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OH 658/7

Full transcript of an interview with

RAY BATTERSBY

on 18 September 2003

By John Mannion

Recording available on CD

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 658/7

Interview with Ray Battersby by John Mannion at Peterborough, South Australia, on the 18th September 2003 for The State Library of South Australia's Peterborough Oral History Project 'Relaying Our Tracks'.

[Transcriber's note: the use tapes are labelled incorrectly and out of sequence. I have retained the tape nomenclature as is, but rearranged the sequence into what appears to be the natural order of the three sides, *i.e.* 'Tape 2A' as 'Tape 1A', 'Tape 2B' as 'Tape 1B', and 'Tape 1B' as 'Tape 2A'.]

TAPE 2 [*sic*] SIDE A

– – – deal with the public.

It's 19th September 2003. I'm talking today to Ray Battersby at his house in 54 South Terrace, Peterborough. Now, I know that Ray's – I've talked to Ray before only a couple of times, but his parents were in the railways, particularly his father, and Ray's been in Peterborough for a long time, isn't it, Ray?

Oh, about 1920.

Can you tell us a bit about your dad? You said he was in the railways and he was a signalman.

Oh yes, well, there was all the stations along from Peterborough and – well, from [Port] Pirie to Broken Hill they had signalmen at the stations, they would let the trains in and out, you see. Not like it is now. Had electric staff [?] which was the safest thing the railways ever had.

So where were you born?

In Peterborough.

Where to?

While the parents were living at Otowpa[?] – which, incidentally, has disappeared. There's a signpost up there, I believe, to show where it was.

And where were you born?

Down here on the corner of Collins Street and Bourke Street.

And what was that, a midwife's house?

It was a, what they used to call a 'housewife' or something.

Midwife.

Midwife, yes.

And so how did your mum get into Peterborough?

Don't ask me, I wasn't – (laughs) I didn't know anything about it. By train, I take it. There was no motor vehicles.

So when the time comes, put them on the train and – – –?

Oh, yes. Yes, might take them just about a day to get here from up there. The trains used to might average around about twelve or fifteen miles an hour. (laughs) Oh, it's incredible. The whole thing has just changed.

Do you remember much about growing up, up along the Cockburn line?

Well, the first three or four years I can't – I was only a kid running around the yard, you know. No, I couldn't recollect the place. I know I can remember we had a mob of goats – I don't know how many, a few of them – just for milk. There was no powdered milk in those days, hell no. We'd never heard of it. The only other milk was a big tin of condensed milk.

Oh, so you could get condensed milk then.

Oh, you could, yes, you could get condensed milk. Then you'd dilute that down, I suppose, whatever, you know.

So what's your earliest recollections of growing up, like with your father in the railways?

Oh, more when we got to Nackara. He shifted down to Nackara, get closer in here, where there was everything came – all supplies came from Peterborough. They used to be on 'service', they called it, there used to be free freight. They'd send an order down and the business houses would put it on the train and it would go up there and you'd collect it. And then you'd get the account fortnightly (clock chimes) and send [it] when you get your pay. The pay van used to go up every fortnight along there, all the way, and pay everybody. Paid the cash and they'd pay them and then they'd send it down with the guard on the train and he'd take it in, take them into the shops for anything up to ten or twelve, fifteen accounts, pay them. They'd give him the money and he'd pay them in and then take them back the receipts his next trip. Oh

yes, they used to give a service, the guards on the railway then. Oh yes, it was terrific.

And so what was in Nackara when you remember there, was it a busy place?

Busy?

Yes.

Oh, sometimes, when they had a dance it was fairly busy. There was a lot of people lived around Nackara. I was only thinking this morning when you were coming, there could have been around twenty to twenty-five families that were around Nackara, that used that as their centre for the rail and things like that. Oh yes, there was two signalmen, there was about four in the gang and then there was a storekeeper, there was – one, two, three – there was about five families lived on the southern side, there was about three lived up on the northern side – this is on the land.

Oh, yes, like farming – – –.

And then there was about three or four out on the north side, couple down the east. Oh, there was a lot of people lived around Nackara. Oh yes, there was – well, I suppose – well, then there was a schoolteacher, of course. Yes, there was around twenty-odd families used to live around Nackara when I was there as a kid. And of course as is still happening today, the place, everything got dearer, the drought years, people had to get off the land so the neighbour bought it. If he had enough he could take it over. And this was how they got down now there's about two people own all the land around Nackara. You see, two or three, that's all.

I just forgot to ask you, what year were you born?

Nineteen twelve.

It's a fair while ago, isn't it?

It is a little bit, yes. That's why I had to stop and think.

So you've seen a few changes.

Oh, I've seen some changes here, all right.

So did you go to school in Nackara?

That's where I started. Yes, I went there, I was in about grade four when we shifted in here to Peterborough.

Do you remember some of the kids you went to school with? Do you remember their names, any of them?

What, up [there]?

At Nackara, yes.

Yes, oh yes. There was Robens, Abbott, Mersford, ... Evans, there was a couple of Evans, Sandlands, you'd know John Sandland that's in the Council out here at Black Rock. I went to school with his father. His father and his sister used to – oh, his auntie – used to ride horses in from White's Well, into Nackara to school.

Was that Les Sandland, was it?

Les Sandland's son. Now, Les was the old man, and Bob was the eldest son. Yes, Bob and Nancy. And then there was another family of Clarkins that used to live about three mile out of the town, due north. Three to three and a half mile, I suppose. They used to ride horses into school. Bernard and Nellie, brother and sister, they used to ride. Of course us kids used to always fight to tear off to go and saddle the horse up to bring it down and have a ride on a horse after school, and they'd walk because they were sick of riding, they'd walk down to the town because the school at Nackara's half a mile out of the town.

So it was a bit of a novelty to ride a horse.

Oh, it was a novelty to us, yes.

Do you remember how many kids roughly would have been at the school?

Oh, when I was there I suppose there could have been, oh, round twenty, twenty-two, I suppose. Oh yes. It would have been that many.

What about the railway families, do you remember some of them? Like the gang?

Oh, there's Robens and, no, I wouldn't hazard a guess now. Wouldn't hazard a guess. I can remember the Robens – oh, different ones since, but then I wouldn't remember any of their names now. I more know the names of the people who were on the land around the place. Oh yes, there was quite a lot of them.

You were telling me the other day that you remember there was two lots of railway cottages at Nackara.

Yes. There was one similar to those that's down here that are still standing in the railway yard down here, three in a row. Well, there was two lots of them in the railway yard. Then they built, in latter years, since long after I left there, they built other cottages down on the north side down there, still in the railway yard. Yes, there was about three or four houses along there. It was all – don't [ask] me who used to live there. I know a bloke called Jack White lived in one but I can't remember the names, you know. Might dig them up and something will come one day, but – I knew them then because I used to go back up there so often, you see, and I got to know them. But then, as you get older and you get different ways, you don't go there, you see.

So how many signalmen were at Nackara?

Two at a time. Two, used to be on twelve-hour shift.

Oh, right.

That was no work on Sundays, the last train was a Saturday afternoon coming home from Broken Hill, and then the first one wouldn't go out till early Monday morning from here, you see. No work on Sundays. I wasn't allowed to throw stones on Sunday. Yes, this is honest. No, this is – and you look back at it, people think, well, you know, 'That's prehistoric'. Perhaps it was. But our parents, they brought their kids up as they were brought up. That's how they were taught so they taught the same. And the same thing's going on today – oh, that's still switched on, isn't it? I won't give my views on that.

I wish you would.

No, no way.

Just getting back to your dad, where did he come from?

Adelaide.

Was he in the railways in Adelaide?

