

STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
J. D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY
COLLECTION

OH 829/10

Full transcript of an interview with

LORRAINE NOSKE

On 10 June 2008

by Sally Stephenson

for the

MEADOWS 150 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Access for research: Unrestricted

Right to photocopy: Copies may be made for research and study

Right to quote or publish: Publication only with written permission from the
State Library

NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

This transcript was created by the J. D. Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library. It conforms to the Somerville Collection's policies for transcription which are explained below.

Readers of this oral history transcript should bear in mind that it is a record of the spoken word and reflects the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The State Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview, nor for the views expressed therein. As with any historical source, these are for the reader to judge.

It is the Somerville Collection's policy to produce a transcript that is, so far as possible, a verbatim transcript that preserves the interviewee's manner of speaking and the conversational style of the interview. Certain conventions of transcription have been applied (ie. the omission of meaningless noises, false starts and a percentage of the interviewee's crutch words). Where the interviewee has had the opportunity to read the transcript, their suggested alterations have been incorporated in the text (see below). On the whole, the document can be regarded as a raw transcript.

Abbreviations: The interviewee's alterations may be identified by their initials in insertions in the transcript.

Punctuation: Square bracket [] indicate material in the transcript that does not occur on the original tape recording. This is usually words, phrases or sentences which the interviewee has inserted to clarify or correct meaning. These are not necessarily differentiated from insertions the interviewer or by Somerville Collection staff which are either minor (a linking word for clarification) or clearly editorial. Relatively insignificant word substitutions or additions by the interviewee as well as minor deletions of words or phrases are often not indicated in the interest of readability. Extensive additional material supplied by the interviewee is usually placed in footnotes at the bottom of the relevant page rather than in square brackets within the text.

A series of dots, indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -.

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that it has not been possible to verify to date.

Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print**.

Discrepancies between transcript and tape: This proofread transcript represents the authoritative version of this oral history interview. Researchers using the original tape recording of this interview are cautioned to check this transcript for corrections, additions or deletions which have been made by the interviewer or the interviewee but which will not occur on the tape. (See the Punctuation section above.) Minor discrepancies of grammar and sentence structure made in the interest of readability can be ignored but significant changes such as deletion of information or correction of fact should be, respectively, duplicated or acknowledged when the tape recorded version of this interview is used for broadcast or any other form of audio publication.

Interview of Mrs Lorraine Noske, *née* Webster, conducted by Dr Sally Stephenson on 10th June 2008 at Meadows, South Australia, for the Meadows 150 Oral History Project.

DISK 1 OF 1

I'm Sally Stephenson interviewing Mrs Lorraine Noske in Meadows on 10th June 2008 for the Meadows Oral History Project. This project is funded by a Positive Ageing Development Grant from the Department for Families and Communities and grants from the History Trust of South Australia and the District Council of Mount Barker.

Lorraine, I'd just like to start with a few brief biographical questions. Can you tell me your full name, please?

Just plain Lorraine.

And what was your maiden name?

Lorraine Webster.

Where and when were you born?

At Blackwood, 2nd September '37.

What were your parents' names?

Elvena. My Mum's Genevieve Elvena and my father's Ted – he was called 'Ted' – Edgar George Webster.

What was your mother's maiden name?

She was a Thorpe. So I've got lots of cousins around the place here.

Where did you go to school?

Started at Clarendon Primary, then I went to secondary school in Adelaide at Unley Technical, Unley Girls' Tech¹.

I'd like to ask you some questions now about one of your first jobs that you did, which was at the telephone exchange, I think. How did you first get a job there?

¹ For one year, and second week of second year, 1951 [LN]

Because Mr and Mrs Raggatt at Clarendon had no children and they were very concerned about me when I had polio, and so Mr Raggatt said to my father would I like to come down and train on the switchboard [at Clarendon Post Office]. And that was a really good thing to do. So I was able to do that and ride my bike and I could [only] ride my bike downhill and then Dad would pick me up and bring me home after work, so that was something I did to start off because I couldn't travel to Adelaide.

So that was the Clarendon exchange.

Yes.

And then later you worked in ---.

