

City of Sydney

Oral History

Interviewee: Kate Dunbar

Interviewer: Sue Rosen

Date: 7 July 1995

Place: Newtown?

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SR:** **This is an interview with Kate Dunbar at Darlington and it's the 7th of July 1995.**

Kate, where were you born?

KD: I was born in Manchester in the United Kingdom. My father was an Australian who was sent to England in WWI as a munitions chemist and while he was over there he met my mother. That's why I was born in England and she was in London but her family were in Birmingham. Then when the war finished he was repatriated back to Australia and she followed him out later with me.

SR: **And what year were you born?**

KD: I was born on the 13th of May 1923 and we appear to have come to Australia 'round about 1927, 1928; I was about five, I think, maybe just turned six. In England, in Birmingham where my grandparents live, I went to kindergarten for a short time – I can't remember a lot about it – so my first schooling took place here in Newtown.

SR: **And so when you moved here you came to Newtown, did you?**

KD: Well, yes. I remember coming off the boat and my father had the flu and my mother took us to the room where he was lying in bed and

that was in Cathedral Street in Woolloomooloo. The building was still there the last time I was down there; it was down almost to Riley Street there; in the centre there there's a kind of grey building. And my next earliest memory was in number 10 Ferndale Street, Newtown, where my mother had a corner grocer shop and my father was unemployed at that stage so she more or less kept us in food and she worked very hard.

2.06 She used to make pies and the factory people would come around and buy the pies for lunch and she'd cut sandwiches and she sold groceries. She actually went to gaol for half a day because she sold milk without a milk licence. Because the people around needed milk and there was no other shop around she just put milk into the shop and then they discovered she didn't have a licence. And she was fined and being a very stubborn Welshwoman, of ancestry anyway, she refused to pay the fine so they said "Oh, well, you have to go to gaol", so they kept her in gaol for a couple of hours and then let her go. But that was the number 10 Ferndale Street and of course everybody was on the dole – if not on the dole it was just before Jack Lang introduced the dole – and very poor, everybody was very poor. I can remember the first radio that came into the area. As kids, we would go down after school and listen to – and the boy's name, I think, was Jackie Glynn or Jackie O'Glynn and I was banned because I had a fight with him and I kicked him in the shins and he had a great big golf ball [lump] on his shin and his mother came and said I wasn't allowed to go down there any more. But the first school I went to there was St Pius in Edgeware Road, Marrickville, and I don't know how long I was there but I was caned for getting my long division sums wrong and I just packed my little bag up and walked out. And I can remember a little girl running after me, saying "Sister Cecilia says you've got to come back" and I said "Well, you tell Sister Cecilia I'm not coming back" and I didn't.

4.02 And then my parents then sent me briefly to Enmore Primary School and then up to Newtown Primary School on the bridge, in King Street on the bridge, and when I was there I was put back to third class and I did third class and fourth class. And then at the end of fourth class we were given some sort of test and I was sent down to Erskineville, fifth and sixth class - I think they were the first of what they now call the opportunity classes or special fifth and sixth – so I spent two years down there.

SR: And what was that like at Erskineville?

KD: It was good. We had a very good headmistress there called Lucy Woodcock who apparently became quite famous as an avant-garde style of headmistress. But I had four friends, Mary McMurtry, Daphne Thompson, Nancy Goldsworthy and myself, Kathy Kelly, and we would come home from school and we'd come all the way up Erskineville Road but instead of walking up Erskineville Road we used to come up all the back streets parallel to Erskineville Road and fight, physically fight with our fists. By the time I got home – I mean, if my son had done the things I did I'd have him to a psychologist but we survived – by the time I got home my uniform would be torn and my blouse would be torn so my mother complained and we were all made to shake hands and promise we wouldn't do it again. But those girls, I don't know what happened to them after they left Erskineville but we were all mates down there and Daphne Thompson lived up in Newtown somewhere. There was also another girl in third and fourth class with me in Newtown who's Lawler. I think her father or grandfather was a truckie, they used to drive trucks or something like that.

6.07 And also when we were down in Ferndale Street I can remember there was a local SP bookie. There was a fight over something and someone was stabbed with an ice pick and another day I can remember my mother washing blood off the outside of the wall of the shop, a domestic argument and the woman stabbed her husband. And of course we had a telephone, and people didn't have telephones, so he came down the street and supporting himself on the side of the wall of the shop – of course there was blood all over the wall – and he wanted to use the phone to try and ring up to get some help and I can remember she had to go out and wash all the blood off the wall the next day.

SR: How old were you when you came to Newtown?

KD: I suppose I was about six or seven.

SR: And so you were born in '23 so it would have been right sort of as the Depression had really hit by then.

KD: The Depression was on then and there was some sort of food coupons. My mother used to collect these coupons and she would supply basic food. I remember there was a woman down the street called Mrs Rutledge and she seemed to have a multitude of children and I remember delivering a quarter of a pound of margarine or something to the door. Not butter in those days, had to be margarine,

it was so much cheaper, and the margarine in those days was just awful, not like today. And I remember the smell in the house when she opened the door to take delivery of the margarine, the smell in the house was just terrible; I couldn't get away fast enough it was so bad. But we would come home from school up in Newtown or Erskineville and we'd stop at the biscuit factory that was there somewhere – I don't know whether it was Arnotts or Weston's or what it was – and we'd ask "Have you got any broken biscuits?" and we'd get an enormous – seemed to be – an enormous bag of broken biscuits.

8.11 And then we'd stop at the fruit shop and say "Have you got any specks?" and they'd give us speck fruit that they couldn't sell. Well, I think today they'd probably sell it to you but in those days they couldn't.

SR: Was your mother's shop in Ferndale Street?

KD: On the corner, yes, number 10 Ferndale Street, on the corner of – I've forgotten the name of the other street but it's still there.

SR: And did you live behind the shop?

KD: Yes, we lived on the premises.

SR: What sort of hours was the shop open?

KD: Oh, I think long hours. I know that it was open at night because I was sitting on the table in our kitchen and I can remember a giant cockroach running across the floor and the screaming out in terror. My mother was talking to someone in the shop and she just came in to see what was wrong with me and she went in and said "Oh, she's having a bad dream". Well, of course she couldn't say there's a giant cockroach running around the shop. So I think it must have been open pretty late hours and knowing my mother, she was a very hardworking woman so she would have kept the shop open if there was any chance of anybody spending their money.

SR: Did your father work?

KD: My father was unemployed and eventually through some contact that my mother had he got a job with the Water Board, digging ditches. He was a man who'd put himself through what was called 'Working Men's College' in Melbourne and he was a qualified industrial chemist of some sort, not a university degree but a technical college degree

but he was still unemployed until he got this job digging ditches and he actually started his own business at that stage, he started a chemical business.

10.08 **SR: When was that?**

KD: That was about 1930, 1930, 1932, and he packed these tiny little packets of antacid powder or something in the back of the shop and went out, trying to sell them. He built his business up, it was never a multinational corporation but it supported him for quite a long time and the family.

