

28th July, 1981 - Mr. Alf Tierney.

Alf, could you just tell us how long you've lived in Northcote, or anything of interest.

Well, I've lived in Northcote since 1926, originally came from Lilydale which is only 24 miles out of Melbourne. I came here when I was somewhere around 7 years of age, or was I a little older, yes I think I was, I was actually 8 years of age.

I've got quite a good recollection of Northcote at that time. I commenced schooling at what is known today as St. Joseph's up near Westbourne Grove behind the Town Hall, and we had two Schools nearby, but for some reason or other I was sent to a Catholic School, sometimes its rather cloudy to me why I was, but I was in fact sent to Catholic Schools early in my school career.

Quite frankly, we had quite a happy childhood in Northcote in those days. I can still recall some of the storekeepers of the time, and thinking back when I was a kid, one of the names that I've never forgotten was the Tharratts. The Tharratts were in clothing or mercery or haberdashery as they may well have called it in those days, and even today in Northcote there is still a Tharratt, and I believe that they went right back into the last century. I believe this was quite true.

Of course High Street was a very interesting place at the time, because when we first came and for years after we had, of course, the cable trams. They were not replaced until the War had been going a couple of years, and then they brought the double decker buses on.

Remembering along High Street at that time - the theatre for instance, the Northcote Theatre was opened in 1912 and one of the things I shall not forget about that is the fact that one occasion I was in the Manager's office there and on the opening night of the Theatre they had taken this photograph of the crowd that was inside the Theatre that night.

The thing I shan't forget about it was the fact that most of the men still had their hats on, bowler hats, but it was quite a good photograph and, I don't know, perhaps, somebody must have that picture somewhere. It would be interesting if you'd ask a question of the Leader Budget and they may be able to find out who has that picture, but I can assure you it existed, I shall not forget it. The Manager's office was a very small office I recall too.

Also, we can't forget about Stott Son & Watson, the Estate Agents almost opposite there on the corner of Westbourne Grove and High Street. Well-known identities, and they too went back into the last century.

On the same side going down towards Separation Street from the Theatre we had what was known in those days as the Moa Cycles, that of course being the name of a bird if I recall rightly, it was a New Zealand bird. Anyway that was a bike shop that was there for many, many years, its only in quite recent years actually that its disappeared from the scene. He was a well-known identity, I can't bring him name to mind, but he was a well-known identity.

Over the road was a little shop, a very small place, right next to the old bluestone Church, and this of course was a grocers and he too went back into the last century, handed down in the family, the name was Cornish. All the way along there were these little shops, and surprisingly enough, without recalling all the names of these people that had these shops, I do know that many of them were handed down in the family and had been there for a considerable period of time,.

Of course when you go down to the bottom of Separation Street, you've got the area now where Safeway is and Venture, well of course that was a row of broken down little hovel shops, they were really out of this world, Dickensian I think you might use the word. I recall when they were pulling down I went and had a look, I was quite young, very young at the time, and they all had these cellars underneath the shops.

And of course, going a little further down, we had the fellow that used to make cricket balls, he made them there for many years, his name was Swale, Fred Swale. He came up with what was known as a Fred Swale patent cricket ball which was compressed of two sections instead of the traditional four, he came up with the Fred Swale patent and it was just two sections of leather and one seam to sew.

Going a little further we mustn't forget that we had the railway used to cross High Street at the Beavers Road corner, and that used to go around into the Brickworks and that was the reason why it was put down in the first place was to have access to loading the bricks from the kilns straight onto the trucks and they used to be transported to their various destinations.

But I do think that right at that particular point the thing that fascinated me when I first learned about it was Sharps. These are the people who sold lawn mowers and bicycles and Holden motor parts and Vauxhall motor parts. They got their start from a single-fronted old wooden shop right almost on the corner there where the Dentist is at the present time, just near the second-hand car yards, almost beside them.

