

## **Waverley Council Oral History of Waverly Beach Inspectors Early 1900's.**

### **Interview with Frank Norton**

**Interviewer #1: Lawrie Williams**

**Interviewer #2: Kimberly O'Sullivan Steward**

This is an interview on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006, with Frank Norton. One of the interviewers is Lawrie Williams, the other interviewer is Kimberly O'Sullivan Steward. They're both from Waverley Council and Frank is talking to us about Bronte, as part of the Lifeguard History Project.

LW: Now, Frank what year were you born in - what was your date of birth?

FN: Oh, dear. 27<sup>th</sup> February 1920.

LW: When did you first join Bronte Surf Club?

FN: I joined Bronte Surf Club, would be late 1936, late in the [ ], probably about this time I think.

LW: And you grew up in this area prior to...?

FN: No, I lived at Edgecliff. Down there where the Edgecliff railway station is today. And I had to walk from there up to Centennial Park gates for the tram depot, to get the tram down to Bronte. It was a bit hard when we had the six o'clock start on Sundays, 6am start, I had to get up at 5 o'clock.

KOS: Frank, why did you choose Bronte Surf Living Saving Club to join rather than any of the other clubs?

FN: Funny thing that, there was a fellow working in the company that I joined, a fellow named Reg Rose. He was a motor mechanic. I think I was about 15, it was the first job I had, and just an ordinary discussion, I said to him "I think I'll go out and join Bondi Surf Club." He said "Oh no no, you better come out to Bronte." I said "Bronte? I've never even been to Bronte." And I came down here and they made me very welcome, I made some friends and so I stayed here.

Other than a break in the Army, 5 years in the army I'm here continuously and still going.

LW: We know you're a life member here, are you still a patron...?

FN: Still a patron.

LW: Still a patron of the club... which you've been for quite a few years?

FN: Quite a few years. I was captain, President, patron, still going...

LW: I'll bring you around to the reason we're here and that's to talk about any anecdotal stuff you've got about the beach inspectors that you knew, personally or you knew of, so if you can take us back as early as you can...

FN: When I joined the club, each patrol had their own beach inspector...

LW: They were honorary...

FN: On the warrant. Honorary beach inspectors, and from my recollections, I might be out just a year or two, I think it would be round about 1948, might have been 46 or so, just after everything settled down after the war and the fellows all came back, and it wasn't long after that they had professional life savers, and I think, I clearly remember Jack Hill taking on the job and Roger Riley - I'm not too sure which one would have been senior in the appointments. But from my recollection they'd be the first of the professional beach inspectors.

LW: So, there were none prior to the war? No beach inspectors?

FN: Not to my knowledge. I could be wrong there, but I [] the last lot of fellows I think - I don't think there were [].

KOS: So, we think that the beach inspectors might just have been at Bondi - it would be interesting to know - that's something Lawrie and I have to find out. We know that they were at Bondi from what? About 1911, 1912...

LW: 1913.

KOS: 1913. So it's interesting, they may have just been there, and it may have been the Surf Life Saving Clubs providing the only service for Tamarama and Bronte.

FN: I don't think we had them too early or otherwise I don't think we'd have had a beach inspector rostered with every patrol we had...

LW: Because though, yeah, there was your honorary...

FN: Yes I was...

LW: ...we were given the badge...

FN: I was an honorary beach inspector, had a Waverley Council beach inspector badge and the long costume and white hat. And each patrol, morning and afternoon patrol had their own beach inspector. Then, and I'm only going from that, possibly, they were very - we were very limited in just what we could do to people. And they got the professional beach inspectors that could carry a lot of authority about them. Jack Hill, Roger, I don't know, it might have been Roger Riley first, then Jack Hill.

LW: Do you know much about Roger, and then Jack?

FN: Who, Roger Riley?

LW: Yes. What sort of person he was, what was he like on the beach, [ ] as a beach inspector?