SR: When you first came to Australia earlier in the '20s - you said you got here about '26, '27 - - -

KD: I think a little later. I think I probably got here about '28, '28, '29.

SR: - - -and so was your father already out of work then? I mean, had he worked since he'd come back from the war?

KD: I think he would have. Having been a public servant - he went over with a whole group of chemists and there's a book been written about these chemists by a professor at Sydney University - having come back with all these chemists, I think he would have been pretty much guaranteed a job but I imagined he was not the sort of man who liked work very much and I think he must have lost his job for some reason, you know, being late or falling asleep or something and being out of work, of course, it was impossible to find work, there were an enormous number of people. I went to high school with girls whose fathers had been unemployed for ten years, ten and twelve years.

SR: Your father, did he fight in WWI or was he used in the manufacture of chemicals?

KD: Only in the manufacturing. He was in a place called Gretna where they manufactured these giant vats of TNT and that's what he used to make, apparently, is to help manufacture these; he was always in England as far as I know.

12.00 He tried to join the Royal Flying Corps but he was rejected on the grounds, something wrong with - he had an irrational [irregular?] heartbeat and also every time he went up in a plane his nose started to bleed so they couldn't take him. I've got photographs of him actually in some sort of uniform but I don't know whether that was before or after the chemical incidents.

SR: And did the war have any kind of impact or life impact on your father, like his experiences, aside from marrying your mother and having you?

KD: Well, actually, he had another de facto wife as well. Before I was born he had two other children and the woman that bore the children was already married and her husband wouldn't divorce her.

SR: Was that in England?

KD: That was back in England, yes, and he met my mother and he married her and I think she was three months pregnant when they were married, pregnant with me. Anyway, she came to Australia. Because he'd come back to Australia and his de facto wife and two children had followed him over she came to Australia to divorce him and he talked her out of it. And she went back to England, picked me up from my grandparents where I had been left, and came back to Australia only to find that another child had been born to his de facto wife. So I'm sort of sliced in the middle there; I had two half-brothers and a half-sister. So then she did divorce him at that stage but they always lived together for the rest of their lives in a kind of on-off relationship; I think it was a love-hate relationship. They got on sometimes and then she'd walk out and be together and then he'd walk out and this is the kind of relationship they had up until the day they died in their seventies.

SR: Well, he was able to keep two women and the children - - -

14.05 KD: Yes.

SR: - - - he must have been a very attractive man.

KD: Well, I suppose he must have had something that attracted women. His de facto wife – Daisy was her name – she was a very fine dressmaker and I think she supported her children to a certain degree by making clothes and my mother, of course, always worked so I guess between the three they muddled through. He never deserted any of his children, you know, in his favour he loved all his children.

SR: And you knew the other family?

KD: Yes, they were introduced to me first of all as my cousins and when I got a little older and realised they couldn't possibly be, things sort of started to twig and I said to my mother "What's going on or what happened?" and I was only about fourteen, I think, she said "All you

need to know is that your father and I were married". And she would never say anything else which now that I think about it I admire her very much for that, that was very fine, because anybody else would have said "Oh, this is what happened and what a nasty situation I found myself in" but in actual fact I thought that she was very remarkable for that.

SR: Because that's quite unusual at that time, wasn't it?

KD: Oh, yes. I think there would have been a lot of stigma about divorce and de facto relationships, not like today where no one worried about it.

SR: Well, what kind of a place was Newtown for kids, say in the late '20s and the early '30s?

KD: Well, you seemed to spend a lot of time playing in the streets, there always seemed to be a lot of activity in the streets to me. Most people seemed to have a small backyard but it was great fun to play in the street.

15.59 I always liked playing in the street because in actual fact being an only child – at least I thought I was an only child – I had no brothers and sisters to play with, so I looked to playmates from around and we always seemed to be playing in the streets. Kids would come and play in your yard or you'd go and play in their yard sometimes.

SR: Were there a lot of kids in the neighbourhood?

KD: Seemed to be, yes, seemed to be kids everywhere.

SR: But what kind of a kid were you?

KD: Oh, terrible. I was spoilt, I used to fight, I was cheeky, I did everything wrong. I've improved.

SR: Sounds like you enjoyed it anyway.

KD: Well, they don't know. My mother and father caught me stealing money out of the till and the only reason they caught me was because I was at St Pius School at that stage and the nuns noticed that I had a lot of money to spend at the tuck shop. I mean, I was only stealing two shillings but I suppose that was a lot of money and I was shouting everybody lollies and making myself very popular. The nuns noticed it and they either rang my mother or sent her a

message. So my parents watched me one morning as I left and I used to go out through the shop, quietly open the till, take out two shillings and take off and they caught me and I was in terrible trouble. I mean, psychologically I think it was one of the worst punishments they could have ever given anybody but they said they were going to send me away and the green cart was coming for me and I was going to be sent away. And I can remember just crying non-stop for days and days until finally they decided I'd been punished enough and they said all right, they'd let me have a second chance. I've never taken anything that doesn't belong to me since, I swear. But I wouldn't do that to a child, to say "You've been bad, I'll send you away" but child psychology's changed, I suppose, but thinking about it I think it's a pretty severe punishment.

18.08 **SR: They didn't hit you or anything?**

KD: No, I was never physically hit. My mother occasionally would lose her temper; if she was busy in the shop she might give me a bit of a backhander but I was never belted as I saw some children who were belted.

SR: And that was pretty much the norm, I think.

KD: Oh, yes, dad's belt with the buckle on it; if you were lucky you didn't cop the buckle, apparently. I played with some children – when we left Newtown and we lived in Cathedral Street [Woolloomooloo], we went back to Cathedral Street and we were in a block of flats and we were on the first floor; and I played with a brother and a sister who lived on the floor below. And we were just playing one night and apparently the father must have come home drunk and the kids were out later than they should be and the next day they weren't there and weren't allowed out. And when they finally did come down they had bruises down their legs the width of the father's – both of them, boy and girl - the girl would have been perhaps ten and the boy about eight – and all down their legs were these three inch bruises right down their legs. I was never, ever beaten like that, never. No, my father wasn't violent in that respect; I don't think he ever hit the boys either as far as I recall.

SR: Yes, sounds like it's pretty tough back there then.

KD: I think so. I know that there was a big commotion in Cathedral Street at one stage because one of the little girls had been – and there were

a lot of empty houses around in Sir John Young Crescent – do you know that area?

SR: M'mm.

KD: Well, they were just a lot of empty houses around there in those days and one of the little girls had been going around to one of the empty houses with a fourteen year old boy and there was a terrible big commotion and she was taken to the doctor.

20.06 I didn't understand what it was all about but I do now, of course, and she wasn't allowed out and she was in trouble and the police were around. I don't know whether there's anything serious came of it but I remember the big commotion. But we always played in the street down in Cathedral Street. Can you imagine playing in Cathedral Street today? We just played out in the street; there was very little traffic down there in those days. And I can remember we had a huge bonfire in Riley Street.

SR: Riley Street – is that Surry Hills?

KD: Woolloomooloo.

SR: Woolloomooloo?

KD: Yes, right down where Riley Street touches Cathedral Street one Cracker Night we had a huge bonfire down there.

