

**CITY OF SYDNEY**  
**ORAL HISTORY**

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**Interviewee: Brendan Doyle**

**Interviewer: Sue Rosen**

**Place: Glebe**

**Date: 5 May 1995**

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**TRANSCRIPT**

0.00      **SR:      Interview with Brendan Doyle at Glebe, 5th of May 1995.**  
**Brendan, where were you born?**

BD:      I was born at George V Hospital in Camperdown.

**SR:      And what year was that?**

BD:      1949.

**SR:      And where did you grow up?**

BD:      I grew up at number 89 Station Street, Newtown.

**SR:      What sort of house was that?**

BD:      Just one of those single storey terraces, twelve foot frontage.

**SR:      And did you have any brothers and sisters?**

BD:      Yes, one sister, Marian, and she's two years younger than me.

**SR:      And that's it?**

BD:      Small family for those days.

**SR:      Yes. Well, what kind of a kid were you?**

BD:      I'd say I was a fairly shy sort of kid probably.

**SR:      O.K, what kind of a kid were you?**

BD:      I was fairly shy but I was pretty bright. I always seemed to sort of come near the top of the class and I was bored a lot of the time.

**SR: Why?**

BD: There wasn't a lot to do in Station Street, Newtown in the 1950s, not many cars came past.

**SR: Well, what about shops and things like that?**

BD: There were plenty of shops in King Street, Newtown, yes, there were little shops.

**SR: But they wouldn't be of much interest to a kid, would they?**

BD: No, no. I can remember a few of the shops fairly distinctly, like there was a dairy shop or a cheese shop and that was really nice because for some reason it had sawdust on the floor and they'd give you samples of all the different types of cheeses, so I loved that.

**SR: Who ran that?**

BD: I don't remember, I don't remember the person's name.

**SR: But were they Australian or were they immigrant?**

1.58 BD: Yes, they were Australians. I don't remember many immigrants at all in the early '50s 'round Newtown, they were pretty rare. I remember there was a Dutch kid and I remember I had a fight with him one day and it was something to do with him being Dutch, I'm sure, and I swore at him and then he called me a "bloody basket", I remember that, and he threw a brick at me and it hit me on the head, split my head open and I ran home with blood all pouring out of my head. So that was the sort of migrant .....

**SR: No, I thought with the different sorts of cheeses that, you know, Australia was pretty boring until we had the influence of the European - - -**

BD: Oh, they were all Aussie cheeses. You'd have maybe a few varieties of tasty and a couple of mature cheeses but like there was some variety.

**SR: What sort of a family do you come from?**

BD: Working class family. My father worked – his first jobs were in the aircraft industry. He was a fitter, an aircraft fitter, out at Kingsford Smith Airport and he worked for, I remember, Butler Airlines which later became Ansett and then got a job at Email. Well, in those days it was called Sidney Cook, so he was a fitter in a factory, making nails and wire and stuff and that was at Alexandria.

**SR: What about your mum, did she work?**

BD: She was a bookbinder by trade. She came out from Glasgow at the age of nineteen and she'd learnt bookbinding; she'd done a bit of it before she came out her and she continued to do it for a while - I remember she worked in a bookbinding place in Newtown – but she didn't do it for very long for some reason or it might have been sort of on and off.

4.06 And the only other jobs I can remember her doing were she used to occasionally bring home some factory work and us kids used to help her. It was like for example there were these eyelet things and you had to make them or assemble

them, you know, little factory jobs where you'd have hundreds and hundreds – it was piecework and there'd be thousands of little things, metal things, that you had to - - -

**SR: Did you have to put them onto paper cards for them to go into the shops?**

**BD:** That could have been one thing, yes. There were lots of different little jobs like that that I remember she brought home. And the only other job I can remember her doing was cleaning; she used to occasionally go and clean some ritzy houses 'round the place.

**SR: Where?**

**BD:** Locally, Newtown. I remember one house she cleaned was in Stanmore.

**SR: Some of those bigger houses there?**

**BD:** Yes, one of the bigger houses.

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

**BD:** I suppose for a kid anyway the most striking thing was that he was a long distance runner, he was very athletic. He was actually New South Wales champion over distances like ten miles, fifteen miles, and he used to train every Saturday out at Centennial Park and that was great fun because he'd take us kids out there. Yes, so we just spent all of Saturday ranging around Centennial Park. And what else? He was otherwise a fairly quiet sort of guy. That was his hobby, running.

**SR: Did he compete?**

**BD:** Oh, yes. As I say, he was New South Wales champion, yes. He belonged to South Sydney Athletics Club for many, many years and so they would train.

6.00 If they weren't training at Centennial Park they'd be training around Botany Bay and places like that. He actually carried the Olympic torch in 1956, Melbourne. And what else? He competed in – it was called the Empire Games in those days; that was before my time but I saw photographs and medals and things – he competed in Perth in the Empire Games.

**SR: Really?**

**BD:** So he was a pretty top runner in his day.

**SR: And when he carried the Olympic torch, where was that?**

**BD:** It was on the way. It was somewhere between – I think they carried it from Sydney to Melbourne, yes, and he was one of the hundreds of runners that carried it. But, I mean, that was a great thrill for because I was very impressed that dad was such a great runner – and I never way. As much as he encouraged me to have a go, I mean, I'd run half a mile out at Centennial Park 'round the lake and I'd just collapse and paddle in the water or catch prawns or something; it wasn't my thing. I tried high-jumping, a few other athletics things but, no, I was more of a bookish sort of kid, more interested in academic things and stuff like that. And that was

fine with him. He was very easygoing so he just encouraged me to do whatever I wanted to do.

**SR: Were there a lot of people involved in athletics and things like that then? I guess people must have been because we were competing – you don't hear about it, though.**

**BD:** There were lots. Well, the South Sydney Athletics Club was a big club and we'd go there every Saturday afternoon and there was sort of – still is – there's a rotunda sort of between two lakes and all the families would congregate there and there'd be sandwiches and barbeques and tea and it was a real family thing.

**SR: And your mum would go too?**

**BD:** No. Rarely, rarely. I can remember her going occasionally. I think that was dad's thing somehow and also she wasn't that interested because, well, for her it would have meant quite a few hours' doing nothing much apart from maybe chatting to other women and she didn't come out with us. So that was the thing that we did with dad.

8.16 **SR: And both of you kids would go?**

**BD:** I went nearly all the time and my sister came most of the time. Occasionally I'd come with other mates and we'd sort of range around the sandhills and things. It was bit wilder in those days, Centennial Park, oh yes.

**SR: And what do you mean by that?**

**BD:** There were areas that were more bushy and you could get lost. It's hard to imagine now but, yes, we really felt we could get lost out there sometimes.

**SR: Was it a safe place?**

**BD:** Yes and no. I mean, nothing ever happened to me but there were some strange people would kind of, yes, be lurking behind bushes and in toilets and things would go on. Yes, we sort of saw a few things out there.