Well, I don't know whether he joined the railways, what – oh, he had all sorts of jobs, I believe. I think he came up here when he joined the railway, I reckon, that's

when they wanted them, you know. The Broken Hill line was just opened up, sort of business, and they had to have signalmen on it for the trains. The trains were so slow that they had to have them. There was a lot of them, of course. They were small. But they had to have roughly every fifteen mile or something like that, they had to have a station, a siding, so the trains could pass one another. This is why there were so many little stations along the line, you see. Ucolta, just down here by the picnic grounds, well, that was the first one, you see.

Just over – – –.

Then you've got Oodla Wirra. Then there was another one in between, there was Nandabibby[?] the other side of Oodla Wirra. And then down the bank to Nackara. Well, coming back was up the bank and if it's wet weather often they used to have to have two goes at getting up the bank, you see, and things like that. And so they put in another passing siding there so they wouldn't have to wait so long to get up to Nandabibby. They put one in between Nandabibby and Nackara, you see. It was only up about three miles up, they'd only go about – it was up a fairly steep bank, the 'Nackara Bank', they called it.

So what was your dad's name?

George.

George Battersby.

Yes.

So how long did he stay at Nackara for?

I was there for about six and a half years. Six or six and a half. Yes, I was roughly about four when I went there, I suppose, yes, and I was around about ten when we came in here.

And did you know what your dad did for a job, did you used to go and help him or just tag along?

Oh, we used to (laughs) – we knew what he had to do, we used to run around the place. Oh! We didn't worry about helping anything. They had tons of time to do what they had to do. When there was two trains come at once they'd be running around a bit, you know.

And did he have a bike?

Yes, they had a pushbike, yes. They had to go down and set the signals, you see, and things like that. And then the distant signal, that was a big lever there where they used to – that was up what they called the 'distant signal', that was the first one. They still have them. If that was against them they could go, the drivers could go past that even if it was against them. But they couldn't go past the next one, the 'home signal', they'd call it, they couldn't go past that if it was against them, because it could be another train on the other section, you see. No, that's where this electric staff used to come in, they had this machine there, they used to put a staff and they'd hand it to the driver on a cane hoop on there, and the driver dare not go without that. It happened, but (laughs) often they'd get back, they'd wake up and they'd reverse the train to get it, because you couldn't – – –. See, that's why it was so foolproof that they used to have this staff, and they took it station to station, every one. Well, sometimes the train, there was nothing for them to pick up or nothing to pass, so they'd give them what we call a 'run through', save time, save them stopping and that and starting, they'd let them go through. Well, he'd still throw that staff down and then he'd stand there and hook the other one as he went by, because he wouldn't be going that fast. Sometimes they were. But they had to leave that staff from here to Ucolta and take another one from Ucolta to Oodla Wirra and that was all the time, and if they didn't, that staff wouldn't go into the machine. Well, the other bloke couldn't get one out of *his* machine, and this is why it was so safe. Because if while that staff's out there's a train on that section, you see, so until it goes back into the machine that section was closed while that staff was out, you see, and it was a terrific system. Now it's all just done by word of mouth, you see, over this wireless. 'Train order', as they call it now. But still, somebody else, a lot of railway blokes could tell you more about that because they used them. Old Bruce would have told you that, I suppose. You didn't ask him, did you, mate? You're asking me all this (laughs).

You seem to have picked up a lot of the railway technology.

Oh, well, there was – we knew all that, you see, we had the interest, we were interested in everything that went on around the place.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Oh yes, yes, I had a sister there, she was the eldest; three brothers.

Where did you fit in?

I was next to last. I was the third son. And I'm the only one left. My eldest brother, he died in Whyalla, he was a painter on the shipyards to finish. He was here to start with. With the Depression he went over there trying to get a job there, and he finished up he got on, handling iron ore onto the boats, you know. And they found out he was a painter so they said, 'Right, you'll do on the shipyards in the painting.' Yes.

What about your mum, what was her name?

Adelaide.

And when did she come from?

Adelaide.

That's fairly fitting.

Well, she was named after Queen Adelaide, I think.

How did she fit into the isolation, up along the Cockburn line?

Oh, there were the other women all round, they were all in the same boat. They used to mix a little. But they were so busy. I mean, Mum with a family of five, she – especially four boys, she didn't get much help. (laughs) But this is it, I mean they were just worked. And, on top of it, didn't have the modern conveniences you've got today.

Yes, so there wasn't much spare time.

Oh, no. They never had any spare time, the only spare time they'd have would be after tea at night, the only time they'd sit down and rest a bit. That's about all, as far as I can see, anyhow.

Do you remember anything about what you used to do after tea at night?

Oh, well, you had to do a little bit of homework from school, perhaps. Might read something, you know, books, read your schoolbooks, things like that.

Did you have a wireless?

Wirelesses weren't invented. They were not when I was up there, no, wirelesses weren't invented. And incidentally, talking with my lad down here the other week when we come back from Brisbane, (laughs) something's come up about what we were talking back in the early days like that, do, and he says, 'What kind of a car did you have?' I was that astounded, you know, just naturally take it for granted today. But there was none at all. There was odd ones around, I know there was one out on Pitcairn, the owner of Pitcairn had a big car. (clock chimes) And other station owners, they'd got vehicles, they used to have to come in in a horse and trap, that's what it was all about. And then wagons, things like that. One trip in, sometimes they'd ride a horse in perhaps to get their mail, once a week. If they had to get stores they'd write down an order and it would be sent out, or they'd get to the local store and pick it up, you see.

So was there a store at Nackara, a local store?

There was a local store, yes.

Do you remember who used to run that?

A chap called Forde. Jack Forde.

And what sort of shop was that?

Oh, grocery-cum-everything. You know, drapery and boots, anything and everything else. Oh, well, nearly every town had a shop that sort of catered for everything, because where are the people going to get it? Small towns, people wanted this – or they could get it on the railway, they could get it in Peterborough, but perhaps on the land they want a pair of boots, there used to be a lot of mail orders from the city stores, they used to send out catalogues and they'd send an order and they'd send it up to them by rail or by post or whatever, depends on how big it was. Oh yes, we had a lot of mail order on the land in those days. Now they get in the motor car and go and get it yourself. (laughs)

So was that Jack Ford, was he any connection to the Fords in Carrieton and Orroroo?

No, I don't think they are, no. This was F-O-R-D-E.

Oh, right. See, the other ones didn't have an 'E'.

Yes, 'E' on the end of it.

Did you use to go away much when you lived out there, did you use to go on the train anywhere?

Couple of times came into Peterborough, I don't know what it was for. Oh, we'd go – when we're going on holidays we'd get on the Broken Hill express and go to Adelaide, perhaps, for holidays. We'd get on that. That used to come through Nackara round about midnight. Us kids would all go to bed and get called and have to get dressed and then get on the train. You'd get into Peterborough roughly two o'clock in the morning. Used to get in here about four. About two hours from Nackara to here by train, by express – that's express, not on freight, (laughs) that's express. Freight might take you half a day.

Then you changed trains at Terowie again.

Yes, change at Terowie. Yes. And then off to Adelaide, come home, Terowie – used to get to Peterborough about midnight, that's right. You'd get into Terowie roughly half past ten, it was three-quarters of an hour there trans-shipping everything, you see, and then you'd get on the train. Of course they'd have refreshments, then they'd come to Peterborough and they'd have another lot of refreshments. (laughs) Oh yes, it used to take the train – the express this was – forty minutes, I think, used to come from Terowie to here.

That was express.

That was express. Steam engines, you see. Oh yes. Oh, there's all sorts of things that – a lot can't comprehend now – retarded everything was in those days, because it wasn't developed. So it's naturally – today it looks as though it was backward, you know, you're sort of hillbillies, I suppose. But what else was there? They had to have somebody there, somebody had to be there .... Well, we happened to be one of them that was there. Today, well, you wouldn't get them to go and put up with it. I mean, a lot of people – there was worse places than Nackara, there was a lot of people around Nackara. But you'd get up further, how some of those people lived there I don't know. There'd be two signalmen and then there would be *nobody* else.

It would be too bad if you didn't get on, wouldn't it?

