

## **CITY OF SYDNEY**

### **COMMERCE AND WORK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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**Interviewee:** Nick David

**Date:** 26 April 2006

**Place:** Hunters Hill

**Interviewer:** Margo Beasley

**Recorder:** Analogue cassette digitised

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## **TRANSCRIPT**

0.00 **MB:** This is an interview with Mr Nick David. It's taking place at his home at Hunters Hill. The interview is for the City of Sydney Oral History Programme, interviewer is Margo Beasley, the date is the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2006.

So, Nick, I'm actually here today to talk to you about your shop in Woolloomooloo primarily which is a kind of an all-purpose grocery and liquor shop. Is that correct?

**ND:** Yes, we class it as a convenience shop.

**MB:** Right.

**ND:** Yes, just - - -

**MB:** That's the modern term, isn't it?

**ND:** Yes. Well, we're not a full-fledged supermarket and, yes, just a bit of everything.

**MB:** But you sell fruit and vegetables - - -

ND: Fruit and veg.

**MB: - - - fresh food and meat?**

ND: Fresh meat, groceries, liquor, videos, yes.

**MB: Do you hire the videos out and DVDs or you sell them?**

ND: Yes, we hire them and then rehire them, that's right, yes, yes.

**MB: Right. So, you hire them from some other source?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: But your shop, although I think that shop's been there about thirty years now, is that right?**

ND: Just on thirty, yes, yes.

**MB: But your family's actually been in the area for a very long time, is that correct?**

ND: Yes. In 1927 they moved into the 91 Forbes Street which is just behind us where we are now. We're now in Charles Street and the old shop went through from Forbes Street to Charles Street, yes.

**MB: But is there any connection between those two sites in a physical way or is that sort of coincidence?**

ND: No, it's just when the [NSW Department of] Housing did their development down there. They said "Well, this shop's not big enough to really do a good shop" and the building we're in now was a derelict building. They said "You do the building up and you can use that to do the liquor and the groceries", yes, yes.

**MB: And the shop now is called Nick's - - -**

ND: 'Nick's till Midnight'.

**MB: Nick's till Midnight, yes - - -**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: - - - which is a good name and I suppose indicates that it's open seven days a week.**

ND: Till midnight, yes, from 6.00 am till midnight.

**MB: From 6.00 am till midnight.**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: Very long hours.**

2.00 ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: So if we can just sort of track back then to 1927, how did your family – this would have been your father, was it, who had the place in Forbes Street?**

ND: My father and his brothers, his family. They lived at Abermain, up in the Hunter, in the coalfields near Kurri and they moved down to there; they bought that shop in 1927.

**MB: Why did they leave the coalfields?**

ND: Well, I guess it was, they weren't miners and I guess there was no – you know, the future was in the city.

**MB: So, really to improve their circumstances, is that what you mean?**

ND: That's right, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: So what were they doing on the coalfields?**

ND: Well, my dad used to go around in a horse and cart, selling haberdashery, but I'm not sure what the others did at all but their dad was a hairdresser, he was a barber and I don't think he did anything up – like, they just came down to just to, you know, try and start a business, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: And so like it was more or less a kind of a random thing that they ended up in Forbes Street in Woolloomooloo?**

ND: I guess so, yes, yes.

**MB: They didn't have any particular connections to the place?**

ND: No, no, no, no connections at all, no, no, yes.

**MB: And so what was the business in Forbes Street then, what did they do?**

ND: That was just a corner shop, which they gradually got another one and another one. I think they ended up with about eight, I think it was. They had shops in Surry Hills and Erskineville, I think Oxford Street, and the different brothers would manage them or they would have managers.

3.55 And they sort of went into wholesaling in Surry Hills; in Buckingham Street at Surry Hills they first went into the wholesaling groceries with, I think, just their mates and their own shops, buying in bulk and gradually they got more into the wholesaling out of the shops and then they got into – I remember when I was young the Four Square stores and all that, they got to supply them and other stores called Foodlands and different ones and it gradually built from that.

**MB: And that developed into a very large business, didn't it?**

ND: That's right, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: What was it called?**

ND: It was Davids Pty Ltd which changed to Davids Holdings and then they started supplying Grace Bros and David Jones and all those grocery shops when they had grocery shops and then at present it's owned by the South African Metcash, which is the IGA.

**MB: So they bought them out, did they?**

ND: Yes, yes. My family haven't been in it since 1966.

**MB: Is that right?**

ND: Well, my immediate family, my cousins and my uncles ran it from then on, yes.

**MB: Your cousins and your uncles ran it?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: I see. And so it wasn't a matter of active choice for you not to be involved in that and to have your own business?**

ND: Oh, well I was involved up till then; I've worked there, yes.

**MB: You were until that time?**

ND: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, yes, I worked there and then when my dad pulled out then I went with my brother in Oxford Street and bought a liquor store - actually in Burton Street and moved around to Oxford Street where the Liquorland is in Oxford Street, yes, we worked there.

**MB: So, why did you go into liquor as opposed to grocery items?**

ND: Well, I don't know. My brother decided he thought he'd buy a liquor store and I thought "Oh, well, I'll go with him". See, it was his shop, I

just worked for him, and neither of us knew anything about alcohol, neither of us drank.

6.10 But it was different days; it was in the days when they were called – I think it was called a ‘Two Gallon Licence’. You had to buy two dozen sort of wines, you couldn’t just buy a single bottle and it was all funny rules which have since all changed.

**MB: About what year would that have been?**

ND: Well, that wasn’t long after he got into it. Well, 1966 I remember because he bought it, you know, in the decimal currency days when he started in Burton Street.

**MB: On that day?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: On the introduction – 14<sup>th</sup> of February.**

ND: February 1966, yes.

**MB: So he didn’t have to do the changeover with the till.**

ND: No. And it must have been a couple of years and then it went into – they loosened up the laws and let you sell single bottles and stuff. Before that it was in funny amounts; I think it was two gallons. Why, I don’t know. That was an old law that – you know, the old shops like Derrin’s and some of the old grocery stores, that’s where all the licenses came from, they used to have liquor licence and grocery and then when the single bottle came in they all got rid of the groceries and just made it bottle shops.

**MB: I see.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: So, was it hard to get that kind of a licence?**

ND: In those days, no, he just bought out a fellow who just happened – the fellow wanted to sell and he just happened to - when we’d finished at Davids Pty Ltd and he just happened to get onto that shop and just buy it, yes, yes.

**MB: So there were no actual restrictions on the number of liquor licenses that were around, they weren’t very keenly fought over?**

7.57 ND: No. No, no, no, because of the funny way you had to serve alcohol. Yes, you had to, as I said, do it in these special amounts. I’m not sure now if it was dozens or two; it might have been a dozen mixed,

you could do a dozen mixed, it had to be a dozen – it was very strange.

