

WHITEHORSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Name of Interviewees: Elaine Hewson of 1/83 Surrey Road, North Blackburn
Marie Bartlett of 159 Surrey Road, North Blackburn
Merle Boucher of 2/35 Rialton Avenue, North Blackburn

Name of Interviewer: Louise Williams

Date of Recording of Interview: 21st November 2019

Focus of the Interview:

Growing up and living in North Blackburn from the 1940s to the present day. Both Elaine and Marie have lived in the suburb from early childhood and Merle came in 1960 as a new bride.

L: Thank you for coming to do this [interview]. I'm going to start with you, Elaine. Can you tell me about your early years and where did you grow up?

E: I grew up, before I came here, in Charlton in Victoria and we came here when I was eight in 1949, on the 18th of August which was my brother's birthday (laughs), that's how I know it [the date we came here] to a house that was built immediately post war with many restrictions on the size it could have and it was a weatherboard base around the house with, I don't know what you'd call it, fibreglass or something around the top half of it and a couple of tiny rooms at the back: tiny because of the restrictions in size allowed at the time, I think it was built in 'forty five.

L: Where was the house?

E: Here, this spot here. [83 Surrey Road, North Blackburn] And, so when my father died in 1970 I was already married living temporarily in Donvale and we bought the property here back [from her mother] so apart from the first five years after marriage, I've lived here since '49 and had our children here. We eventually extended the house to fit the kids and built mum's house at the back---

L: When did you build that?

E: Soon after dad died, I think it was '72 and so lived here all that time until recently. [In 2018 the old home and Elaine's mother's house were demolished and 7 townhouses were built on the block by one of her sons who is a builder. Elaine now lives in one of these townhouses].

L: Right, and what did your parents do?

E: My father was a grocery manager of different grocery shops around the place and mum was a stay at home mum.

L: Why did they come to North Blackburn?

E: They came to Blackburn, they came to Melbourne because the dairy farm he was sharing with his brother wasn't enough for two families to live on after the war so mum had been a city girl and was keen to come back to Melbourne so I think that was their motivation.

L: Did they have friends here or ----

E: Family, mum's family and dad's family

L: In Melbourne?

E: Yes,

L: But what about in Blackburn, why did they choose Blackburn?

E: Oh, apparently mum tells me it was a decision to be made about whether dad would purchase a grocery store and they would, you know, perhaps get something cheap or rent in a home or buy a house and he'd work for other companies which is what he decided to do in the end and with advice from his brother in law, so they were pleased they had made that decision so I think affordability was quite a lot of it, we were out in the sticks by then, (laughs), and dad was able to get a war service loan because of his war service so that made it possible.

L: So did he work in a grocery store round here?

E: Yes, he worked for Nancarrow's which was a chain at the time in various of their stores. He was usually called on to help put out fires, you know, help troubled stores.

L: And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

E: One brother and one sister, one younger brother, a year younger who was in Marie's year at school and a sister who's five years younger.

L: And they were all born in Charlton?

E: Yes, in Charlton, so Kay was three, Geoff was seven and I was eight.

L: So you remember moving here quite well?

E: Yes, I do, I do remember it. We had three house blocks of virgin bush that side (No.s 85-89] which was a great place to play as kids and the first day that we moved in I remember a lady in Deane Street came over with I think a cake or something in a welcome. There was an old house this side [No. 81] and three down to the Junction Road corner. Mr and Mrs Kite lived next door, they had a telephone! If we couldn't go over the road to the phone box to make a phone call, they'd let us ring up on their phone if we needed to, (laughs).

L: So was that telephone box where the telephone post is now, outside our house, [No.82]?

E: No, it was over that way (points towards Springfield Road end).

L: (laughs) Just wondered if they'd kept the same connection but put a post in!

E: No, it was just opposite and up the hill.

L: Oh, right, ok, I'll come back to your further memories in a minute. I'll just go to Marie now, so you grew up here too?

Ma: I came when I was seven to live here but before that mum and dad had been building our house for a few years at weekends.

L: Oh, right, where was that?

Ma: We lived in South Yarra, we rented in South Yarra in a little cottage built in 1830 something or another and then we moved out here when the house was about half finished. The lounge room window was boarded up, the front door was boarded up there were no plaster in the kitchen or the lounge room so that when we were having meals the sparrows used to be flying around (L & E laugh)---

L: And where was the house?

Ma: The house is the one I live in still-- [159 Surrey Road, Blackburn].

L: Oh, ok, right

Ma: And we didn't have the lounge room window or the front door because at that time they had improved valuation rating system for the council, so if you did anything to the front of the house, it put the rates up; that was a very good incentive for mum and dad not to do anything until that rating system was changed (L and E laugh)---

L: So no front door?

Ma: No front door, everybody used to come down the drive and through the back door. Mum and dad bought the land after it was pegged after the war, the government restricted the pricing of land and they paid a hundred and fifty pounds for the block of land which is like three hundred dollars now. There were gum trees either side of Surrey Road at the time, sealed in the centre with metal edges like a country road---

E: This end wasn't sealed, sorry to interrupt, this end wasn't sealed

Ma: Wasn't it? Oh, well I don't remember that because I remember more up to Springfield Road. We didn't have footpaths on our side of the road and our 'nature strip' was an area where my younger brother and I played marbles like as if it was a golf course, you'd have holes in the thing and you'd shoot your marble from beside the edge of one hole to the next hole like on a golf course, (E laughs)---

L: 'Cos there weren't many cars?

Ma: No (laughs)

E: We'd walk up the middle of the road, always

L: Did people have animals, like horses, or anything like that on Surrey Road?

Ma: Not near us in Surrey Road but the land had been orchard country where I am (159 Surrey Road), it was still orchards up this end [near Junction Road], weren't there?(looking at E who indicated yes), but the land was undulating from where they'd taken the trees out and they hadn't flattened it.

