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Signed E. Allen .....

Date 12th September 1989 .....

Interviewer C. Miller .....

After 81 years of operation, the Store closed its doors to

THE NEWCASTLE AND DISTRICT CO-OP SOCIETY LIMITED

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - OPEN FOUNDATION - Wednesday 7.00pm

CHRISTINE MILLER 29/09/89

importance in the Newcastle area, became affectionately known as "The Store".

On 8th June 1898, The Newcastle and District Co-Op Society Limited was formed and registered after a meeting at the post office which was the Civic Theatre now stands. The Store's



After an 83 year lifespan, The Store closed its doors to shoppers on 10th April, 1981. At its peak it dominated the local retail trade. Its correct title was The Newcastle and Suburban Co-operative Society Limited, but due to its importance in the Newcastle area, became affectionately known as "The Store."

On 8th June 1898, The Newcastle and District Co-Op Society Limited was formed and registered after a meeting at the Post Office Hotel where the Civic Theatre now stands. The Store's huge enterprise began with a tiny £33 initial share capital and an aged horse rescued from the Hexham swamp. The first premises was a small shop in Hunter St West, about 250 metres east of its later site.

Although The Store had the same basic ideology as other local co-operatives, it differed in that it was never wholly a miner's co-operative, and in the early years, less than half its members were miners. At the time The Store was being established, Newcastle was the centre of the coal trade and the town consisted of a cosmopolitan hotch-potch of men and manners.<sup>1</sup> There was both great wealth and great poverty.

important influence on the Newcastle and Suburban Co-Op Society's development. Between 1871 and 1875, seventeen thousand people settled in the Newcastle district. Most were working class families who settled in the inner-city areas in close proximity to the Store.

At The Store's first meeting it was expected that £1000 would have been subscribed but only £59, 7s, 6d had been received. Each shareholder was urged to secure five new members.<sup>2</sup>

For the first few years The Store's position was extremely precarious and it was not until 1902 that membership increased to 520 and was rising along with the sales. The basic rule of the system, which originated through economic conditions in England, was that capital should be made the servant of all shareholders and not the master.<sup>3</sup>

In 1908 the first bakery was opened and by the end of the decade the rapidly increasing membership brought the need for larger premises. From 1913, when construction work began on the Broker Hill Proprietary Company, population in the Newcastle district began to rise and the Society's membership more than doubled while sales exceeded £180,000 per year by 1915.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the B.H.P. and the State Dockyard in the second decade of the twentieth century, were to be the most important influence on the Newcastle and Suburban Co-Op Society's development. Between 1911 and 1921, seventeen thousand people settled in the Newcastle district. Most were working class families who settled in the inner-city areas in close proximity to The Store.

Unlike other organisations, The Store's success did not depend on the state of the coal industry nor was it plagued with the problems of isolation.

In 1924-1925, milk deliveries and tea-rooms were established and even more space was needed. By 1930, membership had reached 9,149 and sales were nearly £700,000.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Depression during the 30's had a disastrous effect on sales, The Store was only seriously affected during the peak period from 1930 - 1932. Some work rationing was introduced although there does not appear to have been any retrenchments.<sup>6</sup> Many thousands of pounds share capital was withdrawn and in mid 1931, directors were forced to freeze rebates. Even during those trying times The Store insisted on cash transactions. Unlike other co-operatives, The Store's recovery was more rapid and by 1933 business was picking up and membership rising. Mr Jack Gunn, the Executive Officer Outside Activities in 1975, remembered the 1930's as a time when The Store served it's members with ice, dairy produce, milk and fruit and vegetable runs. "In the Clyde St stables in those years we had 125 horses," Mr Gunn said. "We operated 72 bread runs, 16 green grocery carts and 32 milk runs, all with horse drawn vehicles."<sup>7</sup>

The Store emerged from The Depression with little effect upon it's resources. The value of it's reserves and assets had increased considerably and considerable modernisation had been made in stock, plant and service.



Trade Unions were strong in their support of the Society and unionists were praised by the Directors for their voluntary role in expanding membership.