**MB: So you were there for a while with your brother?**

ND: Yes, with my brother for a couple of years, yes. And then when we knew this development was going through in Woolloomooloo we thought it'd be a good place to move a licence, so we actually moved over - - -

**MB: This is the development at Woolloomooloo that everybody thought was going to happen - - -**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: - - - this was the big Sid Londish?**

ND: That's right, yes, Sid Londish.

**MB: Big commercial and residential development.**

ND: That's right. Well, we already had the shop in Forbes Street; my auntie and uncle were living down there and they were keen to get out and we thought "Well, we can move the liquor licence in there and I'll go down there and do that".

**MB: So liquor licenses were moveable, were they? They didn't have to attach to a particular site, you could just take it with you when you went?**

ND: You had to prove a need, there was a need in the area but it was a bit tricky because the licence that we got came from the Haymarket because the city markets had moved out to Homebush and Flemington there and so there were licenses, all the licenses that were at the markets, some of them moved out there, some of them didn't. And we happened to buy one and we had to prove that the licence was no longer needed there and when you do that then you can move it to somewhere and then we moved it down to Woolloomooloo.

**MB: So how do you prove that it's no longer needed?**

ND: It just ran at a loss. It ran at a loss for six months and then you go back to court.

10.03 **MB: Right, so that demonstrates - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - in some sort of legal, formal way that there's not enough customers?**

**ND:** That's right, yes. Yes, there wasn't any more need - well, the markets had moved and so we moved it into Woolloomooloo. And that was all happening at the same time as Sid Londish was buying up and they were, you know, getting ready for the development down there and they said "Well, if we're going to do a development, if you've got a licence and that you can do the licence and the shop. We need shops and we need licenses", so they had no problem with the developers, yes.

**MB: So that was quite an easy thing to negotiate at the time then that you might go in there?**

**ND:** Yes, yes.

**MB: There weren't any real impediments?**

**ND:** Well, there was. The AHA weren't really happy with moving a licence into there.

**MB: Why was that? That's the Australian Hotels Association?**

**ND:** Yes, so when we moved it into there we couldn't actually use it, it was just sitting there, dormant, then you've got to prove there's a need, which is another step to make a case. And so it had sat there for a few years and then when the Whitlam government came in and the Wran government came in and they gave the Housing Commission that big area to develop the Housing were keen to put a grocery shop and they said "If you do the grocery shop we'll back you up for the liquor which gives you all the information you need", you know, about the need; they had plans and everything already done.

**MB: So they can demonstrate that you're going to have a population of a certain numbers - - -**

**ND:** That's right, yes, yes.

**MB: - - - and so commercial requirements?**

**ND:** Was all going to happen, yes, yes, yes.

12.01 **MB: Before we get to that period, though, I think you negotiated with Sid Londish for quite a long time, didn't you?**

**ND:** For a few years, yes.

**MB: Can you tell me a bit about that, what that was like, how you went about it?**

ND: Well, we used to just go and we used to just call into the office and say hello. Well, it wasn't necessarily with Sid Londish; there were other people in the office and they all knew who you were and what you're doing and you'd just say, "Well, you know, what's happening?" and they'd say "Oh, just sort of hang around", so we just hung around. And then it wasn't – at the time there were a lot of protests with the Woolloomooloo Action Group and that about the development and a lot of the people living in there weren't paying any rent, so - - -

**MB: They were squatting, were they?**

ND: Squatting, yes.

**MB: Because at this stage when the development was going to happen, before the development happened the area got pretty run down, I suppose, did it?**

ND: It did, yes. Well, the railway had gone through before that and that had cut a great swathe through and when that was going up all the hippies moved into the places, into the empty places, and then they were pulled down and as places become vacant for Londish development they'd just move into each place, as it became vacant they'd just move in and paint it all up in psychaedelic and they'd paint the whole street. It was quite good, actually.

**MB: Was it?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: Yes, tell me a bit about that.**

ND: Well, there was no violence or anything like that. They were all, you know, "Make love, not war" and all that sort of stuff and some of them were weekend hippies, some of them were full time hippies, it was all different kinds.

**MB: They weren't local people?**

ND: No, they just moved into there.

**MB: Yep.**

ND: Yes, and there was the Woolloomooloo and there was another lot down in Barkham Avenue and they had an Olympic Games.

14.03 **MB: Did they?**

ND: Yes, it was really good.



**MB: Yes, tell me about that.**

ND: And they put on all these – the street behind us in Charles Street they did the whole street up and there was sort of a group that a lot of the buildings were warehouses and that and people were artists and one fellow would make big doughnuts and just keep making these huge doughnuts – I don't know what he was going to do with them – another fellow collected chairs from old theatres and stuff and these places were full of all this gear. And so to put on the Olympic Games they put all the chairs up and down the street and they had a barber chair at each end for the umpires and they had all really good games, you know, for kids and the older ones and like they'd have a marathon where these blokes'd have to go run 'round and they'd have to go to different pubs and buy a bottle of beer and come back and, you know, things like that.

**MB: Did they have to drink it?**

ND: Well, then they'd have a party afterwards and they'd use the beer for that anyway.

**MB: I see.**

ND: But that was their marathon and when they ran from Barkham Avenue up to Woolloomooloo the fellow run up, he had a broomstick with a jam tin on it with a candle in it, that's his Olympic torch and on his shoes he had all these bottle tops, upside down bottle tops on his feet and clicking up and down and - - -

**MB: Jangling.**

ND: - - - everyone followed him up the thing.

**MB: Where's Barkham Avenue?**

ND: You go – well now you go through the tunnel and go down to Rushcutters Bay and you turn right there at Rushcutters Bay and Barkham Avenue runs in behind there; it's now all car places and that.

**MB: Right. Yes, I know the place.**

ND: Where the BMW places and that are.

**MB: Yes, I know the place, yes.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: So there was a separate group of hippies living there?**

15.49 ND: There was a whole group of hippies living down there and they still had this common bond, yes. And they had their outfits, they had green and gold or something and the ones up on the side of the building we had, there was a big sign that had been there for years, Speedy Welding with a big S, and so they had the big Ss like Superman Ss and they were the two competing groups, yes.

**MB: The two, right, yes. So it was really well organised then?**

ND: Oh, yes, they had bands and everything and went right through to the night.