They started off back in the last century as a boot repairer and that's the way it went, it just took off from one thing to another until they got to safety bicycles as they called them, and then they went into motor cycles in which they spent many of their years selling motor cycles, particularly English ones, and they were specialist in the B.S.A. motor cyclists, the earliest and the latest, and then of course they moved onto other things, as you well know, they sold lawn mower parts and Holden motor parts and so on, and are still there today.

All the way along, we musn't forget that in those days there was a predominance of businesses known as hay and corn stores. Up there on the western side of High Street almost opposite Dennis Street, was a well-known identity, his name was Bostock, Harry Bostock. Now this too was a business that went from father to son. I don't know just exactly how far down it went, but I know that they were an old business when we first came to Northcote in 1926, and that went for a good many years in my recollections.

But then again you've got the old hardware place directly opposite, this being Redmans, and they too were a very well-known Ironmongery at the time, (they never used to use the word hardware in those days, it was Ironmongers), and they went for a great many years.

Also we had, I suppose one of the better identities along there was a couple of spinster ladies used to run a lolly shop, (I don't think they used the words milk bar in those days either), and oddly enough, the reason why I mention this one, is that it was a well-known betting shop in Northcote. If you wanted to go up and lay a bet, you would go up to these two ladies' place, their shop, and I think they must have made more money betting than they did out of the lollies being sold. All the way along we had little old shops all the way up to the junction.

We had the old Thornbury Theatre, which later became a market, it became a skating rink, it became a dance hall, whatever grabbed the various generations that were coming along, until today well its none of those things anymore, it's just another business. All the way to the junction, and of course, when you get to the junction you were over the border into Preston. I suppose this is no longer of any great interest to anyway.

What did you do to entertain yourselves in those days, when you were just a lad, say a teenager?

Well looking back on those days, insofar as I was concerned as a teenager, let's say at the age of 12 years of age onwards, I feel that the thing that interested us most was in those days we never had the facilities to enjoy ourselves as they have today, there was nothing remotely like it.

We all had our billy carts and we also used to fly our kites, and fishing was a great old thing too, this was one of the things that dominated a great deal of our spare time.

Where did you do most of your fishing?

Oddly enough, in the Yarra River.

Whereabouts in the Yarra?

We used to come from behind the Tower Hotel, we used to work our way around the flats at that time, very flat area at that point, and anywhere down to the old pipe line across the Yarra bend, and I don't think at any time that I ever fished any lower down towards Melbourne than that. I never used to get many fish.

What was caught in the River in those days?

Mainly perch and blackfish, and blackfish, being an Australian fish, eventually seemed to be fished out. There were quite a lot of perch. But then again, I think there were more eels caught than anything, because eels were very, very common in the Yarra. There were of course trout, and I do recall that a Mr. Harry Miles, or actually they called him Sonny, he lived up in Dundas Street, Thornbury, and he had a massive trout he caught in the Yarra, something near 12 lbs., I think it was slightly over 12 lbs., and he had it mounted. It was his pride and joy, this mounted fish.

Around about what date would that have been, that a 12 lb. trout was caught?

Looking back, I can usually date things reasonably well with my own age, and I would say it would have been about 1931, about that far back.

What did you do perhaps a Saturday night for entertainment?

Well, on Saturday nights, I myself with a number of young lads around our area, we used to play in junior football competitions, if that was the right season, the right time of year, or cricket. We used to have all sorts of functions, even if it was just a pie eating contest, or a dance of sorts, or just a get-together at a party, or perhaps an all night listening session to the old style broadcast of cricket.

At your Football Club rooms, was it?

We never had Football Club rooms, we were running from a private house in Arthur Street, Fairfield. The man who ran the Club, his name was Jim Reece, one heck of a nice fellow he was too, and he used to run it as a hobby. He had quite a lot of young lads trying to make the team, of which I was one of them.

Of course, in the earliest times, the Saturday afternoon was not available to football or cricket. If you were not playing you could perhaps trot along to the movies, you could get in for threepence, and that was perhaps the sum total of our entertainment.

Reading, or joining a library, was almost not the done thing for the young lads of those days, but it was something that was in the future.

