you hardly slept sometimes because you thought everything would go south and you'd be out on your ear. Anyway, what had happened is that during the period there was a precedent set in a case that was brought against Alan Bond and it was to do with his takeover of a brewery. You know how the breweries had tied houses, hotels, and of course he took over the brewery and then tried to disenfranchise these hotels. They then, as a class action, but tested by one, took him to court and eventually they won. So we were able to use that precedent because the principle was basically the same.

Wasn't it called 'The Principle of Custom and Practice', so the fact that there had been a tradition of something meant that it should be upheld.

38:33 That's right, that's right. The tradition of boarding houses in this area went back to the 1800s and they were an ongoing thing. Yes, they were mainly set up for seamen.

Did you have high-flying legal help?

38:48 Well we did. We went to solicitors initially called Mischy Shehady and they then referred us on to some barristers, one was called Parker and I can't remember the other name, but I've got all the documentation over there I can dig that out. They took no money from us. Well, that's not strictly true - we had this fighting fund of twenty dollars a week and we had built up a certain amount and I think we gave them some money, but they were very, very good about it. Of course the upshot was at the end of the day was that we won and we had all of our costs reimbursed, they were reimbursed. I suppose the nice thing about it was that at the end of the day the Department didn't come back for the rent that was outstanding, so we actually won in way. I suppose you could say what we'd lost in income from tenants over the years was made up by the fact that we actually were able to have that rent, they didn't come and ask for the back rent.

40:15 The upshot was that we won, we were given twenty-year leases, or we were to be given some sort of lease as security. We wanted ninety-nine year leases which of course we knew we wouldn't get, but you start at the top and then you come down. We were given eventually twenty-year leases and they were ten year by five by five and we are in our last five years now, we've got four years to go, the last one started about last October so we are now about four years to go. Over that period of time the rents were reset by the Department and then we paid CPI increase over the period of the years. After the first ten years there was a market rental review, that of course was a debacle that took at least eighteen months to sort out because they really wanted to start charging an awful lot of rent for the head tenant and our argument was that we are providing housing for people who do not have a lot of money, who cannot afford a large rent, because if they could afford a commercial rent they'd be off renting commercially and they'd be having their one-bedroom apartment somewhere, if they could afford to pay for it, but they couldn't. One man had been in his rooms for thirty-eight years, another lady had been there for thirty, so this was a stable sort of rooming house community almost, if you like, and a lot of those people became like part of the family, especially where you had a situation where the landlady actually lived on the premises.

Did you continue to have tenants once it was sorted?

42:18 The house was in a dreadful state by the time I actually got it free and clear. I didn't do anything with it until the case was settled, so that was eight years and it was really very depressing and not very good. Once we'd achieved our goal and we had our leases I then proceeded to spend money making the house liveable. I mean there were a lot of problems with the house - no maintenance had been done. There had never been any maintenance done in my time with the house, which dated from 1977, and I actually have a letter that I wrote to the Maritime when I took this on and I documented all of the problems with the house and would they consider some maintenance. They wrote me back a confirming letter saying that they had gotten my letter and that they would look at it in due course, but of course that never happened.

43:28 There were cracks in walls, this room here had half the plaster missing, there were no skirtings, there was no architraving, there actually wasn't even doors there,

they had gone, the fan light up there had gone. There was plaster missing from ceilings and these are all old lath and plaster, this is the oldest house in the area, these are all lath and plaster. You can see the cracking here in the wall, well I had this all replastered because whatever was left a lot of it was unstable, so what we did was whatever was unstable we took off, whatever was stable we left and then I had it all redone. When I was having electrics put in, because there were no such thing as power points, I was having it done in the room upstairs and the electrician had to pull up some floorboards and he came down to see me and he said, 'Are you aware that three of the bearers up there, he said, there is absolutely nothing left, they are all eaten out with white ant.' Now that was very dangerous because you could see the ceiling was not stable, but in his opinion he felt that if anybody jumped up there the ceiling could come down. Because you had a lot of lath and plaster it was very thick and very heavy and indeed some years later the lath and plaster ceiling in the hallway fell down, one Christmas.

Did you pay for all of this renovation yourself?

45:04 I did. Now when he told me about the bearers here that were eaten out I did get in touch with the Department of Housing and they did come and they renewed that and they actually put this Gyprock ceiling back, but everywhere else in the house I actually did. You see they would only do something if it were absolutely necessary.

