



## ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

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**INTERVIEWEE:** Dario Lo Schiavo

**INTERVIEWER:** Sue Rosen

**DATE:** 17 June 1995

**PLACE:** ?

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## TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SR: Interview with Dario Lo Schiavo, 17th of June 1995.**

**Dario, where were you born?**

DL: Born, in Yurong Street in East Sydney on the \*\*\*\*\* 1918.

**SR: Did you grow up in that area?**

DL: The first four years we lived in the area and when I was five we moved up to Victoria Street, Potts Point because the house was then too small for us.

**SR: Did you have any brothers and sisters?**

DL: One brother, two sisters and my uncle died very young so we had my aunt and her three children living with us in Victoria Street; they were brought up with us as well.

**SR: And where were you - were you the oldest?**

DL: No, I was the youngest in the whole family.

**SR: Of all the children, even with your aunt's?**

DL: No, of my family I was the youngest. My brother was about eleven or twelve years older, my sisters were about three to four years older and five, six years older.

**SR: What are your earliest memories?**

DL: Earliest memories. I remember that in East Sydney or regards Yurong Street there was a man killed by the razor gang in the lane next to our house. I remember going down and looking at the blood and being hauled back by the scruff of the neck and given a proper whack on the bottom for going out there.

**SR: Gee.**

DL: Yes. It was quite safe but it was only just the criminal were killing criminals, not civilians, no.

**SR: Right. Did you hear the murder taking place?**

DL: No, didn't hear it; I was asleep.

**SR: Well, what kind of a house did you live in?**

1.58 DL: It was the first house was a small terrace on the corner and it had a small backyard in which I used to race around on a three-wheeled bike which I had and all the memories of that house was that whenever I was in trouble, which was quite often, we had a neighbour across the street, a Mrs Johnson, who was a lovely old lady and had lovely chocolates and she always gave me a chocolate, soothed me down and then sent me home.

**SR: That's nice.**

DL: Yes.

**SR: What about the house in - - -**

DL: Victoria Street? It was an eighteen foot frontage. It was a four-storey house with plenty of rooms and we had rooms added on the back as well. Now, these houses, the residentials, in Victoria Street in those days were nearly all privately owned, there were very few flats and very few businesses. It was an avenue because all the streets were tree-lined all the way down, all 'round Kings Cross and there were more avenues than streets. And the view from our house was magnificent; it looked right over the city and we could see the lights of the city every night; it was beautiful to see when we moved up there; I was nearly six when we moved up there, between five and six.

**SR: What kind of a place was it for kids in the 1920s?**

DL: It was great and most of us built our own billy carts out of whatever we could find; we had a little hill down the back we used to race down. And

there were gangs: there was the Woolloomooloo gang which lived down the bottom and there was the Victoria Street gang and I kept out of all those. I had more friends than I could handle at school, so I went 'round with them more than anything else.

**SR: When you say the gangs, do you mean kids' gangs?**

3.56 DL: Kids running around together. They weren't doing any bad damage and they didn't beat you up or anything like that, they just sort of called you names and gave you a kick in the backside if you got caught on your own, which you didn't do it. But there was a line of demarcation which was the Butler Stairs – there were stairs there and there's stairs down the bottom of Victoria Street and the Woolloomooloo gang stayed on their side and the Victoria Street gang stayed on their side; there were no rumbles, things like that.

**SR: But what kind of a kid were you?**

DL: I was a chronic asthmatic. I was very ill when I was a baby and I was a very heavy reader.

**SR: What sort of a family did you come from, Dario?**

DL: Originally they came from Italy, of course. My Dad was an aristocrat, he had a title, and my mother was a teacher at the University of Rome. So my father came out here originally after my grandfather and my father came out here and then went back to Italy, got married and came back out here again. During the war he was caught in Rome and being a British subject he was interned. He was very sick and they looked after him very well but he was interned. He died there, we didn't see him again. So I never saw Dad after the age of about eleven, so Mum had to go to work and sort of keep us going.

**SR: What war, sorry?**

DL: WWII.

**SR: WWII. And you were born in 19 - - -**

DL: 18.

**SR: 18.**

DL: Yes. I was in the army then. I was underage and enlisted underage and they caught me after about three or four months and discharged me because I didn't have leave to join from the university or permission from my mother. So I went back down to Melbourne and re-enlisted down there. Pig-headed.

6.04 **SR: Well, what year did your parents emigrate here?**

DL: I think my father came out here in the late 1890s. Mother joined him out here in the early 1900s. I don't have the dates.

**SR: And what brought them to Australia?**

DL: More opportunity. Where Dad came from there was very little opportunity unless you had a lot of money, which he didn't have. So he came out here and he worked very hard and he made quite a lot of money. He had a shop opposite David Jones in Market Street which had like a milk bar, afternoon teas and confectionery and also a small selection of out of season fruit which was very expensive. He had clients who mainly came from Double Bay or Dover Heights because they were the only ones who could afford them and the fruit was like bananas in the middle of winter and grapefruit from Cairo, Sunkist oranges from America, all that sort of stuff which he imported and he made quite a lot of money. Unfortunately the crash came and the Depression; he lost it all and he had a stroke and he went back to Italy for some sort of a cure in Rome which didn't work and eventually he died there in Italy.

**SR: What year was that?**

DL: He died June, I think it was 1942 he died. And I struggled on. I went to work myself. I was still at school but I worked in a fruit shop for some cousins of ours who were very kind to us and I used to get eight shillings for the day's work on Saturday. I used to give six to Mum and the other two shillings was my pocket money and food money for the week.

8.03 **SR: And you know when your father went back to Italy, looking for a cure, when did he go?**

DL: What year was that?

**SR: Yes.**

DL: About 1930, '31.

**SR: '30, '31. So he went back there and you didn't see him after '31?**

DL: No. The cure dragged on and dragged on and dragged on and we supported him from here as best we could and that didn't do any good and he got worse and then he just died over there. They did look after him, even when they interned him. They put him in hospital and looked after him pretty well.

**SR: Well, in your family when you were a child - say we're looking at the 1920s - who controlled the finances in your family?**

DL: My father did until he went away.

**SR: Right.**

DL: We lost all our properties. He bought four properties, big blocks of flats but Jack Lang broke him with the Moratorium Act saying they didn't have to pay their rents. So Dad couldn't keep up the payments and lost the lot.

**SR: They didn't put a moratorium on the banks as well?**

DL: The moratorium on rents. You didn't have to pay rents; if you couldn't pay them you didn't pay.

**SR: Now, the 1920s, they were pretty tough economic times. How did they affect your family?**

DL: Well, we were fairly well off in the 1920s because Dad was working and we weren't short of anything and we never went short of food or anything at all and being the youngest I was spoilt, I admit it, I got everything I asked for more or less. I recall having a green velvet suit with a lace collar which I treasured. So we went to good schools and there was enough to send my brother through university and my sister through university and I paid my own way through uni when I got there.

10.02 But of the four of us, three went through university and my sister went to the Conservatorium of Music and was a music teacher. So we weren't what I would call the average family those days.

**SR: No.**

DL: I recall that you were saying about reading matter, before I was fourteen I'd read all of Alexander Dumas in French, I'd read the Divine Comedy in Latin which is in Latin, Italian, I'd read that, and I was reading Vicente Blasco Ibanez, which is university reading. So I'd read everything around the place; I used to love it.

**SR: Did you have a lot of books at home?**

DL: Yes, we did have a lot of books.

**SR: Had your parents been educated? What level of schooling had they attained?**

DL: My mother was a teacher at University of Rome - - -

**SR: Gosh, that's right.**

DL: - - - before she married.

**SR: What did she teach?**

DL: I think she taught English because we all spoke – at home Mum insisted that we all spoke either in Italian or French so that by doing that we all had at least two languages. My brother had five, I can manage four, but he had five

and so we spoke those languages, we learnt them. As children, when you learn a language you pick it up more quickly than when you're older so we just picked it up.

**SR: Yes. What sort of a man was your father?**

DL: He was a very gentle man, very dapper, not particularly tall although his father was six foot four, my grandfather before that was six foot four, they were all big men. He was only a comparatively small man, very dapper, very polite and a perfect gentleman. He never, ever hit me once.

11.59 I think once we were going out in the car – which was always breaking down – and they were waiting for me and I've already told Mum that I had an asthma attack and I didn't want to go and then he came down and he waved the newspaper at me, said "We're all waiting for you" and I said "Dad, I told Mum that I'm not coming. I've got asthma". He said "Oh, that's all right then" and he went. He never touched me, no, neither did Mum.

**SR: Well, what sort of a person was your mother?**

DL: Mum was brilliant. She was a ham actress; she was in the Dante Alighieri Society and acted on the stage with them. She was a cigarette smoker, heavy cigarette smoke. She used to roll her own, and she could roll her own, lit, have a cup of coffee and read a book at the same time, that's what she used to do, and she liked Agatha Christie's - the more murders the better – but she also was very well-read and very cultured.

**SR: What was that drama society?**

DL: The Dante Alighieri was the Italian drama society where they put on Italian plays.

**SR: Was that in Sydney?**

DL: Yes, a prestige society.

**SR: Does it still exist?**

DL: It was very good; the actual plays they put on were excellent. Some of them were in different dialects. But as I recall, I was in one myself as a junior leader.

**SR: How long did that society run for?**

DL: I don't know if it's still going or not but it ran for a long time. It wasn't just for Italians but it was for students of Dante, Dante Alighieri, it was for students of the classics; anybody could be in it.

**SR: So it wasn't just an Italian organisation?**

DL: No, not strictly all Italian.

**SR: Were your parents religious?**

14.01 DL: Yes, oh, yes. We went to mass every Sunday. Not my father so much but my mother and my aunt, oh, yes, every Sunday. Always later, I was always late; last in, first out. I stood at the back of the church.

**SR: Did you say rosary at home at night?**

DL: My aunt did – she was very religious – but, no, we didn't, no.

**SR: Did you go to benediction and confession?**

DL: Yes, we went to benediction at St Mary's or at St Columbkille's which was down just at the bottom of the hill or St Canice's which is down at Rushcutters Bay but we used to go to benediction. We always went to midnight mass at Christmas, always, the whole family would go to midnight mass and our presents were not distributed till the next day, so we all went to midnight mass.

