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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

SUMMARY

Interviewee: Mrs Joyce Staley (ne Cummings)

Subject: Single Working Women in the Depression

Mrs Staley was born at West Wallsend on the ninth of September, 1918. She was one of a family of eight and her father worked as a baker and miner. Her father would sell bread from a cart and when he developed flour on the lungs, he went to work in the mines as a bricklayer, working weekends at the bakery. Most of the community worked in the mines just before the depression.

The family were very sports minded. Her mother played competition tennis until she was sixty five and her brothers also played competition tennis at a ver high standard. They also played soccer and one brother was a champion rollerskater.

In a discussion about politics, Mrs Staley asserted that, even though the community was labour, her father told her to vote for 'the man with the money' as they could pay the bills. She feels that the depression started because of labour mismanagement of the time.

Mrs staley was brought up in a strict protestant house-hold as her father was a lay preacher for the Methodist church. Everyone in the family attended services on Sunday and this was also a family get-together day.

The family lived in comfortable three bedroom home with a large veranda around it. This was typical of most house built at this time. Her father grew all of his own vegetables, grew fruit trees, and raised chickens and ducks. They were selfsufficent. Hunting was also a part of their lifestyle.

The community was very closeknit, that being picnic and cricket days and social engagements held at the churches. There was also a picture show and sometimes, live theatre was performed.

Mrs Staley can remember the banks closing and money being in short supply. Clothing was handed down from family to family and those who were better off helped out. Mrs Staley's father would deliver fruit and vegetables to those families in need and leave them on the doorsteps. She also could tell about the soup kitchens at the school and remembered that it went on for many years.

Because she was the youngest in the family it is difficult for her to remember her brothers and sisters as they married and left home.

Her father could not receive the dole because he owned houses

and a car. He sold these and lived off the money.

The hotes stayed open and some grocery stores also. Many people lived off credit. There were various market gardens in Wallsend run by Chinese.

Trams and trains ran through to West Wallsend via Cockle Creek and at the time it was a thriving community. Buses later took over.

Many hawkers wasked the streets and sold their wares. Mrs Staley remembers now famous people in business starting in this way.

Her education was basic and she attended West Wallsend Public School. She can remember the fancy dress parties and the fund raising. During those school years she also attended and ran church clubs. Each denomination interacted with each other which made for a close community.

Mrs Staley's first job was at the West Wallsend Postoffice. There she dispatched mail and worked the exchange. Later she was moved to Hamilton where she was in attendance on the day that World War II broke out. She remembers race days as the busiest on the exchange.

There were two Aboriginal families who lived in the town and, according to Mrs Staley, they were well liked and respected throughout the community. She did not feel discrimination was a problem.

Mrs Staley liked to sing and perform in public and found great pleasure in this. Today, she now feels that the world has it too easy and it was much harder back then.

All in all she has lived a very colourful and interesting life.

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permission to Lynne Staley

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Signed J Staley

Date 21/8/89

Interviewer L Staley

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT - Open Foundation 1989.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Subject: Single Working Women in the Depression.

Interviewer: Lynne Staley

Interviewee: Mrs Joyce Staley (ne Cummings)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

My name is Lynne Staley. I am interviewing Mrs Joyce Staley for the oral history project theme: Single Working Women in the depression. The date is 13th August 1989.

The place is West Wallsend.

My name is Joyce Cummings.

Q Your place of birth- where were you born.

A Wallace St, West Wallsend.

Q What Date.

A I was born on the 9/9/18

Q Your family background. Where your Mother and father worked.

A Well, I was the youngest of a family of eight and my father worked sometimes in the bakery and sometimes in the mine . My two brothers, they worked in the mine and one brother worked in a store. The girls, I don't know about them. I don't know whether they worked or not. I never heard of them going to work and they just lived at home.

Q You can't remember the description of the early days from your parents. Did they talk about it at all.