Would you tell me something about what it was like in the Depression?

I can remember very well quite a great deal of things that happened in the Depression. I'm sure there must be many, many people around today with vivid memories of the events of the time.

I can remember how hard it was to get a job, in fact my own father was out of work for a period of time. He lost his job simply because he lost a finger on the job he was working at, at the quarries, which was in Montefiore Street, Fairfield at the time. When he lost his finger, there being no compensation of any consequence in those days and no sick pay, nothing, he was just put off.

Eventually he tried to get a job, and I do remember as a lad going with him because word had got around, I don't know how looking back, but word had got around that they were going to start pulling up the old cable tram route from the Merri Creek bridge, that is on St. Georges Road, they were going to pull up these old rails in readiness to put the electric tram service right through.

I well recall going over there with my Dad, he was hoping to get a job, and there were just thousands of people there, and I don't mean hundreds, I don't mean just scores, I mean thousands, because long before we got there you'd have thought you were going to a Grand Final, there were that many men there hoping to get a job. I saw the men that were selected working, and if they were not good enough with the pick and shovel, I actually saw them, I did actually see these men put off, so a few more fellows would go and see how they went, and eventually they got fellows that suited them. Such were the conditions of the day.

Of course, if you were on sustenance as it was frequently called, or Susso, then it was not uncommon to find you had a hand-out of something like 5 shillings a week, and you would get a coupon for 5 shillings which you took to a grocer shop, an approved grocer shop I might add, you just couldn't take them anywhere, and you would get what you could on that 5 shillings and this would be a very difficult thing, even in those days, to have kept a man and wife and perhaps a kiddie or two. Very, very difficult times indeed.

The clothing hand-outs at the Town Hall - they used to go around the district trying to get old shoes, footwear of any sort and old clothes, and then they would hand them out to the needy at the Town Hall, not forgetting of course the fact that almost every district had the soup kitchens of the time. I do recall, I've had more than one bowl of that soup too in my earliest times before I actually started myself, and looking back at it, it was the wateriest soup I think I can ever recall, and of course all the vegetables were donated for the manufacture of that soup.

I do recall very well the Depression, I recall it very well. There were hardships galore. I look back and wonder just exactly what people would think who complain so much today if they could only revert their lives back and spend a little short time living under conditions such as were lived under then, and then return to the normal, they'd think they were really in God's country today.

This is something about the Northcote Football Club -

Well the Northcote Football Club, looking back, I first took an interest in the Club in 1929 and that particular year they won the Grand Final, which was rather an exciting event for me anyway, because they didn't only win the Grand Final but they had to play two Grand Finals before they did finally become Premiers, simply because the first Grand Final they played that year was a drawn game. They went on, they won a number of premierships after that.

Before they ever moved down to Westgarth Street oval, they used to play football on a ground up in Croxton behind the old Pilgrims Inn, or the Croxton Park Hotel, call it what you like, or often enough referred to as The Crock, more affectionately The Crock, isn't it. Anyway they played there for a few years. In fact, the dressing room was stables belonging to The Crock, and some years ago, of course, those stables were pulled down to expand the Hotel as it is today.

Prior to that, they had another Club, prior to the Northcote Football Club as we know it today, they had another Club which was Northcote's official side, and they were known as the Rose of Northcote. I haven't got a clue as to why they became known the Rose of Northcote, but that is in fact the name that they played under, and they played during the years around about 1906, and they disbanded about 1912. I reckon that was about the years. I wouldn't be sure about that being exactly right, but I feel that that would have been about the years.

I do believe, although I've got no official knowledge of it, I do believe they did win a premiership in the competition in which they played, but it wasn't in fact the Association, because they never came into the Association until the 1920's. Of course they were quickly brought to the fore by a number of businessmen in Northcote who brought lots of players from the League and, of course, Northcote's first premiership was won by a pretty strong side, because they had a lot of representatives from the League, especially Collingwood, at that time.

