

The summary of an interview with Mr. Ray Cummings husband of Joy Cummings, the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia. Mr. Cummings spoke of his wife's activities and highlights whilst in the Newcastle City Council.

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PHYLLIS SOUTHALL.

Australian History Class.

Wednesday Evening.

Summary Paper.

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Following her husband's interests in the Newcastle City Council, who was then an alderman in North Ward in the early 1960s, Joy became conversant with the affairs of council and civic events. Ray moved out of the City Council not seeking further re-election. Joy moved in.

The issue of the elimination of the beautiful Morston Bay fig trees in the Islington Park, offered Joy the opportunity as a candidate to join the City Council in the Triennial Election in 1968 in East Ward. East Ward consists of Mayfield, East Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton the industrial suburbs and she was elected quite comfortably.

Environmental and conservation issues considered of great importance at the time but to Joy it was something Newcastle people should become conversant with.

The destruction of the avenue of trees in the Birdwood Park, the Highway 23 through Blackbutt Reserve were two of many controversial issues attacked by Joy.

Concernation of the unemployed young women in the area, produced a change of heart amongst the big companies in the employment of these young women. Establishments such as Newcastle City Council, the abattoirs, the Red Mill section of the B.H.F., and the Taxation Office are only a few of many who became involved with the issue of the unemployed young women in the area.

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Friday night dances held at Tyrrell House brought Ray and Joy together, culminating in their marriage at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle in February, 1946. The family of three daughters and one son kept Joy active in the community.

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Newcastle. Australia's first woman Lord Mayor, where she remained for nine out of the next ten years. Elected to Lord Mayor three times with overwhelming majority.

Nominated in 1974 for the Order of Australia and received the award from the Queen in Canberra in 1975. Only one of many awards to be received by Joy.

The conversion of Hunter Street for the Mall, the restorations of Newcastle Surf Club and Nobby's Surf Pavilion, the development of Pacific Park, Warabrook Estate, the new Conservatorium of Music and the cosy little Hunter Valley Theatre Co., are small in comparison to the Foreshores Development of the East End of Newcastle bestowed by Joy to the populace of Newcastle.

Serving on the College of Advanced Education and the University Councils, Joy set up "Friend's of the University," which still operates to-day.

Patron of over five hundred clubs and organisations in Newcastle and district, attending each one at least once a year.

The relationship of the sister city of Ube in Japan was established in 1981. The Mayor and a group of Aldermen from Ube with some powerful industrialists came to Newcastle to cement the relationship.

Newcastle has the largest collection of Japanese Art in Australia, Japanese sculpture has been placed in our parks and gardens. The teaching of Japanese culture to the students at Newcastle University.

A tremendous welcome received by the Marching Koalas Band on their successful trip to Japan.

The untimely decision of retirement was forced upon Joy Cummings, who has suffered a debilitating stroke, affecting the use of her right arm and leg also impairment to her speech.

Her formal resignation of Lord Mayor of Newcastle and Alderman of East Ward was received by the Town Clerk on Monday, August 13, 1984.

A Transcription of a Taped Interview with
Ms Ray Cummings - husband of Jay Cummings former
Lord Mayor of Newcastle. 2/6/88

Student Phyllis Southall, Open Foundation Course, University of Newcastle, interviewing Ms Ray Cummings, husband of Jay Cummings, Former Lord Mayor of Newcastle, speaking of Jays activities and highlights whilst in the Newcastle City Council. Jay were you a Novocastrian? were you born in Newcastle No. Jay was born in Arncliffe in Sydney on the 23rd December 1923, and lived in the Sydney area until she was 16 years of age prior to coming to Newcastle she was residing at the seaside town of Ramsgate. Jay what were you and your family involved with in Sydney, Jays family life in Sydney consisted of herself, her brother, her parents and her grandfather. They moved regularly from place to place, because her father was at that stage an officer in the N.S.W. Fire Brigade and living in fire brigade quarters, they were often moved from place to place. Jay whose parents were actively involved in the Labor Party in the early days of Jack Lang in fact they were personal friends of the famous J.T. Lang, her parents and all her relatives ^{in Sydney} always had a ^{picture} photo of J.T. Lang on the walls of their homes. Jays mother herself was the secretary of the Ramsgate Branch of the Australian Labour Party until she moved to Newcastle, Jays father was a adventurous spirit, before joining the Fire Brigade he was great friend of a Mr Holden, who was famous for the advent of the Holden motor car and he eventually went to work for Mr Holden in their factory, Mr Holden had a fixed wing plane in those days, which he operated from Bankstown Airport