A No, they never ever talked about it. Oh, they used to have a kind of a bakery place. In at Wallsend . They used to bake bread. My father used to go around with the cart and sell it and then when they started they had a couple of children. Then it got too much so they decided to sell it and they went and lived at West Wallsend. As far as I know. He got a job in a bake house and then he got sick. He got flour on his lungs and they gave that up and where does he go which was stupid. To the mines to work (laughs). So he worked there as a brick layer I think and he worked there right up till I was Married and he used to do weekend at the bake house for the long weekends for the extra baking on those days.

Q There were a lot of mines in your region out there. A lot of miners.

A The main workforce was mining because there was the West Wallsend mine , Seahampton and There were some around, I don't know the names of them probably around the, what do you call that place, anyway there were other mines in the area but I just can't think of the name of them but everybody worked in the mines, it was the only work anybody had.

Q What about your family's leisure time. Hobbies ect.

A Oh well our family leisure time, my mother used to play tennis my brothers played tennis and mum played tennis until she was 65

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years old in the competition tennis with one of my brothers and the other brother who could have gone and played with Jack Crawford, you know he wanted him to join his troupe and he wouldn't go. So then they all finally got married and went their own way. They used to play football and one of my brothers was a champion Ice skater, Roller skating it would be in those days. He was a champion at that and two of them played soccer for the local soccer team, West Wallsend, which was always a flourishing team.

Q And what about politics and their attitudes to that.

A Oh well, in my day the only politics you ever heard of was the labour party, but my father told me when I was old enough to vote, that even if you are a labour constituency you have to vote for the man with the money. If they don't get in power then there is no money to run anything and that's how the depression came about. Labour was in power and that's what brought the depression. We were led to believe that anyway. I wasn't allowed to go to labour day picnics or anything like that (laughs). I went one day and came home and thought I was real clever cause I'd won a skipping race at the picnic and I got the belt for it (laughs).

Q What about religion.

A Well, we were brought up very religious. My father was a lay preacher for the Methodist church and we all went to church 3 times every Sunday and we lined up and everybody went and the sisters and brothers that were married, they came home on a Sunday. They used to bring a port full of food or whatever and they'd go to church too. They knew that my mum and dad wouldn't stay home from church on Sunday, if they went, everybody went. We were brought up like that right up till I got married.

Q What about the house and the surrounds. Where you lived.

A We had a nice house and there was 3 bedrooms in the house, a lounge room, a big dining room, a kitchen, the front veranda was glassed in up one end like an extra bedroom out there and we had big gardens. We never bought vegetables of any kind because my father grew everything and we had lots of fruit trees and we had chickens and ducks and we were pretty well self-supporting and when the depression came on the boys would go and shoot rabbits and wallabys or whatever and they would cook them. My brother used to breed pigeons, prized pigeons, he was the state champion and any birds that didn't come

out to their best, well he wrung their necks and so my mother used to cook them and then as little chickens and we'd have one each for a meal.

Q Can you remember what type of people there were in the town during the depression, what type of community there was.

A Oh look, people were very friendly towards one another because nobody had any money and they'd go down on to the park and they'd play cricket when it was cricket season, they'd scrape up enough money to probably go and buy one or two water melons, they'd all sit around and eat that and then when it was finished eating they'd pelt them at one another (laughs). The same with soccer. They used to do that when it was soccer season, they'd just all go down there and buy a few melons and..... we used to have good times(smiles) All your social engagements were connected to the church. You didn't think of going anywhere else. The picture show was closed down and it wasn't till getting on in the depression that the picture show opened up for a couple of days and a couple of nights a week and they used to give out free tickets on a Saturday for children to go to the matinee and you could line up and go down and get a ticket and go to the matinee afternoon. Didn't cost you anything, the proprietor used to put that on. Cause the picture show in those days was just a little shed thing (laughs), and we used to have forms to sit on and I used to have to carry my dads pillow to sit on (laughs). But when it opened up into the depression, as I said, it went into a proper theatre up into the main street. And I think it was the same man, I'm not sure, but I think it was the same man that opened it up up there. It was eventually closed down and then it came back a bit at a time, it just grew. The banks all closed. There was no banks. You couldn't get any money if you had money in the bank it was too bad. You just couldn't get it.