SR: And where did you get all the stuff to put on it?

KD: Oh, old tyres and bits of wood; kids always found things in the park. I used to go swimming in the Domain Baths and I was actually attacked coming home one afternoon. I'd gone to my swimming lesson. My mother was at work – she worked as a chambermaid at one of the hotels at the Cross and my father was probably at work with his own business – and I was coming home with my swimming costume, broad daylight, about four o'clock in the afternoon and somebody was walking behind me and I stepped aside to let him pass and he had his coat over his arm, as he passed me he threw the coat over my head and of course I let out all the blood-curdling screams and ran, I just ran. And I ran out through the Domain, across Plunkett Street and there was a tram coming down and I can remember the tram going ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. And there were men having their afternoon tea on Brown's Wharf across the road and they watched him, they'd seen him and they were ready

to come over and help me and I'm just running down, screaming across the street and my mother was called and the police were called and he was never found but that made me very nervous.

22.14 And I suppose that could have been a possibility. You ask if the streets were safe. I guess just the same as they are today, really.

SR: Yes. What years were you in Woolloomooloo?

KD: I started high school when we were in Woolloomooloo so that would have been when I was eleven, twelve. That's '35, 6, 7, around that time.

SR: And would the men on the wharf have come to your aid?

KD: I think so. They told the police that they'd been watching him following me. They were just sitting there, having their afternoon tea - apparently they were shift workers - they were sitting there, having a tea break and they saw him walking behind me but they were a long way away. I mean, I broke a hundred yards record getting out of that park and there was no way that they could persuade me to go back in again. The police went in and picked up my towel and swimming costume which I'd dropped when I took off and I can remember they tried to persuade me to walk back into the park to get my towel. There was no way I was going back in that park again and I was very, very jumpy for a long time after that.

SR: So how could he get you out of such a public place, a ten year old kid with a coat over their head?

KD: Heavens only knows. I don't think people that do those things can be really thinking very clearly anyway.

SR: No. Well, in your family, thinking about the finances in your family, your mother from what I can gather was pretty self-sufficient. Is that right?

24.01 KD: Yes. She always worked; she was very canny with money. We never had a lot of money but I can never remember that I ever went short of anything. When we were in Newtown she took a child in over Christmas and fed them Christmas dinner and so forth and I remember, I think we might have had chicken or something which was a delicacy in those days and the second year that we had another child the child complained because the year before they'd had turkey and she complained because she was only getting

chicken this year. But I think that was probably as much during school holidays as companionship for me as anything else but we were certainly never hungry, never hungry and I can never recall that I was particularly short of anything.

SR: And did your father contribute to the family?

KD: I doubt if he contributed much to my welfare; I think he probably had to struggle to support his other wife and three children. I would have thought that most of the money that went into our household would have been supplied by my mother.

SR: And did she manage the house and run the house?

KD: Yes, she did. She did all the shopping, all the cooking, all the cleaning but to my way of thinking she was very servile as far as my father was concerned. If he was late home his dinner would be waiting for him; there's none of this, you know "You're late; you get your own dinner". He would ring on the phone and say "I'm on my way" or he'd say "I'm not coming" and depending upon his message she would adjust the household to him so she was always there but she always went out to work, she had jobs all the time.

SR: Now, what about when she had the shop? Did she have to do all the ordering and how would she manage that?

KD: I think she would have done pretty much all that took, yes. She was a very efficient woman, actually. She wasn't terribly well educated, she wasn't all that bright about a lot of things but she was a wizard with figures. She would add a column of figures up upside down while you were looking at it, she'd have the correct answer. She was very good with money and she was very good at managing a budget and managing money.

SR: And were you renting most of the time?

KD: Yes. We didn't actually buy a house until just before WWII started, which would have been about 1936, 7, and my father bought a house in Marrickville for nine hundred pounds and up until then we would have rented all the time, flats or cottages.

SR: And was your mother a warm person?

KD: Warm?

SR: Yes, to you, how was she, what sort of person was she towards you?

KD: Really, I'm sure both my parents loved me but I had a situation where they were together and then I would be left with one parent and then they were together and then I'd be left with the other parent. So as soon as I got fond of one parent, that parent would disappear and I'd be left with the other one and I'd get fond of that one. By the time I was about sixteen I really didn't care a lot for either of them and it wasn't until after I was married and sort of began to live my own life and control my own destiny a little bit that I really started to get fond of either of them again. I was very fond of my father as a child but there were always problems, there were always problems with their relationship.

28.05 **SR: And was your father warm toward you?**

KD: He was when I was younger. Yes, he was affectionate, he tried to be affectionate. I think my mother had more trouble. Being English, I think they don't show their feelings quite as much in a lot of ways.

SR: Can you describe your mother's working day?

KD: At what stage of her life? I mean, she worked until she was almost seventy years old.

SR: Well, what time would she get up in the morning?

KD: She was an early riser; she'd be up at six.

SR: And would she make breakfast?

KD: No. My father wouldn't get out of bed until probably eleven o'clock – he'd get his own breakfast – by that time she'd be at work. I'm talking about now when she would have been in probably her fifties and I was by this time married and not with them but this was the routine.

SR: But what about when you were a child?

KD: When I was a child. Well, they never seemed to be together much when I was a child; it was always one or the other.

SR: So when you were with your mother –I'm just trying to get the scope of a working life.

KD: A working life?

SR: For her.

KD: Well, for her she would have got up in the morning and got her own breakfast, probably got me off to school if I needed to. I can't ever remember sitting down to breakfast with either of my parents, not at all. I can remember the evening meals but I can never remember sitting down to breakfast so I would have said breakfast was on the run most of the time.

SR: And what time would the day finish for her?

KD: For her? I suppose probably ten at night she'd probably go to bed and read. They had separate bedrooms by this stage. By the time we moved into Marrickville they had separate bedrooms and she would go to bed with a book and I suppose dad would go to bed with a book too.

30.20 **SR: Were you expected to contribute toward the family in any way?**

KD: You mean financially?

SR: Yes, or would you have to help in the shop, say, when you were in Newtown?

KD: No, I never, never did a tap in the house, never even swept the floor.

SR: Did you help wash up after dinner?

KD: No, I never did a thing in the house; I was never asked to, never expected to.

SR: How come? That's very unusual for that day and age.

KD: Yes, I guess it was because at one stage when my parents had separated and I was taken to my father's other wife's premises there was a daughter there, of course, who was almost my age – there were only two months separate between my sister and I – and I was actually asked to scrub the kitchen floor and I had - - - [break in recording]

SR: The Cinderella treatment.

KD: I thought I was getting some sort of punishment, yes, and I never realised until later, of course, that girls did these sorts of things. Actually Daisy, my father's other wife, taught me more about housekeeping than my mother ever did. She was quite a nice woman, she was very nice in fact and both his wives had their problems because they were both scratching to bring up children in a very unusual situation - and I was never asked. When I left school and started work I went to work for my father and I think I got about twenty five shillings a week and I paid my mother sixteen shillings a week and that covered my entire board and the rest was fares and music lessons and whatever else I wanted to do with it.