E: Talking of horses, okay for me to butt in?

L: Yeah, yeah, fine---

E: I had a friend who lived down beyond where the freeway is now, past the creek, [Koonung Creek], who had a horse and she would, I suppose agist it, I didn't know the word then, in behind my block, between my house and Devon Drive, it was all open paddock and the horse was there and a couple of times I rode it. Once, it bucked so much that I hung on but I don't think I ever got on it again!

L: It didn't endear you to horses!

E: Well, I loved horses, I drove mum and dad crazy when we first came here wanting a horse, and as I understood it, the council's idea was to put a road in along from Junction Road to Springfield Road in the back of all our blocks but they would have had to take a little section off everyone's house block but there was too much, people against that so that's when they put the courts up (unintelligible due L saying 'Ohh' over E's words) to Junction Road so it was lovely to have that paddock there and I had a girlfriend in Devon Drive, we'd just run across to each other, call out to each other.

L: So how many houses were there on Surrey Road in the 1940s and early '50s?

E: In my memory, I'm probably this side of Springfield Road and [Marie], you're the other side (laughs). In my memory from the creek up, I don't think there were any houses. There was Alan Cox's property [corner of Junction and Surrey Roads] and that was like a farm full of blackberries down near the creek, which we made the most of! And then on the corner, this near corner of Junction Road, [nearest] to our house, the Stevens, Val and Berne Stevens and their son Darryl who was a friend of Kaye's.

A funny story about those two is that when it came time for them to go to Kinder, Geoff and I didn't ever go to Kindergarten but they had the opportunity to go to Kindergarten in Blackburn, I think, near the library, and one day, because we didn't have a car, mum certainly couldn't drive, I don't know quite how they got to Kinder, I've forgotten, perhaps Mrs Stevens took them but in the middle of the session they both arrived home! They'd walked home from Kinder, across Whitehorse Road together, (L expresses shock), they'd had enough of Kinder so they turned up at home! (L laughs), We didn't have a telephone that we could have been rung, I don't know the whole story but---

L: How was your mother ? (laughs)

E: She didn't know they were walking til they got home (laughs) and then she [was] relieved, so that was a funny story they told us.

L: And did they have a reason for coming home early?

E: Oh, I don't remember, I don't know, I think they just wanted to, they knew where to go---

L: Like the child who comes home and says, "Well, that's school finished, mum! Done it now!" (L, E, Ma & Me laugh).

E: Yes, so you were asking me [about houses in Surrey Road]. There was that house and then with the Stevens, Bern Stevens' parents lived in the next house this way and is there another, that's where the brick house is, the Smiths, and then Mrs Kite lived next door to us, she was the one with the phone.

MARIE BARTLETT

159 Surrey Rd Nth Blackburn.

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L: And all the blocks on this side of Surrey Road are very long, were they always that big?

E: Yes, they were. As I say, the original idea was to put a road at the back - was good for us, we loved being able to be[play] there.

L: And what about the other side of Springfield Road, what's your memory, (question directed at Marie), going up to Whitehorse Road?

Ma: To Whitehorse Road, there were more older homes on the other side of Surrey Road. There was a poultry farm near where the One Community Church is now. It had three blocks of land that faced Surrey Road and a lot of land behind it and behind the existing homes as well with pens and so forth and I used to work there on a Saturday morning and it was two shillings an hour to do work and my younger brother worked over there testing the eggs that were in the incubator to see which were fertile and which were not. He put a light on each of them and he did that for quite a number of years. Mum wasn't all that keen for me to be working because you carried like a kerosene tin, a big one, filled with either wheat or water to take to the various pens

L: And she thought that was too heavy?

Ma: And she thought that was too heavy for me. They had two blocks that were sort of house and garden and then a third one that was a lawn tennis court along Surrey Road and a lot of the kids in the area would gather on the tennis court in summer nights and play British Bulldog or Stick Cricket or sometimes tennis with old racquets that had been strung up because they had holes in them, you know, it was the old gut and the older girls from that house, the Taylor girls, probably didn't want those anymore so they were put out and we were allowed to use those. We had quite a gathering of kids who all arrived to play together on that lawn tennis court. The other thing that happened in that house, their son was called David. David was a redhead with an awful temper and he'd blow his stack over almost anything - most of the kids would go home but I'd be there because I was as placid as placid, didn't ever worry me. If he was in anybody else's home nearby and it was lunch time or tea time or his mother wanted him, she'd stand in the back door and blow a whistle (Ma, L, E & Me all laugh), and off David would run. (More laughter).

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E: That reminds me----

Ma: But this side the houses were mainly built after the war but on this side one, two, three houses this side of me, that is one of the old homes in your--- there were two houses near the State school, one 3 blocks from me and one near Springfield Road which was later moved to become the current childcare centre over Springfield Road on the other side.

L: 106 is the Slater home isn't it? The Slaters lived at 106 Surrey Road, I think I read---

Ma: That's further down that way a bit, I'm 159---

L: You're across Springfield Road---

Ma: Yes, I live near Fir Street, you know where the bus stop is, on the way to the school. There was another Slater who lived in Larch Street and he used to have a horse and dray and go to the Blue Moon Case Factory and get the, outside remains of all the trees and load it up on his thing [dray] as long lengths and sell it for firewood. Mum and dad used to buy that for the copper for the fire. My dad had had a heart attack before we actually moved to Blackburn so he wasn't allowed to chop the wood and Keith [Marie's brother] and I got the job of using the old bushman's saw to chop it into lengths---

L: Keith was your brother?

Ma: Yes, and if we didn't do it, I can still remember mum boiling up the old copper using this timber and stepping over it. There were all sorts of long lengths.

L: So did your dad work?

Ma: Yeah, my dad did office work.