Q Did you find there was great povity within the people.

A Well, there were a lot of people that were in dire straites, they weren't as well off as we were. We always had plenty of food and we always made our own clothes. If anything got worn out we'd cut it down to the next one. Nothing got wasted and my father used to pick vegetables, I used to help him, all through the day and bundle them up in packets and whatever there was, carrots and radishes, parsnips, onions and in the summer, tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce potatoes, pumpkins and he had this big billy cart and he used to fill that up with all this stuff and when it got dark I used to go with him and I used to push the back of it cause it was so big and

and so heavy and we just used to take them and put them onto peoples front veranda or door step when it was dark so nobody would know who put them there. But I think a lot of them knew. And then they built a little hut up in the school grounds, the Primary school, a little tin shed and they used to make soup there and the butchers would give them the bones, my dad used to give them all the vegetables that made the soup and we'd go up there, they'd have rosters and the different ladies or men would come in and cook the soup then when it was ready we'd take them to the schools, the Catholic school, the high school as I think it was called and it would be called now and we'd serve it out. The kids used to bring their own mugs, we all used to bring a mug to school to put their soup in. Well, that went on for many years, I dont know how long but it was a long time.

Q What about your relationship with other members of the family.

A Oh well, I'm being the youngest, half of my sisters and brothers were married. I never ever remember them much in the home. My three eldest ones, I dont remember them being home, but the others, I can remember them getting married, having their children cause I used to have to go down and look after the house (laughs) feed the others while my sister was indisposed but we all got on real well. Everyone would help each other. Somebody had in their garden, or even your neighbours or anybody, whatever you had you swapped with somebody else that didn't have it and every, passed it around. Same with the chooks and that, if you got too many rabbits, if you got a lot of rabbits, you didn't have freezers in those days, you couldn't freeze things so you just had to pass them around, and we used to have lots of fish. My father was a great fisherman, and he'd go down and stay over night and fish all night he'd come home with a lot of fish and share that around. We always fared very well in the depression days. The only thing that really upset the family was that my father had to sell the homes that he used to own and he used to have to sell them off and we'd have to live off the money cause they wouldn't give us any dole and then when all the houses were sold, we had a car so, they said, "You can't get dole, Cummings, you've got a car." So he said, "I can't take the wheels off and eat them." and they says, " Well, go

home and prop it up and take the wheels off it and prop it up on blocks then come back next time and we'll think about giving you some dole." Which he did. But we used to get upset but my father used to say, the system wasn't fair, it wasn't right because lots of people we knew, even in our own street, all they ever done in their whole life was drink and gamble. They never had nothing to their names then you had to turn around cause you'd saved your money to provide for your family when they grew up you had to use that cause the government wouldn't give you anything .

Q What about your local shops, the first impressions of the local shops and businesses like the blacksmiths, hotels .

A The hotels , well the hotels they survived. I cant remember any of them closing down but some of the grossery shops and things closed down and the store was there and there was a shop called Whyles. It was a fairly big department store with grosserys and hardware and drapery and he was just struggling on, struggling to keep his business going. Then they won the lottery so that pulled them out and that helped a lot of people in the town cause he was able to give a lot of people credit that he couldn't give it to before. We knew them personally because we all went to the same church and I used to have to go there twice a week I think it was with vegetables and leave it at his house .

Q What about the market gardeners and farmers. Do you remember.