**SR: Like what?**

**BD:** Oh, couples making love in the grass or people swimming in the lakes when they shouldn't have been and fishing when they shouldn't have been.

**SR: Lots of kids used to swim in the lakes.**

**BD:** We used to swim too in the lake, yes. What else?

**SR: Catching ducks.**

**BD:** People would catch ducks.

**SR: Dinner.**

**BD:** Probably. We didn't, we caught goldfish. Not goldfish, carp and tadpoles and frogs.

**SR: Well, how would you describe your mother – what sort of a woman was she?**

BD: Mum was pretty quiet sort of, a bit anti-social I'd say, and I don't know if it had to do with the fact that she'd come out from Scotland at the age of nineteen without any friends. I think I'd probably put it down to that basically.

10.03 And she never lost her strong Scots accent over many years. She didn't have many friends; we had very few visitors in the house. There were a couple of neighbours that she'd talk to and spend time with in Station Street but never more than a few doors away. She didn't go out much.

**SR: And what brought your family to live in Newtown, how come your father settled there?**

BD: I don't know for sure. He was brought up in the inner city in Darlinghurst and Crown Street and Palmer Street areas like that, Surry Hills, so I guess he was an inner city boy so I guess to him it was familiar country. And being close to the airport – well, not too far, he always had a car – and being close to Alexandria where he was in the factory I guess it was sort of convenient, had lots of pubs which suited him.

**SR: Really? Being that athletic you'd think that he wouldn't be able to drink that much.**

BD: That was a big thing: they all went to the pub after running on Saturday, yes.

**SR: They didn't put on weight?**

BD: They ran it off because he'd go training nearly every afternoon as well as Saturday. He'd go up to, say, St Paul's Oval in Sydney University and do ten laps or something just about every day, yes.

**SR: With your family, who controlled the finances?**

BD: My mother.

**SR: Did your dad have to hand over the pay packet?**

BD: He handed over the pay packet and he'd get so much for the week or whatever and mum would look after the finances.

**SR: Pay the rent?**

BD: M'mm.

**SR: Did you own your own house or were you renting?**

BD: We rented for a long time because I remember going up to pay the rent at a place call Starr-Bowkett, although come to think of it that's a building society, wasn't it, Starr-Bowkett - - -

12.07 **SR: M'mm.**

BD: - - - so it could have been the mortgage repayments. I remember going there, if it wasn't every weekend every second weekend, every second Saturday and paying this money. Now, whether it was rent – I mean, mum and dad eventually did own

that house in Newtown and they sold it and bought a house in Marrickville when I was about ten or eleven, so, yes, they did eventually own it.

**SR: Were your parents religious?**

BD: Not really at all, no, no, but the funny thing is mum encouraged us kids to go to Sunday school and then church. They never went, my parents, but they encouraged us to.

**SR: But are you Catholic?**

BD: No.

**SR: Very Catholic name.**

BD: Very Catholic name. Well, my father's mother was an Irish Catholic, even though dad was born here and brought up here, so that's where the name comes from.

**SR: And what would your mother have been, Presbyterian or something like that?**

BD: Yes, yes. In fact, I think I've still got her Presbyterian bible that she brought out from Scotland.

**SR: And where did you go to Sunday school?**

BD: The only one I can remember going to was Church of England, Stanmore, so that must have been a bit later, that must have been when we moved to Marrickville. I can't remember going to church, in fact can't remember where the church was in Newtown. There must have been plenty of them but, no, it was a bit later.

**SR: Were they politically active?**

BD: Not really, no. My father was always a fairly strong unionist because he was in the Metalworkers Union and I can remember strikes and talk of strikes and I remember he would often say "We had a meeting today and they talked about this and that", so, but other than that, no. He always voted Labor.

14.17 **SR: And can you remember any of the issues that they went on strike over and how he felt about them?**

BD: I can only ever remember it being about wages, wage rises.

**SR: Not so much conditions?**

BD: No, no. In fact, no, conditions were pretty bad. I mean, he took me to the – what was it called? – anyway, the metal factory in Alexandria, Sidney Cook, and I was just appalled at the sort of working conditions: incredible noise and of course it was impossible to talk, absolutely impossible; there were huge metal presses going hell for leather, making this incredible din. My father got industrial deafness out of it. I mean, his hearing – he's eighty three today - but I mean his hearing is certainly impaired. They never wore hearing plugs or anything in those days, you just put up with noise. And the heat was incredible and the dirt.

**SR: Did you remember hearing about industrial accidents there, your dad coming home and talking about people injured?**

BD: No, I don't. I know there were a lot of industrial accidents but I think I know that from reading about it later on but at the time I don't remember now.

SR: **Did your dad ever talk about Menzies or any of the politicians of the day? You know, Menzies was doing his 'Reds under the Beds' thing then.**

BD: I don't remember him talking about Menzies, no.

SR: **What about the split in the ALP, the DLP/ALP big bust-up?**

16.04 BD: I mean, I remember that but I don't know whether I sort of remember it in hindsight if you know what I mean, reading about it later. Yes, I can't remember dad talking about the politicians. I don't think he liked Menzies; I mean, he was a Labor man, he always voted Labor, so. But he always read the Telegraph.

SR: **He didn't get papers like the Workers Daily or Tribune?**

BD: No, I don't remember him ever reading the Tribune. He'd read the union paper which, you know, the Metalworkers' union paper was fairly left wing and very unionist and very pro-Labor, yes.

SR: **What sort of discipline was used in the house?**

BD: Mainly getting yelled at by mum, she was the main disciplinarian, but if ever things got really out of hand it was the strap and that was dad; dad's job was the strap.

SR: **And what was the strap exactly? Was it a belt?**

BD: It was a wide leather belt.

SR: **What they used to use in barbers', one of those?**

BD: I don't remember it being that heavy, no, more like – don't know. What is leather?

SR: **Or off a machine? You know how they used to have leather belts sometimes.**

BD: Yes. It was leather but I can't remember how heavy it was but I remember it being wide.

SR: **And when you say "if things got really out of control", what would you have to do to get that?**

BD: Well, one occasion when I did get the strap was when – I was a real firebug, see – and there was an old lady who lived close by called Mrs Gillette and she lived off this little lane just off Station Street and unfortunately for her the side of her house had these ventilators and one of them was broken and so of course one day – I think I was only about five or six – I stuffed the ventilator full of newspaper and lit it.

18.14 SR: **Was it wood, the house?**

BD: No, it was a brick house but of course it got full of smoke.

SR: **She could have died.**

BD: And all I remember after that it's like I just got the biggest belting of my life and I don't think I lit any more fires. I still remained a firebug but I didn't sort of set fire to people's houses after that.