and Jay's father learnt to fly and flew regularly with Mr. Holden on one occasion he came to Newcastle and landed the plane on Newcastle Showground when the plane had to take off they had to have groups of men on either side holding the wings until they got enough revs. up so the plane to take off and rise steeply and it would not hit the fences or the buildings near by. He flew regularly with Mr. Holden until after Jay was two or three, her mother became fearful that he may have an accident and so he gave away flying, Jay's grandfather also lived with them, he was an Englishman and lived in the Liverpool area of England and his parents had paid for him to be a midshipman on the sailing ships. And this was to prove a wonderful source of information for Jay, who often listened to him talking about the Cutty Sark the and other famous sailing ships throughout the world, and Jay's love of the ocean and sailing ships is to prove a vital aspect in the life, in the later in life of Lord Mayor of the City Council. Jay was actively involved in sport it seemed as if anything she put her hand at, she became quite proficient at. She was a tennis player of quite renown in the local club she had advanced to what we would call an 'A' grade tennis player and in those days she involved in ice skating, very proficient at figure ice skating and also swimming, where she had lived at Ramsgate for many years, quite close to the Ramsgate Baths. Diving and swimming just came naturally to her, and of course her active sports life was to prove a vitally important to her resourcefulness later in public life in Newcastle. When did you and family come to Newcastle? Jay's father was transferred to Newcastle

in 1942, they came to reside in Discount Flats in Telford Street, Newcastle, which is now the site of the beautiful fountain in Pacific Park, we met at the local dances held in Tyrrell Hall held on Friday nights and then four years later we were married on the 9th February 1946. at Christchurch Cathedral.

After you married Jay where did you reside? We lived at Mayfield, where we resided for the next thirty four years and raised a family of three girls and a boy. At what stage Jay did you become involved with the municipal council affairs? Jays interest in municipal affairs first began when I was elected to the Newcastle City Council in the early 1960s, I served a term of three years but I wasn't greatly interested and decided not to seek a second term but that was an opening and Jay became quite conversing with the trappings of council and civic affairs. When did you first decide to enter local government? As a family we had been involved in many issues in the local community but in early 1967 there had been a move to eliminate the avenue of the beautiful Morton Bay fig trees in Islington Park, this became an issue with Jay and she took up the cudgels and decided to fight on this issue, and a local alderman of the council was due to retire at the triennial elections in 1968, and Jay decided to offer herself as a candidate and that was when she first entered the Newcastle City Council as an alderman of the East Ward. Who was Lord Mayor at the time? Alderman Doug, Mc Dougall was mayor at the time. Jay, what was some of your activities in the council when you elected? When Jay was elected to East Ward, it was quite a unique happening, because,

East Ward consisted of the very industrial suburbs of Mayfield East, Tynes Hill, Islington, Wickham Carrington and Stockton it was something unique that a woman should be entering the council from that type of area where the majority of the residing in that area were employed in the waterfront, shipping, seaman and the heavy industries, however, she stood on a ticket and she was elected quite comfortably. In those days voting was not compulsory and there was a lot of hard work put into the effort to get sufficient people along to record their vote, however, she had no trouble getting elected on that occasion.

Her next six years on the council involved the lots of issues in those days, the environment wasn't considered of a great deal of importance, but, to Jay it was something that the Newcastle people should become conversant with, it affected their life styles, of them and their future children and of the area.

We know that the beautiful avenue of trees along Islington still remain, but, some important issues to come up in the next six years, particularly the destruction of an avenue of trees in Birdwood Park, Birdwood Park had been a park that had been allowed to, more or less deteriorate and it was allowed and used mainly for circuses and such that come to Newcastle, no beautiful development in it. It was always a possibility that the park could become established into a lovely park for the people of Newcastle to rest. The trees had been planted in a form of a square and were at least a hundred years old, and had grown majestically. The idea was to widen Parkway Ave. and to put a road through the continuation of King Street, right through the