**MB: Not like the usual image that you get of hippies being sort of disorganised, hopeless, dopeheads who couldn't organise anything?**

ND: No, no, no, no. Most of them went on to – a lot of them were students, architectural students and stuff, and some of them have since come back; they're now architects and lawyers and all sorts of things. Yes, and it was really good. You know, like they had this dog that used to come 'round to the shop every morning and when it'd come 'round you'd just get a tin of Pal or whatever it was and just roll it out. It'd grab it and run out ..... and then whoever come 'round to pay for it, pay for the tin and one day it ran away and the Governor General's – the governor – from Kirribilli, what's that the Governor or the Governor General?

**MB: Governor General.**

ND: His wife brought it back in the Roller [Rolls Royce], brought the dog back.

**MB: The dog back?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes, down Charles Street in the Roller and it was really good.

**MB: Did the dog have a name?**

ND: Earth, I think it was called.

**MB: Earth?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: A very hippie name.**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: So, you were not a part of that kind of hippie community though, you were sort of like an observer?**

ND: Oh, no, no, yes, no.

**MB: Yes.**

ND: No, no.

**MB: But you would have been quite young then.**

ND: Oh, yes, I was – don't know, twenties, you know, twenties, yes. Yes, it was good, good fun, yes.

**MB: Can you remember other incidents like that, the life around the place? And we're still talking here about the period before the Housing Department had taken over?**

17.57 ND: Yes, yes, yes, before that. The kids, though, there's funny kids around there. In those days the kids used to all have paper runs and stuff - - -

**MB: Yep.**

ND: - - - you know, and you sort of knew them all, they'd all stand on different corners, selling their papers, and they were good kids. And anyway they'd all come down, they all had big boots on, big work boots, and I said "Oh, why do you have the work boots?" and they used to go up the tunnel and all the construction workers used to just sit there and fit on a pair of boots to see which size fit them and they'd all come out with a pair of boots and they'd line you up and think they were - - -

**MB: Was this the Kings Cross tunnel, is that what you're talking about?**

ND: Doing the railway tunnel.

**MB: The railway tunnel, I beg your pardon.**

ND: The railway tunnel, yes. They were building the - - -

**MB: When they were building the Eastern Suburbs Railway?**

ND: Yes, the viaduct there, yes.

**MB: The viaduct, yes.**

ND: Yes, yes, yes. They used to go along that of a night and bomb people with water bombs and stuff, the kids, yes, yes, but they weren't destructive sort of kids, you know, they had a bit of - - -

**MB: No, it wasn't antisocial.**

ND: No. Well, I suppose they thought it was at the time for getting water bombed if you're coming out of a restaurant but because there were no lights up there and it was pitch dark, you wouldn't know where it was coming from. But it was good, yes, yes.

**MB: Anyway, negotiations went on with Sid Londish for quite a long time and then what changed?**

ND: Well, then one day he said "They're moving most of these people out, all these hippies and everyone else", they were all getting their eviction orders and they told me to sort of "Just stay there but don't keep a lot of stock", you know, which was really hard.

**MB: What's that supposed to mean?**

ND: Well, I don't know, I don't know, I wasn't really sure. So, I had another friend of ours who was going to start a store at Collaroy, wanted to do a store. And he'd been in Kings Cross, he had the place called the 'Copenhagen', the Copenhagen used to be up in Kings Cross.

20.11 **MB: Was it, what, a coffee shop?**

ND: Well, it was a building that down the bottom had coffee shops and I think they had nightclubs and stuff in the old days and more the pre-, it was pre-Vietnam time. And he wanted to go up and do a deli and he said "Have you ever done a deli?" and I said "No, I've never done a deli". So he said "Well, you're not doing much here, so if you come up there for a while", he said, "I'll teach you deli". And so I went up there for a little while, while we were waiting for something to happen and then in the meantime is when you had the change of government and everything and they just then given it to the Housing Commission, the whole area, resumed parts and that's when we went back in then and so it was - - -

**MB: So, when you were at Collaroy you weren't actually in that business, you were just working for your friend?**

ND: No, I was a partnership with him, yes.

**MB: You were a partnership in the business and you learned like delicatessen stuff?**

ND: Trying to learn deli, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: Which is a bit different to liquor, isn't it?**

ND: Well, I was doing groceries and that too, yes.

**MB: You were already doing groceries?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: So how was delicatessen different?**

ND: Well, just, you know, doing deli, all the different meats and how to do it. He used to make stuff and cook stuff and that, you know. I wasn't a very good student, I don't think, but anyway try and learn a bit about it and he was, you know, he was a Danish fellow and they like cooking and doing all the different sorts of things; he was a good cook and everything.

**MB: And so this would have been the very early '70s, I suppose?**

ND: That's right, yes. No, yes, yes, yes, it was, yes.

22.02 **MB: So in 1972 what happened was the change of government that you've just referred to - - -**

ND: That's right, yes.

**MB: - - - that is to a Labor government federally - - -**

ND: That's right, yes.

**MB: - - - which was the first time in a very long time and that changed everything.**

ND: That changed the whole thing, yes, yes.

**MB: Can you just tell me a bit about that, what happened?**

ND: Well, a lot of the area, some of it was owned by the federal government, some by the navy, some by the council.

**MB: City of Sydney?**

ND: City of Sydney Council owned flats and the state government had some too and then the developers and apparently someone from the federal government, they just chopped out an area and said "That's all going to housing", which covered all the federal, council and all that and part of the developer's properties which our shop came under and said "That's all now going to be housing". And so with that we went to the Housing and said "Right, you know, we're here. We'd

like to get this licence going and do that". And they would have really liked the bigger store, like a Franklins or a Woolies or a Coles but the area wasn't big enough for something like that so they said "Well, you do the groceries and we'll help you with the liquor, get the liquor going" so that's exactly what happened.

**MB: So you were the right man in the right place effectively?**

ND: Yes, that's right, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: You were already there.**

ND: We were actually before the development which is a bit hard.

**MB: You were already - - -**

ND: Yes, because we'd set up a shop and the only place done at that time, by the time we'd done that was Rae Place, that was the only thing that had been developed. So, a lot around us was just vacant blocks of ground, so it was a bit hard surviving.

**MB: Yes.**

24.00 ND: We had to run on a shoestring and they gave us good rent allowance to do that too, and then as they increased the people they increased the rent again, yes, and that was part of the deal, that if we did the building - and it was pretty derelict - that they would give us an allowance on the rent till things got operating and then each year it'd be more and more housing.

**MB: Business, yes.**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: So then the Woolloomooloo Resident Action Group, I think was probably around when Sid Londish was there - - -**

ND: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: - - - and pretty active then.**

ND: It was, yes.

**MB: But it was also active after the Labor Party came to power, wasn't it - - -**

ND: Yes, they kept on going, you know.