Well, this is right. You had to get on with one another. I mean, this was the whole point. And then sometimes they chopped out and they just put single chaps, and they might stop at Oodla Wirra, their quarters, living at Oodla Wirra, and they'd get on one train and go down there and work that siding till then, then get on the last train coming back, sort of business, you see. Or the other chap would come out and he'd take over and stay there. They were there to let the trains in and out, but they'd still go on the first one to catch it, you see, when he's starting his shift. Of course, there was trains just about every half-hour. Just about both ways, you see. Oh yes, it was nothing to see twenty-odd trains leaving, going in and out of here on the Cockburn line alone, let alone Port Pirie or Terowie or Quorn. They were busy, there was a lot of trains, but of course they never carted much stuff at once. Their limit would be a couple of hundred tons, I suppose, if it was that.

So it wasn't dull living out at a siding? There was plenty of activity.

Oh, we never noticed – I mean, I was allowed out at Nackara, I quite enjoyed my life. We always seemed to have something to do – set rabbit traps, or jobs we had to do around the place. Saturday mornings you had to do all your jobs Saturday morning. Not like it is today, Mum does everything. (laughs) Or pays someone else to do it. No, we had our jobs, cut the wood for the weekend. Like I said, nothing on Sundays.

Did you go to church?

Yes. Oh yes, they had a church there. There'd be a visiting minister would come there once a month or sometimes fortnightly.

What sort of church was at Nackara, what denomination?

Methodist and a Catholic. Oh yes, the Catholic church – well, it's been demolished now – that was a landmark up on the hill over by the main road to Broken Hill out of the town quite a bit. Good half mile, up on the top of the hill. They demolished that a few years back because it was unsafe, it was starting to fall and they thought, 'Well, somebody could be around there one day and it will collapse,' you see.

And did you ever get to ride in the engine as a – – –?

Oh! Dozens of times, plenty of them, yes, plenty of them. Yes, and when they go shunting we'd be up there, we'd get on the engine and they'd be shunting. We

thought this was terrific. Because they'd, you know, a lot of wood was loaded at Nackara for Port Pirie and Broken Hill.

Is that right?

Oh yes, wood. Port Pirie for bakeries and the smelters, for starting their fires up. And bakeries in Broken Hill, and anywhere they used boilers they had to have wood, you see, wood burning. And they'd perhaps add coal onto it after that. What we called 'loco wood', you know, roughly three feet, three foot six long. And then there was what we called the 'long wood' – well, that was about twice the length, a bit more. And then the others were wood yards, they used to buy, you know, and – oh, there was wagonloads of wood. I've been on dozens of them since, camped out, and they'd have wood carting, have a couple of cutters out in the scrub. Then they'd cut it and stack it, you go out with a team, pick it up, take it in and put it on the rail. Often that was two days' work to do. That's because where you were camped out and you'd go up and the scrub would be perhaps eight or nine mile out, and you'd go up and get a load of wood and back to the camp, that was enough for the horses for the day. Next day you'd take it into Nackara about, oh, five kilometres, five mile – no kilometres in those days – and you'd go in there and load it on the train – the truck would be ordered, you see – on there, and then back to the camp again. That was two days' work for the horses, you see, just to put one load of wood, might be eight ton of wood, on a truck for Broken Hill, you see.

So these blokes who were cutting the wood, that was their occupation?

That was their occupation, cutting wood.

Do you remember any of those names?

Oh, poor old Murray Abbott was one, he was a well-known chap around here in latter years till he unfortunately died, died in a fire. Well, from a burn, got burnt. Yes. But he used to cut wood. His father owned land that has just been recently sold. He went woodcutting, he was an axeman, he was a good axeman too.

So all these mallee – was it mallee trees?

Oh yes, all this wood, mallee – oh, white mallee's the best wood of the lot.

So that was all cut down with an axe?

Yes, oh yes, no chainsaws weren't invented then. (laughs) You've been brought up on the modern stuff!

So there was no cross-cut saws used, it was all axe?

Oh, there was cross-cut saws but you wouldn't use that on the mallee. You'd have to have two if you'd use a saw. You had an axe – no, axes were sharp.

And it was all cut green?

Oh yes, all green wood, oh yes, not – green. I used to get out and cut my own wood, we'd go for a drive Saturday afternoon, go out Oodla Wirra – that's after I got a motor car, of course. I didn't mind cutting wood, everybody had a woodheap. It was all wood stoves, you see, everybody – there was wood yards, there was about three wood yards in Peterborough at one stage. Now you're not allowed to cut it down. (laughs) No, there's all sorts of arguments about that sort of thing.

So there was quite a few contract woodcutters in the area, was there?

Oh, yes. Well, there was – there'd be one, two, there could be three different carters loading at Nackara alone. There was Oodla Wirra they were loading wood, a lot of wood went from Oodla Wirra. Oh, yes. Of course, that's where the scrubs were, you see, out from Oodla Wirra to Nackara, all out the back there, there was a lot of scrub. A lot went from Terowie, that was down south way, but this for Broken Hill and for Pirie was mainly – and odd stuff in between, you know, if they wanted a load of wood, you know, a lot of them had trucks, well, they would get a load themselves, you see. All depends how much they used. But the bakeries and that, they used to use – bakers used what they used to call the shorter stuff, you know, just to throw it in the – – –. Oh yes, some of it came here to the bakers too, I suppose, because they were all wood-fired fires, they had to get it from somewhere. But they might get it – the local bakers might have got it from the local blokes around, you see, bring in a load now and again, just bring it in by horse and dray and horse and wagon. They used to go out the back of Dawson there, there was a lot of wood came in from there.

What about livestock? Was there yards at Nackara?

Oh yes, oh yes, had the trucking yards. All the movement used to go by train those days. That's all gone. Oh yes, there was trucking yards there, sheep and cattle, whatever. Was mainly sheep, there was odd – – –.

END OF TAPE 2 [*sic*] SIDE A: TAPE 2 [*sic*] SIDE B

– – – good as an Aboriginal like with a waddy up to twenty metres. (laughs) We used to go walk all afternoon, Saturday afternoon, go out to the scrub and we'd walk for hours to select something to make a waddy out of it. And you'd just fill in your time as you're walking home you'd be throwing it in the bush. And then when the rabbits were bad you could pick the rabbits, you got that used to seeing them you could pick one, you'd often lob one with a waddy. You know, like that – oh! Rabbit plagues. Catching rabbits and trapping rabbits and then netting, put nets across the corner of two fences, you know, and catch them, skin them, send bags of skins away and get practically nothing for them.

Oh, you used to send the skins to Adelaide?

Yes. And then the – oh, it was down to Crompton. I don't know whether Crompton was the area or that was the people.

That was the people.

That was the people –

They used to have the blue –

– Cromptons – – –.

– they used to have the blue signs at the railways stations.

Yes, yes. They used to – what they, skins and soap and tallow, they used to ..... fat down there. Oh yes, they were the days.

What about the shift to Peterborough, how did that come about?

How did it come about? Oh, I don't know why, whether there was a vacancy in here and they apply for the job, you see, and then they get the grant, the job, and if they get it, well, they came in. Then someone else had to go back out there, you see. Yes, they got into Peterborough and that was it. Went on from there.

So where did you live in Peterborough, your first house?

Well, you know where Bruce McPherson lives? It was practically across the road in the railway yard, the railway cottages there. I think the last one that lived in it before standardisation, that's when it was knocked down, was Bob Wheatley. He used to

live in the same cottage that we had. There was two joined together, then there was one on its own and then there was another one on its own. That was four in the block. And there was another lot like that one that's there now down by the crossing. There was another one there – another three like that.

The one there now, is that a three unit?