Centre of the park, the issue had been debated and caused quite a lot of controversy, in Newcastle City Council, Joy made many impassionate speeches on it prior to the actual involvement of it, the destruction of the trees, it took place at a very early hour one morning and Joy received a phone call seven o'clock one morning to say that they were already using bulldozers and circular saws to destroy the trees, she immediately went in and already groups of people were bracing themselves before the trees and trying to prevent their destruction and to look at some other method of opening up an avenue into the centre of the city without going and destroying a park. Highway 23 to Blackbutt Reserve was a very controversial issue which many people took a great interest in, in Newcastle, the Council meetings were packed, people standing out in the corridors to hear the debates on this vital issue. Joy had taken up the cudgels on, that the highway should never go through the reserve, that the reserve would be destroyed in its value, and she made again many impassionate speeches, often when she'd make her speech in Newcastle the people were cheering and clapping, giving her great encouragement to keep up her fight for this issue and issues such as this. Fortunately, the highway didn't go through the reserve and today Newcastle has that majestic reserve out at Blackbutt that is visited by crowds of people almost daily. Joy was vitally interested in that the employment of women in Newcastle being the leading industrial city of Australia, there wasn't a great deal of avenue for work, for young women in the city, she was a great advocate in the early

days for women to be employed, by the police department, this was before women were now employed actually on the beat. Her idea in those days was that they could be engaged in the offices doing typing and such and relieve more police in those days to actual ^{work} ~~work~~ on what they called patrolling the streets. She became a great advocate for women to be employed in the Council and abattoirs, she felt that there were avenues there for employment in the packaging department, some of the media in Newcastle, took the issue up as a being not worthy and was moreover castigating her, "how could employees be engaged in slaughtering animals" and that and of course anyone with common sense would know this wasn't Jay's idea and of course later on, large numbers of female workers being employed in the packaging dept of the abattoirs. Later on when she became Lord Mayor, she had been invited to open, the new very high technical Rodmill of the B.H.P. and she was quite amazed at the technology in which steel was being rolled and poured into the products to be used and she felt then that there was an avenue for women to be employed in this type of employment. There was some hostility from some of the unions at the time, that they, in those days felt that the women shouldn't be employed in the heavy industry, of course this isn't the case today, many women are employed in this form of work, later on she was greatly involved with the having the Taxation Office being built in Newcastle because, she realised that the large majority of persons employed in that would be females. Another issue which caused a great deal of controversy was, when Jay introduced a resolution

in the Council which was asked for support to stop the needless slaughter of whales, most aldermen left it was of no concern of them, the city or its people, Jay again gave one of her finest speeches on value and the quality of life, for her, her children and future generations of Newcastle. She told how she loved to take the children to the high spots of Newcastle Beach to watch the whales passing Newcastle, diving, spouting and would often with their calves. This was something that could be lost forever, and to her it was a tremendous importance, newcastrians to enjoy. The resolution was carried, the Newcastle media largely ignored the issue, however, it must have been recorded interstate and overseas, as she received mail from New Zealand and every state, The upshot was that she was invited to become a Trustee of the World-Wildlife Fund of Australia. You were first elected ~~Jay~~ to the position of Lord Mayor in 1974, yes there was a triannual election in 1974, and the group that Jay represented received the majority on the Council. The position of Lord Mayor in those days was election by the aldermen of the Council, not by the public she was approached by the majority of her members and asked to stand for the position and this she done and consequently in September 1974 became the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia. I understand that there were some notable achievements and awards given to Jay during her term of Lord Mayor, yes there were, I'll talk about her awards first, she was granted, the Federal Government had instituted the first purely Australian award known as the Order of Australia, in the time of Prime Minister Whitlam and Jay was nominated for this award and she

received the award in 1976, and she travelled to
 Canberra and she received the award from the Queen,
 these were the first recipients of this purely Australian
 award. Later after Jay had suffered her stroke in
 early in 1984, the City Council decided to award
 Jay the freedom of the City, this had been a ceremony
 that ~~the~~ ^{had been} instituted during the term of Jay as Lord Mayor
 and there were already two recipients of this award.
 The first was the late Lord Mayor of Newcastle
 Alderman Frank Purdue and the second was a former
 Lord Mayor and a Government Minister in the Federal
 Government Mr. Charlie Jones. Jay, the Councillor
 awarded Jay the award in May, 1984 and it was to
 be left at her discretion when she was ready to
 participate in the ceremony to be receive the award.
 This was because Jay had suffered the stroke and
 they were leaving it to her, to judge for herself
 when she thought she would be well enough. This
 took place in October 1987, at a beautiful ceremony
 in the City Hall, attended by some hundreds of people,
 and she was in fact the first recipient of this award.
 To be honoured as a Freeman of the City of Newcastle.
 Jay's achievement are there today to be enjoyed
 by us all, could you elaborate more on them, yes, I
 suppose we could talk on them, about the Mall in
 Newcastle, Newcastle City had, had a Mall for some
 years, but it wasn't what you'd call a proper mall.
 Traffic still travelled the centre street and it wasn't
 used by people who could walk indiscriminately through
 out the area. Jay was involved in the Queensland
 Company to develop the Mall into the beautiful place
 that it is to day, paving shrubs and trees, hanging
 baskets and the conversion of the City Council owned