FN: He was one of the old guard, quite a personality in the surfing itself. In those days, the surf competitions were strictly amateur and fellows like Roger who were making a living out of Beach Inspector weren't allowed to swim against the amateurs, so they had their own titles [Australian] titles. I think the amateurs were called the Open Championships, the others were called, not professional, the name will come to me, Roger swum in those and he came second and third. I think he won one of those trophies. He was quite a surfer. He was getting on in the mature age and in my time you didn't go for very long. He was always a bit of a character, bit of a hard man, he come up in the hard times, but quite a - they treated him with great respect. It was always Roger.

LW: Was there only ever - when they weren't working during the week at Bronte was there only the one, at any one time?

FN: Only one, just to my knowledge, only the one.

KOS: This role of honorary beach inspector, can you tell me a bit about that? So you actually had a council uniform?

FN: Council... no, we had the Speedo, long Speedos which everyone wore in those days. And we had the gold badge Beach Inspector WMC or it might have been Council. It had a - I wish I could find them - I've got...

LW: I've got quite a few, we've still got a bag of them over at our office...

FN: And we had a warrant "this signifies that so-and-so is an authorized beach inspector"...

KOS: So you were representing the council when you were in that role on the beach?

FN: Well, I guess we were. I guess we were, because we were members of the Surf Club. We wouldn't have been representing the Surf Club they wouldn't have much authority as far as beach inspectors go...

LW: It was a delegated authority.

FN: Yeh...

KOS: To give them a bit more authority because there weren't any full time beach inspectors there... Did you do any training for that? Did the council train you particularly?

FN: No, but we had to have all our actual surf club certificates,

KOS: So you had to have all your standard ones?

FN: The bronze medallion.

KOS: Would the club nominate you? Would the Bronte Surf Life Saving Club nominate you?

FN: They put the nomination...

KOS: ...they put forward someone of their...

FN: One for every patrol.

KOS: that they would like to have be. You talk about coming to the Surf Club in 1936. One of the things that Lawrie and I are interested in because there is very little history and documentation about it, is what was going on, on the beaches during the war? We've got a little bit of information about Bondi but nothing about Bronte and Tamarama.

FN: I can tell you... I can tell you a bit about Bronte but I was off in the Army for five years myself, so I'd only see it on leave. There was barbed wire on the beach, of course. There was a machine gun over near the baths. A machine gun down here near the boat shed...just under where...

KOS: So, either end of the beach had machine guns.

FN: Yes that's right, yes, under there...

KOS: And barbed wire across the beach.

FN: Barbed wire across the beach

KOS: We don't have any of those images or pictures or nothing like that - we have, there's about two images of Bondi that exist...

FN: I think I can show you a photo in there of Bronte during the war with the barbed wire.

KSO: That would be terrific.

FN: Up on the hill here, they had search lights.

KOS: In the park?

FN: Yes, just up in the park... and the soldiers used the club house for cooking and all that stuff.

KOS: So the soldiers used it. Were people actually stationed here? Like, with the machine guns?

FN: The Army? The Army? Yes, yes.

KOS: Oh, really. So there were people actually stationed here?

FN: Oh yes it was a regular army. They had, they were stationed like any army post - day and night.

KOS: When you say the 'barbed wire', where did it actually go from?

FN: Well, I think if we may take a break we'll go in the other room and I'll show you a photo or bring the photo in.

KOS: That would be great, that would be wonderful and we can come back. Ok - we're just resuming the interview and we're talking about Bronte during the war. And Frank was just saying that he did everything when he was in the Army to get a posting to Bronte, but it didn't work out.

FN: I was in a Machine Gun battalion and I thought that would be enough to get a transfer but it didn't work out.

KOS: You weren't on the Bronte Machine Guns...?

FN: It didn't work out

KOS: I was also asking Frank too, did he remember, I thought I remembered from the Interview that you did that you were talking about that the front of the Surf Life Saving Club building here was painted over, the name? Of Bronte?

FN: I can't remember that but I do know, I remember quite well, railway stations has their destination blacked out, and possibly road signs were to be blacked out.