32.09 There was no money left over, it was exactly budgeted out for my fares and my lunch and my piano lesson, my singing lesson, I paid for all those myself and the sixteen shillings for my mother.

SR: Were your parents religious?

KD: No, no. I can never remember either of them ever going to church. When I went to St Pius, of course, the nuns discovered my father's name was Kelly and decided that I must have been of Irish extraction and I'd never been christened. My mother came from a family of Quakers, actually, they were all Quakers and when my father first met her she said "thee" and "thou", talked about "thee and thou" and her father was a Mason but I can't remember anyone ever going to church; I was the first one that ever went to church. And the nuns insisted that I be christened because you have original sin and all that kind of thing in the Catholic Church, so I was christened in St Pius' Church but never confirmed.

SR: Did you get sent to mass on Sundays then?

KD: I went a couple of times. There was a Catholic lady across the street from us in Newtown who would go with me and she was actually my godmother - I've forgotten her name.

SR: What can you remember of the baptismal ceremony? Because you must have been seven or eight.

KD: Yes, I was. I just remember the priest splashing some water and saying a few words but that's about all I can remember and of course it wasn't too much longer after that that I left the school anyway and that was the end of my Catholic experience, I'm afraid.

SR: Were your parents politically involved?

34.03 KD: Not involved but my grandfather was a member of the Labor Party and my father was a Labor man, we were all Labor people. My great grandfather and my grandfather, they were all Broken Hill miners, apparently, and very politically active and my grandfather was apparently on some sort of pension from the Labor Party until the day he died; he'd lost the sight of an eye in an accident in the mines in Broken Hill. So they were politically – not so much my mother but my father was very politically aware even though he mightn't have been active.

SR: Can you remember them talking about Jack Lang?

KD: No, not particularly but I remember Jack Lang was a very prominent figure in those days; everybody talked about him and he was an important political figure.

SR: What can you remember about the '30s? Can you remember your parents discussing the political situation in the Depression years when things got bad and Lang was sacked?

KD: No. I don't think they talked about those sort of things in front of the children. I think those would have been discussions that went on after you'd gone to bed.

SR: Did they have a rule – I mean, not a rule so much but was there a view that children should not be aware of financial and political and presumably sexual matters? You know, like children should be seen and not heard?

KD: And not heard. Not that I'm aware of but I imagine that that was what went on. I mean, I had no sex education from my mother.

SR: At all?

KD: No, none.

SR: So what happened when you began to menstruate?

KD: I remember saying to her "What's all this?" and all she said was – she gave me a pad and she said "This will happen to you now and again" and that was it and my father was the one who wrote off to the Kotex Company or someone and got me a little book which I read to tell me about it; she never discussed it at all.

36.14 **SR: And your father did that?**

KD: Yes, my father did that.

SR: Gee, that's pretty good. I mean, from what I've heard men didn't want to know.

KD: Stayed out of it.

SR: Yes.

KD: Well, that was the situation in our family: he was the one who gave me my sex education such as it was.

SR: What would the family do for fun?

KD: My mother, in the shop she used to advertise, she had posters for the local cinema, and they got a couple of free tickets for that and we'd go to the local movies. We went up to what is now the Enmore Theatre which was a movie house, the theatres in Newtown up on the bridge there, there was the Hub. There was another big one there that was burnt down after it became the Elizabethan Theatre - I think it was called the Majestic Theatre - it's 'round the corner of Erskineville Road and what's that - - -

SR: Could have been Lawson's. No, that's at Redfern, wasn't it?

KD: Lawson's is at Redfern. What's the name of that street, the cars take a shortcut if they want to miss King Street, Newtown and they head straight out to Abercrombie Street? It's not Mitchell Road, is it?

SR: Yes, something like that.

KD: That's not its name, it's got another name.

SR: Henderson Road.

KD: Henderson Road. No, we've got it wrong but was down on that corner.

SR: Could it have been the Empire?

KD: The Empire. Where was the Empire Theatre?

SR: There was one around.

KD: I seem to have in my head the Majestic but I could be wrong about it, it could have been the Empire.

38.01 **SR: Would the whole family go?**

KD: The whole family, mum, dad and me? Yes. Because I used to get a piggyback home from Enmore and I can remember the saddest day of my life when I was told I was too big to have piggybacks any more, I had to actually walk home at eleven o'clock at night. But we also had a piano - we never had a house without a piano - and my mother used to play and my father used to sing and I used to sing. And I can never remember a radio until this little boy down the street got a radio and we used to go down after school and listen to the radio serials.

SR: And what were the serials?

KD: There was 'Chandu the Magician' was one and all sorts of spooky ones in those days. I can't remember them exactly but I know that they were riveting and on Saturday afternoons there were the matinees.

SR: What were the favourite pictures that you liked to see?

KD: I liked animal pictures as a child, anything with animals in it. I can remember seeing the most awful film called 'The Return of Dr Fu Manchu' which caused me to be afraid of the dark until I was about fifty years old. And the first scene is a coffin opening and this Chinese hand with long fingernails coming out and I mean it was terrifying for a little kid of my age - I should never have been taken to this. And I can remember also Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde: I believe my father took the other family to see that and my sister was carried, screaming, from the theatre - children had to be tough in those days. But I always liked animal films.

40.01 **SR: They used to have serials too.**

KD: Yes. Tom Mix was great, the cowboys in the afternoon and all the various things that left you hanging till the following week.

SR: Did you used to go on Saturday afternoon with your friends?

KD: Sometimes, sometimes when I was a little bit older. My mother had another shop down in Shepherd Street, Marrickville and on Saturday afternoons I used to go to the matinee then.

SR: You know the Depression? You made a couple of comments how your father didn't like working or didn't want to work, whatever. I mean, was that because of the Depression experience or was that him?

KD: No, he's just lazy, he didn't like work.

SR: O.K. If he didn't like work, what did he like to do? Did he have a hobby or something?

KD: Well, he liked music although he wasn't ever trained musically. His mother wouldn't allow him to learn the piano because his father was – I don't know whether his father was an alcoholic but he was certainly a drunk – and his mother was terrified that he'd go and play in pubs and become a drunk too, so she'd never let him learn the piano. And he really was quite talented. He used to play by ear and he played very well and I'm sure if he'd been trained he would have been an excellent pianist. But he went to the races and did all sorts of things. The football, he used to take us to the football. He used to take me down to Erskineville Oval on Saturday afternoons and the Aussie Rules was on. And of course during WWII there were a lot of Victorians here so the standard of the game was very good and we used to follow our local team and all that sort of stuff but that was when I was older.

SR: What was a typical meal in your family, tell me the evening meal.

41.58 KD: The evening meal. All I can remember is being made to eat awful vegetables that I never liked. And rabbit, of course you had the old rabbitohs used to come around in those days and you'd buy a couple of rabbits for sixpence and if they were well cooked they tasted as good as chicken. I remember we had cutlets, so we must have had some meat even though I imagine that meat must have been fairly dear.

SR: Was there the same sort of variety of fruit and veg around at that time?