A feature of The Store in 1941, was the role of women in the organisation. From its foundations, the co-operative had strong support from the women of Newcastle. Women's guilds were responsible for much of the cultural activity which was seen as an important aspect of the society. The women reported to the members that, "our committee is quite aware of the power of the woman with the basket in co-operative endeavours."<sup>8</sup>

Although the Second World War was a great time of difficulty for all business concerns in general, the situation soon changed in the affluent post war years when there was full employment and people had money to spend. The Store enjoyed a tremendous boom that lasted throughout most of the 1950's and by the early 1960's, membership stood at 50,000 and annual sales exceeded 5 million. It was not difficult to make a profit because according to Mr Les Gibbs, Manager from 1949 - 1973, "there was a degree of stability which is not around now."<sup>9</sup>

The Store successfully fought for the maintenance of bread delivery zoning, which was introduced as an economy measure during the war, and also resisted, without success, the introduction of solo sites at their service stations. The Store believed their customers should have a choice of brands if they wanted.

In 1966, the Hunter St premises were extended to cope with the increasing volume of business and in 1968, the then General Manager, Mr C Williamson, accompanied by the Merchandise Manager, Mr Les Dalton, went on a study tour of retail outlets in North America concentrating on computerisation, store layouts and modern trends in retailing.<sup>10</sup>

However, during the 60's, The Store came under growing pressure from the increasing numbers of large shopping complexes and huge specialist grocery and electrical chains. The number of older members who were dedicated to The Store was declining and the younger generation had little understanding of co-operative principles.<sup>11</sup> Two world wars and a depression had failed to halt The Store's progress however the affluence and apathy of the 1960's were to be the main reason for it's closure. When people began to shop by car, rather than tram or bus, it was more convenient to go to a suburban complex and they were more interested in lower prices than waiting for a benefit.

Unfortunately, the co-operatives failed to realise the seriousness of the problem until it was too late. The Store changed policies in 1979 and went for price leadership however the members could not understand the loss of the "divvy" and their confidence was shaken. A huge programme of renovations and extensions at the city store began in an attempt to solve the problem without success.

The Store could no longer compete at a price level, and rising fixed costs and wages were biting into profits. The main problem was that of consumer disinterest.

Had The Store changed it's sales strategy earlier, and sold off the smaller branches to maintain the main ones, it may have survived and pulled through it's difficult times but unfortunately, there was no public support and the harsh reality for The Newcastle Regional Co-Operative Ltd was that it had outlived it's usefulness.

7. Newcastle Herald April 12, 1973
8. Newcastle Herald and Miner's Advocate  
23/1/73 (date obscured)
9. Newcastle Herald April 13, 1973
10. Newcastle Herald April 17, 1973
11. P. Septon, Retail Co-Op's



FOOTNOTES

1. Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate,  
April 11, 1981
2. Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate,  
April 12, 1975
3. Ibid
4. D. Patricia Hampton's  
Retail Co-Operatives in the Lower Hunter Valley  
Newcastle History Monographs No 12 1986, pp 33-40
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Newcastle Herald April 12, 1975
8. Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate,  
May, 1978 (date unknown)
9. Newcastle Herald April 13, 1981
10. Newcastle Herald April 12, 1975
11. P. Hampton, Retail Co-Op's

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Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate, April 12, 1975

to date.

SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT  
INTERVIEWER - CHRISTINE MILLER  
INTERVIEWEE - ESME ALLAN  
12/09/89

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Esme Allan, nee Arnold, began work at The Store in June 1928 during sale time and was employed to both sell and carry out alterations to clothing. No specific training was provided however she was already well acquainted with sewing and dressmaking. Mrs Allan was employed for ten years at The Store. At first there was only herself, the Manageress, and four other assistants and then later, when business increased, more staff were put on.

The Store was well known for it's deliveries which included bread, milk, vegetables and groceries and it was a well known fact that you could buy just about anything at The Store.

During The Depression each staff member had one week off every few weeks without pay to prevent retrenchments and Mrs Allan remembers that this was a particularly hard time to sell.

Although the staff did not themselves attend any meetings, The Store Guild was a regular meeting of lady customers who discussed the business of The Store.

There were social outings such as The Store dances, held at St Peters Hall, Hamilton, and The Store picnic held at Speers Point Park. There was also an exercise class for staff members called "The Women's League of Health and Beauty" which was held one night a week in the floor space of the office.

Initially, when you became a member of The Store, you only had to give your number when making a purchase, but later on, an aluminium token was introduced to prevent false purchases. Mrs Allan witnessed some attempts at shoplifting during her employment.

Mrs Allan believes that The Store closed because people panicked when they heard it was "going bad". She also feels that the dividend should have been retained and that The Store was unable to compete with the larger supermarkets which opened later like "Woolworths".

Her initial pay was one pound a week and this increased to three pound five, at the age of twenty-one. The hours worked were forty a week which included Friday night and Saturday morning.