properties, that had become quite dilapidated, and at this time, there was a depressed economic factor in spending money, to do up old buildings, the City Council took the initiative and we had those old City Council buildings refurbished and they look quite beautiful, in the area which was formally that the Strand Theatre, The old Newcastle Surf Pavilion had become quite dilapidated and suffering from the exposure to sea air and was crumbling, it was decided to develop a new surfing pavilion and public ancillaries use by the public on the beach. That beautiful development is up there now without any high structure to cast shadows on the beach and is a popular place now for the people of Newcastle. To get to the beach area, they also decided that a subway should be constructed so that family groups, young people wouldn't have to cross the busy street to get to this beautiful beach of Newcastle. Another development on the beach front was the Nobbys Surf Pavilion, this had also become quite almost unusable because of rust and falling into decay, there was a move to have this building demolished, but, I think Jay and some other members of the Council could see that it was a beautiful building and it could be recycled and which it was, and it is now one of beautiful of the building on the beaches up there at Nobbys. Pacific Park was always an area that had been suffered from a winds and exposure to the southern elements when they swept across from the beach and the ocean area into the park and had this capacity of this damaging the trees and the

garden and so forth. It was decided to seek the advice
 of some of Australia's leading landscape architects Mr.
 Bruce McKenzie and from his ideas that the
 beautiful Pacific Park which we have now developed
 with a huge mound, ^{which} people didn't realise what the
 idea was, and this was to protect the park
 from the ravages of the cold wind, cold salt
 air winds that would come in from the sea.
 The park is one of probably Newcastle's most beautiful
 at the present time, with its beautiful fountain,
 and its area for entertainment, music and ban.
 After the Newcastle Obitters closed down, we had a
 large area of land at Mayfield West, again they
 used the same company, a Queensland company,
 to develop, and this is now become one of the
 prestige new suburbs of Newcastle, called Warabrook.
 The N.S.W. Conservatorium of Music in Newcastle
 had for many years operated in the old Library
 Building and it was to move, they had no
 where to go and it was through the good
 gracious of Jay, through her contacts in the N.S.W.
 Government, she was able to persuade them to
 purchase the old Peoples Palace, Salvation Army's
 Peoples Palace and that became refurbished and
 that became the Conservatorium of Newcastle. Jay
 gave great encouragement to live theatre in
 Newcastle, it had been struggling to become
 recognised and to be accepted by the people and
 they didn't have a, their own theatre and she
 was able to get the Council to develop
 the Old Civic Winter Garden and this became
 the home of the Hunter Valley Theatre Co, and it still
 operates here to this day, quite successfully. They

still have their seasons of live theatre. And it's
 one of the nicest little theatres I've seen. It is, it's
 a lovely theatre, ^{Jays} much involved with
 various aspects of public life here in Newcastle,
 yes, in fact it was just after Jay was elected
 Lord Mayor in Sept 1974, that cyclone Tracy happened
 and Darwin was destroyed, at Christmas-time,
 that year, we had gone away for a slight holiday
 up the valley, to have a three day break and
 we heard on the wireless and on the television that
 Darwin had been destroyed, Jay immediately
 cancelled our holidays and we travelled back to
 Newcastle that night and her secretary Mrs Joan
 Lamb had already set up the paraphernalia for
 opening a Lord Mayoral Appeal, this was to be one
 of the first big local official appeals Newcastle had
 ever experienced, of course, it was a devastating
 event and Newcastle and the people were only too
 pleased to help, it entailed a tremendous work by
 Jay, she had to attend gatherings from breakfast
 time till midnight, not only in Newcastle area but
 all up the valley, up the Nelson Bay area, and in
 the Lake Macquarie area. People were lined up in
 the corridors, in the corridors of the City Hall waiting
 to set up tables to receive money, tables were set
 up in the mall and Jay, I can remember Jay up
 there to see how they were going and people were
 coming across and putting money into her hands
 and she had to sit down herself at the table and
 start issuing receipts herself. Jay became involved
 with the University life in Newcastle, she had had
 close contact with the Vice-Chancellor of the University
 and she was officially invited to become a member