**MB: - - - because they were the main kind of negotiating body?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: So, what can you tell me about that? Can you tell me a bit about what they were like in the Sid Londish days?**

ND: Yes. Well, there was a core body of people. There were the Leonards, there's Gerry and Nellie Leonard and their son, Stan.

**MB: Yes. Now, the Leonards, they're both dead now, I think, aren't they, the senior Leonards?**

ND: They're both, yes, yes.

**MB: Yes, what can you tell me about them?**

ND: Gerry was a wharfie and Nellie had lived her whole life down in Woolloomooloo and they were very staunch supporters of any local – you know, of Woolloomooloo and with Gerry and Nellie they were very loyal people too. You know, if you're doing the right thing they were very loyal to you, they were very - - -

**MB: Were they?**

ND: Yes, yes, they were really good with me.

**MB: O.K. Can you tell me a bit more about that? Why were they loyal to you?**

ND: I had a bit of a problem with \*\*\*\*\* and - - -

26.05 **MB: \*\*\*\*\* ?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: What was that about?**

ND: Well, he objected to us selling alcohol because of where the Talbot was and stuff like that.

**MB: The Talbot Hotel?**

ND: The Matthew Talbot Hostel.

**MB: The Matthew Talbot Hostel, right. So, what, he thought that there'd be too much alcohol for the old guys?**

ND: He thought that all the ills of the area stemmed from Nick's shop - - -

**MB: Right.**

ND: - - - and that if that didn't have alcohol, well then there'd be no problems in that area.

**MB: Because he lived down there, didn't he?**

ND: He was living down there in Forbes Street.

**MB: I think he had a big warehouse redevelopment or something.**

ND: Yes, that's right, yes, but as the police pointed out there's twenty two licenses within six hundred metres of us. There's four hotels down the bottom and two up the top and stuff and we'd made an agreement that we wouldn't open our alcohol till eleven, which is an hour after the hotels open, and we wouldn't try and undercut any pricing or anything like that but anyway he's a pretty powerful man and pretty forceful but - - -

**MB: So how did he try to make that happen, what was available to him to do that?**

ND: Just complain to the Licensing and to Licensing Magistrates and to the Police Commission and to the Premier and to – you name it – and he also had a good ally in \*\*\*\*\* lived down there.

**MB: Did he?**

ND: He was a minister. He gave us a hard time but anyway we got over it all and everyone's happy.

**MB: And the residents supported you?**

28.01 ND: They supported me, yes, through.

**MB: And so why did they support you, what did they like about you?**

ND: Well, they knew you because you've been living there a long time amongst them and they know if you're fair dinkum and if you're, you know, not just telling a yarn. I mean, they lived amongst it and they could see the problems we'd had with alcohol and what we do. I mean, I could knock a person back from drink, say "I'm sorry, I can't serve you", he just goes outside, gives it to someone, they come in, so that type of thing so you're all right. And swap it over. You can't follow everyone out and see where they are and what – you know what I mean? And that's just one simple way, you know, that it worked and things and they'd seen you do that and things, you know, and responsible to the kids and stuff like that, not serving under age and so they were very loyal and really helped us out. Not only that but all sorts of things; you know, you have troubles and that and always very loyal, yes.



**MB: And they were mainstays, the Leonards, in their resident action groups.**

ND: Yes, yes, and there was the Malvina, John Malvina, and brother and his wife. They were with the Leonards, they helped them with the thing; they were very good and they'd been in the area all their life. And then there was – oh, there was heaps, heaps of other – you know, lots of other ones. There were some people in the private sector over in Crown Street – I'm just trying to think of her name – Mrs Wilkinson, Nora Wilkinson, and I just can't think of the names of some of them but there were a lot of them.

**MB: No, that's O.K. Mrs Wilkinson, though, she was part of the action group?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes, yes, these were all people in the action group and strong people in the action group, yes.

30.01 **MB: Yes. So they tended to be people who were long term residents?**

ND: Long term, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: And part of that old working class community around there?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: Sort of a waterfront working class community?**

ND: That's right, yes, yes. There was a lot of ones that would support them but weren't as - - -

**MB: But you're talking about Father Ed Campion, I think, as a very well-known Sydney character.**

ND: Yes, that's right, yes, yes.

**MB: And he was the priest down there. What church?**

ND: From St Columbkille's ..... - - -

**MB: St Columbkille's ..... right.**

ND: - - - the Catholic Church. He would have belonged to the Cathedral. That's sort of they - - -

**MB: St Mary's.**

ND: - - - they come from St Mary's down to Columbkille ..... and he was a good supporter and then they got in, of course, all the builders labourers and everything, yes.

**MB: Because the Builders Labourers Federation then and I think was the FEDFA, Federated Enginemen and Fire - - -**

ND: Yes, it was, you know, people like Joe Owens and Jack Munday and all those people, yes.

**MB: So they started putting Green Bans on buildings around there, didn't they, to stop the - - -**

ND: That's right, yes, yes.

**MB: - - - because, I think - was this still during the period when Tom Uren was [federal] minister?**

ND: Would have been, yes.

**MB: I mean, was there still some threat to the old buildings around there, even though the Department of Housing was basically taking it over?**

ND: It got a bit mixed up with Victoria Street too - - -

**MB: Yes.**

ND: - - - so it all blended in.

**MB: Because Victoria Street was the huge resident action campaign up there to save the old terraces.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: But that was sort of up on the top of the hill - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - really part of Kings Cross?**

ND: Yes. Well, that's right, yes, but those things sort of blended in, didn't they? Because Woolloomooloo was the first one and then Juanita Nielsen, of course.

**MB: And she died.**

ND: Yes. Well, she disappeared, yes.

**MB: And that development then was not Sid Londish was it?**

32.02 ND: No.

**MB: The Victoria Street development was Thiess Holdings, I think.**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: So, did you ever have any contact with her?**

ND: I'd only met her through the Leonards, yes, just sort of they came in -  
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**MB: Because I suppose they would join forces, would they, those two areas?**

ND: Yes. Well, it all came under the – it sort of got very blurred, didn't it, and it sort of just continued on. Yes, because Juanita Nielsen had her own paper at that time and she in her paper was speaking up for everyone and that and they were really threatened, you know, and people would come 'round and threaten them and stuff, you know.

**MB: The Leonards?**

ND: The Leonards.

**MB: Or all of them?**

ND: Well, I don't know about all of them; I know the Leonards were.

**MB: What would happen? Would like just some thug would come to the door?**

ND: Yes, they were told, you know – they were offered huge incentives just to, you know, disappear, to go away. They were offered apartments up in the Cross, big apartments and that, flash places and that which they knocked back, or money, and they resisted all that and, yes, it was pretty hard going and they were always fearful of their well-being and stuff, yes, yes. You know, people, used to be strange people hang out in cars or follow them or things, I think just intimidation, yes.

