

**WAVERLEY LIBRARY  
ORAL HISTORY TAPES  
WAVERLEY COUNCIL LIFEGUARDS**

**Interviewee:** Aubrey Laidlaw  
**Place:** 19 Shore Street North Bondi  
**Date:** 14 April 1989 and 2 May 1989  
**Interviewer:** Diana Rich  
**Tapes:** 3 and 4

**TAPE 3: SIDE A**

*Since we last spoke you have remember some other interesting aspects of your life at Bondi and I thought perhaps we could talk about them for a while now.*

Yes. Well there was a jockey called James Everett Pike, I knew Pikey well and he used to come down the beach when I was on the job. He used to saddle horses for Jacky Green, another mate of mine, lived at Brighton Boulevard. The other people I knew were Lew Hoad and his family, the tennis player.

*What were they like?*

Oh they had two or three girls, they used to frequent the beach in the mornings usually when the weather was good. Then there was Bobby Pierce who was a member of North Bondi Surf Club, he was a scholar, he was a good scholar from Double Bay. There was Joe Walsh from Enfield, a champion cyclist Joe Walsh. There was Jack 'Gelignite' Murray, he was a friend of mine.

*Did he ever tell you about his exploits in car racing?*

Did he what. He was the greatest storyteller about his exploits especially in the Redex Trial years ago. There was another fellow named Tom Luitch, a wrestler and Fred Atkins another wrestler. Lorraine Crapp another swimmer.

*Did she ever belong to any of the surf clubs?*

No she was always at north end, she lived at the north end of the beach, she started to rear her family there when she got married. But I knew Lorraine pretty well because I was a swimmer and she was a swimmer see so we knew what was going on.

*Did she swim at the beach a lot?*

Yes she swam at the beach a lot, surfed and that, she was a good swimmer and surfer as you know.

*Did she ever swim between the Heads and that sort of thing or out with anybody?*

No. There was another girl, Pam Parris, used to swim with a fellow named Bill Willis, another beach inspector. They used to swim laps of the beach from rocks to rocks.

This Pam Parris she was a good swimmer, she turned out a good swimmer. We taught her how to surf and she went to Dover Heights Girls' School and at about twelve or fourteen years of age she got sugar diabetes and she passed away in the finish with sugar diabetes after a number of years. But she swam the laps of the beach with a fellow named Bill Willis, a beach inspector at the time. She was a nice girl and she was a fairly big girl but all swimmers graduate that way you know, big swimmers, women or men.

*How many laps would she do of the beach?*

She would do three or four. She was customary to do three laps of the beach with the swimmer Bill Willis when he was training. He finished up doing sixteen or seventeen laps without stopping.

*Is a lap there and back twice?*

One length of the beach.

*From one headland to the other headland.*

From the Bogey Hole to the Baths.

*The second lap is on the way back.*

On the way back yes that is the second one. She passed away years after swimming all those things. She bought a surfboard and things like that and she was a good surfer and a good swimmer, that is about all I can tell you about Pam Parris.

*What sort of surfboards did they have then?*

They had hollow surfboards. She went out with her mother one day, they went out up on the north side and they wanted to buy a surfboard. She went up there with her mother, she bought this surfboard and then she had to get it carted home by train and by tram to Bondi.

*How big was it?*

It was about fourteen foot long.

*What was it made of?*

It was a hollow surfboard it was made of plywood at the time, very light board. They were in the era that brought in the hollow surfboards and they were built that way,

you know. It was funny when she went out to Artarmon or somewhere to buy this board and she lugged it all the way back to the railway station, into the train and off at Central or Town Hall or somewhere and then she got it on the wrong side of the tram out to Bondi. It is funny when you think about these things.

*Did a lot of people have surfboards then? About what date would that have been?*

That would have been in 1955 to 1960 they had hollow surfboards in those days because they were light. They were made on a frame and covered with plywood sides, top and bottom covered with plywood, and they had a whatsname in the front of them to drain the water out if they got any water in it, a plug to drain the water out. You'd see them standing them up and the water drained out and they'd put the plug in and go and surf again.

*They were very popular were they?*

They were very popular in those days, between 1956 and 1960 I suppose, in that era, they were very popular. Before they brought the foam boards in where they shape them now. They buy them in a mould, they get imported from America, and they shape them out with a little bit of a rise in the front and a tail at the back and they've got fins on them now, three or four fins on them. But that was later after 1960.

*Was it unusual for a girl to have a surfboard?*

In those days yes it was unusual to have a girl to ride a surfboard. They used to ride the surf, what we call body surfing, Pam was pretty good at that too. She watched all us fellows go out and she used to come out with us on the front line of breakers and she'd take anything that came along. We told her what to do and what to catch and not to take the wrong ones and all that, you know, and she cottoned on to what it was and she was really good at surfing. Poor old Pam we have missed her since she left.

