



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

INTERVIEWEE: Jack Bell

INTERVIEWER: Virginia Macleod

PLACE: Killara

DATE: 28 February 2012

TRANSCRIPT

00 **VM:** I'm speaking today with Jack Bell at his home in Killara in the northern part of Sydney. Today is Tuesday, the 28th of February 2012 and this interview is taking place for the City of Sydney Oral History Project, 'Shelter'. My name is Virginia McLeod.

Jack, what year were you born?

JB: I was born in 1914.

VM: **And where were you born?**

JB: Born in Mascot, King Street, Mascot.

VM: **And did you live in Mascot?**

JB: Lived in Mascot, not necessarily in King Street, only for a short time. My parents moved up to Universal Street but Mascot where I lived for twenty five years prior to my marriage.

VM: What number Universal Street?

JB: Number 11 Universal Street, Mascot.

VM: Tell me a little bit about the home that you grew up in. What was it like?

JB: Well, in those days, of course, in 1914 there were not too many hospitals, maternity hospitals, and most of the children that were born there were delivered by a midwife and I can remember very well her name – I certainly don't remember her delivering me but I remember her name was Nurse Goddard and she was as well-known and as well-liked as was the local priest in the area because she went 'round from house to house in Botany and Mascot to deliver babies and Nurse Goddard delivered me and she delivered both of my brothers. So I can remember that name extremely well.

VM: You remember her coming to deliver your brothers, do you?

JB: I remember her coming to deliver my brother, certainly not me.

VM: And what ages were your brothers? They were younger than you – how much?

JB: One brother was two years younger than me but unfortunately he died when he was four years of age and the other brother came along eight years after me.

2.04 **VM: And what were their names?**

JB: My first brother, George, passed away at four years of age.

VM: Was he sick or you don't remember?

JB: Yes. I think it was meningitis which didn't have much cure in those days; I think that's what it was. And the other brother was Ronald and he passed away about three years ago.

VM: And what were your parents' names?

JB: My parents' name was John, known as Jack, my mother's name was Lucy.

VM: And what was her maiden name?

JB: Byrne, B-y-r-n-e. Irish, came from Ireland.

VM: She came as a child?

JB: No, she was born in South Australia but her parents came from Ireland many, many years ago. Although her father was a Londoner, born in Petticoat Lane, I believe, her mother was Irish.

VM: And what about your father's family?

JB: I did say a moment ago her maiden name was Byrne. It's not. Her name was Long, L-o-n-g, but her mother's name was Byrne.

VM: Right, I get it, yes. And what was your father's family? Had they been in Sydney - - -

JB: My father's parents came from England and they were both English. He came out as a refugee, I suppose you can call it; I'm not sure of the date but as a young man. Married here and my father was the second eldest of the family of seven children.

VM: What was your grandfather fleeing from?

3.58 JB: I think it was just hard times in England and thought it was a better life here in Australia. He wasn't deported, nothing like that, but I understand from my background of him – and we were very close because he lived only a couple of doors from where I lived – I think it was just that he felt that Australia was a better place for he and his future.

VM: Economic opportunity, yes. So now what was the house like? Was it a weatherboard?

JB: In Universal Street?

VM: Yes.

JB: A weatherboard house, single fronted, small house.

VM: How many rooms?

JB: Two bedrooms, a dining room – I can remember it very, very well – a front bedroom, another bedroom behind it, then a dining room, a kitchen and adjacent to the kitchen was the laundry, the outhouse, no gas or electricity in those days, it was all wood fires. The bathroom was adjacent to the kitchen and you had to carry the water from the copper, which was out adjacent on one side of the kitchen, back to the laundry at the back where the bathroom was. So it was very, very difficult circumstances, not what we have these days, but I can remember very distinctly everything was wood fire, no gas or electricity in those days.

VM: So did you have like a pile of wood permanently in the backyard?

JB: Oh, yes, used to have wood. Also we used to collect – or I used to collect – wood as a child and but also there used to be a woodman come out and sell the wood too because most houses in the area were the same as our own.

6.02

So we used to buy wood for the wood fires and coal and no toilets as there is these days. It was all a night cart man used to come 'round daily or every second day and change the pans, of course, and if you were sitting on the toilet outside, bad luck, he'd still change the pan.

VM: And was it down the bottom of the yard?

JB: No, it was very adjacent to the house, about two or three steps from the back door.

VM: And how big was your backyard?

JB: Well, the frontage of the house would have been – well, it's a single frontage house – would have been about fifteen metres and the backyard, from the back fence to the front for the laundry would have been about twenty metres.

VM: And in that space your father kept any animals?

JB: Yes. We kept pigeons because there was a pigeon club, a shooting club in the district. We used to sell the pigeons to the shooting club and the pigeons, if they came back home, we'd sell them again, maybe sixpence a pair or something like that, which was money in those days. And eventually when I was a youngster, about six or seven, he involved himself in greyhound racing.

VM: And how many greyhounds did he have?

JB: Well, he only had two at the time.

VM: Two.

JB: Yes.

VM: And did they live free in the backyard?

JB: No, they had kennels in the backyard, oh, yes, individual kennels.

VM: And tell me what your father did, what was his work?

JB: He was a plumber. In the early days he used to travel from spot to spot, he'd either walk or by tram; there was no other vehicle.

VM: So he carried all his tools with him?

8.00 JB: Carried all his tools with him.

VM: Was it heavy?

JB: They were heavy, too heavy for me to lift at the time, of course, but probably pretty heavy, and he used to travel wherever he had to travel, even up to Glebe. I know he was apprenticed in Glebe, which was some distance away from Mascot, and he used to travel to and from Glebe to Mascot initially by tram, two trams, one to the city and another one to Glebe.

VM: Changing.

JB: But there was no other form of transport in those days. Eventually, he got himself a horse and sulky.

VM: How old were you when that arrived?

JB: I was about eight years of age in those days.

VM: And the horse, he must have kept it somewhere else. There wouldn't have been room.

JB: Yes, my grandparents lived two doors away. They had a fairly large house and backyard and side entrance and he kept his horse in the stable there.

VM: And there was room for the sulky too in that backyard?

JB: Yes, yes, there was, yes.

VM: And did you spend much time with the horse?

JB: Yes, a lot.

VM: Did you look after it?

JB: Yes, a lot. I used to ride him a lot. Fell off many times.

VM: Where did you ride to?

JB: Well, down to other districts, Botany, a place called Lauriston Park in those days which is now the airport.

VM: What was that like - it was open land?

JB: A lot of open land. Lauriston Park was named as part of the Mascot Municipality. It was a village rather than a municipality, although it was part of the Mascot Municipality. At that stage it ranged from

Botany Road, which is now still in existence, down to Cooks River Bridge but there was no bridge across Cooks River in those days.

10.09

So if you went down as far as the river and you wanted to get across to the other side of the river, you either had to swim across or you had to get somebody to row you across. And there was a family living right on the river's edge called Puckeridge and there used to be a little spot there called Puck's Wharf and if Mr Puckeridge was home at the time he would row you across and how you got back I'm not so sure.

VM: You waved and shouted, perhaps, yes. And so when you said Lauriston Park, I thought perhaps it was like a park, an open area but, no, that was the name of the village.

JB: No, it was not a park, it was a village, a municipality, probably about a thousand people there in residence in total, which was a lot of people in those days.

VM: And so around where you were living, was there much open space for riding?

JB: A lot; more open space than there was homes.

VM: So which ways did you go? Just down towards the airport or did you go in other directions too?

JB: Well, up from where I lived in Universal Street would have been the eastern side was sandhills. It is now the Lakes Golf Club and it was all bushland, lakes, sandhills, no habitation of any description. I used to ride there and walk there; it was bushland.

VM: Sounds a wonderful riding area.

JB: And that was only about six or seven hundred metres from where I lived and then we'd get into sandhills, bushland, lakes.

VM: Perfect for riding, yes.

11.58

JB: Yes. So I rode either in the bushland, rode down to – on my horse, of course – 'round to Lauriston Park and other areas because there were more vacant spots than there was houses and a great number of nurseries and market gardens. Perhaps in the Mascot district there was probably – and I'm not exaggerating this – I think there probably would have been about four or five market gardens, Chinese market gardens, selling the foodstuffs.

VM: And what were the nurseries – were they different or that was the same?

JB: They were somewhat similar. They were more for plants, flowers, etcetera, etcetera.

VM: Selling for cut flowers or plants?

JB: Cut flowers and vegetables, of course, for the local people.

VM: Did you grow vegetables in your house?