All the stock at The Store was good quality and Mrs Allan believes that people didn't mind paying a little extra because they would receive their dividend which could be left to accumulate and gain interest.

Staff and customers could take items of clothing home "on approval" and return any item they did not wish to purchase.

Stocktaking was a very important time at The Store. All stock had to be counted weeks ahead in time for the day the men arrived to take the lists and check them. The Store would be closed on this day.

If a customer paid by cash, their money and cash docket were sent in a container on a pulley system, across the office to the cashier who would count the change and return it with the receipt.

Mrs Allan enjoyed her time at The Store and remembers the good relationships with both Management and Staff and in fact, she still attends twice yearly reunions with her friends to talk over old times.

TRANSCRIPT - 16TH SEPTEMBER 1989

The Interviewer is Christine Miller

The Interviewee is Esme Allan

The project is for Open Foundation, Oral History Project

**THE NEWCASTLE REGIONAL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED**

It's the 12th September 1989 and the interview is taking place at 55 Meredith Street, Kotara

**INTERVIEWER:** What year did you start work at the Store?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Um, In 1928, about June at the winter sale. Ah, I got this position because I could do alterations, and that was the main reason I was put on, for the sale and if I was suitable I would be kept on, and fortunately I was and ah ...

**INTERVIEWER:** So the job wasn't actually advertised you just applied in the sale time?

**INTERVIEWEE:** No I just applied for work. I was sixteen at the time and ah it suited me being able to sew and liking to sell too.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, so did you stay in alterations or ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Not all the time. When ah, garments were sold I would be called out to fit them if there was any necessary alterations and then when I had time between selling I would go to the work room and do them.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh right.

**INTERVIEWEE:** So have them ready at a certain time, at a given time, we'd give the customer a time to have them ready, and they would come in for them.



**INTERVIEWER:** So did you have any training at all or did you already know how to do the work?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes I had, I had learnt sewing, and ah, I, was used to doing, you know, dressmaking, so it came in handy.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. So did you stay there full time or you moved on into just selling or ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, I stayed, No, I stayed as alteration hand all of the time I was there, ah for ten years, and ah, in different departments because when we first started there, you would sell all over the department, a frock and then if the person wanted a hat, you would sell that, and ah, whatever else they needed in the department, underclothing. Ah but later on as ah, The Store became busier, you only sold in your own Department and referred them to another department for what they wanted.

**INTERVIEWER:** So how many would have been in the Department to start with?

**INTERVIEWEE:** The Manageress of the Department and four other assistants at that time and then at sale time there could be two other employees.

**INTERVIEWER:** So they would have just gradually put on more staff as the business increased?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, as the business increased.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you travel to work?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, by tram or bus at that time and then later I purchased a bicycle and rode to work.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, because I think The Store at the time was sort of where everyone went to shop as well. It was, before they started going up to the top of town.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, Yes there was everything they could buy, everything there, groceries and ah milk, bread, are there were ...

**INTERVIEWER:** They had the deliveries as well.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, all deliveries, of groceries, fruit and vegetables, cakes and pastries, bread and milk were all delivered on certain days of the week, and ah, they had their own cake and pastry, making.

**INTERVIEWER:** On the premises?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, on the premises.

**INTERVIEWER:** Cause they had a lot of branch stores as well. They opened up out at Charlestown later on.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes later on they did.

**INTERVIEWER:** But you just stayed in the town?

**INTERVIEWEE:** I was only in the town store, all that time.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about during the Depression? Was it harder to sell then or ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, ah, it was harder to sell, and ah, in the time I was there through the Depression we had a week off every few weeks in our turn and without pay.

**INTERVIEWER:** So they wouldn't have to put anyone off?

**INTERVIEWEE:** So they wouldn't have to put anyone off. The Manageress didn't want to lose any of her staff, which she valued very much, and ah, I think she had to fight a bit to, I think they did want to dismiss a couple of employees, but ah, she didn't want to lose them so that's the way she overcame that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have to attend any meetings, or um was there any special type of meeting The Store had at all.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, I don't remember attending any meetings, not the employees, ah but The Store Guild, the women's guild was a regular meeting of customers and I don't know whether any employees went to that or not but that was held regularly. I don't know whether it was once a month, something like that, with the business of The Store at hand.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about Social, were there any social outings?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah yes, there were social, Store dances and, were held at different times and a Store picnic every year. And that was a big event, everybody went to that and ah ...