KD: No, I don't think so. A lot of the vegetables that we eat today I can't actually remember seeing as a child. I can never remember eating mushrooms as a child and broccoli was never around until the Italians started to come out here after WWII; I can never remember broccoli as a child.

SR: And was it seasonal? Could you get tomatoes in the middle of winter?

KD: I wouldn't remember that.

SR: And lettuce? Because now you have salad all year 'round.

KD: Yes. Well, my mother being English, of course, she used to tell me that in England you would pay two and six for a peach. Well, I mean, you'd buy twenty peaches for a shilling in those days, so she was quite taken with the fact that fruit, the things like bananas, tropical fruits, which were not available to her in England were just laid on here in Australia.

SR: Did you have a lot of fruit and veg around?

KD: Yes, we always had lots of fruit and vegetables and I discovered that I was never allowed to have my sweets until I'd finished my vegetables and I used to sit there, picking, like little kids do, picking at their vegetables – they'd get colder and more unappetising. And it wasn't until after I was married that I realised just why they were so awful was my mother never strung the beans properly. There were always little bits stuck on the ends, you know, and beans had those little prickly bits on; she didn't string the beans properly and it wasn't till I went back and ate at her house after I'd been married that I realised why I never liked my vegetables when I was a kid because she couldn't cook them properly.

44.23 **SR: Yes. Well, would you say nutritionally it was a good diet?**

KD: Yes. Well, my father was very particular about nutrition. We always had a citrus fruit every day. He was a great believer in wheat germ; he used to take wheat germ every day. He believed that women were all anaemic; so I took iron tablets as long as I can remember which probably did me a lot of good because I was very healthy as a result of it. But he was most particular. We always had salad, lettuce; there was always lettuce and fresh vegetables in the house.

SR: So even though it was pretty hard times, like the '20s and the '30s you didn't go hungry?

KD: Never. And, of course, having food shops meant that you had all the food there which wasn't sold you ate. So you had food there always and if you had more tomatoes than you were going to sell, I guess you had a few tomato dishes.

SR: Did your mum sell things on tick?

KD: Oh, yes. There was a book there with all sorts of stuff written in and particularly when the dole came in because she'd know that they were on the dole, she'd know that the money was safe coming and so they would get credit.

46.05 **SR: Well, who were your friends? You've named the three that you used to fight with on the way home from school.**

KD: Well, they were mostly my friends. I didn't actually make friends when I went to St Pius – I don't think I could have been there long enough. I had violin and piano lessons from the nuns. I was also learning tap dancing at some stage because I can remember going up to Newtown for tap dancing lessons.

SR: Where at in Newtown?

KD: Somewhere in King Street, and also my sister and I in later years used to go to Jack Keating's dance studio. Do you know where that is? Well, it's right next to the station. You go in a door and upstairs, there's a ballroom - or there used to be a ballroom and I think it's still there – and we used to go Saturday nights to this dance. And it wasn't really until I went to Newtown School and then to Erskineville that I made and they were mostly the friends that I had until I got to high school.

SR: But what sort of things would you do together with your friends?

KD: Well, we'd come home from school together – that used to take a long time – and then after we got home I think it was more or less to your own devices. I can remember playing a lot. We had a cat and a dog in Newtown and I can remember playing a lot on my own in the backyard.

SR: Were you free to roam, to go wandering around?

KD: No, no, never, I was never free to wander the streets alone; if I was playing in the streets it was known where I was.

48.00 **SR: Can you remember having any adventures?**

KD: Adventures?

SR: If you weren't free to roam that would be hard.

KD: No, I think I was pretty protected, apart from my adventure in the Domain I think I was fairly protected as far as when I was young.

SR: What sort of games did you play?

KD: At school?

SR: Yes.

KD: I can't actually remember.

SR: What about in the streets?

KD: I suppose we played chasings and hidings and things like that.

SR: You can't remember anything special?

KD: Hopscotch, I remember hopscotch. You know, you draw it on the footpath. Jacks, I can remember playing jacks.

SR: Did you use real sheep bones or knuckles?

KD: Yes, real sheep's knuckles which I never managed to get a full set of but everybody else seemed to have them. Bigger families, I suppose, you had a leg of lamb. Being a smaller family we probably wouldn't have had it.

SR: Were there places that you were not allowed to go specifically, like you were just told to keep away from?

KD: Not that I can remember, no.

SR: What about people that you had to avoid?

KD: No, no. We lived in Cathedral Street, we lived at number 98 which was next door to a hotel and there were two terrace houses and it has now been incorporated into – it's not a hotel any more, it's more like a nightclub or something, I think, and these two houses would now have been part of the nightclub - and I can remember first time I ever heard a swearword was from the back of the hotel, somebody said a nasty four letter word.

50.00 And there was a park alongside, on the other side of Riley Street there was a park going up to the Blind Institute and there were swings there. We had a cattle dog at that stage and I used to go up after

school and play in the park with friends that lived around there. There was a family called Stewart, the Stewart girls used to come up, and we played in the park. And my cattle dog actually heeled somebody on the way home and, well, we just ignored it but he was threatening to go to the police and do all sorts of things; some irate Italian gentleman came and pounded on the door. But we always seemed to have a dog in the house, I suppose for protection maybe; maybe that's why we could leave the doors open.

SR: Well, how would you describe Newtown? We're looking there the late '20s and early '30s, aren't we?

KD: M'mm.

SR: Was it residential or industrial or mixed, what sort of a neighbourhood was it?

KD: It was residential with the corner shops everywhere, which of course have all gone now and Newtown, the main streets of Newtown were as they are now, except that instead of being op shops and clothing shops they were greengrocers and butchers and all the useful things: bootmakers, dressmakers, the kind of shops that people don't seem to need any more because you've got big supermarkets that do it all in one premises; instead of having twenty shops you've now got one huge supermarket.

SR: Can you remember Cross' Herbarium, a big herbal medicine emporium sort of place up there in King Street, Newtown?

51.55 KD: No, I remember Newtown Markets which used to stay open late on a Friday night till nine or ten o'clock and they were in that place where – is it Flemings that's there now or Franklins? – where Franklins are now there were Newtown Markets and they were quite extensive markets: fruit, vegetables, all sorts of things in there.

SR: Wasn't it unusual that they'd stay open till late at night?

KD: Yes, it was but it was the one night of the week when they did stay open.

SR: What was it, Friday night?

KD: I think it was Friday night.

SR: Well, what was the social focus in Newtown? Was there a place where people met and talked and gossiped?

KD: I don't think so. The street.

SR: What about your mother's shop?

KD: I suppose people leaned on the counter and had a chat but, see, that would have happened most likely when I was at school but I don't think she would have had a lot of time because she was cooking pies, cutting sandwiches and doing all those sorts of things for the factories. She had lunches to do for the factories so I don't think she would have had a lot of time to talk.

SR: What about the pubs; were there any particularly favourite – would the men meet at the pubs?

KD: I suppose they must have but they would have had six o'clock closing in those days.

SR: What can you remember about the pubs in Newtown?

KD: Only that nobody ever went into them and women and children didn't go into pubs.

SR: So only the men went?