L: In the city or---

Ma: Around various parts. He worked for MacRobertson's Chocolate at one stage, another job was at Mobileco – a farm equipment company who were opposite the current Whitehorse Civic Centre, then he finished up working in Blackburn for Mr Zerbe who had an engineering place in Ashburn Place.

L: Ok, and your mum stayed at home.

Ma: Mum was a stay at home person.

L: Ok, alright, so, Merle, you were saying you didn't come here til nineteen--?

Me: I was married in fifty eight, I came from Pascoe Vale South and in fifty nine we bought a block of land in Beaumaris but because my mother had passed away when I was seventeen, and I was in Pascoe Vale looking after dad, I said I didn't want to stay in that area so we had friends living in Blackburn so we bought the land here, [35 Rialton Avenue], and didn't move in until about 1960, I already had Leanne and then I had the twins at the end of sixty one and well there was, Pastellas had built a lot of the weatherboard houses in the estate down the end of Rialton Avenue but there was three blocks of land up near Junction Road so we got one too so there was three young brides and we all started off together then. It was pretty rugged, we had no houses behind us or anything and of course we had the fires in nineteen sixty one, in January wasn't it?

L: Ooh, what fires?

Me: Oh, there was fires at Mitcham and all of that and bushfires and that, and I can remember Jim and Rob and that all went off to fight some of the fires at Christmas Hills, the twins were just babies, and of course nothing at the back, we could see flames at Mitcham---

L: Wow!

E: I just don't remember this

Me: Don't you?

E: I know in Warrandyte it got bad—

Me: It come through Pound Bend and so I can remember, I was just saying to someone this morning, we had ash in our bath and that had all come in, it was pretty scary. We had no phone and I had no car so , Jim was at work, it was scary. But when they eventually built a house at the back, as Elaine said, these blocks were deep and our blocks in Rialton Avenue were a hundred and sixty feet deep or something so the courts behind us---- so yes, we moved in in July 1961 and I was five

months pregnant at the time and we didn't ever realise that Junction Road went right through because it was just a dirt track and gum trees and (L laughs), and Cox's had the, you know, the orchard. It was lovely and they had the horses 'cos as the kids grew up all- and further along in Junction Road, the Ericsons had a farm there too—

E: Yes, yes...

Me: You remember, just near Slater Avenue---

E: Yes, yes...

Me: So we sort of settled there and here I still am! But, look, my husband was in road contracting, so because it was so wet that July, it poured when we moved in, and you know clay and that, it was just slush, so Jim got a couple of truck loads of crushed rock and we put it through, next door up to Junction Road---

E: Oh, did you? You made the road!

Me: The only thing is, because I had the three of them in the pram, Mr Cox used to let us cut through his property and out into Surrey Road. I used to have to walk down to Blackburn to the, you know the,

E: supermarket, health centre?

Me: Well, the, yeah – the health centre. Sister Padgham was down there and yes so it was pretty rugged in those days and but it sort of developed over the years and now we're in a sort of prime area, I suppose----

L: So was it seen as cheap land?

Me: Well, the thing was, 'cos Jim come from Elwood and because we put a deposit on a block of land at Beaumaris, that was seventeen hundred pound, which was a lot of money, well, that's why I said to him, we didn't have it, we were paying it off, so we bought the block of land here, it was eight hundred pound so we started----

L: And all three of you, what do you remember as like the infrastructure, so was there public transport, were there schools, were there-----?

Ma: The bus running along---

E: There was a bus, yes---

Ma: Ventura buses used to run along---

L: From Surrey Road?

Ma & E: To take you to the station---

L: What did the train station look like?

Ma: There's a photo in the book [Blackburn A Picturesque History by Robin Da Costa].

L: (laughs). Was it an old fashioned railway station?

Me: Yes, and the gates and we used to have the man in a small cottage near the crossing who opened the gates---

L: 'Cos there wasn't a roundabout, was there then?

E & Ma: No, no--

Me: And my dad, when we first moved in we had nothing, but dad had been a painter and decorator and my husband brought him out of a morning and I'd cut his lunch. He painted our bedroom and our bathroom and our kitchen so that we moved in, [to a nicely painted house]. [w/ remember]hen the kids were getting a little bit older and there was all the orchard on the corner and dad would come out on the train and he'd get the bus and the kids could wait at the door and sort of see papa get off the bus, "He's coming! He's coming!" so it was very open, you know, so---

L: And what about schools and churches, shops? Marie, would you like to--?

Ma: We went to the state school, Elaine her brother and sister and I, Blackburn State---

L: Oh, right, what about primary school?

Ma & E: That was the primary---

L: Oh, Blackburn Primary, sorry, which was on the corner of Surrey and—

E: You're pointing the wrong way, dear! (laughs), Whitehorse Road and still is---

L: (laughs) Yeah, okay. Is that the only primary school?

E: Yes—

Ma: Yes, I think so, at that stage

E: Yes, pretty sure that's true—

Ma: There was a Methodist Church in Railway Road---

E: Near the Blue Moon

Ma: Yeah, near the Blue Moon with a tennis court beside it

E: A little prefab building—

Ma: There was the Anglican Church, St John's but it was only very small, it had five pews on one side and eight on the other and the population was starting to grow because it was post war and there wasn't sufficient room in the church for the kids and the parents to be in the service at the same time so there was a church service, a proper church service, for the children and then we'd go off to Sunday School and the adults would have their church service – pity help you [as a child] if you were late! (E & L laugh) because Mr Miller the minister would stop the service and tell you off! (E & L gasp and laugh).

L: And where was St John's Anglican Church?

Ma: It's in Queen Street [Blackburn] where it still is and on Albert Street and Whitehorse Road where the Nissan car place is, that was the Church of Christ that later moved up into Surrey Road. My older brother who is thirteen years older than me, took me to church with him. The minister there was introducing him as, "This is Mr Bartlett and his daughter, Marie", which I found hilarious (E & L laugh), and David came home furious and I don't think I was taken back there.

L: And where did you go to church, Elaine?

