

CITY OF SYDNEY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

INTERVIEWEE: Sydney Fennell

INTERVIEWER: Sue Rosen

PLACE: Alexandria

DATE: 16 November 1994

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SR:** **Interview with Mr Sydney Fennell at Alexandria, 16th of November 1994.**

Thanks for talking to us, Syd. I believe you grew up in Alexandria.

SF: Yes, I did, yes.

SR: **What year were you born?**

SF: In '29, 1929.

SR: **And when do your memories go back to?**

SF: Oh, gee whizz, I can go back to – how far back I don't know, I don't know, can't remember back too far, I suppose. I can remember back along Henderson Road when there was a theatre up there; I think it was called the Empress. There was an old tin shed; it was a timber and machinery factory along there. A lot of people wouldn't remember that.

SR: **Would that have been the mid '30s?**

SF: Oh, it would have had to been, yes, I was only a young fellow.

SR: **Would that have been in the mid '30s?**

SF: It would have been, yes, it would be about when I was about eight, nine.

SR: And what sort of a kid were you?

SF: What sort of a kid was I? Oh, one of the best.

SR: Yes?

SF: Like any other normal kid in the area, all did the same thing. Nobody had much, no one had more than the other fellow.

SR: Did you have brothers and sisters?

SF: I had brothers, no sisters.

SR: That would have been fairly unusual at that time.

SF: It was in this area, yes.

SR: And where did you live?

SF: I lived in Renwick Street, Alexandria.

SR: And what did your parents do, what did your dad do?

SF: He was a wood machinist in the boot trade. That's when he was working as I was a kid, growing up.

SR: What factory did he work in?

2.04 SF: He worked for the Pioneer Heel Company in McEvoy Street, he worked for the British Lasts Company up in Redfern, making heels for women's shoes.

SR: Can you remember much of the Depression years?

SF: Not terribly. I can remember my mum and dad talking about it, that they didn't have anything or nobody had anything. All you had was friends and they had nothing.

SR: So you would remember the war period then, wouldn't you?

SF: Yes, yes.

SR: Can you remember the outbreak of WWII?

SF: Yes, I can, yes.

SR: What do you remember?

SF: I can remember the prime minister coming on and announcing that we were at war, I can remember different things that went on in Australia in this South Sydney area.

SR: Well, what sort of things went on?

SF: Things like the National Emergency Services [NES], the warders and air raid wardens and things like that.

SR: What did they do?

SF: They met at Alexandria School and they patrolled the area and they lectured people on what precautions would be taken and things like this.

SR: And what were they patrolling the area for?

SF: Oh, they used to have blackout periods and they'd go around, making sure that people had their windows blacked out and they'd advise them if they didn't and warn them if they didn't, yes.

SR: Can you remember the period just before the war – like was the war sort of expected to happen?

SF: Yes, as a child I couldn't say that I could recall that but looking back in time I think it was expected.

SR: And what was the feeling when you heard that the war was breaking out - can you remember that?

SF: Terrible, terrible feeling. Your dad looked like being called up and the home would more or less be disturbed and broken up for that period and women weren't very happy about it, sons looked like going to war and no good.

4.12 **SR: So even somebody – your father would have been in his thirties, so even men in their thirties could be called up?**

SF: Oh yes. My dad was called up.

SR: Really?

SF: M'mm.

SR: And how old would he have been?

SF: Gee whiz. Well, go back to the war period - how long ago's that?

SR: It's fifty-odd years now, isn't it, since the end of the war.

SF: Yes, he would have been a young fellow anyway, thirty, around about - - -

SR: He would have been thirty if you were about ten.

SF: - - - yes, about thirty, yes.

SR: But did he have to go, did he go?

SF: No, he was lined up, called up and then the firm he was working for they had him withdrawn because he was required through his trade to work in the war industry.

SR: And what did he work in during the war?

SF: He was a wood machinist, a timber machinist, and he was making rifle butts and things like that, baseball bats for the Americans when they arrived here for the army fellows.