Sorry, there was an old lath and plaster ceiling in the hallway here, I fortunately was away over the Christmas, and my neighbours heard an almighty crash. We always have keys to each other's houses, Teddy couldn't even get in the front door because the whole ceiling had come down and it was all around the front door, bits of plaster six inches thick in places with the laths, they came and they fixed that eventually. But thank goodness nobody was in the house because if you were walking along there very heavy, very dangerous for that to have fallen in, but still.

46:13 Yes I did everything else because how much longer would I have had to wait to get anything done? Indeed, I've been waiting nine months now for all of the termite damage that is on every level in this house now, all through the architraving there around the door, all through the skirting. I've got it in floorboards upstairs, it is up in the attic, it is down in the kitchen. I reported that nine months ago and I'm still waiting for them to come and the termites are active.

So the Department of Housing, just going back to when they put up the rent to market rent rates, your situation at that stage you were here on your own were you?

No I had a partner then.

But no tenants.

Well we were working and we could afford to pay the rent, we just paid the rent.

Was it a big hike?

47:10 Oh yes, it was two and a half times what it had been under the MSB, with no improvements, we did the improvements.

So what do you think of the Department of Housing's rental policy now, do you think it is prohibitive for the kind of people that used to live in the area?

47:32 Yes. In a nutshell, yes. I can understand the Department's approach, I can understand that in general they've got a lot of people on their books, there are more and more needy people and I can understand their policy in making all of their stock, as they call it, giving it a market rental value. That is where they start, so if people can afford to pay that they pay it, if they can't well when they pay a quarter of what they earn, let's say they have a job.

48:23 You probably understand how the system works do you, because not everybody who lives in Department of Housing housing is on the dole, that would be disaster if they were because the Department couldn't afford to keep going. So I understand as a government body it is very unwieldy and it has a lot of problems and I suppose what has happened here is that where the Maritime were understanding of the job that was being done by the landlords, landladies, by running these boarding houses they understood that whilst we were housing people who couldn't afford to be housed in the private sector, well then there was less demand on the government to house them. I think that the Maritime as a body understood that and so they didn't make the head tenant rent exorbitant, they made it reasonable so that as a landlady you could look after the tenants, i.e. do the linen, do the cleaning - and that was an accepted part of it and some landladies do that to this day - so you could do all of that and still make a bit of profit. Now with some of the bigger houses the landladies live rent-free and make a bit of profit, some of them were so small that was impossible, but that is another story. But the Maritime understood the position that the landladies had in the scheme of things. When the Department came in and

there was all that animosity, fuelled by Jack Ferguson down that we were supposed to all be money-grabbing landladies, ripping our tenants off, charging exorbitant rents and making loads and loads of money off the government and off the tenants, which was never the case.

Who set the tenants' rents though?

Well the landladies.

So theoretically it would have been possible for somebody to set fairly high rents?

50:51 Well they could ask and maybe there were one or two people who didn't do the right thing, but at the end of the day you can't get blood out of a stone. Like all of my tenants here were pensioners, you couldn't charge them a hundred dollars a week because that is probably was not much less than what they were getting for their pension, so it was always set. As I said when I took over they were paying twelve dollars a week and some years later they were still only paying fourteen, they were never paying very much. I know that a lot of landladies had pensioners and you always had to charge less. Where of course you might have a young woman, or a young man who was happy to live in a boarding house until they got themselves established and got a bit of money together and moved out, which a lot of them did, well then maybe they could afford to pay more, but the landlady gauged that, they gauged that.

52:03 Also don't forget that a lot of the people had been in these boarding houses for a long time, so you couldn't just go to them and say, 'Well look, I know that your rent is only x but I'm going to have to put it up by three times because that is what the Department of Housing is now asking me to pay,' so we objected to their first rental review on the basis that they really were forcing us to charge our tenants more than they possibly could afford. They eventually came back and they were more reasonable about it because by then they could see that perhaps they weren't being practical about it, or reasonably anyway, so they did that.

52:50 At the moment we've had another market review which was due last year, because it was the last five years, and we are still waiting. We objected to that on the same basis and we are still waiting to hear from them, so they haven't been back to us yet. We've written letters and we've just said..... from sixty-three we are now down to about a dozen, there are only about a dozen of us left, so what we are saying is, 'Why don't you just leave us alone for five years, let us get on with it, and you'll get

the houses back in five years time,' well it is now four years anyway.

So the other houses have been resumed or gone back to the Department?

