

- Q. Now, we've got Miss B. who's come in from next door - Miss Lawrence - your christian name must be Bertha or Brenda or
- A. Beatrice.
- Q. Beatrice, you're 89?
- A. 89 Last July.
- Q. Now, how long have you lived in Northcote?
- A. Right from when I was three years old.
- Q. Now, what are your earliest memories of living here?
- A. Oh, I don't. .... go right back, save you the morbid .....
- Q. You lived in Perry Street? And, that must have been a house just about all out by itself then was it? Were there a lot of homes there then?
- A. The timber yard was over there. This was a, oh, I forget who's timber yard that was. We'll think of it in a minute anyway. Of course father was always away working, there was no work in those days, and they had to travel the countryside looking for work. Of course he was away, and I can just remember mum sitting on the verandah with a youngster.

Q. How many of you in the family?

A. There were six and she lost two. But there was no, she wouldn't have lost one only that she didn't have the money to pay for the doctor. He had pneumonia. This one was the first, the first one. There was no money. And mum was one of those that wouldn't have a thing if she couldn't pay for it. If you can't pay for it one day you can't pay for it the next. So, he died with pneumonia.

Q. How old was he?

A. I can remember sneaking out to the side gate and seeing the plumes on the - yes, aren't they different now? The plumes on the house and we were hunted round the back.

Q. What was it - the plumes on what?

A. On the hearse.

Q. Yes, what was that like?

A. Oh, they were white plumes - white for a baby and black for grown-ups. Like feathers, yes.

Q. Real feathers I suppose? Where did they put them?

A. Well, they were on the fixture on the top.

Q. Yes, would that have been a motor hearse or a horse-drawn?

A. Oh no, a horse-drawn I think - there wasn't any motor. And, the ground was over at the Northcote Cemetery and it was two guineas to bury them, the ground and the funeral. And then the other little one, she was a little girl, and she died and it was 17/6d. to inter her in with the other one. There's a difference in the price of today isn't it.

Q. What happened to the little girl then?

A. The little girl - oh, mum said she was just a weakling and died. But the price of these days, I kept the receipts there for a while, but when I was coming round here I had to thin out things a bit. You couldn't keep all the receipts and that there could you. They're good to keep.

Q. Well, did your parents live in Northcote for a long time?

A. Mother was at Ballarat - my father was from Alexandra; and then they, of course, they met, married.

Q. What did your father do - did he cut chicory did he, at?

- A. Yes, oh he was a farmer, a country boy, you know. He just took any job that he could get, but he finished up
- Q. Whereabouts was that?
- A. Down Cowes, Phillip Island. And.
- Q. Tell me about the water - what was that all about?
- A. We didn't have water laid on, we had no streets made, no light, no gas, no water, nothing, no sewer, nothing, just literally camped in the dust you might say.
- Q. Up here in Northcote?
- A. Yes - oh way down - 220 Mansfield Street, right down.
- Q. Yes - was that later on when you were a bit older was it?
- A. Yes, when I was about 10 or 11, 11 I suppose. 220 Mansfield Street, it was a fair way down. Things came later, but it was pretty hard to - I remember going to work, I'd started work at this time, I was only 14 and the day I turned 14 I was bustled off and the road wasn't made and I had to come out - it had been a wet day, a wet night, and I had to throw my shoes across to my mother and I threw them right in the middle of the quagmire and she had to get in and get them. But oh, it was
- Q. And where did you get your water from then?
- A. A tank, and then the Northcote water cart used to come down and fill any receptacle you had. They'd fill anything. If it was only a basin they'd put water in it for you. We used to take the washing down to the creek and we took our socks down there and wheel them down in the old pram and wash them down there, and hang them out on the bushes to dry, you know, to get the water out of them. Quite a number did that. There was nothing else to do when you didn't have the water. You were not allowed to turn the tap of the tank on - us kids. There'd be punishment if you did. Water was water and we only had the one tank and then my father put in a well after that and then that was used for the garden and that sort of thing.
- A. They used to get their water from the creek and he said that it was so easy to get fish from the creek. We were sitting down there one day, I'd come and visited him and there were plenty of fish swimming down the creek and they'd just catch it and they'd off and go for breakfast.
- Q. What year would that have been?
- A. Oh, I suppose he'd be approximately - it was Bea's age now - so (I'll just check)

Q. So they did that when he was a boy did they?

A. I'm not sure whether he was a boy or even older - it was, the way he spoke the Darebin Creek had only been contaminated of later years.

Q. Now Miss B. tells me that there was a big swamp at the back of her. Tell me about that big swamp again at the back of your house, with all the birds.

