

26th September, 1981.

Speaking to Mrs. Margaret McDonald of 127 Clarke Street, Northcote

About 1922 my Grandfather, Tom Reeves, purchased the property at which I still live and have lived for about the last 53 years. He managed to come across the purchase of it, I think he paid 800 pounds in those days. The original man that built the property went broke, financially he couldn't finish the building of it and a Mr. Marny bought it from - I've forgotten the name of the original builder but I know he was a butcher that operated from the area of Northcote. Well Mr. Marny got him out of his difficulty and then my grandfather bought the estate here now, as I say for 800 pounds.

There's a little bit of an earlier part of the history there. My grandfathers father, which naturally is my great grandfather, Captain Thomas Reeves, was a deep sea diver and between the two islands of New Zealand Cooks Strait the S.S. Duneedan went down, and the Bishop of Duneedan was on board and all his family and all lives were lost. They included 14 passengers and a crew of 25 - 1865 was that year. Well Captain Thomas Reeves was the deep sea diver who extricated and removed all the bodies, that is my great grandfather. It was a little paddle steamer of 463 tonne vessel. Now a silver tea service was presented to Captain Reeves in his work in bringing all the bodies ashore, by the people of Duneedan more or less in thanks and recognition of what he had done, so all we have remaining of that tea service is the tea pot sitting on the kitchen table at the moment. The other parts have been lost over the years.

Going back to my grandfather, he died about 30 years ago, and then the property became my Mothers, Alice Woolford who was originally a Reeves. Mum passed away in 1961 and we are still living in the property and here we are today.

I commenced schooling at our famous Helen Street Northcote School and stayed there until about sixth grade and then I transferred across the Westgarth Central, and remained there until the eighth grade, as it was known in those days, and eventually finished schooling at Martin Hall, after which I took up a Secretarial Course and I think my first job was in the second year of the war, 1940. About the time when the old cable trams that use to run down Ruckers Hill and sometimes there you could almost walk faster than them. As kids, I can remember we use to get pieces of lead and put on the tram line and when the tram ran over it there'd be a devil of a bang and we got our laughs out of it there. Incidentally, I think that in those days we got more fun out of simple little things and the children of these days are missing so much. We didn't look for great things in those days. We had good clean fun. All we had as far as transport was concerned, if we were lucky, is a push bike and we'd push from Northcote up to South Morang on a Sunday and have a grand old time. I went to the Presbyterian Church and we had our yearly Sunday School picnics at South Morang and I remember one of our mates there at the Sunday School made a sandwich of a lizard, he found little tiny lizards and put this in between two pieces of bread and butter and another kids ate it. So we got a little fun that way.

Then I use to travel of course to work. The first job I had was in the Education Department as Secretary to Professor Osborne, who has since passed away many years ago. I use to travel by train from the Merri Station to Jolimont and walk through the beautiful Treasury Gardens, to the Parliament Place where the offices are. I think the first fare I ever paid was threepence halfpenny and the last time I remember travelling on a train before the decimal currency came in, it was only then about one and threepence, of course, look at the exorbitant way the prices have gone up.

What would your wages have been in those days, do you remember?

Yes, the first wage I got was three pound, twelve and sixpence and I think that I managed to do more on that three pound, twelve and six or save more maybe because we didn't ^{use} so many things in those days. And of course, you can't really go back and compare yesteryear with today but my life as a child is something that I will always remember, I had so much fun. It's just that I would love the kids of today to have a little taste. We'd go to the Northcote Picture Theatre up here in High Street, and it was about sixpence to get in and then apart from that we had the lovely Plaza Theatre further up in Northcote where all the live artists would be. You can ^{go} back to Stella Lamond and her daughter Tonie and Helen Reddy, the sister. I can remember them as kids when they started off their Theatrical life at the Plaza Theatre and it was good clean fun. Then we can go back to where our famous magnificent Comedian Roy Reen that was on the Tivoli, ^{and} M. McKacki, well my god, I mean you'd just laugh from the minute you got in there, he didn't even have to say anything, the expressions would get you going sort of thing.

