



Allen George

Doreen Maher

Depression Resilience

Transcript

I really enjoyed this interview, Allen. You're right to sub-title it Resilience. Mrs Maher emerges as an extremely resilient woman. Her memories of the Depression are a fascinating account of hardship, & deprivation and yet, are affected, not. The description of the almost (in retrospect) idyllic year at Suna Bay is classic! The detailed descriptions of building the bank hut, subsistence living, dance, cooperation - and yet the sadness of farewell - seeing her father returning to Newcastle on his bike to work, are almost cinematic. It's said that every one's life contains the material for a novel. Mrs. Maher's life with the Suna Bay episode, the family's work experiences of the B.H.P., the new life in the Cape Shop - her amusing anecdotes about running a hotel in war-time ~~and~~ is such a life. You've interviewed her well. It does all seem like one long breathless sentence - but when I listen to the tape - there is obvious sentence structure. You should talk to me about your obvious strength - intelligent good voice & your apparent weaknesses - in English language & what can be done about them. I really enjoyed the material.

G.
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Summary Not well organised. You should not refer to "Dad" in the summary. However a useful summary of an interesting interview.

3/5

Tape Good laid back interviewing. Careful for hearing trouble (time) with her name, you interview Mrs. Maher with sensitivity & obvious interest. A talent for this Allen! Thought of radio? VNUK-FM was good training course.

4/5

Paper ... A very thorough paper Allen - longer than it needs to be. The typing/spelling is excellent, but your expression has improved. I still think you would benefit from doing a few sessions at the Individual Learning Centre at TAFE. You seem to have made a definite improvement through the year.

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I, DOREEN MAHER give my
permission to ALLEN GEORGE

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research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of
these if required) and for copies to be lodged in
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Signed Doreen Maher

Date 6-10-89

Interviewer Allen George

Doreen Maher (nee White) turned sixty eight this year, 1989, having had her childhood effected and life formed by the Great Depression of 1929-1933. Her father, the sole supporter of the family, was retrenched from work leaving the family of three children and pregnant wife without an income. During a successful sales trip "Up North", a car accident incapacitated her father and led to the splitting up of her family. After his recovery, the family was re-united by a move to Swan Bay, where they took up residence in a Bark Humpy. As industry recovered, Dad obtained his former job and the family returned to Newcastle setting about rebuilding their lives as the economy improved. The effects of the depression however, remain with Doreen today.

Doreen was living with her family at New Lambton when the depression first effected her life. Father was one of the last Steel Machinists to be "laid off" from Walsh Island dockyards. He looked for work to support the family, selling Banner Hosiery door to door. The family could no longer afford to pay the rent on their dwelling, a common occurence in Newcastle, though a deal was made with the landlord for the tenants comening "up keep" of the property. The elder brother had to finish school for the bus fare could not be afforded. Their father was a proud man and believed he could help the family, thus upholding his duty as bread winner, without having to resort to the Dole. He viewed this assistance as charity, which was undignified to receive. The pressure of not having enough food, that was accustomed in times of employment, forced the decission to lower pride and dignity and apply for the Dole. However this did not stop him from seeking ways to earn a living.

Returning from a sucessful sales trip "Up north", Doreen's father was involved in a car crash. With father incapacitated, mother about to have a baby, the family split up. The children were sent to live

with relatives while dad recuperated. This period Doreen remembers as probably the worst time in her life. It was the first time she had been separated from her mother. Doreen's family were the only ones affected by the depression and this caused some tension within the extended family, who were recruited to give support. This situation caused a lot of trauma and strife within the family and proved to be an unhappy time for all. A letter to old friends solved their problems.

The family was re-united when they moved to a property at Swan Bay on Port Stephens, north of Newcastle. Their old friends, the Lilley family, owned land there. Scattered over the holdings were Bark Humpies used by miners. The family moved into one while they built a new one from trees and leftovers from an abandoned brickworks. Doreen attended the local school and learnt to become a "bush kid". They lived there for twelve months, with aid from the Lilley family who had another six families living on the property as well. This period Doreen remembers as the best time of her life and a real adventure.

As the economy recovered so did the family prospects. Doreen's father regained his position at the dockyards and "set himself up" for the family's return to the Newcastle suburb of East Mayfield. The eldest brother, after a long search, found employment. Doreen and the younger children returned to local schools and life was returning to normal. However, just as the family was regaining an economic foothold, their father lost the sight of one eye in an industrial accident. The compensation money gained was used to set-up a new family venture, The Popular Cake Shop, which proved to be very successful. The start for this success, Doreen believes, was the industrial accident. She wonders how they would have gotten on after the depression for a person on a straight wage would never have earned enough to get a house or start a business and women did not work, so she and her mother could not have supported the family as her brother

could not have done on a youths or juniors wage.

Doreen remembers the depression period as a time of hardships but not a particularly bad time. She learned that anything that came afterward was good for she had had bad to measure the good against. She feels the depression had a profound effect upon her life. It taught her not to be scared of taking a risk or working hard. She gained an inverted pride in herself. This helped her break out of the stereotype allotted to women in the days where women worked in the home or in the areas of employment set aside for them, not, as she did, on a grocery truck. Her experience of the depression taught her resilience.

GEORGE, Allen

Australian History

Tuesday 1p.m.-3p.m.

Regional History Project.

Interview with Doreen Maher (nee White).