Actually, whilst I was working in my job, which I spent something like 50 years at, I had the pleasure of knowing Cec Hiscock, in fact I showed him how to do his very first day's work. He went on, and I played football with him in Junior comp, and eventually he went to Northcote and made the Firsts team and became Captain of Northcote, and he also won the J.J. Liston Trophy.

This is about a place where you used to be able to go and buy some meat.

Yes, we had a very large retail butcher shop. Perhaps you would hardly call it a shop because it wasn't in every sense of the word a shop, it was just a place where you went and traded, and it was more or less a factory where they made and prepared and cooked all their own german sausages and frankfurts, or perhaps they were more or less commonly known in those days as saveloys.

You could go down there and you could get a half a sheep for 3 shillings.

That was named Smith's Meats wasn't it?

Smith's Meats, and they were in Bastings Street at the bottom of the Bastings Street hill on the right hand side as you get down to the bottom of the hill. That is, I believe today, still a meatworks.

Did they ever do any killing of animals there. I think I heard this?

It may have happened, but I've got no recollections of that, because as I recall it was a built up area when I first came to know of it.

Of course in Northcote at that time, it was always possible to stay home and you could have a pork butcher come to your premises, or your home where you lived. We had for instance the McGavins, they were the pork butchers. They would arrive on your doorstep and you would go out to their vehicle and they'd open up all the back, and you could even step in, it was like a little corridor and you'd go and select whatever meat you wanted, and you could more or less pay for it right there and then and you never had to go any further than just out the kerbside of your home to get it. MCGAVIN

Of course we had travelling salesmen, hawking clothes around. Some of them never had a conveyance of any description, they just had cases, and they would carry cases from door to door. Others might have perhaps had a bicycle and had them slung up on the bicycle somehow or other and just wheeled the bicycle.

Would that have been in the Depression time?

It was, very much so. Everybody was out to try and make something and it was very, very common indeed to see that. And of course, one of the things which are still carried on today was we had a number of people travelling around selling greengroceries, and one man I can bring to mind at the present time, his name was Marsden, and he was doing that sort of thing for many years. In fact at one stage you could even go down to the Chinamen at the Chinese gardens.

That's what I was going to ask you about - did you know about the market gardens and where they were?

Oh yes. We had a number of Chinese market gardens. It's hard to know which would have been the better known, because depending I suppose what side of Northcote you lived on, whether you lived over near the Merri Creek or over this way. If you lived near the Merri Creek you'd know that better than the people that lived near Darebin Creek.

But down at Darebin Creek we had a Chinese market garden and they took in all that section on the right hand side just before you cross the bridge in Darebin Road into what is known as Livingstone Street, they had all that area there. They used to take their produce to the market. It was not uncommon to see those Chinese, it was almost a standard joke today that they Chinese used to go to sleep and the horses used to take them home, but it was a fact of life. I can vouch for that because I've actually seen it happen. The Chinese would be sleeping away in his cart and the horse just walking along going home.

Perhaps it may have been the same thing happened over where Spicers operate. This was down below the Northcote Golf Course. In fact, I think we have a big factory there, Containers. All along there was Chinese market gardens and further along, near the old footbridge at Harding Street, we also had Chinese market gardens there.

We also had them further up towards Preston in a small way, but there was quite a number of Chinese gardens near the Creeks, especially in Northcote, but also in other parts of Melbourne. It was simply there because the water was there and that's why they started there.

Well, I just recently read a book by Nancy Lee, and I feel that there would be a tremendous lot of people around today that will remember Nancy Lee. She used to more or less participate in what was known as Chatterbox Corner on 3AW in its earliest years. As 3AW is just more or less going to celebrate their 50 years on the air, she was with them almost from their inception.

She, in her book, stated that she went to School at Hutton Street State School in Thornbury, and she said a little known fact was that she went there at the same time as Norman Banks, the radio commentator, also mainly at 3AW in his last years. He spent much of his schooldays there. So actually the interest was there, and whilst I was at the State Library quite recently I did look up some of the old directories of Banks and I found that, yes, they did in fact live in Collins Street, Thornbury for a period of time, which was quite near the Hutton Street School.