**SR: Did you have benediction, was that on Sunday afternoons?**

DL: Benediction, well, it was every day, I think it was on then, St Mary's.

**SR: And did you go every day?**

DL: No, no, no. We didn't go so much, aunty did; at least once or twice a week she would go.

**SR: Did you get sent to Catholic schools?**

DL: Yes, I went to Marist Brothers at Darlinghurst. Started at St Vincent's College for girls – they had primary for little children – and then I went up to Darlinghurst, Marist Brothers, started in the lowest class, finished up my Leaving Certificate there. It was a good school, a hard school but it was the best, and we still have the old boys' reunion and still we meet there every year for lunch or dinner.

**SR: And when you say it was a hard school, what do you mean by that?**

DL: It was a hard school in the fact that it was Darlinghurst for tough boys. They were all tough boys; none of them were sissies and took your knocks. You got the cane if you got into trouble and you didn't whinge, you took it and you didn't whinge. So boys came from all over Sydney for it.

16.00 **SR: Really?**

DL: It was a mixed lot.

**SR: Because I was going to say you came from a very cultured family and a well-off family. Wouldn't you get a hard time from the kids that weren't - - -**

**DL:** Yes, and from the kids at school I got a very hard time. I was hot-headed; I hated the word "dago". Anybody called me dago, no matter how big he was I was into him like a shot; I got so many hidings you would not believe. I used to come home covered in blood, shirts torn but then a young chap, friend of mine, he used to be my second - because these were proper fights after school, right – he used to be my second, he took me home to meet his father who was a boxer, right. So I went down to the gym with him for about three months. By the time I'd finished I could fight like a threshing machine and then they left me alone.

**SR: What was the name of your friend?**

**DL:** Terry. Terry Hanley.

**SR: Hanley.**

**DL:** His father was Tommy Hanley, lightweight champion of Australia, so a fine gentleman. So it was very, very good, that, I could handle myself quite well. I boxed in the army as well when I joined it, so I could handle myself – you had to.

**SR: You know how you were speaking all the different languages? As a kid, did you have an accent?**

**DL:** No, no accent at all, no accent, Australian, no. No, no, no, our French was good and our Italian was good.

**SR: No, I meant when you spoke English, did you speak it with an accent?**

**DL:** No, because it was a skill.

**SR: Yes. So why were they calling you dago?**

**DL:** Because of my name. If you've got a name like Dario Julio Caesare Francesco Lo Schiavo, in those days there was an anti-Italian, sort of the ockerised, the ocker type of Aussie, only that type. Very few of them but there were enough to make it awkward, so much so that when Italy declared war in 1941 they broke every window of every fruit shop, even the ones that were owned by Greeks and Maltese.

18.08      There were two young boys killed in Woolloomooloo who were not even Italian - they were Maltese but they thought they were Italian – they were killed. There was a definite anti-Italian feeling; everybody who was Italian was a fascist.

**SR: Well, what happened in the '30s with Italy and the rise of fascism and what have you, what happened, how did that affect your family?**

DL: Well, it got a fairly strongish furthering in Sydney. Some of the paesani, we call them, the people that come from the poor part of Sicily, sort of thought that Mussolini was wonderful - and he was then, he was doing a tremendous job for them - and so they joined up. Well, they were immediately interned. I know of one case of one cousin of mine who although he was a British subject was interned and his three sons were in the army.

**SR: God.**

DL: Right, that's how the feeling was but he was stupid, he joined.

**SR: What was the organisation called?**

DL: It was called the fascism, the Fascist Party.

**SR: There was a Fascist Party?**

DL: Called the Fascist Party, yes. And they asked us all the time, my brother and myself, to join but we never would because we were non-political in those days.

**SR: But were you involved - like there was de Groot and the New Guard. Now, they were around in the 1930s. Did you remember de Groot?**

DL: The New Guard and all those sort of things?

**SR: Yes.**

DL: They were German or some - I can't remember but I never even saw any of those.

**SR: Yes, de Groot, can you remember him cutting the ribbon when they opened the Harbour Bridge?**

DL: That was de Groot, yes.

**SR: Yes.**

DL: No, he's mad, he wasn't quite with it. Yes, I remember, actually when the harbour was opened, I was sitting on the top of our roof, watching it with field glasses because I had the attic room.

20.04 Having asthma, I couldn't sleep in an ordinary bed; I used to have to sleep on the wire mattress, put newspaper on it and just blankets. And I used to climb out onto the roof, which was a flattish area at the back, and I used to love to sit there on a Sunday afternoon and listen to St Mary's because they

always played the bells and this particular day I had the glasses on and saw them opening the bridge. That was, I think 1931, '32.

**SR:** '33.

**DL:** '33.

**SR:** I think, I'm not that good on that.

**DL:** Because I thought it was '31.

**SR:** Yes. And did you see de Groot run through with a horse?

**DL:** No. I just saw a sort of general picture of them; I was a bit too far away, no.

**SR:** My last question was were your parents religious but were they politically involved?

**DL:** No.

**SR:** They didn't join up - - -

**DL:** They kept well out of it, no. No, Dad, as far as he was concerned he served in WWI and Dad was British and that was it, he was not interested in that. He was interested in music. I remember him dressing me when I was only a little kid in dinner tails which he had made up for me, a dinner suit, and taking me to the opera at the St James Theatre in Sydney, just next to David Jones, and I went there only knee high to a grasshopper in tails specially made.

**SR:** Gosh. He didn't get involved in anything like the Labor Party or whatever - - -

**DL:** No.

**SR:** - - - and like the Nationalist Party. I don't think the Liberals existed then.

**DL:** No, not really.

**SR:** None of the local political parties?

**DL:** No, not really. We stayed more or less just with the family.

**SR:** I think there was the Unemployed Workers Movement was around at that time too.

**DL:** We ..... a lot of the anti-Italian feeling, of course; my whole family did, my brother and my sisters.

**SR: How was that expressed?**

22.00 DL: I would say insults they threw at you, and if you were cool enough to ignore it you'd could just shrug it off and walk away

**SR: Well, the insults, what they were saying, was that like calling you a dago?**

DL: Dago, dago bastard, bloody wog, all this sort of thing although wog wasn't a name then. "Wog" implied that you were Mexican or something like that or a half-breed. I was the only hot-blooded one like that; the others managed to curb themselves because they were older than me.

**SR: How did that feeling affect your parents?**

DL: Mum used to be upset when I'd come home after I'd got a beating, hiding, she used to be upset. The more I learned to win, she was very pleased.

**SR: Did the family have Anglo-Australian friends?**

DL: Oh, yes, stacks of them, Lord, yes. Yes, I'd say most of our friends were either relatives or English - or Australians, rather - and all my friends were virtually Australians. I made some good friends at school and most of the kids in our school did well. I remember in the Leaving Certificate - in '35 that was - there was only about eleven or twelve in our class. Of those eleven, ten became professionals, I mean as doctors, dentists like myself, lawyers, one who was a judge, engineers, they were all top-flight men. Only one didn't do well and he went to university and failed miserably but the rest of us went through the professions. So it was a good school. You learnt the hard way: when you made a mistake you got a whack with the cane and that's it; they brothers were hard but they were good.

**SR: At the school, after you were in the school and you were established and known there, did that kind of racist abuse sort of just disappear and you were just accepted as one of the kids?**

24.02 DL: No, it disappeared after they found I could fight. No, they weren't going to mention it then or they just said "Well, this fellow's got a bit of guts", so they left him alone.

**SR: And then did you develop real friendships?**

DL: No, they were all real friendships before that, the good ones, but I developed a couple of friendships after that, oh, yes. We still meet, as I said, once a year and my friends still remember me. They used to say that when we packed down in the scrum they always knew I was in the scrum because they could smell garlic and I said "It wasn't me, it was my friend, Frank O'Connell", who was Irish and they ate more garlic than I ever saw. No, we ate fairly normal Italian meals, mainly, but we had a roast once a week and,

as I said, never short of food until my Dad left; then things were a bit tough, they were decent.

**SR: Were you expected as a kid to contribute toward the family in any way?**

DL: No, we all had certain small chores we were expected to do: you kept your room clean; you polished your own shoes because my mother considered that a very menial task and nobody should polish their shoes except the person who owns them. So you did your own shoes and I used to iron my own clothes if I could because Mum was flat-out trying to keep us going. And my aunt contributed. She did nearly all the cooking and she used to work as well.

**SR: Where did she work?**

DL: She worked in a fruit shop down at Double Bay – used to walk there and back to save money, from the Cross, and she contributed what she could because she had her three children with us.

**SR: And how long was your Mum able to keep the shop going?**

DL: Only about three years. She sold that shop in Market Street, opened another shop in King Street opposite the judges' chambers and we ran that for about two or three years but that was too hard because she was getting on.

26.08 I had to go down to the markets at three in the morning and then look after the shop and then go to school and then come back and look after the shop again till the evening and that was a bit tough.

**SR: How did you transport the fruit from the markets – did you have a truck?**

DL: Was brought up in old horse-drawn carts. That was the part I loved best, being able to sit near the horse; I enjoyed that.

**SR: Did you own the horse?**

DL: No. We used to hire a chap to bring it up for us.

**SR: What did the family do for fun?**

DL: For fun. Well, we were all very musically inclined. On a Sunday afternoon I remember we used to go to the front room, which was street level, because we had a front lounge, we had a lounge downstairs as well but street level and my two sisters would play on piano, one on bass, one on treble, I used to play violin – I learnt violin for three years – my brother on first violin, I was on second violin, my father with his squeezebox – he had an accordion – and my mother on guitar. And we used to play there, it was really great fun, and after a while there'd be quite a crowd of people outside and they used to clap so it was good enjoyment. But apart from that I enjoyed the sport; I played

all the sport I could. You name the sport, I played it. Before I was sixteen I won the state fencing title, sword fighting, and held it for thirteen years.

**SR: Fencing?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Where would you get an opportunity to do something like that?**

DL: My brother fenced and he taught me and I was a very good fencer.