JB: A few. My mother used to grow more than my father, a few, such things as the parsley and mint and the basics and a few potatoes – I can remember digging up potatoes for them. They had one lemon tree and another orange tree, I think it was; we used to grow things like that.

VM: So you always had a bit of something in the garden?

JB: Yes, there was always something. My mother was a very versatile type of woman. She had to be because things were very, very hard in those days through the Great Depression and the areas of that description and she had to make things do. Men used to go 'round selling rabbits, the rabbitoh, to sell a couple of rabbits. That would last us a week for food in the Great Depression days. I can remember that very well, how my mother used to scrimp and scrape.

14.01 **VM: What, she eked out the rabbit meat with vegetables?**

JB: Yes, bit of meat.

VM: In a stew or a soup?

JB: Well, I can remember sometimes it was stews, sometimes it was a baked rabbit. I'd have had a little bit, my mother would have less and my father would have even less than that probably because they had two children at that stage and they had to look after them. But things, I know, were very, very tough but she got through it.

VM: Well, you were like a young teenager by the time the Depression came.

JB: That's right, I was. I would have been twelve, thirteen, yes, school age.

VM: And how long did you stay at school?

JB: I left school at fifteen years of age.

VM: And was it hard to find a job?

JB: Very hard, I found it extremely difficult. I may have mentioned this to you before but it's worth mentioning again. My father was in the barber shop, waiting to get a haircut and there was another gentleman sitting alongside him and they talked, as women do talk when they go to the hairdressers, and my dad said "I've got a young boy that's just left school and I'm finding it difficult for him to get a job" – he was trying everywhere to get me a job – and the other gentleman said "What does he want to do?" and my dad said "Well, I don't want him to be a plumber" but he said "Anything, preferably in the office work". So this gentleman said "Send him across to me on Monday" and "to me", he was the manager of J Kitchen & Sons in Alexandria. And I went across there, presented myself to the chief clerk who was expecting me and that was where I started as an office boy for J Kitchen & Sons in Alexandria.

VM: So who was it? Was it Mr Kitchens who actually hired you?

16.01 JB: No, it was a fellow, Mr Miller. He was the general manager of the clock and in those days although they manufactured soap and soap powders, one of their major industries was to collect bones and fat from the butchers and make the tallow in order to make the soaps. So they used to get the basics from the butchers and he was the general manager. He used to supervise collecting the bones and fat from the butchers throughout the whole district, North Sydney, South Sydney, everywhere.

VM: It all came to you, yes.

JB: All horse-drawn vehicles in those days. It was a very large area in Alexandria, about fourteen acres, which is a large area - they had about two hundred horses - I can remember that area very well because they used to have all horse-drawn vehicles, no motor cars.

VM: And what was your job there, what did you do?

JB: Well, as an office boy I was running 'round, doing all sorts of things. I learnt to operate the weighbridge because they used to weigh the horses and the carts and the contents in and out, so I learnt to do that as I got a bit older but initially I was just the office boy; when everybody whistled I ran.

VM: You ran. But you fitted in straight away?

JB: Oh, yes, I settled in.

VM: Do you remember what you earned when you started?

JB: Yes, two pounds a week and that was a lot of money.

VM: So they must have been impressed with you straight away.

JB: Yes. Well I only got less than two pounds but I turned fifteen a little while after I was there and then got an increase in salary up to two pounds a week. Every cent of that went to my mother and she used to dole money out to me.

VM: Did she? How much did she give back to you for spending, do you remember

18.01 JB: It was a matter of pence rather than anything else.

VM: And what did you spend it on?

JB: Well, a year or so after that I met my young lady and of course I used to take her to the pictures, so I'd get shillings then instead of pence. So I had enough to live on, take my girlfriend out, pay my fees at the tennis club but she kept the bulk of it and I think it was very, very handy to her.

VM: Well, especially at that time, as you said things were so hard in the Depression.

JB: Had to at that time. I can remember when I was going to school she used to give me a penny every day. Most times I brought it back without spending it but she used to give me a penny every day to take to school to spend.

VM: And if you did spend it, what did you spend it on?

JB: Lollies.

VM: But you brought it home because you knew money was tight?

JB: Most days I brought the penny home and she'd give me the same penny back the next day.

VM: But you always had it in case?

JB: Yes, I always had a penny in my pocket.

VM: That's nice. Now, you mentioned you met your girl who became your wife.

JB: Well, I was always interested in the sport. I was lucky enough to represent the New South Wales Schoolboys in football and in cricket

but I was also very interested in tennis and some of my friends used to play tennis in Rosebery – and this is how I’m getting onto Rosebery – and they said to me one day “Why don’t you come and have a” – and on the Friday nights they used to go and play tennis; it was a night court.

VM: So it was lit by electric light?

JB: Yes, by electricity. So I said “All right, I will”. So I went up on this Friday night and they introduced me to the boys and the girls there. There was about three or four boys and three or four girls and I think they were more interested in the girls than they were in playing tennis and I was introduced and I looked at this young lady over there and she was a little bit younger than me and I was fifteen or sixteen, I think, at that age and I thought “Geez, she’s a nice-looking girl”.

20.12 And before the end of the evening I plucked up enough courage and I said to her “Do you mind if I walk you home?” and she said “No, I’d like that”. And she lived in Rosebery, in Harcourt Parade, Rosebery, so I walked her home and I walked her home every night since and she was my girlfriend; she’s the only girlfriend I ever had.

VM: So you met when you were about fifteen?

JB: I met her at the tennis court, yes. And I think I was very, very well accepted into the family because I never had a drink of alcohol and her father was an alcoholic and I think her mother welcomed me with open arms and I think the father did too.

VM: What, the father was glad? He didn’t press you to join him in a drink or anything?

JB: No, no, no, he didn’t, never did.

VM: And did your wife’s mother drink too?

JB: No, no, she didn’t.

VM: And what about your wife, did she drink?

JB: My wife was a non-drinker, never had a drink, the same as me. So I was very welcome in that family as a teetotaler.

VM: So tell me your wife’s name.

JB: Dulcie Wilson.

VM: And her parents, what were their names?

JB: Her parents was Alfred and her mother Violet. Her father worked for the tobacco company, worked for many, many years in the tobacco company.

VM: This was just in Alexandria or near Randwick, yes.

JB: Yes, in Alexandria I think it would have been, yes.

VM: And where was the tennis court? You said it was in Rosebery.

JB: It was in Kimberley Grove.

VM: Is it still there today, do you know?

22.00 JB: Well, the tennis court's not, it's built on now, but Kimberley Grove is still there, yes. And I eventually moved up to two hundred metres from Kimberley Grove on the corner of Ripon Way and Bannerman Crescent.

VM: And just before that, though, so you regularly walked from where you're living in Mascot you'd walk up to Rosebery.

JB: Yes, regular.

VM: How long did that take?

JB: Ten minutes.

VM: Ten minutes. So it was your neighbouring area?

JB: Yes. In those days, of course, the girl you married was the girl next door because usually there was little transport unless you met somebody in the company in which you worked but generally it was the girl next door; they were the only people you knew. You wouldn't travel from Mascot to Glebe or something to meet a girlfriend – there was no transport – so the girl next door was the girl you fell in love with.

VM: So tell me about that. You met then and when were you able to get married?

JB: We married on the 6th of April 1940.

VM: So that was some years later?

JB: Some years later. I was twenty five and she was twenty three.

VM: And did you have to save up to get married - I mean, you were together for a long time – what delayed getting married?

JB: Yes, together for a long time. I did save up, I saved up with the intention of getting married but all my life during my father's time he had greyhounds and when I was old enough to have greyhounds myself – and you had to be eighteen years of age to be registered – when I was old enough to have greyhounds and train them, I used to own and train a greyhound or two. And I was very, very fortunate that I won a very big stake – you call it stakes - and that was a big race, in 1939 for which I got two hundred pounds, which was a lot of money in those days.

24.11 **VM: A big amount, yes.**

JB: That enabled me to pluck up enough courage to go and ask my future father in law for his daughter's hand in marriage. He said "Please".

VM: Good, yes, and that was the answer you wanted.

JB: That was the answer I wanted, yes. So that was the way I eventually married Dulcie Wilson.

VM: Yes. So you had two hundred pounds?

JB: Yes.

VM: And was that enough for you to be able to put down a deposit on a house, how did you go? Tell me.

JB: No, I had to borrow and in 1940, of course, WWII had commenced then and all the banks had closed their books for lending money, it was just everybody closed, so I was in a bit of a dilemma. I wanted to get married, we were engaged but I didn't have the money, but my uncle was extremely friendly with the general manager of the Bank of New South Wales – it's not existing at the moment – and that manager opened his books for one person and he lent me a thousand pounds.

