

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

Interviewee: Aubrey Laidlaw
Place: 19 Shore Street North Bondi
Date: 15 March 1989
Interviewer: Diana Rich
Tapes: 1 and 2

TAPE 1: SIDE A

I am Aubrey Shackleton Laidlaw, born 2 March 1909 at Balmain West.

How many children were in your family Mr Laidlaw?

Actually there was five children.

What work did your father do?

He worked for the mental hospitals as a chauffeur to the main doctor.

When did you come to the Waverley area?

We came from Gladesville to the Waverley area in 1925.

Why did your family move here?

Well they all wanted to get into different jobs, went different ways. Journalist, Navy and another one at Newcastle, the youngest one.

So who moved to Waverley then?

Aubrey and brother Geoffrey.

Where did you live?

Hastings Parade, North Bondi.

What sort of a place was it?

Little cottage, we called the weekender in those days, and surf club members came out of a Saturday and Sunday and did their patrols and went home again into Waverley or Paddington on the Sunday night.

So why did you call it the weekender?

Well there was a number of weekenders from North Bondi Surf Club, there was different ones with probably four or five weekend cottages in those days on the hill at North Bondi-Ben Buckler. The boys came out on the weekends and they spent the Saturday and Sunday at the surf club sleeping in their weekenders only.

But you were living there were you?

Yes I was living there. I was living in Hastings Parade.

Who owned the house?

We put in for the rent, about five of us put in for the rent, for the weekly rent, round about twenty-one shillings for the rent and we all dobed in four or five shillings each.

What was it like around that area then?

A lot of weekenders. There were other weekenders with different people and different men and there was one there had a billiard room in the weekender.

Did you use that a lot?

We didn't. We couldn't use it because we didn't own it, we didn't pay the rent for it.

Were the sand hills around there? What were the roads like?

The roads were good at that time because Ben Buckler had good road out there then.

The sand hills?

The sand hills were really west of Bondi and the sand hills we took a flat at the end of Blair Street. Vickers Avenue was the last street there off Blair Street going towards, not Sir Thomas Mitchell Road, and there was no made road from Blair Street right down past the church in those days. That is how long Blair Street took to come over, that was in the sand hills area Blair Street.

What was the vegetation like then?

Well it was all sand.

There was no bush around or anything?

Very little bush.

Many houses anywhere further up the hill?

There were a few houses further up the hill and there was a quarry near the other end of [????] Road and there was a quarry in Curlewis Street, a sandstone quarry. A lot of the sandstone for Sydney buildings came from Curlewis Street.

Do you remember any of the characters that used to live there at the time like Nosey Bob and people like that?

Nosey Bob lived up in North Bondi and he was called 'The Hangman', Nosey Bob.

We lived two doors from him at one stage, at one part of the weekenders. We shifted

round to different weekenders and we saw one here and saw one here and another one was making [????] you know. Every about two or three years we moved around in them weekenders the same as all the other boys.

What was Nosey Bob like?

Oh a fairly tall fellow, slim bloke, we didn't see too much of him because he was a daily worker.

Do you remember any of the other people that were around the area at the time?

Oh on the beach?

On the beach and around? We will come to the beach later actually, we've got to talk about that in detail. Okay why did you actually decide to come to Waverley? Were you already coming to Bondi Beach when you were very young?

When I was young my brother Dudley and another mate of his from Gladesville we used to come all the way out from Gladesville to surf at Bondi because we reckoned that it was the best beach on the coast. A fellow named Gordon Livingstone and Dudley Laidlaw and myself we used to troop out to Bondi to have a surf. Spend a day there and wander back to Gladesville home again.

How did you get to Bondi?

By tram to Central Station, Central Square, and a Bondi tram to the loop at Hall Street.

So what was Bondi like then? How old were you when you first started coming here?
About fourteen or fifteen years of age.

What was it like?

Very crowded because trams used to come out and bring say two hundred people on every tram, double trams came out all the way. We had the two Ryans from Bellevue Hill, what we called the 'Goat Track' from Bellevue Hill, that was a tram that came out from the city, and the one that came out from the railway, that was the Bondi Beach tram and they were often double trams.

It was one of the favourite places to come on the weekend was it?

Oh really it was. They used to have the shark fishing there of a night time and the Bondi Beach Band used to play there on a rotunda there on the beach from seven o'clock to nine o'clock on Sunday nights only. Then everybody would go up to the

Powells Milk Bar and have a milkshake or something like that in the summer time, that is when the band used to play.

They used to walk along the promenade?

The promenade they'd walk along there. There were 200,000 of a Sunday night backwards and forwards all the way along the promenade from north to south, it was packed. You just met people, said hello to them and they said hello to you, backwards and forwards. While the band was playing there was a lot of people walked along the promenade.

What would you wear then? Would you wear your lifesaving jacket?

We would wear our blazers, club blazers, in those days they were very good.

A hat?

No hats, no hats. It was summer time you know.

Tell me more about the shark fishermen.

There was a fellow named Lance Walsh used to live locally, Aub Sarah, he lived locally, and they used to come down of a Sunday night or late Sunday afternoon and there was probably three or four other fishermen beside them would throw their lines in, bait their hooks up and the next morning there might be eight, or ten, or twelve big eight, ten, fifteen foot sharks laying on the beach ready to get buried on the sand.

They just buried them there?

Yes buried them on the sand. The salt water would just destroy the bodies of the shark, in time it would with the salt water.

They didn't cut them up?

No they didn't cut them up.

Why did they catch them?

Well there was plenty of fun catching them because there was a team of boys around. When they brought them into the water's edge they had what they called a tailer, a man with a rope, he has got to put the rope round the tail of the shark. The shark might be ten, twelve, fourteen foot long and the shark would always keep out to sea, his tail would be nearly on the beach. There would be one of the boys going to get the rope and the two of them would grab the tail and put the rope round it and they'd all

get together, there would be ten or fifteen fellows, and pull the shark up the beach. That is how they landed the shark.

Did they ever have any problems with the sharks? Was anybody bitten or anything?

No, no, no. The shark used to face as if it was going out to sea and he would have his tail nearly on the beach. That's why the boys would run in with the tailer on the rope and tail the shark. All the local boys they loved it, it was really an experience for them.

So just leave the sharks lying there, everybody could see them the next day?

Yes everybody could see them through the night. Then council workmen would have the job of burying them the next morning.

How deep would they bury them?

About six or eight feet. The tide would come in, the water would come in over the beach when the tide came in and the shark would slowly sink down and disintegrate with the salt water.

They wouldn't keep the teeth or anything?

No unless it was a big shark, they might cut the jaws out. The jaws were often seen there.

Did anyone think that was dangerous having the sharks there?

Nobody ever thought it was dangerous.

You know sort of attracting sharks to the beach.

Well they all knew the sharks were there, that is why the fishermen came down. When the fishermen knows the sharks are there they will fish them all right. They have got their gear and everything. I used to go out. When I finished duty of a night time, especially in the summer time February or March, I used to go out and Lance Walsh would say, 'Take my bait out Aub,' and I would hook the bait onto my Speedo costume, on the front of my Speedo costume, swim out through the channel, dump the bait and swim onto the bank to take a wave, I used to get three or four waves. I'd come back and probably Lance would have a shark on, it would be near sundown then.

You would just swim out with the bait attached to your swimming costume?

Yes, yes, because it was a quick way to get out there where the sharks were.

Weren't you ever scared?

Never scared a bit, I don't know why but I was never scared of sharks. I've seen sharks and caught sharks out in the boat and I've been round with set lines with a little shark on them about fourteen foot shark, following them around, and they were still coming up the top and I'm in a ten foot boat. Never been scared of sharks, never. I have often swam over at surf carnivals. Cronulla one year where the Junior Lifesaving was we swam over. There was three of us in the lead, we swam round a shark, we didn't know, swam round the buoys and back to the beach and the also-rans weren't there, they were all back on the beach all the other starters. The boys said, 'Did you hear the shark bell?' 'No we didn't hear the shark bell.' The three lead men went round the buoys and we swam over two sharks.

Do you remember any shark attacks down there though?

Ah yes. I remember Max Steele at North Bondi, his brother Harry was with him in the surf and they tried to get waves from the middle of the beach down to North Bondi but they had no luck in taking a wave. Harry came out onto the beach and Max was taken in the corner, he was taken by the fleshy part of the leg, of the calf of the leg, from the knee down to the ankle was all just one bone when we pulled him ashore. Harry was waiting for him on the beach, his brother, and one North Bondi Club man he helped him up to the surf club, North Bondi Surf Club. We couldn't get into the ambulance room, we had to bust off the lock, and then get the ambulance. The ambulance came and took him away and then he had to have a blood transfusion. A North Bondi Surf Club member gave the transfusion back at St Vincent's so he was lucky in that way. Max he was a chemist by trade where he sat down all day he didn't have to worry about two legs to stand on. He was lucky because it took the leg off there just above the knee.

He lived?

He lived. He's alive today.

How about Harry Coughlan in Coogee?

He is buried in the cemetery there at South Coogee Cemetery. Two of the boys from North Bondi helped him ashore.

He was attacked by a shark.

He was attacked by a shark at a surf carnival in the Coogee area in those days. Two North Bondi boys, Jack Chalmers and Reg Ferguson, took him onto the rocks and just in time they did the shark came and swiped again, wanted to get the three of them if he could. He tried to get the three but they had Coughlan on the rocks. But Coughlan died, he died.

Do you remember Nita Derrett?