**MB: And not incorrectly, I suppose, because it wasn't incorrect for them to be afraid because - - -**

ND: No.

**MB: - - - well Juanita Nielsen certainly paid the price, didn't she?**

ND: That's right, yes, yes.

**MB: And I suppose other people didn't necessarily disappear but were frightened off in different ways?**

ND: Yes, yes, it was very real, yes, yes.

**MB: So, the negotiations went on over quite a long time, I think, in the redevelopment of Woolloomooloo.**

34.04 ND: Yes. They had all sorts of things. They had competition stuff; you could enter things how you thought it should be and that, couldn't you? You could enter all sorts of – people used to come up with all sorts of – they had a big thing where you made models. You could do models and I saw all sorts of weird and wonderful models and, you know, ones where the hippie ones wanted great big communes and huge big like pyramid things with no doors anywhere and all sorts of things.

**MB: Yes. So these would be public models were they - they'd be put on display somewhere?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes. Down in the bottom of Forbes Street there was a big building where they used to display them, yes. Yes, when the Housing came in they had a development team. I can't think of the names of the blokes in the Housing Commission. They had a big building down there where they did lots of things, displays and public displays that people could do themselves or the ones that the Housing did; you could go down and look at them and they'd have talks about it and stuff. That went on for quite a while, yes, yes.

**MB: Yes, it was over many years, wasn't it, the whole redevelopment of the 'Loo?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: There was a lot of complex - - -**

35.57 ND: Graeme Goodsell was one of them. Graeme Goodsell and – no, he took over second. There was a man before him but I can't think of his name because it's going back a long while. Yes, we were actually running, when that was all happening we were up and running but they still hadn't decided a lot of the buildings.

**MB: Yes. So what was the business like then when you were - - -**

ND: Very quiet.

**MB: Yes, very quiet, yes.**

ND: Very quiet. Just Bonnie, my wife, Bonnie and myself just did it, and my sister used to help us and we didn't do the long hours then. We used to just do, I think it was seven till seven or something like that.

**MB: And this was before you had your children, was it?**

ND: That's right, yes, yes, yes. Yes, because, as I say, there was mostly vacant blocks round about, yes.

**MB: It must have been a bit of a strange place to have a business.**

ND: It was, yes. Yes, it was really weird. People were wondering what you're doing there because when we were doing some of the development an inspector from the council came in and he said "What's going on here?" Well, I wasn't there at the time and so he packed all the builders up and told them they had to go. He said "You have no right to be here doing any work" and so they rang me and I came down and met him and he said "What are you doing? What do you think you're doing?" I said, "Getting a shop ready" and he said "You can't build a shop here". He said "There's nothing here for starters", he said "and who told you you could build a shop?" He said "You've got no permissions or anything" and I said to me "Yes, the Housing". He said "I've never heard of it".

**MB: So where was he from, this inspector?**

ND: The City Council.

**MB: Council.**

ND: He was the local health inspector and anyway we turned out to be good mates in the end – his name was Frank Lalage and he'd never heard of anything and so we were like a pimple on a pumpkin, you know, sitting out there in the middle of this nothing.

**MB: So what did you sell then when you had hardly any customers?**

ND: Well, the same stuff, just groceries and liquor, yes.

38.03 **MB: I was just going to say who were your customers then when it was really quiet?**

ND: Well, there just weren't very many people, it was just very, very quiet and we were, you know, struggling.

**MB: But they were residents, were they?**

ND: They were residents. We used to get them from the private sector towards the city side, you know, from there across.

**MB: What do you mean by the "private sector"? You mean non Housing Department?**

ND: Non-housing, yes, yes, yes. A third of Woolloomooloo's the Housing Department and the two thirds private, yes, but even a lot of the

private were squatters; all up Bourke Street, that was all squatters, there were still squatters there even though the Housing ended up owning it all but it was very down-at-heel, you know.

**MB: But I'm thinking a lot of those people wouldn't have had much money to spend - - -**

ND: No.

**MB: - - - so they probably wouldn't have been as good as some of your customers are today.**

ND: No, oh, no, no, no, nothing like it. No, it was a bit hard going in those first few years, yes, yes.

**MB: But you must have felt as though there was a lot of potential there.**

ND: Well, we knew what was coming and if we didn't get the licence up and running you end up losing it perhaps, you know.

**MB: Right. So you've got to - - -**

ND: So each year you have to go to the Licensing Court and they'd say "Well, you know, what are you – this licence is issued to, you know, earn revenue, not just to sit there" and so we had to do that, so this was the perfect opportunity to do it, so yes. We would have liked to just do liquor but then when they told us they were going to cut off all the streets and that we knew we had to do the other with it and plus they wanted the groceries too and they wanted to be able to tell people "Well, we've got a shop there", yes. Then other shops came along too, there were a few other shops there but they've sort of come and gone.

**MB: Have they?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: Are there any other shops there at the moment?**

39.58 ND: Not in the front part there, no. Well, there's the chemist shop has moved across to there now, the pharmacy, but where the fish and chip shop was there was another mixed business and there was another, they moved another one into the old shop that we vacated but they've all come and gone and very little commercial retailing there, yes.

**MB: Because it's spoken about as if it's a shopping centre there - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - but really you're kind of the hub.**

ND: That's right. The Housing built that whole complex there to move in a butcher shop and a few other sorts of things but they never, ever got them. They had the newsagent there for a while, he moved in, but then he moved out again because it didn't work out. He couldn't get parking and the newsagent's got to move in and out all day and so if he moves out and he comes back and he can't park so he moved, he just let it go. And so really we've been the only one there consistently.

**MB: Consistently there.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: And is that because what you sell is something that everybody needs?**

ND: I think so, yes, plus we put in the hours, we put in the time. A lot of people come along and think, you know, it's all going to happen in two minutes and if it doesn't, well they - - -

**MB: They're gone?**

ND: Yes, they don't hang about, yes. Because, as I said at first it was very quiet for us for we knew it was going to come good, so we hung in there and just did the long hours, whether you're busy or not, yes, yes.

**MB: And so when did it really start to pick up, your business?**

ND: It took about five years; it took about, yes, at least five years to really start to, yes, to be any good at all, yes, yes.

42.09 **MB: It must have taken a lot of faith. I mean, you know the big development's coming and that there are going to be people, a lot of people living there and so on but you must still wonder, "Yes, but what other things might go well and what other problems could there be?" - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - and so on, so it's quite an act of faith to work those really long hours for a long time when you're not actually making any money.**

ND: Yes, yes, it was a bit hard but we got through it, yes, and it's a good little business now, yes.