53:35 Yes some people have sold them back. When we got the lease with the Department of Housing we were able to sell the business, if you like, if somebody wanted to buy it and some of them did that. Some new people came into the area into those boarding houses because they bought them. Some didn't always run them as boarding houses, some did. Some people saw it as an opportunity to move into a house around here and have it as a private house, others did run it as a business.

54:12 The system was that the Department got first right of refusal, so if I had wanted to sell this and I had fifteen years to run on my lease I could speak to the Department and I could come to an agreement about what it was worth and then they would pay me and I would move out. Or the other system was if I had somebody knock on the door and say, 'I would like to buy your residential, I am prepared to offer you x amount of dollars,' I would then present that to the Department and if they were prepared to meet the price well then they would buy it themselves, or if the asking price was more than they wanted to pay they would let the other private person buy it.

Just on the landladies, I'm just wondering about the public support. I know that you and Patricia Phillips were two of the landladies who ran for Council on the ticket.

Along with Jack Munday.

What made you want to do that?

55:10 Well we got Jack involved because Jack has a great social conscience and I suppose the Builders Labourers and people like Jack were the people that fought for the man in the street, if you like, and we very much saw ourselves like that. We didn't see ourselves as an elite group of people, we were just working class people who happened to be running these places and of course a lot of us had a long history with the area, right, so that is when we approached Jack and he agreed to come on board. It was decided that maybe what we needed also was representation on Council, we needed a voice to actually put our case forward because we weren't the only boarding houses that were being assailed at that time, there was a lot of problems arising with a lot of the private boarding houses where a lot of the councils were becoming involved and saying these boarding houses weren't complying for health

reasons, for fire and safety regulations reasons and all of that was quite valid, there was not a problem there, the councils had a right to do that.

56:40 Indeed for all the years under the Maritime the Council used to come and inspect you because you had to have a licence. Now when I wanted to buy this residential I had to have two or three referees who had to write letters to say that they had known me for x number of years, that I was a person of good character, that I dealt with other people morally, in other words they didn't want somebody coming in here and maybe turning it into a brothel, one of the guys from Maritime said that to me actually. Although they knew that key money changed hands the Maritime never had anything to do with that, they allowed key money to change hands between the head tenants, so the lady I bought this from she got the money and the Maritime had absolutely nothing to do with that, but they had to approve me as the head tenant. I also had to be licensed every year by the local council, so by Sydney Council, so they had to come along and they looked at everything, they looked at the cleanliness, they looked at the facilities. They weren't overly happy that there were five people using one toilet and one bathroom - there was only one bathroom - what they suggested to me that it would be better if I had all men rather than the one lady, but I had inherited these people I didn't buy an empty house and then put these people in, but they were reasonable with that, that was fair enough. But they came every year, they made sure everything was okay.

When Jack Munday was elected to Sydney Council do you think it was because of his name and the green bans or was it because people were sympathetic to the landladies issue?

58:44 I don't know. I think that there could have been a combination. Being a working-class area I certainly think that there was a soft spot in a lot of people's hearts for Jack, although Jack and I used to campaign together, we'd go doorknocking and I know that some of the older people would say to me, 'Your father would turn in his grave if he knew that you had turned Communist,' because they knew Jack as a Communist. I would say to them, 'No, we are not running on that ticket, we are not running on a Communist ticket, we are running on a Conservationist ticket. We want to have representation in Council to make sure that this area is properly dealt with.' Up until then you didn't feel threatened by the Maritime but the minute the Department took over you realised that you really had to start doing things, you had to be a bit more politically savvy in order to deal with this other arm of the

government, you know.

So did you feel a sense of victory and jubilation when you won?

59:58 Well yes we did, yes we did and it was good. We didn't ever expect that we would get myself or Pat in, we were thrilled that we at least got Jack in. For his term there Jack did whatever he could, but of course we were still going through the courts, so there was not much he could help us do about that, but at least we had a voice at the Council. There were people on Council at that time too who were sympathetic, like Clover Moore - she was a councillor for the Redfern area and she was always sympathetic.

60:48 Actually we started up a group called 'The Friends of The Rocks' in the early 1980s and people like Clover and Ted Mack were on the committee, I was the secretary-treasurer, Ted Mack was chairman, so we had a number of prominent people, if you like, in our corner. A lot of the local people - you didn't get a lot of vocal support from them but I suppose the support was there in essence.

Didn't Jack have a falling out with Shirley Ball?