**SR: And what would your mum yell at you about?**

BD: Usually minor things like not finishing dinner or not eating the peas or leaving a mess in your bedroom, that sort of thing, yes, or not feeding the dog or stuff like that.

**SR: And was your sister disciplined in the same way?**

BD: Yes, mainly yelling. I don't think she ever got the strap come to mention it. That was very rare, that was like the really worst punishment I think that's ..... yes.

**SR: Were you expected to contribute toward the family financially as you got older?**

BD: What, like getting a job or something?

**SR: Yes. Well, in the Depression kids often had to do anything they could but I mean even selling newspapers and bottles and scrap iron and all sorts of things but I assume that in the '50s it would be different but was it? Or did you just have to have jobs, like you would mow the lawn or something like that?**

BD: Things around the house. Yes, I don't remember ever – I think I did one paper run but I can't remember how old I was. I might have been about twelve by then, so we would have moved to Marrickville by then.

20.08 **SR: Yes. And when you did the paper run though, would the money go to the family or would it go to you then?**

BD: From what I can remember I always got whatever I earned, yes, because after that my first real job was doing a sort of chemist run, was riding a bike around, delivering medicines to old people around Enmore, Newtown and Enmore but I must have been old enough to ride a bike so I must have been about fourteen by then.

**SR: So you'd have a lot more affluence. In the Depression, people needed the money from the kids literally to buy food and it was crucial to their survival but in the '50s hopefully things were a bit better. Do you remember what your standard of – when you look back what do you think about your standard of living?**

BD: Well, we had all the basics but not many frills, yes.

**SR: What sort of car did your parents have?**

BD: The only two I can remember were we had a T-model Ford and we had a Whippet which had a dicky seat, one of those seats that fold out in the back, at the back.

**SR: Really?**

BD: Yes, an open air seat that popped out; it was fabulous.

**SR: Well, that must have been quite old.**



BD: That was old, yes. I think the Whippet would have been like a late '30s model so it was already pretty old, yes, by the '50s and T-model Ford, I can't remember when that came out.

**SR: It wasn't '50s anyway.**

BD: No, so they were already – yes, my father was very interested in cars so he would have bought a second-hand car and done it up and worked on it, yes.

22.06 BD: Yes, I don't remember getting a new car. Well, let's see. We got a Holden, we had a Holden, yes, I'm sure he bought a new Holden but I'd say I would have been maybe fifteen or sixteen by then but till then it was second-hand cars, definitely, yes. But I remember we didn't get a television till I was about ten years old. So what does that make it?

**SR: '59.**

BD: About '66. Because TV came out in '56, I remember that because we used to go and watch TV down the road at a friend's place but, yes, we didn't get it till I was about ten.

**SR: So in '59. You were born in '49.**

BD: Yes, sorry, you're right - what am I saying? – '59, yes, got a TV, yes.

**SR: Can you remember TV actually first coming out – did you used to go and watch it in shop windows?**

BD: Yes, a little bit but mainly we went up to Dawn Keeler's, she was the daughter of John Keeler, the funeral business - and they're still in Newtown – and they were the first people to get a television and fortunately we were friends and so we got to watch television from the very start.

**SR: And what were the shows that you liked then?**

BD: The earliest ones I can remember – there was the Mickey Mouse Club and that was one of the very first shows and what was it called, that Johnny O'Keefe show?

**SR: Rock around the Clock?**

BD: Rock around the Clock was an early one. They're about the only two I can recall, actually.

**SR: When you think of music at that time, can you remember your parents' reaction to rock and roll and people like Johnny O'Keefe and Elvis and Buddy Holly, I suppose? Can you remember if there was that much influence from Buddy Holly out here?**

24.12 BD: Yes, they were really big.

**SR: Can you remember your parents, what they thought of that music?**

BD: Well, they never bought it, they never bought those records because I can remember the sort of records we had 'round the house and they were Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. Who else was there? Anyway, an older vintage, certainly not

Buddy Holly or Elvis Presley, no, my parents never bought those records. So they might have heard on the radio but it wasn't their thing.

**SR: Did you listen to the radio much?**

BD: Yes, a lot. That was our main form of entertainment.

**SR: At night?**

BD: M'mm.

**SR: And what were the shows you listened to?**

BD: What was there? I remember listening to Tarzan. There was an Australian comedy show that was really – Guess What? I think it was called, Guess What? It was set in a classroom, yes, and there was Green Bottle and kids with funny names; it was really, really funny.

**SR: Can you remember a show with a character called Dexter in it?**

BD: Yes.

**SR: What was that?**

BD: Dexter.

**SR: It was American, I think.**

BD: Was it?

**SR: I don't know. It had a very strong, harsh kind of voice – that's why I'm assuming he was American.**

BD: Dexter. Rings a bell but I can't remember the name of the show.

**SR: So what would you do in the evenings after you'd had the evening – you'd have the evening meal, would you?**

BD: Pretty early, usually.

**SR: Was that called tea or dinner?**

BD: Tea.

**SR: Had tea at what?**

25.59 BD: Tea at five thirty, six o'clock, depending on the season. You know, in winter you'd eat earlier, summer might be an hour later but never later than, I would say never later than six thirty.

**SR: And what would be a typical evening meal then?**

BD: Always meat of some description, usually chops or sausages except fish on Friday, always fish on Friday, which we'd often go and buy, not cook. In fact, I don't think mum ever cooked fish, that was something you went and bought.

**SR: Battered?**

BD: Oh yes, from the fish and chip shop. Otherwise it was just meat and peas or beans and carrots maybe, mashed potato, pretty basic stuff.

**SR: Did you ever eat out, the family go to a restaurant?**

BD: No, I can't remember ever doing that.

**SR: And did you ever have takeaways of exotic foods?**

BD: It didn't exist.

**SR: What about Chinese – was there any even Chinese food?**

BD: There was Chinese, yes, there was at least one Chinese ..... I can't remember going to one but we probably did, we probably did.

**SR: But you don't remember having it as takeaway? Was it usually your mother cooked the meal?**

BD: Yes. Yes, I can't remember. It was very unusual to buy – except the fish and chips was regular, that was a regular Friday, I think.

**SR: Yes, I don't think there was the culture of eating out then.**

BD: No.

**SR: Well, what did your family do for fun? I mean, we've talked about your dad and everything, going to Centennial Park. Was there anything else the family did together?**

BD: Going for a drive was the big thing.

**SR: Where did you go to?**

BD: We'd go to places like Kurnell.

**SR: What was out at Kurnell?**

BD: Not much.