Taped on 4 October 1989.

Topic Life in Newcastle during the Great Depression.

Title Depression resilience.

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
000	A.G.	I'm here today interviewing Doreen Maher, can you just give me your full name .
	D.M.	Doreen Maher, I was Doreen White .
	A.G.	And about how old are you?
	D.M.	I'm sixty eight next week.
	A.G.	Were here to discuss the depression and Doreen's memory of what happened, would you like to start off by telling us where you were born and where you grew up in Newcastle?
	D.M.	Yes, I've always lived in Newcastle, I was born at Stockton and by the time I was ten I'd lived in Islington and then we moved to New Lambton; it was at New Lambton I was at the depression time.
011	A.G.	At that time were you living with all your family?
	D.M.	Living with my family, I had a brother six years older than me and I had another younger brother and yes my mother was pregnant, I can remember that at the time and that was when my father was out of work, he use he was a steel machinist at what we call Walsh Island which is now classed as the Dockyard and he was a steel Machinist and he worked there until he was one of the very last Machinists to be layed off and then he was out of work and that gave him a husband and wife with three children and another baby coming and they didn't own their home.
020	A.G.	They were renting it at the time?
	D.M.	Yes, they didn't own one even then.
	A.G.	So, while he was working, times were getting bad, you saw that happening all around you?

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
	<u>Counter</u>	
	D.M.	Well, I don't remember that of course, because I was only about, it started to get bad when I was six or seven. I don't remember that and I don't remember any problems until my father was actually out of work, I don't remember anything like that, but then after he was out of work I had a brother, who was fifteen, and he would have travelled from New Lambton into the Newcastle Boy's High school and he was quite a good student but he had to leave school because they just couldn't afford to pay the bus fare for him to come in he had to leave school and I can remember that, and I can remember my father trying to sell things, I think I was telling you that, and he went around trying to sell, there was goods called Banner Hosiery, it was womens stockings, and he would go around with a suitcase of that, selling that everywhere and, at those times, now you might go, well I've been here seventeen years, I've never had anyone knocking at my door selling anything but there would be someone at least once a day or every second day you would have someone coming around trying to sell you something, my mother tells me that, I can't
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		remember much of that, but, I also had friends whose parents made sweets, lollies, toffies and such things and sent their children out trying to sell them just to give them a little bit of something, and I had an aunt who's husband was the manager of Walsh Island and he had no problems with the depression, and she would always help anyone who came to the door if she, men would come to the door, to, if they could do anything little work, any little odd job, any thing
030		

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		just to get almost sometimes just to get a meal , and she would always give them a meal or sandwich and she had backwards and fowards and the story use to be if you were really good like that marked the gate so that the next fellow coming along, he would know that this was a good house, we'll go in here and at least get a meal, that was a well known story, whether that was right or not I don't know, but, my father was very proud, he'd always worked hard and he, he was never going to get the dole, he was never going to lower his pride, as he called it, to get the dole.
050	A.G.	Did he feel that it was his fault that he was going to be out of work or did he see it as ...
	D.M.	No. He didn't feel it was his fault, no, that was his personality, he didn't feel that it was his fault but he felt that he, there would be something he would be able to go to keep his family together, he wouldn't have to go and have charity as he called it.
	A.G.	So he didn't think of it as, sort of having payed into the government with tax that he was entitled...
	D.M.	No, he never felt like that, I don't remember tax being spoken of in those days, I don't remember whether he had ever payed tax much, I don't know whether tax was taken out of wages at that time , I wouldn't know, but he wasn't going to lower his dignity as he called it and he tried to do every possible thing he could to earn enough to keep everything together , but, finally when he had tried

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
060	D.M.	<p>everything and my mother was pregnant and I think she got quite hysterical about the fact that he'd come home and he'd w^ont something and why hav^en't the children got this, why hav^en't the children got that in the way of food and it wasn't there that he finally said, oh I can remember that, I can remember that as a thing where oh alright I'll lower my pride and I'll go and get the Dole and he and he went off to get the Dole and that was too, I felt it was to a local place somewhere at New Lambton and when he came back I remember him saying, " oh theres fellows there who shouldn't be getting it, they've got other type of work and they're not as bad off as he, so he was never, he never felt as badly about it after that and they had the Dole all the time. I can remember very pl^ane food, extremely pl^ane food such as syr^up, you didn't, I don't remember how the Dole was worked, I don't know whether they actually got money or whether they got docketts like we got in the wartime, I'm not quite sure, but anyway after that he then had a chance to go and sell mercery and drapery in the country with someone he knew, so they took a utility with a load of towels and such things and they went up into the country and they did two trips up there and they were doing fairly well and then they came home from up near Raymond Terrace and they turned the car over and he was hurt very badly and he went to hospital and my mother was just about to have this baby and she was renting a house, I think I told you that he was renting a house and he was a least two years behind</p>
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<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
080	D.M.	with his rent and he went to the landlord, he'd been renting the place quite a while, he went to the landlord and told him that he couldn't pay the rent and he was out of work and their attitude was, well your a good tenant, theirs nobody else who can pay it either so you might as well stay there, he felt badly about it but of course when he was hurt, at one stage they thought he was going to die and my mother was expecting the baby and through the family her brother came and said we have to do something, you cant stay here and we all just split up which was the thing that was terrible for me, I went to an aunt and my brother went to a different aunt and my mother and the boy went home to her mother .
088	A.G.	Was this all within the local region or far apart?
	D.M.	It was all within Newcastle but we were all split, we were all around the different areas and the family was, there was alot of trauma with it, alot of family strife, you know, the grandmother wouldn't allow different ones to come home on the weekend there was too many there and I couldn't go home to my mother and I was about nine and I can always remember that being dreadful and she had the new baby there and she was very unhappy, they just felt that they were, oh you know, a trouble to her mother, there was just them and other people there, tell me when you wont me to stop.
	A.G.	No, just keep going.
	D.M.	She was very unhappy, my father and the grandmother wern't very good friends and they were the only ones