61:24 Everybody had a falling out with Shirley Ball. Shirley was a very, very capable but very highly opinionated person and if you dared to voice an opinion that she didn't happen to agree with, well. I fell out with Shirley all the time and yet I was constantly on committees with her. I was constantly down at her place helping her do various things, but she used to get extremely irritated with me because I didn't agree with everything that she said and I certainly didn't agree with some of her tactics, so we'd agree to disagree, we'd have a falling out and she'd get annoyed and on you'd go. So yes, as I said Shirley fell out with everybody over a period of time but Shirley was such a force of nature that whilst you may not agree with everything she said or the way that she went about some things, you had to admire the intelligence and the strength of principle that she brought to every fight. Was it Voltaire who said, 'I may not agree with everything you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it,' so I think there was always that element, you had to admire somebody like Shirley.

63:05 END OF TAPE: MP:SM15, SIDE B

00:03 START OF TAPE: MP:SM16, SIDE A

00:07 TAPE IDENTIFICATION

So Beverley just before we go back to the childhood stuff, you've got four years to run on your lease here now, so what do you think the future holds?

For me or for the area?

Well both, but first for you.

00:30 Well, I am in a slightly difficult situation at the moment whereby I'm basically working part-time, but I'm working to pay the rent so I have a decision to make about whether or not I continue to work for the next four years but I'm sixty-five and it is just so I can pay the rent. Certainly if they double the rent, which was the review recommendation last October, that would make it very difficult. Also what it means is that okay, I pay that increased rent but at the end of the day there really wouldn't be a lot left in the kitty savings-wise, so I've got some decisions to make obviously about my position here. I obviously have an alternative, I could go to the Department and say, 'Well you can have the house back, I won't continue on with this last four years,' I want to become a Department of Housing regular tenant, I guess, and then it is up to them as to whether or not they will accept me on that basis.

But presumably within the area?

01:55 Oh absolutely, that's right. I suppose in the back of my mind I thought well I'll be nearly seventy, I will certainly be sixty-nine or so, by the time my lease is up and when you are seventy they will take you in at Darling House, so maybe that is an option but who would know? Certainly a couple of other landlords have said to me that that is their option, that as soon as they have nowhere to go their names are down at Darling House, but of course those landlords are in their eighties now, so they wouldn't have a problem I don't think with getting in.

But if you stopped working would they not drop your rent?

02:41 No. You see if they were to accept me as a normal tenant yes, they probably would, well I'm sure they would, but because they deem this a commercial lease, so whatever the rent is, the rent is. Well look even as a residential I have never made any money out of it, let alone anything else, that is why I would have a decision to make. I

can't go to them and say, 'I'm not working as much therefore I can't afford to pay your exorbitant rent. This is what I am earning, will you give me a reduced rent? I doubt that on a commercial basis they would do that.

Are you particularly attached to this house?

03:30 Well when I first moved into it, it was a very sad house. You see my mother always used to say to me, 'You are very fey, you are like my mother,' my Irish grandmother, you see. I think I have a sensitivity to things around me and I certainly believe in spirits and what have you, because I know my grandmother used to come and visit me when I lived in her house in Lower Fort Street because I would hear her on the stairs in the middle of the night and I knew it was her, but that is another thing. When I moved into this house I felt it was a terribly sad house, it had been a boarding house for a long, long time and by definition a lot of people that live in boarding houses aren't necessarily happy people. Often there is a history of alcoholism, of divorce, mostly you find a lot of men; they are predominantly men; or certainly in this area they were, they might be solitary people like sailors who would not have family, or who had divorced, or who had a drinking problem, or whatever, so I always felt that this house needed a lot of love and attention. It took me a long time, I think to make it feel happy, so yes, I am attached to it.

05:02 Also I've always loved old houses, even as a kid I used to love going into a lot of the different houses around the area and I used to love imagining who had lived here a hundred years ago, and how they'd lived and what they had done for a living and how many children there might have been, so I've always had a bit of an imagination in that sense. Also I think that I have a sense that it is a living thing, you know.

You do feel a lovely atmosphere when you come in.

05:40 It has taken a while and I get emotional, yes I do get emotional. I often say to people that I feel like a white Aborigine because this is my place. Not the house so much as the area, I have a spiritual connection with the area, you know. The thought of maybe having to leave it, once again, maybe not the house, but the thought of having to leave the area with so many family connections is very upsetting.

Do you still have a lot of family in the area?

No, not any more. I have a cousin who lives around in Trinity Avenue and he is the

youngest son of my mother's eldest sister. But they are all gone, my mother's dead, all of her family now have gone.

Why have they all left? That seems to be what is happening, that the younger generation is moving out.