VM: That was lucky.

JB: A thousand pounds and then he closed the books again. So I borrowed a thousand pounds and built the house for nine hundred pounds.

VM: And tell me about the land – how did you find the land?

JB: I had to pay that off at twenty five per cent of my salary; it was taken out of my bank account. My salary was paid to my bank account for my company who I worked for, J Kitchen and Sons. I was getting in those days five pounds a week and twenty five per cent of that was

taken out automatically by the bank for the Bank of New South Wales.

24.05 **VM: But the block of land, had you had your eye on it for a while?**

JB: A long while, yes; we managed to secure that.

VM: Had somebody bought it before, your father in law or your father?

JB: My father in law had bought it before, so I got it at a very cheap rate.

VM: So he had already - - -

JB: He had already purchased the land but assisted us in taking it over into my name.

VM: And did he own other land in the Rosebery estate area?

JB: Did I have other land?

VM: No, did your father in law own other land or had he just bought this one?

JB: Only his own home, that's all.

VM: His own home and he'd bought this other block?

JB: Yes.

VM: Do you think he had it in mind for you and Dulcie when he bought it or he'd had it before?

JB: I'd like to think he did because he didn't have it for very long. So I would like to think that he did have something there for his daughter.

VM: Yes. He had you in mind, both of you, yes.

JB: And that started that and I can remember the name of the builder. We designed it – my wife and myself designed the house – didn't build it, of course, obviously, but the name of the builder was John Evans who was a family friend, a builder.

VM: A friend of your father?

JB: A friend of my father and my father was the plumber who looked after the building of the house.

VM: He could supervise all that.

JB: I didn't have to worry about a thing but my wife and I designed it and watched every brick put in it.

VM: Being laid.

JB: We used to go and visit it three or four times a week just to see what it was.

VM: See the progress, yes.

JB: Yes. And I will show you a picture later. Do you want to see the picture now of the house?

VM: Yes. So you were just telling me, you said you designed your own house. What did that involve – did you have an architect?

28.02 JB: No, but I like drawing, I did like drawing, so I used to spend a good many hours at my place of work doing my own drawings and rubbing them out when my wife didn't like it. I can remember very, very well we had a bit of an argument – not an argument, a debate – she wanted one toilet outside, I wanted two, one inside and one outside. I won, so we had two toilets in the house, one in the inside and one outside, which eventually turned out to be very, very handy. So they were the sort of things. I would draw something during my working days, working hours, and take it up and show her and she'd go "I don't like this. Should do that" .

VM: In the evening?

JB: And so I'd do it again and eventually we got to a design that appealed to the pair of us.

VM: Both of you, yes.

JB: And that was it, I gave it to my dad, he gave it to the builder and away they went.

VM: And so what did you end up with, how many rooms and what sort of layout?

JB: There were three bedrooms or two bedrooms and one what we might call a third room which I used as a bit of a study or something but it developed into a third bedroom when my mother in law passed away and my father in law moved up with us; we developed that into the third bedroom.

VM: An extra bedroom, yes.

JB: So virtually it was a three bedroom house, a combination of dining room, loungeroom, very big.

VM: What, open between the two?

JB: Very open, three times this size. It would have been from one side of the house to the other, probably about thirty metres.

30.03 **VM: Very big, yes.**

JB: Quite a big house.

VM: So the living/dining area stretched right across the house?

JB: The dining area and living area stretched right across the house from east to west.

VM: And when you came in the front door -?

JB: We came in the front door. There was a hallway for about six or seven metres, on the right hand side was the main bedroom, left hand side the second bedroom, then into the dining/living room. Beyond that was the kitchen – rather, a kitchenette – where we had our meals. Alongside that, on the western side the kitchen and on the eastern side the third bedroom – which turned into a bedroom – and at the back a back verandah.

VM: And where was the bathroom?

JB: The bathroom was in between the main bedroom, just inside the front door, and the living room.

VM: But it wasn't an ensuite from the main bedroom?

JB: No, no.

VM: And then you had the extra toilet out the back?

JB: Out the back.

VM: And did you have a laundry out there?

JB: The laundry was attached to the house and adjacent to the house but outside the back door, just outside the back door.

VM: Now, it was on a corner block, you said.

JB: Yes, it was.

VM: And how big was the yard?

JB: The yard was fairly big. It would have been – well, being on a corner block – beyond the house would have been twenty, twenty five metres by forty metres - it was a big block.

VM: So we were just talking about the backyard - you got a phone call – but now tell me, it was quite a big backyard. Was that important to you?

32.08 JB: Yes, it was a big backyard and I was very keen on gardening, not that I'm a terribly good gardener, but I had a lot of fruit trees. And I think if I could just recall some of them I had about two lemon trees, two orange trees, a mandarin tree, a peach tree, an apricot tree, passion fruit vines, avocado tree, all surrounding the perimeter of the house. Although I had a double garage there was still plenty of room and a fairly large area in one of the corners of the garage - - -

VM: The garden, yes.

JB: - - - where I had the garden, the flowers, etcetera, etcetera. So I'm not a horticulturist but I did like fiddling 'round the garden.

VM: You grew a lot, yes.

JB: And, of course, I had plenty of lawn to mow too.

VM: And did you put all those plants in straight away or did you gradually - - -

JB: Gradually did it. The only plant I put in within the first couple of months of me being there was a very small pine tree on the side of the house which has grown now, seventy years ago, eighty years ago.

VM: So it was a Norfolk Island Pine, was it?

JB: Yes, it was, I think that was the name of it.

VM: So you planted one tree in the garden straight away?

JB: One tree. And from there on we had lots of space in the backyard to grow and in the front, of course, there's a fifteen or twenty metre walk from the front footpath to the front door.

34.03 I had flowers 'round the front of the house on each side of the pathway, leading up to the front door and a front verandah running 'round the side and the front.

VM: So on the corner?

JB: So the overall area of the house, including the verandahs was very large.

VM: Do you know how many squares roughly?

JB: Oh, I couldn't tell you that.

VM: It doesn't matter.

JB: Probably one of the largest houses in the district at that stage and I think – I'm being boasting now – I think it was one of the well sought after houses.

VM: It was thought highly of in the area, you mean?

JB: I think so, yes.

VM: And you told me you did drawings and eventually you and Dulcie agreed on the layout of the house. And did you then just employ somebody to draw them up - did you have to put in planning to council?

JB: No, it had to go to the council to be done. Incidentally, my uncle was a member of the Waterloo Council at the time and made sure that it went through.

VM: He was a councillor or a council staff?

JB: A councillor, yes, elected onto the council. Yes, it had to go through the drawing but the builder arranged for the drawings. I eventually gave him my design. Apparently, it was satisfactory to him and from that, whether or not he got an architect to do it properly I don't know.

VM: Draughtsman, yes.

JB: But it was passed through the council and away we went and, of course, my dad being the plumber, he was there every day to see it was all right.

VM: To supervise, yes. And because this house is in something known as the Rosebery Estate were there particular restrictions on how you could build?

36.05 JB: Very much so, and I believe the restrictions are still in existence. For example, it had to be a brick house; there was no weatherboard houses in the estate. This is in the Rosebery Estate now I'm talking about, which originally was governed by the Waterloo Municipal Council. It had to be of brick stature, it had to be so many feet back from the footpath, it could not be a two-storey house, it had to be of

such a design - there were a number of restrictions and I think they still exist. It was called – I've forgotten the name, it had a particular name – a covenant on it, on the whole area. You had to have certain restrictions: you couldn't have a weatherboard house, you couldn't have two-storey, you couldn't have this, "It must be designed this way".

VM: So it had to be brick with a tile roof?

JB: Tile roof, yes.

VM: And were there a lot of other houses already in the street when you built? I mean, were you one of the last or the first?

JB: I was one of the last in the street but there were a couple of other houses who had tennis courts on them, which were eventually demolished and rebuilt; a number of houses have had that done since then.

VM: Subdivided, yes. So some of the blocks got smaller by that process?

JB: Yes, yes.

VM: That would be after the war probably, yes.

JB: Yes. One in particular was immediately opposite on the other corner of the Bannerman Crescent and Ripon Way, which is owned and still owned by a chap named Scott Cam who is the actor in Channel Nine.

38.04 He and his family became very friendly with me and his children and he demolished the house he originally bought and he's got a mansion there now, a very nice house.

VM: So there's all different styles now, yes.

JB: And there were stables at the back of those places and there were a number of the horse owners, racehorse owners, in the district who had stables at the back. They were able to do that but you were not supposed to have fowls.