That was a three unit, yes. And then there was one down further, was – just not that far because it was still in the yard – was another three unit. The one in the middle had to go out your front door and out your back door, you couldn't – you had to go right through the house, you couldn't walk around the front to do the gardening. Well, that was it, you went out the front and you went out the back. Oh, yes. Those on the end, they could get around the end of the house. Yes, well, they're the type of cottages, that was the gang mainly lived in them. Yes, that's – – –.

Did you ever – you had to share a room with your brothers?

Oh yes. In fact, we were sleeping out on the front veranda right from the word 'start'. Well, my sister had the back room. When we shifted in here my eldest brother was brought in beforehand, he was helping in the shearing up there and he contracted diphtheria. The hospital up here was built, but I don't think it was officially opened, and the isolation ward was the veranda on the end of the hospital. And he was up there. And then my younger, next brother, he got it and he was up, they were both up there out on isolation out of sight. And then we had to keep in the fresh air and all this, and that's why we slept out on the front veranda, down the cottages – closed it in, of course. We got so far and then canvas blinds, you know. It was all right, wintertime it was just as snug as anything. You'd have more blankets on, of course. Didn't have electric blankets, they weren't – (laughs) you didn't have them.

Did you have electricity?

Oh yes, in Peterborough? Oh! We thought, 'This is marvellous, it's coming here. You just go and switch the light on, ha!' Out there you had a lamp, lamp on the dining room table, and other lamps out in the kitchen, there'd be one on the wall, sort of business. Oh yes, lamps, kerosene.

So out there you never had a 32-volt plant or anything.

No, they weren't invented. They weren't – those plants, they came in, oh, a lot later years. Yes, it was all kerosene. Dietz lantern if you were outside, of course.

A what lantern?

A Dietz lantern. You haven't seen one of them?

Like a hurricane lamp?

Hurricane lamp, yes. They were called a Dietz lantern, first up because they were made in Germany, Dietz, D-I-E-T-Z, I believe. Some of them used to have it stamped in it. Yes, we always knew them as a 'Dietz lantern'. But they are like a – I mean, we used to call them, what you'd call a hurricane lantern, we used to call them – they were a smaller version and more closed in, you know, from the wind. Because sometimes you get a decent wind, it would blow these out. All depends. Oh, yes. A hurricane lantern, walked a long way with them of a night. Well, you'd no light outside, you had to have a lantern, take the lantern if you had to go outside for anything at all at night time, you had to have a lantern. That was always, there, you lit the lantern, there was always matches near it. We used to use matches, we never started any fires.

That's interesting, because it was talking to – – –.

Because we were taught to use matches and don't waste them, and you don't – and that's because they're vital. Not just to play with and light them and throw them away. You'd get a hiding if you were caught doing that. But it was a necessity and you valued everything you had, because if you didn't you just didn't have it. And you learnt, you learnt naturally just to look after what you'd got.

Yes, a dozen matches was a standard thing, wasn't it?

A dozen matches, yes. Ha, a dozen matches, yes. What you pay as much for a box of matches now you used to pay for two dozen! (laughs)

They were two cents for years, or tuppence.

Yes, for years and years, a box of matches, tuppence.

Don't know how much they are now, probably about a dollar.

Well, I hate to think what they'd be. Well, now I think they're great big packets, aren't they, big matches.

Big long ones.

They're big matches, just about like a stick of wood. A log of wood. (laughs) Yes. Stick's a stick, a log's a big one, isn't it?

Right. So you thought Peterborough was it, that was the – – –?

We thought Peterborough was it. Yes.

And so did your brothers recover from the diphtheria?

Oh yes, yes. Oh yes, they got over that. And I started to get crook, so 'Right!', the doctor comes in – he used to come to the house then, because you'd have to walk to the doctor's otherwise. The doctor would come to the house, you'd call him, he'd come down when he could, doing his rounds. He'd come down, 'Right!' In goes the needle, vaccination, and I finished up with just a bit of a cold, you know. Just in case, you see. Oh yes, they got over it.

Did they know what caused it?

No, no, no. Oh, there was – before, years before, before I was born, there was, up in the north-east there was a lot of kids or people died with diphtheria. There was one bad year, I don't know what year it was now, but there was a lot, there was whole families were wiped out. Oh yes, you'd see in the old gravestones up there. Yes, there was a lot died in the early days. And that's a disease that's practically got rid of now.

So you must be talking now about 1922, because that's when the hospital opened here, didn't it?

Oh yes. Yes, well, that was when it was officially opened, yes. It was about 1920 – well, that would have been around 1920. See, I was in grade four, I was about ten. Well, that'd be '22, you see, when I was ten years. We came in in about '21, '22, yes, they were up there. About '22.

And so did you go on with your schooling in Peterborough? Your school, primary school?

Oh yes, I went over in grade four. Well, I started actually in the start of the school year here. I couldn't go to start with, you see, because on account of contact with my brothers. And then when that isolation business was out, you see, I could go to school. And I'm not sure, I think that was around the end of grade four, towards the end of that, and then I went into grade five. Grade five year, and that would have been in about 19–, what would that be? 'Twenty-three, '24.

'Twenty-three.

About '23.

Did you notice the difference between the two schools, like Nackara and Peterborough?

Oh yes, there were so many kids. And they were individual classes. Oh yes, there was individual – because up there there was one teacher for all grades, and of course they wouldn't, every year they wouldn't have everybody in every grade, you see, there mightn't be kids starting, you see. There was no pre-school business, I just went in as a grade one, ... but I was in grade two the next year or whatever. Might have been still the same work, I don't know. Oh, yes. (pause) I can remember when I first started, my eldest brother was still going. I think he finished about that year because he went, it was shearing time one of the stations, he went up helping, got a job in the sheds helping out in the sheds, and that's when he contracted diphtheria. We were about to shift in, that would have been a bit before Christmas. Yes.

So did you enjoy the school here in Peterborough?

Oh yes, it was all right when we got used to it, oh yes. Kids always soon mix in and get with kids, they're still going to be all right, no worries at all.

How did you get to school? Now, you're going to tell me you walked, I know that, but which way did you walk to school?

Well, I used to go up Railway Terrace, through the subway and then down around down (clock chimes) to Ned's Corner – that's down there where the homes are now – and then across to the school flat, school, straight across to the public [school] there. (laughs) When I first got into high school, because that was still over there, two rooms over the public school was the high school – I think I told you that before

– anyhow, there was a chap called Tom Bennett, he was ahead of me in school, of course, and he was in high school, and the first year I went to high school sometimes for some lessons they'd combine because the one teacher would be doing it, you know, and they'd be doing it so we'd be in amongst it. And .... knocking off, and of course he was a son of Pr..... Bennetts, and you know where they lived? There on the drain, or on Victoria Street. Well, he'd grab me at – he used to call me 'Tizney'[?], the nearest he could get to Battersby, because he was doing the Shakespeare book that they had to be learning in high school and there was a bloke called Tizney in it and that was the nearest he could get, so he called me Tizney. And he used to grab my thumb or he'd twist my arm behind my back and he'd march me down till he went home and he escaped, then I'd come home this way up Jervois Street. Or he'd take me out – oh no, they were funny days. We thought it was hard done by, but we never, we were fit in those days – walk, walk, walk.

So you'd go down Railway Terrace through the subway.

Yes.

The subway was fairly narrow, then?

Oh, well, there's an approach to it and then down under the railway, you see. The railway wasn't as wide, you see. When they standardised, that's why they opened the subway up wider, just up the ramp to the street, you see. But before you used to walk in from the street and then down the ramp into the subway. Oh yes, it was nowhere near the length it is now. Yes, out through there. Then of course all depends, we'd come home for any reason down the main street with anybody, well, we'd just cut through the Post Office yard or through the fence and over the railway tracks into the back gate. Oh yes, it was quite handy.

When you were living here in Railway Terrace, did you get on well with your neighbours?

Oh yes, yes. We'd soon get a hiding if we didn't. Oh, yes.

I suppose you had to, you were living next door, yes.

Oh, yes. You got on with your neighbours. Well, they were all in the same boat, all in the same work.