of the University Council and she served her term on that for a period of two years. This was also carried out with the College of Advanced Education, she also served on that Council for a period. The University Council, while she was a member of that, she was involved in setting up, what was known as Friends of the University, and this Society still operates, raises funds for various aspects of University life. Because of the part Jay had played in the University, after she had suffered her stroke, the University decided to award her the honorary degree of Master of Arts. The whole family attended this ceremony the conferring of the awards and it was an really beautiful sight when Jay was awarded this honour and the whole of the audience raised to their feet and gave a public acclamation. A most deserving person. There was always speculation how Jay would be received by the various R.S.L. Clubs in Newcastle, all her life she had been a great worker for peace, but, strangely enough she was accepted by the R.S.L. and became a popular and asked by all the sub. branches to attend their functions and in spite of being a woman Lord Mayor, she was greatly accepted, by the R.S.L. They understood her work for peace, marching in the peace marches and that was accepted by them that was Jays thoughts and they knew that she, that she was loved and respected by the Returned Soldiers & Sailors & Airforce establishments in Newcastle. She was patron of nearly five hundred various organisations in Newcastle and I think she at least attended each one of them at least once a year. Because of her involvement in the council it extended from 9 o'clock in the morning till midnight almost

every day, of the week unless this included Saturdays and Sundays. Mr. Cummings what was the benefit to Newcastle of the Japanese City Sister relationships ^{can you} tell me? Yes Newcastle had already established the relationship with Arcadia an area in California on the west coast of the United States of America, and this was very important, however, look at Japan was proving to be one of our most important trading partners, particularly in coal, Jay could see the value of establishing good relationships and the city of Ube in southern Japan was a city very much akin to Newcastle, it had been a city established on coal and had moved from coal to heavy engineering and steel, the population was similar and the cities themselves were similar in appearance. When the Sister City Relationship was established there was lots of apprehension because there were still a lot of hostility towards the Japanese people that Jay could also see in this a relaxation of this hostility and being of most benefit to both nations. The relationship with the city of Ube, was established in 1981, when the Mayor and a group of the Aldermen and powerful industrialists of that city came out to Newcastle and cemented the relationship with the signing of documents. Later that year we were to visit Ube City and there signed the documents in that city. It was an amazing sight, when we arrived there, the whole of the city, was bedecked with flags and bustling, huge signs carrying Jays portrait, citizens were wearing big cardboard medallions on their lapels, dresses with Jays photograph and we were received at the airport, with a band, with a uniformed band and

hundreds and hundreds of school children waving Australian flags, it was almost like royalty. As we descended from the plane to be greeted by this spectacular event, later we were taken to the City Hall and received a battery of television cameras, and radio stations and news paper reporters. The benefits to Newcastle were twofold, firstly was the trade between the city of Ubi and the coal industry in Newcastle. This was proving an immense value to this city, with the developments of further coal loaders and the development of deepening of the harbour that will accommodate a huge ship, to carry the coal to Japan, but, another aspect of the benefits received by Newcastle was the generous response from the Ubi City Council and Ubi Industries to Newcastle. Arising from the relationship, I think Newcastle Art Gallery now has one of the largest collections of Japanese art in Australia. Besides this, Newcastle has been graced with some Japanese sculpture which has been placed in our parks and garden flats. A special department has been set up at the University with a Japanese Professor in charge that deals mainly with Japanese culture and the teaching of Japanese culture to the students at Newcastle University. I have arranged just recently last year for a visit to their city of the, our famous Marching Koala Band, ^{where they} received a tremendous reception from that city. Because of the Sister City Relationship between Newcastle and Ubi, Jay was invited by the Australia, Japan Society, to attend a convention in Tokyo in 1983, I went across with her and it was an amazing convention attended by people from all over Australia and people from all over Japan, that Newcastle was