A There weren't exactly what you would call farmers in the West Wallsend area, none at all that I know of, never ever had like market gardens. There used to be chinese gardens at Wallsend but there was nothing like that at West Wallsend. You either grew your own or you bought it from the shop. There was no garden and the blacksmiths, there used to be one there for a while but that didn't last long because they used to have the trams running from West Wallsend to Wallsend and they used to have a train running through from West Wallsend. It used to go through to Cockle Creek I think It was called and then you changed trains there to go through to Newcastle or you caught another tram. They eventually went. The trains went off first , that was cut out first and then the trams were eventually

cut out and there was no transport for a while then people call by the name of Johnsons, they bought a bus and they started running a bus service and thats still going today as far as I know from West Wallsend to Wallsend is Johnsons Bus service .

Q What about the hawkers. Can you remember the people who came to the door .

A Oh yes , they were always coming around to the door. Sometimes they'd be Chinese , sometimes they were just ordinary people but they'd have their suitcases with all their little things in them and you could buy things. You didn't have to pay cash for them cause nobody had much money and you could pay them off. That Mr Creigh from Maitland, he's a big business man now. That's how he started his life, hawking around with a suitcase. He's got an enormous business up in Maitland.

Q Can you tell me about the education and the schooling .

A We had two schools in the grounds at the public school. The primary and the kindergarten were separate down in one part of the land and then up above you went to the high school is what they call it now . You went up to sixth class I think it was and you got your high school certificate when you passed that. I dare say that's equivalent to going to a high school. But you could go into Platésburge to a high school in there but most of them still went to Westy school. You always had a good education there and we always had teachers, very good teachers, they were all very nice and they used to be friendly if they were having or running fund raising things like fancy dress. We called them frolics. But the school they used to run them a bit different. They used to.... each class would choose eight persons in their class and they'd choose a costume that they were going to wear and that was kept secret. Everybody went to the playground and practiged for their dance but you darn't tell anybody else what you were going to wear because it was a big secret. They used to give prizes for the best and and the fanciest and, you know, the simplest

and they'd have a prize for the best dancing and that. It used to be a big night in those days for everybody, the whole town went (laughs).

Q Was it very competitive at school. Did you find that.

A Oh yes. It was very competitive at school. It was just the same as it is today. Its no different. To me it wasn't. We used to have our art teacher and our biology and cooking and your usual things, mathamatics and english. What else? We used to have some sort of science,we used to have algebra. I used to hate that.(laughs) I could always manage to get it right but I could never understand it(laughs). The teacher would say'stand up anybody who cant understand that', and I'd stand up and then she'd take me out to the table and I'd go out, and she'd say 'What's wrong with you, thats right.' Then I'd say 'Yes, but I don't know how I do it '. (laughs).

Q O.K. What about your years as a teenager and a young adult.

A Well, our young life, is like I said, everything, you had to make your own entertainment. You couldn't go to the picture show, you couldn't anywhere. They didn't have bingo in those days. They had had socials or concerts. A lady spoke to me just the other day. I went to a bowls carnival and she said she can remember when I used to put on penny concerts at Wallsend Hospital (laughs). And thats a damm long time ago.(laughs) She remembered that. She come up and spoke to me, youknow. It gave you a sort of a thrill.But you only had that. Up at the church they had three clubs going, like we'd call them clubs. One was for the juniors called the Rays and that went up to age 12 or 13 I think. And from then on up to 21 was the seniors, they were the Cmrades and then they had the boys and they were called the Knights and they used to have their club nights and I used to run some of them and each night you had your meeting you'd have a different program for the children. Some nights you had spelling and some nights you had memory tests. I'd put a lot of articles out and give them so long to look at it. Then I'd give them a piece of paper and let them write down what they could remember and some nights I used to take all bits of material there and I would buy little celulluloid dolls and the children would dress them and we used to send them to the Islands through

the mission of the church. And I used to give a prize for the girl that, just a little gift, whoever dressed their doll the best so you made sure they were all nice (laughs). We used to have umm, well, there was the Presbyterian church and there was the Baptist church. The Church of England never socialised with any of the others. They sort of kept to themselves but the Baptist, Presbyterian and the Methodist, well, we'd go and the 'Pressy' boys and girls would ask us to their night and we'd ask them to our nights so sort of. It was always mixed and we used to play 'postmans knock' all this kind of thing, the usual parlor games. Then we'd have big nights. I used to go around and collect money from the business people. They couldn't give you money but the parents of the children, so we could have a big night for a celebration for our instalation night, the parents couldnt give money but they gave you half a token for bread and I used to take that and sell back to the baker and he would give me the money and I could go and buy sweets, lollies or he'd give me some bread or meat or something and the fruit shops used to give me spec fruit to make fruit salad.