Do you remember who your neighbours were?

The first one I had .... was a chap called Jack O'Leary. He had one leg shorter than the other, he had a built-up boot and he used to limp. He was in the bell cabin, his job. He was a guard on the railways and there'd been a railway accident, he'd lost part of his foot or something, you know, had it built up. He had a false leg or part leg. Yes, Jack O'Leary. He had two children, a boy and a girl, Cyril and Nell. And Cyril, he used to work down at the ice works down here on the corner, that vacant block on the corner there. There was a big ice works there. And a mill, chaff mill first, and then they built this other place, a freezing works, sort of business. And he was working down there. And then he went to England for some reason or another and he stayed over there. Young lad. And his sister – of course, they shifted from here, when he retired, well, he shifted to Adelaide, somewhere down there. Well, I ran into the girl, oh, years afterwards, I was down there with my brothers and .... and she was working in one of Woolworth's shops. You know, she was a grown woman, of course, then, and I hadn't seen her for donkeys' years. Oh no, we got on all right with them.

What about the other side?

There was no-one on the other side, it was just railway yards out there. There was the yards, there was an overhead tank where they used to water the engines from, you know, those big ones, and a turntable. There was a turntable, used to turn the engines in there, just outside of our place. That's all gone, filled in. And the other way, well, that was adjoining us, and next door was one was O'Brien, and then next to them was Clarks when I was there. Yes. Clark, well, he was head rosterman, I think, something like that.

Did you kids use to play on the turntable?

Oh! God, no. No, they would be working there, you know, we couldn't play around over there, nothing to play with. Too busy. We couldn't have been mucking around over there, we'd be off somewhere else. (laughs)

So the railway yard was very busy.

Oh well, yes, there was trains in and out all day, and shunting. See, all the shunting now – well, in latter years when the railways were still going, they were shunting all round here. But that all was done in the yards, they'd make up trains. A train would

come in and everything had to be dissected, there's trucks to go here and trucks to go there and loads, you know, and all this. And they shunted off. Well, they had to make up trains to go Quorn line or Pirie way and Broken Hill, and trains or shunters were up two ends, west and east end, and they'd be shunting, breaking up trains and building trains, all the time, you see. And they, for different places, they always left from the same area, that's where they'd assemble them.

Was that day and night?

Oh, day and night, yes. Oh yes, day and night, yes.

Oh, so the turntable was virtually working all the time.

Oh, not that one. A lot of them, you see, a lot of the engines, they would turntable – in Loco, when they're bringing the engines out, well, they'd turn them down there to start with, and if they're going Pirie or Quorn way they'd come out backwards, and if they're going to Terowie or Broken Hill they'd come out forwards, you see, frontwards. So that's how they'd just go through there and come back onto their trains, you see. That was all right. But the turning there was just for the shunting engines mainly, that's what they used that for. And it had the Dort[?] car, that was the car they used to run on the rails for the officers to get around instead of going on a slow train, you see, there was a – 'Dort' was the name of the car to start with. And they used to use the turntable to run that into a shed when it's going in off the track, you see, and they'd have to go off into the shed, you see. They did have a plate underneath that they could turn it with, but this turntable was there – sometimes they had to turn engines there, you see. But oh, they didn't use it that much, but the one down at Loco was used every time an engine went in or out, because they had to turn around to go different lines, you see. Then there would be engines coming out one after the other or going in, or one's going in and one's coming out. Oh, yes, there was a lot of activity in the railway yards in those days. That's why they put those big towers up, and the coal gantry they had down just out of Loco – that's gone rotten, of course – well, they had the lights up on top of that and this big tower here, and that used to floodlight the full yard for working at night.

So those lights went through the night?

Oh, yes. Well, you didn't need them in the daytime.

No, but all night, were they?

All night those lights were on. They floodlit the railway yards for the working, you see, men working on it, shunting. Otherwise they only had their hand light, you see, they had the hand lights still for signalling, signalling to the drivers, you see, but they could see where they were going and what was what, because it was lit up.

So it never really got dark in the yard?

Oh, no. Well, this is after they put the ..... up. Before that it used to.

So when you were a boy the light tower wasn't there?

Oh no, no, no, they weren't there. I don't know when they came, they came in latter years. Oh no, they weren't there.

You were telling me the other day you went to high school in Lake Hall.

That's right, yes.

How did that come about?

Well, that was they wanted more room for the primary school, there were so many children going to the primary school. See, once they got that roundhouse built they were bringing so many people up here to work in it, in the railways here. See, it used to be mainly from Islington, but then they'd run it as a separate division here, you see, narrow gauge, and there were so many. And there was more kids going to school and there was an influx, you see, and they had to have more room. And that's it. So they decided to build a high school. So while they were building it, we went down to the Methodist church, the hall at the back and the Lake Hall, you see, that was accommodated – – –. There was only the first year and Intermediate, and there was the third year there'd only be about three or four, there was little rooms, separate, off Lake Hall there's other, two or three little rooms, or a couple of them. Well, one could be in there, the third years would be in there, you see. And of course teachers going in and out from one to the other teaching the classes, and then the first year in Lake Hall, the Intermediates were in the hall at the back of the church, I can't think what they call it, the name, what name is that?

Yes, it's on the north end of the church, isn't it, yes.

On the north end of the church at the back of the church there, there's a hall right across the back. The Baptists have got one, too. Yes, but that's where we used in high school till that one was open, built.

All right.

Then we shifted up there. There's been a few alterations up there since, the buildings. They've got, the kids have got to have a map up there, I think, as to where they go to classes. I mean, it's like a university. You see them going to school in the middle of the day (laughs) and they're going home at eleven o'clock in the morning. Going for different lessons at different – kids have got to go there, not 'You're in that classroom' and that was it, the teachers came in to you for different ones, but now you go off there to the teacher and the kids are roaming round[?]. I think a lot of that is all distraction. Because we used to distract the teachers too, I suppose.

Yes, you probably did. (laughter)

Oh, we had some good teachers and we had some terrible teachers. Ah, well, there's – all had it.

So how far did you go in your secondary school?

Intermediate. I didn't do third year. Of course, you had to pay for things and they couldn't afford for me to keep going to school, I just had to knock off and go to work, get a job.

So how do you mean, you had to pay?

You paid for, you had to buy your books and your – oh, the free education, that came in years afterwards. Oh yes, you had all your books, you could buy them – kids leaving school, you'd always, they'd sell their books if they looked after them, you know, you'd sell them or something. Or you might buy, some of them you had to get a new book – well, they might have changed it, you see – and you'd buy some. But they just couldn't afford to keep buying – – –. I put two years in Intermediate because there was no sub-Intermediate, there was just direct from first year you went to Intermediate. And not having a sub-Intermediate, they allowed you to do two years in it instead of having the sub and then the Intermediate, you see. So I thought, 'Well, it's costing them dough for me to sit for the exam, they're going to pay for me

to sit for the exam' – I don't know how much, but whatever it was it had been a hardship. So I opted to do the second year, see. And that first year, everything was a gift. They wanted more classes, you know, and there wasn't enough going on, they made things easier, like. The next year, thought, 'I'll do the second time, I'll bolt in with this,' they changed about three books that we'd wasted, you see? You know, like we all had to do Shakespeare; well, they'd changed that, and we thought doing the same work again we'd be right, but no, they'd changed everything. So that didn't help. So I missed out, I didn't get enough, I didn't get English. I missed a few marks out of passing in English, and that's – if you didn't get English you didn't get it. And I got all the what counted, I got all the Mathematics. I got my Arithmetic and Maths I, Maths II – oh, what was the other one? Bookkeeping. I got all them, so I got – – –. I still can talk a bit, I suppose. (laughs) People can understand me, anyhow.

You seem to be talking all right.

(laughs) Yes.

So there was a fair bit of emphasis on like maths and bookkeeping.

There was emphasis on all of those things.

Social studies?