*Do you remember anything about the Bondi Police Station?*

Yes the Bondi Police Station was on the Roscoe Street side, on the north side of Roscoe Street, a semi-detached cottage. It was near the end of O'Brien Street where O'Brien Street comes from Lamrock Avenue down to Roscoe Street. It was there until it moved years after to Wairoa Avenue at North End. Now they are going to move it back, they've got a place in Roscoe Street nearly opposite where they were.

*Full circle just about. Did you ever know any of the police down there?*

I knew all the policemen. I used to come from Vickers Avenue I used to go past the police station every day I went to work. I knew all the policemen, different fellows, young fellows and old fellows and all that, I knew them all. When they came to the I knew them on the beach because they had beach police down there at the time. Beach police used to come there in the summer time to look after people's togs when they were on the beach. They were in swimming costumes or trunks and they looked like deadbeats but they were policemen. But they were good fellows, I knew quite a few of them. It is very hard to recollect who is who now. There was Gordon Bierdmore, I forget all the men that was around there but they were good fellows. Some of them retired afterwards. They used to always be at the beach because when we had any trouble with anybody we would call them over and say, 'Come over and stand-by because we might have someone wants to argue.' Our greatest argument was talk to them and let them know that they are not allowed to do it on Bondi Beach, that is how it was.

*So could you tell me a bit about Bondi Pavilion, we were talking about that earlier? Do you remember the people that built it and some of the things that happened there?*

Yes I'll tell you about the Pavilion. They built the Surf Pavilion about 1928 and they had a caretaker's cottage at the back of the place, right on the north-west side of it facing the roadway, they had a man there. The first caretaker was a fellow named Harold Watts and his family lived there for a while before another fellow called Tim Collins and his wife and family came there, they lived in the cottage there. Now they lived in the cottage for about five or six years until about 1934 until they built the auditorium at the back of the Pavilion. The auditorium was for the picture show, they ran open-air picture shows in the summer time. The screen was down the side of the park, hessian screens or something like that, it was right down. On the auditorium they had the upstairs with a caretaker's flat upstairs. They pulled down the cottage first to build the auditorium and it was all upstairs for Tim Collins and his family. They were good people and he reared his family there. This Harold Watts who was there before him I knew his family. He had a girl, Jean Watts, she was one of the champion swimmers of Bondi Ladies Swimming Club. Harold's son joined the firies, the Fire Brigade.

The Beach Pavilion there was tenants in the Beach Pavilion known as Sargeants Limited, they were caterers with the famous meat pies. After the war years there was

Guido Pellicciari, he was on for a while before he passed away. Then after he passed away Guido's brother Johnny and his wife Ann Pellicciari they took over the Pavilion, that part of it.

Then there was the Turkish Baths south of there and they were hot salt water baths. They drew the salt water up from the south end of the beach in a deep hole which was always filled with water low tide or high tide and it was called the Porridge Pot. The pipe went into the Porridge Pot and the water was pumped up from the south end of the beach along the wall to the Pavilion and into the boiler room into the Turkish Baths and made hot there in the Turkish Baths, so you could have hot salt water baths as well as a Turkish bath.

*Was it very popular?*

It was very popular at the time. The council took it over at the start but it didn't pay well. That Turkish Baths that went out later in the year, about 1934 I suppose it went out, and North Bondi Surf Club were having renovations done and a new surf club built at North Bondi and we had meetings in that Turkish Baths and competition with our drills and all those things we had to have for R&R we had them in the Turkish Baths section. Then after the war years there was another man took it over, Brother Jonathan a wrestler, he was a cagey sort of a fellow but he was a good bloke. After him there was Charlie and Bobby Saunders they took it over after him. Bobby was very popular, she was a nice lady, and Charlie was a character of a fellow. The jockeys used to go there and finished up calling him 'No Change Charlie' why I don't know. They would give him a fiver and he would get the change off them, that is the way Charlie worked. After the war was over, Second World War, the Bondi Boys' Club took it over and I think they still run it, something happens there now I don't know exactly what it is now. That is as far as the Turkish Baths are concerned. In the Pavilion in the men's locker room there was probably 6,000 small lockers and there would be 500 cabins, walk-in-walk-out cabins with your own key and your own lock. Below that in the men's section there would be just where you could change without buying a locker or a cabin you could just go and dress in a cubicle. There were family cabins which is now called the Community Room at the Surf Pavilion. Beside that there was the small locker rooms and the places where there was no cabins, just ordinary cubicles.