**SR: Was there a beach? Isn't that industrial? I keep thinking of the oil refinery when I hear Kurnell.**

28.04 BD: It is but it's on Botany Bay so there's a bit called Silver Beach which is quite nice.

**SR: Not polluted?**

BD: In those days – I'm trying to think what industry. See, there wouldn't have been as much industry then in the early '50s. I can't remember when the oil refinery went in for example. So that's Kurnell. Royal National Park, we'd go there, Audley. Where else? A place called Carss Park which is in the Kogarah municipality which is on the Georges River – East Hills? - somewhere out on the Georges River, I think it was East Hills. Picnic Point, that's the place. That seemed to take ages to get to because you didn't have the bridges that we have now so you had to sort of go via Liverpool or something to get to Picnic Point.

**SR: And would you swim there?**

BD: Yes. Whenever we got a chance we'd swim.

**SR: And you'd take a picnic or something?**

BD: Yes, yes, yes.

**SR: What about holidays? Did your family go on holidays?**

BD: Yes, we used to go, I think, probably ever summer we'd go, I'd say once a year we'd take whatever holiday.

**SR: To where?**

BD: I remember going to places like Pretty Beach, Kilcare, Bateau Bay, all those places up near The Entrance; they're the only places I remember.

**SR: And where would you stay there? Like caravan parks?**

BD: No, we'd always rent a cottage, yes, a fibro place usually.

**SR: Did your parents like their work?**

29.59 BD: I got the impression that dad had enjoyed being an aircraft fitter and he certainly always kept up his interest in aircraft and the airport. In fact that was one of the drives we used to do: sometimes we would just drive out to the airport and watch the planes landing and taking off over Botany Bay. I used to enjoy that, dad too, and he would know all the planes and he'd say "Oh, that's a 1949 something or other, DC3" and, I mean, I was quite interested in all that and he took me out to the airport a couple of times. And he took me on this dreadful flight on a DC3 from Sydney to Foster and it was a terrible flight, it was really noisy and bumpy and I think I got sick and it seemed to take forever and I wasn't all that thrilled with air travel.

**SR: Was it just a joy flight sort of thing?**

BD: Yes. I mean, because he worked at the airport he got a cheap ticket or a free ticket or something.

**SR: Did you stay overnight there or [break in tape]**

BD: This poem's called 'Newtown Boy'. "Sittin' on the gas box, waiting for me dad. He's at the pub. Fridays he celebrates and puts on a funny voice. Joy Pithers across the street, she's in kindergarten too. I'll bet her dad is home. Never seen him but. Dawn Miller's father, the funeral man, he's rich. They're going to get a television soon as they switch it on from America. First thing will be Mickey Mouse. I'll be seven then. Joy Pithers kissed me, sittin' on the gas box but I like Christine Parker 'cause she's got long brown hair down to her bottom. When she sits on the scripture mat I make plaits for her and look at her red ribbons".

32.01 "On Fridays dad gets drunk and wobbles his bike down the side but he always brings us fish and scallops, Fruit Tingles, Steamrollers, Choo-Choo bars and Cherry Ripes. I fight my sister for the green Fruit Tingles. Other days, dad puts me on his handlebars - he made a seat for me - and rides me up to the very end of the street across the big road and we watch the trains go past. I wave to the guards and they

wave back. Sittin' on the gas box, I can see into Salmon Park where the Dutch boy who called me a bloody basket threw half a brick and split my head open. I didn't have to go to hospital but. I shouldn't have called him 'dago'. The street light just came on. Now those big flying ants will bump against the globe until they're fried. Yesterday my tortoise died after Mr Morris run over it in his semi-trailer. Here's my last green one - I've been saving it for a week – fizzing in my mouth, tickling under my tongue. I wish a car would come past. Hey, I can smell fish and scallops. I'm standing on the gas box, waiting. It's my dad and the old green bike".

**SR: That's great. It's a good poem.**

BD: Thank you, yes. Yes, it was published in the school magazine at that time. I think kids would have got sort of an impression of maybe how life was different then.

**SR: Yes. I think it's great. We'll have to ..... yes. Well, who were your friends? You mentioned a few of your friends in that poem.**

BD: Yes.

**SR: Is that their real names?**

BD: Yes, Christine Parker and Joy Pithers. It should be Dawn Keeler; it's actually Keeler's funeral business; I don't know why I changed it.

33.59 Who were my other friends? Freddy Hata was a great friend of mine – he lived just around in the back street – and we used to spend a lot of time playing in the backyard. That's all I can remember.

**SR: What sort of games did kids play then?**

BD: Endless hours playing in the backyard. Well, I had this wind-up train set for example and we'd set up the tracks in the backyard and so you could have little hills and you could have it going through water and you'd sort of make it a whole sort of city railway system in the backyard – that was one thing we did. And what else? I suppose being boys, a lot of our games revolved around toy cars and little wind-up motors and things and I had a Meccano set – that was a big thing. My father made – well, he sort of built me, gradually over the years he built up a huge Meccano set which was in this big box and sometimes he would help me make things. So you could make structures, buildings and cars and things.

**SR: Everybody had Meccano then. It was a bit like the '50s Lego.**

BD: It was like Lego, yes, yes, it was very popular. What else? Cricket. Cricket was the big game, more than football or anything like that.

**SR: Where would you play cricket?**

BD: In the back street, behind Station Street – I can't remember what it was called now.

**SR: And with your friends - you said you mostly played in the backyard - did you have much freedom to roam?**

BD: Yes, we did up to a point but we never went very far. I don't remember ever going much beyond Station Street and King Street and the back street.

36.00 I mean, that in those days seemed a big area and the little park I mentioned, Salmon Park, was just directly opposite 89 Station Street. It seemed to me in those days quite a big park but now looking at it it's just a pocket handkerchief size, it's tiny. So at that age things seemed big and Station Street seemed to me a very, very long street in those days. It's not, actually, but it seemed to go on forever.

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

BD: Yes, there were a lot. There was a big family on one side called the Murphys and there were about seven kids.

**SR: Were they over in Erskineville? No, it's the wrong generation, sorry.**

BD: I don't – yes, they were next door, next door, yes. And on the other side there was Mr and Mrs Portas and their daughter, Greta. So they were immediate neighbours. Yes, there were a lot of kids because I remember a lot of the local kids – a lot of kids in Station Street went to the same school as me.

**SR: What school was that?**

BD: That was Newtown Public, which is up in King Street near the station.

**SR: What was that like and how were you treated there?**

BD: It was a fairly sort of dark, foreboding building - I never liked the building much. It was sort of dark brick and big rooms, not very light. I can remember we used to have open fires in the classrooms; when it got really cold you'd light a fire.

**SR: And what was the average size of the family then? You said the Murphys had seven.**

BD: Seven. That was unusual. I mean the average family was, I'd say it was two or three kids was pretty average by then.

**SR: And where did most kids' parents work?**

38.04 BD: My impression was that most of them were factory workers. There were factories in St Peters, Alexandria, Newtown not so much. I think Newtown was more sort of shops and very small industry but the bigger industries were sort of between Newtown and the airport, there was a lot of heavy industry.