Well there's another part of life that's missing now for the youngsters, unfortunately. Then we'd dance. We'd go dancing as we got older. I made my debut up at the Northcote Town Hall and I use to dance 5 to 6 nights a week.

Locally?

No, we go to the ^{Tockadeero} Tockadeero, which was opposite the old Glasi ? we go to Legats at Prahran, and Merri Palais down here and Sunday nights we'd be at the Northcote High School, Heidelberg Town Hall, there was Moonee Ponds Town Hall, there was plenty of dances you could take your chance. The war years were on and we went through the war there, we had some, mind you we had a few little love, you know friends that we met sort of thing and the Americans and what have you. I was engaged to an Air Force fellow and then that fell through and then I eventually married the man that I had known all my life from Ford Street, Northcote, Ron McDonald. We've been married 32 years. As I say out earlier life, we didn't seem to look for what the, I don't know what they're looking for today, I really don't.

During the war years, 1939 - 1945, we were forced, or actually the Government introduced ration tickets there and we'd purchase like the tea and sugar, which were very very short and you had to have these ration tickets to be able to buy it. Now also you had to use ration tickets for clothing, for materials, anything that we wore. What say one person didn't want in the way of food stuffs, we'd swap over tickets. You might ^{use} some of my clothing ones and I might want some of your food coupons and that's the way we managed to get by. Of course there was a fair bit of black marketing went on and you could buy sheets of ration tickets in certain suburbs there. It didn't get out of hand there and people realized that they had to share what ever they could amongst them and we also had big war relief depots that were situated. The Education Department had several there, I use to work one from the Cambridge Street, Collingwood School and all the children would knit balaclavas and all wool pullovers and soxs and so forth and we'd pack them up into great big bails and they'd be either sent to the Australian Comforts Fund or the Red Cross, so Australia did her part as best she could through the children and their families to assist our men that were overseas.

Incidentally, my father, Jack Woolford served in the first war. He left Richmond, Tasmania when he was 16 and landed on Golipolli and when from 1914 to 1918 and he earned the honour of the Military Cross, which I still have and very proudly display to anybody that's interested, and I wear it on Anzac Day in memory of my father and he also served in the second war in the Air Force, but for not as long a time, I think just 3 years. So he made me feel very proud for what he did for his country.

During the war, we use to travel by train, as I mentioned before and one was not afraid, I use to have to be home by half past 11 on the week nights and half past twelve I was allowed out on a Saturday night.

How old were you when those restrictions were put on you?

I was in my teens, say from about 16 even till the age of 20 and I realised that if I didn't keep those hours, I was not permitted to go to the dances that I wanted to and I had restrictions placed on me so in honour to go and enjoy my life as a teenager I had to abide by the rules of my parents and grandparents and if I didn't well naturally I was barred from going. I had to take the consequences. But going back to the trains, we use to come home on our own, or perhaps say two girls together. Half past eleven at night and I'd get off the Station here at Merri and I'd walk there and there was never a fear of anybody sort of, you weren't worried as to whether you were going to be attacked or that, there was not the crime or the thoughts of anything like that. Then sometimes, we'd miss that train and I'd have to ring and say that I'd missed the train and I thought oh my god when I got home what's going to happen and we'd come home on the all nighter. Well we'd walk from the Exhibition Buildings and there was never a fear. Now I would be honest with you, I would not travel in a train of a night time and I'm a little bit hesitant to go in the day time. A tram I will, fortunately, I travel by car mostly and I'm in the position to be able to do so but I certainly would not travel by train. I've trained my daughter, she's now married, that if she wants to use public transport - a tram.

So unfortunately now, these sadistic things that are now going on, you're frightened to walk down the street at night time really you are. I don't know where the crime originated from. It's a pity.