We were just talking about transport in Northcote. Well, there was one particular thing that I shall not forget about the transport in Northcote. It's not so much the cable trams or the buses that were coming onto the roads and the various conveyances that they had at that time, but we did in fact have a very small bus service which serviced some of the side streets - Gillies Street and Bastings Street and around Separation Street - and they were funny little buses.

They would only take about 6 passengers, and to get in them you paid the driver - if you liked you could pay the driver before you got in - and then you went around the back and you got up a couple of steps and you sat down on bench seats. Looking back, I think that 3 could sit on one side and 3 on the other, so small were these buses, and they were all predominantly black. I know I had a few runs to High Street on them, and how rough they were.

At that time I lived in Gillies Street with an old Aunt and my Uncle whom I was named after, I lived with them for a period of time. I shall never forget that little bus service, it was really wonderful.

This might be a bit different to these days too, now tell us Alf.

The question asked was what we may have had to eat when we came home from School. If it wasn't the evening meal, which was never always a substantial meal in those days because things were very, very tough generally and I feel that the vast majority of families in Northcote, and perhaps everywhere else for that matter, were really hard up, and it was incredible just how difficult things were for families to exist.

If we came home from School and we wanted something to eat, we would have a piece of bread and jam, or you might have a piece of bread and butter. If you had a piece of bread and butter, to flavour it up you might sprinkle a little bit of sugar over it.

What about the old pieces of bread and dripping, did you ever have those?

Yes, very much so, we certainly did. We had our share of bread and dripping. In fact in my earliest working years it was not uncommon to get up in the morning and have a bit of dripping on your toast, because butter wasn't all too cheap, even by the standards of the time, and it would certainly knock a hole in a pound note at

any time, butter. Butter was never always cheap. But this is what we did, and put a little bit of pepper and salt on it and flavour it up a little bit, and you know we used to really enjoy it, it was just like nectar from the gods, it really was, it was marvellous.

Now this is to do with health care.

Well in the period of time in my earliest memories, it wasn't a daunting aspect to be ill, insofar as the financial side of it, because you simply paid for whatever doctors you had to see or whatever treatment they gave you, and if it came to hospitalisation, well public hospitals were simply exactly what they were called, public hospitals, and that's where you went and you didn't pay in a public hospital.

Doctors. I do remember going to a Doctor myself in my earliest recollections, I'd be about 16 at the time, and the fee was 10 shillings and sixpence, which of course is \$1.05 today. Could you imagine how that would be today? That's the way it was, and even in those days Doctors were considered to be among the elite.

Private hospitals, they were not in existence in those days to the extent they are today, in fact it was nothing remotely like it is today with hospitals proliferating all over the place. We've got private hospitals almost in every suburb and some suburbs have got more than one private hospital. But those days there were a few, but not many, and you did have to pay when you went there, but I'm afraid that there were not very many people who would want to pay to go into private hospitals in those days.

In my earliest times - I left School at the age of 13½. Of course, in those days you didn't go on to higher things to the extent to which lads do today, because after all parents were not in a financial position to further the education to the extent that they are able today. This is one of the wonderful things of the time that I wish people could sort of go back and live in those times just for a few days to see what it was all about and they would probably think they are very, very lucky today and there would be less complaining in the world.

At 13½ years of age I managed to get a job at what was known as the Northcote Potteries. I started there in 1929, and those days of course they used to burn coal to burn all their ware. It was a very, very hard job, a very hot job in the summer, extremely hot, especially when you worked on the kilns, and it was a very, very cold job in the winter, because working in that building was a very, very cold place indeed to be, but we got through.

At the time when I first started on the job in 1929, I recall that the wages they were paying were 3 pounds 12 shillings a week, which in cold-blooded terms is \$7.20 by today's standards. I know you can't more or less bring those figures together in comparison without a complete understanding of the situation as it was, but I recall that my first wage that I got was 24 shillings a week at the age of 13½. You had that 24 shillings, you had to take that until you were 16, you never got a raise until you were 16.