KD: Only the men.

SR: And what was it like when they shut at six o'clock?

KD: Well, I could only tell you what I've read and that's the six o'clock swill which everybody has read and seen.

SR: You never saw that, though?

KD: Never.

SR: And did you live near a pub?

KD: No, the pubs were all up on King Street, I think.

SR: So there weren't corner pubs in the residential area?

KD: No, not down there, not 'round Ferndale Street.

SR: Well, who were your neighbours in Ferndale Street?

KD: I have no idea.

SR: O.K.

KD: No idea.

SR: Where did most people work?

54.02 KD: Well, I don't think most people did work. There seemed to be always a lot of people, a lot of men, around the streets, particularly Saturdays. You know, the SP bookie'd be around in the back lane and there'd be people running backwards and forward all the time.

SR: What do you mean the back lane? He'd operate out of a house, wouldn't he?

KD: Well, if he did it was from the back of his house because I had a look the last time I was down there and I've looked on the map and the lane that I remember isn't there anymore so it might have been a night cart lane which has since perhaps gone.

SR: What can you remember about any criminal activities? Because SP booking was then a criminal activity.

KD: A criminal activity, yes, it was. I just remember that there was a fight and someone was stabbed with an ice pick around in that area. And there was a lot of talk at that stage which I heard about, some man who'd killed a young girl about twelve – I suppose it was a rape and murder – and he was to be hung and there was a lot of talk about whether he should be hung or whether he shouldn't be hung and he was hung, he was killed.

SR: And that wasn't a local murder, no?

KD: No, but there was a lot of talk about it. I think it was a Sydney murder, though.

SR: And you know the industries, even if people weren't working what were the industries in the area?

KD: Well, there was the ETA factory down in Edgeware Road?

SR: What did they make?

KD: ETA peanut butter and butter and margarine. There was a biscuit factory somewhere nearby and then up in Newtown I don't know that there was much heavy industry up there. Down towards the other end, the St Peters end of Edgeware Road there was a lot of heavy factory industry, I think, but I don't know what they made.

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

KD: Only Mrs Rutledge's house is the only one I remember, it was just so terrible.

SR: Well, what sounds do you associate with Newtown?

KD: Well, the clothes, the call of the clothes prop man, rabbitohs and the butcher and the baker and the iceman, I mean they all came with the horse and cart.

SR: So were they the sort of standard kind of deliveries? Would they be daily deliveries in the area?

KD: Oh, yes. The iceman would come probably twice a week with his block of ice for the ice chest, the bread, the milk would come every day and then the rabbitoh would probably come twice a week, the clothes prop man would come occasionally and I don't think there were any other deliveries.

SR: Can you remember somebody called the order man?

KD: The order man who used to come around and take orders for sheets and things?

SR: And then he came up.

KD: Yes. No, I can't remember him but there was one in Campsie when I lived there.

TAPE 2

SR: This is tape 2 of the interview with Kate Dunbar, 7th of July 1995. We were talking a bit about industries, I think, before, and smells.

KD: I can tell you one fascinating piece of information. This is in the days before toilet paper. Now, I don't know what the rich people did for toilet paper but the average house in working class or non-working

class industrial area used to have squares of newspaper and they would be on a piece of string inside the dunny.

58.16 And we were actually privileged because the fruit would come in boxes and each piece of fruit would be wrapped in a piece of tissue paper and we had tissue paper in our toilet from the apples and pears and whatever they were. And of course the night carts, the toilets were at the back, there wasn't sewerage; I don't think there was sewerage in Newtown at that stage; the night carts used to come around in the wee small hours of the morning.

SR: I thought it was sewered, the inner city got sewered quite early. You can remember the night cart man?

KD: Well, I know all the lanes are there and I think a lot of the areas may have been sewered. I can't remember whether we were or not.

SR: It wouldn't be much good if you were putting newspaper down. It must have been the night cart man or the newspaper would block it.

KD: That's right; the newspaper would block it up, wouldn't it?

SR: Yes. Can you remember any big events from your childhood and when you were growing up?

KD: I remember the cricket and then my father was a smoker and he used to get a little tin of cigarettes and in each tin there would be a sportsman and they were almost all cricketers, McCabe and Larwood and Bradman and Fleetwood-Smith and all these guys and they were all saved by the boys.

SR: What do you mean?

KD: The boys would save the cards, yes.

SR: The cards, yes.

KD: And the tins were useful too, they were handy to have. Big events. I can remember the opening of the Harbour Bridge, of course, because I think it was the second day that it was opened we were all taken from Newtown School on the tram into the city and we marched across the bridge and back again, back on the tram and back to school.

60.16 **SR: Can you remember the kerfuffle when de Groot - - -**

KD: No, I've read so much about it since that I remember it, but I can't actually – I'm sure it was a big kerfuffle at the time, I'm sure it must have been on everybody's lips but I can't remember people talking about it.

SR: Can you remember when the Unemployed Workers Movement, people barricaded themselves into a house in Union Street and fought them up in the Evictions in the '30s?

KD: No.

SR: Were you aware at all of any evictions in the '30s?

KD: No, no, I think I might have been too young.

SR: Did you ever go on holidays?

KD: Yes, I did go on holidays. I was sent away to some sort of a camp for two weeks while we were in that shop in Newtown. I remember crying myself to sleep every night of the week for the first week and I was just starting to settle down and the weekend came and my mother and father came to see me which upset me again and so I cried myself to sleep every night for the second week and was very pleased to get back home.

SR: What sort of a camp was it?

KD: It's some sort of holiday camp because I remember there was a beach and water and swimming and activities. I'm sure it was a very good camp; it was just that I was miserable there, particularly at night.

SR: You don't know who it was run by?

KD: No, I don't.

SR: And that was the only holiday you can remember?

KD: Yes, it was the only holiday that I ever took with my parents. We never took holidays, never.

SR: Were there many local crims in Newtown?

62.02 KD: I suppose there were.

SR: Did you know any?

KD: Not personally I don't.

SR: So what was the crime rate like?

KD: I don't think I was aware of it. If there was a crime rate I imagine that it was kept from me, it was kept away from me. See, you didn't have television and radio and newspapers then the same way as you do today. I mean, if something happens today in Sydney and the television has got it, you're looking at wars and all sorts of things. That was just not on. The only news that came was by word of mouth or through the newspaper and if you were a child and the newspapers were kept out of your sight or out of your reach then you only knew what you were told.

SR: But what sort of papers came into your family, into your home?

KD: I suppose the daily, the evening paper would have been delivered, I'm sure my father would have read the papers.

SR: Were there magazines in the house?

KD: I can't remember any.

SR: Did you read comics?

KD: Yes, I read comics.

SR: What ones did you like?

KD: I don't know. Tarzan, I suppose, was round, I don't know. I just know that there were comics.

SR: Where did most people shop?

KD: At the local shops usually.

SR: You mean the corner shops?

KD: Yes, the corner shops. The daily groceries and butchers and so forth was all done from the corner shops. The trip into town was a major event: you dressed up and you walked and you went into town for the day.

SR: And what were the sort of purchases that you'd make in the city?