SR: When the war first broke out, some people say that people didn't take it seriously. Did it only get serious when the Japanese came into it or was it serious from the very beginning in 1939?

SF: Well, some people were serious till fellows got called up and had to leave Australia to go overseas and it was a serious problem, people became very worried through their loved ones.

SR: And how did it affect you as a kid?

SF: Actually, it didn't affect me greatly at all. I know, I can remember that I was called up as a messenger boy for the National Emergency Services because I had a pushbike.

6.04 **SR: What year was that?**

SF: I don't know what year it was but we used to meet up at the Alexandria School. That was all built up, reinforced, to stop any bombs that might have dropped on us in the basement of the school; air raid shelters were built in the school grounds and the trenches were dug in Alexandria Park, Erskineville Park, air raid trenches, yes.

SR: And did people take the air raid trenches and the shelters seriously or did they vandalise them?

SF: Oh, they were vandalised, yes, they were to a degree.

SR: And can you remember when the Japanese come into the harbour?

SF: Yes, yes.

SR: Tell me what you remember of that.

SF: Well, I can remember that the sirens went, the blackout was on and we all had to make our way up to the Alexandria School and my dad did because he was a warden and I can remember I had to deliver a message at Beaconsfield to one of the warders out there and the brown-out was on. The trams were still running but they were all browned-out.

SR: Were you scared – did you hear the explosion?

SF: Oh, yes, you could hear it, yes.

SR: You must have thought the Japanese were really coming.

SF: We did, people did.

SR: And how did people react?

SF: Well, everyone was unnerved; they began to realise that Australia was really at war.

SR: Were you scared?

SF: Not actually, no, I don't think I was scared. I didn't realise the seriousness of it as a kid.

8.01 **SR: Were there many Americans around here in the '40s?**

SF: Oh, yes, a lot of Americans.

SR: And what were they like?

SF: I found them all right, the ones that I met. I didn't meet that many of them but I think they were well received.

SR: So talking about your family, how would you describe your family? Did your mother work?

SF: Yes, my mum did work, yes, for a period.

SR: And was your father out of work in the Depression?

SF: Yes, yes, yes.

SR: How do you think that that affected him?

SF: Oh, it affected everybody in some way, you know what I mean. You couldn't give your family what you would like them to have and, well, nobody had anything more than anyone else in those days. If you had a job, from what I can recall, you might have had one day, two days a week but you had a lot of friends in those days.

SR: And did people socialise a lot together?

SF: They socialised a lot and if someone in the street got something that you didn't have, well you got part of it, you know, if they had a little bit of good fortune to run into something they shared it, people shared things.

SR: At home who were the political party that your parents voted for?

SF: Labor.

SR: Was there much talk of politics at home?

SF: All the time.

SR: Yes?

SF: M'mm.

SR: And your parents, they were involved politically then?

SF: My dad was, yes.

SR: Did he have a position in the local branch?

SF: No, no, no, no, he just supported someone that held a position in the branch.

SR: Who was that, who did he support?

SF: A chap by the name of Dwyer, Kevin Dwyer; went on to be – well, he was an alderman on the council, city council.

10.03 **SR: And as a kid did you hand out like 'How to vote'?**

SF: Yes, we handed out 'How to vote', put stickers up on telegraph poles. Yes, some funny experiences there.

SR: Tell us about some of those experiences.

SF: We put stickers up one evening and our opposition come along and pulled them down and things like that, you know, little things that you look back and laugh at.

SR: And who were the opposition?

SF: It was another Labor branch, actually; there were two factions in the area.

SR: And were you associated with the right or the left?

SF: The right.

SR: With all the politics being talked, did you have politicians that were in your house or meetings in your house?

SF: My father did, yes.

SR: Can you remember anything interesting from then, like say the '40s or from when you were a child?

SF: Well, at one period there when the split was on with the ALP and the DLP - -

SR: Was that the '50s?