No, we never had social studies, that came in afterwards.

Geography?

We did Geography in the first year, but after that it was out in the Intermediate, didn't do Geography in that. Bookkeeping went with Shorthand, I think, was another one.

Did you learn shorthand?

No, not from then. And then History went with French, they called one – (clock chimes) oh, what did we use to call that? If you did bookkeeping you did, not the business course, I can't think what we used to call them now, the one was sort of a public course, you know, you could do History and French. I did twelve months of French and didn't like it.

Have you spoken French since?

Yes, once in the pub at Moonta. (laughs) That's another story.

It just seems really strange that you learnt these foreign languages.

We had to learn a foreign language, this is what they – this was the thinking in those days. Well, they do now. Had to learn another language. And of course we had no option, it was French. Oh, you did French and Latin and History. And I started Latin and I just couldn't handle that and I thought, 'I can't. Can't see any point,' and I was that disinterested. And I had the option, so I switched, I switched from Latin and did History, that's right, Latin and History. If you took one course you did History, and the other course you did Latin, that's right, and I took History. And with History and then with French, and then they gave us the option of giving that away. I did twelve months of French and then I used to just have that lesson off. I could go outside, but I still had to catch up on some work. I didn't have to stop in the class because I might disrupt the other kids, you see. You know, there was two or three of us –

What, disruptive students?

– students, yes, we gave that away, you see, gave that French away. Oh, yes.

You weren't disruptive students?

Oh no, no. It was just you might do something that disrupts them, you see, do or what they say takes their interest away, something like that, you know. But it could. So we used to – – –.

So what ambitions did you have after leaving school?

Well, in those days – – –. You couldn't move around, you didn't know what was going on out of Peterborough. You naturally were going to get a job or get in the railway – oh! – get out on the engines, be an engine driver, oh! And my young brother went on with that. But the Depression came just as I left school, the Depression was coming on, and that was there and went on and I still used to go down the police station every month and sign the Bureau for a job in the railway.

Can you tell me about that?

Oh, there were dozens there, that was where the Work Bureau, you could register for jobs, in the police station. And then you'd have to there and report every month, still

sign on, you see. But I was trying to get in the railway, but I thought, 'Well, what's the point?' As the Depression got deeper and deeper they were getting rid of men in the railway, and the last in is first out. So the bloke on the bottom rung, he's first to go, he's out, unemployed. Then it comes, see, well, there was chaps that were engine drivers, had their family, and they – – –.

END OF TAPE 2 [*sic*] SIDE B

TAPE 1 [*sic*] SIDE A is blank

TAPE 1 [*sic*] SIDE B

That was a natural ….., everybody did. That's when Ernie Vaughan offered me the job.

You were talking to me about your brother, what was his name?

Ron, Ronald.

And you said that he joined the railways.

Yes, he went on as an engineer, he finished up he was an engine driver till he retired.

But this first job he had you said he was a box boy. Can you tell us about that?

(laughs) Oh, well, he'd just go, he'd come home on shift work, and of course Mum would lay the law down, 'Don't make a noise, Ron's just on the bed.'

What was this box boy?

Cleaning these fireboxes out, that's what they used to do, you see. Course, they're in the soot, you see, and you'd wonder how they cleaned it out, but I suppose they had to scrape it off, I suppose, and you can imagine what it'd be like. Oh, they used to be like 'niggers'. Whether they still did it that way afterwards while the steam was going on or whether they found some other way of doing it, I don't know.

Like when he'd come home from work with all the soot over him, did you have a shower?

Oh, well, we didn't have showers then but yes, they'd have a shower down there, perhaps. But how good it was I don't know.

So your houses never had showers.

No, no, we had baths, no shower. Then I think there was one, you could have a cold shower, there's no way you'd have hot water, hot water was out in the copper and you'd bucket it into the bath. Oh God, yes. You're talking about *modern* days! (laughs) Oh! When I got into a hot shower, I thought, 'This is terrific.' No, there's so many – – –. But like to say to start with, we didn't notice anything different because we hadn't had anything different. If we'd had showers when we were kids and then you went somewhere where there was no showers, then you'd have noticed it. But, you see, we didn't have it. And our rainwater was an underground tank with a hand pump, you had to go and pump that up, you see, and get a bucket and take it into the kitchen. Oh, yes. We didn't have a rainwater tank, it was down in the ground, had to pump it out, you know? Oh, this is where the modern kids just can't comprehend a lot of things because they've no – everything's so natural, you know. See, there was no wireless. You mentioned the wireless. There was no wireless in those days.

Well, everything – – –.

There was gramophones, you see, some of you, if you're lucky, had a gramophone, a few records, or something like that.

Everything's so unnatural now.

Well, this is right. This is right. It's – well, like this: talking and it's going onto a record, a tape. That was unheard of in those days. Technology has just took too big an advancement too quick, and the people couldn't keep with it. And, well, the financial – the countries couldn't keep with it, you see. They wanted to be with it, want it, 'Ooh, got to get the modern stuff, we've got to be up with it', but they couldn't do it and couldn't finish up what – they're all behind. Australia's behind the rest of the world now, and yet we say, 'Look, what else is there for us to get?' Make pictures, make television, all sorts of things. Some of them, they ought to be pinched for doing it, but still, they make them. So there's such a big advancement happened over a short period, from one to the other. You see, to get it like it was then, you've got to go right out in the back blocks of the bush, you know. And even so, they've got 'phone on a satellite, they've got a 'phone. The only 'phone that was around Nackara would have been in the railways.

Was that often used?

Just for railway work.

It was only a ….. …..

Oh, yes. It wasn't a 'phone for everybody and everybody. Oh, no.

Was there a 'phone in the Post Office?

You had a 'phone in the Post Office, yes. And that was, I don't know if it was right from the word 'go', but – no, I don't think – – –. Of course, these things come about when you don't notice just when they come about.

What about your house in Railway Terrace? Did that have the 'phone?

(laughs) No. Oh, God, no. No, there was no 'phones. I never had one here for years.

You're probably very lucky.

Well, I didn't need one. They'd say, 'You get the 'phone?' I said, 'What do I want the 'phone on for? I'm in the street, I get everything in the street I want,' I said, 'If I want to ring anybody up there's a 'phone box out by the front gate and I'm not paying rent on that, and if anyone wants to ring me up,' I said, 'they get bad luck,' I said. 'They can write to me or they can come,' and all this. Or the 'phone in the shop when I was at work, you see. Well, often would – ...., but odd ones, but you didn't do that. But oh, latter years I was sick, I was in hospital for a few days, bit over a week or something, and my wife told me, she said, 'I got the 'phone on.' I said, 'This is – – –.' They had this exchange built down here when – of course the exchange, till they built this one, was at the back of the Post Office, it was all the PMG[1] then. And it went to Telecom, they built their own show down here, you see? Well, that was even going when I got – I don't know what year it was I was in hospital. So the wife said, 'I got the 'phone on.' I said, 'Well, righto,' and that's how I come to have it, had it since. I'd have got it on, I suppose, eventually because the convenience of it, you know. But I was 'What do I want a 'phone for?' And the same, Mum wanted to get a motor car. I said, 'We'll finish getting the

[1] Postmaster General's Department.

house first, pay for the house first, and then we'll buy him.' (laughs) Oh, motor cars today, couldn't do without one.

Well, you could but you'd be a bit behind the – you really couldn't do without one, could you?

Well, the modern life – not just me, but everybody's sort of got to have a motor car now, don't they? You know, otherwise the – – –.

There's no public transport.