In Clarke Street here, I think the number would be approximately 159 or 161. Many years ago, Marie Pitt use to live there, and she was a famous poetess and she wrote one that stands out in the mind now called Spider Orchards *Orchids* and that was featured in the school readers for years and years and I should imagine many thousands of children learnt that poem. Also living with her was Bernard O'Dowd another famous poet at the time, going back let's say 40 years perhaps. Both of them of course have passed on and then two doors up from here at the moment we have a set of 28 flats. Prior to that many years ago there was a beautiful residence it was owned by Councillor Hughes, he lived there with his son and daughter. Councillor Hughes was also a Reverend Minister at the Church of Epiphany which has since become a Lutheran Church, I think, it was situated on top of Ruckers Hill, a beautiful isle and a magnificent leadlight windows there at the end of the isle, I think it's in Bayview Street. Any old Northcote person would know the old Church of Epiphany but of course, Reverend Hughes has since passed away, many years ago but he was a very famous and a beautiful old man that never had a hard word to say about anybody and always had time to stop and talk to children and old people alike, a beautiful man.

We use to have a wonderful meeting place for a lot of teenagers and youngsters alike and it was the old Northcote Baths. Now the Northcote Baths had a cement bottom and sides and when you first went in there you'd say - my god what a dirty looking place this is. Well I can assure you that those baths were scrubbed daily with long brushes and these long poles there, and the man that use to run the baths was a Mr. Fogg, known to everybody, old Joe Fogg . He would have taught thousands of children to swim and we had mixed bathing and what have you but there was never anything out of line and Fogg as well as being a brilliant swimmer, and I don't know how many people he saved from drowning, had eyes like a hawk and if there was any sign of misbehaviour you were stopped immediately and told to behave yourself or get out and leave the baths. As I say there wasn't very much money in those days there, and we use to go up and we'd spend hours and hours. A few great swimmers came from there. My husband was a very good diver and he was trained by old Fogg to do two and a half summersaults and all that and we spent a lot of wonderful hours up there. Threepence was I think the most I ever paid.

Sunday morning when we'd go up and help old Foggy clean the baths, naturally we'd get in for nothing, so he had plenty of willing helpers there because they'd get their swims free and that use to be open from about 6.00 Sunday morning till 12.00, but it was a lovely old place.

We had a famous grocery store, chain of groceries actually - Olders. There was a lovely grocers store down here on the corner of Charles and Park Street. Mr. Radcliffe was the grocer there. He was there for years and years and we use to go down and take our grocery order down there and he'd say come back at 4.00 and it will all be ready, but if it was too big he'd deliver - no charge. Always in that grocery order there would be a bag of boiled lollies or a bag of broken biscuits and they were beautiful. We also use to buy the milk in milk cans, billy cans, and I use to go down to the shop opposite, my grandmother would give me sixpence and I had to get a quart of milk, 2 pints of milk and it was sixpence a quart. Well I use to get a pint and a half, which was fourpence halfpenny, not every day and I would spend the other penny h'penny on lollies, white knights and big beautiful licorice blocks and so forth and being the silly little fool I was I would come back to the front garden and put the billy can under the tap and fill it up to the quart line and my grandmother caught me one time, well heavens above I never did it again. I got belted up that path. So we did very nasty little things like that there.

Then we use to shop in High Street, Northcote, which to me was always a beautiful shopping centre. You could get anything. They came from all over town to shop at Northcote. It was known as a very very good shopping centre. It's changed drastically. We use to have lovely delicatessens. Old Johnson use to run the Deli there for years and years and years and his family too. You'd go in a buy your ham and beef and he always gave you a little piece of ham or something like that. You got little tit bits in every shop you went to. Opposite the Northcote Theatre there was a beautiful milk bar - Hawkins - for threepence we could get a double ice block that was absolutely chock a block and made of pure fruit and cream on the top of it that was set hard into it, so at interval at the pictures we didn't have money to buy chocolates, we'd go over and get these lovely ice blocks and he was there for years and everybody knew Hawkins Milk Bar and unfortunately he's gone and they don't make the ice blocks that they use to make those days. It was beautiful.