**SR: Did he do it at the university?**

DL: No, he learnt it in Italy. After he finished his Bachelor of Arts in Sydney he went to Italy – he's an artist – and he got his Diploma of Arts in Rome and Florence and he learnt to fence there and then he brought it back and he insisted on teaching me.

28.07 And I got my university blue in fencing as well and held the title for thirteen years. As I said, the last two years I was in a steel brace because when I was in Darwin I was playing up in the grades in Darwin, I had a fractured spine and I wore a plaster cast for a year and a jacket for a year and a steel brace for five years and I won two titles wearing the brace.

**SR: God.**

DL: Yes. So we were pretty good, my brother and myself. I loved fencing. It must have been the old warrior blood because I used to like to get behind a piece of steel with one man in front of me, him and me, with just these two bits of steel. It was good. It was a sport, a gentleman's sport, yes, I used to love it. But I played football, ..... tennis, first at football, I played cricket, my first in cricket, school, so on, into faculty, played all those sports, golf, I played them all.

**SR: In the '20s you'd have the music in the evenings but on the weekend would the family ever go on outings?**

DL: Yes, yes. A friend of ours had an old truck and we used to all pile in the back of that with seats which we made up ourselves and we'd go off to Audley, the National Park, or out to Bondi for the day and we'd go as a picnic and that was a great outing. In those days, to go on a picnic was something. I mean, now you get kids on a picnic and they're bored after five minutes but we used to enjoy every minute of it; oh, it was lovely. There'd be school outings, there was always a school picnic going on somewhere.

**SR: Where would they take you?**

DL: Mostly it was to Audley. It was very popular because there was plenty of room for rowing, fishing, swimming, there was everything there.

- 30.12    **SR: Did your parents like running a fruit shop?**
- DL: The running it?
- SR: Well, did they like the employment? Like in Italy your mother was a very educated woman.**
- DL: Yes, yes. No, she just had to do it because Dad was gone. She never worked there before this, that was Dad ran it, but she had to do something. Well, it wasn't a fruit shop, it was more a milk bar with exotic fruit and so we had to do it to make a bit of money because we had no money coming in. Once I enlisted, of course, I made my pay over to my mother and it was sent to her and I kept myself pocket money and that kept them going too. And my sister always contributed and my brother when he could. But he had a bad heart, he couldn't contribute much, but my sister always contributed as well; she was a teacher by that time.
- SR: Why is it [break in recording] known for running virtually all the fruit shops and milk bars? And I guess the Greeks then after WWII got into that. Why did they go into fruit shops and milk bars?**
- DL: I think it was because most of the Italians who came out here, I'd say the average or the greater percentage of Italians were paisano, they were people from the earth, from farms, and that's all they knew was how to grow things and how to sell them, market them. That's what they did at home, that's what they did out here and they were very successful at it, most of them, because they worked hard, very, very hard indeed; the whole family usually worked in it.
- SR: Can you describe your mother's working day, say in the '20s?**
- 32.01    **DL:** In the '20s. Most of it was just running the house, the odd sort of – she knitted quite a lot, most of our woollen garments were knitted, and she was the only one I know who could knit with eight needles and give you a jumper with no seams, no joints, no seams, and socks without any seams and all that sort of thing. And she used to do knitting, my aunt did most of the cooking and working out of the shop, as I said, and just cleaning the house and tidying up. Of course, there were a bunch of kids there, seven of us.
- SR: Well, what time would she get up in the morning?**
- DL: Not early, not an early riser, in time to see us off to school at nine o'clock.
- SR: And would she make you breakfast?**
- DL: No, we made our own. We were very independent by then but she would make us sandwiches for lunch.
- SR: How did the Depression affect your family?**

DL: The Depression hit us very hard because Dad lost all his money, as I said, and went over and we were scratching.

**SR: Did that contribute to his health falling apart?**

DL: My health?

**SR: No, your father's. What happened?**

DL: Yes, oh, yes, I think it did, because he lost the lot in one go. That's a lot to lose. He had four blocks of flats which he'd paid deposits on and Bellevue Hill, Dover Heights, Bondi and Double Bay, he owned a whole block at Double Bay, and the bank just foreclosed, bang, like that and took the lot.

**SR: And he would have saved for years.**

DL: That gave him just a shock and the Depression built up and I think he had the stroke from that, personally.

**SR: Terrible.**

DL: So we were really scratching from then on.

**SR: Yes.**

33.55 DL: They were very good at school to allow me to pay my fees but they gave a reduced fee at Darlinghurst; they were very good that way so I paid my fees bit by bit. Same with the university: I was allowed to start without paying and I used to pay bit by bit as I went along.

**SR: Would you say that your mother was happy in the '20s?**

DL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, until Dad was sick she was very happy, yes, quite happy. She was the boss of the family; there was no doubt about that. Dad was very quiet but, no, she used to run the family, she was very bright, very bright.

**SR: And was your Dad happy?**

DL: Yes, I'd say he was, he was quite happy to sort of just work and he was quite happy.

**SR: O.K. Can you tell me what a typical meal was in your family?**

DL: A meal, a typical meal? Oh, we'd start with we'd mostly have soup, usually some of what they call gnocchio which is made with fish heads and it's very, very nice - the French call it bouillabaisse, I think - but we'd have that and then we'd have a spaghetti dish or we'd have steak some night or roast beef but mostly it was an Italian dish. And the spaghetti was always cooked in different ways, it wasn't always with tomatoes, sometimes it was with fish -

it was very nice. And we didn't have sweets, we very rarely had sweets; on birthdays maybe some jelly but mostly it was no sweets.

**SR: And this is in the '20s?**

DL: And we had a lot of bread. We were taught to eat bread with our food to spin it out because there wasn't much food.

**SR: Are you talking then in the '30s when things were tougher?**

DL: No, in the late '20s, early '30s.

**SR: Yes. And when would you have your main meal, in the middle of the day or at the end?**

DL: No, at tea time, the end of the day.

**SR: Right. And that's the sort of thing that you would have.**

35.53 DL: I recall during the early '30s that my brother was mixing with a fairly artistic crowd and for dinner at night we'd have Peter Finch, Chips Rafferty - whose name was John Goffage in those days - Chips Rafferty, Unk White who was the illustrator for *The Bulletin*, and we'd have all these artistic friends at our place for dinner and they used to love spaghetti and the conversation was fantastic for a twelve, thirteen year old, to listen to the way they spoke across the table that you never dared to get up because as soon as you got up off the seat they'd say "While you're up will you get this, will you get that?", you didn't sit for another half an hour and you're running around doing messages, so you got caught.

**SR: Well, tell us about these dinnertime conversations, Peter Finch.**

DL: Oh, they discussed mostly artistic problems they had. Peter Finch lived with us for six months and he acted as my brother's model for two paintings he did for St Mary's and he paid it off that way by doing it. But he used to love living with us because it was easygoing, the house was easygoing, there were very few arguments.

**SR: When was he living there?**

DL: It'd be in the '30s. No, I'm unsure of what time but he mentions it in his book, in his biography.

**SR: What were the names of the paintings?**

DL: And my brother did paintings of St Stephen and the one who was shot by the arrows, St Sebastian, those two, and they were so graphic that they weren't hung outside, they're in the actual archives underneath St Mary's.

**SR: Why?**

DL: People got upset because they were too graphic.

**SR: What was your brother's name?**

DL: Virgil, Virgil Lo Schiavo. He was a brilliant artist. He graduated in Italy cum laude which is about the highest you can get and he was very good. He did quite a lot of murals, after the war he did some murals for a while because then the – it's the State Bank now, he did murals for them in Macquarie Place in Hunter Street.

38.13 Now, remember that the feeling when Italy joined the war. He did a huge mural for a chap called Christmas who was a manager of Woolworths. When Italy entered the war, this fellow whitewashed the whole mural; that's what the feeling was like in some areas.

**SR: That's dreadful.**

DL: But some of his murals are still standing, of course, on the Christ Church St Laurence, he did one there. The church was burnt down and all they did at the back was scrape the wall down and the painting was perfect underneath because it was done in the old Latin style where they put fresh lime and they use pigments that sink right through into the stone, yes.

**SR: And you mentioned earlier that when Peter Finch was living there you had a few adventures with him.**

DL: He led me astray; he used to give me a beer to drink. Don't do that to a thirteen, fourteen year old and they'd be racing around, having parties everywhere, girls all over the place, and they used to keep me out of the way as much as possible but I was pretty curious, I had a look to see what was going on and I learnt very quickly.

**SR: Did he corrupt you?**

DL: He did. It wasn't corruption. I'd call it entertaining knowledge.

**SR: And what can you remember about Chips Rafferty?**

DL: Chips was a tall, gangling bloke, came in, very boisterous, blusterer, and you always knew he was there because he was loud. And a nice bloke, do anything for you, but never had a razoo most of the time, neither did Peter, they were always broke and a heavy drinker. Particularly Peter Finch was a heavy drinker even then; he would drink anything that was on the table kind of thing.

40.17 **SR: They sound like good times.**

DL: They were good and I enjoyed them because I mean you're going around with this crowd and a lot of the time they sort of had parties down at my brother's studio which was in Wylde Street, down the bottom – it's now

navy headquarters – and he actually rented the boardroom area which was one huge room and they'd have parties down there. There wasn't much food going around but there was usually plenty of – I think claret was a shilling a pint in those days – there was plenty of other stuff around. But they were enjoyable. We taught Peter Finch to fence. That's why actually he was a good swordsman, quite a good swordsman.

**SR: Were there a lot of kids in Kings Cross when you were growing up?**

DL: Not so many because there was more – what do you call it? – where we were it was an upper class area, Potts Point. On the other, Darlinghurst side, there were more kids around there but around that area it was mostly one or two children families.

**SR: You lived in Potts Point rather than Kings Cross?**

DL: Yes, the area down from Kings Cross.

**SR: Well, who were your friends?**

DL: My friends were the kids from school; they were the only ones really because I had plenty from school and most of them nice blokes.

**SR: And what would you do together, what sort of things?**

DL: What'd you do? Oh, well, I was always out playing football or cricket. I used to run quite a lot. My brother's pushbike, I used to run around on the pushbike.

**SR: Well, how far could you roam, how restricted or how free were you as a child?**

DL: How far could I run?