Q This was during the depression?

A Yes, it was all in the depression days. So we always had our good times.

Q What about your first job? Discribe It.

A The first job I ever had was at the West Wallsend postoffice. I was coming home from school one day and I saw the notice on the board so I went home and wrote an application but I didn't tell mum and dad. It wasn't till the postmaster came down to see me about the job that they knew about it. But anyway I got the job. It started as part time relief when the other girls went off on their holidays and I eventually worked in full time and you only worked there till you were twenty then you had to leave because the wages were too high to keep you there but you could go to Newcastle or perhaps into Wallsend or Hamilton. You had to go and do an exam and they sent you to one of those if you passed it so I went to Hamilton. The man said Mr..... I forget the area supervisors name. He Said he'd send me to Hamilton because there were more Protestants there. There was too many Catholics in at Newcastle(laughs). Seeing I was Protestant he thought I might be better there. (laughs).

Q Can you describe the type of work you did on the exchange.

A Well, on the exchange you had too, you had so many subscribers

I forget just how many there was but..... and then you had so many lines coming in from Newcastle. You'd have one to Homesville and one to Wallsend. I think we had two direct lines to Newcastle. Then there was one line where you could either pick Newcastle or Wallsend or Young Wallsend on the same lines so you had to have a code ring so when you rang..... and if they were ringing me and wanted West Wallsend, I'd have to listen to that little bell ringing , you know, you'd work out if it was three dashes and a dot it was South Wallsend (laughs) If it was something else, it was Wallsend (laughs).

Q So it ran on a code system?

A Yes. On some of them. You'd call them party lines I supposed. You had direct lines too. And you used to have to..... I used to start work at, I think, it was eight o'clock one one shift. We did broken shifts because you weren't employed a full day. You only done like part time and you used to start work at eight o'clock and the mail would be there and you would have to clear the letter box , and sort the mail and tie them up into their bundles which you soon learned and dispatch it. Fill in the dispatch book. The bus would stop out the front and the bus conductor would come and take the mail away. Well the same thing happened in the morning. He'd drop one in and we would give him one to take out.

Q What were the particular problems that occurred with this system.

A Well, I don't know that I noticed any problems in it. Cause if you done that shift when you done the mails and that you only worked till lunchtime and sometimes you might have to go back at five o'clock and work till five til ten. It all depends on the day. On old age pension day was the biggest day. I used to work on that day and you get to know all the people and there were problems like, say people had their pension cards and somebody had died and they hadn't handed them in, you used to have to watch for them cause some of them would bring them up and try to use them and you had to check the numbers as you were stamping them and if you found one that didn'tshouldn't be there you just have to tell the boss and he would have to fix it up (laughs).

Q There were no problems with the system itself. The way the phones came in and out ?

A No, no problems causeten o'clock at night when you worked on the night shift you had to plug the doctor's line through to Wallsend on one and the other doctor through on the other line because people had an all night service for emergencies for the doctors.

Q What about breakdowns on the line? Were there many lines that would go out of service.

A Not that I ever noticed that much because I don't suppose there would be that bigger work on it. The biggest day when there was a lot of problems was race day cause the hotels used to ring up and put a lot of bets through and cause you learn how to handle that. I used to just take (laughs) them all when I got used to it and they all be ringing the one number so I used to tell them and I'd stick them all on together and let them fight it out themselves (laughs) .But the hotel fellow used to think it was great so every weekend after the racing was over there'd be a box of chocolates for us the next day. (laughs)

Q What about your income for that job.