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
100	D.M.	in the family actually of five girls and two boys that were really grown, adults, that were in this situation, none of the others, we had the worst of the depression out of the whole family.
	A.G.	Do you think that caused any problems, the fact that they were o.k. off and your family.
	D.M.	Not with the other families but it was just that they were there and yes it did cause a little bit of problem with some of the family and one sister I remember one aunt, the one I was with actually, said in an arguement, your home here worring ¹ the old people and all this sort of thing, dad went and got me and took me out, there was all sort of strife things, but anyway, finally, they were very unhappy there and they had these friends at Swan Bay at Port Stephens that they'd had for years and they'd had holidays there earlier and my grandmother had holidays there and they were oyster people and they had leases and they had big properties and they had cattle and gardens, and my mother wrote up and asked them, they had, they had these things called Bark Humpies that the min ^u rs use to use as weekenders and she wrote up and asked them could they possible come up there and stay for awhile untill dad got back at work and they were welcomed up there, and when we went there, there was about six other families.
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	A.G.	Before that, about how long was your father out of work?
	D.M.	Two years at that stage, two years before we went to Swan Bay.

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
120	A.G,	After the accident?
	D.M.	No, he was out of work for about eighteen months and then he had the accident and then they were about six months with the grandmother and then thats when they decidēd they would go to Swan Bay up to Port Stephens. Over the whole period he was three years or maybe three and a bit, but they went up to Port Stephens and they lived in this bark humpy , and he built his own there, he went out and the men showed him how to go out, I don't know if you'll wqnt that?
	A.G.	Yes, tell me all about it .
	D.M.	Well it was, it was, I've just been back to the hundred: years celebrations of the school, I was the only one who went to the school, My brother was, he would have been sixteen .
	A.G.	And that school was ?
130	D.M.	Mulwee School, it was, it should have been called Swan Bay but it was named an Aborigine name, Mulwee, and thats at Port Stephens, and I use to walk three miles to the school with the local children and felt very much the town kid and I was the only one going with shoes and socks on .
	A.G.	You were the real local.
	D.M.	Oh yes I was the local, I use to be running behind them crying because I couldn't keep up with them. I soon learn't to keep up with them and the next kid who came up I use to run ahead of him and leave him behind crying I suppose.

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
	A.G.	So your feet got toughened?
140	D.M.	Yes I got tough I got use , I got use to snakes, I got use to all those things, bush things, and you walked three and a half miles through bush to get to the school. It was a school that only had sixteen pupils from kindergarten up to sixth form, I was in six form and there was only two of us in six form , that was, we called it the Q.C. in those days and I think that that ment the Qualifying Certificate.
	A.G.	About how old were you then?
150	D.M.	I'd be just on to eleven almost eleven by then and that gave you your entrance to High School when you came back to Newcastle which I got up at that school but he had a school with sixteen on it and he had two blackboards, he was only about twenty, the man, I remember him very, I always remember him as a good teacher and he'd cut a blackboard down and have half in one class there and one class there and one class on there, then maybe the eldest girls, they'd be eleven, they would take the kindergarten out to here and it was a very big job for a young man out of school, out of college, but dad went out into the bush with my brother and they'd cut the bark around these big trees about, I suppose, eight or nine feet high and then they'd strip them off, strip the bark off in one big piece and it would be a curled up piece and then they'd lay it down they'd wet it, I imagine and it would be all flatten out and then they'd make the humpy with the bush timber, all nailed bush timber, no ceiling in it, it was just

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
160	D.M.	all these bush wood and all bush timber and then they'd put these, the bark on so that the inside you would have lovely shiny polished wood like the inside of the bark and the rough bit on the outside and then wire all that on .
	A.G.	Was it a triangular Tee-Pee shape (telephone interruption).
	D.M.	There was an old pipe works, not pipe works, brick works out into the bush away from where they were and it had gone broke and the attitude was well whatever you want, go and get it out of there it doesn't matter, it's not going, so dad went out and got a big, big bricks for the hearth and also got the iron for the roof and the house was very comfortable, the windows were pushed out with a stick, there was no glass in it.
170	A.G.	What sort of floor?
	D.M.	It was a wooden floor, we had a wooden floor in ours, most of the others had an earth floor, an earthen floor, but when you say an earthen floor it was so hard that you couldn't hardly get a dust pan and sweep up any dust, it was just hard baked floor, but it was, a little picket fence around it, it was really a pretty little place. I remember it quite clearly, we thought it was great, it was only two rooms, a bedroom, we had double beds and a cot (interruption) and a single bed out in the kitchen and you had a fireplace that you could actually step up into the fireplace and had a big rod accross with