KOS: So, that would be great if you could look for those photos and what I'll do is I'll have a search through the War Memorial and see if they have any images or pictures taken at the time, during the war. I wondered, you were wanting to talk about, Lawrie, when the first council beach inspectors actually came to Bronte and who were the early people you might remember if they came after the war.

FN: I clearly remember Jack Hill because it caused a bit of discussion, 'we've got a registered life saver and a council life saver on full time' and it was something new, so I think that'd be around about 46 - 47.

KOS: And that was Jack Hill?

FN: Jack Hill, and Roger.

KOS: And how did - and Roger?

FN: And Roger.

KOS: How did the Surf Club members feel? Were they happy enough to have a beach inspector? They didn't feel a bit -

FN: No, not at first, no. It was something new. Some of them didn't like it for a while, but they gradually worked in, there was no problem then.

LW: Tell us about the beach inspectors that you know a little bit more about. You spoke about Roger, let's talk about the beach inspectors that you knew especially the interesting ones...

FN: Well, I knew Jack Hill a fair bit because he was always interested in what was going on. He had football teams, he'd be interested in that. All that was happening in the club. He was a pretty jovial sort of a man. Then Terry Reilly came along, he was quite a lad, an outgoing extrovert sort of, type of fellow. Everybody knew Terry when he was on the job, he'd go around and make himself prominent.

LW: Of course, you had your fellows who were here more or less full time in the summer, and then you had casuals, because...

FN: Yes, the casuals would be another prominent name, Alan Johnson. He was with North Bondi.

LW: At one stage he was the chief beach inspector for a very short period after Aub retired, but he started as a casual...

FN: Yes casual, professional life guard.

LW: Todger Taylor?

FN: Todger Taylor was Herb Taylor as we knew - and he was very good, because not only was he a registered professional life guard, but in that time he had all the awards possible to do the job. He was what you call a real professional and a very nice fellow with it.

KOS: Frank, when you said he was a really good beach inspector, what do you think makes someone a good beach inspector?

FN: Well, I think number one is, knowing how to handle people, to get on with people. It would be no good being a professional beach inspector with a lot of authority and making yourself a damned nuisance, sort of thing. The fellows I mentioned, Roger, Jack Hill and Terry, they were great mixers and I think that helped a lot. Of course, Alan Johnson was not only a great beach inspector but he was a great personality. Alan captained an Australian...

KOS: So that ability to diffuse any problems?

FN: Alan captained an Australian surf team at the... they had the Queens carnival at Bondi - quite a popular man. Gary Carter...

LW: That's [Jay] Carter, Jay Carter's father...

FN: [Jayne]

LW: [James Dorf]?

FN: There's Gary and John. I think Jay at the time had a little shop over the road here, made little surfing things. And, of course, George Quigley. Another interesting fellow was Ray [Taukler]. Ray [Taukler] was a radio operator for many years and switched over to doing time down at the Antarctic - I think he did two full years down there, come back on leave then go off and do another [ ] down at the Antarctic. Always a great knock-around fellow and he did his time on the professional circuit with the beach inspectors, [with Roger Riley]

LW: What about Todger, that's Rod Kerr's grandfather.

FN: That's right.

LW: Todger, that was his house where they live now.

FN: Yes, yes, he was President of this club for a time.

LW: He was, what was his real name, I know Todger his nickname?

FN: We called him Herb.

LW: Herb - oh you mentioned him.

FN: Oh, Herb Taylor. If you give me a few moments I can find out from my records inside.

LW: No, its alright

FN: We can come back to that.

LW: I thought I'd ask you this. This is, along with Tamarama, one of the most dangerous beaches on its day in metropolitan Sydney and has been rated in the top ten in Australia.

KOS: Really? I didn't know that. Bronte? I mean I knew Tamarama, and I knew that was quite a...

LW: Number one.

KOS: ...and that was the number one most - really - and this is...