**INTERVIEWER:** Where was that held?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Mostly at Speers Point park because of the size of The Store.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh right, because there would have been a lot of people. What about the dances, where would they have been?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah St Peters hall at Hamilton, mostly the dances were held.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about the exercise class you were telling me about earlier.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes ah, I think it was called the Women's League of Health and Beauty, and I know about three of us from our Department used to go one night a week. And ah a little bit like Aerobics now, only not as er ...

**INTERVIEWER:** Energetic?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Energetic. No not quite. Mostly down on the floor doing push ups and things I think.

"Laughter"

**INTERVIEWER:** And where was that just held in the Department or ..

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah in the ah, floor space of the office as far as I can remember, the office that was at that time, which is not far from our Department.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who would have held, who would have run it, like who would have been the instructor?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah yes I, I, well it would be someone to do with the name I think. The Women's League of Health and Beauty.

I can't remember who it was. But I'm sure that was the name of it because, "laughter", we all wanted to be;

**INTERVIEWER:** Beautiful? "laughter"

**INTERVIEWEE:** Healthy and beautiful.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeh, oh well it was different to now, they don't have anything now unless you go outside. You have to go to the gym or something.

**INTERVIEWEE:** No that's right, well that was there if you wanted it. It was very good.

(pause)

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you become a member of The Store?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah you paid, two and six to become a member but you couldn't charge anything for, on your account having just joined with that fee. To charge you had to have ten pound. And um, then you weren't allowed to exceed that amount on your account.

**INTERVIEWER:** So was it a monthly account.

**INTERVIEWEE:** No a fortnightly account and a dividend was paid every half year on the purchases, and an interest was paid too,

**INTERVIEWER:** As well.

**INTERVIEWEE:** on your amount in the ah ...

**INTERVIEWER:** And what did you get to show you were a member?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, at that time, it was only that you gave your name and your number, you got a number when you joined The Store, and ah, a few years later because purchases were being made with fictitious numbers, ah, tokens were made, they were in aluminium I think. And ah, your initial, ah surname initial and number were stamped on the token, and you had to show that when you were making a purchase.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Lots of times people would say, "Oh you know me, you don't want to see my number."

**INTERVIEWER:** But you had to give it anyway.

**INTERVIEWEE:** They had to show it because the person next door you wouldn't know and you would have to ask for theirs.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have any trouble with people trying to book up false ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes um, before the tokens came in I was selling a fur coat one day, and er, the usual thing to do when you're selling anything over ten pound was to go to the office and show someone who attended to you the name and number of the person who was purchasing, and the day I went around, the gentleman said to me, "you've got the number wrong, go back and get the ladies correct number." So when I went back to her she said, "Yes that was right you know." "Griffiths" and so so ..



I went back to him the second time and told him again it was right. So when I went back to her the next time she'd gone. She hadn't taken the coat fortunately.

**INTERVIEWER:** "laughter" Just as well. Did they have like, they wouldn't have had store detectives or anyone checking at that time either it would have just been ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** No. Just all the staff had to keep their eyes open to see what was doing, whether anyone was shop-lifting, which did happen quite a bit, because another time I was serving ah, a lady with something, and I noticed she put her case under the swimming suit rack. And ah two of them dropped into the case, "laughter", which I wasn't supposed to see. So when I was charging her carding to her I asked her was she going to charge the swimsuits too.

**INTERVIEWER:** Mmmmm

**INTERVIEWEE:** And she did charge them so that went off all right. I don't think she'd do it again.

**INTERVIEWER:** No that's for sure. Um did The Store sort of change with the times, did it update or, was it sort of the same the whole time you were there?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, we had new window dressers and ah, we had new figurines. Our first figurines were rather ah, what will I say, crude, yes crude they had no heads.

**INTERVIEWER:** "laughter" just bodies?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Arms, and of course body and legs and we had to work Friday nights then, in those days and ah there was a gentleman who was walking up and down waiting for his wife and he bumped into one, one of these dummies, dressed up, and he grabbed it and said "Oh I'm sorry"

**INTERVIEWER:** "laughter" with no head?

**INTERVIEWEE:** No head, yeh

**INTERVIEWER:** They would have employed special people to dress the windows?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, but not at first when I went there, er, we had to do our own window dressing. If we had a window in for sale or anything you had to go down and dress it out, and stifle in the heat.