VM: So you could have horses?

JB: You could have horses.

VM: Any other animals – but not chickens?

JB: Not chickens, no. They were frowned upon although some people did have them.

VM: What, because they were noisy or what was the general feeling about them?

JB: No, no, no. It was one of the things that were looked upon as being not suitable for the district.

VM: And did you have any pets?

JB: A dog, always had a dog.

VM: And not a greyhound?

JB: Not a greyhound, never had a greyhound in the backyard. They were allowed, of course, but I never had one.

VM: You chose to have a different dog then?

JB: I had a Labrador, always had a Labrador.

VM: And so how long did it take to build the house – was it fairly quick? Because I'm thinking this is in wartime. Did that slow it down?

JB: It was a slowly built house, probably. It started prior to the Christmas of that year, of 1939, and it was finished and ready for us to move in in April 1940. So it would have taken, what, four months.

VM: That's quite good, yes, quite quick.

JB: Yes.

VM: And so what about furnishing? So you designed the house yourself.

JB: Yes.

VM: And then was it easy to get furniture?

JB: Well, as I've mentioned earlier, I borrowed a thousand pounds and the house cost me nine hundred, so I had a hundred pounds to spend. A hundred pounds in those days was money.

40.04 I had some money in the bank and we bought our furniture, this current furniture was bought in my house, my original house. There's a glass top on this table, that was a wedding present, but all the other furniture except the piano was purchased by a man who was a builder of furniture in Surry Hills named – I've forgotten his name now; it doesn't make any difference.

VM: You can tell me later, you can come back later, you can tell me.

JB: Yes.

VM: So you went to his warehouse and said “Oh, we like this and this” and he built it for you?

JB: Yes, yes, he built it for us. We told him what our thoughts were and he designed it and said “Does this suit you, does this suit?” My wife was the boss, of course – always was – and she said “Yes, that’s it”. So this furniture you are sitting on today was purchased there to move in our house when we first arrived. We didn’t have carpeted floor in those days; that came at a later stage.

VM: So you just had boards, timber?

JB: We just had floor and lino, yes.

VM: In the kitchen?

JB: In the kitchen and through the rest of the house.

VM: All the rooms had lino?

JB: All the rooms had lino ,yes, but the carpet came at a later stage.

VM: And curtains and blinds?

JB: Curtains. Well, for the main rooms they had the curtains and blinds. It was very livable the moment we walked into it from our honeymoon.

VM: Livable in what way?

JB: Well, we felt very proud of walking into a new house, one of the best houses certainly in the street and probably in the district, looked upon by our neighbours with envy, and we were very proud. And I had a good job.

42.14 **VM: And you’d worked hard to get it all together and design it how you wanted it.**

JB: Yes, yes.

VM: And then you felt right when you moved in?

JB: Yes.

VM: Sometimes people design houses and they say “Oh, we didn’t get this right or that right”.

JB: No, no, we felt very happy with what we had. In the original stages there was not a double garage, there was only a single garage – we

did put a garage in – but eventually we demolished that and had a double garage.

VM: So was that ‘round the back?

JB: That would have been in the 1960s, ‘70s.

VM: But did you access it from the front of the house?

JB: In the side of the house.

VM: So the front of the house looks onto Ripon Way and the other street, you entered from the other street?

JB: Yes, there at the side. Behind the palm tree there was a side entrance, double gates that took us straight into the garage and all ‘round that area was fruit trees, yes.

VM: And once you got married did Dulcie carry on working or was she working before you got married?

JB: No, she didn’t. She was a dressmaker. She stopped having it as a full time job but she did a little bit of dressmaking at home.

VM: What, privately for people?

JB: Privately. But then she had a little bit of time on her hands and she worked at Woolworths a couple of hours a day; always home for me when I got home but she would go to Woolworths, the local Woolworths store in Mascot.

VM: What was she doing there – checkout?

44.01 JB: Just serving, yes, as they did in Woolworths in those days.

VM: And did you have children?

JB: Yes, we had one child, one son, that’s all.

VM: When was he born?

JB: He was born in 1944.

VM: And what was his name?

JB: His name’s John.

VM: But not known as Jack?

JB: Not known as Jack; he’s called John.

VM: He's called John, not like your father.

JB: And he has a son named John.

VM: Also known as John?

JB: Also known as John, although called Simon, he's John Simon but he's called Simon but his name is John Simon.

VM: So you were living in Rosebery and, of course, you already knew the area very well.

JB: Yes.

VM: Dulcie had grown up there, had she, all her life?

JB: Yes, yes. Originally born in Waterloo but she moved to Rosebery as a very young child.

VM: So she hadn't moved far away. And your parents in law were in Harcourt Parade. So how far away was that to walk?

JB: Five minutes' walk.

VM: And did you see a lot of them?

JB: Yes.

VM: Would they come to you or you would go?

JB: Both. They would come to us and we would go to them.

VM: What, for a meal?

JB: They were very, very fond of their grandchild. And my mother in law died prematurely; she was in her '50s or maybe a little older than that, passed away suddenly with cancer. Tragedy but one of these things.

VM: So they would just drop 'round for a cup of tea or for a meal? Was it formalised?

JB: Yes, cup of tea, mind the baby if necessary whilst we went to the pictures. They were very, very fond of their grandchild and that was the only one they had at that stage.

46.02 **VM: So it was a very close relationship.**

JB: Very close, yes. When my mother in law passed away, my father in law moved in with us.

VM: Because he was on his own then, yes.

JB: I mentioned earlier that he was an alcoholic. When he moved in with us, he did not have one drink of alcohol - that was taboo.

VM: And he was O.K?

JB: He was O.K. Thought the world of my son, thought the world of him. We thought so too.

VM: So roughly when was it that he moved in with you then – how old was your son?

JB: It would have been about late 1950s.

VM: So your son was a teenager by then?

JB: Yes, yes. Not so much. My son was born in 1944. He would have been about – it was mid 1950s so would have been about nine or ten, 'round about that age.

VM: So then there were the four of you living together as a household?

JB: Yes, yes.

VM: And your father in law, was he involved in the running of the house or did Dulcie do all that?

JB: No, no, he was just a boarder, but when I say "a boarder", that's not quite right. He didn't have to pay anything, obviously. If I said to him to jump, he'd say "How high?", that sort of business. I was the boss of the house but he never put a foot out of place. Used to smoke a lot but never drank another drop of alcohol in the house; might have done outside but never in the house.

VM: And was he working still then?

JB: No, he'd retired then, yes.

VM: So did he do anything in the garden?

48.00 JB: No, but not really, he wasn't a gardener. But he used to take our son for a walk or take him out to the pictures or somewhere; he looked after John.

VM: So they had a close friendship?

JB: Very close relationship, yes, extremely so.

VM: And you mentioned the neighbourhood or some neighbours. What sort of an area was it? Did everyone know everyone really well?

JB: Most people knew everyone, they're fairly close-knit. I was and still a bit of a loner but I made quite good friends with some of our neighbours, our close neighbours, the person immediately behind and immediately in front and on the other side and on the opposite side. One fellow that lives opposite me used to lock himself out and he'd always come across to me "Can you get through the window and let me in?" That's the sort of friendship we had. So to the immediate neighbours, 'round about the first seven or eight homes, close friends.

VM: These are the houses in Ripon Way?

JB: Ripon Way and Bannerman Crescent, that particular area.

VM: Both of them, yes. And I just wondered, the way the houses were, if you were in your backyard could you see them in their backyards so that you had constant contact?

JB: In two houses, the one immediately behind and the one adjacent, yes, I'd lean over the fence and have a chat to both of those neighbours, yes.

VM: And out the front of the house – just looking at the photos – it was all very open too.

JB: Although there was a house I mentioned to you this chap, Scott Cam, lived, immediately opposite on the corner very friendly. Next door to him was another house owned originally by people named Blaxland. They also made it into not a restaurant but a - - -

50.09 **VM: Bed and breakfast, a boarding house?**

JB: No, for parties and things like that, that sort of house. They developed that for a function centre. Next door to that was people by the name of Smith Brothers, or one of the Smith brothers, who owned a box factory down in one of ends of Rosebery. He had a tennis court in his backyard, eventually owned by people named Leahy, L-e-a-h-y. All of these people were close friends.

VM: And did a lot of people work locally?

JB: Yes, yes, they did. A lot of them did, yes, I'd say so.

VM: And how about you? Did you walk to work from there when you were at Kitchens or had it already moved to the city?