Then I got a job at Kangarilla² and then I went to Adelaide just before we were married: went to the government offices, worked at the Department of Agriculture, the Treasury switchboard and the Education Department switchboards, so we had to learn about three hundred subs on your board and things like that. Catch the bus home and people wouldn't put their phones up by five and we had to put a night line up and (laughs) I was nearly missing my bus one night and had to ask the Minister for [Agriculture or Education] to please would they mind closing their calls so I could put the night lines up, otherwise it was a bit of a disaster [with only one evening bus].

Then I got the job at Meadows Post Office after we were married and I worked up there for a while, quite a while.

Can you tell me what did the job actually involve at the Meadows exchange, how did you ---?

It was quite a responsible [job] – it was a manual exchange, cords and plugs, and you often had to deal with any emergency that came in because people would ring and say to you, 'There's been a big accident up the road. Can you get a doctor?', at that time, 'or an ambulance?' And sometimes the doctor would actually go out to an accident. So there was lots of things: if there was a fire, or somebody was ill, you just had to manage the whole switchboard and the disaster that was going on, and if there was

² In the Post Office and General Store [LN]

two of you on that made it easier because somebody else just answered all the other calls that were coming in.

So did you have to decide who was the best person to ring in those emergency situations?

Well, we had a list. You had your list and you just whatever happened you had your list. But once at Kangarilla a lady woke up in the morning and her little child was blue in the face and I remember the phone call saying – she rang in and said, ‘Get the doctor. My child’s blue. My husband’ll be at the gate to direct them’, and then I had to ring Dr Gillam and he flew down – Hillyfields Road, it was – and he got down there and he came to the phone and said, ‘Get Dr Delores’, and so I had to call her back and all the time he’s trying to resus[citate] this child. She flew down and did a trache[otomy] on the kitchen table – she drove a little MG car at the time [fast]. The child survived quite well. It was quite an exciting morning. Thank God, she survived quite well. But the doctors called on the home at that time.

Who else was working at the exchange in Meadows?

Marj Buckley and Helen Brooks when I was there, and some of the boys who were the mail boys during the day but sometimes they’d sleep over on their shift and that was the night staff, the boys did the night staff from eleven till seven in the morning. There was quite a few: [Ken] Winnen, Mundy, Brian Neville, I can’t remember anybody else, some of the lads³.

Did you get much chance to talk to people when they were ringing through to the exchange?

Well, sometimes people wanted to chat so you would have to speak to them but say, ‘I’ve got a call coming in’, (laughs) so you just couldn’t sit there and chat because it was quite busy. Quite busy at times.

What would happen at the exchange if there was an electrical storm?

Well, it could bring smoke and flames at the back of the switchboard and you’d have to be very careful not to be on the phone while the phone was ringing. You could be (laughs) very deaf. It was quite exciting.

Had to put up the test panel cords sometimes for the technicians in Mount Barker and so they could perhaps trace the call where there was a fault between different places on their line, and that would save them coming all the way perhaps to – they used to do it to Kangarilla because Mount Barker was our head technicians and the linesmen⁴.

Where was the actual exchange in Meadows, where was it located?

Through the room behind the post office now, you went through from the main post office desk into the back room where they've probably got their private residence now. There was a couple of hundred people, I think, on there.

I'd like to ask you now about the Red Cross because you've been very involved in the Red Cross over the years. Approximately when did you join the Red Cross?

Probably '62. We were married in 1960, and then ---. But the branch actually started, I understand, in 1939 after the big bushfires, so that when I joined there were people who had long service already. I did about twenty-one years; but there were people there who'd done their fifty-odd years, some of the older ladies. And so it was something you did.

And I'd like to say that when I got married I had to resign my job. You couldn't remain in a government job and they didn't employ married women. And sometimes I say that to girls and they think, 'Oh, come on', but it's true. And so what one did (laughs) is you worked really hard on the voluntary things and did what you could around the community. And it looks a bit funny now, doesn't it, when people, girls, hold down a job and run their families; but, believe me, it was very serious stuff.

What were the activities that the local Red Cross branch undertook?