KD: Probably a special dress or something in the big shops in town and there was Snow's and David Jones and Grace Brothers, Anthony Hordern's.

64.03 **SR: You know how your mother's shop was organised? I was thinking about crime there. I mean, was shoplifting a problem or was the shop organised in such a way that everything was behind the counter and you would serve people rather than people getting things themselves?**

KD: I think everything was pretty much behind the counter. I imagine shoplifting must have gone on but I don't think to the extent of today. I mean, today shopping is so open and I mean you walk around and you pick everything up and you look at it and you try it out and you put it back or you put it in your purse and shoplift it. I don't think those opportunities were around in those days and also too you had more shop assistants in the big stores. If you walked into Anthony Hordern's, for instance, or Grace Brothers you weren't expected to serve yourself. You walked up to the counter and you said you wanted a particular thing and they pull them down for you and you'd try on fifty pairs of shoes or whatever.

SR: Did you have shoes, by the way?

KD: Yes, I was going to say this has reminded me that a man came to our shop and he had an enormous suitcase which was full of shoes and my mother bought me a pair of shoes for a shilling and they were just plain black shoes with a strap across the instep. Yes, I always had shoes, I never ran around barefooted.

SR: What did you notice about other kids, did they have shoes? Were you aware of poverty in the area?

KD: No, not really, not really.

SR: Kids weren't hungry?

KD: Didn't seem to be. There was a lot of bread and dripping eaten but then that was quite healthy actually; dripping was full of good things. I mean, it had a lot of fat in it but it was also full of all the juices from the meat and lots of vitamins and things in it. And they would take a

piece of bread, put on a thick piece of dripping, pepper and salt and it was a good meal; they were happy to have it.

66.13 **SR: Did you have that?**

KD: No, never liked it; never ate it.

SR: You just said how good it was.

KD: Well, they all enjoyed it. And there was always our biscuits and the speck fruit too, don't forget.

SR: What sort of employment was available for kids locally?

KD: I don't think there was any. I imagine they ran messages but there wasn't much money for that.

SR: So what would you do – say you had the whole Christmas holidays and given that you didn't have to contribute to the family in the house or in the shop, how would you spend your time?

KD: Just playing in the backyard.

SR: With your friends?

KD: Yes.

SR: What was the ethnic mix of the neighbourhood?

KD: All Anglo-Saxon. I'd never actually even saw an Aboriginal until about 1960, I'd never set eyes on one.

SR: Goodness. That's incredible, isn't it?

KD: It is incredible, considering that in 1962 when my son was born they were still being taken away from their mothers and put into institutions. We didn't know that, that was currently known to the general population.

SR: Yes, it was pretty dreadful. Can you remember what any of the big issues of the time; can you remember any big events?

KD: No, I think the test cricket, the opening of the Harbour Bridge, that's about the extent of it.

68.05 **SR: What were the common illnesses?**

KD: Flu.

SR: And would people get over it in a day or so?

KD: No, it was a two week job in those days, you went to bed for two weeks with the flu if you got sick. I can remember my mother having teeth extracted.

SR: Was that a big - - -

KD: That was a big deal, yes, it was pretty horrible.

SR: Did you go to the dentist?

KD: No, I never went to the dentist till I was sixteen and then I had a filling and my teeth were horribly crowded and I had baby teeth which had never come out which should have been extracted but I was never sent to the dentist.

SR: Do you remember anyone dying, any deaths?

KD: No, I don't think so. I can't remember anyone in the street or going to funerals or anything like that.

SR: Can you remember in terms of either your friends' parents and that hearing about industrial accidents?

KD: No.

SR: What about any union activity or any political activity, like your friends' parents going on strike or that kind of thing?

KD: No, I don't recall any of those issues.

SR: What about politicians of the day? Aside from Lang, can you remember any others?

KD: No.

SR: What about local politicians, aldermen and people like that?

KD: No, they never came 'round to the children. If they came around they would see the adults but the children weren't; I was never made aware of them.

SR: What songs do you remember from the time?

69.57 KD: Songs. Well, at school we learnt 'Rule Britannia', "Britannia rules the waves", we had a half holiday for Commonwealth Day which was the 24th of May – Empire Day it was called – 24th of May. We sang 'God Save the King', of course, as it was in those days. I can't remember that we sang anything that was particularly Australian.

SR: Were you ever involved in things like sort of rituals? I mean, there's Cracker Night which was almost a ritual but there were also other things. I think that there was something called physical culture and there also used to be mass displays of maypole dancing at particular times. Were you aware of anything like that?

KD: No.

SR: It was in the '30s.

KD: I remember there was always something called Wattle Day which we all went to school and had little sprays of wattle and things like that and Arbour Day was another thing: that was a tree planting day.

SR: And what was Wattle Day celebrating?

KD: I think it was the 1st of August or the 1st of September or something and the wattle usually came into flower about that time. We just looked at it and painted it, drew it, admired it and went onto the next thing. It was no really big thing. There wasn't a lot of Australian things to celebrate then. I mean, you're looking at sixty years down the line now; we've got a lot more to celebrate, a lot more history.

SR: Well, what about Australia Day, was that a big event?

KD: We didn't have an Australia Day.

SR: 26th of January?

KD: No, we didn't have an Australia Day when I was at school.

SR: So what were the big events of the year in your yearly calendar?

KD: The Empire Day. I don't even recall ANZAC Day. I don't know when ANZAC Day started but I can't recall ANZAC Day.

72.06 **SR: How was Christmas – was it a big event in your family?**

KD: Well, it was a big event for every child, of course, Christmas. Yes, we had Father Christmas. We used to leave him a glass of lemonade and a piece of cake.

SR: What about Easter? Did you have Easter eggs in those days?

KD: I suppose we must have. I can't actually recall a particular Easter but I'm sure we must have had Easter. Anything that would have been going, I would have been given the necessary presents, I'm sure.

SR: What places in the area were important to you?

KD: In Newtown?

SR: Yes.

KD: Well, strangely enough, Alice Street is only just a little way down from Ferndale Street but I can never recall going down that side of Newtown very much, the St Peters' side; my interest seemed to be all 'round the bridge, which was important. The theatres. At one stage they had a mini golf course next to Enmore Theatre which was great fun and we used to go up to there and play a round of mini golf after the pictures came out. Just the shops up in Newtown. School.

SR: Can you remember any local characters in the area, I mean people that stood out?

KD: No, not particularly, just a few neighbours that I can't recall faces, I just sort of remember that there were people who lived there. There was a woman across the street with two daughters, I remember. I can't remember their name or their faces but I remember there was somebody living there.

SR: In that time of '20s and '30s had the car had much impact by then – did people have cars?