mentioned on numerous occasions, as the one successfully run and to be as an example to other relationships, to copy our Newcastle relationship had developed. It was so important that we had been invited to attend the private reception at the Australian Ambassadors residence in Tokyo. While in Japan Jay was invited to open an Australia Fair in one of the largest business houses in Utsunomiya. This was a tremendous multi-story building and we attended the Fair and every floor we ascended on there were huge crowds of people waving Australian flags, and Japanese flags and when we arrived at the Fair, at the floor where the Australia Fair was to be conducted we were amazed to see, lots of produce from the Hunter Valley, including dairy products and of course our famous Hunter Valley wines. The Australian Government was NSW so impressed with this event that they sent down people from Tokyo to be present at this Fair. Of course the NSW Branch of the Council had arranged the Fair originally, and they arranged to be there, when Jay opened it. I believe also Jay was one of the two directors appointed to represent NSW, on the Bicentennial Authority, yes in late 1979 the Fraser Government had decided to start organising for Australia's Bicentenary birthday in 1988. They decided to set up this Bicentennial Authority and in early 1980 and as you say, Jay was appointed one of the two representatives of NSW. The directors were generally appointed for a period of two or sometimes three years. Jay was appointed on three successive occasions & she probably would have been still in that director of Authority until only she had to resign after she suffered a stroke in 1984. The Authority met generally in

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Canberra on a monthly bases, at first then later on they met in each State capital city, and gradually plans then plans were formulated to celebrate our Birthday in 1988. One of the early suggestions came forward, was that vigorously enunciated by Jay and this was the visit of the Tall Ships to Australia, Jay had a vast knowledge of sailing ships throughout the world. As I had mentioned earlier her grandfather had been a midshipman who worked on sailing ships in the late 1800s. She was pressing for this and actually knew by name, all the names of the tall ships operated by the various companies throughout the world. And of course we had that grand spectacular event of the Tall Ships entering Sydney Harbour on 26th January, 1988. And on that occasion Jay and I were invited to see this event at the Authorities sighting on Garden Island on that day. We flew down to Sydney and was transferred by car to Garden Island and had a spectacular view of this event. Later in that year, the Federal Authority had to set up the each State, councils to direct the affairs of the Bicentennial Authority in the various states. When N.S.W. was set up, Jay was appointed vice chairman of the N.S.W. Council. Later the N.S.W. Council of the Bicentennial Authority was to set up in every municipality of Australia, Bicentennial Council to organise events in their area for the national celebrations in 1988. Has holding such an important position in the Bicentennial Authority at both Federal and State levels been instrumental in establishing of the Foreshore Development? Yes, because of these positions Jay held and her rapport with both Federal and State Governments, she set about with a small

group of colleagues on the city council, to organising the acquisition of the old government railways lines and buildings and old power-house and power-house stations site on the Newcastle East end. To develop a project, Newcastle's major project for the Bicentennial event and a harbourside park to open up the city, with Newcastle Harbour.

Arrangements were formulated done with very close colleagues to arrange for a prize to be established for an Australian wide competition to design a park which would be acknowledged as something beautiful for Newcastle. An appeal was opened and Newcastle businesses came forward readily with large donations and I think approximately \$30,000 or \$35,000 was raised from this 2nd and 3rd appeal. was awarded. Three judges were appointed to choose the winning design, one award expert on environmental landscaping and another of course our own Bruce Mc Kenzie, who was also involved with interest in his own right, and a third person. The ~~winners~~ ^{winners} were a group of design architects from Melbourne and after the prize was won, the whole of the project of the half a dozen or more of the leading designers were put on display in the City Hall and it was visited by thousands and thousands of people from the city and throughout the valley. To see what was to be established for Newcastle by 1988. And of course we have seen the result of that by the visit of the Queen in May of this year, when she opened the Harbourside Park, already used by the people of Newcastle on a number of occasions and seems to be appreciated by the people. Just prior to Jaysuffan, her stroke in April in 1984, she had invited the

Prime minister of Australia for her and him to plant a tree to initiate the first Bicentennial event in Australia and in the municipality and a plaque was arranged for that and it will no doubt be established in the park when the tree is well established. I'd like to thank you Jay and Ray for this interview, but, I believe Ray that you and Prince Phillip have something in common would you like to tell us, well I suppose you could say that we have both walked besides great women.

PHYLLIS SOUTHALL.

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An interview with Mr. Ray Cummings husband of Joy Cummings first woman Lord Mayor in Australia and former Lord Mayor of Newcastle for nine years. ^{Some} Of Joy's highlights and activities whilst Lord Mayor of Newcastle.