E: To the Methodist one in Railway Road---

L: All through your childhood?

E: Yes, well, when we first came here, then, my dad was very involved with the church and what year did we start the church in Koonung Road? [Looking at Marie].

Ma: The church was closed in Railway Road and we went down to the corner of Gardener Street and The Avenue---

E: I didn't, so ----

Ma: Oh, didn't you?

E: Oh, The Avenue, yes, for the youth

Ma: Where the Methodist Church was---

E: But about the same time as, I think, they were buying land at Koonung Road, 1956 or something, wasn't it?

Me: Bernie Store would know about that, wouldn't he?

L: So the 1950s? Right and that's where ----

E: I've got a little book about it [Koonung Uniting Church, North Blackburn]---

Ma: I went to the youth group at the Methodist Church at the corner of Gardenia and The Avenue and then when North Blackburn started I went up to the youth group here----

E: Because that church was Pressy Church [Presbyterian] but before union---

Ma: Well, The Avenue as it is now was the Pressy on the corner of Blackburn Road and The Avenue and the Methodist was on the next corner, Gardenia

L: The Avenue Church and then they joined?

Ma: They joined before union, before the others did---

E: I was in the youth group at the old Methodist one up there, up at the other corner. I never went to the Pressy one, must've been when I started nursing.

Ma: Yeah, well I didn't go to the Pressy one, I only went to the Methodist one.

E: Oh, ok--

L: Pressy being Presbyterian?

E & Ma: Yes, (laughs)

L: (laughs), right, just to make that clear

E: Got to get the lingo right!

Ma: And then North Blackburn church was opened and I came up with another girlfriend called Lyndsay. Lyndsay and I went to school together, primary school, and she lived in Springfield Road.

L: So that was more convenient in many ways?

Ma: Yes, I suppose it was nearer.

E: There were a lot of earthworks went on for that building to go up and originally that was just a little prefab—

L: Oh, was it?

E: -church with absolutely booming Sunday School, I forget the figures, I'll have to get the book—

L: Well, they had good, a strong tennis club and football?

E: Yes, eventually, but as Marie said, young people were coming into the area, so all a new suburb and they just flooded in.

Ma: You went to church early because if you didn't you knew you wouldn't get a seat.

L: And that was a good way to meet people?

E: Yes, it was social

L: Social as well as faith? And what other buildings were going up at the time, so we're talking mid to late fifties to early sixties?

E: Mostly housing, can we remember when the shops went up on the corner [Springfield and Surrey Roads]? because I worked there when I was sixteen in the chemist's shop (Elaine counts aloud to work out the likely year), so this is fifty seven---

L: So that was the corner of Springfield and Surrey?

E: Yep.

L: Okay, so what shops were there, so chemist?

E: Chemist,

Me: They were on the corner, there was Nancarrow's, that was a grocer, a hardware, a fruit and vegetable and a hairdresser.

E: It wasn't a self serve grocer, was it?

Me: They were called(.....) for many years, a sort of cash and carry or something, can't remember the name of it but she worked there for years. Bernie Storer worked in the hardware---

E: Hardware! That's right and was the hairdresser (.....)?

Me: Yes, I used to go there right on the corner near the doctor's there, ----

E: Where the hairdresser is now—

Me: Probably.

E: A funny thing, mum tells the story about I worked on a Saturday morning at the chemist shop and it was while I still at school and apparently after some period of time the chemist said he was going to increase my wage and I must've said to him, I don't remember this, (laughs), he told mum later, I said to him, " Oh, that's alright, you give me enough"! (Everyone laughs).

L: So which shop is now what was the chemist shop?

E: I'm guessing p'raps the third from the corner, I would guess it was a milk bar and then Mr Lewis---

L: Haig's [Hahndorf's] Chocolates, what was that?

Me: Over the other side? Hahndorf's was a haberdashery and the post office was next to a fish and chip shop---

L: Oh, is that why the letterbox is there?

Me: Yes, a post office and ---

L: A beauty salon or hairdresser or something?

Me: Yes, there was a hairdresser there too where we used to go too--

L: And so the milk bar on the corner was where the pizza shop is?

Me: Yes on the other side, yes---

E: Where Bardot is ---

L: Where Bardot is now? Okay---

Me: Mr Lewis was very mean 'cos my kids used to go up there and wanted this lolly and that lolly in a little bag and he was very terse and he's say, "Hurry up and make up your mind!" (laughter)

Ma: There was also the other milk bar that's still there in Surrey Road-near the corner of Springfield Road----

E: It's a hairdresser, now [Arose]

L: That was a milk bar when we came here [1993].

Ma: You know down on the corner of Railway Road and Chapel Street, there's this sort of triangular building. That was---

E: You mean opposite the post office?

Ma: Yeah, opposite the post office, that was owned by Moores and it was a fruit shop.

E: Was it?

Me: Yes, I used to walk down there with the twins and there was a butcher---

Ma: Then there was Mr Pryor

Me: A butcher and a greengrocer. I used to go down there with the twins in the pram and he would deliver them [her purchases] back home and put them right on your bench.

Ma: So Mr Moore owned that milk bar up here. The other thing that, you know where the childcare place is, that actual house was moved from beside the old milk bar in Surrey Road -

L: Which child care, sorry?

Ma: The child care that's just down Surrey Road toward Springfield Road on the right hand side [118 Surrey Road], that was an old home that was moved from beside the old milk bar in Surrey Road, it was an old house---

E: As was the house opposite me now [No.90]---

L: I heard that was the stationmaster's house [Blackburn Railway Station]?

E: Oh, I don't know but it was moved from, not sure, but from just up the road, maybe the other side of the road---

L: Why would they do that?

E: Oh, maybe they wanted the land up there for something else---

L: And the house was worth preserving.

E: But there were lemon orchards here, weren't there?

Ma: On the other side of the road.