SF: - - - I can't recall but there were quite a few meetings in my father's place.

SR: And can you tell us anything about them?

SF: No, I wouldn't want to tell you some of the things that happened.

SR: O.K. Were your parents religious?

SF: No. No, no, they were believers but they never practiced it, never went to church - - -

SR: Were they Catholic?

SF: - - - but they were good people, Church of England.

SR: Church of England. I always thought that the right were all Catholic.

SF: No. A lot of people believe that.

SR: So what sort of a man was your father?

SF: One of the best. Hard worker, good family man, yes, good father, yes. You'd say he was a battler.

12.06 **SR: A battler. And was he a warm man?**

SF: Oh yes.

SR: So he hadn't been embittered by the Depression experience of anything?

SF: People looked back and laughed about it: they say it was the good times.

SR: The Depression?

SF: Yes. If they're talking about the olden days they say "the good old days". What was good about them I don't know. It might be the fact that nobody had nothing, there was no envy, you didn't have any more than the other

fellow had so therefore you didn't want anything that he had because he didn't have it.

SR: And how would you describe your mother?

SF: Wonderful woman, the best, the best.

SR: Did she have to work outside the home?

SF: For a period, yes, in her early days she worked, yes, locally.

SR: Where did she work?

SF: She worked at a pickle factory up behind Henderson Road. A lot of the people in the area worked there, the women.

SR: And who owned that?

SF: Oh, I couldn't tell you the name of the company, love.

SR: When you were growing up, because you would have been ten in 1939, were you expected to contribute to the family in any way, like sell papers or collecting bottles?

SF: Oh, I used to do all those things.

SR: Did you?

SF: Yes. I worked on a milk run Saturday mornings; we sold eucalyptus soap and disinfectant soap on a Saturday morning from our wheelbarrow. We had a billy cart and we'd go up to the factory and buy a can of this and a can of that for about one and sixpence, we'd come home and we'd water it down and we'd go around selling it door to door.

SR: And who's "we"?

SF: Me and a little mate of mine.

SR: And did you have to give that money over to the family or was that yours?

SF: That was mine; they wouldn't have taken it off me. They made me bank it for Christmas.

14.04 **SR: You didn't spend it at the flicks or something like that?**

SF: No, no, Christmas time.

SR: And so you worked on the milk run.

SF: And we sold old wood and that as firewood to people, pay so much a bag. I think it was three shillings a bag, from memory.

SR: And where would you get the wood from?

SF: Different factories in the area, timber factories, you'd get the offcuts.

SR: And put it into bags.

SF: We'd bag it up and push it around on our billy carts, sell it.

SR: After school?

SF: Yes.

SR: Where did you go to school?

SF: Alexandria School and then Gardeners Road.

SR: And what was it like there?

SF: Gardeners Road? I enjoyed every minute of it, yes, good school, good teachers.

SR: What were the kids like – who were your friends, who were your mates?

SF: Had very few mates over the years. I found out I couldn't trust any of the buggers.

SR: Well, what about when you were a kid?

SF: Yes, kids in the area, plenty of mates, you know, played football and things like that, cricket.

SR: What were their names?

SF: Surnames or -?

SR: Both.

SF: There was a young fellow by the name of Berwick lived down the bottom of the street. There were relations of mine that lived in the street by the name of Gurney. Everyone played together in those days because if you had a football, we were all in together and you just kicked your football over at the park; if you had a cricket bat you'd start up a game of cricket.

SR: What park is this?

SF: Erskineville.

SR: And was it mostly an Anglo sort of neighbourhood? Like were there many ethnic groups in this neighbourhood?

SF: No, no, no, not in those days.

SR: And where did most kids' parents work?

16.03 SF: Well, in those days Alexandria was very, very industrialised; most of them all worked local at the glassworks or the steel places at Frank Spurways and Metters. Metters were very big in the area, very big. They made baths, sinks and everything like that.

SR: Did you ever hear much about industrial accidents and things like that happening in the factories?