LW: Tamarama.

FN: When I was telling my father I was joining Bronte, he said, 'that's a terribly dangerous beach...'

KOS: Really?

FN: Wasn't much good to me, I was a very [slow ] swimmer.

KOS: Can you explain why it is a dangerous beach?

FN: Well in those days, the outlet the drainage outlet which runs around... came out on the bogey hole and it created a terrible current, a southerly current going out there, and it was a spot that you never turn your back on because you see swimmers around there suddenly [] round the baths and the outlet, the water coming down... well, they changed that and they built the outlet around under the rocks coming out in the north corner, which was no near dangerous as the south corner at the time. There was a bit of natural runoff here with all this sand, sandbank, the low swell often goes that way and with the added help from the Bronte outlet it was known as the 'Bronte Express' it got sent out quick and lively.

KOS: Really.

LW: The chaps that you mentioned, Roger Riley, and the other chap Hill, working here by themselves during the week would have been a real big challenge.

FN: Yes, but they never been alone really because even today with the beach inspectors here, there's usually fellows around - Surf Club fellows around. They used to come down sit on the steps, in the times when jobs weren't too readily available and call themselves the Sunshine Club, and come down here and sit on the steps, but there was always someone around...

LW: To back you up?

FN: Yeh, to back them up. I can't recall any problems there...

LW: I noticed that when we interviewed Roger Riley's son...

FN: Warren Riley.

LW: Warren, yes, and Warren gave us a little scrap book, which was fantastic, of which we have copies. And in that scrap book mention was made in newspaper articles about some feats of bravery, of rescues performed by Roger, so I believe that he did receive bravery citations from the Royal Humane Society.

FN: Royal Humane Society

LW: Yes, shipwreck.

FN: Yes, oh god yes.

LW: So there were some great feats of bravery.

FN: Oh my word, and of course in those days they had the heavy belts, not like, well they don't have them now. But they eventually had a self-release, just pull a pin and the belt fell apart. But not with the belts that they used, they had to pull the line, get some slack, open up the belt, get under it, get out, and they changed all that of course.

LW: I remember in the days when I used to work over here, at the beginning and the end of the seasons we called it the 'skeleton shift', I'd be here by myself during the week but as you said, there were always people up here, people down at...

FN: At the baths...

LW: ...down the baths and if anything happened you were never on your own.

FN: Well, that's it today. I come down here everyday do a bit of work here, go over to the baths, and there'd be anything from up 8-10 old surfers sitting around down there, always watching the beach.

KOS: So they'd be available, if you called out to them...

FN: They have been yes, and even on times when the children get into trouble in the bogey hole. The registered fellows are sort of up here, and they'd have to run up and get them, and the old fellows would hop into the bogey hole and hold the children until the lads get down there. There's always somebody around.

LW: Did you know any of the beach inspectors who worked at Tamarama? Do you recall any of the names, going back before Tom Blake.

FN: Oh yeah, well I recall Gary Carter, and Bluey, you mentioned his name a little while ago.

LW: Bluey Mayes?

FN: Bluey Mayes. He was always around.

LW: He was a beach inspector, was he, Bluey, at one point?

FN: Yes I'm pretty sure he was.

LW: He's deceased now.

KOS: We have his surf board []

LW: Old Brads...

KOS: Bluey Mayes.

FN: I think really the professionals, even from Bondi, they'd come over here, and they'd go back on rotation to Tamarama. I know Alan Johnson was on Tamarama at times, Ray [Taukler] was on Tamarama.

LW: Roger was here, we know Roger was here pretty much all the time and his son may have even mentioned that he did possibly 30 or more years on the beach.

FN: ?[ ]

KOS: We wondered about that, if people particularly stayed at a beach they knew because they knew the conditions, they could almost [ ] at the beginning of the day 'this crowd and these conditions I can see how the day is going to pan out just because of that kind of knowledge of the beach.'

FN: See, George Quigley was another, had a long stay on the beach. He ended up a top beach inspector around at Bondi, same as Bruce Hopkins is today.