What date would that have been?

This was in 1929 when I first started, 24 shillings a week, and I had to stay for 18 months, pardon me 2 years, and after 2 years I was to get a raise over that 24 shillings. But unfortunately, we had what was known as the 10% cut, all wages in Australia were cut 10% at that time, plus the fact that wages were snipped down through the dubious various methods they used for cutting wages, and when I turned 16 (I wouldn't be sure that it actually happened at the time I turned 16), but when it

was time for me to get more than 24 shillings a week, I was in fact at the age of 16 getting 21 shillings a week. Eventually when I reached 21, which was in 1936, I then started to get my full wage, which was still only 3 pounds 12 shillings a week.

So there was one thing about it, we never had galloping inflation. I suppose that was one consolation of the situation and times. But overall we were happy, we were certainly happy. We didn't have the high cost of running cars, and you'd go and buy something on hire purchase and you knew darn well that, provided you stuck with your job, you were going to be able to pay it off.

You might only be paying 1/6d. a week on something, but you could go to a place called E.L. Gates in Northcote in those days, and a man could go there and for 5 pounds he could get a complete rig out. It consisted of his shoes, his socks, his underpants, his singlet, shirt, tie, suit and hat. You could get the whole lot at E.L. Gates & Co., which was standing on the site where the Leader Budget office is today, as was Harry Bostock the hay and corn merchant.

And how much was the rig out?

Five pounds. Yes, you could go for 5 pounds and get a complete rig out. Of course in those days you could also go to the London Stores and get a suit of clothes for three pounds ten shillings with an extra pair of trousers, and that was supposed to be a really good quality suit of the times. But then again, we had a price cutting tailor in the City known as Myersons, and he used to advertise in all the local papers and also the Herald, the Sun, all the papers of the time, "Myersons suits - 2 pounds". He had a bit of a slogan - Tall, short, fat or thin, come to us, we'll fit you in.

If you were paying 3 pounds 10 shillings or so for a suit, that would be a whole week's wages.

It was.

It was about equivalent if you were paying a whole week's wages for a suit today.

As long as you got an extra pair of trousers, because it was considered the trousers wore out first anyway, so that was something of a bonus wasn't it?

At one stage, I can recall when we first came to Northcote, just below the Carters Arms, I feel looking back it was on the site of what was known as the Lyric Billiard Saloon, they used to have open air movies at that particular place, and you could go there and you could take your own chair if you liked. They had benches to sit on, but there again they used to have this white square painted up on the side of the shop wall, and they used to project the movie up onto that white wall.

Did you pay?

Oh yes, you had to pay to go in. I think it was only threepence to go in.

Did they rope the area off or something like that. How'd did they let the paying people in and the non-payers out?

Well that's exactly what they had. They had all sorts of pieces of wood up, it was really one of those countrified places that you might go to in the earlier days when you went to a circus where they put all sorts of silly barricades up to keep you out. I remember it quite well.

Tell me a little bit about the conditions of work at the Pottery when you were there as a young man.

Well looking back on my earlier years there, I'm sure that many people today that do labouring work would turn somersaults, because the work of those days was so much harder, and I really mean hard, compared to what they are today. When you took on labouring jobs in those times you had to do exactly that. The lifting was heavy and you had to work pretty fast and really hard, and the carrying of ware itself to racks, from the manufactured point to racks, was a very, very heavy job indeed and you might spend quite a period of time making up a certain batch of something and putting it on board. You might have say 4 or 5 items on one board, and one little trip or one false step and you broke that lot, you'd done a lot of damage.

Working in the kilns at the time, you had to go into the kilns to set them, naturally, and you also had to go in to draw them. The setting wasn't quite so bad, because at least the kilns had cooled down, but the drawing of these kilns, taking the burnt ware out, was an extremely hard and hot job, because the ware was not only hot but also you could get nasty cuts if you didn't wear heavy bags over your hands, which was the usual thing in those days. You used to cut a square with a little hole through it and put your hand through it, just like the bakers of years ago would handle their bread with bags, well you'd handle the hot ware with bags.