Nita Derrett I don't exactly know when but I know it was late in the afternoon she was paddling in the surf at Bronte. Now Bronte has got a dip and then onto a bank and there is deep water and the sharks can come right into Bronte at any time. They can come right into Bronte even if you are paddling in the water they can grab your legs. That is what happened to Nita Derrett, she had both legs taken off. That was at Bronte.

Do you remember when they put the shark nets up?

Coogee shark net, that was back in the 1930s. They ran it off the pier, Coogee Pier was there with sideshows and all those things on it you know. We used to swim there of a night time because they had a surf carnival at night time.

What about Bondi?

The nets were swung across between the points about twice a week, sometimes every week sometimes it might be every month. That happened about 1935 I think it did and they didn't get too many sharks at that time. But the big net was swung across Newcastle Beach about the same time in the late 1930s and they got 102 sharks at night time at Newcastle Beach, this is according to one of the beach inspectors up there, a fellow named Bill Harris told me.

What did it involve swinging the net across? What did they do?

They had a trawler that set the net down and they would set it say early in the morning and then two days later they would haul the sharks up.

Would they get a lot at Bondi?

No they wouldn't get too many. They started off with about a dozen or so every time they put the shark net down but then they dwindled away and they hardly get a shark now. The shark net goes right down to the bottom and the sharks can swim over the top but the sharks usually feed around the bottom and that is where they get tangled up in the net, it was a mesh net.

So is there a permanent net or anything now?

No, no permanent net, about once a week now.

So when did you first join the lifesaving club?

1925, North Bondi.

What was it like then, what was it like to join?

Well I was a young fellow then only seventeen years of age and it was a real godsend as far as I was concerned because you mixed with all the young blokes your own age and seniors as well. The seniors taught you what you should know about the surf, surf lifesaving, swimming and getting through the surf and all that sort of business.

You had already been surfing for quite a while by then?

Yes, yes.

You could swim well?

Oh always, always a swimmer.

How did you learn to swim?

My father taught me at a place called Morisset and we used to have a boat there in a boat shed and off the boat shed was a little bit of a walkway to take the boat out and get aboard the boat, like a little jetty. My father said to me, 'Now you dive in and swim, I'll look after you if you sink,' but I only sank once I swam the next time. I had to because my father was about ten or fifteen yards off the jetty and I had to.

How old were you?

I was about five and a half.

You had seen people swimming?

Yes, yes, yes. I knew what the action was, my father told me what the action was because he was a fair swimmer himself.

When you sank that time did he come and get you?

Yes he come and got me, I'm here today.

You went right down?

No not right down.

He just got you up...

He got me up and put me back on the jetty again and said, 'Do it again.' [*Laughs*]

That was the way I learnt to swim.

You didn't have any formal lessons?

Oh no, no formal lessons. We were in the country then at a place called Morisset you know where koala bears and all that were in those days, koala bears.

So you started coming to Bondi, how old were you when you first saw Bondi do you think?

I'd say I was fifteen years of age.

After that there is no turning back.

No turning back after Bondi, after seeing Bondi. My mother said to me, 'Be careful when you go to Bondi the blacks will get you,' she means the Aboriginals.

Why did she say that?

She wasn't frightened of me going out with the sharks she was frightened of the Aboriginals.

Were there Aboriginals around?

Oh yes Aboriginals at Bondi. B-o-o-n-d-i it is called, that is the Aboriginal name for it Boondi.

Did you ever see any of them?

Occasionally yes.

Where did they live?

Lived round different places, small humpies and things like that you know. Round the rocks they lived in little humpies and that.

What did people think of them?

I don't know what they think of them today.

At the time what did they think of them?

Oh they were strangers as far as we were concerned. We were white and they were black and as mum said, 'Be careful of the black fellers.'

How did they live do you think? Did they spear fish or what?

Yes they could have speared fish, lobsters and all those things around the baths area, Bondi Baths.

What did they wear?

Anything from football jumpers with football shorts.

Were whole families there or just the men?

Oh families. You know how Aboriginal families are, not one or two there is three or four or five or six.

They would just live up in the rocks and up around North Bondi?

North Bondi because there is plenty of land there then, plenty of land.

How long were they there for?

Oh until the white people came in and they had to do something else, had to go somewhere else to live.

Well we are talking about fishing, you used to fish a lot when you were at Bondi didn't you.

Yes.

You've got some photos that we might just look at of some fish that you caught there. How often would you go fishing?

I would go as soon as possible.

Would you go every week, or in the mornings?

Every week probably. The photo that I'm looking at is where the snapper was caught about '56 and a jew fish was caught probably about that same time, about twenty pound jew fish. We used to get a lot of snapper those days.

Earlier on you'd go with your mates would you and fish off the rocks?

No we'd go out in a boat, always go out in a boat. Had a ten foot dinghy. I had a brother at Lamrock Avenue, I used to get in touch with him of an early morning, say four o'clock, and I'd say, 'How does the weather look out your way?' and he'd say, 'Righto.' That was at four o'clock in the morning and we'd arrange to meet at the boat shed at four-thirty and get afloat at four-thirty bringing fish in about an hour and a half before the sun comes up.

Is that the best time?

Best of the day. That and late in the afternoon is the best time for fishing.

What would you catch mainly then?

Snapper and jew fish.

Good big ones?

Good big ones, eight, ten, twelve pounders, especially in the snapper, especially in the morning, that is what we used to go there for. We'd be home by eight o'clock with a catch of fish.

Do you remember the rock fishermen?

Yes a few rock fishermen about.

They would go on those large rocks just along North Bondi?

Oh depending on the sea they'd go on the rocks. But if there was a sea on they wouldn't go near the rocks because it was too dangerous. A rising tide is bad.

There was one with a rope going down to it on those rocks.

Yes that is at the sewer outfall.

Looked really scary.

I used to go across there on a roller on top of the wire and go across and fish there for bream and catch the bream, bag the fish and bring it back over the flying fox, what they called the flying fox.

That would have been scary. You'd take your son out would you?

No I wouldn't take him out with me.

How did he catch this one? Did he catch it or did you catch it?

I caught it, I caught it, it was just him and his mates having a photo taken, that's the main thing.

So why wouldn't you take him out fishing?

Well I wouldn't take any one out that didn't know anything about it. Boys have got to learn how to manage a boat and what to do if everything comes out of there way, if there's trouble aboard well you've got to know what you are doing. If you take a crew with you everybody has got to know what to do in an emergency and you've got to learn that. You can't walk on the side of the boat and think it is going to tip over with you and the next minute someone is on the other side of the boat, and that is what happens.

You've got to be very responsible with boats.

Yes. The little ten foot dinghy it was quite good.

Such big fish probably had half the bottom of the boat covered in fish, great.

That's right.

So coming back to the surf club how many people would have belonged to the surf club when you were there, when you started?

Probably about 350 members junior and senior members, mostly senior. There was a lot of families joined the surf club. There was four Gardiners, three Horshalls, three Laidlaws, two Strouds and all the families all had brothers, a couple of brothers, and they all joined the surf club. A lot of them come from out Paddington and some came from Bondi Beach and Lamrock Avenue and all those places.

What did it involve belonging to the surf club? Did you do training?

Training, surfing, going out with surfers every weekend. We worked for five days. In those days we worked forty-eight hours in those days and the weekend was always free, there wasn't much work done of a weekend because the five days took the forty-eight hours. We had fellows come out from Paddington and things like that and they used to come out just from Saturday morning and they stopped at the camp overnight and they were there on Sunday morning.

They would devote their whole weekend?

Their whole weekend to the surf club. We all knew one another, we all had different names for it. See I was called 'Strawb' and they got another bloke at the Bondi Club called 'Strawb Wright', he's an Aub, and 'Strawb Turnbull', he was Bondi Surf Club. All Strawbs and Joes and all that, you get all the nicknames under the sun. There was a fellow named Rhodes, we called him 'Dusty', Dusty Rhodes.

What would you do for training say? Say you'd get a young kid in how would you start training him?

Teach him to get in and out the water on the low tide and the high tide. Jump over the water go up on the bank in the low tide and in the high tide swim as soon as he can, swim as soon as you get into deep water, swim.

How old would they be when you'd accept them into the club?

In those days we'd accept them in at sixteen years of age. Sixteen to eighteen was a junior and over eighteen was a senior.

Did they have to do the courses like the Bronze Medallion and things?

All had to do the Bronze Medallion, the junior members and the senior members when they joined. All the senior members they did the same thing. If you learnt as a junior you worked up to a senior then. When you worked up to a senior you had your Bronze Medallion.

How many people would be on patrol at any one time?

In those days we'd have a patrol from 6.00 a.m. in the morning to 1.00 p.m. and there would be twelve members on that patrol. There would be another twelve members come on from 1.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. in the evening. So that is how much the patrols would take and they were very intensive patrols. All staffed with two or three good swimmers to take out the belt in those days, because we belt and line swim, and in those days on the beach we had twelve to thirteen reels all the way along the beach. Today they haven't got one reel on the beach, they depend on a buoy that they tie behind the flag pole and the lifesaver is supposed to take this buoy and put it around him and go out. He has got to tow the buoy about three or four yards out with him and he has got to go out. I don't know how he is going to get on if there is a big sea on, he'd be battling to get through in a big sea. We had a belt and we could get through in the run-outs and the rips and that sort of thing.

Why did they stop the belts?

Well we don't know. I don't know why that stopped.

When was that?

That was after I left in 1970, when I left the beach in 1970. There are very few reels on the beach today, you won't find one here only of a weekend when the patrol is down there, they take a reel down with them sometimes. The rubber duckies are all the business today, two-man boat. They go out quick and lively, they've got thirty horsepower engines behind them, outboard engines. They have got plenty of petrol all day, they are using petrol all day. At Bondi now you'll see two and three duckies every weekend, Saturdays and Sundays.