KOS: I asked you before Frank, what you thought made a good beach inspector and you say it was people and having good people skills. But is that to kind of diffuse problems?

FN: You had to handle people, because when the girls started to break out into bikinis and such, Aub Laidlaw wasn't very happy about that. Well there was a way of handling it different to Aub, he'd come up and scream and yell. You could go over and approach them in a more sociable manner without being too overbearing.

KOS: We've all seen the pictures of people being ordered off Bondi Beach but did the same thing happened here, were a lot of people ordered off for the wrong swimsuits?

FN: I can't recall anyone ever being ordered off, I can't recall it.

KOS: The only stories I found and the arrests are all Bondi. They're not anywhere else. And people would have worn the same costumes everywhere.

FN: But, you can admit that Bondi was the most popular beach and people the youngsters would flock here before they came down to notorious Bronte and Tamarama. I can't recall any of them myself, having any trouble that way. Really, our job was seeing that people were actually comfortable on the beach without any hooligans, ball throwing and all that stuff.

KOS: I was going to ask about that, what actually were the issues on the beach? Were you here in the 40's and 50's

FN: I beg your pardon?

KOS: Were you here in the 40's and 50's on the beach?

FN: Yes, I was.

KOS: Do you remember what the issues were what the problems were?

FN: Mainly larrikinism from the young fellows. They invariably did not like being told what to do and they'd come down in - like what happens on a larger scale today. They come down half a dozen or so from different suburbs, play up a bit. They were the only trouble...

KOS: So is it kind of people wanting to play soccer over the top of people, and kind of running around?

FN: Moreso in the park - but there was a lot of ball throwing on the beach which was a great inconvenience for the people who come down to have a quiet afternoon, quiet [morning], but ah, once again I can't recall a great deal of trouble created by them. They sort of acted okay, they probably got up to cause trouble in the park.

KOS: Probably. So, did your jurisdiction stop on the beach? Were you responsible for anything that happened in the park you weren't responsible?

FN: We had nothing to do with that. Maybe, if there was trouble, I suppose, I can't recall, some of the boys would go up there, and may be the sight of the beach inspector would calm it down. But I don't recall any great trouble that way.

KOS: Was Sundays the big day - was that the big day for the crowds, Sunday?

FN: Oh yes, yes, Sunday was, particularly here, was big picnic day. The families would come down from Bondi Junction, Woolahra, Paddington where they got the tram right to the beach, the bus right to the beach. Still do, make a big picnic day of it in the park.

KOS: Is that something you think has continued, that still Sunday is the big day down here?

FN: Yes, Saturdays were very lean on it but Sunday is the big day.

KOS: That's interesting, that's stayed consistent across time, isn't it? People have more leisure now and there's...

FN: Early in the piece I mentioned previous, we started our patrols here at six in the morning on Sunday, with people arriving 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, 7 o'clock, to get their cubby house, to get....

LW: To get a stake...

FN: To stake their area.

LW: ...stake their area.

FN: Stake their area.

KOS: So you were here at six on a Sunday? And what would you be doing for your first period of time here? Getting set up?

FN: We started off six till twelve, twelve to six, but hours gradually worked down moreso now that we have professional life savers on early starts. It got down to an 8 o'clock start, its a 10 o'clock start,

KOS: But the beach inspectors would they always be here from that very early time, from six...?

FN: Always early.

KOS: So the beach inspectors were always here.

FN: Not at the six o'clock time, they started later. I wouldn't have throught patrols started at six o'clock [ ] twelve people, life savers around, so that was alright.

KOS: So did you ever try to estimate the kind of numbers that you used to have on the beach?

FN: That's very difficult...

KOS: It is a hard one, I just noticed...

FN: I can remember the newspapers used to ring of a Sunday afternoon, and if you were around there, you answered the phones, and they'd first say "any shark attacks, any sharks, any dangers?" trying to get a story, then they would say 'what do you indicate on the beach?' well you'd have to make a guess... 5000, 6000, it'd have to be out of your head. It was certainly crowded, Saturday afternoons not much, Sundays a big day.