A I can't remember what I got. I wouldn't have a clue. But I was earning more money than my boyfriend. I was getting more money than him. I can't remember what it was but we used to say it would be better for me to work and him stay home and keep house (laughs). But he worked at the postoffice too. He used to work on as a night shift on the switch and postman through the day.

Q What about your work relationships with employees. How did you get on with them?

A Oh, I got on with people because I was very well known in the town and I was the Miss Cummings in those days and everybody knew me. If anybody wanted anything they always used to come and see me cause I used to go around on behalf of the church. If I knew families that didn't have enough clothing I would see that they got some and if they didn't have enough I would see that they got food and I just used to do that cause I used to go around collecting..... people used to pay threepence a fortnight towards the church and I used to go around and collect it and, of course, you get in contact with all the different homes and I always got on very well with all the people. Everybody was very friendly.

Q What about work stability? How was your job as a stable position.

A Oh, it was a stable position cause.....well, you had to learn it to do it. Anybody just couldn't walk and do the job they had to be trained. You had to go and learn. Cause I didn't have a clue what I'd be doing. I just wanted to see if I could get the job and the head master said it would be a good job for me cause I used to do elocution in those days and they said it would be good job for me cause I spoke well. Well I used to..... I got the job. If anyone's telephone number was changed. youknow, how they do sometimes. Now its different. They tell you to ring suchand such number and they'll tell what the new one is but in those days we just use to put a red button in that particular number jack and I'd go on then and I'd take it out then and tell them your phone number has been changed; 'This is the PMG department. Your telephone number has been changed to 905468. (laughs) I used to get that job because I used to talk good (laughs).

Q Now, can you remember changes like when you first started to work, how it progressed through right to when you married during those depression years. On the job.

A Oh, well it just sort of went along, you never seemed to think about it being depression days because they closed the bank but as things sort of..... eventually it started to lift a bit. They had banking done at the postoffice but other than that I never noticed a great deal of hardship or anything. It was the life you had you didn't know any other. Things were very cheap. I used to pay 4 pc. a yard for material to make dresses. If you payed 6pc. you had very expengive one (laughs).

Q What about the quality of the things that were bought during that time.

A Oh, very good quality. Yes, I've married a long time and just a couple of years ago I found petty coats that was my babies thing and they were better than the things that people are buying today. Better quality. There was no shortage of things really cause in a mining community and in the country everybody does whatever you wanted. If you couldn't do it you done without. That's all. If you couldn't make it or cook it or that well you didn't have it. You didn't pay for anybody to do anything.

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Q Were there any Aboriginal families in West Wallsend.

A Well, there were two, I would say . One lived down the street from us and the father was Aboriginal but the mother was a white woman and they used to be friendly with us, the boys and the girls and they were very beautiful girls and they eventually married white people and some of the children were dark when they were borne and some of them were white. I remember my mother sending me to see one woman one day to get a message about something from the church and this fuzzy-wuzzy came to the door. I just looked at her and thought 'Im crazy'. But anyway, she said to me 'Don't you know who I am, Joyce.' and I said 'No'. She said 'I'm Mrs Darrington'. 'Oh'. I said. She said 'Did your mother send you up', and I said, 'Yes', and I told her the message and I went home and I couldn't get in the house quick enough to tell my mother about the black fellow being up in Mrs Darrington's house (laughs).

Q Why was it so unusual to see this lady when you had known her before.