So you would go out with the reel and you'd have surf carnivals with the reel and all of that?

Yes. Then you'd train for march past. When you were training of a night time you had to train on the beach for march past and there was twenty men per team in those days and they used to all be able to march properly, be taught how to march properly, hands right, swinging your arms, not look sideways look straight ahead and all this sort of business. It was very disciplined in those days, really disciplined. The kids are missing it today because they won't join the surf club.

This discipline, what would happen to people who disobeyed the discipline, were undisciplined?

They would go up before the captain of the club, captain or the vice captain. They would be in no uncertain terms be told what to do or get out of the club. That is how it was, you had to do as you were told or get out.

There would be a lot of people you'd remember from that time, can you remember any particular personalities in the club that you want to talk about?

I remember Bluey Watkins and Jimmy Dunlevy, they used to put on the boxing gloves of a Sunday morning and have two or three rounds with the gloves and they'd knock each other about. They had what we called elephant gloves, they were big-sized gloves they were, and they couldn't hurt each other much. Then after they had a fight we'd all go in and have a surf.

What time would you all get there in the morning then?

If you were on patrol you'd get there at six o'clock, come out from Paddington. When I first joined the club I was in Paddington.

Now when you belonged to the club did you have any other job yourself?

Yes I was learning a trade, the carpentry trade, with Anthony Hordern and Sons, Anthony Hordens in Brickfield Hill. They had a carpenters' shop out at Redfern, Elizabeth Street, Redfern. I did six years out there learning the carpentry and joinery trade and that set me up for life. When I came back from learning a trade I couldn't get a job at Bondi, there was no jobs available. It was getting near Depression time, 1929-1930, and I took on any sort of job. I worked on the excavations of North Bondi Surf Club. I worked on the excavations while the club was there in the early days, the foundations. Then later I was in mini-golf, there were six mini-golf courses around Campbell Parade, there was one here and everywhere right up to North Bondi Surf Club, there was a sixth one there. Every block of land had a mini-golf course on it and I was in charge of one mini-golf course and Reg Ferguson, another member of the club, was in another one at Bondi at Campbell Parade near the Hotel Bondi. In the surf club I was a resident member-caretaker in 1929 and that kept a little bit of money coming in. It was only ten bob a week at the time for the caretaker but still you had to keep the place clean and all that sort of business, the toilets and all that. The toilets in those days were the outside toilets, pan toilets in those days, that is years ago.

You said before that you were digging the excavations of North Bondi Surf Club, what was it like doing that sort of work?

I was on holidays at the time and I thought to myself well I'll have a bit of a job somewhere so I went to the builder and he said, 'I'll put you on the pick and shovel,' and I was put on the pick and shovel and I dug part of the excavations.

Talking about building around there what do you remember about the Pavilion?

Well we used to go there early morning at five o'clock to start on the beach. There was a cottage at the back where the Pavilion is now, where the auditorium is, there was a cottage there first before they built upstairs. We used to knock on the cottage and ask for Tim Collins, Tim was the manager, and he gave us a key to go into the surf sheds and get the shark wheel. We had to get the shark wheel and put it out on the promenade ready in case there was a shark on. So that was the first thing we did of a morning with Tim Collins. Tim used to come out at seven o'clock and open up the rest of the sheds. He was a funny man, Tim, but he was a good bloke, Tim was a 'Three F', fights, funerals and football. He went to everybody's funeral that he knew and everybody knew Tim. He was a keen fisherman as well, I used to take him fishing outside Watsons Bay, he was a very keen fisherman. He and his son Brian and one of the men from the sheds who used to work there they used to go with us and we used to go out to Watsons Bay, hire a boat and go fishing on Tim's day off, usually on a Thursday. We'd go out to a place called The Cottages, we'd get snapper there. Brian and another fellow from the sheds they used to get very sick and they'd say, 'Take us back to Watsons Bay.' We'd say, 'No. If you are here you've got to stay here now. Sleep in the bottom of the boat, in the front part of the boat, and Tim and I'll fish in the back.' The fish came on at quarter-past three, like come out in a school, and the snapper would come on and we'd fill the boat up with snapper. That was Tim's Thursday afternoon off.

What else was the Pavilion like then?

The mini-golf was there upstairs where the ballroom was, the second ballroom. After the mini-golf turn-out the ballroom was used in two places. One was the main ballroom and the other one was the other ballroom. The proprietor used to have an orchestra in both places, in both ballrooms, and you could go from one ballroom to another and do a bit of dancing, then go to the other end and do that dance, that sort of business.

Where was the mini-golf?

The mini-golf was in the main ballroom. The Pavilion was built on a rubbish tip, it kept sinking all the time. Most of the Pavilion has fallen down at some time or other but they have just built it up, underpinned the foundations because it was built on a rubbish tip.

Old bricks.

Built with cement bricks. When they sunk a lot put in cement bricks.

What were the bathing sheds like?

The change sheds there was about 5,000 small lockers in the men's shed and the cabins in the men's shed there were about 300 walk-in-walk-out cabins with your own key. The ladies' sheds they had more cabins because the ladies weren't prepared to be seen undressing like the men. They had twice as many cabins as the men in their part of the Pavilion. They walked from the shower room, same with the men, down a tunnel out to the pier, the south pier, and the men walked onto the north pier and went down to the beach from there. So it was just men on one side and women on the other.

Did that stay like that?

It only stopped until the war in 1939.

The piers were demolished then weren't they?

The piers were demolished by the Army. They put in hundreds of plugs of gelignite and all that and all the shops around Bondi, Campbell Parade, were blown out, the paper shop and all that were blown out. They lost their windows. They had that much gelignite in the piers. The explosion was terrible, you know. They'd probably do it first thing in the morning just when everybody was getting out of bed.

How long did it take them to blow it up?

Oh about a fortnight to blow the two piers up.

Why do you think they did it?

The Japs were going to come there they reckon. We had five rows of barbed wire all the way along the beach. Palm Beach had two rows of barbed wire, the select people had two rows of barbed wire, and poor old Bondi had five rows of barbed wire. All their pickets were made by BHP and they were always made of steel.

TAPE 1: SIDE B

We were just talking about the barbed wire on the beach.

There are still a few pickets today left. On the high tide when there is a big sea on there is still a few pickets to be seen and that was 1939-1940 and there are still a few of those pickets left.

Dangerous?

Oh yes would be. They are very deep now because there has been so much sand backwards and forwards over it over the years.

Coming back to talking about the bathing sheds and people, what did people wear on the beaches in those days before the war?

Neck-to-knee costumes. Hired them at the Pavilion. When they hired their cabins and all that sort of business they could hire bathing caps. The men had to wear a pair of 'V's' over their costumes, full costumes, it would be a sin not to wear a pair of 'V's'. The men could hire the 'V's' and use only the 'V's' to sunbake in the sheds only. They weren't allowed to go on the beach although we found a few of them sometimes wandering along the beach with a pair of 'V's' on and we'd have to shove them back to the Pavilion again. They could only wear 'V's' in the surf sheds themselves because there were sunbaking areas there.

What colour were they? Were they all black?

They were always black. All the women's swimming costumes were black because black is the best swimming costume for a woman to wear do you know that. Black is the best. I reckon the most attractive is a black full costume for a girl, it is the best.

What were they made of?

Wool. All wool. All woollen costumes.

How much did it cost to hire them?

Well it just depends. It might cost one and six or two shillings for the day to hire them.

Did they wear sun tan cream then?

No it wasn't thought of in those days.

When did that man start spraying with the sun tan cream?

I'd say 1945, 1946. The servicemen from overseas came out, R&R servicemen, recreation leave.

Rest and Recreation.

Rest and Recreation. They came out to Bondi because Bondi was the place and Kings Cross. They used to come out there and they were funny they'd leave their girls in the channel and they'd swim back to the beach and wave their arms, rescue, rescue, rescue, and we've have to go out and rescue their girlfriends. They would stand on the beach and let us do the work, they didn't want to do the work because they were servicemen.

So tell me about some of the rescues. Do any of them particularly come to mind?

Only Black Sunday, that was the worst one. That was something that shouldn't have happened, it shouldn't have happened, because the beach inspector that came on on the Sunday he hadn't seen the surf on the Saturday. He had left the job on Friday and he was off on the Saturday and he was on Sunday afternoon. Another mate, a fellow named Laphorn, and myself were on Saturday and I was on both days, Saturday and Sunday. We were working forty-eight hours in those days. He didn't understand the surf because on the Saturday we had seventy-odd rescues in the centre of the beach so we took all the people from the middle of the beach up to the north end. We wouldn't let any surfing go on at the middle of the beach because it was too rough, big seas on the Saturday afternoon it was tremendous. So we had seventy rescues there before we put the people up the north end. Sunday we wouldn't let anybody in. This beach inspector came on on an afternoon, one o'clock, and he said, 'Why aren't we surfing in the middle Aub?' I said, 'No we had rescues here yesterday afternoon. We can't have them in there today because there is a falling tide and a big sea on, just as big as yesterday.' He said, 'Well we should have flags at the middle.' I said, 'No. If you put the flags in you look after them, I'm going to the north end to look after the north end people. I know the north end people want me to go up there.' He said, 'Well I'll look after the middle and you look after the north end.' Half-past two the surf race from Bondi Surf Club was just about ready to start, there was about seventy members on the beach. This happened about three o'clock in the afternoon and he let a few people on to the bank. The sea was going down slightly but every now and then there was a big boomer come in, you know. The boys were ready for the surf race and there was a run-out and a channel in deep, they couldn't put their feet on the bottom, and they got washed into this channel and you couldn't get your feet on the bottom. As you know most people can't swim going into the surf, they can't swim a distance, and if they don't get their feet on the bottom they are sunk sort of business. There was panic

everywhere. I come down from the north and I could see what was going on, I come down to give him a hand. The surf club boys all rushed in and took the belts and that in. There was four people that day that were rescued and two of them came to and the shock killed them, out of four. Four were clinically dead when we hauled them out of the water but two of them revived and shock killed them. That is four on the Sunday and there was one missing that came back on the Thursday afternoon, washed into the beach. I was there on the afternoon when he came in. He'd been wedged in the rocks somewhere, round the rocks, round the North Bondi area. That was the fifth person. But we all used the Schaeffer method on those days and I talked to nurses later, a few years after, and one nurse from St Vincent's she said, 'Always use the Schaeffer method Aub it is the best.' That was from a nurse.