74.03 KD: No. My father's first car – and we lived at Newtown when he got it because he built a kind of humpy thing in the backyard – in that photograph (indicates visually) – to house it. It was a Chevrolet, I think it was a Chevrolet, a great big open thing with a hood and we had an accident. We were coming back from Windsor somewhere, on the Windsor Road and a car came and overtook us and we'd just picked up a hitchhiker who was sitting in the back with me. He was

sitting on the outside, I was behind the driver and I was sitting on the inside behind my mother and this car came along and it had four drunken fellows in it and they sideswiped us and tipped us over fairly heavily because the young man who was in an air force uniform went to hospital with a fractured skull, I was just under a whole lot of rubble, my mother was thrown over a fence into a paddock somewhere and my father was pushed over into her side of the seat and we were brought home from that accident by some people in another car. And that night I remember we went to the movies. Apparently we had eggs on our heads with the bumps but we were all feeling fairly all right so we went to the movies and we saw two films and it was a big joke because both the films had train accidents in them and that was the big joke when we got home because we'd had an accident ourselves in the afternoon, gone to the movies and there'd been two train accidents in the movies.

76.05 **SR: That was the times before seatbelts too so accidents were often lethal.**

KD: Oh, long before seatbelts, yes, yes. Well, I don't know what would have happened if we'd have been buckled in, we might have even been killed and as it was we were just thrown out. But that was my father's first car. Now, that car was a write-off.

SR: And what year was that?

KD: I must have been about eight, I suppose.

SR: All right.

KD: '31, '32, something like that. Then he got a second car.

SR: Did many people have cars then?

KD: No, no. I don't know how he got it. See, I think a lot of the time if you had a little bit of money you could acquire things very cheaply because people who were really scratching would sell a car for whatever they could get for it and because there was not a lot of money around you'd sell it very cheaply, probably for far less than its real value and I imagine this is how we got the piano and I imagine this is how we got the car: one person's misfortune is another's fortune. The second car he got – he then took a job as a travelling salesman and I think this is why the car came in: he was selling something and he used to trek off into the country.

SR: What age were you when you were down in Woolloomooloo? You said ten or eleven by then you lived there. Why did your mother move – is that because she had a disagreement with your father and you went down to Woolloomooloo?

KD: No, he was with us down there.

SR: Was it ten?

KD: I think at the end of my primary school, which I did my primary final in 1934. I started high school at William Street Girls' Junior High School, which is just down from the museum. The buildings are still there but it's not a high school any more. And we were then in Cathedral Street and that's why I went to that local high school.

78.10 **SR: Well, what places were important to you down in Woolloomooloo?**

KD: In Woolloomooloo. Well, school of course, the local parks were. We used to play out in the street, in Cathedral Street and Sir John Young Crescent. There were shops down there where I used to be sent down to buy a pint of milk or whatever, go down with the billy can – which we don't do any more. And the Domain Baths, I used to go there for swimming lessons.

SR: And you were free to go there?

KD: After school, yes, because by that time I was, what, eleven, twelve, high school and it was assumed – I used to go with a group. That afternoon I was attacked, I can't recall why I was coming home alone, maybe there's some reason for that, but usually I went with a group, with three or four of us and we'd have our swimming lessons.

SR: What was Woolloomooloo like at that time, what can you remember about Woolloomooloo in say '35?

KD: It was just like another suburb. It wasn't the city, it wasn't like the city.

SR: Was it an oppressed area?

KD: No, I wouldn't have thought so.

SR: Were the wharves busy?

KD: Yes, I think they were. Brown's Wharf, there were ships coming in there all the time although I must say I didn't go down to that. Plunkett Street School was there – that was a primary school. I didn't go 'round to that area at all, I stayed more or less in my own street.

SR: So that was Cathedral Street?

KD: Yes, Cathedral Street and also there was that park alongside which is I think still there where the swings were and, I mean, we used to play in the park, that was a playground for us. And my mother worked up in the Cross somewhere. As I said, she was a chambermaid in the Hotel Metropole; I think was the name of the hotel she was in.

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

KD: When I was about sixteen I went to Luna Park with my two fourteen year old cousins and my Aunt Bertha who was about sixty at the time and we went on the big dipper and we came off the big dipper and my twelve year old, fourteen year old cousin said "Oh, let's go again, let's go again" and I thought "No, thank you". I went and sat with my Aunt Bertha until they'd finished; I'd had enough of the big dipper. But, yes, Luna Park was good fun.

SR: What sort of reputation did it have at that time?

KD: Oh, I think it was all right, I think it didn't have a bad reputation. If you were a young woman, I don't think you would have gone on your own but then there were a lot of places you wouldn't go on your own as a young woman; you'd have your mother or father with you and we didn't have the freedom that kids have today.

SR: Was that just girls or girls and boys didn't have that freedom?

KD: I think girls and boys. I don't think the boys had freedom. The boys were expected to do things the right way too.

SR: What's your happiest memory?

KD: My happiest memory? Gosh, that's difficult. As a child?

SR: Yes.

KD: As a child. I don't know, I don't regard my childhood as being particularly pleasant. I think my happiest days were at school, yes, I think my happiest days were at school.

82.04 **SR: And what was it like at Erskineville Opportunity School?**

KD: It was fine. I think we had good teachers down there. There was a little boy stood on the front verandah and played the drum and we all marched into school to the sounds of the beat of the drum. I had sewing lessons as well as all the other things and I can remember I had to produce a quarter of a yard of cream Fuji silk or something and we made a little pair of scanties or something and I was such a bad sewer that everything I sewed had to be unpicked several times and my cream Fuji silk was a sort of a dull grey by the time I finished it. Never fitted, nobody ever wore it because it just didn't fit but we spent hours and hours, in fact almost a whole year making these darn things. But I'm a bit better sewer now than I was then.

SR: What's your saddest memory?

KD: My saddest memory as a child? Oh, I don't know. I think just losing a parent all the time, I think that was tough. You don't understand what's happening when you're a child. Perhaps kids today might be a little more worldly wise but you were kept in a fair amount of innocence in those days.

SR: Were you free to ask questions as to what was going on?

KD: I suppose I was but, you know, you'd probably say "Where's mum?" or "Where's dad?" and you'd get some sort of an explanation. I think a lot of my memories I've shoved into the back of my mind and put the lid on because occasionally I'll get a little flash of a memory and I'll think "Oh, yes, I remember that" but it's been – I mean, I'm seventy two years old and it's been sixty years and more since some of these memories have come back.

85.18 And I really think I was pleased to just get out of my parents' relationship and get married and start a life, life my own life more or less.

SR: Is there anything else that you want to say? I've asked every question that

KD: Yes. I can remember when – well, actually, we'd moved to Marrickville at that stage – I can remember being sent from the shop we had in Marrickville up to Enmore Terminus to buy ten pound of sugar. It used to come in big bags and my mother used to weight it into one pound bags and I had to go up and get ten pound of sugar and there were tram lines coming down Enmore Road down to

Addison Park, down to Addison Road and there'd been a horse and cart been hit by the tram and the horse had a broken leg. And I was standing there, on my way to the shop and the policeman took his gun out and shot the horse and that has stayed in my memory until today. That was the sort of thing that would have happened, you know, these trams everywhere.

SR: And did most people get around by public transport?

KD: Yes, yes, rain, hail or shine you got on the toast rack tram.

SR: O.K. Well, thank you very much.

KD: A pleasure. I hope it's useful to you.

SR: It is, thanks.

Interview ends