**SR: Did you have any adventures, like doing things with your friends when you perhaps shouldn't have been?**

BD: The greatest adventure I can remember is – and I was a little bit older by then – was going in stormwater drains under factories down towards Sydenham, yes, I remember that distinctly. A lot of them still exist, there are these open stormwater channels and if you followed them they would go under the whole factory system. It was pretty dangerous actually.

**SR: And scary.**

BD: Yes. Well, that's what we loved about it, I guess, you know, and dirty and slimy and slippery and there were rats and stuff like that. So I don't think my parents would have been too happy about us running around there but we did.

**SR: Any other places, anything else?**

BD: I remember fishing on the Cooks River at Tempe. I'm wondering how we got there. Yes, that was easy because you'd just get a bus from King Street, Newtown to Tempe Depot which was not far and you were at the Cooks River, so it was a good place to fish.

**SR: Was it clean there?**

BD: No, not very; you'd be lucky to catch a few leatherjackets.

**SR: Would you eat them?**

BD: I don't think we ever caught anything big enough to eat.

40.03 **SR: Probably a good thing.**

BD: Yes.

**SR: Did you have any books?**

BD: I can't remember. Our house was pretty empty of books; my parents didn't read. Newspapers, that was about it, newspapers and magazines, Post and Pix, things like that.

**SR: You said the Telegraph before.**

BD: The Telegraph and the Mirror.

**SR: And they would have been quite popular at that time.**

BD: Every day. Yes, I mean dad would get the newspaper every day, every morning and every afternoon and get the paper. But books, no. There was maybe the odd little Reader's Digest thing and that'd be about it, yes.

**SR: What about sex education?**

BD: Very, very rare. I don't remember any at school, not as a little kid. In high school, yes, but are you talking about sort of as a teenager?

**SR: Well, whenever.**

BD: Ever, yes. In high school there was a bit because I can remember father and son evenings – that was at Fort Street.

**SR: Did you go to Fort Street?**

BD: Yes.

**SR: Yes, do you must have done very well in primary school?**

BD: Yes, I went to Stanmore Primary. See, we moved to Marrickville so I then went to Stanmore Primary and I did quite well there and then went to opportunity class in fifth and sixth class - so that was at Summer Hill so I had to get the train to

Summer Hill - and from there went to Fort Street. And they had these father and son evenings; that was sex education.

**SR: How did you feel about that?**

BD: I was pretty embarrassed about it, really.

**SR: And how did they feel about your success at school, given that they weren't particularly interested in education?**

42.01 BD: It's not that they weren't interested. I mean, they were very pleased that I did well and they encouraged me and they more or less left me to my own devices basically. They were very pleased when I got stars or good marks and all that and good reports but they weren't really able to help me with much at all.

**SR: When you're talking about the local area - you mentioned that it was mostly residential and then shops up in King Street and in Station Street – did most of the people shop locally there?**

BD: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, King Street had just about everything you needed.

**SR: Right. Because now King Street's sort of got lots of restaurants and art shops and things.**

BD: It didn't in those days.

**SR: And when people did their grocery shopping, did they do it like for the week or was it like a daily thing?**

BD: I think mum went shopping every day basically and that was part of her life, her lifestyle was to walk up to the local shops and get things. So, no, I mean she would bring back what she could carry; you certainly wouldn't drive to go shopping.

**SR: And it wasn't a big expedition?**

BD: No, no, no, it was always just to the local shop where you'd be well known and it would always be "Hello, Mrs Doyle" and you would know the shopkeeper's names often so it was more a sort of village atmosphere in that sense.

**SR: Did you notice any changes over the time? You left when you were about ten or twelve, was it?**

BD: Yes, yes, we went to Marrickville.

**SR: Did you notice any changes or it was pretty consistent over that time or did changes there come later?**

44.00 BD: Yes, it's hard for me to remember. I think I can remember Greek and Italian shops opening up that hadn't been there earlier.

**SR: Well, what sort of shops would they have been?**

BD: Like milk bars, fruit shops, grocery sort of shops and maybe the odd kind of Greek sort of café/restaurant type place which we would never have gone to, of course, because that was for the Greeks, wasn't it? Full of Greek men.



**SR: They would have had real coffee.**

BD: Yes, and Greek men playing cards and talking, like a Greek place.

**SR: So there must have been some influx of immigrants then?**

BD: Well, I have, yes, vague memories but I think it would have been late '50s because I honestly can't remember many – well, I didn't have any Greek or Italian mates, that's for sure.

**SR: There weren't any at school?**

BD: At school, I can't remember Greek or Italian kids in Station Street for example; I can only see a very Anglo neighbourhood, yes, in those days.

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

BD: The pubs.

**SR: What about for the women or the women went to the pubs too?**

BD: Well, not really. My mother certainly never went. I mean, she wasn't a drinker so she didn't drink at home or in the pubs. No, women generally didn't go to the pub.

**SR: So was there a social focus?**

BD: For women?

**SR: Or anywhere.**

BD: Well, for the men it was certainly the pubs. For the women it was home, like visiting each other's home and church, I suppose, for women who were in the church, who were involved with churches.

**SR: Were a lot of women involved in church? Your mum wasn't, was she?**

46.02 BD: She wasn't but I couldn't say, I wasn't aware of a real churchgoing culture, put it that way.

**SR: Was it a safe neighbourhood?**

BD: Yes, except that there were some gangs around, there were gangs.

**SR: What sort of gangs?**

BD: Teenagers.

**SR: Bodgies?**

BD: Bodgies, I suppose, yes, and the Murphy kids next door were pretty rough.

**SR: What was a bodgie?**

BD: Well, Johnny O'Keefe was a bit of a bodgie. You know, they had that sort of slicked hair, right, usually brushed back hairstyle. And what did they wear? They wore these sort of jerkin things, I think – or maybe that was only Johnny O'Keefe. What did the bodgies wear? They wore jackets, leather jackets, I think.

**SR: Did they have pointy shoes?**

BD: Yes, pointy shoes, yes.

**SR: And I always imagine them having these stovepipe pants - - -**

BD: Yes.

**SR: - - - really tight. I keep thinking of the Silver Bodgie. And what did they do?**

BD: The gangs or the bodgies?

**SR: The bodgies or the gangs?**

BD: The bodgies, yes.

**SR: Or were the gangs bodgies?**

BD: I don't think so.

**SR: And did the bodgies have widgies? Weren't the women called - - -**

BD: The bodgies and widgies, yes. I don't know whether I was too young to be really aware of it - and they rode motorbikes too - yes, I can't remember being very aware of that.