**SR: Roam.**

42.01 DL: There was no ..... on that. Mum let us go where we wanted.

**SR: It was safe?**

DL: I used to recall that if I was upset about something I used to go down to Elizabeth Bay Park and sit on the stools there, put my feet on the ..... and just look out at the harbour and I could be there for three hours because I let my Mum know where I was going, "Mum, I'm just going down to have a sit", I'd say, and she'd say "All right, off you go". And I would go down some nights up till one, two in the morning I'd just sit there, just relaxing.

**SR: As a kid? But how old were you when you were there?**

DL: About twelve, thirteen, fourteen.

**SR: Gee.**

DL: I was at university when I was sixteen.

**SR: Really?**

DL: They were different in those days, you started early. And my cousin who lived with us, the girl, she was what I called a swot. She got her Leaving Certificate with first class honours, second class honours and three As and she was only fourteen and a half. They wouldn't let her go to uni so she did it again next year and got two first, four As and they had to take her in even though she was not quite sixteen. I was only fifteen and a half when I went up there. I pulled out my first tooth when I was about sixteen years' old, scared stiff. I put the forceps on the tooth and it rattled, it was shaking.

**SR: Must have given your patient a lot of confidence.**

DL: She didn't mind generally. The tooth was so loose I could have pulled it out with my fingers.

**SR: When you were a kid, what sort of things did you do for fun with your friends? Say we're talking back in the '20s now.**

DL: Sport, it was always sport. We'd used to go to tennis at least once a week.

**SR: Where did you play tennis?**

DL: Tennis, I used to play with my sister up at Bellevue Hill courts. She had a friend up there at Bellevue Hill.

**SR: How would you get there?**

43.54 DL: We'd walk or used the pushbike. Most times we'd walk. I'd hate to do it but sometimes I used to wag it. Not wag it so much as get on the back of a tram, you know, get a free ride. We called it scaling, you'd scale the tram.

**SR: When you were a kid growing up, did you have toys?**

DL: I was very happy if I got a little tin Ford for Christmas - those were the only toys we had. My toys after that when I was twelve, thirteen were swords. I always used to make up stories, dress as a Roman, carry a sword, brandish it and had a wonderful time - I'm a bit of a daydreamer.

**SR: Well, what sort of books were you reading as a child, as a younger child?**

DL: I don't recall even reading primers or something; I went straight into good books. I was reading Keats, Shelley, poetry, I remember reading those when I was about ten or eleven years old. Conan Doyle I'd read about nine or ten, I enjoyed those.

**SR: And what about kid adventure stories like Biggles or something?**

DL: I used to get – there were two magazines out then – one was called ‘The Gem’, the other one was called ‘The Magnet’ and they were schoolboy books, I used to get those fairly regularly.

**SR: Did you ever get the Boys Own Annual?**

DL: I got one once as a present and it was a few years old but I enjoyed it even then, yes.

**SR: Were there places that you were not allowed to go?**

DL: Yes, I wasn’t allowed to go down into Surry Hills or down into East Sydney at night; no, it became quite dangerous at one stage there. And I certainly was not allowed to wander around the streets at night in the middle ‘30s because it started to get a bit rough but not as rough as when the Americans came. Then the prostitutes moved in and next door which were flats became a brothel, virtually.

46.03 And things got rough and there were always fights on at the Piccadilly Hotel which was three doors up from us, every Friday night there’d be a fight on, so I certainly was not allowed in those areas.

**SR: Well, you said Surry Hills.**

DL: Yes, Palmer Street, Crown Street, all that area down there was a bit rough at nighttime.

**SR: And that was even what, the ‘30s or the ‘20s?**

DL: In the ‘30s. The ‘20s wasn’t too bad. Between you and me, I used to like to walk down there and walk past the girls and look, just look, and they’d snarl at me; I’d go for my life; it used to scare me.

**SR: In terms of the crime, you said that at one point in time it got very, very rough.**

DL: Very rough, yes. I tell you when that actually started to occur there was no crime at the Cross when I was younger. You could walk down the street at midnight, at one o’clock, two o’clock. As I said, I used to be down Elizabeth Bay Park and walk back through the darkened streets. It was quite safe, you felt perfectly safe, and the only crime then was amongst the criminals themselves. That chap that was killed in the razor gang was a criminal but only crime in amongst the criminals themselves and so the average civilian was quite safe. You could walk down the middle of the street or down the side of the street and not be touched but during the war is when the prostitutes and all the drugs came in and when the fellows got in, they were looking for a good time and then that’s when crime started to come in because once you get drugs and these in that’s when crime starts.

**SR: In the WWII period there were drugs?**

DL: There were drugs then.

**SR: What sort?**

DL: I don't know because quite frankly I never got near that area. I remember there were some ..... they're called. Rowie Norton, they used to have a lot of dos there that were pretty rough.

48.04 **SR: Do you mean Rosaleen Norton?**

DL: Rowie, she was known as Rowie, R-o-w-i-e.

**SR: She's supposed to be a witch.**

DL: She's supposed to have plenty of money as they said. So did Bea Miles. I saw her a few times and she was brilliant. She could spout Shakespeare at you, you know, from all the years. She was a university student who didn't finish her course but she had a private income but her main thing was jumping onto cabs, jumping in cabs or riding on the mudguards and if she couldn't get in she'd kick the doors in. She was pretty violent that way but she was all right, she was mostly harmless.

**SR: What do you think about this rumour or statement saying that Rowie Norton was a witch?**

DL: A witch?

**SR: M'mm.**

DL: She ran a witches' coven, she called it that. She called it a witches' coven and they went through all these so-called – according to the papers, this is, the papers that say this at the time – she had these rituals that went on there and they're supposed to be witches' rituals but as far as I was concerned she was just a failed artist and I know she wasn't very good so she made herself notorious for this.

**SR: You didn't know her personally?**

DL: No.

**SR: No.**

DL: No. Well, actually, I met her once somewhere but I can't recall where.

**SR: Where else weren't you allowed to go? You weren't allowed to go to Surry Hills and there was somewhere else?**

DL: That was down at East Sydney, Palmer Street, down there. I didn't go to Woolloomooloo because that was the industrial area and very poorly lit and you could get into trouble going there but even that wasn't likely, it was just possible.

50.03 SR: **Were there any people you had to avoid?**

DL: To avoid?

SR: **M'mm.**

DL: Not that I knew of.

SR: **You were never told "You're not to go near so and so"?**

DL: No.

SR: **O.K. And we've talked about school and you were treated well by the teachers?**

DL: Yes, they were good, yes. They were hard but they were good and they taught, they didn't expect you to learn on your own, they taught you.

SR: **Did most local kids go there?**

DL: Many local kids? I'd say about thirty per cent were local, the rest were from other suburbs.

SR: **And that's Darlinghurst - - -**

DL: Darlinghurst, Marist Brothers High School Darlinghurst. Yes, it was a famous school. There were four lord mayors of Sydney in succession all coming from that school.

SR: **And St Vincent's, how was that?**

DL: St Vincent's School? Well, that's still an upper-crust school; the nuns have a convent there; it's still regarded as a pretty high grade school.

SR: **Were you happy at school?**

DL: Yes. Yes, yes, I even liked the fights, yes. Because it brings something out of me.

SR: **Was there much sort of bastardisation there or rituals of initiation?**

DL: No, none of that at all.

SR: **No?**

DL: No, the brothers wouldn't have that. No, we only had one boy expelled from there who was caught stealing when we were playing football, he was thieving the kids' lockers, and he was out on the spot. But, no, the brothers were too stern with that; none of that business going on.

**SR: What about sex education?**

DL: None.

**SR: Well, what about from your parents?**

DL: No, none.

**SR: Really?**

DL: I learnt from Peter Finch.

**SR: Right. What was the average family size at that time, how many kids?**

52.05 DL: Oh, I'd say those days at least two or three kids, two or three kids was the average.

**SR: What was the ethnic mix in Potts Point in the '20s?**

DL: Potts Point? I'm just trying to think back now. I'd say we were the only Italian family or Italian aged family our area – that's at the bottom end of Potts Point. On the other side of Darlinghurst there were quite a large amount of Greeks, Italians, Maltese – a lot of Maltese down there.

**SR: Darlinghurst?**

DL: But there was quite a good ethnic mix – there was no trouble there at all.

**SR: So were there mostly Anglos and you in Potts Point, your family?**

DL: Yes, yes, because in those days it was a fairly expensive area to live and I mean the houses were not cheap but if you went two hundred yards up the road the houses were half the price because they were in Darlinghurst side and not Potts Point; Potts Point was considered the upper crust.

**SR: And your family managed to keep hold of that house all through the '20s?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Was that because it was paid off?**

DL: Oh, yes, yes

**SR: The area, what sort of a neighbourhood was it? Was it residential?**

DL: It was an artistic area, there were a lot of artists lived there, most of them really scraping along but they all had nice addresses: Macleay Street, Kings Cross Road, Victoria Street, all those areas, and Wylde Street. There were a lot of artists there and a lot of writers and quite a lot of the news people used to live there.

**SR: What do you mean “news people”?**

DL: I mean what do you call them, I mean the people who were columnists and reporters.

**SR: Can you remember any of those sort of people that lived there, remember their names?**

DL: Not really, no, I was too young then, no.

54.02 **SR: Well, what was the social focus of the area?**

DL: The social focus was art. They were nearly all – I mean, I can recall going up to get the paper and it'd be nothing at all to see somebody float out in a negligee to pick up the milk or somebody float past in a top hat who's just going home; they all used to dress well but it was an artistic area. You'd go along the street most times, going towards Potts Point you'd find an artist down there, painting part of the city or part of the wharves.

**SR: Was there a place in the area where people met to talk?**

DL: They did, yes. Most of the arty people met at a place called the Arabian Coffee Shop and that was above Woolworths and that was a favourite meeting place for everybody. The other place they used to meet was in the city in Elizabeth Street and I can't recall the name of it but the artists met there too.

**SR: Are we talking '20s or '30s here?**

DL: That's we're talking late '20s, yes. And the '30s – now, what was the name of that place? It was in Elizabeth Street anyway – and Peter Finch would come along and give a monologue or Unk White would be along with his cartoons and sketches and show them all.