JB: I obtained a motor car, a small cheap motor car, early in my married life and I used to drive to work.

VM: When you say “early”, whenabouts was that – after the war?

JB: Within the first twelve months.

VM: Right. So 1941 you had a car, yes.

JB: Yes.

VM: And so tell me how long you actually lived in this house? You moved there in 1940.

JB: I lived there for sixty seven years.

VM: So you left not long ago, yes.

JB: No, lived there four years ago. When my wife passed away I still stayed on there for a further twelve months, very lonely. Friends ‘round and neighbours were very, very friendly, very helpful, but it was not the same. Although my wife was in a nursing home for three years, I still went down and helped her, helped to feed her twice a day for every day of those three and a half years and I miss that.

52.13 When she passed away there was something went out of my life, obviously did, and my son suggested to me that I should move into a place like this.

VM: A yes.

JB: I was not enamoured about it but I thought about it. I said “Well, why not?” So he said “Come and have a look at these places”. There was none in the area, Rosebery area.

VM: You would have liked to have stayed?

JB: I would have liked to have stayed in the district but on the other hand I recognised that being close to my son was an advantage and he wanted me to come up near him too so this was the answer.

VM: And so over those sixty seven years, did you change the house a lot? I mean, you mentioned putting in a double garage.

JB: No, the house was not changed one bit, except the furniture was moved. We moved from a two bedroom to a three bedroom but other than that, no, nothing was changed.

VM: So you kept it exactly as you'd decorated it?

JB: Exactly as we designed it, yes. The only things that we've changed regularly were the flowers.

VM: In the garden?

JB: In the garden, of course, yes.

VM: And how did it feel when you moved here? Because, as you've told me, you brought all your furnishings from Rosebery.

JB: Most of them. Some of them I had to dispose of - - -

VM: Yes, there wasn't room.

JB: - - - such as wardrobes and things of that nature because, as you can see, they supply the wardrobe but wardrobes, Salvation Army, things of that nature, but other than that all of the furniture we have are the things that you can see here, little bedside tables in the bedrooms and wherever, a little desk. I used to have a little desk; I do my own writing. All of these things I've fitted in here but the big furniture is disposed of.

54.22 **VM: The wardrobes, yes. And was there anything you had to leave behind that you regretted?**

JB: The house mainly, that was a regret. But, no, I don't think there was anything. I left refrigerators and cooking utensils and things like that but other than that, no, I think I took everything I needed to take, except, of course, beds. I disposed of some of the beds that were in the other rooms and I bought another single bed for that single room there and put my own double bed here. Other than that, no, I disposed of the others.

VM: So you kept all the things that were important to you, it sounds.

JB: Important to me and my wife. I still have things such as linen and things of that nature that have never been used; I still have much of that there. Maybe it's a sentimental activity, a sentimental thought, but in that cupboard there I've got lots of things that have never been opened but my wife purchased. In here I've got lots of things that my wife accumulated. I've got also in storage now a dinner set that was given to my wife on her twenty first birthday, a dinner set has never had a drop of water put on them and that's in storage. She used to be one to collect very high class crockery, cutlery and things and I've got lots of that that I've stored away now in storage; that's for my children and grandchildren.

56.13 But I still have lots of things here. She was one for the good stuff, the quality stuff. If she'd see a bargain of quality, whether it be crockery or cutlery she'd go and get it – mightn't use it and some of it, it's never been used. As I said a moment ago, I've got crockery, cutlery and things in storage that have never been used, never had a finger laid on them, never had a drop of water on them.

VM: But you feel they're part of your life and your home?

JB: Part of my life, part of her, and that will pass onto my children, grandchildren.

VM: And when you moved here and you had all your own furniture, in the same way did that feel like you'd brought part of your home?

JB: Yes, it is, yes, it is.

VM: Did you feel at home here?

JB: I feel at home but if you said do I like it here, I'd say "No, I don't". Having lived in the one place with the one wife for sixty seven years and to move out to another place that I don't know people, no, I don't like it. If I live long enough, I'll probably get used to it but to ask me if I like it, no, I don't. The only person I really know – and I've probably mentioned this to you before – is the woman that lives next door, that's the only person I really know. I'll say "Hello" and "Good afternoon" to people walking along the street but I don't know them, whereas living in Rosebery I could say g'day to the person next door; I'd know him and I'd know his wife, I'd know his children. But here I don't know anybody.

58.00 There are a lot of one day trips in this area, they have one day trips run by the visitors, yes, I go on those and I say hello to everybody in the bus but I don't know them.

VM: And you don't see them again, yes.

JB: If I see them in the street I'll say hello. Well, one thing, I don't know them; the second thing, I can't recognise them because of my sight.

VM: But for you living in Rosebery, that was a really important part of your home?

JB: A very, very great, important part of my life.

VM: Knowing the neighbours.

JB: Knowing the neighbours, having a very happy marriage, a happy son, and he got married and we have a wonderful daughter in law. All these things add up to me having a very, very lucky life. And, I don't know, I'm not a churchgoer anyway – I go to church once a year or something like that – but I thank the Lord now and again for what he's given me: a very, very lucky innings for my life. I don't want to be pessimistic about it but I realise how lucky I've been.

VM: **No, that's wonderful that you appreciate and feel all that. And I suppose I was thinking if you look back now and you remember your home when you were a child – you know, we talked about it at the beginning – what comes to your mind strongly about the home you grew up in?**

JB: The thing that sticks out in my mind more than anything in the world, something I will never forget, and that is the funeral of my younger brother who died when he was four years of age. No motor vehicles in those days, the hearse was a horse-drawn vehicle.

60.07 Sitting in the cabin behind the horse was my mother on one side, my father on another side, me in between them and a little coffin that big (demonstrates visually) on the seat in front of us, a blue coffin covered in pale blue. My mother cried every day for twelve months. I will never, ever forget that incident. The horse-drawn vehicle from Mascot to the Mortuary Station in Central Station, from there train to Rookwood, from Rookwood to the graveyard which was in my grandfather on my mother's side a large plot and they buried my younger brother there. Never, ever, ever let go out of my mind and that sticks in my mind more than anything else in the world.

VM: **And was your brother at home? Did the coffin go from your home?**

JB: Yes, from my home.

VM: **You remember.**

JB: I remember also the streets. On both sides of the streets was lined with schoolchildren from Gardeners Road School in respect to me because I was going to Gardeners Road School. All the infants down there lined the street of Universal Street whilst that coffin was in the little hearse.

VM: **And do you remember the coffin being in the house – do you remember what happened when he died?**

JB: Yes, I do. It was in the house overnight, I remember in our loungeroom – well, I'll call it a loungeroom because we have – I remember that very well. My mother didn't sleep, I know, and nor did my dad, I don't suppose.

62.05 **VM: Did they have a wake, did friends come around or were they just on their own?**

JB: They were on their own, they were mainly on their own. Well, their immediate family. My grandparents - my father's parents lived only two doors away – obviously they were comforting there. My grandmother was a very, very big woman. She originally lived next door to where my mum and dad lived and she was bedridden and she had a rope coming from the ceiling to lift herself up from the lying position to a sitting position; she was a very, very big woman.

VM: This is your father's mother?

JB: My father's mother, yes. And eventually my grandfather on my father's side built another house next door to that which was a very modern house in those days, a brick house, and sold the other house. So he moved from next door to two doors up – that was in Universal Street.

VM: So you grew up in a very close sort of neighbourly relationship, close to your father's parents and they were very much part of your life.

JB: Yes, yes.

VM: And then when you moved to Rosebery it was a similar situation with your in-laws.

JB: Yes, it was, yes, it was.

VM: They were very close and your father in law ended up living with you.

JB: Yes, that's true.

VM: And was that an important part of your home, sort of having a home that you could bring your father in law to – was that important for you?

JB: I think it was important. It was important to my wife, obviously, because he couldn't live on his own; he was not the sort of person to be able to look after himself. He needed somebody to look after, so he moved up with us and one of his sons stayed in his own home.

64.11 So it was important for my wife to have her father living with us and I accepted that - I don't think I ever resented it. I used to be the boss, of course - I used to tell him what to do and he did it – but I think I recognised that if I'd have been in her position I'd have probably done the same thing.

VM: And what about your parents? What happened to them in their older age - did they come and live with you?

JB: My dad finished up in a nursing home. He was about eighty nine, I think it was, when he moved to a nursing home because of his disabilities and his hip. We worked hard physically and he's got to the stage where he just couldn't do anything, so he passed away in a nursing home. My mother also passed away in a nursing home but she was in her early nineties when she passed away but she lived in the house in Universal Street on her own for quite some time and, of course, there wasn't a day go by that I didn't go down to see that she was all right but eventually she had to go to nursing home because of cancer; she died of cancer in the nursing home.