SF: Yes, yes, you did.

SR: Kids' parents being hurt and things?

SF: Oh, yes. Dad had a broken arm or something like that at work or something fell on someone or some hot metal out of the foundries fell on them, yes, all those little things.

SR: What about kids, did they end up having accidents?

SF: Kids?

SR: Yes, were there more accidents in those times?

SF: Well, I think most of the accidents in those days were kids who've got hurt jumping off trams, scaling the tram home from school and things like that, fall under a tram.

SR: Was it fatal?

SF: In some cases yes, my word.

SR: Did you do that?

SF: I scaled trams, yes. I got caught a couple of times and got a kick in the backside.

SR: By the conductor?

SF: Yes. If he caught you, he used to put a black circle – he had an implement they used to grease the couplings – he'd put that on you and you went home your father knew what you'd been up to and then you got another clip under the earhole there. "You've been scaling the tram", he'd say, because the conductor put his brand on you and there was another smack over the earhole.

- 17.55 **SR:** **And what did you do with your friends? I guess you would have been selling your soap and wood and things after school, would you?**
- SF:** Newspapers, you'd sell the papers if you were lucky enough to get a job as a paper boy.
- SR:** **And what else did you do with your friends when you had some time off?**
- SF:** We'd go down the canal where we shouldn't have been, down Alexandria Canal, racing boats, go down and raid the Chinese gardens, pinching some tomatoes or carrots or something.
- SR:** **Where were the Chinese gardens?**
- SF:** Down behind Euston Road.
- SR:** **Do you know who any of the Chinese were, like their names?**
- SF:** No, didn't know their names.
- SR:** **Did they have kids?**
- SF:** The Chinese? Oh, yes, but we never played with them. They were just down the other side, you know what I mean, they weren't one of us.
- SR:** **And it must have been tough for them?**
- SF:** It was tough for everyone in those days.
- SR:** **And were they sort of isolated?**
- SF:** They wished to be isolated, I think; they kept to themselves.
- SR:** **And you know the canal, did you swim in it?**
- SF:** No, never swam in it. I've often fell in it as a kid; you'd stand on some of the green slimy stuff and away you'd go. But that was big, the canal. Like even Sunday mornings you'd go down the canal and grown men'd be racing boats down there.
- SR:** **What sort of boats?**
- SF:** They'd come home and make these boats, carve them out of timber, wood, and they'd race them with a little bit of lead on the bottom and they'd race for pennies and thruppences in those days.
- SR:** **And how would they get them out from the middle of the canal?**

SF: The canal you could walk. I'm not talking about the big open canal, I'm talking about the canal that takes the floodwater into the – they were good old days.

20.01 SR: **Did they bet on them?**

SF: Yes, a penny and tuppence if they had it. There was card games where the men, if they had a penny they were playing a penny school. If they won enough money they'd move up to a thruppeny school alongside the Erskineville Oval every Sunday morning.

SR: **This would all be outdoors.**

SF: Yes.

SR: **In parks or a vacant lot?**

SF: In the park alongside the old Erskineville Oval when it was there. Yes, every Sunday morning there'd be five or six card games going there for a penny or tuppence, thruppeny, yes.

SR: **And was it always amicable?**

SF: Yes, yes, yes.

SR: **So there weren't any sort of hoodlums or people like that associated with it?**

SF: No, no, it was just the general run of the mill fellow that was trying to win a bob, you know, pass a few hours away. Plus we used to go down to the greyhound dogs.

SR: **The what dogs?**

SF: Greyhounds on Sunday morning.

SR: **We were talking about down at the canal. Was it pretty dirty down there? Like what was the water like there?**

SF: There wouldn't be all that – the big canal itself, it was always dirty – still is today.

SR: **Industrial sort of matter and that?**

SF: Yes, muck.

SR: **So on Sundays there'd be boat racing and card games and what have you down there. Would kids play the card games?**

SF: The kids? No, it was the men; they played their card games; there was a two-up game going, yes.