E: Yes, immediately opposite us when we first came here, yes, there was open paddocks, before Bernie and Merri got the land and built, there was a dam in there and we used to fly kites because it was a little bit, um—

L: **Oh, wow—**

E: --undulating, you know, and---

L: **Oh, I'm getting a great picture—**

Me: There was a dam on the corner of our property too, next door, nearer Junction Road, that's why I still can't grow anything there 'cos it's still so clayey because that was part of the orchards and that so we had a dam there and I can remember when the people, she was a Merle too, living on the other side of me, they built a Fairlane home but they had to go down deeper for their foundations because of the dampness so we were fortunate, we were alright.

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L: **And do you remember what was at number 82 Surrey Road?[Interviewer's home].**

E: This, they changed the numbers because when we came here it was seventy seven and so I don't know why they changed the numbers much later.

L: **Seventy seven? So it went from odd to even [from 77 to 82].**

E: No, it's eighty three now. [Interviewer misunderstood Elaine]

L: **I know but, oh, where I live, at 82 Surrey Road?**

E: Yeah, yeah

L: **Do you remember what was there?**

E: No, oh, I think it would have been open land

L: **Because they built [the house at no. 82 Surrey Road] in fifty seven.**

E: Yes, because opposite Junction Road there was nothing, remember they had a, I don't know what you call it, a metal sort of screen thing around the corner to protect the nature strip, the corner, I suppose, from cars or something going round, it was just a tube, a metal tube and I with my girlfriends would use it like

a monkey bar, you know, be upside down, can't imagine the poppy show I would have shown [refers to showing her underwear as she hung upside down] (L laughs), and, yeah, there was nothing around.

L: So even all those streets behind, they weren't there?

E: Behind who?

L: Behind us [82 Surrey Road], so Peter Avenue and Sheila---

E: At the very beginning they weren't, it was almost, from my memory, it almost open land down to the creek.

L: Wow, Okay. And when did it all start getting developed then, in the fifties and sixties?

Me: Yes, probably the fifties, late fifties, early sixties.

Ma: I mean, I can remember ---

Me: The Stapletons used to live on the corner there, do you remember?

E: Yes, Mrs Stapleton, two boys, their son who was deaf, and when the Olympic Games were on they were the only ones that had a television around here and so all the kids went, sat on their back lawn with the television coming out the window, so you could see the Olympic Games.

L: Excellent! And what were you going to say, Marie?

Ma: I can remember deliberately leaving home to go out to get lost (E & L laugh), on a number of occasions. We didn't ever manage to do it but like it was just so semi rural, and just, you could go anywhere. We had to give mum some idea of where we were headed, but you know, we were home for lunch and home for dinner and that was all that mattered.

L: So was the creek an important place to go, was that a good place?

Ma: Oh, yes.

E: It was for me.

Ma: You're talking of this creek [Koonung], there's the other creek runs along the back of Cootamundra Walk, you know there's a creek there? Well, the creek was across Surrey Road, it's in a barrel drain now and it's a narrow bridge there, just a two lane bridge which is also mentioned in the book [Blackburn A Picturesque History by Robin Da Costa], but I can remember being under there one day and I saw a snake! (laughter), I didn't go back again, (laughter).

L: But you went to Koonung Creek?(looking at Elaine)

E: Yes, and—

Me: It was very rural and open, wasn't it?

E: Pretty bushy as well and have I got a memory of a pig farm, somewhere?

Ma: I don't know about a pig farm.

E: There was something further up past the creek, but anyway, we'd go up and we'd do a lot of bike hiking with my friends and we'd be allowed to go anywhere on our bikes as long as we (.....) and if we went up Junction Road, in the early days, there was a place, I can't identify it, but almost up to Springvale Road, that had an old house on it and we all were terrified. It was very brave of us if we rode our bikes past this house where there was some sort of bogey man (laughter), yes, so, that was a very rough road, Junction Road, to ride on—

L: Unsealed?

E: Yes.

L: And Surrey Road, when did that get sealed?

E: I don't know—

Ma: It was done in a few different times.

E: I think so. It was unsealed when we came, this part of it, anyway

Ma: Bluestone guttering, you know, like, in old country towns—

L: It was like that?

Ma: It was like that when we first came.

L: And you were saying there were trees down the middle.

Ma: No, either side.

L: Either side.

Ma: But gum trees, not the council trees that are here now and then they were felled on our side of the road and they were still on the other side of the road for quite a number of years and eventually they were felled too. There was a lady, do you know Cootamundra Crescent?

L: Yes, goes around. [in a curve].

Ma: She lived almost on the corner there in Surrey Road, a widow, who was a Pentecostal lady and used to travel on the train down to Richmond to her church but she was always out for wood. I can remember her with her barrow out collecting the big logs from the gum trees, taking them home and if you happened to meet her she would always praise God and all these sorts of comments that were unusual for me hearing at the time.

L: Yes, of course. We were talking before about all the different shops, so what happened when North Blackburn Square opened, well, it wasn't called that then, was it? What was it called?

E: Old Orchard—

Ma: Old Orchard because it was built on the orchards

L: Yes, and that was built in 19--? [1967]

Me: I went to the opening.

L: Did you?

E: Did you?

Me: Johnny Farnham was singing there.

E: Oh, was he?

Me: Leanne [Merle's daughter] was about nine, I suppose, so they'd just had their sixtieth anniversary, haven't they, so long ago, a couple of years ago, yeah, we were there for the opening, a big deal.

L: And was it a big deal?

Me: Yes, it was, there was a lot of people there.

L: Sounds like it might have been more convenient.

Me: ... probably. It was in our area the first sort of complex that we had, you know, with shops altogether.

L: Exactly, everything was altogether, so it was easier

Me: Shopping was quite different.

L: So everything was altogether, so as a mother with young children that would have made life much easier.

Me: Mm, it was good.