**INTERVIEWER:** What floor were you on? The first?

**INTERVIEWEE:** First floor yes. There was only ground and first floor. And no lift in those days. We had to carry everything upstairs. Any stock that came in had to be carried.

**INTERVIEWER:** So they put another floor on, Did it have two story's eventually?

**INTERVIEWEE:** No we only had two story's at The Store, the ground and one level. But later on, have they since it's become the Pink Ele, have they got the third floor? I don't think so!

**INTERVIEWER:** I don't think so, I might be thinking of the car park. They put that on then later on didn't they? with the walkway across.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes later on yes, that's right. It was ah, in the early days when I started there, some of the buses that ran out to outer areas like Mount Hutton and those places, if any of the employees were ah, going to be on those at half past five in the afternoon, and one lass who worked in the hardware, used to come into our little room to comb her hair etc, and ah, the bus driver downstairs would honk on the horn because she wasn't there.

**INTERVIEWER:** And wait for her?

**INTERVIEWEE:** She'd throw up the window and say, "I'll be down in a minute."

**INTERVIEWER:** Ah, that was alright, "laughter" They wouldn't do it these days.

**INTERVIEWEE:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ah, what do you think caused The Store, all it's problems and why do you think it closed down eventually?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Well I think eventually when it closed down, a lot of people withdrew their money, because they thought times were going to be bad. And so the same thing happened previously, a few years before that when it became very shaky, people withdrew their money and it's like when they draw money out of the bank - there's none there.

**INTERVIEWER:** there'd be a big panic.

**INTERVIEWEE:** But, I think that's partly what happened and ah, ex-employees used to have a reunion and one of the managers addressed us one day and said, this is since The Store closed, ah, no it was while The Store was still open, but it was nearly closed, he said that ah, the supermarkets, they could not pay the dividend. I asked the question whether it would make a difference if they paid the dividend even though it was only a low one and he said, no and you couldn't pay a dividend because they had to compete with the supermarkets. So that's I think why it eventually did close.

**INTERVIEWER:** And the bigger supermarkets like Woolworths, all those opened.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes mmm, that's right, too many of them.

(pause)

**INTERVIEWER:** What were you actually paid to work when you first started, at The Store?

**INTERVIEWEE:** I think it was approximately a pound a week.

**INTERVIEWER:** And did it increase?

**INTERVIEWEE:** And it increased with each birthday until you were a senior at twenty one and you were paid three pound five.

**INTERVIEWER:** And for what hours would that have been that you had to work?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, forty hours a week. That included Saturday morning and ah, Friday night and an hour for lunch every day.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. What did you do for your lunch? Did you stay in or ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, no mostly ah, not always we stayed in sometimes and bought lunch from different departments, fruit and, or you made your own sandwiches or something, cause there was a lunch-room and other times if you wanted a meal on Friday night, we went to the tea-rooms and had a meal, because we had an hour.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right!

**INTERVIEWEE:** And the tea-rooms was just off from our Department. We had a nice meal. I can't remember what it cost now.

**INTERVIEWER:** No. You didn't get it for free?

**INTERVIEWEE:** No, We didn't get it for free, "laughter".

**INTERVIEWER:** And what about the stock in where you worked, in the Department you worked, was the stock all good quality or ..

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah yes always good quality, good brands.

**INTERVIEWER:** And that would have been one of the things that differed.

**INTERVIEWEE:** That was one of the reasons perhaps why you would have paid a little more for your goods at The Store, and people didn't seem to mind that as long as they got a dividend.

**INTERVIEWER:** No that's true.

**INTERVIEWEE:** They didn't mind paying a little more because their dividend was a saving over a period of six months, and ah they could either draw the dividend or leave it accumulate for on their share capital and get interest on it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Mmm, and was, like would have the clothes been home made by people at home or bought from ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** No it would be bought from firms in Sydney and Melbourne.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you only actually had to alter them when people needed alterations done.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes when they needed it. Sometimes there might be quite a large alteration. Shoulders and waistline and things like that but for the coats in the wintertime it was mostly hems and sleeves.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you buy most of your own things at The Store?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes always, yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Would you have got a special discount again or just paid the same?



**INTERVIEWEE:** No you didn't get a special discount, you paid the same price um and mostly when you worked at The Store and you saw the things as they came in you always wanted to take something home on approval, which you could do, and so could the customers, and of course you bought more than you should then. Your mother would say, "Oh yes, you can have it".

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, so you could take something home and bring it back if you didn't want it?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, Yes, the customers could take say, three frocks home and they might keep two and bring one back.