SR: It's a wonder you didn't have visits from the police.

SF: We did from time to time.

SR: And what would happen?

SF: Oh, everyone'd scatter.

SR: Really?

SF: Yes.

SR: And what were the police like in those days – were they crook?

SF: Crook?

SR: Yes.

22.00 SF: I don't know that they're crook today, are they?

SR: Well, no, but they had a reputation back there in those days of being less than straight.

SF: Yes. Well, when you're a policeman I think that's easy to acquire that reputation.

SR: So you didn't find them - - -

SF: No, no. All I got off them was the occasional kick in the tail as a kid for being where I shouldn't have been.

SR: And if they'd come down to disturb the card game everyone would just run off?

SF: On, yes. They'd see them coming and away you'd go but they'd be there again next week.

SR: And did your dad go down there and play?

SF: Oh, yes, yes. People would do anything to try and get something and if they thought they could win sixpence or a shilling or two bob playing cards, they'd play.

SR: What about the horses?

SF: Yes, horse racing was in then; if you had enough money you'd go to the races. Yes, I used to go out to the Ascot Racecourse and I used to climb up on the fence and watch them start the races as a kid.

SR: Were there any SP bookies around here?

SF: Yes, yes, there was. In every area there was an SP bookmaker.

SR: And so what else would you do with your friends as a kid when you had the time?

SF: You'd go to the local movies and things like that.

SR: And where did you go – did you say the Empire?

SF: Yes, the Empress it was – I think it was the Empress or the Empire, I'm not sure. I can just remember going in there once or twice and there used to be theatres on Botany Road or Newtown.

SR: And what would have been your favourite from that time?

SF: Favourite movie?

SR: Yes, what can you remember as being the one that you really liked?

SF: Tarzan, Tarzan.

24.01 **SR: And what about songs – did you have a radio?**

SF: Yes, we had a radio, yes.

SR: And did you have any favourite music from that time?

SF: As I got a bit older, getting on towards the teens, Frank Sinatra, he was one of my favourites, Vaughn Monroe was another one. And there was a jukebox in the local milk bar and you'd go up there and if you had your sixpence you'd play your record of your choice.

SR: What were some of the games that you liked as a kid?

SF: As a kid?

SR: Yes, what were the games that kids played?

SF: Cricket, football. See, you only needed a football and a dozen kids could play. Yes, we had spinning tops, marbles. It was all you didn't have much, bare necessities.

SR: How far were you allowed to roam – did you have to stay pretty close to your family home?

SF: Oh, gee, yes. You had to be in by a certain time and soon as it got dark you had to be in.

SR: And so what was the extent of your territory, if you were to describe where you would go to meet your mates or just to do things?

SF: Erskineville, Newtown, Waterloo.

SR: Were there gangs? I have heard of some people talking about kids, you know, the Newtown kid would beat up the Alexandria kids and that.

SF: Yes, that's a fact, yes, there were gangs.

SR: Were you part of that?

SF: Yes, I was in a little gang.

SR: How old were the kids?

SF: Oh, you'd have been eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen.

SR: And would they be sort of based from schools or just the neighbourhoods?

SF: Neighbourhood. If you got into their territory, you know.

SR: And what would happen? Tell us.

SF: Well, there'd be a rumble on, a bit of a fist fight, things like that. Each gang had a good fighter and if you got into trouble you'd call on him and he'd fight their best fighter and all that sort of business; there was no harm come from it.

26.13 **SR: It wasn't a serious sort of - - -**

SF: No. At the time we used to think it was big time, you know, but it was nothing. It was nothing; it was just a part of growing up.

SR: And were there places that you weren't allowed to go as a kid?

SF: Yes, there were a lot of places you weren't allowed to go because, as I say, you had to be in by a certain time at night.

SR: Did you play on the railway tracks?

SF: Oh, yes, up here in the goods yards. That's where you weren't allowed to go to but you went there.

SR: And what did you do up there? This is Eveleigh, is it?