**MB: Yes, obviously.**

ND: Yes, it is but as I say it is because then we went to the midnight stuff a long time before the big shops and that did it, so we were sort of established into that.

**MB: Yes.**

ND: I mean, you could run there twenty four hours a day if you wanted to.

**MB: Yes, because it's the kind of place where a lot of people keep very late hours, isn't it?**

ND: Yes, yes, there's always activities, people around all the time but it gets very dangerous from twelve onward, when they start to have all the trouble.

**MB: From midnight?**

ND: From midnight onwards, the early hours of the morning when you have the trouble. So it's very hard, yes, so it's not worth it, yes.

**MB: Yes, can you tell me a bit about that? I mean, I'd like to know a bit more about just the business itself anyway but what happens after midnight, have you had bad experiences?**

ND: Well, we're not there so we don't do it but - - -

**MB: But you know enough not to be there.**

ND: - - - I've spoken to the police and that and they said "Oh, you know, that's exactly when the really troublesome part, the most troublesome times are", so they advised not to because at one stage we were thinking we might and the local sergeant there said "Oh, you know", he said "I wouldn't". You know, he said "I'd advise against it".

**MB: What sort of trouble is he talking about? [Break in recording]**

43.52 **We've just had a little break on the tape for telephone and other reasons. Yes, I think we'd been talking quite a bit about how the business built up over the years and it was a long time until it did build up. And we've talked quite a bit about the old residents there, the old core of residents but I guess Woolloomooloo has really changed in the last couple of decades.**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: There would still be quite a core of old residents there, is that correct?**

ND: They're really thinning out.



**MB: Are they?**

ND: Really thinning.

**MB: What, dying off, you mean?**

ND: Just dying, yes, yes. But it's getting back to like it used to be, everyone was interrelated one way or another. Like, it took you ages to work out who had married this one's brother and this one's, you know, it was very intermarried and it sort of gets back that way again, doesn't it?

**MB: Is it?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: Is that happening again now with people who live in the area?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: So a lot of these would have been people who came in as Housing Commission tenants, I guess - - -**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: - - - once all that redevelopment had happened - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - but also in the more private areas of the 'Loo there would be quite a lot of more well-heeled people, I suppose.**

ND: That's right, yes, yes.

**MB: Yes. Can you tell me a bit about them?**

ND: Well, we don't get – yes, we get people in from – like it might be a him and a her that are both working, perhaps professional people and so that helps us, it's good for our shop because they're not looking – you know, they don't have to go to Franklins and things like that and so you've got them coming in and buying and the price is not, you know, isn't a big problem and so they just get what they want and when they want it.

**MB: Because naturally your prices would have to be a bit higher than they would be in a supermarket?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, we're not them by a long shot.

**MB: So they don't baulk at buying all their - - -**

ND: That's right, yes.

**MB: - - - fruit and veg there or their meat as well as their grog?**

46.02 ND: Well, the shopping thing seems to have changed a lot too; where people used to out to get the great big load for the whole week and that seems to have changed and they go more often now which probably suits smaller shops like us better because we're getting the benefit of that and, yes, we don't get people come in and buy big trolley-loads or not a lot but we've got a big enough selection that they can do pretty well a proper shop, a big shop and some of them do. Whereas a lot of people they'll go to Franklins or they'll go to wherever they go, to Woolies or Coles, and then use us as their pantry and so you forget something or you run out of something and - - -

**MB: Where do they have to go if they go to Franklins or Woolies or Coles?**

ND: They can go to Eastgardens or they can go to Edgecliff or you can go – there's a Coles at the Cross, there's another Woolies at Town Hall there, there's a Metro, plus they bus them 'round the centres, the community centres 'round there, they have buses running every week.

**MB: Do they?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: To go and do their shopping somewhere?**

ND: You can go shopping or they do all sorts of different things. They go on tours just to – you know, they might go to the Blue Mountains or the Central Coast but they go on shopping every week, there's shopping buses, and I think they get on and decide "Right, today we go to Birkenhead Point" or wherever they might want to go. And so they've got plenty of opportunity.

**MB: Are the community centres primarily for older people?**

ND: No, there's different kinds. There's the Mary McDonald for the older people and there you would get your buses that do – they might go up to the Central Coast and go to the Leagues Club up there for lunch and do a little trip around or see a show and come home or they might go down south or out wherever they go. And then you've got the council centres, the Juanita Nielsen Centre, or there was another one over at Phillip Park and they're run by the council.

48.00 And then there's another centre that's a community centre - it's called Walla Mulla Community Centre – and they'd be the ones that'd run buses and things to shopping centres.

**MB: For shopping expeditions?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: Because it's a very mixed it's also an area with a lot of social problems.**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: So you've got these very well-heeled, high end people as you would think of them - - -**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: - - - with minimal social problems, high incomes, flash places to live in and so on, urban dwellers - - -**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: - - - but then you've got other people who are living in Housing Department places - - -**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: - - - they're living on Social Security, they might have health problems - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - I suppose they could have drug addiction problems - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - all different kinds of things - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - and by definition they're on low income. I think we were talking a bit earlier before we had to turn the tape off about what kind of problems might occur around that area for a shopkeeper after midnight and that police had advised you not to open up after midnight. Are the problems that happen – I suppose you're talking about violence or theft or that kind of thing - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB: - - - are they related to the social problems of the area?**

**ND:** Not necessarily the area but just – like we're in a backwash. Because of the way they've closed off the streets we're virtually in a backwash in as far – and all we get is local people, there's no passing trade and it's got its – you have your downfall that you're not getting that passing trade but we don't have the problems that the shops do down in Cowper Wharf Road, down near the water there on the main road. They get held up a lot - - -

**MB: Do they?**

**ND:** - - - because whatever they are, drugs addicts or whatever they happen to be, going past and they say "Oh, this'll do" and they just go in and hold it up and more or less with them and the service stations have it in turns. We never have that trouble and we know all our local people, whether they're drugs addicts or whatever their problem might be and we sort of know them all and so they don't really give us a lot of trouble, it's just the strangers that come through, perhaps.

50.13 **MB: Yes, so it's more likely, when there are issues it's more likely that they're non local people.**

**ND:** Yes, the non local, yes, yes.

**MB: I suppose it's pretty dark around there at night too, isn't it, around where you are?**

**ND:** Yes.

**MB: Is that right up under like that Cathedral Street there's a bit of - -**

**ND:** Yes, they do try and light it up a bit but they had – they have brightened up a bit but they had that policy, you know, with that low lighting 'round to sort of look nice and everything but it's - - -

**MB: Softer, I suppose.**

**ND:** - - - yes, the softness and that but it does lead to problems. Yes, they have brightened it up a bit lately, yes, yes, and tried to light the area up a bit.