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
180	D.M.	hanging all the hanging saucepans and such things in it but.
	A.G.	About how long did it take to build to get it together?
	D.M.	Oh I don't think he'd taken very long to build it. He probably built it within a month or a little more and added the veranda and all that to it after.
	A.G.	So were you staying in Newcastle while that was being done?
	D.M.	No. We were in one of the other, the older humpies there, we were next to them, then we built the big one, we built the better one, it was a better one, and anyway, now the family of Lilley's their name is, there still there, they are a very big family of
190		people there and they would give us milk, she had cows and she would give, she had about, I suppose she had about six families living there nearly all the while through the depression and she gave, they gave everyone milk, you'd go over and get your can of milk, and the boys, her boys, they were oystermen, but they also liked gardening and they'd all have these great huge gardens, when I say garden it would be as an ordinary lot, you know, great big gardens with pumpkins and stuff, so we always had plenty of pumpkin and potato and sometimes you would get oysters or fish, they'd go out fishing and you'd get fish, and they were a very a very good family, you were never made to feel as though you were poor people living off them, they made you very comfortable and we loved them very much, we always did, my mother did too

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
202	D.M.	and when it was all over, now before that, my father was able to get back to work through my uncle who was the manager down at Walsh Island, he was back, one of the first ones back at work, so he had no home, he had no money and he had, his furniture was stored still, most of it was still stored with the grandmother so he decided he'd come down to Newcastle and get himself established before he bought the family down .
210	A.G.	While you were still up at Port Stephens, you were saying, with the big gardens etc, did everyone staying there on the property did they all chip in together and do gardening around the place?
	D.M.	No. They didn't do the gardening. The gardening were these boys' hobbies and they just seemed to work at these themselves. No they didn't, they use to help with the oysters, they use to go down onto the wharfs, and if the families that were going out to get wood, I mean , my brother was sixteen and my father was very fit at that time and if ever the truck was going out to get wood for the families well they just automatically went, they just helped in every way they could, but they never helped with the gardening, the gardening was a hobby thing, they would help with firing and burning off stuff for them all that kind of thing to keep the place safe, they did all that.
222	A.G.	And what would an average meal perhaps be, can you

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
	A.G.	remember?
	D.M.	Oh yes. Well the average meal would be, well you always had plenty of vegetables I remember that, you would eat a fair bit of mince I suppose, mince meat, there was no slaughtering of cattle there was no anything like that, they would have to buy their meat, I can remember sausages, I certainly don't remember having chicken like we do. I grew up like most people my age alot of people my age, that chicken was a thing you had at Easter or Christmas.
231	A.G.	It was very expensive in those days.
	D.M.	To get chicken was something you get at Christmas or Easter. You never, it was a very special thing. Pork, I don't ever remember eating pork as a young girl. They had a few fruit trees around the place, very hard pears, I remember really hard pears, you use to eat all those things, but I don't remember getting apples and bananas, any of that type of thing you eat automatically now, but there was always plenty of milk, tomatoes we always use to get tomatoes and potatoes, mashed potatoes and I think you'd eat alot of sausages. I think we always ate alot of sausages, but apart from that I can't think. There was always cooking done. They use to hold dances, lots of dances at this boat shed as they called it and all the fishing nets were in the boat shed and everybody would go down and clean out all the fishing nets at the drop of a hat and they'd have a dance and they'd play an accordion and a violin and the people that had egg's, they were

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
250	D.M.	<p>other oystermen from around the other way, they all came on their boats to this dance and they came from everywhere and on horses too, over the hill, those women, I should say, who wern't on the dole would cook great sponges like this, they were great cooks and you'd remember the dances, the suppers at the dances were absolutely wonderful. I don't think we contributed anything, we, if we took anything we'd take sandwiches that were paste and that was a joke about the sandwiches and when they'd be handed around at the dance someone would say "Oh no, not paste again", you know paste, paste was anchovy or something was the cheapest thing you could put on, but the dances were great. Everybody danced , you'd go to this dance and I was ten years of age and I could do every dance, you'd call them Old Time dances now, I could do all of them at ten, and when they'd put a dance on, all the kids would get up just the same as the parents and you'd feel like, I suppose they'd felt like saying, all you kids get off so they could dance because it was crowded but,</p>
260	A.G.	<p>It sounds like alot of fun though.</p>
	D.M.	<p>It was good and they made beer, they made their own beer, they made a honey beer and there was alot of drinking, alot of drinking but very few people had cars, very few oh the two Lilley families had cars, but most people would walk home from the dances and it didn't matter how much you staggered and some of them had sulkies and horses , I can remember one thing</p>

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>	D.M.	<p>they did there one night that almost caused a great upset, a fight actually, was they took a horse and they put him on one side of the fence and put the sulkie on the other and harnsed him up with the fence you know the horse in between, I remember they did that, the men did that, they did all sorts of things like that with each other but there was a lot of drinking and, but, it was cheap drinking because they'd made it themselves, it was home brew type of thing, but we stayed on there, I suppose we stayed on there for about four months after dad came down to Newcastle, when he came he boarded down at Hamilton, down near Hamilton Ambulance station and he came back to the dockyard and he bought a bike, a push-bike to get to work and he use to ride every Friday afternoon and leave Newcastle and ride to Raymond Terrace which was about nine miles I suppose, nine miles out along the highway and nine miles in, eighteen miles every friday afternoon he'd come home, he'd come up to us. I was up there last week and I was explaining to my friends, I said it was just getting on towards dusk and I can remember how we'd be looking along, it was just a track, nothing tarred, and you'd see his light on his bike and it was dad coming and dad would come up every friday and then Sunday afternoon he would leave about 2p.m. or 3p.m. I suppose and we'd all stand out the front of this place and everybody would cry, mum would cry too cause dad would be going back to Newcastle and we wouldn't see him again until friday. He did</p>