SF: Yes. What would you do up there? You'd pick up anything, especially wheat or corn that had fallen out of the bags when they're unloading them and you'd bring that home for your pigeons and things like that; anything at all you'd bring home when you was a kid, nuts and bolts, anything.

SR: And did you have pigeons even as a child?

SF: No, but friends of mine did, yes. Everyone – well, I don't say everyone but a lot of people had pigeons, even the men. They'd race them and there was a prize at the end of the business, there might be a money prize. Anyone would do anything to earn a quid or to get a quid: they had greyhound dogs that they raced and, as I say, the boats that they raced down the canal, they raced them to try and win a quid.

SR: Sounds like they'd bet on anything.

SF: They would, they'd bet on anything because they were desperate.

SR: But in the war wouldn't things have picked up in the '40s?

SF: Did things pick up?

SR: M'mm.

28.00 SF: Oh, yes, people become employed, you know, there was a war industry and women were working, yes.

SR: Did your mother work during the war?

SF: No, no.

SR: And how do you think that war period changed your life – did it change?

SF: Didn't change my life because my family wasn't broken up; I still had my mum, I still had my dad. There were some families they had brothers away, they lost brothers, sons, husbands, had a big effect.

SR: It was a sort of sad time.

SF: Yes, it was sad.

SR: Were there any eccentric sort of people in the neighbourhood or local characters that you can remember?

SF: Local characters. I'd say there was always a local character, always. My old grandfather was a local character because he was the local fruit man. He had a fruit shop in Renwick Street and he also had a horse and cart where he'd sell from the cart. He was known as a character, everybody knew him.

SR: What, he would sort of drive it around?

SF: Selling his fruit.

SR: You know at school, how did the teachers treat you?

SF: Very good, very good, yes.

SR: You didn't get into trouble?

SF: Oh, I got into trouble like anybody else but the teachers in those days had feeling, they were prepared to spend time with you if you had a problem and show you the easy way. Because those same teachers took you for sport too and if you played up you never went to sport so you had to be a good boy if you wanted to play football on Friday afternoon.

30.09 **SR: Was sport a big thing in this neighbourhood?**

SF: Oh, yes, yes, yes, always has been.

SR: You know how you mentioned the Chinese being one area? Were there any other sort of ethnic groups or communities that

SF: Not that I can remember. Mainly Chinese gardens.

SR: And did you knock off their vegetables?

SF: Yes.

SR: It's a wonder they didn't chase you.

SF: They did chase us, oh, yes, they'd chase you. Don't know what they were saying to us but they were chasing us all right.

SR: And what was the social focus of the area in the '40s say? Say you were around ten years old, did the area sort of have a social focus where people would meet?

SF: No, I couldn't say so.

SR: What big events can you remember, what can you remember?

SF: I can remember [break in recording]

SR:

SF: I remember that. I can remember the Duke of Gloucester coming out to meet us at the NES.

SR: What was that?

SF: The Duke of Gloucester came out from England and presented himself up here to the NES in Alexandria School and we all got introduced to him and that was a big thing. I can remember the Queen Mother coming out here – I don't know how long ago that was but we were lucky enough to get invited to that.

SR: And how come? The school or because you were a messenger boy?

SF: Yes, among other things and mixed up politically.

SR: Well, what was the most looked forward to time of year?

32.02 SF: Christmas.

SR: Yes?

SF: Yes.

SR: Tell me about Christmas.

SF: Christmas was wonderful. You got your little present and everyone was happy and nine times out of ten you had a big Christmas dinner, you visited your old grandmothers and it was good, really good.

SR: What about other times in the year that were sort of big?

SF: It was your birthday, that was another big time.

SR: Did they have any special events for Cracker Night?

SF: Oh, there was Cracker Night and Chinese Night where you went over to the old Chinese joss house over in Retreat Street.

SR: What do they do?

SF: They had a Chinese procession and a dragon dance going and their fireworks – that was on every year. Oh, hundreds and hundreds of people went to that.