*So what were the family cabins like?*

They were very good. They were about eight foot square with seats all round them and pegs in them and covered over the top. You had your own key, when you got the family cabin you had your own key, and your own family could go in there the boys and girls could go in together, all the little ones, what they call the family cabins.

*You could leave your things there, go down the beach and then come back.*

Come back and shower and come into the family cabins.

*That was good. Even though people took a lot of care with their belongings and left them in the cabins I suppose there was still a lot of lost property around.*

Yes there was false teeth very often lost because a wave would knock them out of your mouth as soon as you got into the water and the first wave hit you. They used to wash up in the big seas right up the high tide level. We had some fun there one day, there was a fellow lost some teeth, a Father Green from down south somewhere, Father Green one of the priests used to stop at the Hotel Bondi with another priest called Father Cahill. Father Green used to go to the races every Wednesday. This Father Green was on holiday sort of business, as we would call it, and my mate Bill Willis said to him one day, 'What happened to your teeth?' He said, 'I lost them in the surf Bill.' Bill says, 'I think Aub picked them up yesterday.' He said, 'Would you like to try them on and see if they are yours are not.' Father says, 'Oh yes Bill I'll try them on. Bring them up to the hotel in a couple of days when I'm here. In the late afternoon when you come up for your jug of beer.' Bill says, 'All right.' Father Green was there and Bill had washed the teeth and everything like that and Father Green says, 'They are pretty white aren't they Bill,' but when he started to run his tongue round his mouth they weren't the same teeth, Father Green said, 'No they're not mine Bill.'

*Do you remember the stormwater channels at Bondi?*

Yes I do very much. They were there for a long time and it was called 'Hogan's Hole' on the beach because there was always water in it and we had to refrain children from swimming in it because it was all stormwater drainwater. At sea you would call it 'The Binoculars' because two binocular pipes were looking at you from the beach. From there we go to the two piers, people would say, 'I'll meet you at Bondi at the south pier,' or the north pier. They got blown away in 1940, the Army blew them up. Then there was Tiny's Cafe at the north end of the beach, a place called Beach Court, it was run as a bit of a radio station for a while. It was called 'To and Fro the Lido'

and that went on for years. That was near Wally Weekes Pool, a rock pool for swimming. When it was built, Wally Weekes Pool, it had a springboard on the outside edge of the pool on the rock ledge, it is still there today, the foundations are still there. They had a spring board and in calm water all the boys from North Bondi Surf Club which was just up above there next to Wally Weekes's home, the first North Bondi Surf Club was there on the hill, the boys used to go down and dive off on the springboard next to the pool.

*Tiny's Tea Room what was that life?*

That was called Beach Court. It had a dance floor on the top between the two buildings and they used to run a Saturday and Sunday night dance there and all the girls used to turn up there and the boys from both surf clubs, Bondi Surf Club and North Bondi Surf Club, it was run on Saturday and Sunday nights on the top of the Beach Court Pavilion.

*How many people would be there?*

There would be 400 people on the dance floor. It was only a tiny floor but we used to get round.

*How much did it cost to get in?*

Two bob dance in those days.

*Did they serve anything to eat or drink there?*

No. Not like the Esplanade. The Esplanade upstairs they used to have a dance there. It was a dance floor on one side and on the other side was the tea room. Roy Starfield used to run a dance there with his wife and we used to have two shillings and six pence for men and two shillings for ladies Saturday night dance. They used to have what we called the main hall, that is the western hall as it is now, it was a real dance floor. That is where I had the mini golf years ago. You used to go from there into the other hall where the band people used to rehearse their band, the Bondi Beach Band, put all their music in there. You used to have a cup or tea, a scone, a cake and a sandwich for your two and six pence and the girls for two bob.

*There was no alcohol around at that time was there in those affairs?*

The only alcohol there was in those days was when some of the smarties went out on the verandah of the Pavilion, lower the fishing line down to their mates downstairs and bring up a bottle of plonk, as wine in those days was called. They would bring it

up to the top of the Pavilion with a fishing line and open it up on the balcony. But it was soon confiscated by the men that were there, chuckers out as we called them, they soon found out who was who and where the grog came from. It was pulled up by fishing line onto the balcony.

*Do you remember a sly grog place that was at Bondi?*

Yes the sly grog place at Bondi, it was at the bottom of Simpson Street and Kalua Street. There was a house there had two or three garages behind it and it was called Canary Cottage, a well-known grog shop at Bondi in the early days when the sand hills were there. They used to have to knock at the door to get their grog of a night time so the police wouldn't see them and that was always a sly grog shop. I don't know if it is going now.