This is lying them on their front?

Yes and put your hands on their back.

This is to try and get the water out.

Of their lungs, water out of their lungs.

You can't get the water out of their lungs if they are lying on their back to get mouth-to-mouth can you?

No, no, no. If they are sick with mouth-to-mouth boy oh boy. They can get sick you know, the person who is rescued. You can just imagine the rescuer, he doesn't want to go mouth-to-mouth. Would you?

So how many people would you say were actually rescued that day?

There must have been 240, 250 rescued that day and that is all we lost out of them. But we were lucky because it was the week after the kids went back to school. If it would have been the week before the kids were all on holidays, we would have had a big team there and it would have been hard to control.

But there was a lot of panic on the beach wasn't there?

Yes a lot of panic. But there was none of these big waves as they say there was, it was just an ordinary swell, but there was a terrible rip and it was a deep hole where the rip was and the surfers couldn't put their feet on the bottom and walk out as the saying goes.

I heard there were three waves and then the back wash.

Don't worry about three waves. There was waves all day, big waves all day. That is why we wouldn't let them in there on the Sunday morning and it happened on the Sunday afternoon when this mistake was made by a beach inspector. I've never revealed it someone. I will reveal it to you because I'm the only one alive to tell the story. Carl Jefferson was the captain of the club at the time, he brought his men down there but his men were already down there for the surf race. What he has tried to revive over years ago you can't get surf the same way.

He's tried to re-enact it.

Re-enact it. Yes he tried to re-enact it.

You can't.

You can't do that. You can't get the conditions and the sea.

How many people would have been on the beach that day?

Well being a big sea on there wouldn't have been more than 2,000 on all day, that is north and they came down the middle after lunch. When they saw the flags up of course they thought they would bathe there. I always think of it myself. I actually never lost a life when I was on the beach, only people having fits and things like that in the water and falling over and not coming to after that.

But not drowning because of the water. You could always bring them to.

Yes always bring them to, bring them round.

That was an incredible day that day in 1938.

See in those days we had to learn first aid, we had to go through a first aid certificate. I don't know what the lifesavers do now. We had to go through a first aid certificate and know all about it.

On a regular basis, say every year, how many people would you say would be rescued per season?

Well it would depend on the surf of course and the low tides. Sometimes we'd get there, some days we'd go down, I worked with another mate Bill Willis and we'd take it in turns to go and rescue. We would know when the tide was coming in and the people on the outside bank would be cut off by the channel inside and they couldn't walk through because it was too deep, we had to go out and rescue them. A fellow there one day he said, 'How the devil did you know I wanted rescuing?' He had his boy with him, his young little boy. Bill went out, it was his turn and he went out and

rescued them and come back and he put the fellow on the beach and his boy and the fellow said to me, 'Now how did you know we wanted rescuing?' 'Because we knew the channel was too deep for you to walk back across.' That fellow he said we were really good men as lifesavers and he went up the Pavilion and when he came out, when he got dressed, he came down and he give Bill Willis eight shillings, 'For you and your mate.' 'Eight shillings for you and your mate.' Another day we had a serviceman there from one of the ships that were in, he was a second cook on one of the big boats, and we rescued him and we sent him off to St Vincent's. He returned to the ship about midnight. Every time we'd have anybody sent to St Vincent's or to the hospital one of us would always ring up through the night to find out whether he was okay or not, or she was okay. We rung up in the night time and the bloke said, 'Oh yes he has been returned to ship.' Anyway he was going to sea the next week, he was going to Melbourne, so about five or six days later Bill gets a letter from a bloke, second baker of the ship, he was in Melbourne and he'd sent us three pounds for rescuing him. Three pounds between Bill and I for rescuing him.

Did you find most people were appreciative?

Most people were very appreciative. There was a lady used to come down regular, she was a married woman Mrs Harris, I knew her pretty well. She lived up at North Bondi and I used to go past her place nearly every day going back from work. She used to come down and she was going out one day and she got in a bit of a rip. She got off the bank, off the flags, got into a rip and I had to go out and rescue her. She couldn't stand up where she was, she was just a surfer not a swimmer, so I went out and rescued her and put her back on the beach and sat her down and said, 'How do you feel now?' She said, 'I'll be all right in a minute.' I said, 'Now you are going to go back in that surf again. When you are right you just say you are right.' I walked around for a while and she said, 'I'm right now Aub,' so I said, 'Go back out on the bank this time, on the bank between the flags and have your surf. You only had a little bit of a surf when you got into trouble. Now go out there and do as your told and have a surf for a quarter of an hour and then come back.' When she came back she said, 'That was good. That really made my day.'

She mightn't have ever gone back.

No she might never have gone back she was that scared. But me rescuing her and bringing her out on the beach and sitting down on the beach and letting her have a bit

of a blow for a while. I'd heard of these things before, if a man falls off a horse he has got to get back on the horse again. If a man goes up in an aeroplane and he has an accident he has got to go back in an aeroplane. That was in my mind always when I was on the beach, if it was in the surf and they were all right and they'd go back again we'd send them out on the bank. That was the turning point for her. She was always there.

You showed me a photo earlier on of a blind man who had come down to the beach.
Oh yes.

We might talk about some of these photos that you have got here.

Yes Malcolm McMullen who lived out at Glebe. In November 1948 he used to come to Bondi Beach.

How would he get to Bondi?

He would take a tram from the Glebe into Railway Square, change trams at Railway Square and get into a Bondi Beach tram. It would bring him out to Hall Street, Bondi where the loop was and he would walk from there unaided, back down to the Pavilion, without a stick or anything. He would come into the Pavilion and he'd pay his admission, get a cabin. He knew exactly where the cabin was, they'd tell him what number it was. They'd direct him, he'd go out and the first time he went in there he knew exactly what cabin he was in. He would change his clothes into his costume and his pair of trunks, he would come back out onto the beach and sit down down where Macdonalds had a Chair House, what they called a Chair House, and they had deck chairs there. He used to sit down there and sunbake. He was a nice fellow but he was totally blind this man. When he wanted to go for a swim I used to go up and say, 'You come for a swim Malcolm?' 'Yes Aub yes.' So I'd take him down to the flags where the bank was and Malcolm would come down with me and I'd say, 'Well there is one flag here. The next flag is about sixty yards on north side. You go in there on the bank and I'll watch for you coming out. Now have a good time and enjoy yourself.' Well he used to go and have a surf and he'd be there for half an hour and he'd wander back off the bank onto the beach and I would go back and say, 'I'm here Malcolm.' He'd take my arm and we'd go up to the Chair House again, he'd sit down and sunbake and he was satisfied. Later in the day before he went home back to Glebe I would say to him, 'Have another swim?' or Blue Willis, me mate, used to say, 'Want to have a

swim Malcolm. We'll go down.' He knew what to do. We used to go down and take him to the flags and then when he came out he'd say, 'I'm going home now Aub.' 'Righto Malcolm, behave yourself, don't do anything wrong now.' He used to go up the Pavilion, change into his gear, come out of the Pavilion, go up and catch a Railway Square tram and get out to the Square and get a Glebe tram, go to Glebe. He was totally blind. I'd been coming out there a couple of seasons and I used to walk up to him and put out my hand and I'd just shake him by the hand. He'd say, 'You're Aub aren't you,' and I wouldn't say a word, he knew who I was.

Just from your handshake.

Handshake yes. That was Malcolm.

How long did he come to the beach for?

Oh he came there for four or five years I suppose.

Always by himself?

Yes. Never had anyone with him. Everyone knew him around Bondi. Tim Collins in the Pavilion he knew Malcolm, all the attendants and all that in the Pavilion all knew Malcolm and they used to look after him. He was totally blind.

You said about Macdonalds Chair House, could you tell me a bit about that spot?

Yes. Well we used to have a turn-out there about once a year, this was just after the war years. Stan Macdonald was still alive and we used to have a get-together there. The girls would bring the eats and the boys would bring the liquid refreshments. We had all the boys, surf club boys, North Bondi and a few Bondi boys used to connect there with their wives of a night time, about eight or nine o'clock. We'd play havoc until about midnight or one o'clock in the morning and then we'd all leave and go home.

You have got a photo here of that. Who can you remember in it, starting over here on the left?

That's Brian Davidson.

Then in the front there is another man.

Murray Smith he was a beach inspector at one time.

Beside him?

That's Aub Laidlaw.

Sitting on the chair?

Stan Macdonald, ex-beach inspector. Jack Hodge is the captain of the North Bondi Surf Club. Billy Jenkins of the *Mirror*.