KOS: Do you think that the beach was more crowded then than it is now?

FN: That's a good one. I think the beach itself, yes was crowded more, but the park and all was not as busy as it is today because a lot of the mature age people come down...

KOS: Frank and I and Lawrie were talking about the crowds and numbers on the beach in the 30's 40's 50's and probably even into the 60's and I was saying that even though people think there are vast numbers on the beaches such as Bondi now, the numbers aren't anything like they used to be, and one of the reasons for that has been put to me, may have been that there was much more restriction about what you could do on a Sunday. There weren't pubs open, there weren't the clubs...

FN: There weren't so much for people to do in those days take all the attractions down that are on, on Sundays... movies, clubs open, that would take a lot of the normal people away so a [ ] the carnival at the... a day out at the beach. When the surf carnival was on there was always a crowd but it's all dwindled off today, because of other attractions. I would consider the crowds on a real hot Sunday right up to the 60's, were much more than they are today.

KOS: But more people using the park today.

FN: In the park, yes,

KOS: Using the park, that's interesting.

FN: Though last Sunday I went home about 6.30 quarter to seven and I would think there would still be 2-300 people still in the park, and it was quite dark then and they had bongo drums, over there when I arrived mid afternoon playing the bongo drums, and they were still there at seven o'clock.

KOS: You were saying that the papers were interested in shark attacks, and certainly there's always a lot of interest about sharks and shark attacks. Do you remember anything, any particular cases down here while you were here... or how...

FN: No but I can tell you, we used to have a shark patrol up on the cliffs here, where the steps... see the white fence, near that van going past...

KOS: Frank's indicating, north - North Bronte...

FN: The north end of the beach.

KOS: The north end of the beach along the cliff face heading toward Tamarama, there'd be a shark patrol. Who'd be doing the shark patrol?

FN: They had two flags, to get the attention if they spotted anything that looked like a shark, but the - it was quite, they were busy, matter of fact they might have been a bit overly busy, because you might even see a shadow, and they'd say "shark, shark" and of course there were times when they did see a shark, but they don't have that today...

KOS: So how do you spot the sharks now?

FN: Still, rarely hear a shark alarm go off, now that you mention it.

KOS: Very rare. I can remember the last time, I'm at the beach every summer, and I can remember the last year I heard a shark alarm, ten years and fifteen years. You just don't even hear one. And a lot of the people actually wouldn't know what it was.

LW: Oh, they do. When they sound the siren at Bondi, everyone gets out of the water. But, they're also, the siren is assisted by the fact that life guards and - or life savers go down to the water's edge and use megaphones to...

FN: to whistle them out...

LW: to whistle them out. But when they hear the siren for some reason they leave the water. Because we still get an average of 2-3 alarms per year at Bondi.

KOS: Per year? It's probably not a lot historically, is it, though, over a season or a year compared to what it used to be. Although there also is the point of view that there are more sharks because there is less pollution and there's more fish and the ocean is less polluted and its actually a good sign that...

FN: And of course, now... now they have nets in the south corner, shark nets, which would be some deterrent.

KOS: They move around those nets, don't they? I thought they got taken to other beaches.

LW: They do, they're on a cycle, they don't remain, they might be here for 10 days, or 14 days

FN: Oh yes, they move them about.

LW: ...and they're picked up and taken to other beaches all the way up and down.

KOS: to other beaches? Right...is there anything else you'd like to ask Frank, Lawrie?

LW: Frank, as you know, going back to Serge Denman, and looking over at the walls here at the Hall of Fame, Bronte has always be renowned for the quality of its board riders that you've produced over the years, but I'd like to know when that became popular here...

FN: the board riding?

LW: ...the board riding, because you've produced some fantastic Australian champions and professional surfers.