**SR: Who?**

DL: Unk White. He was the illustrator for the Bulletin. He used to draw those beautiful coloured, the Aboriginal people, he loved them. And I remember him once inviting me over to his place – we went there with my brother and the whole crew went over, Peter Finch went over, we all went over – he put on a Spanish paella because he'd been in Spain and we took one mouthful and the flames came out of me ears. It was terrific, it was a beautiful paella but it was a little hot. But he was a very good cook as well. So there was a lot of artists lived around there, yes.

56.11    **SR:      What was so special about the Arabian Coffee Shop?**

DL:      I think the coffee was good to start with and it was cheap and also it was a nice actual area where they didn't push you to go. In other words, you'd have your coffee and stay there for an hour with that coffee and that, they'd push you to go. And not so much on the first floor it had trees there and it was a nice shaded area where you could sit and talk.

**SR:      So it was an outdoor sort of place, outdoor café?**

DL:      Yes, part outdoor, part indoor, they had a part outside as well.

**SR:      Well, how would you describe Kings Cross and that area and the shops and that?**

DL:      Kings Cross and the area?

**SR:      At that time.**

DL:      Oh, it was great. You could buy any sort of food you could think of in that area there. They had delicatessens; it had everything from smoked salmon down to Spanish olives. The shopping was good, it was reasonable. The only thing that was dear there were the flowers because the florists were a bit expensive but the rest of it – there was a Woolworths there and most people did their shopping there because that was our nearest spot for shopping – and it was all shops and it was a nice area. You could walk along there at nighttime and it was still open to do your shopping. And there were no pubs open, only the Piccadilly, so it was quite safe to walk up there and there'd be no fights or anything.

**SR:      So there were no sex shops there then?**

DL:      No, none at all.

**SR:      And it sounds like it was a lot more cosmopolitan than what I imagined.**

DL:      It was very cosmopolitan. There were all types there at the Cross: there were French, Italian, you name it, mostly used to congregate in, as I said, the Arabian or around that area. In Macleay Street you'd go to the park and there'd be people just talking there, they were great.

58.02      There was a lovely little park there. It's now where the El Alamein Fountain is now, that was just a little park then, it was all park. And then you could walk down the street to Elizabeth Bay and that also had a lot of people there who were ethnic people, mixed, and a lot of arty people, very much so, there so collected 'round those area; they all finished up at the Arabian.

**SR:      Can you remember the Morrison's cake shop?**

DL: Morrison's, no, I can't recall it but I remember one cake shop that I loved. It was in Elizabeth Street, it was the Greek cake shop - it is still there - and they sold Greek cakes. Have you ever seen Greek cakes? I'm diabetic now, I can't even look at them; I used to love them.

SR: **And the women mentioned to me a gorgeous lingerie shop.**

DL: Oh, there was. Oh, yes, I used to go up there and perv regularly ..... yes. I used to imagine how they were filled.

End Tape 1

SR: **Dario Lo Schiavo, 17th of June 1995. We were talking about what Kings Cross was like and you were mentioning the lingerie shop.**

DL: Yes.

SR: **One other thing. You mentioned just off the record a minute ago of you being in a bit of trouble and being sent down to some relatives. Do you want to tell us about that?**

DL: Yes. Well, I got out of line a little bit and was chasing around with older women, which I shouldn't do, and I was sent down to my relatives in Albury who of the six children two of the boys were priests and two of the girls were nuns and the others were very religious and the mother was very religious and I was sent down there for punishment, which it was for me.

60.13 So I stayed down there for a couple of months. I helped him in his shop – he had a fruit shop – I was working with the old chap in his shop and he and I used to eat our lunch together in the garage because he was not allowed to eat at the table because he drank wine with his meals. Eventually, I managed to find a local bit of skirt and was banished back to Sydney. That's the end of that story which I love.

SR: **And when you were down there in Albury you went to mass every day?**

DL: No way. They used to but I used to go on Sunday. But the two priests, by the way, were pretty famous priests, the Bongiorno's – you might have heard of them – they both finished up Monsignors and they were very up and coming priests, modern era priests. Because I remember the older one, Sam, who we called Gigga, attended at my surgery at Kings Cross to get his teeth fixed and as my nurse went past –and she was a very pretty nurse – he pinched her backside, and this is a Monsignor. And she said "Ooh, Monsignor". He said "I'm sorry, I'm Latin" because that's what they were like. But they were teasers. I recall one time they put itching powder in my bed while I was down there so I got up early and took the sparkplugs out of his car and buried them – I wasn't very popular.

SR: **You were about fourteen at that time, weren't you?**

DL: About fourteen, yes, nearly the last year at school, fourteen, fifteen, fourteen and a half.

**SR: So was your mother hoping you would be reformed?**

DL: I wasn't bad but I was just a bit grown up for my age; that was going around with older people.

62.00 **SR: Did she hope that the religious influence would - - -**

DL: Well, Mum was not all that religious. She'd go to mass every Sunday but she was not a fanatic by any means. She could swear with the best of them. I've heard her swear in Italian, French - not English because she thought it was too coarse - Italian and French for twenty minutes without repeating herself; she had a magnificent flow of language. Because you can do that in Italian, you know. You can call them a son of this and son of that and that can go on for five minutes.

**SR: Who were your neighbours in Potts Point?**

DL: We actually saw very little of them, we didn't even know them, really. The chap next door was the butcher - I don't even recall his second name. We didn't mix, in those days they didn't mix much your next door neighbour. It was almost like England: you had to be introduced sort of business. So we didn't mix much, we didn't know them very well.

**SR: So there wasn't much sense of a community amongst the residents?**

DL: Not really, not really, yes. If they'd held a social dance on a Friday night there wouldn't have been anybody there, that sort of thing, you know, so it was almost like a city area; it was virtually city.

**SR: Well, where did most people work who were living around there?**

DL: They mostly worked in the city or in the arts, in theatre or so on but, no, I can't recall except a local tradesman.

**SR: What were the main businesses there?**

DL: In Victoria Street - in Kings Cross?

**SR: Yes, Potts Point, Kings Cross.**

DL: Kings Cross. There were chemists, butchers - three good butchers, very good - two or three fruit shops, three flower shops to my knowledge, the famous lingerie shop, of course, and the rest were just generally sort of delicatessens. And in those days you could buy rabbits for a shilling a pair, a shilling for each one which were baked and stuffed and they were beautiful. They used to go 'round selling those, hawking those in the streets.

64.11 **SR: Just the raw rabbits?**

DL: Yes, and they were still going 'round the streets in those days, calling out "Rabbitoh" and "Milko". The milkman called and dropped the milk and the bread man called and delivered the bread but those days are gone.

**SR: Well, where do most people do their shopping?**

DL: Up at Kings Cross because they had a Woolworths there, as I said, and the variety of stores that had everything in them; they didn't need to go to the city. They only went to the city to get clothes.

**SR: Well, what about major purchases like furniture or things?**

DL: Oh, you went into the city for those; there were no furniture shops there, there was none.

**SR: Did people shop for the household on a daily basis or a weekly basis?**

DL: Mostly on a daily basis. I believe twice, two or three times a week only at the most they'd go shopping.

**SR: What sort of storage facilities for food would you have in the house?**

DL: We had an ice chest where they put a block of ice. Ice was delivered as well and you put a block of ice and put a tray under the meat. That's all we had; there were no refrigerators those days.

**SR: What smells can you remember?**

DL: What smells? Smells of my mother's cooking and the most beautiful smell of all was when she was roasting coffee because she bought the coffee beans green from Harris Brothers in the Strand Arcade, used to get them green and she used to roast them herself and the smell was magnificent, oh, wonderful smell. And the other smells, let's see now. Beautiful cheeses and underneath the stairway at the back, a stairwell at the back, we used to keep our olives and salamis and cheeses all stored in there and the smell there was beautiful. Lovely food.

66.06 **SR: Well, what sounds do you associate with say the '20s at Potts Point?**

DL: Sounds? The street callers, the street vendors as they came along, because there were quite a few of them. They'd come along every day with their fruit carts, milk carts and the ice carts, like that, and also the beautiful sound of St Mary's when they played the bells which they don't do now; they used to play the bells. And the other sounds – let's see now – you could hear the cars going over the bridge, the trains; enter the bridge from where we were. That's about all.

**SR: And if you sort of close your eyes and think of a sight, an image, what's the image that comes to your mind when you think of the area?**

**DL:** The image of the area? When I was in Leaving Certificate class, upper Darlinghurst, our room was on the top floor. There was no units – they turned into units – I always used to sit near the open door because you had no air conditioning so it was kept open, I could see all of Sydney and down to the Cross from that room. I spent most of my time not studying but looking out at the scenery. I don't know how I passed my exams, I really don't.

**SR: Sounds nice.**

**DL:** I was a loafer. I always topped the class in English because I read so much and French, of course.

**SR: Can you remember any big events from your childhood?**

**DL:** Opening of the bridge, I can recall that. Declaration of war, I remember that. It was very quiet when war was declared, it was very quiet, there was not much noise around, people didn't say anything much. And the only – let's see now – the only noise because I came home on leave very rarely, Mum would rush out, yelling at me because she never expected to see me again and rush out. And the only other noises were the advent of the car in particular.

68.17 **SR: When was that?**

**DL:** That was early '20s. Before that, it was nearly all carts and horses and it was lovely to hear the horses clip-clopping around. It was nice, the smell of horses, I love the smell of horses.

**SR: Can you remember the sinking of the Greycliffe?**

**DL:** Yes. That was a huge tragedy, it was in the papers, and once again there was virtually silence about it. It was in the papers, of course, but nobody wanted to discuss it much because it was such a bad thing to happen.

**SR: Well, what did happen?**

**DL:** What did happen there was that the Greycliffe got too close to – she was seeing off the American warship which was visiting Australia and it got too close and the warship hit it and it rolled over and sank. All the people were on one side. Actually, I think the warship actually virtually, I think it barely touched it but the wave from it and all the people on one side of the ferry and the ferry overbalanced and sank.

**SR: A lot of kids got killed on that.**

DL: Lots, yes. I don't remember the bombing of Sydney, the shelling of Sydney, because I was away in Darwin but Mum said it was a scary time and at the time they were selling houses at Woollahra for a thousand pounds.