47.58

There was a sort of criminal element, maybe a petty criminal element in Newtown at the time and for example there was Ern McQuillan's Gym which was a boxing place and that was on King Street and you could go - my father took me there a couple of times for some reason. And you'd go upstairs, these really narrow sort of smelly stairs and there'd be these guys and there was a boxing ring up there and there'd be guys training and boxing and punching and all that and in my vague memories of all that there was something a bit suss about it all. I had the feeling - could have been wrong - that there was a kind of criminal element around the joint and that some of the kids I went to school with ended up getting into trouble with the police but my memories are as vague as that, I can't remember particular kids, just vaguely, but basically I'd say a safe neighbourhood.

**SR: Were there many break and enters and things like that?**

BD: No, no, it was pretty safe. I mean you'd certainly leave your front door open, especially if it was hot.

**SR: When you were home?**

BD: Yes, yes, when you were home, yes.

**SR: If you went out would you lock the place up?**

BD: Well, you'd close the front door. I can't remember how it locked but you'd probably leave the back door unlocked in case someone forgot the key sort of thing; security wasn't a big issue.

**SR: Were there any drugs around, addicts?**

BD: I don't remember, no, don't remember any drugs.

**SR: Were there people you were told to avoid?**

BD: Well, we were encouraged to avoid the Murphys next door because they were such a rough lot. I think it was seven brothers, I think so, and they were noisy and sort they'd punish each other in strange ways.

50.05 Like I remember they'd sort of stick each other's head down the toilet and pull the chain and horrible things like that.

**SR: Gosh.**

BD: Yes, so we were encouraged to avoid them and we did, we did, yes.

**SR: And did you know any widgeys?**

BD: No.

**SR: I wonder what they looked like; I wonder what their uniform was.**

BD: Don't know.

**SR: Were there any sort of local characters, either eccentrics or colourful local racing identities as the saying goes, just were there any people that stood out or stand out in your memory?**

BD: Not really. Bea Miles I remember and I ran into her one day and that's about it.

**SR: In Newtown?**

BD: Newtown or City Road or somewhere between Newtown and the city.

**SR: And what was your encounter with her?**

BD: She was getting in or out of a taxi or something and she had grotty old sandshoes on and looked pretty grotty and had lots of layers of clothing on and I don't think I realised at the times who she was and later talking probably to my parents or someone they said "Oh, that's Bea Miles" so they obviously knew who she was.

**SR: Did everybody know who she was?**

BD: Yes, I'm sure they did. She's the only local sort of, yes, really well known character I can remember.

**SR: What were the main businesses in the area in Newtown?**

52.10 BD: I can't really remember. There were lots of pubs, if you'd consider that a business.

**SR: Did they have six o'clock closing then?**

BD: Yes.

**SR: What can you remember about that?**

BD: Just that all the factory workers would sort of get up there as soon as possible, realising they had to get all their drinking done by six.

**SR: Didn't they open again after though, they shut for an hour and then they opened again in the evening?**

BD: I don't remember that.

**SR: I think it was to force them to go home for dinner. Maybe your dad never got out again after.**

BD: Yes, don't know.

**SR: Would he generally be home in the evening?**

BD: Yes, oh yes. I think he only – Friday night was his drinking night and he'd usually come home a bit under the weather and they'd always go drinking after the running on Saturday and I suspect he probably had a drink some other days after work.

**SR: But he'd generally be home after six?**

BD: Before that because they'd start work, like factory workers would start at seven or seven thirty and work till maybe three o'clock or three thirty so, yes, he'd generally be home well and truly by say five o'clock.

**SR: If you went to make major purchases where would the family buy big items like white goods or stuff like that?**

BD: That would have been further up King Street, heading towards the city because there were lots of big places, big stores like Brennan's I remember was a big, big place which was near the Elizabethan Theatre, the old Elizabethan Theatre.

54.09 **SR: Did you go to the theatre much with family?**

BD: No, no, but I'll always remember going to the Elizabethan Theatre because that was my introduction to the theatre which was a show called the Tintookies, yes, which was these huge puppets, string puppets, and we were taken there from school. I'm sure I wouldn't have been more than five or six or seven so it would have probably been at kindergarten or first class but I distinctly remember these big sort of grotesque rather sort of ungainly puppets called the Tintookies and they did this sort of comedy show and it was in the Elizabethan Theatre and I was fascinated because it was the first live theatre that I'd seen was a puppet show.

**SR: Did you go to the movies and things like that on Saturday afternoons or was that not an event?**

BD: Yes, no, we went to the pictures. We went to the Hub, Newtown or the Odeon in Enmore Road, they were the two local cinemas.

**SR: Did you go Saturday or Sunday or something?**

BD: Saturday afternoon.

**SR: When you went running or something?**

BD: Well, that's right, yes, yes, and sometimes we'd go Saturday night. Like if it was a big film, sort of family film like Ben Hur or one of those big - - -

**SR: Ten Commandments?**

BD: Maybe, yes, the blockbusters, they'd be sort of Saturday night family entertainment or a cowboy show, you know, High Noon or something.

**SR: And your mum and dad would go to that?**

BD: We'd be taken along, yes, but not every Saturday.

**SR: Was it an expensive thing to do, to go to the movies?**

BD: Gee, I don't know. I remember it being something like a shilling but what that meant in those days. It might have been - so you'd have a shilling to get in and maybe thruppence to spend but I don't know whether that was a lot of money. It couldn't have been a lot of money because my parents wouldn't have been able to afford it.

56.16 **SR: What songs can you remember from the time?**

BD: Songs from those early days?

**SR: That were popular.**

BD: Popular songs. 'I'm forever blowing bubbles'. You know that one?

**SR: No.**

BD: (sings) Don't know that one? Oh, gee. Don't know why that came to me.

**SR: What about jokes and riddles and things that kids would do?**

BD: Yes, look, there were heaps. I've got a bad memory for jokes but anyway, yes.

**SR: What about tricks? Were there any tricks that you'd play on people?**

BD: We weren't very naughty kids. What sort of tricks were there? I can't remember. I mean, look, the naughtiest things we did would be things like throwing stones at an old lady's roof or something. Really, it was nothing nastier than that.

**SR: What about rituals and things? You know how like till a few years ago we had Cracker Night but there were a lot of things like Wattle Day and Arbour Day and - - -**

BD: Empire Day.

58.00 **SR: Yes, what would happen on those sort of occasions, how would they be celebrated?**

BD: Not much that I can remember.

**SR: Can you remember any flag raising ceremonies or, you know, when I say "rituals", patriotic kind of things, was there any kind of that?**

BD: I remember dancing around the maypole.

**SR: Really?**

BD: Oh, yes, at school, that was a school thing.

**SR: What would you do – maypoles?**

BD: Yes, a maypole with the long ribbons, right, the long coloured ribbons and you'd run around, holding these ribbons and they'd get all twisted up, all the coloured ribbons and then you'd run the other way to music and unwind them all. So you'd wind in and out. Do you know how it works?

SR: **No. I thought it was a medieval something.**

BD: No, I can remember doing that.