A Because she always wore white makeup on her face. I don't know what she used but she used to sing in the church choir. She was a beautiful singer and she was nice looking. She had beautiful black curly hair like they have and she used to wear this white makeup. I didn't know she was black till that day.....never ever knew and she had a sister who lived up the road and she was almost white, you could hardly tell the difference but her daughter, Mrs Darrington's daughter, she was sort of half and half , you know, you would say she would have a lovely suntan but that was in her blood, you know, Shirly, they only ever had Shirly and she was a good singer too. Then there was another dark family and I dont know where they lived when they were living in the town, I cant remember where they used to live , anyway one of the girls who lived over the road from us got entangled with one of them and she had to get married so she married him and they went to live up in Seahampton. Well the first child she had was white with blond fair curly hair but the next one was a pure little pickaninny (laughs) and the others all were. It was just the first one that wasn't dark but a lot of the people used to down her for marrying him but he seemed to be a

good man and he was a gentleman and they found out that there was no difference in them to us, you know, there was only certain people used to down them sort of but most of the community excepted them as they were.

Q So you didn't find a lot of racism at all.

A No. There was no racism. I can't ever remember anyone objecting or being nasty to them as the saying is. They always treated them the same as they did anybody else. Cause we didn't have a lot of them in the town, only those two that I can remember.

Q Did they mix freely with everybody.

A Well, the Muir family did. They mixed in everything. 2 of their sons went on to be very high people in the government positions, two of their sons and with the other family, they sort of kept to themselves and they didn't mix with the rest of us. They just kept to themselves. The children would come and play with us at school but once they went out of school they just went with their parents and stayed at their own place. They were more or less kept isolated.

Q Involvement in charitable organisations, were you involved in any.

A Oh, yes. I used to. The Salvation Army used to come there. I used to recite and teach a few kids things and we used to put on a little concert at the Salvation Army to raise money for them and I used to do the same with Presbyterian church and for the Baptist church and the Church of England and the Catholic church (laughs). And we'd have concerts and that and sometimes they would have what they would call a big concert and they'd have a lot of people come up from Sydney and myself and two lads, Wilson McReay was one and Raymond Goldsmith and myself were the only local people on the program and they were beautiful singers, those boys, they both went off to bigger things. Wilson McReay was the boy who sings in the 'Silence of Dean Maitland' in the movie. It's his voice that you hear in that and Raymond traveled Australia as the golden boy soprano but I don't know what's become of them now. I met Wilson once. As far as I know he's living a normal married life in the suburban area (laughs). It's just the same.

Q What about involvement with local government and political groups.

A We never ever heard of any of those. There used to be a bit of a political group down in a place called Barnsley. They used to meet down there but we were never involved in any of it.

Q What about personal experiences in your working years. Anything funny happen during those years.

A There was different things. One night I was on the 5 to 10 shift and it was just about time to go home and this telegram come. Cause you used to take the telegram and send the telegram, that was part of your work besides answering the switch board, you have to serve on the counter and as a matter of fact I used to be in charge of the safe and I used to have to check the contents of it, stamps and what money and everything was in there. That was part of my job but this night I was just about to leave and this telegram came for these people, Douglas, I think their name was. They lived right up in the bush, a long way up on Cocked Hat as we used to call the hill, the mountain or whatever, and they had to meet a train at 2 o'clock in the morning so I just took it up there and delivered it and when I went to work in the morning the postmaster said to me 'Joyce, what about this telegram for Douglases here', he said. 'I see you've got it down.' I said 'Oh, I took it up and delivered it'. And cause he went mad then about me going up there (laughs) in the middle of the night to take this telegram so after that he used to get the police to come and call every night to see if there was any messages . (laughs) I wouldn't do it now.

Q Can you give me an overall view of how things have changed now from then. What are the most important things that have changed at West Wallsend now.