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<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
290	D.M.	that, until I suppose, he gathered enough to pay rent and to, I don't know now whether once he started work you stayed on the dole, I can't remember any of those things of social services whether you were able to work for awhile while you gathered money or not, but he, he must have evidently got enough because he didn't have a thing and he got enough for us to rent a house and once we got this house, well they had the truck and they went up and brought us all down we all came back and we started life again.
	A.G.	So where did you move to then, where was the new place?
	D.M.	We moved out to Mayfield East. My father kept on working at Walsh Island or the dockyard. My brother who by then would have been eighteen or nineteen couldn't get work and he was going to the B.H.P. everyday, walking to the B.H.P. from where we were at Mayfield East up on the hill along Crebert street way. He'd walk down to the B.H.P. with a cut lunch hoping everyday at the gate that he might have got a job and he did that for a long, long time without any work.
320	A.G.	Do you know what year that was?
	D.M.	Yes I can remember that year, that'd be about 33, and finally he got some work at the B.H.P., no he didn't get work there, he got some work in town at Mc Graths, he was cleaning cars, there not even here now, then he got back onto the B.H.P. . I went back to school at a Newcastle school and the other

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		
340	D.M.	children went on to there local schools and we stayed there for a long time, and that was only renting, You wonder really how they ever would have got on except that my father had another accident. They left Mayfield East, I dont really know the reason why they left Mayfield East, it can't have been convenient or something and they went down to Mayfield near Waratah Station, a house down there and before he did that, he had an accident at the B.H.P. , he worked a plane, a big machine that was planeing steel and there was a wedge on the machine and whatever happened, a job as he used to call it , a job fell off the machine, hit the wedge and came up and hit his eye. He lost the sight of an eye and he got quite a ^{if} fair bit of compensation and by then we were living at Mayfield, things must have been getting fairly good then, things were getting back to fairly well normal but of course that was getting up not long before the war so there must have been a fare lapse in between.
350	A.G.	After about 33 B.H.P. was really improving, making quite a bit of profit.
360	D.M.	Yeh the B.H.P. I can remember the B.H.P. as a place where at four o'clock in the afternoon you couldn't move, there was just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of bicycles coming out, not cars bicycles pouring out of B.H.P. and you never thought the B.H.P. would ever be as it is now . He hurt his eye and he got his compensation which he hung on to he waited, he was going to do something with it because as you

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
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400	D.M.	Well he stayed in that and he did very well and it was war time by then and everything was in coupons and all that sort of thing and then he sold that, he auctioned that and he bought a hotel in Tamworth. You wonder from the depression that how they would have ended up if he was on a straight wage you would never have earned yourself enough to get a house . Women didn't work, my mother hed never worked, she worked in the shop, and the hotel, but without having had that accident to give him his start to get him into a say his first shop and then a hotel you think the effects that he had in the depression he would never have overcome. I dont think, he may have. He owned a block of land when this depression first hit him, before he was at New Lambton before he was laid ⁱ off, he owned a block of land which would have been out on one of the corners of Mayfield it's a garage on there now and he had to let that go, he couldn't pay that off.
420	A.G.	So he lost that?
	D.M.	He lost that completely, he lost that and he never ever paid any of the rent back to those people which he always felt he should have done but he was never able to do that.
	A.G.	There was alot of that happening at the time.
	D.M.	And another thing that was a big with my father anyway, he was a Mason, he belonged to a Masonic Lodge and he was a master of two lodges before the depression hit him. He was a self educated man too, he hardly had any schooling but he taught himself enough to get through the lodges and he was a

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
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440	D.M.	<p>master of two lodges both at the one time and that cost him quite a bit of money but he wasn't out of work then, that was before he went out of work and when the depression hit him, I don't know what the dues were but I know it was an expensive thing and they went out to lots of places and did lots of things when you were master of the lodge or a past master and he dropped his lodge and his lodge was something he was very fond of you know, it was his religion, it was everything to him and he had to drop that cause he couldn't afford that and he never ever went back until he was quite an old man, he never picked it up, I don't know why, I don't whether he could have paid back money and gone back into it, I think the fact that he went out of it, I never ever asked him, I'm sorry for that I didn't ask him why he never ever went back into it but he was really up into the lodge and he, that all went so, but he, they came out of it pretty well in the long run.</p>
460	A.G.	So you went to work after school in the cake shop .
	D.M.	I went to work at fifteen in the cake shop.
	A.G.	You were saying just before, women in those days really didn't work. Was that a ...
	D.M.	Well, I didn't know any women that worked, well they all had babies, you didn't do baby-sitting, you didn't have any child care centres anything like that we have now and I worked all my life but I was a different generation but my mother worked, not in a job of going out to work, well she couldn't while she