Joy Cummings was born at Arncliffe, a southern suburb of Sydney, on 23rd. December, 1923. She was the eldest of two children and lived with her parents and grandfather in the Sydney area, until the transfer of her father to Newcastle.

Joy's family moved to Telford Street, the inner city, to Aircourt Flats, which is now the site of the beautiful fountain in Pacific Park, the year was 1942.

World War II was well advanced, Newcastle had been shelled by Japanese submarines and Fort Scratchley had replied with their 6" guns. During the attack a shell landed in Parnell Place, fortunately upon impact it did not explode. No landing had been attempted. The night skies were lit up with the blaze of search-lights, scanning and probing for the enemy overhead. Great rolls of barbed-wire and pyramids of concrete one metre high (tank traps) were strategically placed on the beaches in an attempt to prevent an armoured landing under the cover of darkness.

Social evenings held at Tyrrell House, brought Ray and Joy together. ¹ Tyrrell House a stately multi-storey building costing £41,500 to build in 1922. ² Named after Bishop William Tyrrell, who was Bishop of Newcastle from 1847-1879, who was consecrated in Westminster Abbey as the First Bishop and on 30th. June 1847, he was installed in the Christ Church Cathedral at Newcastle.

Unfortunately, with progress the beautiful Tyrrell House, the ³ Anglican nerve centre of religious life of Newcastle came to an end in 1981.

⁴ About forty home units and town houses replaced the hall, which is only a few yards from the beach. The facade of the building was preserved.

In the same Christ Church Cathedral, Ray and Joy were married in 1946.

The family of three daughters and one son kept Joy active in the community.

The move to eliminate in 1968, the avenue of the beautiful Morton Bay Fig Trees (*Ficus Macrophylo*) in Islington Park, these trees stood 20 metres tall, were planted in ⁵ 1879 by the

1. Anglican Year Book of 1922. P 49.

2. Ibid. P36.

3. Newcastle Sun, 3rd February, 1981.

4. Ibid.

5. Newcastle Morning Herald, 2nd November, 1935.

late James Croft. Payment of 1/- (10¢) for each of the 68 trees with stipulations that they were watered until established and the cutting of every taproot in order that the trees become of large girth and spread generally. A stone was placed under the taproot in order to make this practicable. Some of these trees have since been removed to make way for the Bowling Club at Islington.

The elimination of the trees was an issue for Joy.

A local alderman on the council was due to retire at the Triennial Election in 1968, Joy offered herself as a candidate. Upon winning, she entered the Newcastle City Council as Alderman for East Ward, Alderman Doug. McDougall was Lord Mayor at the time.

East Ward consisted of Mayfield East, Tighes Hill, Islington, Wickham, Carrington and Stockton. Voting for local council was not compulsory in those days. A tremendous amount of work was put into the effort to get sufficient people along to record their votes.

"There are many great things we can do for this city," commented Joy.

The decision to put a² six lane expressway through Blackbutt Reserve resulted in a loud outcry of protest.

The original area in 1932 was known as Blackbutt and was held in Fee simple, by the Scottish Australian Mining Company. Then was purchased by the Newcastle District Returned Soldiers Memorial Trust, for the purpose of making farmlet holdings for returned servicemen. This project was dropped.

The approach of⁴ citizens to the New Lambton Council, culminated in the constituent councils of Adamstown, Wickham, Wallsend, Merewether, Hamilton, Waratah, New Lambton and Newcastle contributing £900 to purchase the area. Later, a Government Grant of £2,500 permitted the addition of further land to increase the acreage.

Blackbutt Reserve is our largest park in Newcastle and is unique, because⁵ three quarters of it contain over 82 species of Australian native trees. This⁶ specialized forest community cannot be replaced just anywhere. The⁷ project was abandoned.

Her⁸ impassionate speeches on parks and trees earned Joy the nickname of "weeping willow".

1. Newcastle Morning Herald, 2nd. November, 1935.

2. Ibid. 5th. September, 1968.

3. Ibid. 5th. January, 1932.

4. Local History and Archives Dept. Newcastle Reg. Library. 1983

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Newcastle Sun, 1st. December, 1968.

8. Ibid. 30th. November, 1985.

The invitation to Joy in 1973, to become a trustee of The World-Wide Life Fund of Australia, resulted from her pleas of protest about the needless slaughter of whales.