Ma: The family across the road from me had five children, there were two boys, a girl who was my age and then two more and the boys were always telling us, "Don't go to the orchard because Mr Pearce has got a gun and he'll shoot you if you try to get the fruit off the trees!"

L: This is the chap that owned the land before the shopping centre was built?

Ma: Yes, so it was always, "You don't go there!" How true it was, I don't know!

L: And Mr Pearce, did he own the land that the high school was built on? [Blackburn High School]

Ma: Yeah. Mum used to go up there to get windfall apples with her basket and she'd walk from home and get a basket full of apples with, you know, marks on them for two shillings and then come home. The other thing, Marilyn from across the road and I would go after school down to the Blue Moon Case Factory and go into where they were sorting the apples- lines of women packing the apples and the ones that had marks would come off the end of the conveyor belt and fall into a box and you

could help yourself to apples or pears. She would go quite frequently and get the basket on her bike filled and take it home. They had a lot of stewed fruit and custard for sweets. (laughter)

L: All very nutritious and fresh.

Ma: That's right, a cheap way of doing things as well.

44.43

E: I didn't know about that—

Ma: Yeah, well, we did it a lot—

E: Would that have been when you were—

Ma: At primary school

E: At primary school?

Ma: Yeah.

E: You're just that much further up and in a way, I suppose, dad used to bring our groceries home, wouldn't have been fruit, mum used to walk up to Blackburn to get the rest of the shopping.

Ma: Did you go down to Michael's Fruiterer? It was at the roundabout in Blackburn.

E: I don't remember, (..... indistinct comment)

L: When was the roundabout built? 1970s?

Ma: Perhaps. I don't remember particularly but I know I started going there and shopping when mum died and then my dad died just a couple of years after and I'd still be going to Michael's Fruiterer and apologising because I wasn't buying all that much (laughter)—

E: What year did your mum and dad die?

Ma: Mum died in seventy four and dad died in seventy seven and I can still remember apologising because I wasn't buying very much. Michael said, "Don't worry,

you buy more fruit and veg than some families do." 'Cos he'd known both my mum and dad, that's right.

L: And what did you do if you wanted to buy clothes or appliances, where did you go?

Me: You'd have to go into town and we'd go to Darrod's or..... Bon Marche or Foy's.

L: And you'd go into Melbourne?

Me: Yes, but I can remember there used to be a few, what d'you call them, hawkers used to come round. I can remember once when there was another Merle, June and I and we were all pregnant at the same time, and this fellow sort of came to the door and he was selling flannelette sheets and o' course, me, being quite naïve, said to him, "Ah, I don't need them, I'm hot in bed!" (loud laughter). Well, he sort of had his tail off [=tail between his legs, embarrassed], and went to get them, so if you had anything like that, we had time payment, you know, sort of thing, you didn't ---

E: Laybys

Me: Laybys. I didn't, the children's eiderdowns, I think, I don't know who they were from, probably Love's Stores or something and you didn't get them until you'd paid for them, yep, you know, perhaps fortnightly.

L: I remember that system too.

Ma: The carpet shop in South Parade, Hoskings, started as a furniture store and Bob Hoskings' dad owned it first. Bob was working under [my] dad at Mobil Co which was a farm machinery business opposite where the Whitehorse Civic Centre is now and because dad had worked with Bob, mum and dad bought their first refrigerator from Mr Hosking.

L: So you would go into Melbourne CBD to one of the big stores?[to buy big items and clothing]

Me: Well, me having twins in the double pram, the only way I could get into the city, I didn't do it too often, was go in the guard's van [of the train] because you couldn't get your pram in old red rattlers, you see, so we didn't often go there.

L: So that was the only way to furnish your house?

Me: Oh, basically, yes, well, Hoskings was there. I think we had some lino [linoleum floor covering] put down and that was before King Street was developed. My cousin used to live there and she used to babysit the Hoskings' kids and so I got to know the father and that in those days, you know.

E: Talking of clothing, et cetera, Camberwell was another place.

Me: Yes, Camberwell,

(Some interference with recording due to tea things being moved around on the coffee table).

L: People made their own [clothes]?

Me: Made the kids' overcoats, [her husband] Jim's shirts, I did everything, knitting, I did.

Ma: I mean, I worked, so you'd see people knitting on the train all the time.

L: It's coming back a little bit, I know a few people of my generation who are into knitting and crocheting.

E: It was kind of automatically a necessity—

Ma: Yes, that's right

(indistinct comments)

L: So after primary school, did you go to Blackburn High School, Marie?

Ma: No, it wasn't open [it opened in 1956]

E: My sister went [who was] four years younger, went into the first intake.

Ma: Blackburn State became Blackburn Central for a couple of years and I went into Form One, like Year Seven,

E: So did I.

Ma:the Central, Form Two, Year Eight was the start of Nunawading High at Blackburn State School. We were the oldest form going through to Nunawading and we didn't go to the actual school until halfway through Form Three. [Nunawading High School opened in 1955 on Mahoneys & Canterbury Roads, Forest

Hill, eventually becoming Forest Hill Secondary College]. So I came home from school for lunch every day and quite often I'd bring another girlfriend or somebody with me – mum never knew who would be (L laughs) coming home for lunch.

L: And did you go to Blackburn High, Elaine?

E: No, no I also went to Blackburn Central, its first year, in Form Seven [One] and then I went to Camberwell Girls on the train, rode my bike to leave it at a girlfriend's place at the station and got on the train.

L: So how long did it take you to get to school?

E: Oh, I don't know, just as long as it took, the bike, then the train and you had to walk from East Camberwell Station to the school, so probably another quarter of an hour.

L: So you had to get up pretty early?

E: (laughs), Yes!

L: We can stop for a minute. (Recording resumes whilst discussing changes the women have witnessed during their lives in the Blackburn area):

Ma: As a family, we sat in the kitchen round the table in the centre of the room and mum and dad'd be sitting there saying, "Isn't this a quiet country road, just lovely!" (laughter). If they were alive today and saw the bumper to bumper traffic in Surrey Road they would not believe it.