Well, we had fundraising, the doorknock every March, 'Red Cross Calling', and you had to check out who had a dog that might be trouble because at least a couple of women got bitten at times. There was sales, saleyard, where we did that fundraising for the Strathalbyn Hospital Auxiliary and so raised [money for] things like monitors

³ Brian Maywald and Ken Smith were others [LN]

⁴ They covered the Kangarilla, Prospect Hill, Meadows, Bull Creek and Ashbourne area. There were linesmen at Meadows PMG Department [LN].

and that for the hospital, but at the Strathalbyn Saleyards, for lunches, morning tea; and you had a swinging budget that they provided you with a certain amount of cash and you went to the butchers and the bakers and everybody before you got out to the saleyards, collect the set amount; and the housekeeper at the hospital organised the amounts of food you would get, and that was another thing. And we had the Red Cross Baby Competition, and that went every year and got five or six thousand dollars that would be raised, because I think we had about fifteen or twenty members at first.

How did the baby competition run?

Well, people were having babies then – they don't seem to have (laughs) so many babies around now – but names would be submitted, and so that there was no taint of favouritism we had a ballot, and some [parents] tendered their names and you'd have a ballot and voted who was going – and you just fundraised, and the parents always had a couple of functions. And that was a state-wide fundraiser, so there's a lot of children who have been Red Cross babies around the town. I think the [Lachlan] Patullo baby was the last one the branch had, yes.

And what else did we do? We did clearing sales, lunches at football wind-up dinners, lots and lots of catering; and we also trained. The most important thing was the inquiries and registration for disaster, and we all had to do that and you had a little certificate, so that if you happened to be at Surfer's Paradise or in Queensland on holiday that training is nation-wide, so if you were somewhere on holiday and there was a flood or something you could just go into a centre and say, 'I'm a member; can I help?'

Before I come to Ash Wednesday when I know you used that disaster training, I just want to ask you about the other thing that the Red Cross did and that was the first aid post that you had in Meadows.

Yes, I forgot that. We had a local first aid post which a lot of the branches had through the state, especially out in the areas that were isolated; and we didn't have St John Ambulance here, we were at Strathalbyn, we were in a blank spot here, and I was a member of St John at Strath, uniformed member, and had done my certificate. So you had a post down the end of the street with a sign on it and we had lots of

people come through, and one a week still: accidents down on the Willunga corner, I mean that's still a magnet for people not to do the right thing on that corner⁵. And when I say 'I' did it, Ron⁶ and I did it together because he's done as much round the place like that as I have, really.

Can you tell me a little bit more about the sorts of things that you would have to do for the first aid post?

Well, sometimes people just came to the house with injuries, or else people would call you or come and get you and take you someplace, just ordinary things that the ambulance [crew] deal with now. Car accidents. And once there was a petrol strike and I had a key for Trevor Thorpe's fuel depot and he said, 'If you need it at any time, you just come and help yourself'. And somebody new in the district, as I told you before, moved into a house and walked along the back veranda, where there was their chopped wood for the stove, and the axe was placed not like people would safely do it and it was facing out, the blade, and he walked into the axe in between his big toe and his next toe and split his foot up. They had no petrol, didn't know where the hospital was, and they had the injury, so we dealt with them. I think they came dripping to the house, actually. And I bandaged him up, put him in the car and we had fuel and I think Ron took him over to Strath Hospital, and then he took him and I phoned the hospital to say the person was coming in. So it's just a neighbourly thing that you would do. (laughs)

We've had dogs, we've had dogs with concussion after car accidents. We've dealt with all the people and had them all ready for when the ambulance arrived but have been there first and knew who was who; and then brought the animal home – animals; several times – because they'd been in the car and they weren't restrained, and the people came back and got their dogs from time to time. One lady fell out of her car: stepped out of the car, put her foot in the handle of her handbag and fell out the door and broke her ankle. It's very simple, accidents, aren't they?

And we also had the medical loans, apart from the roadside aid post. That involved having some crutches, bedpans, urinals, walking frame, wheelchair, and

⁵ Intersection of Mawson, Morris and Brookman Roads, just west of Meadows; known locally as 'Fingerboard Corner'. [SAS]

people might want to go to a funeral, take grandma to a funeral or something, and pop in and get the wheelchair. But later on there was a lot of red tape to hire out the things – you had to take the big deposit, and people often didn't have X amount – so we would just organise it for them and they would come and bring a donation afterwards, because that's what it would have been. You have to be helpful to people.