SR: So even the Anglos went to that?

SF: Oh, yes, yes, yes, it was very good.

SR: And you were welcomed by the Chinese?

SF: Oh, yes. They'd parade through the streets with their dragon. It's still over there today, the old joss house.

SR: Must have been quite a large community.

SF: Yes.

SR: Was it mostly a residential neighbourhood?

SF: Big industrial area, Alexandria, in those days, yes.

SR: And what major changes have you seen in your lifetime?

SF: Well, I've seen Alexandria fall away from being a heavy industrial area to like more or less warehouse factories today, the big influx of workers are not in the area like they used to be like when the big places were going, like Metters and the glassworks and Stromberg Carlsons down there. That's not there today.

34.01 They build these warehouses today and they have a forklift driver and a storeman.

SR: So there'd be less people here today, do you think?

SF: I'd say so, less people coming into the area for work.

SR: In the '40s were there any affluent people in the area or was it mostly all working people?

SF: Mostly all working people but there was that person that had money, you know, you find that anywhere, someone's got what you haven't got.

SR: Can you remember any special adventures that you had as a child?

SF: Adventures. You didn't have many adventures unless you went over the park and you played cowboys and Indians. And of course that was before the flats were in Erskineville, that was just a park area and we had some great times over there.

SR: And they built the flats there? Is that the Swanson Street flats?

SF: No, I don't know what they call those – that's the little flats there now though

SR: And what sort of discipline was used in your family? If you'd been naughty or something and done what you shouldn't have done and you got caught, what would happen?

SF: Well, you weren't allowed to take your bike out, things like this; you had to be in a certain hour of a night.

SR: Were your parents warm towards you?

SF: Oh, very, very, yes, very.

SR: What's your happiest memory?

SF: Happiest memory? When I got married.

SR: As a child, when you were a kid what was your happiest memory?

SF: Gee, I had a lot of them. I can't recall the happiest one.

SR: All right, saddest memory?

36.04 SF: You had so many good memories, you know what I mean.

SR: It sounds like you had a really happy childhood.

SF: I did, I did have a happy childhood.

SR: O.K. then. Thanks very much for talking to me.

SF: It over, is it?

SR: Yes.

SF: That's all. Now, it didn't take - - -

SR: Is there anything you wanted to say that I haven't asked?

SF: No, I don't think so, love. They were good days; there were good people around in those days because nobody had more than anyone else. And, as I say, if someone was lucky enough to find something that fell off the back of a truck he shared it with his neighbour.

SR: Was there a lot of things falling off the backs of trucks in those days?

SF: Yes, very bumpy roads.

SR: A lot of factories.

SF: Factories and what few trucks there were on the road always lost something.

SR: Yes. People had to get by.

SF: That's right, and they helped one another.

SR: Did kids help them fall off the truck?

SF: Occasionally, yes. They were desperate times for some people; some families had nothing.

SR: That's the '30s?

SF: M'mm. Like I can remember I had two pair of sandshoes, one for school and one for weekends. You'd come home from school every afternoon and

you'd have to put the Blanco on your sandshoes for tomorrow, going to school, for the next day. You didn't wear sandshoes, you're just barefooted if you couldn't afford a pair of sandshoes.

SR: Did that pick up in the '40s?

SF: Yes, things started to get better and that's when – things started to get better, people had more than other people had, that's when bad feelings and that crept into things. People that you grew up with and were friends with when you had nothing, well you just drifted apart; as they acquired something they'd move out to a better area or things like this.

SR: But you've always stayed here?

SF: M'mm, a good area and the people in the area are good people. There's some people you wouldn't spend the time of day with but the majority of people have lived in the area all their life and they're good people. Battlers, yes.

SR: O.K, thank you very much.

SF: And that's it. Now, who wants my autograph? Now, come on, Mae.

MF: You haven't become famous overnight.

SF: No, I'll never be famous at any time.

Interview ends