Behind him on the right?

Cec Mac from North Bondi Surf Club, was once the secretary. Pam Parris. [*possibly Pam Pass*]

Then there is a lady with a white collar you don't know who that is?

That is one of the boys from North Bondi Surf Club. The captain of the boys was Johnny somebody, that is his wife. Pam Parris there. There is my wife Doris Laidlaw there.

Right behind Mr Macdonald the lady?

Oh that was Billy Willis's wife. Jack Hodges wife.

The one in the white blouse yes.

Murray Smith's wife.

The one at the end, yes.

Les Fairbairn.

Up there at the very back.

The bald-headed fellow. Jimmy Comans there. Who is the other now. Joyce Hawthorn and Kenny Hawthorn.

At the back with a sort of white floral pattern on a dark dress.

These are all the people that were assembled around.

So where was this? Was this sort of the under the Pavilion place?

No this is where the piers were. When they blew the piers down they just left the abutment. The council built the abutment there, it is still there now.

Under the promenade.

It is nearly under the promenade but it is just off the promenade. Say it is about ten or fifteen feet off the promenade, it is a round house like. They built on both sides where the ladies' Pavilion used to come out with a pier and the men's Pavilion.

What would the Macdonalds do? Did they buy all the chairs and rent them out?

Yes they bought all the chairs and surf-o-planes and all those sort of things and hired a few surfboards at different times.

And the spraying.

Yes they had Vitasun, or Vitatan they called it first.

There is a photo actually of you standing with that advertised. There is a photo here of three of you and it has just got 'Vitatan and Surfboards, one shilling half an hour.' When was that taken? 1952?

That was Brian Davidson, Billy Willis and there is your's truly there.

In the middle.

That was taken about 1952, October 1952. The council built these and down below was the chair hire business.

The wigwams, the deck chairs?

The wigwams, the deck chairs and all that sort of thing yes.

They were very popular weren't they. How long did the Macdonalds run that for?

Well they are still running it. Like Basil died, he died a few years ago.

When did they start?

Stan Mac he started the beach hire business about 1944 after the war. His son Basil and his wife kept on after Stan passed away.

Who is running it now?

Now Joan Macdonald is still running it. Basil passed away about four years ago. Joan has the assistance of his three sons occasionally helping her to run the hire business now.

One incident that is always associated with your name is the bikini on Bondi. Can we hear your version of the story. We said earlier on that they had started with the neck to knee so you've seen quite a few changes.

I've seen a lot of changes in the costumes since 1930 when everybody had to wear a neck to knee and the ladies wore two-piece costumes, the bottom half plus the top half, that was in 1930. From then on it went onto bikinis in 1960 when the servicemen wore trunks only when they were on R&R leave and the ladies wore two piece bikinis. A lot of them were ushered off the beach at times but not only me but by the other inspectors under instructions from the council that we had to do these things. There was an ordinance and we had to abide by the Bathing Ordinance. These bikinis they got that way that they are topless now at Bondi Beach, they are topless now, and why they wear the bottom half now God only knows. There is nothing to the bottom

half as it is today because you get a string up the backside and a handkerchief on the front and that is about all it is.

How did you feel about having to get the girls off the beach?

Oh well it was a job as far as I was concerned and I wanted to do a job and I wanted to do a job properly according to council because council was my boss always.

So you would go along. There are photos, I suppose a set-up, measuring a bikini and things like that to see that it had the required amount on the side.

On the side there. We'd judge it by three inches, index finger about three inches.

And if it didn't comply?

If it didn't comply we'd tell them to go and change their costume or get into something bigger.

Did you have any trouble with them?

No, no. We had arguments at times. There was a girl there one day she came out of the surf and she had been sunbaking in the ladies' surf shed and she had a budgerigar on her shoulder. She came out onto the beach, she wanted to sunbake out on the beach, and I said, 'No. You had better be suitably dressed. You have got to go and change that costume and take your bird with you.' She did it, she did as she was told because if they wouldn't do as they were told we would warn them that the police would come into position.

Would people stand around, once you started talking to these girls in bikinis would crowds gather or didn't people take any notice?

No they didn't take much notice, only at times a newspaper would come out. The *Sun* or the *Daily Mirror* used to come out and they'd come out in cars with their photographers and all of that and when we see them come out we'd say, 'Aha there is something going on today, the bikinis are going to come out today.' Sure enough we wouldn't be far wrong, the beach inspector would be waiting for the bikini to come along the promenade. We saw one day had the bottom part on and had a ribbon around the bust, just as well she wasn't full-busted it wouldn't have held anything in at all. She just had a ribbon round it, a green ribbon. So you can just imagine what they tried out on the beach, they would try anything out on the beach as far as that goes. Same with today, they've got topless today and you see them going up there where the spray is and they get sprayed.

Yes it certainly has changed.

Still I suppose that is the why of life as it is today.

I was wondering if we could talk about the Norfolk Pines at Bondi.

Yes. They strung around the beach front, Campbell Parade, in the park. They died after the aircraft come out from Mascot with the petrol fumes and kerosene fumes they used to boost the jet planes with early in the piece when the jet planes come out with a noise. They used to shoot all the black smoke across Bondi Bay, across the pines, I think that is what killed them, that is what actually killed them. There's a few left. There is only one near the school and there's two or three standing near the south end of the park, of Bondi Park, that is the pines.

You remember when they were beautiful tall trees?

Yes beautiful shady trees. But no more. They were all knocked over and cut away and that was the finish of them. There are three left, one in the school and two in the south end of the park.

Also up on Ben Buckler do you remember the big gun up there?

Yes. That was up in Marks Park I think it was. It was in the Military Reserve a big revolving gun was in position to shoot any invaders that came into Sydney Heads, big revolving gun it was.

Actually were you around when the Japanese entered the harbour, do you remember that?

Yes I remember that. They came in by submarine and they caught three of them past the boom gates at Watsons Bay. They aimed at a big ship and they thought it was one of the American cruisers and it was the Kuttabul that was housing the men's sleeping quarters at Garden Island. On the south side of Garden Island was the Kuttabul and all the sailors were asleep there and there were probably thirty sailors blown up.

Did anything happen around the Bondi area that you can remember at that time? Was there general panic?

No it wasn't that time. We had some shells fired over here when the Japanese come into the war. To boost the Army business they fired some shells, we don't know where the shells come from, one landed over in Rose Bay and another one landed in the steel works at Newcastle. A brother-in-law of mine was working in the steel works and it went straight down a chimney in the steel works. We reckon the line wasn't being filled but that week the line was filled, the war effort.

Shocked them into it.

Shocked them into it. People were moving from Bondi up to Katoomba and Wentworth Falls and all those places, they were leaving their homes here and going up to Wentworth Falls. My family went up and not just mine but others as well, they all went up. Left their homes, left the men there, and the women went to the Blue Mountains.

So how long did they stay away for?

Oh probably three months, probably in the winter time.

What did everybody do here? Did they get prepared for invasion or anything?

We always had alerts from the sirens, we had air-raid sirens and all that, we had all the alerts and that. We used to all collect in one place in fire-resistant or bomb-resistant shelters and there is still a few shelters around now.

Whereabouts are they do you know?

Well they were probably every two hundred yards in the district there was a shelter, what we called a bomb-shelter, built out of concrete and brick.

Were these for each area?

Yes for each area, for every person that was in the area to get into a bomb shelter. Flats had them and different houses had them and they were scattered everywhere. Bomb shelters they were called.

The boys in the surf club I suppose a lot of them would have volunteered?

They did, they volunteered for the war all right. A lot of my mates went. My young brother went, my eldest brother Dudley went. Dudley joined the Navy and Geoffrey joined the Army. The eldest brother he was in the Naval Reserve for the Gunneries Reserve at Rushcutters Bay. I had three brothers in the war. I was a bit flat-footed because I walked on a beach and they wouldn't pass me. *[Laughter]*

You were probably the fittest of all of them.

I could have been. I'm still going anyway, the other three have passed away.

So they came back from the war okay?

They came back from the war okay. Geoff was the youngest one, he was Geoffrey, he got a job with one of the petrol people, Ampol, and he went over to Western Australia. Then he was stationed back in Melbourne, had a house at Kew in Melbourne, and when he retired two years early he came up to the north coast of New

South Wales and plonked himself down at Yamba. Him and his wife were there at Yamba until he was on the bowling green one day and he wasn't feeling too well, a competition was on, and he asked could he go in and sat down for a while. He sat down on the seat and he just passed away right on the bowling green.

That was a shock.

Oh yes. Well he'd gone through enough fighting the Japs in China. He was a major in the Army you see, in the 2/2nd Independent Company and they were really fighters those boys, they knew what to do.

We haven't talked about your own family actually. We haven't spoken about your family, when you got married. Maybe we should start mentioning them.

Yes well in 1933 I got married to a Ballina girl, she was here on domestic services with an aunty of hers. Doris Mellon, that was her name, she was from a family of five girls and one boy living in Ballina near the Lismore area. She was asked to do domestic work with her aunty here at Bondi, at one of the avenues up there off Bondi Road. She used to always come to the beach, she was a beach girl, and we all fell for beach girls didn't we in those days.

And they all fell for lifesavers.

They all fell for lifesavers, especially the hefty ones anyway. We went together for a few years and then we decided we would get married and she was about nineteen and I was about twenty-one and we decided to get married. We lived all round Bondi at different places. Sofia Street, that is Glenayr Avenue now, Curlewis Street, Matilda Street. Do you know where Matilda Street is, Beach Road was Matilda Street. We lived all round those places and then we finished up in 1939 Vickers Avenue, off Blair Street, Vickers Avenue. We stopped there from 1939 to 1973 or 1974 when we moved down to Shore Street. That is the way we went.