FN: Well from my memory, it started when an American team came out, and they had these things that were called Surf boards...

LW: Pre-war?

FN: Pre war... yes, and gradually, no, I'm a bit ahead of myself there, I just can't recall who started it here but they had the long boards. That was well before the war...

LW: Were they the wooden boards?

FN: Yes...

LW: Because you had your balsa, but prior the lightweight balsa board you had the redwoods, and just to carry one of those...they were...

KOS: It would be like carrying a telegraph pole... so before the war there was the Americans, was a team actually was it?

FN: [ ] after the war some Americans came and they had a smaller type of board and because that suited a lot of the youngsters well, having the real big long boards... and then they got down to what they are today, the boogie boards.

KOS: So these Americans do you think they brought the boards with them it seems extraordinary to be bringing them with them.

FN: They were out on a surfing promotion... to compete in a couple of the carnivals, Manly.

KOS: And what was people's response to those surfboards, then those surfboards? Were you intrigued?

FN: Yes, intrigued by how popular they became, they eventually took over from the surf [] and the rubber floats. Now every youngster has a surfboard. It just caught on.

LW: One thing down here from my experience, and the experience of many before and after me, was that you've got a small beach, you've got a set of flags. It's hard to get a balance between the guys on the boards, and the swimmers. Now that would go back in time wouldn't it?

FN: Yes, yes, a lot of trouble there trying to keep the boards away from the swimmers.

LW: Again you say that popularity that came with the Americans coming out with the smaller boards...

FN: The smaller boards.

LW: ...that would have presented some new problems for the beach inspectors of the day

FN: And a lot of problems, they were almost probably seen to be gone, now, you get the beach inspectors going down with their whistles [and they soon] and their megaphones, and they'd soon get the boards away from the swimmers. Then you get the [rascals] who didn't take much notice. So Serge Denman used to take people right out.

LW: He was one of them.

KOS: Not mentioning any names! So which end do you, it's normally the north end of the beach where people ride, down here where the board riders are, aren't they normally down the north end?

FN: Well its [following] the waves of course, but it's the south end where they get the good waves.

LW: Off the reef.

KOS: It's just a bit awkward isn't it... because with the bogey hole, and the...

FN: No matter where they are, if at the south end when they see a wave cranking up at the north end they paddle back and chase it.

LW: And the flags are dynamic here they move.

FN: They move around yes they move them around.

LW: For the conditions, that's right, you'd know that.

FN: There's another good, its pretty hard to pick out real excellent fellows but there's one here that always stood out, Herman Unsworth. You might remember Herman...

LW: I do, I spoke to Herman the other day.

FN: Did you now? He was always spotless, in his gear, his white pants, the outfit and very conscious with the responsibility of the job. He sort of stood out amongst some of the others.

KOS: I was going to say, what made him stand out for you, just that he was...?

FN: Just his approach...

KOS: One of those people, if you were in trouble you'd really want them to be on the beach...

FN: Yes, you'd know everything was under control when Herman was on.

LW: What about Serge Denman? Now Serge I'd like to know a bit about because he was a real character and a great athlete. He was a casual, was he or full..

FN: Permanent - permanent...

LW: Permanent?

FN: A loveable rascal, a great waterman, a great athlete. One of those fellows that if you walked into the room you'd know he was there. Very keen, very competitive. Anything he did, he did at the best of his ability.

LW: They say he was a great board rider?

FN: Yes, one of the best.

LW: And one of the pioneers, if you like, of board riding here.

KOS: Of Board riding at Bronte.

FN: Yes he was great, a good surfer.

KOS: It was interesting that you said that Bronte was always been known for having, particularly having a board riding culture... do you have any idea why that would be so?

FN: A board riding..?

KOS: Like a culture, there's always like a lot of really good board riders here, and it was known for...

FN: There were a lot of good board riders, they always followed Serge, he was a leader. And he did a terrible lot to cultivate surf board riding at Bronte Surf Club. They had a little group, the 'boardies' - sometimes they called us a bit of a worry but generally it all worked out okay.