*I have heard some stories about when the Malaba was wrecked and all the cargo was washed up.*

Yes the *Malaba* was wrecked just near Easter time, one Easter, and two days after it went aground and all the kegs of butter, onions, potatoes, sacks and sacks of these things, were washed along the coast and the southerly wind had brought it into North Bondi. Now North Bondi had a few kegs of beer washed up and it finished up the police got onto it and they confiscated it into Beach Court, or Tiny's Cafe at the time. There was some kegs that never drifted in, they drifted into Ben Buckler. You can just imagine how the boys that found the kegs they never returned it to Beach Court they just all sat down, say ten or twelve fellows, and they had a real party. That was the *Malaba* wreck. That was butter and all those things washed in there.

*Was it still useable the cargo?*

The cargo was used for the butter. If you took of the flour on the outside the flour was dry inside, but the coating outside was like a dough and you had to dig inside for the flour itself. The onions were in good condition and the potatoes were in good condition because they wouldn't deteriorate.

*Did you ever get to meet Bea Miles?*

Yes I often met Bea, she was a character of a girl, she knew everything and she was a very brainy girl. She used to come to Bondi a lot and used to go round to the Bogey Hole at North Bondi, around the point at Ben Buckler, and used to do a lot of swimming there. She always carried a knife with her she reckoned if a shark attacked



her she'd go for the knife. Bea was a nice girl she was frequently at the place, especially of a weekend when all the crowd was there. One day she brought down a lamb on a string and tied it up to the North Bond Patrol and she said to me, 'Aub there's no notice about lambs on the beach it is all about dogs. Can I leave it here while I go and have my swim?' I said, 'All right. As long as the boys don't worry about baa-baa-baa all the time while they are on patrol.' She went away to Ben Buckler and had a swim. Another day she came down and it was a very windy cold day and a southerly wind blowing. I was called to the south end of the beach, we were all hiding out from the rain and all that at North Bondi Surf Club. When the council officers called in and saw me he said, 'There's a lady down south there out on the south end of Bondi Beach.' I went to the door and I said, 'That's all right I know who she is.' This officer said to me, 'What do you mean you know who it is?' I said, 'I know it is it is Bea Miles.' He drove me down in his car all along the promenade down to the south end and it was her all right. It was Bea Miles and she was surfing with a number of dolphins, catching the waves with a number of dolphins. You would swear she was amongst the sharks but she knew a dolphin from a shark. I said to the fellow then, 'That's Bea Miles. I know her well. She's come out from Kings Cross.' The officer left me and I stopped there and waited to see what she was going to do. She came out of the surf and she put a towel around and put her jacket on and she walked up to where I was and I said, 'How are you Bea?' She said, 'Oh the water was beautiful Aub. Did you see me with the dolphins out there?' I said, 'Yes you had a great time didn't you.' She had a cab standing up on the road, on Queen Elizabeth Drive she had a cab driver there waiting for her. She went up and got in the cab in her wet gear and she said, 'I'll see you later Aub,' and off to Kings Cross in the cab. Had the cab waiting for her while she was surfing.

*Did she pay the cab man ever?*

She would pay anything, she knew she had to pay any parking fee or anything like that at any time, she would do that. No getting out of it for Bea, that wasn't in it.

*So is there anything else you remember about Bea Miles?*

She used to get in a double-decker bus at North Bondi and I used to go there to the railway sometimes and into Darlinghurst and Oxford Street. She'd go up on the top deck of the bus and I'd get up there too and she'd say to me, 'Do you want to bet on the cars today?' I'd say, 'What are you going to bet on?' She'd say, 'I'll bet on the

Holdens if you bet on the Fords. You pay my fare if we get to Darlinghurst first and I've got the most Holdens.' So we passed Ford after Ford and Holden after Holden all the way to Darlinghurst and finished up I would pay her fare at Darlinghurst because she had won by the Holdens.

*Did she normally win?*

Usually yes.

*Around 1935 there was the Bondi Beach Band wasn't there.*

Yes that's right. They used to play in between the piers, there was a bandstand there built and it was hired by the chair hire people that put the chairs out around the bandstand of a Sunday night between seven o'clock and nine. The band played there from seven until nine and people would sit on four sides of the bandstand listening to the band. The other people walked backwards and forwards along the promenade, didn't want to listen to the band, and there were probably 10,000 people of a Sunday night they would walk up and down from the Pavilion down to the north end to the beach and back towards the Pavilion again, walk backwards and forwards, and meet this one and that one and say hello to this one and say hello to that one.

*Was it well lit at that time?*

Yes it was well lit, it was very light, big lamps on the driveway. It is more lit today, they have got the big extension lights on today.

*Everybody could go down and there was no worry about being mugged?*

No. It was a friendly attitude and a community attitude. Everybody knew everybody. People went surfing and it was, 'How are you mate, how are you going. Long time since I've seen you,' things like that.