And the children?

Well we've got Denise, she's the girl, and John lives at home with me. Denise and her family live at Pendle Hill and she has got a girl and three boys. They are doing all right, I'll show you a photo of them after, we've got a photo in there taken a couple of years ago. They are all swimmers, even mum and dad are swimmers.

Do they come to Bondi still?

Occasionally yes. They are a good family and they are a Catholic family brought up in the Catholic school at St Anne's. I was Church of England, my wife was a Catholic, it didn't make any difference. We were in love so what is wrong with love? Nothing wrong with it is there? I mean what colour or creed you are it makes no difference as long as you do the right thing with the right girl.

So they went to St Anne's?

St Anne's School, Bondi Beach. Denise went to Dover Heights School when she got up into high school she went to Dover Heights School.

How far did she go at Dover Heights?

Until she was about fifteen or sixteen and then she went into a college in town, in [????] where the TAFE College is there. Then after twelve months they get them a job and Robert Reid and Company took her on. Since then she has been computer expert at TNG, AMP. In the room at AMP she was one of the senior girls in AMP in the computer room. She worked shift work, sometimes she will be at home at two o'clock in the morning, and in those days they'd pay for a cab to bring her home from Circular Quay to Vickers Avenue.

Your son what does he do?

When he left school he worked for a firm of grocers over at Rose Bay, Permuens did have it, I don't know who has got it now. He worked for them as a truck driver and car driver for them delivering all round Bellevue Hill, Woollahra and all those places. While he was on that he took on a job with the Red Cross with the Blood Bank and of a weekend he used to deliver the blood for the Blood Bank all round the area in Sydney. After that he took on a job at TAA Airways, Australian Airlines now, he has been there twenty-five years. He is a supervisor now in the airline business.

Is he involved with the surf club at all?

No not John, never joined the surf club.

He goes down to Bondi Beach does he?

He goes there occasionally, he used to. I remember when he was a kid he wouldn't put his feet on the sand, when he was two years old he wouldn't put his feet on the sand. Mum used to have to carry him all the way. Oh dear it was funny. Now he goes to the beach, whenever he can get off duty he goes to the beach, he usually goes out to

Maroubra and all those places out there, wide open spaces, and he sunbakes out there and swims out there.

Well coming back to the beach one thing we was talking about was the Queen's visit in 1954. Do you remember much about that one?

Yes. I helped to organise that and actually I built the dais for the Queen. At the beach the dais was built there for them, red carpet was laid down, everything for it. I spent probably a week doing that, part of my job with the organisation for the Queen's visit.

What did that involve? You had trained as a carpenter.

I had trained as a carpenter before I went to the beach in 1930. This was work for me, something I knew. They knew that I knew it because they just said, 'Righto you have a labourer and that's it, you go ahead. You build the stairway steps and everything.' Off the roadway onto the dais.

TAPE 2: SIDE A

What did they do with the dais and all those things when the Queen's visit was over? Did they just dismantle it all?

Just dismantled it like every other surf carnival. It was a beautiful day for the Queen's visit, big surf really on.

What was the surf carnival like?

Oh it was terrific. It took up three parts of the beach, cars, trucks, everything with surf lifesavers came in and they filled the place up. It was a terrific day, good day, good weather.

How many other clubs were there?

There were probably about twenty-seven or thirty clubs at that time from up and down the coast, Wollongong, Newcastle.

How many came to that surf carnival then? Was there only Bondi people at that surf carnival?

Oh no from other club and they brought visitors with them. Probably there was 15,000, 20,000 there for the carnival that day.

What did it involve? A march past and what else?

The R&R and the belt races and the surf boat races. Surf skis wasn't in then, the surf boat races were the main thing, and it was a big program with surf boats because the

surf boat was really the go then. But now they have got onto boards and Iron Men and all that now.

It was a very successful day.

A very successful day. Everybody was happy about it and the Queen was pleased. Instead of spending a certain time they spent an extra three-quarters of an hour watching the carnival. They were overdue in time when they had to be in another place.

It was well organised.

Well organised yes. It had to be well organised for the Queen.

It sounds like a really great day.

It was a beautiful day and weather-wise it was beautiful.

Right any other things that we can remember about Bondi? Some of the local people that lived there, you know, Bondi Mary.

Bondi Mary oh yes. Bondi Mary she was a regular especially windy days and southerly days Bondi Mary would show up and she'd come down and have a sleep on the beach, around the beach, under the piers. She used to sleep under the south pier where the ladies came out of the Pavilion and many a time the police would come down. McPherson used to have small truck and he used to deliver goods of all descriptions and they brought McPherson's truck down with McPherson driving, a little bloke, and he would have the job of driving her out to Long Bay. The police would carry her up off the beach in the wind and all that sort of business, she had a great coat on and two sugar bags, that is how Bondi Mary looked. We didn't know where she lived, she never lived anywhere only just under the rocks and all round the place and under the piers. She was always sent out to Long Bay to be cleaned up and given another great coat or something like that, a couple of bags.

They looked after her then?

Oh yes the police looked after her.

What did she look like?

Oh she was a fairly tall lady but we never actually saw her outside the great coat.

Even in hot weather?

On a hot day she never took the great coat off. That kept her warm I suppose. That was her secret, kept her warm in wet weather, dry weather, windy weather, cold weather. They were great things the great coats, they were army great coats.

Did she wear a hat?

Yes some sort of an old hat she wore, an old hat. If it wasn't an army hat it was some sort of old hat she had.

Some other people that we were talking about like Ike Cole.

He lived up off Bondi Road, Ike Cole, and he knew when the southerly was coming and he'd come down to the Bondi Beach near the Astra Hotel, there was a park there at the southern end of the beach, and as soon as that southerly would blow he'd invade the beach beachcombing. From the other end would come another fellow named Banger, he would come from the north end, and he'd do the beach too. Then there was Southerly Jack, he'd come to the south end and he'd go in and he'd go along the beach. There were three fellows walking along the beach turning this way and turning that way beachcombing. The wind would blow the coins up and you'd see the shillings and six pences shining fifty yards away, hundred yards away and you could go up and pick up a coin here and coin there. Find another shiner and that would be another six pence or two shillings or something like that. That's when the southerly blew.

Are any of them still there?

No. There's only one fellow there now that is Maxie Williamson and he has got a metal detector on the back of a pick-up. Now Max is a good bloke, I know him well. I've known him since 1946, Maxie, and he always talks to me and I always talk to him. He has got this metal detector and he swears by it and finds coins, especially the \$2 ones now, he says he can pick them up anywhere now. He is set on the detector finding the coins and the metal.

Have you ever found anything interesting on the beach going along? I suppose you would have found jewellery sometimes.

False teeth and everything. False teeth in a big sea, many of those came up. We'd find coins and that in the big seas, two shillings, five shilling pieces. Gold rings. Silver always turned black, coppers or pennies were always a yellow kind of colour but the gold never changed colour at all. No gold rings or anything ever changed colour. If

you saw something shining that was gold it was gold. Wedding rings and things like that we picked up. I often did that kind of business, beachcombing in my spare time, especially when the winds were blowing and the big seas were on there was no on round the beach much.

What about little Billy Johnson?

Billy Johnson he used to have an overcoat on wet days and big seas on and he used to be beachcombing what we called in the wash, where the waves washed up and washed the money back and he'd run down. You see him today, see him running down with a big sea on. Boys, men, girls and everything when the water receded and run down like that they'd pick up the coins down there. Billy was picking up the coins and he had a hole in his coat pocket, his overcoat pocket, and the kids used to come down and follow Billy because Billy wouldn't realise he had a hole in his pocket. The boys used to follow Billy around because when he picked up a coin and put it in his pocket it would fall on the beach again. That was poor old Billy Johnson.

I hope he fixed the pocket. Do you remember the mermaids down there?

Yes the mermaids. They were erected on the big rock. The big rock was washed up in 1908 I think it was, it is 235 tons or something like that and it was washed from the seabed onto the ledge of rocks and hasn't moved since. There was a fellow from Bondi who was a sculpture and he sculpted two mermaids, as I can show you in the photos there, and the mermaids were in bronze filled with concrete. They were up for twelve or eighteen months and then the vandals took them. The university students from Sydney University came out one night and chiselled both mermaids off the rock and they were found two days later by the police in Engineering up at the university, the university's Engineering section.

That was a pity wasn't it. Right so do you remember also the Aboriginal carvings? You talked about the Aborigines earlier but there are Aboriginal carvings up there at Ben Buckler.

Yes at Ben Buckler in the golf course, up near the sewer outfall, where the sewer shed is and the monument, what we call the monument, that is the big chimney that you can see from anywhere around Bondi. They fenced those in a few years ago and retraced them, the council, but they never retraced the one at Ben Buckler. There is a small carving there, it only takes up about six feet, it is like a shark or something like

that, tortoise or something like that, and it is an Aboriginal carving. It is the only bit of Aboriginal carving there at Ben Buckler, that is near the fishing shed.

The next thing I think we should talk about as some of your own swimming achievements. There are so many medals and so many things that you participated in that maybe we should devote some time to that now.

What do you want me to do, when I started swimming in the competition?

Yes. When did you start competitive swimming?