L: So, what are the major changes that you've seen, Elaine?

E: The physical changes to the suburb? Well, the suburbanising of it (laughs at her words), I suppose you would say, with the traffic. When you think back to it, our mothers didn't drive, we didn't even have a car, dad didn't have a car when we first came and now that's unheard of really so it's just the degree of car ownership that's made a big difference with that the roads talk about the freeway going ahead and ----

L: What did you think when they said they were going to extend the freeway, get rid of all that pasture and grass?

E: Yeah, I think we're probably quite pleased (laughs)

Me: The thing was, I know when we bought the land they told us, you know, in perhaps twenty years that the freeway would be coming through, well it was forty years because it opened in 1997 and so everything was going to happen but I find now that there's no more sort of houses on a block of land, it's all units or apartments and all that, that's the biggest thing. As soon as someone passes on or sells up, there's two or three storeys going up and the kids play outside anymore, do they, they're all on their phones. Box Hill has changed and it's forever changing and it's creeping out here now to Blackburn and to Doncaster and all that, all the high rises, it's just amazing.

L: What do you think of the development on the corner of Whitehorse and Surrey [Roads], so where the old Leader Newspapers were and then opposite there?

Ma: That will be really interesting to see how the apartments which replace the police station on the corner of Surrey Road and Whitehorse Road will deal with the traffic. How on earth the cars will get in and out of that building when it is finally built.

L: I agree. Have you seen the cars queueing to get into Blackburn Primary School, so you just don't go down there at three thirty in the afternoon---

Ma: In Surrey Road? Yeah, well I was coming back and there was somebody trying to do a right hand turn into the school as all the cars were trying to come out, you can imagine what that did!

L: And what about the other site? That was a jam factory, is that right, originally? Cottees?3.18

Ma: Before then it was a poultry farm. There was a mulberry tree there that the kids would go across the road from the school and get the grubs on the mulberry tree at different times.

L: So what was Whitehorse Road like in those days?

Ma: Oh, narrow, two, three lanes, that was all there was, not three lanes on either side, three lanes and we hadn't been here all that long and there was a train strike and my mum had to go to a doctor's appointment down in Prahran and no trains so she decided she would thumb a lift (laughter), which if you'd known my mum that wasn't sort of part of her scene at all and she got herself a lift by thumbing a lift while standing on Whitehorse Road (more laughter) –

E: Did she get it [a lift]?

Ma: Yeah, she managed to get down there and back home.

L: Mm. When did the jam factory go?

E: It was there when I was at primary school, it was there for a long time.

Ma: I can remember climbing over it at primary school when it was being built—

E: The most delicious smells came.....

Ma: Oh, yes---

L: Could you buy jam from there?

Ma: No, you didn't go there to buy it.

E: It was just a beautiful aroma.

L: And so then it closed and became the newspaper?

E: The Leader [The Leader Newspaper Group].

Ma: And then they did some building works and built the Leader there and later knocked down that, your grandchildren were watching when they were knocking that down

E: Were they?

Ma: Yeah, you took one of the boys down to see the machinery, the bulldozers.

E: I took?

Ma: Yeah, (laughter)

L: And now they're building apartments.

Ma: Well, they haven't started, they've got a sales room there to sell it off

L: That's right, they can't build til they've sold enough, I think they're going to put some shops as well or offices or something, but I can't imagine why anyone would want to live there.

E: But it's got an access to Railway Parade [Road]

Ma: Yes, the access will be Railway Road, not Whitehorse Road

L: I often wondered why they never extended Surrey Road across Whitehorse Road through that ---

Ma: Piece of land!

E: So do we all!

Me: We've all said that over the years.

L: It would have made sense, wouldn't it?

Me: Get rid of that dog leg, wouldn't it?

E: Yes

Ma: The fellow we were talking about that had the bike shop, Mr Robbie, he often would write articles in the local paper about acquiring the land to put the road through, of course it never happened, no.

L: And what do you think about them lowering the railway line under the road there?

Ma: Ah, that's made a tremendous difference.

E: It's really good

Me: It's a good thing.

Ma: Both here and at Middleborough Road and further up.

L: Nunawading, yeah, yes. So you were saying before as children you played outside and you could go lots of places. Did you play any sports or were there sporting clubs or?

E: Yes, well I wasn't a sporty one (laughs), my brother was in the footy and tennis and I had a bit of a hit with tennis but I wasn't all that good.

L: 'Cos I remember hearing---

E: School sports--

L: --yes, there were lots of sporting activities.

Ma: I wasn't into sport (L laughs) until I retired.

E: But as far as you might be hearing about the church when it was new, as you said, before, it had the basketball team and the cricket team and the footy team—

Ma: and the tennis

E: the tennis team

L: And didn't Winston [Elaine's husband], used to take tennis at what was Blackburn Technical College that's now Old Orchard Primary School?

E: Yes, yes that was right.

Me: I played there and my girls, Narelle did anyway, she played tennis there and they won the banner one year and they played inter school sports—

L: With the church?

Me: With the church, yes, but it was the courts behind the tech school for social tennis.

L: Did you know anyone who went to the Tech School?

Ma: I did at night school, I did Ladies Woodwork Class for three years in a row. (L laughs).

L: What did you make?

Ma: I started with a cutting board with a Laminex top and then I made a shadow box to put little ornaments in and then I made a footstool with a lid that opened that I could put, you know, hand work stuff in with cabriole legs on it and then I went

to making two bookcases to sit either side of my fireplace in the lounge room. When I first said I was going, my mother said, "Oh, you won't be able to manage that!" (L laughs), so after three years, mum's saying to me, "if you go back to that class, you're not bringing anything else into this house!" (laughter).

L: Were there many other girls doing it?