06:54 Well, in my brother's generation education was better, there were more opportunities, and when they got out and started earning money, I guess they set their sights on owning something for themselves instead of living in a house that somebody else owned and paying rent all their lives. Indeed, that is where a lot of us have really been caught between a rock and a hard place because to be honest with you if I had paid off a mortgage the amount of rent that I have paid to the Department over the years, let alone the amount of money that I have put into the place to make it very liveable and comfortable, I'd be much better off because at least at the end of the day I'd have an asset.

07:50 There are a number of people who have been caught in that trap here, you see and we were just the generation that perhaps didn't quite recognise that earlier on. Also, to be honest with you, two divorces doesn't help, they don't help because economically you are always behind the eight-ball, but still that happens to a lot of people.

Let me take you back to asking you - how do you think the area, the community, has changed in your time?

08:29 Well the sense of community is really all over bar the shouting in many ways. Those of us that have been here a long time still try and maintain a sense of community, the Resident Action Group Meetings - that is all about having a sense of community. Whilst some of the new people that have moved into the high-rise buildings up in Kent Street and some down in Pottinger Street do come to the meetings to be a part of the community and to sort of voice their opinions, most of the Department of Housing people that have been moved in over the years don't bother. There isn't a sense of community amongst those people on the whole, you might get a few, but generally not. Let's face it you don't know whether this is their third move or the their fourth move, so maybe you can't expect that they would have a sense of community and want to look after the places.

09:39 I know that a lot of people who move in here don't like the old houses, they

don't like the stairs, they don't like the fact that there isn't an en-suite, right, or at least a toilet within the house near the bedrooms - I mean you get all of those sort of things said, they just don't like the old houses. I've actually had a Department of Housing official say that to me that this isn't necessarily an easy area for them because the houses need a lot of maintenance, they need an awful lot of money spent on them. Then if they are going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars doing up an old house to move a family who are on welfare and who are paying sixty dollars a week you don't have to be an A-grade economist to realise that that can't go on forever.

How do you think things will change further when the Patricks lease runs out next year?

10:42 Well I know it is an incredibly valuable piece of land down there and I know that various proposals have been put forward. It is still part of Millers Point, even though the authorities, the government, want to keep referring to it now as East Darling Harbour it is still within Millers Point precinct. I think it will be a bit like Walsh Bay. Look, we were able to hold up the Walsh Bay redevelopment for about eighteen years and quite frankly I think that the Resident Action Group and the people in the area should be proud of that, even though the developers hated us.

11:37 Had the initial development gone ahead eighteen, twenty years ago I think it would have been a disaster for the area. What we forced a lot of the developers to do, and we still didn't win absolutely, was to be more sympathetic to the area, to the history of the area and the type of buildings that were in the area, so we've ended up with what we've ended up with, still not ideal, but better than it would have been initially.

It won an award just recently, did you see that?

Exactly, that's right.

The best integrated modern structure within an historic area.

12:14 But had we allowed the initial developers to go ahead, eighteen or twenty years ago, I don't think that would have been the case. Things will move on whether you like it or not and bearing in mind that the people who protest in this area are all ageing - you do not get the normal Department of Housing people protesting about the area and that it should be preserved because I don't think half of them care one way

or the other.

They don't have a history of being politicised.

12:50 No they don't. There is no sort of community loyalty, you know, they are basically only interested in their own life and whether or not the house is big enough, cheap enough, suits them, I am not blaming them for that but that is the reality of the situation. I don't want to sound racist because I'm not, but if you're moving Tongans or Maoris or other races into an area you can't expect them to be sympathetic to a culture that they do not identify with, that's it.

13:35 Whereas the Millers Point precinct basically was peopled by people whose forebears I mean we had several families that went back eight generations. More broadly, okay, my mother's family - her mother came from Ireland, her father from Scotland, but four generations of our family lived here, even in that shorter period of time, so there was a continuity and an identity with the area. So as we, the older people, who have this continuity and identity with the area die off who is going to fight for it?

Plus you were all inter-connected through the activities of the waterfront.

14:23 Absolutely, there was that. I mean we went to school together and a number of people did intermarry. We went to dances together, we went to the King George together. I mean regardless of race, religion or creed we did intermingle, we all did have a common bond, yes. You don't get that with the people that are moved in by the Department and that's not the Department's fault - that is just the way of the world, or the way things are. I think that eventually, yes, Hickson Road, Millers Point, will be redeveloped.