Competition swimming I was at Henley Swimming Club at Gladesville. I won the Under Nine championship in 1917. I was thirteen year old champion of New South Wales Public Schools in 1922. Hundred Yards Swimming Championship of Balmain and District Schools in 1922. Hundred Yards Swimming Champion Boy Scouts of New South Wales in 1923. Hundred Yards Swimming Champion Drummoyne Swimming Club in 1924. Hundred Yards and Two Twenty and Four Forty Yards Championship of East Sydney Club in 1927. Hundred Yards Championship Eastern Suburbs District in 1927. Hundred Yards Olympic Games Test of New South Wales in 1928. Hundred Yards Professional Swimming Championship Parade Years from 1931 to 1938. That was because I was a beach inspector and I was considered a professional swimmer. Hundred Yards Far Eastern Championship at Toolangi, out west, in 1928. Junior Surf Championship of New South Wales in 1927. Senior Surf Belt Championship of Australia in 1931/32 Season. North Bondi R&R Team Championships of Australia 1929 to 1930 and 1930 to 1931 and 1932 to 1933, three of those years. New South Wales R&R Championship Team of Australia in 1935. Captain of the North Bondi Surf Club R&R Team from 1930 to 1936. Interstate Surf Belt Championship Western Australia in 1934. Captain of the North Bondi Interstate R&R Team Western Australia 1934. Hundred Metres Champion of Bondi Icebergs Club.

In 1934 what were you doing in Western Australia?

I was with a representative team from Sydney. We went to Western Australia for the championships in Western Australia, surf championships. I won the Surf Belt championship, at two carnivals there I was undefeated.

You are showing me your program from the 1928 Games.

That was the Olympic Test Selection New South Wales. Due to a lack of funds they would never send any teams over to the Olympic Games swimming teams because

they didn't have enough money. It was 1928, it was near Depression time, Depression was working 1929 to 1933 and nobody had any money. The bank closed, the Commonwealth Bank closed, I had a few bob in the Commonwealth Bank and it went west, all those things happened when I was a kid.

You were chosen for that?

Yes I was chosen. I won the Olympic Test in Manly Baths.

What did that involve? Was it freestyle?

Yes freestyle swimming and I won the championship for that Olympic Games Test Selection of New South Wales. I swam against the good swimmers here and they all said so and so was going to win but Aub Laidlaw he just went in and went first.

Must have been disappointing not to go to the Olympics.

Oh well I look at it now and these Olympic champions today they are mad if they want to go twice, let someone else have a go because that is what Olympic Games are for. Let the young people get up and have a go, not the old people that were there four, six or eight years ago, they've had their day. Let the young people get on the swimming today because they are the future champions and they will be breaking records. In the old days we had different records to break and after years they were broken by other swimmers that came up, the younger swimmers, that is the way swimming goes.

Did you get to see the Olympics at all? Did you see the Olympics when they were in Melbourne?

I saw them in Melbourne. We went down there for the championships and the surf championships and we went down with the Bondi Junior Boat Crew. We were going to the Games nearly every day of the week, because it was on five days, and the championships in the surf was on the weekends. We went into the Games nearly every day to see the discus throwing and running and athletics and all that sort of business and then of a night time we used to clean the camp up and go up at half-past ten, it was still daylight saving so it was daylight until half-past ten, we went up to the hotel where the other boys were staying and we had an hour and a half with them before close up time and had a yarn and all that and then walk back to the camp, the caravan park.

Did they compete in the surfing championships down there?

Yes we competed in the boat race championship because Junior Bondi Boat Crew was there.

Coming back to the Bondi area do you remember anything like dairies or anything like that around this area?

Yes there was a dairy right here were we are at Shore Street in this area. They moved all the dairies from here up to Dover Heights, Pennalls was the last dairy out here and it was at Diamond Bay. There was a piggery half way up here, up past Maroubra Road there was a piggery. An ostrich farm a little bit further up where they grew pretty feathers for the ladies' hats and all that in those days, the ostrich farm. That is how it went at North Bondi.

Do you remember Mackenzie's Point? What was Mackenzie's Point like?

Well there was a bit boot around past the baths before you get to Mackenzie's Point, there is a walk round there now put in by the council and goes right round to Tamarama and Bronte. Mackenzie's Point there was a boot there and in the boot was a big rock just sitting there, it has moved since, on the edge of the surf and behind the big rock one of the fishermen has put a cement part up and the soakage from Bondi Road has come down and there is always fresh water there, there is a bowl of fresh water there today. If you go round there today you find it where the fishermen put this little bowl up in concrete to catch the water, the drip off the rocks.

Who would use the fresh water?

The fishermen. Only for the fishermen. They wouldn't take any water with them they'd have it at the boot area.

What was Mackenzie's Point like then? That used to have cars around there but that was a while ago.

Mackenzie's Point they put a football pitch on that, football ground with goal posts and everything, but I think it finished up they lost too many footballs over the cliff and they have done away with that now.

Do you have any memories of Bronte Beach and Tamarama at all?

Well Bronte Beach and Tamarama yes I've been at both those beaches and done duty there as a lifesaver. Tamarama is a very funny beach. You have got the Twins on one side and the reef on the other side and you've got about seventy yards of beach between those two rocks. It is a great sunbaking area and a lot of people go there especially of a weekend. But with a big sea on you didn't put up the flags with a big

sea on. The only time you would have the surfers go in between the flags at Tamarama was an hour before full tide and an hour after full tide, that was the safest time. You pulled the flags down for the rest of the day because it was too rough and there were rips everywhere. Out from the Twins and out over the reef there was too many people getting carried out.

Did you have to do a lot of rescues there yourself?

We did a few rescues. I ran the place properly when I was on duty there because I knew that if you had a rough sea on you'd only have the flags going for about two hours through the day, just before high tide and just after high tide. Bronte was a different beach, Bronte was another beach. There's a bank out off Bronte and deep water in close and you go down Bronte and you walk straight down into a bit of a ditch and you swim out onto the bank, it is about thirty yards out. That is where the sharks used to come in at Bronte there, that is when Nita Derrett got taken there but she was only paddling on hot night. It was a funny beach. If you go out on the surf there, out where the break is between Bronte Point and Tamarama where the Twins are you break the surf one way and you go left and then you meet another wave coming across the other way and if you don't swim on it you've lost the wave. It is a funny beach to surf at, some of the boys wonder what happened but the locals all know about it.

Do you remember the sheds, they always had the family sheds, I think there was a pavilion there for a band or something.

Dinny Brown was the caretaker there and he looked after the sheds. Later his son Dave Brown, the footballer, and his wife looked after the sheds. Dinny actually was the first lifesaver at Bondi Beach when Bondi Beach was opened for surf bathing, he was before Stan Macdonald. Then there was other boys later, I came in 1930 and [????] Harris and all those fellows. But the Browns held that fort at Bronte, the Browns, from father to son and his wife.

Coming back to Tamarama have you ever heard anyone speak about Wonderland?

Wonderland City, yes it was there. It was on the north side of Tamarama. The flying foxes and all that went across the bay there and it was called Wonderland City. That when the White City was on, where the White City Tennis Courts are today. That was another Wonderland City.

Do you remember the stories about Wonderland City? The acts that they had there or anything like that.

No I never heard too much about it because it was actually before my time coming out to Bondi, coming out to Waverley.

Well back in Bronte do you remember the rotunda where the band used to play?

No I don't remember that. The rotunda used to be at Bondi Beach, but I don't know about the rotunda at Bronte. A lot of shelter sheds at Bronte because Bronte Park was a real good place to picnic. They used to have picnics there with running races and all that, different firms would run their races there and have picnics there, a day's picnic, it was a really good picnic spot. Bronte was the best picnic spot in the Eastern Suburbs beside Neilson Park.

Just looking at the map now, moving down, the next thing we come to is the Waverley Cometary, that's a fine old place isn't it?

Fine old cemetery yes. Terrible lot of vaults built there. Italian people they always use the vaults and they wanted vaults to house the whole family. There might have been fifteen or twenty in the vault and that is how it went. They were broken into occasionally by vandals but they never got much out of it only passed on people.

Back here at Bondi Junction do you remember the skating rink around there or the theatres?

There was four or five picture theatres at Bondi Junction, they are all gone now, all gone now, they are a thing of the past picture theatres. Like there was two at Bondi Beach, there was the Kings and the Sixways, they've gone. There was one up at North Rose Bay and that has gone, the Kings Picture Theatre up there that's gone. They are one of the has-beens.

They used to apparently make movies at the back of Bondi Junction where Norman Ross is now.

Yes that's right. Made some of the Cinetown films, Cinetown had it. I think Waverley Council took it over in the finish, Cinetown.

There was a skating rink there and those things too.

There was a roller skating rink at Bondi Beach where the Kings Theatre was, that was a skating rink for a number of years. That is where I learnt my rolling skating there.

[Laughs]

That is great. Moving up to more recent times, a few years ago you were badly flooded in this area, in Shore Street when was it?

We had a bad flood, it is about three or four years ago.

1984 or 1983?

I forget now what year it was. There was torrential rain here all day and nearly all night. The week previously there was a strike, a garbo strike, Waverley Council Garbo, and there were lids of bins, they weren't bins like they are today they were plastic bins with lids on. They went down the drains and they blocked up the drains and caused the floods in Elliott Street, the next street and Shore Street. We had water in this house here about twenty inches high right through the house. It came up through the floorboards in the night time about eleven o'clock at night. There was one family up here just on the rise, on the end of Shore Street, number 2 Shore Street, and he said, 'Come up with us,' him and his wife were there only a young couple at the time, they've got a family since. They invited John and I, we locked the back door and we locked the front door and just left everything as it was. You would have vandals come in, the next morning they would come in and want to break in and take something. When you had beds and bedding out the front you got to watch the bedding next day that had dried out because someone would come along and take a double bed off you or a single bed off you. We were lucky. I had a divan I made years ago, a divan, and it was in John's room. It was the only thing we had that floated that was the divan. There must have been an airlock underneath the divan and as the tide rose the divan rose, the only thing I had worth keeping was the divan and it is still in John's room.