I'd like to move on now and talk about one of the main events, probably, that happened in Meadows's history, and that was Ash Wednesday. Can you tell me what happened on that day?

Well, I think it's probably been told to death, hasn't it? People might get sick of hearing about it.

No, but I want you to tell me from *your* perspective what happened that day.

Well, my husband went to work and so he was working in the forestry, and then the fires, I think they came up about midday, the afternoon, and so we did all the things at home that you do to prepare and it was pretty worrying. A lot of people were coming into Meadows from the Willunga Road and we met one family and we brought them home and put them – I had the bath full of water and they didn't have much clothing on and I put all my husband's work clothes out and they all got some clothes on, because we thought the fire might come through and they didn't have any protection. And we all eventually had to evacuate to the oval. I had a great big box of apples that I'd brought from my father's orchard and I thought, 'Oh, wet, food, something for the kids to eat', so I brought this big box of apples in the boot. (laughs) Anything I could throw in the car. And all these people had horses on the oval and there was these little apples and they were feeding all these apples to the horses to keep them calm.

But the fire sounded like sitting at the airport when the jets come in. Roaring through the Hills. It was pretty scary. But you're really calm at the time because your adrenaline keeps you going. And so we were looking at – when the police set up their van, the police eventually came and set up a command post, and we tried to take down names of people who'd evacuated and didn't know whether they still had

⁶ Ron Noske, Lorraine's husband [SAS]

homes, and at this time the fire was out the back of Kuitpo and I didn't know whether *my* husband'd come home, you know? So we were just praying everything would settle down⁷.

And the army came, and later on in the evening it rained, which was wonderful. We set up to put a list of where people were staying who might have been staying with friends and that was the best you could do because you didn't have any bookwork. I just sat there with a pencil in the police van and tried to write down Mrs So-and-so was staying at the manse and so on. And then they sort of got busy and made food and things like that.

But it went on for about a month afterwards, when we doing the proper inquiries and registrations so that people could come and get feed for their cows and fence posts and all that. There was a place for the Agriculture Department over where the craft centre is, where the Gateway Gallery was, and so if you wanted hay you had to come and register with Red Cross first then go there.

People were very kind, that's what I think I remember most. People are very, very kind and generous when there's really a need, and there were lots of truckloads of hay came from Eyre Peninsula. One caught fire on the Devil's Elbow, I remember. And I know Mr Dunn⁸ lost a hundred and forty stock, I think it was, in his paddock and they were asphyxiated ahead of the fire by lack of oxygen ahead of the fire, they just [died] – where they were.

And Peter's room got burnt down the back, that was at McHarg's Creek. It sucked in the back of his room in the old stone building, but it didn't affect the rest of the house, but he lost some of his things.

Then those people came into the Mawson House, where Mawson House is, and that was the Council Chamber. And they had a demountable room out the back and people were sending like truckloads of lovely stuff – and some that weren't lovely; we had to actually pay for a load of rubbish to be sent away – but a lot of things were sent to me directly and asked would I disperse them.

⁷ Lucerne paddocks and sprinklers on the south side saved Meadows [LN]

⁸ “Mr Peter Dunn is deaf mute, but fully capable of working and communicating ably. A lovely man.” [LN]

What was this, clothes?

Sheets and goods, so that they knew that they would be honestly handed out and to the right people. That was very trusting of them, I thought.

And we had to also interview people who were relatives of those who were deceased. That was quite useful to do. I didn't know the people personally who died, but we were able to be of service to them, the families who came in.

And they actually catered for all the workers in the football clubrooms, but the base for the practical, material things were over in the Mawson House and because there was a fair bit of parking in Mill Street that made it a bit safer there, too. But that went on for, oh, at least a month, I think – more than a month, probably – that we took out rainwater to people in tanks in the back of our car and ripped the seats out of the old Holden and – – –.

Why did they need the rainwater?

Because their tanks were all burnt. It's amazing how tanks will – they were all scorched and crumpled, or the water was contaminated; if they still had water, what had washed off the roof was probably all contaminated.