Each year sees the migration of whales to warmer waters to breed and forage for food. Returning south the True Right whales with their calves can be seen in the waters surrounding Newcastle from time to time.

¹Joy's support of Womens' Lib. Any movement that tries to free women from pots and pans and give them the same opportunity as men would have my support, "I'm in general agreement with the principles of Women's Lib."

²The Lord Mayoral robes are splendid, even if the chain is a bit heavy, remarked Joy at the end of her first afternoon in the City Hall. The position of Lord Mayor of Newcastle was filled by Joy in September, 1974, then again in 1977, following that in 1980 with 66% of the votes.

³The fact, that Joy's overwhelming popularity among the city folk have forced her to do her weekly shopping at Cessnock. Where the shopping gets done.

The restoration of Nobby's and Newcastle Surf Pavilions, which had fallen into disrepair and the projects of The Mall in Hunter Street and the Foreshore Development, which enhance the east end area of Newcastle are visions of what the future holds for the city of Newcastle.

⁴Nobby's S.L.S.C., now in it's 66th. year of service, and is responsible for the safety at both the beach and the harbour entrance. The name Nobby has been lost in history - some historians say it was called after a Mr. Nobby Clark, but, there is no evidence of proof.

⁵Newcastle Surf Pavilion was established in 1927, built as a memorial to 24 members, who died in World War 1, that same year 187 members of the ^{club} served overseas.

⁶This building replaced the little wooden shed which had been established as a surf club in 1908 after the death of three from drowning at Newcastle Beach.

The Newcastle Market Square and The Mall Development in the inner city of Newcastle, ⁷designed by the Queensland company Kern Corporation Ltd., and officially by Premier N.Wran on November, 1980 provided an attractive invitation to invest in retail in the area. The ⁹cost of \$500,000 to beautify the area

1. Newcastle Sun, 27th. September, 1971
2. Newcastle Morning Herald, 2nd. October, 1974.
3. Ibid. 19th December, 1974.
4. Post, 26th. August, 1987.
5. Ibid. 28th. December, 1957.
6. Ibid.....
7. Ibid. 17th. November, 1980.
8. Ibid.....
9. Ibid.....

with it's pavings, lamps, shrubs, trees, hanging baskets and the conversion of the City Council owned properties which had become quite shabby ~~was~~^{money} well spent.

The Foreshore Development was opened on May 7th. 1988 as a Bicentennial Project by Queen Elizabeth II, resulting from the demolition of the old Zaara Street Power House, the removal of the old delapidated buildings plus the restoration of the beautiful Custom House. Creating a spectacular panoramic view of great beauty with wide sweeping lawns, lamps, paved walks, benches and festooning flags a suitable entrance to the Port of Newcastle.

To Joy there is not "a place" for women in society. But, a woman's place is in the world.

The presentation by the Queen to Joy in Canberra in 1976 of the Order of Australia, an Australian award for her services to the community, following upon her successful election to Lord Mayor, the first woman Lord Mayor in Australia.

Newcastle City, covers a great area. The Lord Mayor of Sydney, has about two square miles to worry about and the Lord Mayor of London only one square mile. But Newcastle has a tremendous area and a large number of people to represent and to visit.

In 1984 the City Council awarded Joy The Freedom of the City, a traditional English honour, this rare award was given for 'outstanding service to the city and to local government.

A debilitating stroke suffered in April 1984, reduced Joy's power of speech and movement and forcing her into an early retirement.

Ald. Cummings leaves the Lord Mayoralty with honour and knowledge of great achievement. Her life-long love of parkland and trees were second only to people in her aldermanic life; she made friends among and drew political support from all sides of the city. Her strong sense of social justice and compassion marked all ^{THE} years of her public life.

A thunderous applause at the afternoon graduation ceremony at Newcastle University in May, 1985. When the former Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Mrs. Joy Cummings, was awarded an honour degree of Master of Arts, presented by the Chancellor of the University, Sir Bede Callaghan.

As we journey through Islington, we will see the Moreton Bay Fig Trees still standing.....

1. Newcastle Morning Herald 14th September, 1977.
2. Ibid. 11th. December. 1976.
3. Ibid. 25th. September, 1975.
4. Ibid. 17th. October, 1987.
5. Ibid. 15th. August, 1984
6. Ibid. 6th. May, 1985.

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Signed R. C. Cummings

Date 2nd Day of September 1988

Interviewer Phyllis Southall