VM: And did your parents come and see you quite a lot when you were in Rosebery? I mean, did they walk over or maybe your father had a car.

JB: We went down to their place regularly. Every Friday night we walked down – we didn't have a car then in the early days – we had a child – but we walked down to my parents' place very Friday night - and other times too but that was a regular visit down there.

66.00 **VM: And so you had dinner with them, tea?**

JB: Yes. They looked forward to us and we looked forward to them and they doted upon their grandson.

VM: And did they come and have meals with you too?

JB: Oh, yes, yes.

VM: On a regular basis?

JB: On a regular basis, yes.

VM: On another day they'd come up to you?

JB: Yes, yes. On a number of occasions when we celebrated my mother's birthday or my father's birthday it was in our home, my wife, my own home, their wedding anniversary or something like that. Any anniversary was in our home, not in their home.

VM: Now, you were quite involved locally in Rosebery as part of a residents' group but you also mentioned earlier that your uncle was on Waterloo Council, as it was called then, as an alderman. What was his name?

JB: Bill Heppell, H-e-p-p-e-l-l.

VM: How long did he serve on the council?

JB: For about two or three terms.

VM: And he lived in Rosebery too?

JB: He lived in Bannerman Crescent and my house was on the corner of Bannerman Crescent and Ripon Way; he only lived a hundred metres up the road from me.

VM: And you saw him quite often?

JB: Oh, yes, we saw each other. I used to babysit his children. My girlfriend at that stage - - -

VM: Dulcie.

JB: - - - and myself used to babysit his children when he went out.

VM: When you were young?

JB: Yes.

VM: And this was your father's brother or your mother's brother?

JB: My mother's sister.

VM: Husband?

JB: My mother's sister's husband, yes.

VM: And so he was on council for a while and you said he helped you with your building application to build your house?

JB: Yes. He made sure that it went through and signed, sealed and delivered.

VM: And was there a lot of interest in being on local council in the area or was he unusual?

68.05 JB: It's unusual that he was on it and he and a number of other residents doorknocked the Rosebery residents to get support for his nomination and he was on it but he was an odd man out in the council.

VM: Yes. So he was elected very much by the Rosebery area?

JB: By the Rosebery residents.

VM: Was he known in a broader area – did he work locally?

JB: No, he didn't. He worked in an insurance company.

VM: But he just went 'round door to door and got people interested?

JB: Yes, yes, he did.

VM: It sounds like it was quite a cohesive area in that it saw itself as "people of Rosebery".

JB: A fairly close-knit area. Rosebery area itself that covers the residential area is reasonably small.

VM: It's a dozen streets?

JB: Well, I can name all of the streets there; that's how small it is.

VM: And the original estate was quite big, two hundred and seventy acres or something.

JB: Probably was but that included areas of industrial area which still exist there but the residential estate was reasonably small. It's probably twice as big as this particular village here.

VM: So it was bounded by Harcourt Parade?

JB: Rosebery Estate itself was bounded by Gardeners Road, the Australian Golf Club, which is now the - - -

VM: Southern Cross Drive.

JB: - - - Southern Cross Expressway, Botany Road - - -

70.01 **VM: To the west, yes.**

JB: - - - to the western side and the northern side, it would have been Elizabeth Street.

VM: Cressy Street or Epsom Street?

JB: Well, the hospital was in Joynton Avenue and that was still part of the estate, although there were no residences there. The only residence was the one adjacent to the hospital.

VM: So the residential area was sort of in the middle, was it?

JB: That's right. So it was a reasonably small area which housed, I don't know, three or four hundred houses perhaps.

VM: So it felt neighbourly in that way?

JB: Very neighbourly.

VM: Was it actually a bit geographically isolated because of the factories around it or industrial areas?

JB: Yes, isolated in this respect, that on one corner was Gardeners Road School and adjacent to Gardeners Road School was Thatcher and Oberg Timber Company. Then, running along Botany Road with Smith Brothers' box factory covered a very large area - one of whom, the Smith Brothers, was a friend of mine – up to we get into Alexandria then. So it was cut off 'round about Morley Avenue; I think that from there on Morley Avenue you're getting into the industrial area.

VM: So it was quite a small area.

JB: Does that

VM: Yes, yes.

JB: So in a fairly small area you had the complex district of the Rosebery Estate.

VM: And you knew your in-laws were living there and your uncle.

JB: Yes.

VM: Any other family members?

71.58 JB: Yes, another aunt of mine on my mother's side also moved to Ripon Way further down the road later on in years. My grandparents on my mother's side moved to Rosebery - they originally lived in Strathfield. He was very, you might say, well-to-do and he had a factory in Alexandria but it was burnt down twice in about two months, three months, made him virtually bankrupt, and he moved to Rosebery, so he moved in Rosebery. So at one stage there was my grandparents on my mother's side, my aunt on my mother's side, two aunts on my mother's side and myself. So virtually there was – apart from this is on my mother's side – my brother in law on my wife's side lived in Rosebery and my other brother in law lived in Rosebery, so a family orientated place in Rosebery.

VM: And you got involved in starting some sort of residents' association.

JB: Yes.

VM: Did that grow out through your family or a wider area?

JB: No, no, it was nothing to do with my family. It was another friend of mine, a builder named Jack Hall, and myself felt that we needed some sort of society association within the area of the Rosebery residents because we were isolated from many things.

VM: What period was this?

JB: This would have been about the early 1960s. Jack Hall, a very well-known builder in the district, very well liked, and myself we were good friends, went to school together, we decided that it's time that we had a bit of a society of some description.

74.17 So we virtually door-knocked, sent a little bit of a brochure 'round the residents and said "We'd like to form what we call a Rosebery Residents' Association". And we thought we'd get about fifty or sixty, seventy people there and we hired a local church hall. Couldn't fit them in, it overflowed. We had to magnify it, get other activities to make ourselves heard, microphones and things; there were hundreds there.

VM: This is a church hall in Rosebery, was it?

JB: All in Rosebery.

VM: Yes. What was the church?

JB: They were residents of Rosebery and we formed what we call the 'Rosebery Residents' Association' and immediately Jack Hall was nominated and elected as secretary and I was nominated as president. So up till the time of its non-existence we were the president and secretary and we used to go down to the council meetings – the city council in those days – and put our case, if we had a case, used to assist with things.

VM: What sort of cases were you putting, what sort of issues came up?

JB: Garbage collection, for example, what we thought was something that was not in keeping with the rules and regulations.

VM: What, you mean new developments or doing modification?

JB: New developments, making sure that they kept within the rules of what we had to abide by.

VM: The covenant, yes.

JB: Yes, so all of these things. The Rosebery residents were not overactive but they kept their finger on the pulse and we had more than one meeting with the likes of Nick Shehadie down there, putting our case and he was very sympathetic because whilst we were not good friends we were acquaintances, both with Jack Hall and Nick Shehadie, Jack Bell and Nick Shehadie.

76.10 I knew him playing football, etcetera, played for Australia – as you know. So these things, he gave us a very good hearing. Not that he agreed with everything we said but he gave us a hearing.

VM: And what was his role at that point?

JB: He was the administrator appointed by the government.

VM: So the council was under administration then?

JB: Yes. So there was no council in those days, there was just the administration because for whatever reason I don't know but the government of the day, the state government, dismissed the council and put Nick Shehadie in as the chief. And we were glad of that because we got a good hearing from him.

VM: And talking of sport and playing football, did you carry on once you were married, did you carry on pursuing sport in the area?

JB: Yes, I did. I joined the services, as you know, in 1942 and spent three and a half years and I was injured to the extent that I couldn't participate as I used to in my younger days but I still participated, playing cricket in a limited fashion. And, yes, I did participate in sport, mainly tennis and cricket. Didn't play football again; that was a bit beyond me.

VM: You mentioned there were private tennis courts. Did you play with your neighbours?

JB: There were tennis courts sprinkled about pretty well in every street in Rosebery. There was one in Ripon Way, there's one in Trevilyan Avenue, there's one in Kimberley Grove, there were three in Morley Avenue – just some that I can name – and I was a member of the three in Dalmeny Avenue; four tennis courts there.

78.12 **VM: That was public tennis courts?**

JB: Public tennis courts. And also we had a club that was in the backyard of one of the Smith brother's in Trevilyan Avenue.

VM: So were you playing like several nights a week or how often?

JB: I used to play some nights down in Dalmeny Avenue but it was weekend tennis in the backyard of the Smith brothers. We had a club there and we played in the backyard.