**SR: Can you remember any local characters?**

69.53 DL: Yes, all the famous ones, Peter Finch, Chips Rafferty, all those, Unk White. Unk White wasn't really local, he lived in North Sydney, but he was always over at the Cross. Bea Miles, of course, I remember her. I can't recall any other local characters, really.

**SR: Well, we've sort of talked about them anyway.**

DL: Yes.

**SR: But what about local criminals?**

DL: We had none until, as I said, the Americans came down but the criminals kept to themselves. There was no real criminal activity as such in the area. It was more or less understood that people were left alone; the civilians were left alone in Kings Cross.

**SR: But what about things like break and enters and stuff like that? Didn't that happen at those days?**

DL: We were broken into in Yurong Street once and I don't know what that was about but the burglar came in but the other time, no. In those days you left your doors open, your windows open, you left your car unlocked and nobody touched them. It was an understood thing the criminals who were in the Cross didn't touch your own.

**SR: Well, were there any crimes committed in that area?**

DL: Yes, not to my knowledge, not really. No, I don't recall any major crime like the razor gang attack, I don't recall any crime.

**SR: O.K. Did you know of any two-up schools?**

DL: Thommo's was there; it was famous even then.

**SR: Where was that?**

DL: Thommo's, it wasn't here, it wasn't at the Cross. The criminals wouldn't have it there because it was sort of not right to have it there; it was just too open to be picked up by the police, so it was mostly Newtown.

**SR: Who's Thommo anyway?**

DL: Thommo was the chap who ran the school, he opened the school.

**SR: What was his name, his real name?**

DL: I don't know, I just know his name was Thommo. And it was a two-up school and it would be different areas all the time but it was never in the Cross.

72.05 **SR: It just moved around?**

DL: Yes. That's why he never got caught.

**SR: What was your view of the police and your family's view of the police in the '20s?**

DL: They were friendly. You could stop and ask directions and get a polite answer. They were always there if you needed them; you would phone and they were there like a shot. When I had my [dental] practice there, because I never, ever sent them a bill - so I could park my car upside down on the driveway if I wanted to. I could anything I wanted. But they were wonderful. I always helped them with their raffles and so on.

**SR: With their raffles?**

DL: Yes, with the raffles: things like they'd send you tickets, you'd buy them. And I don't think I ever had recourse to call them for anything at all. No, they were good. There was only one police station at Darlinghurst - it was really out of our area.

**SR: There was no sense of them being corrupt?**

DL: Never heard of it, not while we were there.

**SR: O.K.**

DL: Didn't need to. They were reasonably well paid according to the ordinary wage then.

**SR: Did you know anything of bootlegging?**

DL: Bootlegging? No, not as far as I know. We had some property over in an island in Italy and the people who rented that property used to send us ten gallon casks of wine and they were brought in and all that, no duty on them or anything, just brought in. There was, of course, illicit bootleg after six following. Oh, yes, you could buy whiskey, beer, anything you liked if you'd go after six when the bars were closed if you know where to go. If you went 'round the back lane up to the Piccadilly Hotel - I don't know if I should mention it - but you could go in the back door and you could always get some grog. We called it sly grog so it was not bad, no vicious.

74.11 **SR: What about prostitution?**

DL: It was there but it was discreet and in our area it was upper class and it was virtually call girls, not prostitutes but prostitutes were down in East Sydney, Palmer Street, Crown Street, all that area, yes, where they stood in the doorways. I can't recall any drugs, really, I can't recall any drug trafficking. It think it was the advent of drug trafficking was started towards the end of the war. That's when the crime started to come in, real crime.

**SR: Was there much SP booking?**

DL: I didn't know because at the time I was too young to bet but there was, of course, yes.

**SR: Did your parents bet?**

DL: No. If Dad did, he went out to the races.

**SR: Can I ask was there a sense - like with the sly grog and even the two-up and with the SP booking, I've had a sense from a lot of people that the majority of the population didn't consider the people who did that as criminals. Like it was more like it was a stupid law and therefore the law should be disregarded.**

DL: Yes, it was. Most people, I'd say the majority of people, took SP booking and two-up as a national pastime but you had to be careful not to get caught, that's all.

**SR: Well, when there was no money, how did people survive?**

DL: On the dole. In those days you didn't get cash. You were given coupons for food and coupons for clothes and if you wanted cash you worked three days on the roads anywhere they sent you and you got some cash. I think it was that people were better off.

76.02 **SR: Pardon?**

DL: People were better off.

**SR: Than what?**

DL: Than now, when they spend all their money on cigarettes and drugs and leave their children to starve which is happening.

**SR: What sort of employment was available for kids, say in the '20s?**

DL: Kids. There was employment everywhere, menial jobs, plenty of them. If you wanted to go – I took jobs working in a shop and so on but I had opportunities to scrub floors, clean floors, sweep out rooms, cleaning, there was always plenty of work around. Yes, a small job like that but you wouldn't get much money for it though.

**SR: But would you do them?**

DL: You could do them. Well, I already wasn't allowed. I was allowed to work in the shop because it was clean but I had my hands to think of. I knew I was going to do dentistry and anything that would wreck my hands would have wrecked me.

**SR: So were there kids in your area that were working, like in Potts Point doing odd jobs when they were like twelve, ten to fourteen, say?**

DL: Odd jobs ..... Not really.

**SR: No.**

DL: No, they all went to school and a lot more children went onto the higher classes and do now.

**SR: So when the Depression hit that area, given that that was a more affluent area say than Darlinghurst or whatever, did you see much change in the area as a result of that?**

DL: No, it wasn't really hit as hard as other areas for the simple fact that people were used to living well; all they did was live a little less well. In other words they cut back on a few of the luxuries but of the essentials they had plenty. There was never any shortage.

**SR: Did you go on holidays as a kid?**

DL: Holidays? Let me see. Yes, I did. I used to come up here, had school holidays once a year, and we used to rent a cottage at Kincumber for six shillings a week and there were about eight of us boys from the school and we just rode in the boats and fished and swam, looked after ourselves.

78.13 **SR: But what about when you were a younger child and you would be with your family –did the family go on holidays?**

DL: Not that I recall, not really.

**SR: I suppose you'd have to keep the shop running.**

DL: The shop was going seven days a week.

**SR: Seven days a week?**

DL: Open Sundays.

**SR: You'd think there wouldn't be much demand in Saturdays and Sundays.**

DL: Oh, Sundays people used to go to the city just to walk and they'd want a cup of coffee or a cup of tea or afternoon tea and we had sandwiches and tea and cakes, all that sort of .....

SR: **Who made the cakes?**

DL: The cakes, we bought them.

SR: **O.K.**

DL: Gartrell White.

SR: **Sorry?**

DL: Gartrell White was the name of the firm they bought them from.

SR: **Right. Did most people shop locally?**

DL: Yes.

SR: **What were the most popular newspapers in the '20s?**

DL: The [*Sydney Morning Herald*] was very popular - my Dad always bought it – and *The Bulletin* was quite popular. I don't recall whether there was a *Telegraph* then. Sunday papers, of course, were always popular.

SR: **Everybody read the Sunday papers then?**

DL: Yes.

SR: **What magazines did you get in your house?**

DL: Magazines? Very few to my knowledge.

SR: **Comics?**

DL: Comics, yes, I used to love comics. As I said, *The Magnet* and *The Gem* and any comics that I could scrounge, yes.

SR: **Did you go to the pictures?**

DL: Yes. I remember my first film. I went up there; I was about seven or eight. How they let me in, I don't know, but I saw Emil Jannings in 'The Way of the Flesh' [The Way of *All* Flesh]. I've never mentioned that. It was an R certificate film; he got the Academy Award for it. I didn't understand it; it was brilliant but I didn't understand it.

SR: **Was that on in the afternoon?**

DL: That was on in the afternoon, yes, they had a matinee session on there. I used to go up to the Kings Cross Theatre which was on the corner and I used to go up every Saturday because a Saturday afternoon was a big thrill, was the serials like the 'Perils of Pauline' and Hopalong Cassidy, all those, I used to love those.

80.20 The kids would cheer and yell, there'd be popcorn being thrown around, all that sort of stuff, it was great.

**SR: What songs can you remember?**

DL: Songs? Mostly opera but I can remember two pieces of music, my sister used to play them, because we had opera records. I've still got them; my mother gave them to me. They're 78s and the opera, Caruso ..... all those. But I remember my sister when she played Claire de Lune or the Submerged Cathedral, La Cathédrale Engloutie, the whole house stopped to listen because she played it beautifully. And we all stopped whatever we were doing, we stopped and listened and she'd make a mistake and smash the lid down and go off in high dudgeon but she was brilliant, her music was beautiful. Mostly we listened to classical music ..... ..

**SR: Were there any popular songs that were sort of on?**

DL: Oh, yes, but I can't recall them all; 'In the Mood', things like that.

**SR: Was the radio around then?**

DL: The radio was around though we used to listen to 'Radio Lux Theatre' quite a lot, especially when Peter was on, Peter Finch was on – he was in there quite a bit and that was the main thing, enjoyment in my time, to listen to radio. We had one, an old radio, in the lounge room. We'd all go up and listen to it. They used to have plays on, good plays and serials.

82.11 **SR: Was that in the '20s or '30s?**

DL: '20s.

**SR: '20s?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Can you remember the name of any of the plays or serials?**

DL: Not really, no.

**SR: O.K.**

DL: Hang on. 'Mum and Dad' on the farm.

**SR: 'Dad and Dave'?**

DL: 'Dad and Dave' and all those, yes, and I don't think 'Blue Hills' was going. It was later on in the ..... '30s.

**SR: Did you ever play jokes or tricks on anybody?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Can you tell us some of those?**

DL: I had my room in the attic and when I was studying for anatomy at university I got a skull which I managed to find in a second-hand shop and I rigged that just outside my door. Now, the attic door, you had to go up steep, winding stairs to get to the attic door and I put a red flag on it. Every time I had a girlfriend come to see me I'd wait till she got halfway up the steps and I'd put the light on. This red skull would glow out and scream and fall backwards straight into my arms which was perfect, a good start. And above my doorway I had "..... abbandone ogni speranza voi ch'entrate" which translated to mean "Abandon all hope he who enter", that's what I had. I was a bit of a devil.