No public transport, you see, and there wouldn't be even if a lot of people didn't have the motor. There was a chap started the bus service here in Peterborough donkeys' years ago, they had a miniature vehicle, it made up – just seats, you know, more open air, you know, a couple running down the side – (clock chimes) and they used to run when Peterborough West was first built, wouldn't have been two motor cars in Peterborough West when that was going first. They built it, men used to walk to work, you see, from the sheds. Idle ones might have got a motor car, but this bus service was quite, he used to meet all the passenger trains, you see, and it did fairly well. But then people would drop off, they just couldn't fill, they'd walk to the street, you see, from out Peterborough West. Didn't have to lug their shopping home, that was delivered. And then when .... things got better and they got a rise in wages and things went a bit better, 'We'll get a motor car.' And a motor car in those days would cost you about three hundred bucks, pounds. That's cheap, but you were getting peanuts[2] too, you see. And everything, it balances out itself. What they pay you – rentals were always worked on roughly what I could see round about a quarter of your wages you were paying for your house, and that still is today. It goes on. You can roughly say what they were paying back a few years ago, you know, 'Oh, paying fifty dollars a month off the house.' Well, they were getting about two hundred bucks.

So this bloke who used to run the bus, what was his name?

Oh, God, don't ask me. I wouldn't have a clue, wouldn't have a clue.

Was it an open thing?

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[2] Peanuts = low wages.

Oh, yes, open – more open, yes. Well, I believe it had canvas sides, had like a top and canvas down the sides if it rained, to keep off the – – –. The seats were just on the sides. Like a ute[3] with seats down the side but specially built, sort of business, low, you know, you could just one step and you're up in it.

So was it very popular?

Oh, well, yes, a lot used it, oh yes. People getting off the trains and that, you see, and get a bus service to go home. Oh, yes. See, the passengers, mainly the express from Adelaide at night for Broken Hill, that was at night-time, you see, and then there was a midday, a mixed train, used to come down from Quorn. That was a goods train with carriages on it – well, one or two carriages on it, you see, and that'd go through to Terowie. Well, that was what we'd call the 'mixed'. That was due around about midday, that would get here. It would leave Quorn I suppose seven o'clock in the morning, be about now, be eleven o'clock, it would be about – it would be seven o'clock at night (laughs) when you got to Adelaide. Ah, yes.

So you gave away any idea of joining the railways during the Depression, did you?

Oh, yes. Oh, well, that was right. Well, they go .... a job, because it was – you hung on to what you had, you see?

So what did you do? What did you do for a job?

I went with Von Berto's[?] and the groceries, that's what I was in there. I thought, 'What's the use of trying to get to the railways?'

And did you approach Mr Von Berto? Did you ask him for a job, or – – –?

No, he asked me. He told my sister, she used to work in a shop next door, one Friday night and he told her he wanted to see me about a job. So I didn't wait till the next weekend or next day, I went there that night after the nine o'clock shops shut – that's when I saw her, you see, in the street. And I went down there then. I thought – well, I knew he'd be there, so went and knocked on the door and go in and I got the job, I started next morning.

And were you still living at home at this stage?

[3] Utility vehicle with small tray-top.

Oh yes, yes, I was living at home till I got married. Where else are you going to live? There's no money to go living anywhere. Holy gods.

Did you pay board at your Mum and Dad's?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Not to start with. Well, I used to – she'd have all of it to start with, give you a few bob. And then I got a rise and Mum said, 'Right, you can pay me a pound a week and keep yourself in clothes.' I thought I was made. I used to get about twelve-and-six for myself every week.

So do you remember your first day at work?

Oh, been at work – I'd been in the job, I used to help the bloke that was in there Saturday mornings, so I knew what was going on, you know, and that might have been why he asked me for the job, because I – – –. He wanted a bloke, you see, starting off going and another one in the fruit and veg, so I started, and then he started a groceries.

So what sort of shop was it?

Well, he had, originally he had the Delhi, Delhi Café, which is now – renamed it the Petersberg. That was a blue, that was, they should have kept it as the Delhi. Delhi Café was known for donkeys' years in Peterborough. Well, he originally started off in that, and then he – there was a solicitor used to be next door, and he closed up so he bought that shop and turned it, put in fruit and veg, just as a bit of a sideline. And then it was getting a bit much, so he let the – or sold the café, or sold the business, you know, and he just had the fruit shop. And that was all right, fruit and veg, a greengrocery's. And he used to live at the back of the shop. And then it got that way that people coming on weekends wanting this and wanting that, you know, and he wanted a place that closed up at six o'clock at night and weekends get out of it. He started up in groceries, and this place come down and where Pelton[?] is now, that was a café, and a bloke called Clare opened it. And he was retiring and he was selling it, so the boss bought it. But he didn't want to go, he wasn't ready to start in groceries, you see, but he got the property, the shop, while he could get it, you see? And a chap called Carruthers was working on the railways and he wanted to go into business, you see, so he chucked in the railways and started up the café himself, in there. He was doing all right. But he was spending too much money as he was

earning it. He refurbished the place, put a pianola in to attract customers, a bit of music, you know, and some glass cases to put the cakes and that in, sell a bit of cake. But he overspent, you see, spent dough out too much. And he had a good café. And he never lasted, finished up he went broke, he just had to go back on the railway. He could get his job back. So the boss didn't want to have an empty shop in the street so he started up a grocery's, you see, and that's when I come into the scene. He started up groceries before he needed it, because he had a bit of everything – groceries and ironmongery and tinware, and you name it. And there, that's how it went on and went on and went on from there. And then, when Kyle[?] his son was starting to take over the reins and I thought, well, this place come up, we'll buy that and start a self-service because one of these in Adelaide has started to expand out in the country and they'll come up out and kill it, you see. In those days it was SO Bilby's, and one in Adelaide were branching around all over the place.

Is that right, so Bilby's, that was one of the first like self-serve – – –?

Yes. They were what you'd call a supermarket, they started it all, you see.

What year are we talking, roughly?

Oh, what would it be? Sixty, getting around the '60s.

So Bilby's, did they have a shop in Rundle Street?

Yes, that's right. SO Bilby.

Down the East End?

Somewhere down there, yes. SO Bilby.

Because the only reason I mention that, Penny Donellan[?] used to work at Bilby's in Adelaide.

Oh, yes?

Penny Van Dochem[?].

Van Dochem.

Yes, she worked at Bilby's when she left Peterborough.

(laughs) God, marvellous, isn't it.

Oh, so they expanded out into the country areas as well, Bilby's?

They started to go out, yes. And of course they thought, well, they might – Peterborough being a bigger town, you know, because there was over four thousand people here about these times. And they come so the boss thought, well, he'd get in and ..... would start this self-service. Keep them out. And had a shop, he started the self-service, because it was a coming thing, you see? And then it went on from there.

Old Mr Von Berto, what was his name?

Ernest. Ernest Otto. EO Von Berto.

Now, was he German?

Yes. Yes. His father came out from Germany. He was a baker, pastry cook. He used to live in Lloyd Street. In fact, he had an oven around there, it's still there in there, in the place that he lived in.

Do you know what number that is?

Oh, number four I think. Ian Cherry had it recently, he's bought it for his daughter or something and they sold it, he sold it. Yes, it's that place on the corner that's like a shop. It was a shop once originally, it was a butcher's shop. Well, that's the second one back from that, behind it, when you're coming up Lloyd Street. It was the one .... next door to that, it's got a bit of an elevated veranda in it. An old Englishman called Houston was living there, he bought it when the old Von Berto family went, the old chap died.

So he was called Ernest as well?

No. His name was Johann – JH, I think it was – Johann Heinrich.

Do you remember him?

Oh yes, he was a little man. Oh yes, I knew him, oh yes. He used to do – after he gave up work and that, he used to do the gardening up at the hospital a bit, tidying that, you know – voluntary sort of business. Yes, oh yes. .... and the old lady, she used to come down the fruit shop a lot, worked with her a lot.

And she was German as well?

Oh, yes. They came out from Germany. Matter of fact, I believe he went home before the First World War, he went home for a holiday or something or other, perhaps to see his parents or something, and he – then the First World War started and he nearly got trapped and kept in Germany. He just got out, otherwise they might have kept him there, being a German national. Well, this son, that's my boss, Ernest, and another brother, Mane[?], they both went to the First War, they went over. Yes.