LW: And Kimberly, it's not... surfing here is not for the faint-hearted on a good day. This, if you're going to become any good this is the place where you'll...

FN: There's many a time we were thankful that the board riders were out here...

LW: If we go back, we spoke without the tape on about Alec Menzies. If you could talk about him a little bit, and we'll talk about the story of the Australian Championships.

FN: Ah, well you never know what you're game enough to say. Alec loved life, took every opportunity to enjoy himself and very keen on looking after his body - food, exercise and all that stuff.

LW: Good beach inspector?

FN: The best beach inspector, you'd rate him amongst the top of them. Another one like Serge, if he took on anything, board riding, whatever, ski paddling, he took it on it to win. No second place. He tried very hard, he's a nice sort of fellow.

LW: Do you recall the occasion when he went away to Queensland with the Surf Club to the Australian championships and he was on sick leave?

FN: Unfortunately when I went away to the Australian Champ's, I was usually Club Captain or something and I missed out on all the fun, trying to keep the others under control. Yeh, Alec always enjoyed himself. He caused me a bit of worry going over to Tasmania on one trip - he started to play up a bit with the captain, put the [irons] on him to keep still, roaming around everywhere, going off, we put him in [irons].

KOS: What was the story about him going away for the Championships?

LW: Well, he was considered the Head beach inspector of Bronte, and of course being an avid rower, boat rower for the Surf Club, he was off to the Australian titles but he was rostered for the weekend to work the council at the beach. And he took sick leave as one did back then, and unfortunately they had televised the finals on as they always did, on the Sunday. I think it was on the ABC back then, and our chief engineer and town planner Mr Don State, who lives locally in Yanko Avenue, happened to be watching...

FN: Watching the events...

LW: ...the Australian, watching the events I think this was in the early 80's and noted that one employee of the Waverly Council was rowing or was the sweep of the Bronte...

FN: ...the sweep, away on sick leave...

LW: ...of the A crew and they were in the final. So when Alec got back to work the following week, I think Mr State had words with him. I'm not sure what other recriminations there were, but he eventually got moved to - Bondi, and that was considered in some way a form of punishment...

FN: You see the standard of work over there would be continuous at Bondi, but here they get some sort of a break. You could sit around on the old club steps and survey the whole beach.

LW: You do a lot of walking at Bondi.

FN: Yes you see...

KOS: Is that because of the length of the beach or that shape?

FN: Yes.

KOS: Ok, whereas here you've got a much smaller area.

LW: Well, we didn't have quad bikes or what they call Rhinos now, which is the small beach mobile, there was no driving around. It was all on foot...

KOS: It was all on foot, right.

LW: You were out there.

KOS: There's never been observation towers here has there, like for instance for sharks or for surf in the way that there has been at...

FN: Yes... [ ]

KOS: Ok Frank.

FN: During the war years, with things getting a bit nasty with Japan getting closer and closer, they had the search lights up here, and the army but they had air raid [wardens], civilians, under certain occasions would go around and make sure everything was ok, lights were out when there was a black out on. And there was a shop over there Robert Lo and Bertie Lo, Bertie was a Chinaman but a very good local identity. He was the local [warden]. So one night the alert came, a fair dinkum alert, blackout sirens going, search light going, and that was Bertie's big night. He came down the beach front had on his swagger stick and he saw [ ]. Ran up the stairs, banged on the door and he knew everyone in the district, and it was - you mentioned his name -

LW: Not the Moyses...

FN: No... [Tymore]...

LW: Ian [Tymore]?

FN: Yes, the [Tymore] family and the father's name was Sid. I don't know whether it was real but the boys banged on the door and Mrs [Tymore] answered the door and screamed out "Sid, the Japanese are here!" and fainted...

LW: Oh, I just remembered what you just said, about that chap, Lo, he was Chinese.

FN: He was Chinese... he had a hat on...

LW: That's a classic...

KOS: That's a good story.