A. It was in the street, really, it was Mansfield Street and Flinders Street - that's where it was. Of course there were no houses within coo-wee of it.

Q. Which birds were there?

A. The swan and the plover and ducks and, of course, they went when the thing dried up.

Q. Now tell me about what your brother did with that swan.

A. Oh, he just - he, he shot it, and then I got it and plucked it; and used the fine feathers, small feathers (close to the body) for my bed because I had a very sunken-in bed, you know, I was very conscious of my figure, and I went flabby, it was born in me that sort of thing, to be conscious of yourself, and

.....

..... the Northcote, the swimming pool is on it now, that's where they made the Northcote Swimming Pool.

Q. That was a swamp too, was it?

A. Yes, two of them they had down there.

Q. Do you remember any orchards around when you were young?

A. No, they only had ..... . One thing I do remember was the night cart right opposite us and the night soiler used to just fold his hat ..... you know, come round and collect it and tip it on their garden up the top. Oh dear!

Q. What'd they do. They'd tip it on the garden.

A. Tip it on the crop - yeah.

Q. What the, all the collection of all round?

A. Yes. They had the contract for the business and they'd tip it on their land.

Q. And did they cover it over with dirt?

A. I don't know, I never went up to see.

They used to plough, furrow, and then they'd tip the cans out along and furrow and then plough the next furrow ..... with the top of the furrow and cover it that way.

Q. So that, you still got a bad smell from it did you?

A. Oh, yes, poisonous. We had a shop and you had to leave the door open, you know, for the shop and it used to come in, it was terrible.

Q. What sort of a shop did you have?

A. We had a grocery. Mother opened it to try and make things a bit better for us you know, and she, father was away working with his father at the time, and then he started doing a bit of building around - he built a few houses around down there and took that on, he thought he might make a bit more. Money was scarce in those days like - it's the same thing, it goes over and over, doesn't it.

Q. Do you remember any of the prices in your grocery store?

A. Sugar - 2 lb for fourpence halfpenny.  
Mother bought a house - it was two hundred pound.

Q. Whereabouts was that?

A. 19 Northcote Street, Northcote. That's in between Bastings and Mitchell Streets. Then we moved to Fairfield, like, when the shop was getting built, and

Q. Whereabouts did you live in Fairfield?

A. Oh, quite close to the school. When we moved over to the shop we had to walk from Mansfield Street to the Fairfield State School. That was a good step. We used to enjoy the stones - jumping the stones - basalt stones. They're very dear to built on that land, I believe, they all had to be hauled out before you could built on them, build on the blocks.

(Mal.) - Do you remember the horse tram in Station Street, Fairfield.

A. No, I don't remember that but I've heard about it, but I don't remember it. I can only remember Dixon's - oh, they had a lot of poultry and the garage and the sheep. They had lots of sheep. And the grower used to drive a cab. That's about all that, there weren't many people down there then.

(Mal.) - Do you remember the piggery up near Mansfield Street there, what's the name - Pender's Piggery.

A. No - a Piggery up in Mansfield Street.

No, no - Pender Street's named after Pender - he had a big pig farm up there. I thought you might have remembered Pender.

A. No, Pender? No, I remember Pender's Grove. And, then, where was a pig farm on that - low down?

Oh, somewhere down where the school is, I think, in Victoria Road - down from there, somewhere around that area.

Q. Tell me, what used you children do when you were teenagers, what used you do of a night time?

A. We weren't allowed out. I wanted to go to a Francis Wooller Club to learn - I was very good at sewing and fancywork, and I wanted to go and I wasn't allowed to go.

Q. Where did you want to go?

A. Kept at home - you weren't allowed out. It's an example to the others. I was the eldest and I had to set the example. And yet Ida, the youngest one, she'd go out and stop out all night, you know, down at her girlfriend's place in Clifton Hill, that sort of thing. Too hard on me, the eldest. I think that's wrong to do that. I had it in my fingers, and I felt afterwards I could have done something. There was a lady, she was always tripping backwards and forwards to England, and she wanted somebody when she came home to tig her sewing up. She'd kid you all the time, you know, to stay and mind her house. She wanted somebody and I was asked if I'd like to do it. I wasn't allowed to do anything but stop at home and set the example for the others.

Q. And where did you finally go out to work?

A. When did I finally. I went out at 14 and my word, I was at a boot factory ..... my keenness on sewing to put me to work at a boot factory. It nearly broke me up, it really did.

Q. Yes, and did you stay at the boot factory?

A. No, I only stayed there till Christmas and I begged my mother to let me leave and I came up to Gilpins - Oliver J. Gilpin - you might remember that name, and I came up there, but I had to work for half a crown a week there, and I was getting five shillings.