*So you would walk around or else you would sit down and listen to the band sometimes.*

Then when the band had completed everybody would go up to Powells, the milk bar up in Campbell Parade, and have something to eat, an ice-cream or something like that at Powells Milk bar, it was on the corner of Campbell Parade and Roscoe Street.

*Do you remember the other milk bars that were there like [????]?*

Yes [????] Milk bar, he run that for years. That area from Lamrock Avenue right down to Hotel Bondi all the shops were leased or owned by Greek nationalities. There was George's at the corner of Hall Street and then there was Milly the Fly, he had a

restaurant, [????] and Powells Milk bar. Then there was the fish shop, he was a Greek boy too. Probably about a dozen or so Greeks leased or owned those shops from Lamrock Avenue to the Hotel Bondi in those days.

*Did you find after the war there was a great change in the population there?*

Oh yes. Of a night time or a day time a double tram would bring down of a hot Sunday 250 people by tram. There used to be double trams following down Bondi Road from early in the morning until late in the afternoon, 250 people travelling by double trams. There were very few motor cars in those days and everybody used to come down by tram and all meet at the Foundation Stone in the front of the Pavilion. If you wanted to meet anybody you'd meet them outside the piers or at the Foundation Stone at Bondi Beach.

*Before the war they were mainly sort of Anglo-Saxon type people, then after the war did you find a lot of Europeans started arriving?*

Yes there were because they had signs on the beach in German and Italian, 'Bathe between flags' signs on the beach. They had about five or six signs the whole length of Bondi Beach, 'Bathe between flags,' in German and Italian.

*Did you find that they understood the rules of the beach well?*

They did in those days yes.

*I hear now that some of the lifesavers have got to learn to speak a bit of basic Japanese because the Japanese people don't understand and they just go hopping off into the lovely white surf.*

Yes they go anywhere. They are like the boys that come out from England on their boats, they used to come out to Bondi Beach and the first thing they would do is go down the south end and the first bit of a rip, or where they could go into the surf, in deep water they would go into the rip and it finished up we had to pick them out, rescue them. These bell boys used to come out from the boats, they were the boats that brought them out from England in those days, and they used to come down to Bondi Beach during the weekdays, probably Wednesday or Thursday, when they'd be off duty and the first thing to do is to go through the rail, jump on the beach, pull off their clothes and straight into the surf. Doesn't matter what sort of surf was racing they'd go in and we'd have to dig them out by rescue.

*They just didn't know did they.*

They didn't know anything about it. They thought it was surf and that was enough for them. They had learned all about Bondi.

*Everybody knew about Bondi and they'd go straight there.*

Well they used to come by boats this way, they used to have two or three different places they used to go to. They used to go to Bondi Beach first, then Blue Mountains and then Taronga Park. Three days and they'd be off again on another trip, they'd be leaving Sydney. They would be here for three days, Bondi Beach, have to have a trip out to the Blue Mountains and then Taronga Park and then they'd go in the boat.

*That was a quick stay wasn't it.*

It was a good three days to spend for the tourists wasn't it.

*You just had to make sure they didn't drown.*

We had a boat that came in one day, I was talking to one of the fishermen boys the other day down at the fishing club, and it was a fairly rough day and these two or three fellows got in a channel and that was a rip going off the beach. We finished up rescuing them. Bill Willis and I was on duty that day and I went out and rescued this fellow, brought him back, and we pumped him for a while and we finished up calling for the ambulance we couldn't do any good with him. We had to send him to St Vincent's Hospital. We always had a thing that of a night time Bill and I used to always say, 'How did so and so get on yesterday?' 'Oh I rang him up last night and he was right.' This fellow was a second baker off one of the ships and we rang up about midnight and he'd left the hospital and been taken back to the ship and he was okay. We never heard any more of him and the ship left going to Melbourne a couple of days later, we never saw any more of the second baker. About a week or so later we get a letter from Melbourne with four pounds in it for Bill and I for rescuing this second baker.

*That was nice wasn't it.*

Yes. Very seldom we got gifts like that from people we had rescued.

*You had saved their lives.*

They would just say thanks and away they'd go and that was the last you'd see of them.

*You would be concerned enough to ring up the hospital.*

We would ring up the hospital and then ring up the ship. We knew what the ship he was in and we'd ring up the ship exactly what was going on. We had to know, we were guardians of the beach sort of business, so we had to know everybody was present and correct.

*Could you tell me about the weekenders down at the beach.*

Yes. Years ago North Bondi Surf Club used to have weekenders coming out of a Friday night and going home of a Sunday night, lived in Paddington, Bondi Junction and those places, and they used to spend the weekend at the weekenders. These weekenders were named Arcadia, Solstice, Rose Cottage, Doralian and Slugger's Camp.