Of course wheeling the material to and fro from the kilns and to the yard, you used the old-fashioned barrows of the time. Somehow or other they were all heavy, and when they built barrows in those times they built them to last, they didn't build them to consider the individual who was going to use them, they really built them and they were heavy and hard to handle. Also the tyres were not inflated tyres, they were just iron wheels, often enough they were cast wheels, and I imagine there must have been times when some of those barrows they used, the wheel would have been as heavy as the rest of the barrow put together. It was an extremely hard job.

I must confess that after the years of the War things started to slowly improve and we had our pneumatic tyres on the barrows and we had barrows better designed, the load was carried by the wheel, not by the man, and you didn't have to do the heavy carrying. Say you had to carry stuff upstairs in the earliest days, well we had elevators manufactured that would take it up at a press of a button and the man up top, he'd just lift it off and rack it away.

Generally, work did improve. Wages improved certainly, conditions improved. I suppose this is conditions, the fact that you didn't have to do such heavy lifting. You had no such things in most of the factories of those days as showers and washrooms. You never had diningrooms in most factories of those days, you just fell down wherever you were, wherever you wanted. If it was a cold day you'd probably get out near the kilns and that was one advantage, you could sit near the kilns in warmth. There were times, I've seen fellows actually with big long toasting forks, they used to twist up some wire and make toast out of their sandwiches. It was quite fascinating.

Looking back at the times, we had a wonderful group of fellows working there. Somehow the chaps came and they stayed, but in the years after the War they came and went, day after day you'd see new faces, and it was not unusual to find that after 6 months you'd had around about 60% or 70% turnover of your labour force.

Why do you think that was?

I feel that peoples attitudes changed after the War and it looked like everybody was looking for something different all the time and looking for the end of the rainbow, but somehow many of those fellows would never have found it anyway. I feel that they were just desperately looking for something, but they would never have found it where I was.

Something about during the War Alf -

I feel that during the War there was a wonderful feeling of fellowship among people. People were closer, they helped one another more. There was a wonderful feeling that everybody wanted to help everybody else, and it was a predominant feature of our lives at the time. Nobody wanted to keep up with the Joneses, everybody just wanted to get on with the business and get that War over, and a wonderful partisanship in the way that people lived. It was really an amazing fact that Australia had a population of somewhere around about only 12½ to 13 million people and they were able to put that many people into the Services, it was really a marvellous achievement.

We shall never forget that most of the streets you went into in Melbourne had these signs up, little metal signs tacked on a post, "This is a War Savings Street", and somehow you look back and you feel a sense of wonder that people were able to get along so well and help one another so much, and have thoughts for people, because we were all in the same boat. But what a terrible change has taken over since the War.

Let's talk about a War Savings Street - that was when you used to take your money to the Post Office and it was like a bond wasn't it, a savings bond?

That's right, yes savings bond. In fact, very often enough you'd find that in streets you might find one person that would do the job of going from house to house doing the collecting of the money and also doing the writing, the detailed writing, concerning that money, and you would then find that this person would take it to the Post Office and you'd buy bonds.

And they'd bring them back to you then would they?

Oh yes, and that of course drew a certain amount of interest over a period of time, it wasn't great, but it was a little bit. It was just like putting money in the bank, but instead of putting it in the bank you were more or less putting it straight into the war effort and hence the fact that it became War Savings bond. It was a marvellous effort and there was a tremendous lot of money used for the War effort.

Were you ever involved in any of the A.R.P. work with air raid wardens?

No, myself I wasn't connected with the A.R.P. I saw them in action - when I say in action, that's hardly the word to use - I saw them practising for the possibility of having to bring it into a fact of life some time or other, but I myself I was in the Air Force. I joined the Air Force and I served my time out in the Air Force.

Of course after the War, it was rather a different thing altogether. Everybody was head down to try and do something about themselves. Housing was in a terrible state, it was extremely difficult to get a house, there were people looking everywhere and there were more people than there were houses.