**MB: So, have you ever been robbed?**

**ND:** No, not a hold-up, no, no.

**MB: No.**

ND: Just you get plenty of people just, you know, stealing when they're in there but that's - - -

**MB: Shoplifting.**

ND: - - - it's like an everyday occurrence, yes.

**MB: What do you do about that, when shoplifting happens?**

ND: Well, we just tell them not to come back but they still do.

**MB: Because you're the only shop in the area they go into?**

ND: Yes but, you know, if it's a local you might say "Oh, you're out for a month" or whatever it is, you know. And then the kids, you know they're going to do it and you just say, you know, "Tell your parents to come up" and we're not after to punish them or anything but as long as they realise that you can't do that sort of thing and more that for the kids, you know, to let them know that it's the wrong thing to do and it's not acceptable. But as you see out the front we have a lot of homeless people, so you've got people that are not only homeless but mental - - -

**MB: Yes, mentally ill people.**

ND: - - - mentally ill and that.

**MB: Yes, there's an awful lot of that around, isn't there?**

ND: Yes, it can get a bit unpredictable.

**MB: Yes. So how does that impact on you?**

52.01 ND: We generally know most of them, you know, and you sort of – I find if you talk to them and you don't have a bigger problem, you know, like address them by name and chat to them.

**MB: What, a generally respectful kind of relationship?**

ND: That's right, that's right, yes, yes, yes, but if they're behaving unacceptably you've got to tell them so. So we generally get over it that way, yes, just by talking. Some you can't, obviously, and you might have to call the police but yes.

**MB: Your wife, Bonnie, was saying when we had the tape off that all your children, your three children have worked or will work in the shop - - -**

ND: Yes.

**MB:** - - - and you've still got one son going through high school but he'll work there for a while and your brother's children also have worked in the shop - - -

**ND:** Yes.

**MB:** - - - and that you all joke and you all call it the 'Woolloomooloo Finishing School'.

**ND:** Yes, that's right.

**MB:** And so what did she mean by that?

**ND:** Well, they see the other side of life. You know, they've been brought up pretty – in a more protected environment and gone to nice schools and that's not their fault, that's just the way it is and so this side you see the other side of life and it's not a bad thing to see it, perhaps, and know the consequences, you know, if you do get onto drugs or alcohol or whatever it might be this is how you can end up. And, you know, like our kids are used to being with older people, like, you know, pensioners and stuff and so they're pretty good, they're not scared to talk to them.

**MB:** Why are they used to being with older people?

**ND:** Well, became my mum and that were, you know, older when they were kids so they're sort of – and Bonnie's mum had dementia and her dad looked after her for ten years, so they're sort of used to confronting it and, as I say, all my aunties and uncles and that were a bit older because we had our kids later in life and so they're sort of used to that, you know, it's not - - -

54.15 **MB:** They're not afraid of it?

**ND:** No, no, no, no, no.

**MB:** So what do you think's going to happen for Woolloomooloo in the future – are there any changes on the radar?

**ND:** Well, they keep talking all the time about, you know, getting rid of the Housing and bring in development and stuff but - - -

**MB:** Who's talking about that?

**ND:** Well, people who live in the Housing are worried all the time that it's going to be sold from under them but that's been going on for years and years they've been talking, everyone. You know, it was going to be the year 2000, then it was going to be 2002 and everyone says "Oh, no, this is the year that it was going to happen" but speaking to

people like Colin James and that, they just don't seem to be particularly worried about that and so - - -

**MB: Colin James, he was an advocate for the Woolloomooloo Residents Action Group, wasn't he?**

ND: Yes.

**MB: And he's an urban planner.**

ND: And Tom Uren, you know, the Leonards and that were friendly with all those people and they'd ask them and they'd say, well, you know, they wouldn't worry particularly about it, about that, but people have still got concerns about that because a lot of Housing is being sold in other areas but Woolloomooloo's got this - - -

**MB: Public housing is being sold?**

ND: Public housing, yes, but Woolloomooloo's got this tripartite agreement where the state, the federal and I think the council will have to agree and it makes it a bit harder and - - -

**MB: Be very difficult to get through bureaucratically - - -**

ND: Yes, absolutely, yes.

**MB: - - - to have to resolve all those three different areas?**

ND: Yes. So, you'd have to perhaps have all the same people in parliament together, you know.

**MB: They've talked now that it needs regeneration again.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: It's thirty years, I suppose.**

56.00 ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: What do you think about that?**

ND: Well, I'm not an architect or anything but I think if you build them I think you should build better quality and not as many, perhaps, because they never stop having to upgrade them and do things and repairs and a lot of it's done pretty shoddy. So, you're all the time fixing it up whereas if you had have done it well in the first place it would have been a lot cheaper and perhaps better and I can't understand why people like the Housing Department, we talk about saving energy and stuff, there they had five acres, why didn't they face it all north and pick up the sun and do all that sort of thing and

sort of build all that into it. And they're building places all the time, they could learn from what they're doing and sell the technology to the private sector. So, if someone was building a little block of flats or something they'd say "What's the best way?" and they'd say "We've tried that eight times. We know that this is the way to do it" and sell it to 'em, you know, perhaps, I don't know. But rather than stick to the old roads - it's all stuck to where the old roads and that were - and just close them down it sort of leads to a rabbit warren type setup.

**MB: Yes. So you think it would have been different if they'd actually -**  
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**ND:** Just cleared the whole lot, face it all the right way and then do all the -  
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**MB: And put some new roads around it?**

**ND:** - - - perhaps to fit in, I don't know, but as I say, I'm not an architect and I'm not thing but.

**MB: Do you intend to stay there for the foreseeable future?**

**ND:** Yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes, I guess until I retire.

**MB: So no plans for that at the moment?**

**ND:** No, no, no. Get the kids all through first and we might take it a bit easier, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: Have you had any other business interests or is this primarily it?**

**ND:** No, no, that's all I've done, yes, yes, yes. I've only worked for my family or myself, yes, yes, yes, yes.

58.06 **MB: No regrets about that?**

**ND:** No, no.

**MB: Is there anything else you'd like to say today or people you'd like to mention?**

**ND:** I'm not very good at this, am I?

**MB: Well, no, it's not a matter of being good or bad. There may have been some people who'd crossed your mind. Stan Leonard, you said, is still alive.**

**ND:** Stan's still alive, yes.



**MB: And there's probably other people who were connected with the Residents Action Group who are still around?**

ND: Not many.