**SR: Yes, sounds like it.**

DL: I used to enjoy that. Also once my sisters had two girls visiting and at great labour I installed two tubes down from my room down the side of the house into the window, just the top of the window, to their room which was directly below and I'd made cutouts and fixed them onto the window so they could fall over when I pulled a string. So I waited till they were all in bed and I pulled the string and the cutout of a man's head came across the window and I went "Oooh" and my sister had fainted from fear. I got caught, yes.

84.10 **SR: What about when you were younger?**

DL: No, not really. No, I was very quiet; I was a continual asthmatic and I used to read a lot, I was very quiet. I was so good I was sickening when I was little.

**SR: You made up for it later.**

DL: Well, I tried hard.

**SR: Yes. What major changes did you see?**

DL: The major changes? As I said, the advent of the war brought the Americans; it brought fights because they were always fighting.

**SR: Who were?**

DL: The Australians would fight - I didn't blame them - because they'd come there and you know the old saying, they came over to Australia "Oversexed,

overpaid and over here” and the Australians resented that, they did really, so there was quite a lot of fights. And also they were also getting in more fights in front of the Piccadilly Hotel; it went from one a week to about three a week because overseas seamen, tough boys, would visit. That was the best pub for them because the girls were there as well so there’d be fights there.

**SR: When you say “the girls”, do you mean prostitutes?**

**DL:** Prostitutes, yes. They were the main changes and the feeling around Kings Cross changed. It’s changed from being a friendly, totally safe area to a dangerous area to an area where nobody wanted to talk to you any more, it was like that. That was the most that changed.

**SR: You know how the Australians and the Americans would fight, that’s the troops, but how did the general Australian population feel about the Americans?**

**DL:** Well, as far as we were concerned we were up in Darwin and we were getting bombed and we were glad they were there to give us a hand because we got hit very hard. People think Darwin got bombed a few times. It wasn’t. It was bombed sixty eight times. I was there through most of them.

86.11 I remember seeing Darwin a sea of flame, the city itself a sea of flame and the harbour all on fire because the oil caught fire and about a dozen ships on their side, sunk. So we were quite glad but as far as that goes they were resented; we still thought we didn’t need them.

**SR: That was the troops would resent them?**

**DL:** No, not the troops, I’d say the general civilian population who didn’t know how dangerous it was. See, when we got hit in Darwin the news led ‘29 Killed’. There were two thousand five hundred killed in its first raids. They kept us quiet because there would have been a panic, right.

**SR: Right.**

**DL:** And I said “If we knew” because we buried them. I was in a hospital up there; we had to bury them. If you go up and see the cemetery up there you’d be surprised how many graves there are there. We were hit hard. That’s where I got hurt.

**SR: At what point did you get hurt?**

**DL:** I think it was the third or fourth or fifth week or the raids, a retaliatory measure from the Japanese: because one of their hospitals was bombed they bombed us. And they dropped a five hundred pounder and the concussion picked me up and blew me through the wall of the x-ray room. It was only fibro cement. but it broke my back.

**SR: Were you working in the - - -**

DL: I was working x-ray then; I was a qualified radiographer, staff sergeant.

**SR: It's a wonder that you weren't made a paraplegic or something.**

DL: I was for three weeks. I couldn't move my legs for three weeks but I had to keep working because I was the only radiographer within two hundred miles.

88.04 **SR: So how could you keep working?**

DL: So I worked in a wheelchair. They got a chap to position the patients and I just lived on APCs [analgesics], sixteen to eighteen a day to keep going.

**SR: That's terrible.**

DL: The worst part was when my legs started to come back. Sort of you know how you get pins and needles? This was like pins and needles ten times over but they did come back but still the damage was permanent.

**SR: I don't know. You look like you're getting around all right now.**

DL: Yes. I'm lucky to be walking. The specialist told me I'd be in a wheelchair by the time I was forty. I'm seventy six now. A lot of it depends on your willpower. You can beat it, you can beat all these things; it hurts to walk but you keep walking.

**SR: Well, you don't want to stop.**

DL: No.

**SR: You're done for if you - - -**

DL: So none of us got hurt apart from me but they used daisy cutters – they're horrible. They are bombs which hit the ground and explode sideways, sending out shrapnel, so if you're near to them your legs get cut off; they maim you. My tent was shredded; if I'd been in my tent I would have been killed; my tent was shredded by one of those.

**SR: When you were a kid growing up in the '20s, what did you know of the world outside your local area?**

DL: Not very much, really, not that much while I was growing up there. No, we were pretty localised. The school was there, our friends were at the school, we all had our own friends and we were a family, a very much together family. So we ate together, we lived together so we were more or less a group on our own. No, I didn't know much about the world outside.

**SR: What can you remember of common illnesses, what sort of illnesses were there in the '20s that people would get?**

90.09 DL: Flu, of course. The flu went through Sydney and killed a lot of people. I was personally concerned with my asthma and there was more of that was recognised and those days the only treatment was adrenaline. [Break in recording]

**SR: Diphtheria?**

DL: Yes, the usual amount, diphtheria, whooping cough, all the childhood things that were around but the only thing that was bad was that Spanish Flu that went through Sydney. That did a lot of damage.

**SR: When was that?**

DL: Just after the war.

**SR: WWI?**

DL: M'mm.

**SR: You would have been virtually a baby or two or three?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Did you ever get hospitalised?**

DL: Yes, I was pretty sick. When I was eighteen months old I had pneumonia and gastroenteritis at the same time and the doctor sat with me for twenty four hours, pulled me through it. I think that's why I've always had a weak chest. But, no, I've been to hospital plenty of times since, yes. A broken leg when I was skating, got in a couple of fights and broke my nose - my nose has been broken eight times – and the other times I've been to hospital have been mostly army days ..... ..

**SR: Yes. But your nose got broken as a kid?**

DL: Yes. Yes, mainly because a relative of mine gave me a glass of muscat and I'm five years old, she gave me a full tumbler of muscat, brown muscat. You know brown muscat wine?

**SR: Yes.**

DL: It's like sherry. I drank it. I fell off the top of the fence. They say I was calling out "Miaow" as I went down. I thought I was a cat and I landed on my conk and my mother cried because I had a lovely straight Parisian nose, you know, a straight Roman nose and I bent it all over the place; it was ruined.

**SR: Well, what can you remember of your hospital experience from then?**

92.03 DL: From then?

**SR: Yes. Well, you must have been taken to hospital for that.**

**DL:** No, no. I was born at home and the time I was put in hospital was when I was really sick with the flu but they sent me straight back. Broken leg, I was in the hospital in the Sydney Hospital then.

**SR: How old were you when you broke your leg?**

**DL:** I was fourteen, fifteen.

**SR: How'd you do that?**

**DL:** Ice skating.

**SR: Where?**

**DL:** I was skating down the Glaciarium and I was doing a figure eight and a kid fell in front of me with her hands stretched out and my blades were going straight forward and they were sharp blades. So I twisted on my ankle, trying to miss her and I missed her and I came down, the skate went across my leg and I broke my leg.

**SR: Well, what can you remember about that hospital experience then?**

**DL:** Well, I think there was a doctor there skating behind me. He organised the pick-up - they had to pick me up a certain way – they took me to hospital and they put it straight in plaster and they put it in wrongly so the next day they had to reset it and the doctor said “I’m sorry, we can’t give you any morphia because of your chest. We’ll have to do it without the anaesthetic”. So he said “Just hang on” so I just hung on and sweated blood and they pulled it out and reset it and set it properly and it made me a celebrity because I was in plaster and getting around in crutches. Nobody got cheeky anyway because I could belt with the crutches quite easily. It made it very awkward getting up to my room, up the steps: I had to sit on my backside and go up slowly. Otherwise, that was all.

**SR: O.K. Can you remember any of the politicians of the day? You’ve mentioned Lang.**

**DL:** I remember Lang. Menzies, of course.

**SR: No, Menzies would have been much later.**

**DL:** He was later but during the war.

94.02 **SR: Yes.**

**DL:** Yes. He was the minister of war – he declared war. Didn’t you know?

**SR: I can't remember.**

DL: Menzies declared war in 1939. Not really.

**SR: What about the '20s?**

DL: No, I wasn't interested in politics, I was too young.

**SR: Can you remember any election campaigns?**

DL: No, not a one.

**SR: Well, what about street speakers? I've heard that people used to stand on corners and also there was Hyde - - -**

DL: We saw plenty of that. We used to go down virtually every second or third Sunday to listen to the soapbox boys down at the Domain, yes, and listen to them spouting away there and that was fun because they were silly, most of them.

**SR: Yes?**

DL: Yes.

**SR: Can you remember any of the - - -**

DL: Yes, my mother got into trouble, yes, because she was a suffragette. As I said, she smoked and she was mad for women's rights - she chained herself to the Domain railings. She was anti-conscription, she refused to do women's work, what they call women's work; she said she could either drive an ambulance or do nothing. And she chained herself to the rails and the crowd got around her, all men, and she was abusing them because she said "Women are slaves here in Australia and they should not be" and the police had to come and cut her free. The police came and they were very kind: they cut her free and took her home.

**SR: When was that?**

DL: That was when they brought in conscription at WWI.

**SR: So this is before you were born?**

DL: Yes, I wasn't born then. I was told about this. She was a spitfire, my mother, a real spitfire. She was only about this big (demonstrates visually), about five feet. You wouldn't believe it but two big detectives came around during WWII. They knocked on the door and they came and answered it, "We've come to arrest your son" and she says "For what?" They said "He's been fencing down at the club, the Italian Club".

96.06 And she said "What's wrong with that?" And then she said "As a matter of fact, he's been in the army for two years. He is in uniform. What are two big men like you doing out of uniform, why aren't you fighting for your

country? Get out of my house". And they went, she kicked them out. They went. So that's what the situation was. She was a real spitfire.

**SR: Was she involved in any women's organisations, feminist organisations?**

DL: No, she was always anti-conscription; she was always for women's rights, yes. And she wasn't publicly for it but if anybody came she'd expound on the theory and if you mentioned anything about masochistic things like, not masochistic, male things she would tear into you because she was a real suffragette type.