Q. Were you a sales person at Gilpins were you?

A. Sewing.

Oh the Gilpins - I was thinking of Gilpins stores.

Yes, that's right, the same Gilpin.

Q. Well, who were you sewing for - the owners of the?

A. Yes, you'd make them - 24 pairs of children's knickers with the embroidery around the bottom and pack it and sew your own button on - they'd do the buttonhole.

- Q. Yes, but what were they - what sort of a store was Gilpin's?
- A. Well, we worked - a factory, yes, he used to sit up on a box high like that watching you so that you - oh, you didn't waste a minute - you couldn't waste a minute because you had so much to do.
- Q. And how many people worked there?
- A. A fair number, about 30 I suppose. And, part of the time, a good part of the time was treadle machines and he put in power. You'd start here and you'd finish up over there by the end of the day. The machine had moved. You'd pull your chair around with it. And, then in the morning when you'd go in they'd be all in line again. By the time the day was finished you were back to any old way.

Wait on. Gilpin

Oliver J. Gilpin - he took over Foy & Gibson's country stores, and he employed an enormous amount of people - he was one of the biggest crooks in the game, and he was well known for it. The drivers and the trucks that he had they had to be there to the second, and he sacked people for no reason whatsoever, and he had the vilest name as an employer out, especially with the transport drivers. But, I had the tick-tack machines on his vehicles that said what speed they were going, when they stopped, how long they stopped and everything like that - was automatically recorded on them, and I suppose the place you worked in was probably owned by Foy & Gibson's too, was it, where was it?

- A. Oh, I never heard of Foy & Gibson's. It was up there in Normanby Avenue, where the bowling green, where the Thornbury Bowling Green is now - That was Gilpin's. The back part of it was Gilpin's factory and the house he lived in, of course.

Did he live there, too?

- A. He lived there in the house.

Did you ever see Mt. Martha that he - Mt. Mary, that one of the, the catholic church bought out in Balwyn from him? Bought from O'Gilpin. Gilpin built an enormous house, there was a swimming pool inside, and oh - a great

I didn't know he was ever in Northcote. That's interesting.

Q. Did he live on the premises near the factory where you worked?

A. Yes - it was a nice house in front. And then he built this back part and you worked, you slaved in there.

Q. And did you stay there for many years?

A. No, I got another job then in the City. I went in to Wright & Neal's, which is now Myers, and I was there see, before Myer took it over 'cause Wright & Neal's was a lovely shop.

Q. What was the name?

A. Wright & Neal's. The head of the showroom, Mrs. Coombe, she used to wear a long train and when she walked around the showroom - it was lovely to see it you know now, wish she'd come back again - and she'd swish this train around, you know, and she'd go up to the customer ..... it was lovely, lovely manner with it, you know, different to what it is now you know, you just go and pick something off the shelf and take it - nothing to it. But, oh, to see Mrs. Coombe in action - it was lovely.

Q. What were you doing there?

A. On the sewing still. I was a sewer, a born sewer.

Q. And when she was walking around swishing her train and that, what part of the store was she in?

A. In the underclothing <sup>clothing</sup>.

Q. So, when you said the customers, did the customers come into that part to buy - where you were sewing?

A. No, we had a place at the back, in Little Bourke Street, I suppose. That was our room where we were in, and I can remember I was put on the trimming of the underclothing <sup>clothing</sup> - night dresses and that sort of thing - and the others would seam them up. I was always one better. I sought of had it in my fingers, it was no good putting me into boots. I've always liked sewing.

Q. So, how long did you stay there at that place?

A. Then Myer took it over then, while I was there, and we stayed there. I stayed, we thought we'd leave, you know, we talked about when we'd leave but we couldn't think about working for a Jew - that was the part we didn't like, but anyway we overcame that - we stayed there. I stayed there for a long time, and then I got the itch to go somewhere else and I went next door to Buckley's and it was just as good as Myer's. And then I went up to George's. I found that if you had outside experience - other than Myer's - if you had a little bit of experience you got a job easier and better, but I finished up back at Myer's again. I came back again after George's. 'Cause George's had a lot of holidays see, you'd finish up on the Christmas and you wouldn't go back until ANA Weekend - which was a long spell.

Q. And you didn't get paid?

A. No - no pay. But you'd look out and take in work. I made seven evening cloaks, in velvet - velvet evening cloaks, one after the other, for different ones at the shop when I was out of work. They're hard to make at home. You haven't got the facilities for seaming and that sort of thing.

Q. No - and, what would the wages have been in those days at Myer's?

A. I never earnt any more than 12 guineas or 12 .....', something like that. 12 Pound was the wage for a full hand, and I got this