*Were these men from the lifesaving club?*

Yes they were all qualified lifesavers the whole lot of them.

*Would they have to pay to stay there?*

Yes. On Doralian we paid I think it was twenty pound a week.

*You mean the club would pay twenty pounds a week and the people who stayed there how much would they pay?*

We would all put in our share whoever stayed at the camp.

*To cover the rent.*

To cover the rent. They were probably three or four room cottages.

*What would happen to them during the week?*

Well the boys would come out occasionally through the week. Probably they would leave someone as a caretaker, that was out of work something like that, he was there to look after the place.

*Were there lots of sand hills around there then?*

Oh plenty of sand hills yes. Blair Street wasn't complete. From the foot of Blair Street where Vickers Avenue starts you didn't have a road way from there down past Sevenways. I think St Anne's Church was the closest. There was no road in Blair Street from Vickers Avenue to Sevenways.

*What was it like? Was it just sand?*

It was all sand.

*Any bush?*

No. There was a bush called O'Brien's Bush. On the north side of Bondi Road on the hill there near Edwards Street it was called the cow paddock. It was a fenced in block of land and they used to run cows on it.

### **TAPE 3: SIDE A**

We were given a speed boat at North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club and a fellow named Mr Simons, a Western Suburbs furniture maker, donated it to North Bondi Surf Club. He thought it would be handy for rescues and all that sort of business and for laying the buoys and all those things. It had an engine in it called the Bert Hinkler's Aircraft Engine so it was pretty speedy. We used this boat from about Christmas time up to about the New Year's Eve party. When the New Year's Eve party came the boys early in the morning, three of the lifesaving boys, they decided to take this speed boat to sea. There was a fair sea running and they run across the bay like nobody's business in the speed boat and when they got to the south end of the beach the engine conked out, they couldn't get it go. It was drifting, drifting, drifting towards the beach and a wave caught it and threw it and boys jumped over board. It threw it and shot a wave to the beach right high up on the sand. We finished up dragging it up to the surf club and that was the last we saw of Mr Simons, he never fronted again with the surf boat. *[Laughs]* Now we have the rubber duckies and they are very manoeuvrable and can be taken out through any surf. We have the helicopter to bring in the surfer that goes out in the rip and he can't be put aboard the rubber ducky. The helicopter is the biggest gift to lifesaving there is. They were the good days we had at Bondi Beach years ago.

### **TAPE 4: SIDE A**

*You have lived in many different areas. You started off with Balmain and then where did the family go?*

Oh the family moved to a place called Morisset on Lake Macquarie. We lived in a tent, it was called 'Howie's Tent' on the shores of Lake Macquarie until the houses got built that had to house mum and dad. There were the four boys living in a tent with mum and dad, that is six people.

*Then you came down to Gladesville didn't you?*

We moved from there to Gladesville and went from Gladesville to Paddington.

*Did you go to Bondi from there?*

Yes I spent a lot of years at Bondi.

*Did you join the surf club while you were still in Paddington?*

Yes I did. I joined the North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club when I was seventeen years of age. I was eighteen years in March the following year and before then I won the Junior Surf Championship of Australia.

*How did you get to Bondi from Paddington?*

By tram, the old double-decker tram, single-decker tram it was.

*When did you move to the Bondi area?*

I moved to the Bondi area about 1928 into [????] Street.

*What sort of a place was it?*

It was a small two-bedroomed, or one-bedroomed, and a kitchen. It was a cheap rental, it was about fifteen shillings a week at the time and I was learning the trade as a carpenter and joiner with Anthony Hordern and Sons.

*Did you live there alone?*

I lived there alone yes. I spent about twelve or eighteen months there and then I was appointed the surf club caretaker, or resident member it is called now, and I lived at the surf club in Campbell Parade North Bondi.

*What were your duties as a caretaker?*

Cleaning the club and the main amenities and service of the surf club.

*How long did you live in Campbell Parade?*

I lived in Campbell Parade for about nine months as caretaker until they got another caretaker. I moved from there to a weekender at North Bondi in Leighton Boulevard, a place called Rose Cottage.

*What was the rent there?*

The rent there was about seventeen and six per week.

*Did you live there by yourself at the weekender?*

Yes. I was the caretaker during the week and the boys came down at the weekend and spent from Friday night to Sunday night before they went home again. They all lived around Bondi Junction and the Paddington area.

*What sort of a place were these weekenders?*

Some of them were two bedroomed and a kitchen and a big yard at the back, big enough to hold a mini golf course in the back yard. In those days there was a lot of land around the cottages.

*Did you actually have a mini golf course there?*

We did, we had a mini golf course and the boys of a weekend, Saturday afternoon, they used to play mini golf around the cottage. That was Rose Cottage.