**SR: That's good.**

DL: They told her not to smoke so she smoked more. They told her not to cut her hair short, she cut it short. She was game, yes, a little lady but full of fire.

**SR: How'd your father cope with that?**

DL: Pretty quiet, stood in the background and said nothing, he'd learned how to. But when he did speak, when my father got angry he used to go a little white, he'd become very quiet and the quieter he got the more dangerous he was. So if he had enough of Mum or she was nagging he'd just get up and he'd say "Quiet, woman. Into the kitchen" and Mum would go because she knew she'd just pushed a little too far. I remember he once put his plate of spaghetti clear through the window of the kitchen and the window wasn't open at the time and he went down the club, stayed there for a week till Mum learnt her lesson.

**SR: A bit tough.**

DL: But she was always in, these discussions with Finch and all those, she was always in amongst the middle of it, haranguing them.

98.08 **SR: And what did they think of her?**

DL: Oh, they thought she was wonderful. You ask my wife. All her friends, they thought she was the most wonderful lady in the world. Oh, she was, she was bright, entertaining, well knowledged, you know, got an immense amount of knowledge, could speak well in all three languages with an Italian accent in the English and she spoke very well and she had a tremendous sense of humour.

**SR: Can you remember the sacking of Lang in the '30s?**

DL: In the '30s?

**SR: M'mm.**

DL: No, I can't recall much of that, really, because we were in the wrong area.

**SR: O.K. I want to ask you about rituals. Like can you remember how like Arbour Day or Wattle Day being celebrated?**

**DL:** Oh, yes. ANZAC Day was a big day even then, it was a huge day. We closed the shop ANZAC Day always and we all went in and waved flags madly.

**SR: Even from the '20s?**

**DL:** Even from the '20s, yes, because, as I said, Dad served in WWI and he was a master gunner in the navy. And you used to get huge crowds to all those things and we used to love it – holiday atmosphere.

**SR: In the '20s, do you have any recall of men being around who were minus a limb and shell-shocked or a bit loony?**

**DL:** No. What we did get in the late '30s were a lot of men who would sleep on your front verandah or sleep downstairs down at the front part of the house and get drunk – there was a lot of drunks. We had a tremendous amount of drunks at the Cross and they'd just sleep in people's verandahs, yes.

100.11 **SR: So you don't remember anybody that came back from WWI a bit the worse for wear?**

**DL:** No, not really, no, because they generally kept to themselves.

**SR: O.K. Sorry, we were talking that ANZAC Day was big. What about Wattle Day? Do you remember anything about Wattle Day?**

**DL:** No, I don't recall Wattle Day.

**SR: Arbour Day?**

**DL:** No.

**SR: Empire Day?**

**DL:** Empire Day, yes.

**SR: Tell me about that.**

**DL:** What was that? That was treated not the same as ANZAC Day. ANZAC Day was a ritual we never missed but Empire Day, yes, because it was an empire and the British Empire was pretty big and Mum was a monarchist, she believed in the royal family and Dad did too, so they celebrated Empire Day, yes. Fireworks all over the place; we could see them from the top of the roof; I used to go up to the roof and watch them.

**SR: Did you used to make a bonfire?**

DL: Did I make a bonfire? They'd make them in the back lane but I never went down to them.

SR: **Why?**

DL: I could see it from the top of the roof. I didn't want to get too close and get hit by an exploding firework.

SR: **Did you ever get fireworks?**

DL: Yes, we got fireworks, let them off in the backyard, yes. Always got into trouble; used to shoot rockets up. Well, you can't shoot a rocket up in East Sydney because it lands in somebody's house always.

SR: **I was also wondering about things, like at school was there any marching around and singing the anthem and saluting the flag or any of that business?**

DL: No. We always had assembly where we stood in our class ranks and the school was a school where if you were going to play up and do something wrong you did not wear your badge or your tie.

102.03 They used to have a high, very high, moral tone, a very high intellectual tone. You were not allowed to disgrace your school; your school was the main thing, that was it, that's was it, and if you disgraced the school you'd be in real trouble. So there was never any sordid drinking or cigarette smoking, all that sort of stuff, none of that went on.

SR: **Well, did you know something called "the pledge", did you take something called "the pledge"?**

DL: No. When I went into the army.

SR: **No, as a kid. Well, what was the pledge in the army?**

DL: To serve the Queen.

SR: **No.**

DL: No. .... yes.

SR: **Was there such a thing – there was, I think, in the '30s, I know, of a sort of a thing they had in the school called physical culture and it was sort of they'd get lots of kids doing these sort of calisthenics type movements.**

DL: Oh, yes. Physical education was one of the subjects at school. All schools did them and every year when you had your yearly concert there was always a play and there was also a physical education display, always. That was a big thing in those days, you got quite a lot of it.

**SR: Can you remember ever being part of a mass display, like going to the Showground or a place like that when there was some visiting dignitary and joining with other schools to do that kind of stuff?**

**DL:** No. Going to the Show? No, we used to march in the St Patrick's parade every year with our own band and I was the drummer and we used to march out to the Showground through the streets and that was a good day.

**SR: Was there much rivalry between Catholics and Protestants?**

**DL:** Not really but, I mean, all schools are in rivalry but nothing in Protestant, not really, didn't care.

**SR: So you had Protestant friends?**

**DL:** Yes, yes. Also Jewish, coloured. They were all mixed in the school.

104.01 **SR: Were there Aboriginal kids at the school?**

**DL:** No. There were Greeks. One, two Aboriginal kids who were treated the same as everybody else.

**SR: Were you aware of abortion?**

**DL:** Abortion?

**SR: Yes.**

**DL:** No, I never heard of it.

**SR: I wanted to ask about pollution. Do you think that the area was polluted at that time in the '20s?**

**DL:** No, I don't think so, no.

**SR: Well, what about the fact that everyone – I mean, did you have coal fires and wood fires?**

**DL:** No, we had radiators; we never used coal.

**SR: Did you ever go to Luna Park?**

**DL:** Yes. Went there a couple of times, enjoyed it. Couldn't afford it more than once or twice but we went down and enjoyed it, had a wonderful time. I was sick, of course.

**SR: What?**

DL: I was sick. I went on the stupid Big Dipper and I came out of it and I was ewrgh, threw up, mainly because I was eating hot dogs and things I shouldn't have eaten but otherwise it was great fun.

SR: **Did Luna Park have a seedy reputation or sort of a positive, fun reputation?**

DL: Luna Park?

SR: **Yes.**

DL: Positive fun, it was all fun, everybody enjoyed it, went there for the day.

SR: **So it was a respectable establishment?**

DL: Yes, respectable establishment and it was classed as just inferior to the Easter Show.

SR: **Really? Did you go to the Easter Show?**

DL: Yes. In those days the samples were free, you got free samples. You'd go on there, you could gorge yourself on beautiful chips and you'd get hot dogs and things for practically nothing. And you got your samples and when you got home you'd stuff yourself full of those, then you lost the lot later on but who cared.

SR: **As a child were you happy?**

DL: Yes. I used to get days when I was quite – if I'd read a sad book or something, you know, Anne of Green Gables, something like that – I read all those – some sad book. No, that's when I used to go down to Elizabeth Bay and just sit and look at the ships going past, the boats, and that seemed to settle it down.

106.13 SR: **What's your happiest memory?**

DL: Three really. Let's see now. Passing my exams, marrying my wife and our fiftieth anniversary are three of the happiest occasions I've had.

SR: **What's the saddest memory, thinking back to your childhood?**

DL: The saddest memory was when my uncle died. He was only young. He stood on a nail, he got tetanus. Stood on a nail, went through his shoe because his shoes were thin and poisoned. He got tetanus and he died within two days.

SR: **Where was this?**

DL: This was at Victoria Street in Kings Cross.

**SR: He got tetanus in Kings Cross?**

DL: Yes, tetanus, oh, yes, from the nail.

**SR: What year was that?**

DL: That was 1924, '25, and he left his wife and three kids and they've moved in with us, my cousins. That was a sad day because I woke up – they left me that night to look after the children, for some reason or other left me – and I woke up and I saw my uncle there and he looked sad, you know, and that was him, he had died. When they came back I said "Uncle ..... is dead" and they said "Yes, he is" and that's what it was, I saw him.

**SR: Well, what's your most vivid memory?**

DL: Vivid memory. The joy on my mother's face when I told her I'd passed my exams because she thought I would never pass; I used to do very little work as a lad. Yes, that was vivid, yes.

108.02 **SR: O.K, look, I've run out of questions.**

DL: And also the pride on my mother's face when I won my first championship at sixteen, state title.

**SR: For what?**

DL: Fencing.

**SR: Fencing?**

DL: Yes, and I held it for thirteen years.

**SR: That's pretty good.**

DL: That's pretty good.

**SR: That must be a record.**

DL: Well, I think it could be except there's a couple of chaps since then that have held it quite long.

**SR: Look, I've run out of questions. Is there anything else that you want to say, anything I haven't covered?**

DL: No, just I've led a very full life.

**SR: Yes.**

DL: And it's been happiest up at – we used to live at Eastwood, and here, because our family, it's like all Italian and Irish families – my wife's Irish,

I'm Italian extraction – those families are a tight-knit group. Now, we've got six kids. If one of our children needs help the other five will group around, whatever sort of help it is, financial, whatever, they'd give every cent they've got to help out and anything goes wrong they're all together again. And all Christmas, all birthdays, even the grandchildren, Easter, all Christmas holidays, all school holidays are spent here; we have enough beds for twenty two people so they all sleep here and they all come up.

**SR: That sounds great.**

DL: Which is great.

**SR: Yes. O.K, thank you very, very much.** [Break in recording]

DL: He's eighty two. We watched his concert. He played Rhapsody in Blue with a pianist. I can play three numbers and I'm finished, my lungs are gone. (Plays harmonica: Moon River) Is that all right?

110.59 **SR: Yes, it's great.**

DL: Good.

**SR: Do you want to do another one?**

DL: Do you want me to?

**SR: Yes, yes.**

DL: Do you like St Louis Blues?

**SR: O.K.**

DL: You heard of that?

**SR: No, but I will.**

DL: [plays harmonica: St Louis Blues]

**Interview ends**