VM: And Dulcie played too?

JB: She played too, my uncle and aunt played too. I was not married – I forget the date - but I was seventeen years of age when I won the singles title of the Eastern Suburbs Hard Court and in that year my uncle and I won the doubles title. Bill Heppell, he was a bit of a - - -

VM: Lobber.

JB: - - - I was a smash and grab and he'd get them back.

VM: So you were a team.

JB: So we had fun. And my mother and I were runners-up in the mixed doubles, so we had fun. And so we were all members of the tennis court but that was in the Rosebery district.

VM: And where did you play cricket – whereabouts was there a cricket field?

JB: Mainly when I came away from the services in Centennial Park.

VM: Right. Not in Rosebery – there were not any cricket grounds there?

JB: No. I got out of that district. I played in the business houses, a member of my company, J Kitchen and Sons cricket team, and a very successful one if I might say so.

80.02 **VM: So you kept that up for many years.**

JB: Yes.

VM: And you also mentioned about public transport changed in the Rosebery area. When you first went there, there was a tram service?

JB: There was a tram service that run from the Circular Quay through the business district right up through Rosebery, along Elizabeth Street and terminated at Rothschild Avenue at what was then Nestlé's chocolate factory was on the opposite side, eventually the Roads and

Transport Registration, that was the termination and they used to switch the hook above the tram and put it on a different thing, away they'd go, back again.

VM: Went into the city, yes.

JB: And I'm not sure of the date that it terminated but it would have been about the 1960s – I'm not sure of the date.

VM: Did you use it much yourself to go to the city?

JB: Yes, I did, yes. My wife and I used to catch the tram regularly if we wanted to go to town. I didn't have a car in those days but if I wanted to go to town or we wanted to go to town we'd catch the tram. And those trams in those days were the sideboards with the guard used to up, "Fares, please. Fares, please".

VM: And once you got a car did you stop using the tram or did you still use the tram?

JB: No, I used it now and again. My father in law was living with us in those days and he used to catch the tram regularly and take my son to shopping in the city; he was a tram traveller. But I used to go now and again, yes. I didn't cut myself off altogether.

VM: And you said once the trams stopped somebody started a local bus.

JB: Yes, a family called the name of Bradshaw, they had private buses and conducted a bus service from Rosebery area down to Circular Quay, private bus.

82.14 **VM: So did they go all around the Rosebery streets like we have little buses now?**

JB: Many of the streets but mainly on the tram route.

VM: It picked up the old route, yes.

JB: As Rosebery residents we're in a fairly compact area; none of them had to walk very far to catch a tram. And besides that the tram was still running along Botany Road so that those who were living on the western side of the Rosebery Estate only had a short distance to walk to Botany Road and those on the other side a short distance to the Rosebery tram.

VM: And the council, Waterloo Council offices, were just up the road from you too. And I think you mentioned the hospital. Were

they very much part of the local community – did people go to South Sydney Hospital?

JB: Yes. South Sydney Hospital was a very major hospital. That was one of the major hospitals in the South Sydney district.

VM: So if you had an emergency you just went straight up there?

JB: That's right, that's right. I was personally involved in there as an in-patient for some weeks – I had my appendix out, that's all.

VM: When you were young?

JB: In my teens, about seventeen, sixteen, seventeen, yes.

VM: So you were already at work and, what, you got rushed to hospital with appendicitis?

JB: Yes, got rushed to hospital, I can remember.

VM: What happened?

JB: I'm not sure how long I was in there, maybe only a week or so. And I went back to work on a Saturday morning and when I went back to work, went to the office the manager there, general manager, says "Hey, Bell, what are you" – he was a very, very upright man, a very distinct man – "Bell, what are you doing here?" I said "I've come to work, sir". "You've just got out of hospital. Back home you go. Don't you come back for another few days" and off I went back because I went back on the day after I got out of the hospital and he sent me back home again.

84.19 **VM: And he told you to take some rest and convalescence, yes.**

JB: Yes. I remember his name too, yes.

VM: And while you were still living at Rosebery, there was a major hailstorm in 1990, is it?

JB: I'm not sure of the dates of that – in the 1990s, yes.

VM: And it came over the Rosebery area. You said like it was almost the centre or the most damaged area.

JB: It was.

VM: Were you at home when that happened?

JB: Yes, it was. It was seven o'clock at night and the planes, aeroplanes used to come fairly low over the area and I remember my wife and I

were in the kitchen – she was getting the meal – and a plane appeared to be coming over and she said “Gee, this one’s low”. And it wasn’t a plane, it was thunder, and suddenly whoom, it hit, the hailstorm’s hit the house, run right through the roof, through the ceiling, and one big lump of hail that thick (demonstrates visually) hit her on the shoulder.

VM: What, as big as a tennis ball?

JB: It didn’t hurt her. It came right through the ceiling and the roof.

VM: So through the tile roof, through the ceiling, into the house?

JB: Through the tiled roof, through the ceiling and hit her on the shoulder and all the rest of the house ice coming through the ceiling, through the roof and the ceiling. We didn’t know what had happened; we thought it was the end of the world. And not only our house but every house in the district, in the Rosebery Estate district and in Mascot, most of them, in other areas too, were damaged.

86.07 My house was so badly damaged it was looked upon as being the worst damage in the district. I have photographs there of help that came from the services department - - -

VM: State Emergency.

JB: - - - state service department. They came from all parts of the country to help put tarpaulins over the roofs to keep some people reasonably safe.

VM: And were they there immediately or what happened?

JB: They were there within twenty four hours.

VM: And what about people in the street?

JB: People in the street did the best they could.

VM: Stunned, yes.

JB: For example, now every room in our house had water coming through to it. There was one area, probably half as big as this room, that didn’t have the water coming down. That was our bedroom and our double bed had sleeping quarters. That was the only spot in the house that was not damaged by rain and hail, so much so that Alan Jones, who was on Radio 2GB, was an acquaintance of mine, not a vast friend but an acquaintance, knew that I lived in the area and he got in touch with me and said “What are you doing?” I said “I was

actually getting people to put tarpaulins up". He said "We'll get somebody to help you" and he put a call over the air. And an Australian cricketer named – forget his name – anyway, doesn't matter – he came from way back out in the western suburbs, travelled in to come and help me put tarpaulins and sandbags. A fellow came from down Bulli way, a plumber, to come and help to get the water out of the ceiling.

88.07 These two fellows came to help me put some tarpaulins in the roof through Alan Jones. I did mention – I haven't mentioned – but I mention that our house was so badly damaged that Channel Seven did a documentary on the damage of the house.

VM: What, they came and filmed it?

JB: They filmed the house.

VM: Straight away or when did they come?

JB: Within a week of it happening. It was history throughout the state of this damage that was done to the Rosebery and Mascot area - more so in Rosebery; that took the brunt of the storm; there wasn't a house in Rosebery Estate that wasn't damaged.

VM: And did you have to move out during that time?

JB: Yes, we moved out for about two months whilst the damage was repaired or the house rebuilt.

VM: Where did you go?

JB: I fortunately had a friend, who was actually a friend of my son, who was a builder and he took over the whole of the control of my house. He looked after the insurance and any quotes, new tiles, he looked after everything. He said "You go and move out" and we moved out and lived in Maroubra in a hotel for about two months whilst he virtually rebuilt the house. We didn't do a thing, he just did everything, and he covered all the insurance. We didn't have to pay him anything, he did the deal. We were extremely lucky, one of the lucky ones in that respect.

VM: And so when you moved back in everything was fixed?

JB: When we moved back in we had to get the furniture re-covered, some of it re-polished, but most of it was all right. But new carpet, obviously, new carpet on the floor, new linen, bed linen, things like that, all of the things that were hail damaged, rain damaged we had

to have replaced, but the furniture was all right except it had to be reconditioned.

90.12 **VM: Re-polished, yes. And after that happened, did you feel apprehensive that it might happen again or did you see it as a one-off?**

JB: No, that didn't worry us. We felt that if the world was going to end that was it, full stop.

VM: You'd experienced it?

JB: Yes, it was an experience. And many pictures that I've shown you there show you the help that we got, not dozens but hundreds of servicemen; the army enlisted to come and help. When the essential services didn't have enough people, the army was enlisted to come and put new tarpaulins around, do this and do that. So for probably a month, easily a month, there was repair people on the roofs of homes, all in the Rosebery district. It was not just Jack Bell's; it was everybody in the district.

VM: And you said at one point it was obviously very windy and wet - -

JB: Yes.