15:10 There will be people who will fight for the type of development that goes on down there because as I said we do have a number of people who come from the high-rise developments in Kent Street to the RAG and they are very vocal and very active because they want to preserve their little piece of paradise as they see it. They don't want a twenty-five storey building going up in front of them so that they no longer have a view and they are looking at another building, so they have their own agenda for fighting for things to remain low-rise. But I also think that in sympathy with the area and in sympathy with the Walsh Bay development, which is not high-rise on the water, it should continue around. I don't think that you can stop it, I think that

we have to fight for open space and maybe some sort of community usage, access to the water, but I can't see in the long run; and hopefully I'll still be around here in maybe twenty years time if I live to be eighty-five; it won't take another twenty years, we won't be able to put off the inevitable for another twenty years. I see development going ahead in one shape or another down there.

Do you think that Australians who don't live in the area appreciate the heritage of the place enough? I mean tourism is a big thing now down in The Rocks but it is a very crass kind of tourism.

17:02 Like tourists anywhere they just want to come and have a look that something that is quaint. I suppose you would get a number of Australian people coming, unfortunately a lot of them are younger and a lot of them come to the hotels, they go on the pub crawls, they yell and scream as they leave the pubs every night. We get it constantly, summer is always worse than winter, it is lovely when it rains and hails because you know that is going to keep them away. I don't think that within Australia there is an appreciation of history and heritage the way there is in Europe. I've always said that if this precinct were in Europe, and by Europe I also mean England and what have you, that like a lot of those nice villages they would restrict traffic that goes through it, they would close off streets so there was more pedestrian activity, and they would treat it with the respect that I think it deserves.

18:23 I can say to you that I know this house pretty well, having been in it now for nearly thirty years, the cracks that are in the walls now come solely from the degree of traffic that has increased ten-fold out along these streets here, mainly on this side of the street. Trucks, buses, the volumes have increased greatly, although it is nice and quiet at the moment of an afternoon it is like living in a bus depot. Now you see I think that shows a lack of respect for the area on behalf of the authorities because they do use it like a bit of a bus terminal because it suits them. Because of the closures at Circular Quay, the street closures and the street changes at Circular Quay, they re-route a lot of buses around here that would not normally have come here, so they treat it like a bus terminus and I think that is not doing the fabric of the houses any good. It also takes away from your peace and quiet and enjoyment of where you live.

Well Beverley we have got to wrap it up now, but you wanted to mention some story from your Fort Street Primary days.

19:46 Oh yes. I just wanted to say that when I was at primary school I always used to go home for lunch every day because my mother always believed in giving you a hot lunch, that sandwiches were never considered real food. She would always be at home and I would always come home to something lovely, either a hot bowl of soup and a baked egg custard. I just wanted to say that in relation to my mother really because not a lot of the mothers did that. That is not to say that they weren't doing a good job, but my mother was particularly careful about the sort of food that you ate and although we didn't have any money there was always enough money for good food. You may not have a lot of clothes and a lot of other things in the house but certainly she was always very, very mindful of putting good food on the table.

Did she do that even when she was working, cleaning?

20:48 Oh absolutely, because she worked in the early morning and she worked in the late afternoon. So I would come home for lunch and my brother too when he was at Fort Street Primary and we always had a hot lunch. If dad was working locally he would walk home and have hot lunch as well. So if he was working on the wharves down at Walsh Bay he'd walk up, a five or ten minute walk, she'd have a hot meal on the table and then he'd go back to work and we'd go back to school. I think that we weren't the only families that did that but I think that stems from her mother who was always an advocate of good food. If you put good food in your belly, she used to say, you are not paying it out to doctors.

Okay Beverley. Is there anything else you want to add?

21:44 Well only in relation to Millers Point's future. Whilst I can see certain things happening because it is inevitable that they will I would like to think the Department of Housing have become a little more enlightened in recent years about this community and about what this area really means, not only to the people who live here but what I think it probably means to a lot of other Australians who value their history and who would like to see it preserved. Preserved in a good way, not just used as perhaps a dumping ground, which sometimes you see happens in other areas. In light of that I have to say that, and a lot of people may not agree with these sentiments, I am in agreement with the Department leasing off some of the bigger houses here that need a lot of money being spent on them to private people who are prepared to put their money where their mouth is, who want to live in an old area,

who want to live in an old house that is a *bona fide* old house, not just built like an old house and who are prepared to look after them and restore them and love them the way they should be.

Okay Beverley, thank you, we will leave it there.

Thank you.

23:40 END OF TAPE MP-SM16 SIDE A AND END OF INTERVIEW WITH
BEVERLEY SUTTON