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
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480.	D.M.	had those three small children after we'd gone to high school but when he had the shop she use to come down and do when the children, the three young ones were at school, she'd come down and help me in the cake shop and when she went to the hotel she certainly worked up there, she was behind the bar and everything and she was a person who had never had anything to do with hotels or anything like that, she use to say to the men "it's about time you went home isn't it, you know your wife will be waiting for you", and dad would say, "I'm trying to sell them beer and you're sending them home", and she, it was an Air Force hotel, it was during the war up there at Tamworth and she had young fellows come in (end of side A).
500		but they'd be waiting for the train to go to, come home on leave and they didn't drink and of course the other fellows would have them drinking before they knew where they were, and once they had too much to drink she'd take them down into their flat and she'd have them stretched out on the beds, settling them all down, they were very fond of them, she was a real mother to them.
	A.G.	Did you go to Tamworth as well?
	D.M.	Yes I went to Tamworth with them. My husband was in the Air Force and I had my young son, I was with them all the time from, I didn't set out into anything while the war was on and I had my son and I went up there and I worked in the hotel as well, my son wasn't well (telephone interruption).

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
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510	A.G.	So after having spent that time through the depression whats your overall memory of it. Was it something very bad, a time, fine you were a child, still you would have seen alot of...
	D.M.	We loved the twelve months at Swan Bay, we all loved that, that was good fun and it was better living and it was better living than it was at Newcastle .
	A.G.	It was a real adventure I suppose.
	D.M.	It was an adventure, and we were on the water and there was all sorts of things happening and everyone was, I've just written a thing for the Swan Bay magazine which, I'll show you that that might be something .
	A.G.	Whats the name of it?
	D.M.	It's just Ruby, Will, White, it's just the memoirs from each family and I wrote this and it only takes you five minutes to read but of all my schooling and all the things I ever did while growing up that twelve months at Swan Bay was, impressed on me, and mum always said it was the best twelve months she ever had, we made good friends up there and we just thought it was great, but my own impression was, of the depression with my parents is something I find I'm very proud of it for, I'm proud that they got, I think they handled it well and got through it and I think they, I get people say to me, I have friends that were never affected by the depression at all and they use to say "Oh all you people who have been through the depression, you can never talk about anything at all but the depression", so it really must have been something that really impressed you,
520		

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
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570	D.M.	like that. I could go with him and work with him on his truck, we lived at Nord's Wharf out on the lake, and I don't know if you're doing Psychology or what but I don't know what it means but I can remember thinking, you know, there'd be women out there who'd say, "Oh, I wouldn't do that, I wouldn't work on a truck". I use to feel I can do any of those things better than any of you and that, not better but as good as, nothing like that lowered my dignity in any way because if you did it and you did a good job it didn't matter, but I don't know if that's anything to do with the depression, it toughened you or not, I don't know, I wouldn't know. I'm not sorry I went through a time like that because I think if I hadn't of I don't think I'd have remembered much of my childhood, there wasn't anything terrible,
580		anything I got after was good because you sort of got in there, you did it yourself and you learn't to work hard, we all worked hard but still I know plenty of people who worked hard that had nothing to do with the depression, its hard to say. I think what it did to my mother and I think it might have done it to me to, you are always very careful of what you spend, I mean, if I think I can save anything or do a thing myself, like wallpaper or stripping walls, I think to myself, oh I can have a go at that, I can do that myself, and whether other people don't do that I don't know, its hard to tell.
	A.G.	I think its very true that people who did go through

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
		<u>Counter</u>
590	A.G.	it you see, they were either crushed or else they came out of it with a great resilience.
	D.M.	Yes, well I have got that I know, you were never frightened of anything. I've never been frightened. My mother wasn't, but she wasn't reared like that. My mother was reared as someone who was always looked after by the rest of the family and even though she went through this business, I can still remember at eleven years of age, in the bark humpy, I was looking after her , to a certain extent.
	A.G.	You were the next generation.
600	D.M.	And my brother, he was sixteen, you were looking after her, thats how it was, but she was that way and she still is, she's ninety three and in a nursing home now, I had her for five years here and she cant waste a thing. If she, she doesn't drink milk, but say she did, she went out there and had a glass of milk and if she said "Gee that was lovely", and you could say "Well have another glass", oh no no no, you couldn't, that would be wasteing. I, I still spend anything that I wont. If I really want to do a thing enough, or get it, I'm not that way that I'd say oh no, I spend on things other people wont spend on and I've had trips overseas, I've had two trips overseas, I can leave, where I have other people I know say, oh no I like to have my money sitting in the bank, I can get away without having to much in the bank as long as I get away and do what I want to do and do that, so its not as though you get lousy, your not lousy about anything or food or anything but you

<u>Tape</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Text</u>
<u>Counter</u>		just feel as though you can, you can get through things and I dont know whether thats what made you feel like that. Resilience is the word that you used possibly.
	A.G.	Well then Dorothy, Doreen, sorry, Thank you very much.
617	D.M.	Thats good.

The Great Depression heightened the experience of economic Allen George for the people of Newcastle. The district had suffered Australian History previously, most notably in 1922-23. The Great Tuesday 1p.m.-3p.m. were not a new occurrence in its economic impact except that the impact was spread further throughout the community. The spread of the impact is apparent by looking at the Regional History Essay steel industries, the ministry of employment opportunities. As unemployment increased so did homelessness which How did the Great Depression affect Newcastle? The role of the churches in this period highlights their own beliefs and reactions to the depression and the subsequent social problems. Furthermore, the political climate created a conservative reaction, both overt and covert, which sought to counter the presumed progress of labor policies against the Australian way of life.