**MB: Not many?**

ND: No, I don't think so, if any. Well, they would have been connected but not as a major, yes – not really, only - - -

**MB: I suppose really the people who live there too in the Housing Commission areas now have actually come in from the outside, they are also – they're local now but they would have been non-locals as opposed to the old working class area.**

ND: That's right, yes. Yes, yes, well, yes, what's coming in now is, yes, it's completely different. When you said before, you know, there'd be something to say, one thing that does come to mind when you say "moving people in" is the concentrations of single mums and people with problems, you know. It's probably too big a concentration of not only those but people with all different sorts of problems and that. It makes it very hard for the area sort of; there's a lot of lovely people there. People talk about all the kids, you know, on the wrong track and that but for all them there's some beautiful kids and beautiful families and you see them go on and do all sorts of great things, you know, either sports or academic and things but they're the ones that don't get spoken about really.

60.08 **MB: Yes. So often those areas are characterised as only social problems - - -**

ND: That's right.

**MB: - - - but of course that's the thing that you see, you don't see the bits that are - - -**

ND: Yes. In amongst those social problems there's all the ones that seem to come through it. There's heaps of really, really good families, yes, good

**MB: And you yourself originally – I think about three generations [break in recording] – yes, we were just saying that originally your grandparents were Lebanese but can you just tell me a little bit more about that, about how they came to be here and where they came from?**

ND: Yes. Well, I know my grandmother come from .... in Lebanon and my grandfather came from Damascus. I knew my grandma but my grandfather I can really only remember seeing him once. And as a matter of fact the place my dad had just down here, it had three acres

down to the water and he used to grow grapes there, used to, yes, he had an orchard.

**MB: Really, so your father had a place here in Hunters Hill?**

ND: Yes. And then it was going to be a family home but then the war came and that and didn't want to but he had an orchard down there.

**MB: Your grandfather?**

ND: Yes, back then, yes, but I was too young to really – because I was the seventh of nine children and so I sort of didn't really know him, but yes, whereas I knew on my other side my mother was Irish and her dad was Norwegian whereas I didn't know her very much but I knew him.

**MB: So you knew the Norwegian grandfather?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: What was he like?**

ND: Oh, great, yes.

**MB: Was he?**

ND: Yes, yes, terrific bloke, yes, yes. Yes, we had a good - - -

**MB: So how did he fetch up here?**

62.01 ND: He ran away from home when he was thirteen or something on a sailing ship and the third time – they kept bringing him back – the third time they said “That's it, you're on your way”. And so he worked on sailing ships and stuff all 'round the place and he told us he was in New York, he was on a bridge in New York, and he thought he'd stay there and then it was snowing and he thought “Well, why am I coming away from a cold country to get to a – you know, I'm back here”. So, he hopped on a boat and it came 'round the Cape and they ended in Newcastle and he hopped ship with his mate and they got work pretty easy because they were so good at rigging – well, they were steamboats by then too – and so good at doing ropes and stuff that they got jobs, working on the roads and stuff pretty easy. And then he was scared they were going to kick him out but he went back to Newcastle and he got a job on the harbour and he ended up being a harbour master and he worked on a boat that went up and down the Hunter River there. And that's how he met my grandma, going up; they'd take all the supplies up and bring the dairy stuff back and that.

**MB: So she was further up the Hunter?**

ND: She was up the river, yes, Raymond Terrace, I think up near there, yes.

**MB: But she was Irish?**

ND: She was Irish.

**MB: She'd come out here -?**

ND: Well, I don't know but she was - - -

**MB: Did she come with her family or did she come as a young, single woman?**

ND: I guess, yes. No, no, I think with her family and she was Irish Catholic and he was a Lutheran, a great big, rough, tough, you know, like off a boat and she wouldn't have a bar of him at first but he ended up marrying her, yes.

**MB: That's a nice story.**

ND: And she was like a princess, you know, and he was this – yes, but he was really, really good and yes.

**MB: And she was nice too? You didn't know her very well, you said.**

ND: Not very well. She was always sort of older and sick, you know, when I was older but he looked after her like a princess.

**MB: But did you know your Lebanese grandmother very well?**

64.02 ND: Yes, yes. She used to live down at Woolloomooloo. She had a tellie [TV] and we didn't and we used to always say "We'll go down and see grandma". Oh, no, and she used to come and stay at our place but yes, yes, she was - - -

**MB: Was she sort of integrated into Australian life?**

ND: Not a real lot, no, no, no. She'd break into Lebanese and stuff when you were talking to her and you'd have to tell her to speak English and stuff, yes, yes, yes.

**MB: Yes. So you've got a really complex, like a lot of Australians, a really complex cultural background from all over the place.**

ND: Yes, yes, yes. That's right, yes. But that's good, yes, yes.

**MB: Yes.**

ND: They were good immigrants, weren't they, you know, hard-working and - - -

**MB: Absolutely. Well, it's a country of immigrants.**

ND: Yes.

**MB: But the business side really came from your father's side, not from your mother's side?**

ND: My father and his – yes, from him and his brothers so, yes, they were pretty good at that.

**MB: They were serious about business?**

ND: Yes, yes, yes.

**MB: And building business?**

ND: Yes, yes.

**MB: Do you know why they came to Australia in the first place then?**

ND: No idea.

**MB: I think you were saying how a lot of Lebanese people used to go out into the country towns. Can you tell me a bit more about that?**

ND: Yes, well every country town you see, you know, you've got either the Maloufs or the Dadas or the Josephs or whatever it is, you know, you see them.

**MB: Like the Greeks and the Italians?**

ND: Yes, like the Greeks, exactly the same. The Greeks had the milk bars and the Italians had the fruit shops and the Lebanese had the haberdashery and stuff, didn't they, you know, and they're very good immigrants.

**MB: And you're saying it's a different kind; the Lebanese who come now are a bit different?**

ND: Well, it seems to be a different – might be just different days I suppose, don't know. I don't really know ones that come today as much, you know, whereas these other people I'd more or less met but they seemed to integrate better, didn't they.

66.09 **MB:** **Yes. I don't know whether the difference maybe is that when you've got smaller numbers and you have to go out - - -**

**ND:** Yes.

**MB:** **- - - there's no really fixed community for you to go into.**

**ND:** Yes. They still kept their cultures and their cooking and all their things and that but they integrated pretty well because, well, a lot of them were Christian, most of them were Christian, so that helps a lot. I suppose that's the biggest thing, so yes. I guess that'd be the biggest denominator to make them integrate easier, wouldn't it, yes.

**MB:** **O.K, we might stop there.**

**ND:** Yes.

**Interview ends**

**Interview ends**