VM: - - - that you had to try and tie down the tarpaulin.

JB: Tarpaulins were being blown off the roof regularly.

VM: What, each new lot of bad weather would rip them off again?

JB: Well, it continued raining for a couple of days and the wind was blowing and whilst the tarpaulins we put on initially it was only twenty four hours before they were off again, so the rain was coming in. So the Randwick Council organised an area where they filled bags with sand and people could go and get the sandbags to come and put on the tarpaulins.

92.01 You might see pictures of men on my roof pulling a tarpaulin but they didn't have sandbags. So I had to go in my car and load up my car with sandbags and put them on the roof. Well, most of the SES people had gone then, the tarpaulins were, but they were blowing everywhere. So that's when I had to get help, for somebody to come and help me put the sandbags on the tarpaulins to keep them on the roof. Now, that happened for a month before the tarpaulins could be removed – well, more than a month before we could get told because everybody in the district wanted tiles - and the builder had gotten

them for me – tiles had to come from Newcastle - that's how bad it was. And we had to have tiles on the roof; we couldn't put galvanised iron.

VM: No, because it was a tiled area.

JB: Couldn't put slate on the roof.

VM: So you were up a ladder in your eighties, carrying a sandbag?

JB: Carrying a sandbag. I was in my eighties, on the ladder with sandbagging my roof and another young fellow on the roof, trying to keep down the tarpaulins up till I got the sandbag up. I only got them up to the roof; he came and got it and carried it up. But it was a bit of an effort for me in my late eighties to be climbing up a ladder with a sandbag on my shoulder; it's not fun.

VM: No, definitely not.

JB: Anyway, as I said, if people had been walking past they'd have thought it would be some of the comedy being filmed or something.

VM: But anyway your home still felt like home, even after all that?

JB: Well, it's all right now. Eventually sold because I had to move out but we resurrected things. But another thing that the storm did - we had a Hills Hoist in the backyard as many people did or most people did and a Hills Hoist, as you probably know, is built of wire around for a wire clothesline.

94.07 **VM: Yes, a central pole.**

JB: Every piece of wire on that Hills Hoist was cut and broken, every piece of wire; I had to have it rewired completely; that's how bad the hail was.

VM: So the hailstones kind of cut through the wire?

JB: Cut through the wire, the hail. I'm not exaggerating. The hailstones were not as big as golf balls, they were as big as twice the size of a cricket ball and that's not an exaggeration. They were chunks of ice that came through the roof; they would have had to have been to do the damage they did. Not only cracked the tiles, they smashed tiles.

VM: So it's more like rocks, big ice rocks.

JB: They were like rocks coming through the roof.

VM: Were they evenly shaped or were they jagged?

JB: No, they were sharp, sharp edges.

VM: So that's how they cut the wire.

JB: They cut through everything, cut through everything. And as you would imagine, all of my electricity department or electricity wires were in the roof. Well, every bit of that was damaged, I had no electricity. So not only did the house have to be repaired but all the electricity, wiring, had to be redone again. So the whole house virtually was rebuilt.

VM: But you replicated exactly how it happened?

JB: As it was, as it was.

VM: The builder fixed it all up?

JB: Yes, as it was, yes. Well, you couldn't have it any different.

VM: Well, that's very interesting about what it's like to be in a major hailstorm and that hit, of course, not only the residential area but also the industrial area of Rosebery, I imagine. What companies were there in Rosebery? You've mentioned the industrial area.

96.05 JB: I mentioned one - it's Thatcher and Oberg, a very, very big timber company. Another one was Eveready Batteries, another one - - -

VM: Was a box company.

JB: - - - the Smith Box Company, Nestlé's chocolate companies. There was a big dairy was in the Rosebery area, Haze's Dairy.

VM: They actually had cows there or it was a place where the milk was brought and processed?

JB: They had the cows there.

VM: They had the cows there?

JB: Yes, they had the cows there, yes.

VM: Until what date?

JB: That was eventually taken over and roads are now built along there, such as Epsom Road which is a main street.

VM: That's where the dairy was, is it?

JB: That's where the dairy was. What was once the racecourse is now a very high-rise development.

VM: And in between it became a British Leyland factory, didn't it?

JB: That's right, it did. I think Nuffield's was the company that bought it. Some of the other companies, I just forget some of them. There was quite a number of industrial businesses.

VM: And all that Zetland and southern Waterloo area was a big industrial area?

JB: More along the Botany Road side. If you could look at the western side of the Rosebery Estate being the Botany Road, the industrial area were along that side.

VM: Was along Botany Road, yes.

JB: The factories, yes.

VM: I just wondered, because we've been talking quite a bit about your home and you've touched on this a lot through the interview, but I wondered if there were certain things when you look back at living in Rosebery or in your home there, times when you really felt at home?

98.12 JB: Yes, there were. Most of my married life I felt at home. I would wake up in the morning and I would think to myself "This is my home. I own this home and nobody's going to put me out". That is one of the reasons why Jack Hall and myself formed this Rosebery Residents' Association, to protect our home. It's a good feeling to say to yourself "This is mine". I go out in the garden during the weekends and I mow the lawn, I talk to the neighbours – they're my friends – and I do my gardening. I say "This is my lemon tree, this is my orange tree" or whatever. I go and pick my fruit and vegetables and I think "This is mine, I'm growing this". It gives you a very, very warm feeling and apart from all of that you've got a very happy married life. So how can you evaluate that, how can you put that in terms of money? You can't. And you have a son that you think the world of, everything, and you add all of these up and you say "I'm the luckiest person in the world" and that's what life is.

VM: Thank you, Jack.

JB: That's a bit of a sermon, I think.

VM: No, no, you're saying what you feel; that's really good.

JB: Nowadays you ask me how do I feel. I feel a little bit lonely. I am lonely because I'm a lonely sort of person. I don't have the same companionship that I had with my wife although I'm very, very close to my family, my son and my daughter in law and my grandchildren.

100.13 I'm not complaining about what I have left but I do miss my wife very much and that's the sort of thing that I say "Well, when I go" – which may be in twelve months, maybe hopefully a bit longer – "I've led a very good and happy life; I've been lucky. So if you say how do I feel now, that's how I feel.

VM: So home is very much about not just the building but about living?

JB: Oh, it's not just the building, it's what's in the building.

VM: And the life that's lived there?

JB: Yes. Good friends, warm friends, friends that you could say "I can go to that one if I'm in trouble and if he's not there I'll go to that one if I'm in trouble". They're friends. These days, I have very few friends because they've all passed on. I have lots of acquaintances but not the person you can say "If I'm in trouble I'll go to that one". I don't have any of those.

VM: Or the person who you can say "Do you remember when we played cricket?"

JB: That's right, yes, yes. I don't think there would be any of my cricketing friends that I have now because most of them were older than me anyway. So if I'm in my mid nineties now there's not too many of those fellows that are around. Many of my relatives that were very close to me have gone. So now if I said I'm a lonely old man that's not quite true but I don't have the friends that I used to have because I've expended all my good luck in living in Rosebery.

102.04 **VM: But still, having a few or a lot of your furnishings and things that you associate with your life with your wife – you said that you had things that actually you'd never used but they are important to you - - -**

JB: Yes.

VM: - - - that helps to give you a sense of feeling at home even here?

JB: Yes, it does, very much so.

VM: Even though it's diminished, obviously, but that's part of

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JB: I mentioned to you that I have in storage a number of things that my wife collected. It gives me some pleasure to know that when I go and my estate is going to be distributed my family is going to have those. I'm sure they're not going to sell them because that dinner set I was telling you about, one of them will have that, whether it's a grandson or a great grandchild, I don't know, whether it's my son or daughter in law, but I know one of them will have it. The cut glass that's there, it's too good to be given away to the Salvation Army. That gives me pleasure to think that they're going to – I have things in the drawer there that have never been used, linen that has never had the cellophane taken off them – somebody's going to get that. I won't use it. I'll go and buy something secondhand rather than use that but that will pass on to somebody. That gives me some sort of satisfaction, comfort, if I can use that word.

VM: Continuity, yes, comfort.

JB: Yes. So when I say I'm a lonely old sod I am but I look forward to what I can pass onto my family. I'm reminiscing and I know I shouldn't, perhaps, but these are the sort of things that keep me going.

104.02 **VM: No, it's very important, I think, that feeling of continuity.**

JB: Yes.

VM: Well, thank you very much. It's been really interesting.

JB: It's been my pleasure.

VM: Thank you.

JB: I don't have too many people I can come and reminisce with.

VM: Well, it's been my pleasure.

JB: Thank you.

Interview ends