The economic health of Newcastle in the 1920's reflects a down turn in the coal and steel cities fortunes. The number of mines and quarries decreased by over one third during this decade to just over 2000 men¹. Furthermore, the number of days worked was reported to be 171 per year by the Department of Mines.² Thus the number of employees, days³ and output decreased to a stage where the president of the Chamber of Commerce declared "Our coal trade is ... in a very precarious position..." in 1928³. The steel industry was in a similar position.

The dream of Newcastle developing as the Pittsburgh of the Southern Hemisphere faded as the high cost of local production could not match cheaper imports. The B.N.P. steelworks reacted by

1: S. Gray, Newcastle in the Great Depression, Newcastle, 1989, p 11.

2: Ibid

3: Ibid

The Great Depression heightened the experience of economic recessions for the people of Newcastle. The district had suffered serious recessions previously, most notably in 1922-23. The Great Depression was therefore not a new occurrence in its economic impact except that the impact was spread further throughout the community. The spread of the impact is apparent by looking at the decline of the coal and steel industries, the mainstay of employment opportunities. As unemployment increased so did homelessness which affected the municipal councils and the family unit. The role of the churches in this period highlights their own beliefs and reactions to the depression and the subsequent social problems. Furthermore, the political climate created a conservative reaction, both overt and covert, which strove to counter the presumed excesses of Labor policies upon the Australian way of life.

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The dream of Newcastle developing as the Pittsburgh of the Southern Hemisphere faded as the high cost of local production could not match cheaper imports. The B.H.P. steelworks reacted by

1: S. Gray, Newcastle in the Great Depression. Newcastle, 1989.p 11.

2: Ibid

3: Ibid

Gray, "An evil long endured" in The Hated Years. Sydney, 1991.

reducing their workforce from 5000 men too 2000 men in a six months period ending December 1921.⁴ By June 1922, the works employed 900 men, mostly on a part time basis.⁵ It was not until August 1925 that full employment was regained. The dependent industries suffered as B.H.P.'s capacity fluctuated.⁶ The districts second largest employer, the State Dockyard, experienced financial difficulties and it's workforce was reduced by fifty percent to 1000 men in 1922.⁷ These heavy industries continued to experience difficulties and affect employment opportunities throughout the decade. Thus the decade prior to the depressions onset was a period of economic hardship felt throughout the community and the problems faced at this time were to be repeated. Once again it was the coal and steel industries where hardships were to spread. had to carry water long distances in deused kerosene tins.¹³ The State The inter-relationship between Newcastle's main industries strengthened their capacity to produce and employ when times were favourable, however when one industry was experiencing problems, all the main industries suffered. The closure of collieries in the Northern coal district highlights this dependence. Most of the collieries closed from February 1929 to May 1930 with 12 000 men not working.⁸ The Newcastle Herald reported on December 14, 1929, the closures had affected the employment of 400 coal trimmers, 200 - 300 wharf labourers, 75 carpenters, 19 turners, 150 boilermakers and more than 1600 ironworkers assistants⁹. The widespread effect of the strike is incalculable in its effect upon the community and the loss of revenue sustained. By examining the social effects upon part of the community it is possible to gauge the results of the Great Depression. advantaged. Those who

4: Ibid, p.12 found it hard to work and were believed to obtain

5: Ibid.

6: Ibid. rough immoral means, prostitution, to support themselves.

7: Ibid.

8: Ibid, Newcastle... p.17

9: S. Gray, "An evil long endured" in The Wasted Years. SYDNEY, (1981).

12: Ibid p.18.

13: Ibid

Homelessness was not a new phenomenon in the Newcastle district. The settlement of Hollywood, near Jesmond, was used for "camping" by the homeless from at least 1920¹⁰. The humpies of the unemployed were to spread throughout the municipalities by the early 1930's and were either supported or ignored by the local authorities. The first camp to be set up for the purpose of settlement was at Adamstown Rifle Range by the Australian Workers Union.¹¹ Other camps just grew out of necessity such as Coral Tree at Stockton and Texas in Carrington. Texas camp was fortunate in that the local council was sympathetic towards the inhabitants and supplied water while resisting moves to have people evicted by the Lands Department.¹² The campers at Hollywood were not so fortunate in gaining council support and subsequently had to carry water long distances in dis-used kerosene tins.¹³ The State government, before the 1930's, did not ^{ac}cept the burden of supplying aid to the unemployed. Thus the municipal councils carried most of the burden for aid, with aid being directed toward men, the bread winner and sole supporter of the family. The assumption that women and children were dependent exclusively on a male for their well being caused hardships for those who did not fit into this assumption.

The industries of Newcastle supplied only a limited opportunity for female employment. Women were usually the first to be retrenched as their labour was un-skilled. When an un-skilled husband lost his job, opportunities of domestic employment existed though as the whole community suffered from the depression, these positions were scarce. Women were thus doubly dis-advantaged. Those who were single found it hard to work and were believed to obtain money through immoral means, prostitution, to support themselves.