Ma: It was a ladies class, yeah. There was some beautiful work done, they were learning French polishing as well as normal woodworking. One lady made a half round table that was beautiful. It did have cabriole legs on it and she French polished it as well and it was just lovely.

E: Well, Darryl [Elaine's son], went to the Tech School, it was his choice –

L: What did he do there?

E: You know, as a high school [student].

L: So did that lead to an apprenticeship straightaway or?

E: He did Year Twelve at Swinburne and then went to RMIT to do his degree in building construction management. He chose, the three girls [her daughters], were at the high school, [Blackburn High], but he wanted to go to the Tech School so—

L: And what was the High School like in those days, in the sixties?

E: Yeah, we were very happy with it, very happy with it.

L: What do you think of it now, have you been for a walk around or had a look through?

E: No, I haven't been for a walk around it, I haven't been in the grounds, oh, except when I voted, oh, it's progressed, I suppose, I don't hear how it is.

Me: It always was a good music school

10.29 E: Well, you had a lot to do with that—

L: We did, yes, we did. We were there at a very good period when we were there, not 'cos we were there, but it just happened---

E: Do you get the feeling that it's still a good school?

L: I think it's still a good school but I think the whole emphasis has changed, I don't think it's as community minded as it was, which is a shame but it used to have links to the tennis club, [Koonung Park TC], and other things, I don't think it's, yeah, but I think that's the nature of a lot of state schools, high schools.

Ma: One of the things you might be interested in is when I was at primary school one of the girls in my class could borrow a horse that was kept behind the Blackburn Hotel and you'd get it and it'd be saddled and harnessed and we would take it down to Blackburn Lake and ride it there although none of us could ride properly and there were no paths or anything. It was just bushland around the lake and my younger brother had a friend in his class who lived in Lake Road and they'd go swimming there and then they'd go to Tony's home afterwards to have a shower before he came home— You couldn't imagine swimming in it now.

L: No, no.

E: Back along Junction Road, about where the school, the Catholic church is, roughly, there was a dam, this was in my childhood—

L: Before they [the church and school] were built?

E: Mmm, yes, oh, yes and all the houses and things. There were a lot of pine trees around there and we would go down to the dam with a bit of string with a bit of meat on it and catch yabbies. Dad would cook them in the copper in the laundry and---

Me: Further down of course, there was the pony club there for years too and they had horses down the end of Junction Road before they had the freeway. They had the pony club there before all those houses were built down there.

L: Because I remember before they built the extension, we'd just come to Blackburn and we'd walk along where they built the freeway. Am I right in remembering there were people growing vegetables and plants, or was it just horses?

Ma: Well the community garden was ---

L: Yes, but actually where the freeway is now, we used to walk along there and I remember seeing horses and I'm sure I saw people growing things, no, perhaps not?

E: I don't get down there so much ---

L: What do you think of the walk along the freeway now? Have you been along there?

Me: I just walked along there the other week and I was quite, haven't done it for ages, I was quite impressed with all the bits of garden that people have done along there---

L: That's lovely, that's one man, apparently.

E: He started it, yes, it's lovely.

L: I think they did a good job with the walk---

E: Oh, yes, it's creeping further each end [the plantings along the path]

L: Yes, yeah, but even right along the creek and if you go across the bridge there's a big open area, it's like you're in the bush, it's lovely—

E: Yes, it is nice. Not so much now, but I used to take my grandchildren down there, over the freeway, the other side of the freeway and go 'rock climbing' up the rocks (laughter) and I'd hold my breath, I'd think [to myself] it's good for them to be stretching themselves! (more laughter). And so it was a very pleasant place to be. I think they've done wonderfully well with the freeway, the planting and you know, the amenities generally.

L: And it's like anything growing, it takes a while for it to actually establish.

E: Oh, yes, that's right.

L: Just one other question. When you were at school here, so primary school, did they talk much about the area or the history of it, or any, the first people or even just first settlers?

E: I've no memory [of that].

Ma: I can always remember ANZAC Day, you know, returned soldiers would come to the school and talk about Gallipoli but I had no understanding until I saw the film ['Gallipoli']. So it didn't do any good for me!

L: So no one talked about the local area or--?

Ma: Yeah, at high school they talked about the meaning of Nunawading at one stage, that it meant 'ceremonial grounds', but I haven't heard that in later life, whether that's right, I don't know.

L: There's a café just opened in Diana Drive called 'Battle' and it's apparently because Nunawading means 'ceremonial ground' but also 'negotiating between the tribes' so they would often 'battle' to work out their differences.

Ma: Oh, right.

L: (laughs) I only learnt that recently. Well, it's nice that it's not a massacre ground which is what I thought it might be or—

E: I know, when you ask, I didn't hear any history of the first people in the area at school, it wasn't talked about.

Ma: We did a lot of Australian history but really the First Fleet coming and--

E: European history

L: The white history, yeah.

Ma: Yeah.

L: Yeah, sure, no, that's what I would expect. And no one knows why Surrey Road is called Surrey Road?

Ma: No.

L: No? I can't find out.

Ma: Did you know that there was a stock route sign on the corner of and Springfield Road and Surrey Road? That along Springfield Road was the stock route and on the corner, before the shops were built, looking from here (83 Surrey Road) the southwest corner was an orchid farm---

E: Where Bardot pizza

Ma: The Munts used to live there at one stage—

E: The who?

Ma: The Munts, I think it's M U N T S,

Ma: It was an orchid farm.

E: I don't remember that.

Ma: There's a fellow who's now got advanced Alzheimers who used to live further down Surrey Road towards the school, [Blackburn Primary School], he was born at the house and he knew the Munts and he'd tell me the history, you know, some years back then, 'cos he's a bit older than I am. I wouldn't refer you to him simply because of his dementia.

L: Well, that leads nicely into whether there's anyone else I could talk to---

End of Interview.