And this was when all the controversy was going on about the German –

Oh, yes.

– sentiment in Peterborough and – – –?

Oh, that was more in the Second World War than the Great War, yes. Oh yes, there was a chap, he was an engine driver in the powerhouse around here for years, and he used to work in the, run the engines in the ice works down here. And the chap built it had rabbits, he used to have truckloads of rabbits going away from here. Freezing works he had and they used to call it ice works because they used to sell ice, blocks of ice, you see? And the freezing works. And a chap called Bert Grauer[?], he was Germany, but his daughter, his second daughter, worked with me for years. Matter of fact, she got long service leave when they shifted from here to Adelaide. She had to leave. And when the Second World War started, well, he had to get out the powerhouse so it looked like they might go and intern him, just because he was German. I mean, this is – the thinking was so narrow, you know, in those days, but it was, there was a lot of feeling, talk that they might intern him. And I thought a man that's been here, brought his family up, you know, he had two girls, and worked in the town, everybody knew him, respected family and all that. I couldn't believe it. Of course, I wouldn't worry about my boss because they'd been in the First World War, you see. Oh, no. Old Ernie's father, I knew them.

He was a baker, you said?

He was a pastry cook, I believe, yes, a pastry – he wasn't a general baker, but he was a pastry cook, I think.

Was that his job in Peterborough, that's what he did?

Early days when he was out, before I knew him, he used to bake it, used to sell it there, yes, yes.

What, from his house?

From the house. Well, that's where they had a – there was a shop there, you see, no shop in the street. Oh, yes. Yes, they were originals.

Like you said, you've seen a lot of changes.

I've seen some changes here, not only just in how the place went, but in building. (clock chimes) Reconstruction and things like that. That main street was a trap[?], I've seen boats going up that, rowing boats. It was – the whole thing was no thought to start with, no engineering. It had a – crowd on the road there, in front of the YMCA[4] there was a huge crowd, a lot of horses and traps, Thursdays, going down sometimes the horses would slip on it, you know, it was such a slope. And the flood waters coming down, they used to go across under the railway line, they'd come out by the YMCA. Well, they've altered all that. And that's one there, and then it would come down over the crossing down there, Silver Street crossing, around the pub corner and follow the main street. It couldn't get out. It used to go right down till it got down to 'Ned's Corner', as we called it, where they go to school, and that's where she'd go, round that corner down there, down onto the school flat. The flood waters used to go down to that. And they had to drain, of course, that was .... But this was from this side of the town, you see, and they couldn't get there. Then it come down Hurlsford[?] Street as well, ... And they rebuilt the ..... but years afterwards, after they got the shops been flooded and all this business, they rebuilt the main highways, they rebuilt it, and that's why they made the dishes at each street. And now when you walk down the street on a wet day you've got to walk through water to cross the side streets. And this was bloody engineering.

And then they had the big brainwave, when they standardised[5], that that big pipe through to the junction corner – you've seen it here – and it goes down there and there's a pipe going down that side street, High Street, there's a grille just out from the garage there in the middle of the street and there's one down just past

[4] YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association.

Lloyd's on the corner? When they get a flood in the drain used to come back up through that, ... the water back, just to get rid of it. Well, that takes the main corner, that gets away – well, the bit that goes down the rest of the street doesn't matter, that's only just off the street. But the street was a crown[?], the flood water would come down and it would be on this side but it would go down there. Oh! Floods in the subway, full as a bull[?].

Oh, right, you've seen the subway full?

Oh! Plenty of times. Plenty of times. We used to get floods that often, every summer, we'd get a couple perhaps. But we got one always around Christmas, Christmas week. We'd call it 'the Christmas flood' – thunderstorms. And the railway yards would be under water, the whole of the railway yards. Of course, it's been lifted, with standardisation they lifted it, it used to be lower, you see. And there – oh, yes, the subway, that electric pump on that, that couldn't cope with it, that'd be filled up. I've seen people have to cross the railways and they had all these handcarts like you see in Adelaide, and they'll stay on two wheels and a flat top, you know, and they'd wheel it. And they'd lade people onto that and take them across the tracks in the station. Oh, yes. That was one of the major things that was rebuilt here in Peterborough. As far as the streets are concerned. Before that I think was before they built the drain. There used to be houses down that, what we call 'the stock route' – that was where they used to drive the stock from the sales back out through the town, back of Kitchener Street there – always call that 'the stock route'. Well, there was a flood – there used to be some houses that used to be along there but they made them pull them down because they're in the flood area.

Yes, you were telling me the other day that old – what's his name? – Byrne –

Reggie?

– his house used to be there, didn't it?

Someone – I didn't know that till someone was telling me the other day, that used to be – – –.

....

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[5] Refers to ongoing project to standardise rail gauges throughout Australia.

Yes, that's right, down there along the drain. That was over there, you know, over on that bottom end of the drain there. There was two or three houses still there. Reggie Britcher[?] lives in one. It used to be along there. I didn't know that; all I knew was it was over here, and that's what I said when Ross, that's when we were talking the other week, that old Dave Buzzer[?] used to live there. He was a dustman[6] and he used to live in there. Yes. Reggie Byrne and his – whether they sold the house, it was open and they bought it – Reggie and his mother used to live there. Yes.

The other thing you were telling me the other day was when you were a young bloke, going to the YMCA gym.

Oh, yes.

And before that even, you were saying how there was a big tin shed.

Yes, down the back of where Ira Davis lives now.

So what used to go on in the shed?

I believe it was a military depot, sort of business. What did they call it? Not the Light Horse.

A drill hall.

The drill hall. Well, then they built another drill hall – I reckon it's still there – up the top, at –

Badger Street, yes.

– yes, Badger Street, up there, yes. This one – I *think* that's what it was, it was something anyhow – was empty, and this chap, this Norm Smith, took it over to start gymnasium classes, you see, for the kids. Yes, went down there, there to start with, and then they built the YMCA, you see. Well, then, when they built the gym alongside the YMCA, well, we went in there.

And did you spend a lot of time there, what, young blokes?

In the gym? Oh, well, they had their regular days, oh yes. The regular, like gymnastics, and then Wednesday nights was basketball. And of course I was getting

[6] Garbage collector.

in, I was a teenager then, and then you'd go in and naturally join the YMCA and we used to go in and play table tennis in those front rooms, and then of course billiards, we got in and started billiards and that was it. That was, oh, they had two beautiful tables in there.

And where were they in the YMCA building?

When you go in the main entrance you go across to the double doors on the western side through the main hall, and it was off of that. You go the other way it was the dining area and the kitchen, up the stairs, of course, they had ..... the western side of the staircase, you see, and the office was up on that end and you'd go in there, two full-sized tables in there. Ooh, they were beautiful. I don't know what the – I think the Railway Institute, because they've got the place now, and they used to use that as a depot for their goods and chattels, you know, like their spare tablecloths and cutlery and things like this, whatever they wanted for the Institute.

And the two front rooms in the YMCA, what were they used for?

Two?

There's two front rooms.

Oh! Well, they were built, I think, for meetings, I think, and used to have meetings. And then they put table tennis – I think one of them was for table tennis and the other one was a meeting room. And they were the – ..... allowed to use when we had indoor – the railways started indoor bowls there for the retired railway blokes, and I know they started a library, institute library, in there. That was in one, because the table tennis, that folded up a long time before. Both just meeting rooms, I think. You could hire them or go in there.

And what about the YMCA, their – – –?

Was more a home for single blokes and ..... working, up and working, you know, and – well, the YMCA organisation started I suppose for all sorts of reasons.

But was there a – – –?

The schoolteacher's up here, you know – – –. (telephone rings) This is the dogs' home, I'll bet you.

The what?

This'll be the dogs' home. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 1 [*sic*] SIDE B:

END OF INTERVIEW.