10: S. Gray, Newcastle... p.17

11: Ibid

12: Ibid p.18

13: Ibid

With society believing women in this position ^{WERE IMMORAL} ~~the~~ women ^{AFFECTED THUS} ~~who~~ were reluctant to come forth to ask for help, ~~so~~ much so that a Methodist and an Anglican minister claimed doubt as to women actually needing help for seldom was any request made.¹⁴ Domestic service was offered ⁱⁿ for return of food and shelter however this good Samaritan type of help was also economic exploitation. Thus women were victims of the depressed times as were their older children. These youth were see as dependents and thus could not receive relief when living at home. For them to obtain government relief they had to leave home, thus reducing the capacity ^{of} for the family to earn a living as well as breaking the family up. Females forced to do so were, as previously mention, were branded immoral, while single males were well catered for.

A number of the camps set up in Newcastle were designed for male only occupancy. The Diggers' camp in Hall Street was well run and serviced by aid given by the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (R.S.S.I.L.A.). Nobbys camp was not so fortunate. The Newcastle city council allowed the 170¹⁵ or so men found sleeping around local beaches to take shelter at Horseshoe beach. The council was reluctant in this move and did not supply camp requirements itself. The Federal government supplied thirty tents and sufficient dixies (pots) for 120 men. The State government subsidised the council for a caretaker for three months. The temporary ^w camp for men survived for seven years and its inhabitants included women and children. It was a well organised camp "conducted on the lines of a community settlement, with a president and a secretary and a committee

14: Ibid

15: Ibid

committee of eight...".¹⁶ The commitment to organisation saved the tenants of the camp from eviction many times over the seven years of operation. The residents helped each other out and kept a collective eye out for employment opportunities at the local Labour Exchange. When difficulties arose beyond the means of the authorities, the churches sometimes aided. This call was answered but not heeded. This was the Anglicans' only effort to . . . The Churches played a varying role in guiding and helping their flocks. By far the Catholic church was the most helpful. The church carried out an extensive building programme and welfare work. The building programmes started in the 1920's and carried on through the Depression. During the 1930's almost £69 000 was invested in bricks and mortar, using a large pool of unemployed.¹⁷ The church also aided orphans, supplied a school for the deaf and most of all ran the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The St Vincent de Paul Society, by 1932, collected and distributed food, operated two soup kitchens and would visit and help the poor of any denomination¹⁸. On the political front, this church was critical of the failure of the capitalist state, though pointed out the dangers of a socialist alternative and deplored atheist communism. The Anglican church also deplored communism and this is the only thing these two groups had in common. The Church of England did not

enter into a building programme or offer economic aid to the community. The Bishop Batty believed "...the root and cause of all our troubles is spiritual and not material."¹⁹ In an address made in 1931, he alined the sins of dishonesty and lack of integrity in a veiled reference to the leaders of the State and Federal Labor parties, thus upholding the conservative view that these leaders' policies were not helping but hindering the society as

16: Ibid p.19

17: Ibid p. 62

18: Ibid p.

19: Ibid p.70

22: Ibid p.63

as a whole. Not all Anglicans espoused these views. The Reverend Burgmann attacked capitalism as "...a system which finds no use for a large number of its citizens,...(that) cannot provide an economic basis for civilised life".²⁰ He pushed for the church to aid the unemployed and with their aid sent a letter to the State government asking for the dole to be doubled. This call was answered but not heeded. This was the Anglicans' only effort to aid the community and the aid was not their own. They did supply guidance to the community though this was hypocritical for one church leader appeared to support the conservative, establishment view, this being ^{that} the Labor governments were at fault in their handling of the crisis, while another element found fault with capitalism and wished to see it replaced with Rationalism. Either way this church did little for the community's distressed. The Salvation Army with the aid of the B.H.P. cared for 3,000 unemployed²¹. Their resources were tiny compared to the Anglicans. However, one group who were aided was the conservative forces.

The Great Depression had affected the Newcastle population. Labor Party policies brought about conservative re-action in Newcastle. Those who did not believe in radical policies of Lang, namely repudiation of British loans to the state, found a political voice in the All for Australia League. The platform the party ran on was "To keep Australia white, to preserve our British traditions, to safeguard the sanctity of motherhood, and to defend the Christian faith against the representatives of godless sovietism".²² Taking part in the December 1931 Federal election the A.F.A.L. polled thirty five percent of the vote. A good result for a new party and a definite statement by voters of their belief in ^{the Failure of} the Labor parties economic policies. Some who believed the economic policies of the government would ultimately lead to the down-fall of the state to Red Radicals had a chance

20: Ibid p.71

21: Ibid p.67

22: Ibid p.52

to save society. Three groups had this aim. The New Guard is claimed to have been made up of returned soldiers of the 2/35 Battalion "Newcastles Own" regiment.²³ They were an offshoot of the Sydney based group. Proof of their existence is sketchy as is the proof of the existence of two other secret groups, The Protective Association and a group so secretive they did not name themselves, though are referred to as the Defence Organisation. The role of all these groups was to protect society from the threat of social upheaval. Their secrecy reflects a self perceived threat from the community as a whole for Newcastle was a Labor stronghold and this group was the threat. The significance of these groups was their formation as a result of the pressures of the depression and the Labor party and the need for members to somehow express their dissatisfaction with the events of the day. After the Lang government was removed these groups seem to have dispersed.

The Great Depression had affected the Newcastle population in a number of ways. The major industries were affected and in turn dismissed employees. Having lost the means of self support, camps for the homeless sprung up. The family unit suffered under this pressure. Some were able to gain assistance from some of the churches. The society was split by the political actions of the day and produced an increasing opposition toward the Labor party in a city dominated by the working class.

23. Ibid p.54.

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