So your carpets had to do?

Carpets. The insurance said, 'No take the carpets outside and dry them out.' That was on the Saturday. I had my brother-in-law and my daughter, her husband, they came down here with John on the Saturday, they went right through the house Saturday and Sunday and Sunday the insurance people rang up and said, 'Don't worry about the carpets.' The carpets were all soaking wet and they were smelling through the house, after twenty-four hours they smelt through the house, wool carpets you know they are terrific.

There was quite a lot of people around this area.

We were all in this street here, specially on the low side, right up to number 2, he only got a flooding in the back of his place but not in the house. He had all the inmates of the rest of the street up at his place overnight sheltering because there was nowhere else to go.

That really is scary isn't it.

Especially when water starts coming up through the floors and round all the rooms.

You would be up to your knees just about. You'd have to turn off all your electricity and everything.

That is what we did, we closed all the doors and turned off all the electricity and had to get the electricity supplied by one of the boys. He had an electrician mate of his that come and made the electricity suitable for us to use for the lights.

That would have been a great worry.

It was a worry all right.

All the time you have been here that hasn't happened before has it?

No it hasn't happened. We were here in 1934, as I say, 1983 or 1984 the flood came, it was torrential rain. We nearly had the same about a week ago the torrential rain came and I kept looking out the door to see if the flood water was rising but we were lucky. They've only got fifteen inch pipes going through here, fifteen inch pipes to carry all the water that comes of Maroubra Road and Shore Street and down the hill here. They run next to where that tree is there and they run through there right through the houses, through the back part of the houses. They can't replace those, the council won't replace that. Fifteen inches is that long, that is the inside measurement of the pipe, fifteen inches.

They would be easily clogged up with garbage wouldn't they.

Well it did clog up with garbage then. These garbage cans with plastic lids they all went down the drain and blocked the water from going anywhere.

Here we have the medal that you received from the Queen, the British Empire Medal, what was the citation on that?

The citation was 'For lifesaving and community services.' That was presented to me by the Governor of the day at Government House in 1972.

Coming back to your work with the Bondi Surf Club could you just tell me the different positions that you held with them?

North Bondi Surf Club? That was back in 1928 I joined the surf club and I was a vice president for a time. A few years later I was vice captain and stood at the Management Committee meetings, Selection Committee meetings. I was a gear steward and covered all the lifesaving gear for the surf club that wanted painting and repairing. I was a resident member or caretaker in 1929.

You stayed as an inspector for how long?

I was an inspector with Waverley Council from 1930 to 1970. I was a permanent lifesaver Waverley Municipal Council from 1930 to 1970. During those forty-odd years as beach inspector I performed rescues from the surf totalling over 6,000 rescues with and without surf line and belt during those years.

Now we were going to talk a bit more about some of the people down there. You told me you had a beach detective.

A beach detective yes.

Why was this necessary?

Because there was so much stealing on the beach in summer time. There was so much stealing of towels and personal belongings off the beach.

What would he do? Would he just look around?

He'd come down five days a week, in the weekdays, and just look around and look just like any other surfer with a pair of trunks on. He'd go down north end and south end and have a look round and see if there were any criminals around, they knew all the criminals. If they were consorting, that is going together, criminals gathered together, they would book them for consorting as well. They kept an eye on the beach and on the roadway as well with stolen cars and things like that. We had a position there one day, there was a team of boys come over from Coogee. They had ransacked Coogee Beach and stolen nearly everything they could lay their hands on. They come over to Bondi with tenners and fivers and things like that, paper money. They came down to the Chair House, Macdonalds Chair House, and the detectives were there. They came hiring different surf-o-planes, chairs all those sort of things and they produced tenners and fivers, they just pulled them out of their pockets, school boys fourteen years of age. They'd been to Coogee previously we found out and then they were up the milk bar changing tenners at Bates Milk Bar at Campbell Parade. We put the beach detective onto these boys and he caught the lot of them. But they only got

half the money back because they had spent half on surf-o-planes, ice-creams, milkshakes and all that.

Did you find it was a success, that they did catch a lot of people?

Yes he'd catch a lot of people. They went to the Surf Pavilion because in the Surf Pavilion in the men's section there was a place called The Mandated Territory and they would catch many offenders doing the wrong thing there.

Do you remember when the OTC, Overseas Telecommunications Cable, was laid in 1962?

Yes the cable ship came in in 1962 to Bondi Bay. Parked in Bondi Bay for a few days and dropped the cable from there. They brought it from New Zealand across to go to Bondi Beach to come up to Paddington to the OTC. With the cable on board they had to lay the cable by succession of big drums sort of business, like forty-five gallon drums, to take the cable towards the beach. I had to swim out with a belt and line to bring that line ashore for the cable to be pulled ashore to the beach.

You swam out to the boat did you?

I swam out to the *Retriever*, that is a big boat there, the *Retriever* that was the name of the boat.

They threw the cable to you?

They threw the line to me that had the cable at the other end so I could swim to the beach with the line for the cable to be towed in by these succession of big floats. That kept the cable on the top of the water, that is natural.

So you took the line in and then it was followed by these floats.

That brought it into the beach. Then there was a number of men hauling it up the beach towards the cable house where it was fixed up at the cable house.

After that it was dug under the sand was it?

It was covered up under the sand, yes, by a council bulldozer. Sometimes in a big sea it is visible now. We get a big sea about twice a year at Bondi Beach and it is visible then, it is uncovered. It is down near the stormwater drain that ran out which we used to call 'Hogan's Hole'. There was a mayor called Hogan and Mr Hogan used to have the hole filled up every Friday and it was called Hogan's Hole because young people, boys and girls, used to swim there in filthy drain water. They finished up calling it the 'Polio Pond'. We had a fellow come down there on a really big day with a heavy surf

on and he would never swim between the flags, he always used to swim out of the flags in the rips, because he reckoned the water was a lot cleaner. He used to always come down especially with a big sea on and we finished up calling him 'Mountains High' because he liked the sea when it was mountains high. He was a lacrosse player and he taught lacrosse in his spare time.

Did you ever have to rescue him?

Never had to rescue him.

Well that was a wonderful career spanning a long wonderful time at Bondi Beach wasn't it.

Oh yes, very good.

Anywhere you go in the world if you would say you were an inspector at Bondi Beach they'd recognise that wouldn't they.

There was a family used to come down, we had a family come down from Bellevue Hill called the Burlei family. Now the Burleis were in big business in Sydney with foundation garments. Four daughters used to come down with mum or dad to the beach regularly and these four daughters were good-lookers, nice looking girls. I think they were Jewish communities but they were very good-lookers and well-built in front, you know what I mean, they were a good advertisement for their garments I tell you because everybody looked at them. They'd come down afternoons or weekends with mum or dad to surf.

You have probably seen a great change in the community around Bondi haven't you. Yes big difference. We have got all sorts. We have got the Westies who have come out now from Parramatta and Penrith, we call them the Westies, they come all the way out from Penrith and those places to surf at Bondi and they won't do as they are told.

The population has changed. I mean I suppose when you first started it was more of the English and Anglo-Saxon stock.

We had the 'Bathe between flags' in two languages, German and Italian in those days. 'Bathe between flags' in German and Italian and we only had Italians and Germans out there in those days in the 1930s, that is before the war.

TAPE 2: SIDE B

In the time you were an inspector are there any particular rescues that you remember?

Yes. One Saturday afternoon we were surfing down at the south end and there was a fair sea on and there was a rip alongside the bank. Two or three swimmers got carried out and were carried out past the bank in the open. We had to send out two lifesavers, one from each side of the bank, to make certain we got the persons concerned because we were not certain whether they'd be able to get out with a belt or not. Two of the lifesavers from the Bondi club and one from North Bondi we sent them out and one of them had to get to the patient first and he was still going out to sea. One of my mates went out and he was a lifesaver from Tamarama Surf Club, he went out and helped out there and he finished up he had a partial set of teeth and he lost his set of teeth that day in that rescue, he was minus his partial set of top teeth. We made the rescue all right, a really good rescue, but the senior man said, 'No, no, we can't give any medals for that sort of thing. We couldn't do that.' He was thinking of himself all the time, you know how lifesavers are sometimes they think of themselves and why didn't they do it and they didn't have a chance to do it. It was a really good rescue that day.

Another day a young bloke went out at North Bondi, he went out in a rip there, and I said to myself I had better go and chasing he is going out to sea all the time. So I chased him in the belt, I get out to him where he is and I say, 'How are you going sonny boy?' 'I'll be all right mister. I'll be all right.' I said, 'No you are coming with me. When we get back to the beach talk to me on the beach.' I towed him back to the beach and he was quite happy he said, 'Oh thanks very much inspector,' and he left with his mates. He didn't want to be rescued but you get those types of kids.

So looking back over the forty years would you have changed anything? Are you glad you opted to work for the North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club?

I wouldn't do anything else. I was really happy in the job and as far as the job was concerned I did everything that the council wanted me to do at the time, over the years, and I never regretted anything that I have done. I was a disciplined man at the time, led a disciplined life previously in my boyhood days, school days. It was all discipline as far as Boys Scouts and all that was concerned and then discipline in the surf club. I would say to any boy that wants to join a surf club you have got to be prepared to take discipline otherwise get out.