SR: **And what was that part of, PE or something?**

BD: What was it called? Well, you had dancing, like regularly, that sort of dance. Maypole, I think it was called maypole dancing and Morris dancing and stuff like that.

SR: **Really?**

BD: Yes.

SR: **They'd have bells on your knees or something with Morris?**

BD: I don't know if we went as far as the bells but we had that sort of line dancing thing, yes, as kids. And I'm pretty sure that on Empire Day, the old Commonwealth Day, we would have done, there would have been something like that where parents would be invited to the school and there'd be 'God save the Queen' and dancing around the maypole and maybe kids would read a poem or two and there'd be some patriotic speech about how wonderful the empire was and stuff like that, yes.

60.07 JR: **Did the adults dance too?**

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## **Tape 2 Side 1**

SR: **This is tape 2 of the interview with Brendan Doyle, 5th of May 1995. We were talking about jokes. What were the big issues of the time when you were growing up?**

BD: You mean social issues?

SR: **Yes, in the news.**

BD: I seem to remember there were a lot of strikes, strikes and industrial problems, yes, like with the wharfies for example, on the waterfront.

SR: **And can you remember your parents discussing the strikes and whose side they were on?**

BD: Well, my mother basically wasn't interested and hardly read the newspapers, actually. Dad would talk about – because, I mean, he'd read the newspapers every day so he'd talk about what he was reading and – yes, what was your question, whether he talked about strikes?

**SR: Yes. Well, whose side were they on when all the industrial action was happening?**

**BD:** Yes. Well, dad was basically on the side of the unions, certainly his own union, which was the Metalworkers which was very big and powerful.

**SR: Can you remember any big crimes that happened at that time that were big headlines?**

**BD:** No, I can't. You mean during the '50s?

**SR: M'mm.**

**BD:** Yes. No, I really can't. Big crimes?

**SR: You know how we were talking about rituals before, can you remember any other sort of ritualistic things that happened, what people did? Well, what'd you do on Cracker Night?**

62.05 **BD:** Right, that sort of ritual. Well, yes, Cracker Night was a big ritual. We'd have a huge bonfire in the back street, yes, not in a park or someone's backyard but just in the middle of the street, huge piles of, God, everything.

**SR: And all the kids in the neighbourhood would put it together, would they?**

**BD:** Oh, yes, yes, and the fathers would help, yes. It would be a huge bonfire.

**SR: Where would you get all the stuff to put on it or what would you put on it?**

**BD:** You'd sort of be collecting it from weeks before. You'd have sort of fruit boxes and bits of timber and old fencing and whatever had been demolished over the last twelve months you'd burn on Cracker Night. Huge blazes.

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

**BD:** Christmas, yes. Christmas first and then Cracker Night, I'd say, for kids.

**SR: And what would you do Christmas Day, what would that be like for you?**

**BD:** Very traditional. We'd have a real Christmas tree, of course, and the kids would wake up incredibly early, crack of dawn. Of course, middle of summer so you'd be up at four thirty or five, as soon as it got light, yes, and opening stockings and the stockings would be full of little nicknacks and then we'd get pretty good presents like might get a bike or a scooter or, I don't know, I got an air rifle one year.

**SR: Where would you shoot it?**

**BD:** You'd shoot lizards in the backyard or you'd put matchboxes on the fence and shoot matchboxes.

64.12 **SR: What smells can you remember, what did Newtown smell like in the '50s?**

**BD:** Well, I can remember smells at school, the smell of chalk. If I walk into a classroom – of course, a lot of classrooms don't use chalk any more but at that time that was a very, very strong, evocative smell for me. Frangipanis, yes, that's a

strong – there's still a lot of frangipani trees. Yes, that's the one, isn't it, with the beautiful white – yes, that to me is a very sort of inner city Newtown smell.

**SR: Was it more polluted then than it is now?**

BD: Well, not from cars because there weren't many but I'm sure there was some pretty heavy industrial pollution. Like down at St Peters there were the brick pits, the brickworks, and I guess those big chimneys must have belched out quite a lot of smoke so there would have been a lot of – and in winter, of course, people had coal fires so that was fairly polluting.

**SR: Can you remember it being grey and smoggy looking or can you remember blue skies?**

BD: Mainly blue skies I would say, yes, in the early '50s anyway.

**SR: What sounds do you remember?**

66.03 BD: Gee, not a lot of sounds, really. Birds, sparrows and pigeons basically, and starlings, the odd car coming down station street. We could hear the trains and the trams, you could hear them quite clearly because Station Streets only like one back from King Street with all the trams coming along there. They're the main ones.

**SR: What image comes to your mind when you think of that time?**

BD: You mean in general?

**SR: If you think back was there a sort of picture of something?**

BD: The trams going along King Street was a fairly strong image because, well, as kids we had to cross that like to get to school so it was fairly dangerous, you had to be pretty careful about not getting hit by a tram, and we used to put pennies on the tram track and flatten them out. Yes, so that's a fairly strong image.

**SR: What were common childhood illnesses at that time?**

BD: Well, there was polio was still a problem.

**SR: Did you know anybody who's got it?**

BD: Yes, one of the little kids in our street had polio.

**SR: Did they survive?**

BD: M'mm, but he had to have a thing on his leg or both legs.

**SR: Calipers?**

BD: I don't know what they were called.

**SR: Metal things?**

BD: Yes, metal rods, peg legs.

**SR: Did he get better?**



68.01 BD: I don't remember. I just remember distinctly now a kid getting these things on his legs.

SR: **Can you remember people being afraid of that or was it unlikely that you'd get it?**

BD: It was taken seriously, yes, yes, because people would talk about getting polio and, "Oh, the poor kid with polio". Otherwise it was the usual common things, chicken pox and measles, mumps. Yes, I don't remember any other like major illnesses.

SR: **Can you remember any deaths?**

BD: Yes. A little kid around in the back street – I think it was called Campbell Street but I'm not sure – was hit by a semi-trailer. It was an awful accident because someone, one of the blokes out in the back street was a semi-trailer driver and he kept it parked in the street and I can't remember how it happened but a little kid somehow managed to get under the wheels of a semi and was killed. That's the only death I can remember that was like close by.

SR: **Can you remember any of the politicians of the day?**

BD: I remember Menzies, of course; he was like the main figure throughout the '50s. I can't even remember who was the Labor – I guess it was Evatt for some of the '50s. Menzies was the dominating figure.

SR: **Can you remember the Queen visiting?**

BD: M'mm.

70.00 SR: **Tell us about that.**

BD: That would have been – was it '54 or '56? Maybe it was '54.

SR: **I think it was 4.**

BD: O.K, so I was about five, yes. Yes, I can remember we were taken out to the Domain area, Lady Macquarie's Chair, around there, and we all lined up and waved flags and she went past in some big car. That was about it.

SR: **Were you excited about her coming out?**

BD: Oh yes, it was a big deal. Yes, it was.