**INTERVIEWER:** That was a good idea!

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Um, and what about sales, how often did they have their sales.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Twice a year mostly, ah that would be the winter sale and then the summer sale.

**INTERVIEWER:** In what months would they have had those?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Bit different to what they have them now I think. Ah June I think was the winter sale and I think November was the summer sale.

**INTERVIEWER:** Would the stock have been reduced quite a bit or

..

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes, ah, some of the, you might have a half price rack, you might have been wanting to clear some special stock and other stock that was new you might get ten percent or twenty percent, different percentages off the stock.

**INTERVIEWER:** You would have got a lot of customers in at those times?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes you were so busy, so busy.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have to work longer hours then or?

**INTERVIEWEE:** No you still worked your hours and ah they might ah perhaps the, well always the manageress would help and in our Department and sometimes her sister from the office would come around and ah, bring the goods over to you and the customer and then all you would have to do is charge them, so that she would be serving, you would be charging.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. Have you kept in touch with any of the people you worked with?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah yes, I have one special friend in Sydney, another one I worked with is in Townsville so I don't see her very much. But we have a Store reunion twice a year and ah, meet and have our lunch at the Princeton at Hamilton and ah...

**INTERVIEWER:** How many would go to that?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ah, the Christmas time one is most popular. We might have about ah, fifty people or even more for that one, and ah, less for the other one.

**INTERVIEWER:** You must have been close, sort of when you worked together to have kept coming back twice a year. It must have been a close staff.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, Yes that's right. A lot of them are younger than I am and ah, from different departments and they all seem to enjoy the ah, luncheon.

**INTERVIEWER:** Mmm, I guess a lot of them would have missed, like would have worked right through till it closed down as well?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, mmm, yes that was after I left in 1937.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you actually leave, to get married?

**INTERVIEWEE:** To get married, mmm, yes.

(pause)

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there anything else we've forgotten to talk about at all?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, we have forgotten to talk about stocktaking which was a very important time at The Store. Everything had to be counted weeks ahead, of the time for stock-taking, the day that all stock was listed. And ah, stock was counted, and lists were made and kept amongst the stock, and as you sold from it they had to be crossed off.

**INTERVIEWER:** Mmm, It would have taken ages!

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes! absolutely ages and you had to really work hard to make sure that everything was done before the time. And ah, you might be in the middle of counting a rack and a customer comes along, you just have to leave it and start all over again.

**INTERVIEWER:** So it was just, you did it during normal work hours and you had to do your normal job as well?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, you had to weeks ahead, and ah, then comes the day that the men taking stock would come in and take the list from the fixtures and check them out and all that sort of thing, and then after they would go, ah, we were all supposed to stay back and add everything up. But I don't know, I'm sure the boss didn't have a computer, and she used to let us all go off to the beach, and she used to do it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, that was alright!

(laughter)

**INTERVIEWEE:** So, we were very lucky, we didn't mind stocktaking day at all and of course The Store was closed for that day.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what about, the other thing we forgot to talk about was with cash sales. Did they have like, just cash registers or ..

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh no, um the contraption we had for sending our cash dockets away to the cashier was like an overhead tram line. And ah the docket and money was placed on top of a kind of a small drum, and it was screwed up into another top, turned, and then a little pulley was, a little rope was pulled down, a little handle, and it would shoot across the department, (laughter) and go to the cashier and that's the same way you would receive your change.

**INTERVIEWER:** Mmm, So she'd write the docket out and send it back.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, she would ah, send you back your change and send back the docket. And ah, then later, a more advanced procedure, it was like a tube with an opening and ah, you would open it and the air would suck the docket and contents away downstairs to the cashier in that Department. And if she was a long time sending back your change and your customer was waiting you would open the flap and I understand it would go POP, POP, POP, down in her department, (laughter) and she wasn't very happy about it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Ah, to see why it was taking so long.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Yes, eventually she would send it back with a note saying don't do that.

**INTERVIEWER:** So all in all you would have enjoyed working at The Store?

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes and ah, had good relationship with your employees and ah, no hassles with them.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you see many of the "Big" Managers or ...

**INTERVIEWEE:** Oh yes. They were always through. Always walking through the Department, keeping an eye on everything.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right, well thanks very much for talking to me today, it was very good.

**INTERVIEWEE:** You're very welcome, I hope I have given you something to read about.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes thanks a lot.

**INTERVIEWEE:** To listen to I should say, (laughter)