*When you left there where did you go?*

I went to a place called Doralian, another weekender, in Hastings Parade, the top end of Hastings Parade right on the point of North Bondi.

*Were you the caretaker there?*

Actually caretaker same as I was at Rose Cottage.

*From there where did you go?*

I was married from there to a country girl from Ballina. When I was married we moved to Kalua Street.

*What sort of place did you live in in Kalua Street?*

It was a one bedroomed unit to start off with.

*What was it like when you say a unit?*

Well a very comfortable unit and very clean.

*How many floors?*

On the first floor.

*How big was the block?*

It was only a two-storey block, there was only about six flats in the place, in Kalua Street.

*So you lived there, what rent did you pay at that place?*

I think we paid twenty-one shillings for that unit, flat, twenty-one shillings a week.

*Where did you go from there/*

Went to a place in Sofia Street, it is called Glenaire Avenue now, lived in a house there with one bedroom with kitchen-amenities thrown in. I think it cost us twenty-three shillings for the amenities and the room in the front.

*Why did you move?*



Well we got another flat again in Kalua Street and we stayed there for a while and then went down to Matilda Street, that is Beach Road. I lived there with my brother and his wife, we shared the unit or the house, it was a house really. We went from Beach Road to Lamrock Avenue and my brother and his wife moved out and they went to just out of Sydney, he was in the Navy.

*Did you have any children by then?*

No no children by then. My brother he didn't have any children either, his wife didn't have any children. We went to Lamrock Avenue and we sorted out a house in Lamrock Avenue, a semi-detached cottage. We found another semi further up in Lamrock Avenue for my brother and his wife to move out to, out from outer Sydney to Bondi again.

*Which brother was this?*

This one was in the Navy, Dud was in the Navy. He lived with us at Beach Road. We found a cottage for them to move out to it was about twenty-five to thirty shillings a week further up in Lamrock Avenue.

*What work were you doing at this time?*

I was a beach inspector at Bondi Beach in those years.

*So what would be about the date that we are looking at now?*

In Lamrock Avenue, we lived in Lamrock Avenue in 1936 for four years. We moved out to Vickers Avenue in 1939, we lived there before the Second World War. It was always handy for working at the beach because it was only a stone's throw from the beach at that time. Then I moved up to Shore Street after I retired from the beach in 1974. Actually at Bondi Beach I spent forty years on Bondi Beach and four years on the carpentering, the last four years on the carpentering staff with Waverley Council.

*I didn't know you had done that. What did that involve?*

Well all the carpentry work in the council from Bronte down to Dover Heights over to the cemetery, I worked in the cemetery in that way.

*What did you have to do as a carpenter?*

Do fencing and all building materials and all that. Doors and windows and all those things. They were sash cord windows in those days and you had to know how to fit the sash windows out and that was a thing I learnt in the trade when I was at Anthony Hordern's.

*Came in handy didn't it.*

Came in very handy.

*So when did you have your children? When you were living in Vickers Avenue?*

Yes in the Vickers Avenue area, that was from 1940, just before the war finished we had three boys, two were still-born, the third one lived for twenty-five days. Then we had Denise, a girl and then we had a boy, John. So in all I've done pretty well so far. The wife was in the Royal Hospital and they didn't know much about babies in those days, in 1940, 1941. We might have had family since then but it didn't happen. The boy that lasted twenty-five days he is buried out at Waverley Cemetery.

*So how old are your children now?*

Denise is forty-nine years and John is forty-five years, there is five years difference between them.

*They were born on?*

9 February 1940(?) and 2 September 1944(?).

*About 1960 there was a huge hailstorm do you remember that one?*

Yes I remember that. It struck the beach after about 2.00 p.m. in the afternoon on a summer's day and everybody was surfing on the beach. They all run for cover, as much as possible they run into the Surf Pavilion and run for cover. Cars got under the awnings without going on the road, they parked up under the awnings to miss the hail. It was hailstones as big as cricket balls. I had to come up to Vickers Avenue at the time to get a raincoat and coming up past the police station the hailstones started to fall and they were splashing on the road in front of me as big as cricket balls. I thought this was going to be a trouble one this one and I hurried back to the beach.

*What did it look like when it started coming?*

There was a roar and it was green, the cloud was green. Not brown or red or anything else but green. Now every time a storm comes I look at the sky and think are we going to get hail. It was a big green cloud that came through and you could hear this noise like a din of hitting iron roofs. It came through from Bondi Junction right down to Bondi Beach and motor cars had canvas hoods at those times, you can just imagine what it was like, a fishing net. When they left their cars on the driveway it was just like a fishing net when they came out with their hoods.

*They were so torn were they?*

Yes. The front of the engines where the radiator [????] as we call it where the water goes right to the front of the car [????] it was dented with these big cricket ball hailstones.