SR: **What were the most exciting highlights of your childhood?**

BD: Well, that was one of them, actually. Like the Queen's visit was really big. I mean, people talked about it for a long time before it happened and it was almost like someone coming from another planet because people didn't travel much in those days. I mean, O.K, my mother came out from Scotland and other people had sort of emigrated earlier on but she never went back and people didn't generally go back to Britain if they'd come from Britain, so you didn't travel. So for someone to come out all that way from England to see us here in the colonies was a big deal and of course the whole kind of pomp and circumstance aspect of it was pretty impressive to a kid, you know, to have people wearing crowns and lots of jewellery and horses and stuff like that.

**SR: Did you talk about it at school beforehand?**

BD: Oh, God, yes, it was a huge thing. The other big thing was the Olympics, '56 Olympics, you know, first Olympics in Australia and my father was carrying a torch and that was a big thing.

**SR: Yes.**

71.58 BD: And there were big concerts in the stadium but of course they were a bit later, I guess.

**SR: Concerts?**

BD: Yes.

**SR: Who?**

BD: The Beatles performed in Sydney Stadium.

**SR: Did you see them?**

BD: Yes, yes, but that was - - -

**SR: Where's the Stadium?**

BD: You know White City tennis courts?

**SR: Yes.**

BD: It was down there - it's been demolished – it was Rushcutters Bay.

**SR: Gee, that must have been exciting.**

BD: Oh, it was incredibly exciting. I can't remember – was it '64 or – no, it was quite a bit later but like big concerts happened in the Stadium, so Johnny O'Keefe. Don't know whether Buddy Holly ever came out – he might have – but there were big rock and roll concerts there.

**SR: And when did you start going to rock and roll concerts, what age?**

BD: The Beatles was the first; I think was the only big one. Yes, otherwise it was on television, you'd see the singers on TV.

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

BD: Not from the '50s, no.

**SR: What did you know of the world outside your local area?**

BD: Not a lot. You mean west of Sydney?

**SR: Or even outside your neighbourhood and then even say internationally. What were you aware of outside your area, Newtown, or Station Street?**

74.03 BD: Outside of Station Street, yes. Not a lot. I mean, as I said, we went down as far as Sydenham via the stormwater channels and things, drains, but that was like a really big expedition. And, yes, other places. We'd get the tram to the beach sometimes, Coogee Beach or Bronte Beach.

**SR: Was that with your father or with your family or with just your friends?**

BD: Well, initially it would have been with the family although we usually went by car. I can remember the other place we used to go a lot was Nielsen Park and we'd drive there, yes. So I was sort of a bit familiar with the beaches and with the inner city. Hardly ever went to the North Shore for example and we wouldn't go – well, Picnic Point, so that's as far as we'd go sort of west but never travelled any further than that.

**SR: And were you aware of any big news events? I mean, what was going on? Well, there was the Korean War, I don't know when. It was the beginnings of the '50s, wasn't it?**

BD: M'mm.

**SR: Can you remember any – I don't know what happened in the world in the 1950s.**

BD: Well, there was the Korean War but it certainly didn't stick out, doesn't stick out in my memory ..... yes.

**SR: Well, getting back to more domestic life, what was your mother's working day like?**

BD: Well, pretty dull, I'd say, basically because she'd start by making the kids breakfast, making breakfast.

**SR: What time would she get up?**

76.02 BD: Oh, six thirty, somewhere between six and seven, probably depending on whether it was summer or winter.

**SR: Would she make your father breakfast for him?**

BD: For sure, yes.

**SR: Would you sit down to breakfast, all of the family?**

BD: No, not usually because dad would – I'm pretty sure he started work at seven so like he'd be leaving home about six thirty and we didn't have breakfast that early. So she'd make his breakfast and then there'd be a second round for the kids.

**SR: And what would you have for breakfast?**

BD: We had cereal. I'm trying to think what sort. Probably, yes, I think we had Cornflakes and Weetbix, things like that and Vegemite on toast, yes, and on the weekend, Sunday morning we might have poached eggs or boiled eggs. And then depending on the day she'd do the washing but I think she only washed – I'm pretty sure she only washed once a week and that would have been Monday because there was a big copper out in the laundry and she'd have to heat the water for the copper and boil the sheets because you boiled sheets in those days, you had to use boiling water for some reason. And that would take most of Monday, like washing would take most of Monday by the time you washed it and then rinse it and then wring it with a hand wringer and hang it out on the line and bring it in and fold it and iron it; it was like a big deal, washing day. Other days

what would she do? She'd go shopping, probably in the morning, I'd say, shopping and knitting, talking to neighbours.

78.06 She made us some clothes, I remember, a little bit of sewing, cleaning the house, that was about it – talking to neighbours.

**SR: And then in the evenings, you were talking about you have your evening meals and you'd listen to the radio, you mentioned before board games.**

**BD:** Play board games.

**SR: With your sister?**

**BD:** Mainly the kids, yes, things like Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Monopoly. What else? There were lots of games came out.

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

**BD:** Probably the holidays up at Pretty Beach or Woy Woy was another place because the house would be right near the beach and it was just like total freedom, it seemed to me, and you could just spend the day between swimming and fishing and paddling and eating and getting sunburnt, terribly sunburnt. I suppose they would have been probably the happiest times.

**SR: What's your saddest memory?**

**BD:** Isn't that funny? I can't think of a really sad memory. Maybe when – we were pretty close to the family, the Portas family on one side and when Mr Portas died that was pretty sad for some reason. I can't remember quite why. I think it's just because we spent a lot of time with them and sort of fairly close but I was only little so it didn't mean a lot to me but I don't remember losing any close relatives, that sort of thing, no.

80.23 **SR: O.K. Is there anything you want to say, anything I haven't asked?**

**BD:** Probably not; pretty complete there. No, nothing really. Some of the games we played, there were other games we played like hidings and chasings and that was all around the neighbourhood and cricket and football in the street. We always had scooters and bikes and things with wheels on them. And playing in the park, we just spent endless hours playing in Salmon Park over the road which had swings and trees and sort of things to climb on and tunnels to go through and we just seemed to spend – it was sort of fantasy, lots of fantasy games.

**SR: With the kids from the neighbourhood?**

**BD:** Yes.

**SR: What about this girl whose father was the funeral director? Did you ever go and see his business?**

**BD:** No, I don't think we ever went to a funeral parlour, no, but there was something a bit creepy about visiting the Keelers for that reason, something a bit strange about her dad, someone who was a funeral director, yes.

**SR: Did they live above the shop or anything like that?**

BD: No, no, they didn't. They had a very nice house. He must have done quite well because they had a large house, not a twelve foot frontage like us, they had probably a twenty four foot frontage and bigger house and they got television as soon as it came to Australia and things like that.

SR: **O.K, well, thank you very much.**

**Interview ends**