A Well, in the depression days, by the time they were to their end the town had fallen away. It was nearly like a ghost town. There weren't many people there and they came to live around the Lake Macquarie area where they could fish, catch prawns and sell what they didn't want and things like that for a bit of money, but then gradually the mines started up again. People gradually moving back and settling in again. The town sort of went ahead. The Store finally closed down, most of it. Instead of having such a big building, they used to have a whole section of a block . Well they only opened up in about half of that and brought it more

up to date. You could go and buy anything you wanted at the store. If they didn't have it you just told them and they just got it in. It didn't matter what it was. Then my work changed up at the postoffice. I was 20 now and so you got put off when you were 20. They can't keep you there because its only part time, the wage was too high and I went to work in at Hamilton. Well, there were no trams and no trains in those days and you used to have to catch the bus and they only had so many buses a day and when I was working in at Hamilton the girls that came down from Maitland, they'd be home an hour before I was (laughs) because I'd have to catch the tram out to Wallsend then I'd have to wait at Wallsend to catch a bus to West Wallsend and some shifts there were just no buses and my father had to come in and pick me up. I used to wait in Dr. Pettinger's surgery until my dad came to pick me up and he would take us home. Sometimes there would be another girl with me. She didn't work with me but she was often there at the same time so she would come home with us. But things just sort of came to gradually grow. The people these days dont realise how well off they are because you couldn't just say 'Im going to do this' 'Im going to go there', cause you just couldn't. You didn't have the money. Nobody had money. You got a piece of paper from the government which was issued to you, slips and it would have so much tea, so much sugar or so much butter and you would take it to the grocer that you named, that you got your things from and you could go up there and get those things, but other that that you didn't have money. My sister next to me, she got a job in Wallsend then she got 10 shillings a week, which was a fortune and I was working by this too. I forget how much I used to get. I used to work in at the Hamilton exchange and I was working there the day war was declared and they only have a skeleton staff on a weekend and there was fifteen thousand subscribers and I was there by my self cause war was declared and there was shutters dropping everywhere and I thought 'Oh God, what am I going to do', (laughs) anyway I just answered them as I could and I wrote down who they wanted as I just went through them and got all their numbers eventually. Everything went off, I never heard any complaints or anything and the next day when the boss came to work she said (Miss Johess) 'How did you manage yesterday.' I said 'Oh, alwright', and she said 'any complaints', and I said 'No'. She thought she was coming in to see a whole lot. of complaints. I said 'No there was no complaints', and she said 'How did you manage'. I told her. I just

pulled the plug out and go down there and take all them and come to this board and take all them and I told her I just went through them automatically and sorted them out and got them all through. But she told me I should have rung through to Newcastle to ask for assistance. I told her I never thought of doing that because you didn't do that at West Wallsend. You just managed the best way you could. If there was an emergency you just did it and that was that. They were all pleased with it. I went up a bit in that (laughs) estimation. Then there was a accident. Quite a big fire down on one of the streets one day. It was when I was on shift and I got the ambulance and the fire brigade and the police. They rang up and congratulated the supervisor on the excellent service, and that was me (laughs). They were pleased with the way it was handled. But just sort of went along and excepted things. These days if they can't get a new dress or hat or something they go into a willy but you didn't, you just never ever thought about those things you just saved a couple of shillings when ever you could then you would go and buy something. Nobody seemed to worry about it like they do these days. As long as you had enough to manage with and live in comfort in your home you didn't worry about all the other things. We didn't have washing machines in those days, we didn't have a bathroom, we had what was called a wash-house and you used to get washed in a big tin tub but these days young people have got to have everything; haven't they? They've got to have electrical ~~coplong~~ utensils and stoves and washingmachines. I can remember when I first got married I had a copper out in an old shed and I used to put my swim costume on to do the washing because it would be so hot(laughs). Cause you would have to put the wood under the boiler to boil the copper up. (laughs) But I can't see the young people these days doing it. They'd do without. They wouldn't do that.

Q So you feel there were a lot of big changes since you were young.

A There's been a lot of big changes in their life to what we had because they get so much so easy so quick now, don't they? If you wanted a new dress you saved up six months for it, nine shillings to go and buy a dress or six shillings and these days that's nothing to them They spend more on a drink that would buy you a weeks feed in the depression. The young people, these days, its a shame cause they dont appreciate what they have got and the good life that they have. With all the advantages that they have now.