*Were many people hurt?*

Oh there were a few people hurt, we took them to ambulance then. But most people dodged for cover all the time.

*Did you go back down onto the beach?*

I had to go on the beach all the time, I had to be on the beach. I put the box on my head to save any further damage.

*Did you get a little crate?*

Yes. We called it a banana case and that was a long one. That was a terrible day that day.

*Windows were broken?*

Oh the windows in Campbell Parade and all around there and the west side of Berkleigh Court never had a window any good in it. They took months and months to replace windows because nobody had any glass, all the glass was taken out of the windows all through from Bondi Junction, Bellevue Hill nearly out to Vaocluse.

*All around Dover Heights.*

Dover Heights and Lancaster Road they copped it all. Everybody wanted glass. I was living in Vickers Avenue and when I got home I had to repair my glass in the side of the windows. I was lucky I only had one side window that was broken.

*That would have been very scary.*

Oh very scary.

*How long did it last for?*

It last for about half-an-hour I suppose and you can just imagine cricket balls coming down for half-an-hour, you just imagine how you could dodge the hail.

*It really hasn't happened like that since has it.*

Never since, not so big. We have had storms and that but they are nothing like that.

*You have had the floods.*

Floods and things like that.

*You have seen a bit on that beach.*

Oh yes plenty on that beach.

*Do you remember the brick pits that they had at Bondi?*

Yes. There was one at Warners Avenue and Glenaire Avenue, that is where the Sixways are today. They made grey coloured bricks out of the brick pit there. They had to drill well down to pick up the clay there and it was grey bricks that they made. When I was living in Doralian Close at Hastings Parade it was made of these grey bricks, the last of the grey bricks that were there and I understand that is where they come from. Now this brick pit must have gone well down to get this grey clay for the making of the bricks. At Bondi Beach in January 1938 I'd say we had flood seas in the January period and the Christmas high tide were on and we had very flat seas and the seas undermined right down to the clay that was being dug up at Glenaire Avenue.

*What affect did this have?*

On high tides the bay was covered with a greyish coloured yellow colouring all over the bay from North Bondi down to the baths. It wasn't sewerage in those days it was just clay, the high tides had dug out the clay, because when the tide receded the sand would come back onto the clay and you wouldn't see the clay. About three times in one week we had this discolouration in the whole of Bondi bay.

*All through the water.*

We were too scared to swim in this coloured water.

*It has never happened since?*

No never happened since. Never happened.

*Do you remember the stone quarries in the area?*

Yes there was one in Kalua Street where the Ampol service station is now built. It supplied all the sandstone for Sydney buildings at the time, this was in 1924, 1928. A lot of grindstones for grinding tools were all sandstone before they got carborundum stones. They made these out of sandstone, these grinding stones. When I worked at Waverley Council we had one at the Pavilion, one of these sandstone grindstones. They supplied all the buildings in Sydney with their sandstone for the foundations in those days. There was another in Clyde Street behind the Bondi Ice Works and it was only just recently they still got stone out of that one at Clyde Street because I saw three bits of stone carried up, about twelve months ago, coming up Murrivierie Road

going to somewhere, three big lots of stone on a wagon that is all they could carry and it came from Clyde Street, the only quarry in Bondi at the moment.

*Was it very busy for a while?*

Well they took a lot of stone out of it because it is below the Dover Heights Bowling Club, right in front of the Dover Heights Bowling Club, that is where the quarry was.

*You just mentioned the Ice Works could you tell me a bit about them?*

Well the Ice Works were in Murrivier Road just off Clyde Street. I was in a position to have ice delivered to my home and the ice-man used to come round two or three days a week. We didn't have refrigerators in those days, in 1940, and we had to have all ice cubicles in your ice-box sort of business. It was three days a week the ice-man used to call.

*Did he cut off slivers for the children for ice-blocks and things?*

Yes he cut off slivers for kids that were hanging around, you know the kids hang around they all like a little bit of ice to chew.

*Did he bring it into the house?*

Yes brought it right into the house, always delivered it right to the house and put it in the ice-box.

*You would know what time he was coming so you would have to be home.*

Yes. He came in the morning. I was living in Vickers Avenue then and I wasn't far away from the Ice Works then in Maroubra Road.

*Did he have a truck?*

Yes he had a truck, a flat table-top truck covered so the ice wouldn't melt, covered by a little tarpaulin.

*Were they already cut?*

Cut into squares. They were cut with an ice-axe. They would bring them out in a big say three foot can and saw them with an electric saw in halves, you only get half a thing in your ice-box depending on where you lived.

*How much did that cost?*

It only cost about a shilling a block, it would last you for three days and then he'd come again.

*Bit different now.*