Can I take you back to when it first started, and the communications lines were down, weren't they?

Yes. We couldn't get – a lot of lines, they were just clogged by people ringing and we couldn't get to Red Cross Headquarters, even through the CFS⁹ or the police, because everybody was just busy. It seemed the lines were fully blocked at headquarters. So we were supposed to get permission from headquarters to set up Inquiry, and people were standing in the street, homeless and hungry, so we just went on and did what we could at the time. Got rapped over the knuckles for it, but the Adelaide Headquarters, they were thinking of 'Greenhill, Greenhill, Greenhill Road' all the time, and I said, 'Well, we heard that, too; but we have a Greenhill Road out here, we have Green Hills Road out here', and they couldn't comprehend that. And they suddenly realised that we'd had a fire out in the sticks as well; but the regional president came, I called her, she lived at Yankalilla, and she came up and set up with

⁹ CFS – Country Fire Service

her little trusty bag with all the inquiry details, it's quite interesting to do that, and we sort of made rosters out to get helpers in to do the interviewing of people.

I went to a grief counselling course before that, through the Church, and I found that very helpful because people would come in and they were shocked, they didn't know who they were, couldn't think of their brother's phone number, that sort of thing. And we were able to get one person to go out and sit with that person and make them a cup of tea and work out who they were and where they were, and then this one gentleman said, 'Oh, yes. It's in my tobacco tin'. So he got out his tobacco tin and there was his brother's phone number and his registration number of his car, and I can still remember that.

And I've got a book here that I've saved from what we first set up, the registration, people would ring in: Mr Haines, an old gentleman used to live up the hill, 'I know the Archers have got a donkey' – two donkeys, I think Julia had – and he said, 'I'll put it in the paddock here if it survived'. I think the donkey did survive, actually. Her cat survived, too. They had their house lost at Prospect Hill. And later they went – they were in Darwin and lost their house, originally, in the Cyclone Tracy; came to Prospect Hill and lost all their belongings again in that bushfire. That was a tragic thing to happen to them.

How important was local knowledge to you when you were responding to the – – – ?

Well, we found that there were things that I could read down the lists that were totally wrong and we were able to tell people different places and family communications, too, so that – it makes a big difference. At that time, it wasn't a dormitory suburb like Meadows is now.

When you say things were wrong, do you mean it had some with the wrong name?

Oh, well, people would put down information and it wouldn't be at all correct, and because sometimes the people would give them information, because of their shock they were saying things that were totally, totally outlandish; and a stranger would not know that. That's what I mean.

You said people could get food at the clubrooms.

Yes.

Who was preparing the food and cooking it?

Well, everybody just bucked in. Everybody. Everybody just – somebody just rang and said, ‘You’ll be on a roster from five till seven, will that be all right?’ And everybody just helped. The people were very generous, so they just baked and cooked and everybody bucked in.

What was the story about your children trying to get a meal there?

(laughs) Oh, I skun my cupboards out and sent everything up, and I was busy up at the Mawson House and I said to the kids, ‘Well, go up there and get tea because I won’t be home’. And they came home, ‘We didn’t get tea. They wouldn’t give us anything’. (laughs) I said, ‘Well, didn’t you tell them all my food’s up there?’ But they didn’t know that. They said, ‘Oh, no, you haven’t been afflicted by the bushfire so we can’t give you tea’. And all my food was up there and there was nothing in the cupboards, absolutely nothing, and I didn’t have time to go shopping, so – – –. We found something for them, they survived. And the girls, I mean the girls had been busy: they were helping also, they were helping me and they were also helping up at the oval doing things, like for me. They were teenaged, they were old enough to be useful. They weren’t little ones.

The people who’d been evacuated to the oval –

Yes.

– where were they sleeping?

Where were they sleeping that night?

Yes.

Oh, well, eventually we found them beds around, except one family, they refused to move, they were in such shock. They sat in their car all night. And we got – St John tried to persuade them to go somewhere but they wouldn’t, they were just in shock. So they brought them blankets and food and they were happy to sit there. They lost their home at Prospect Hill. And that was really upsetting. Somebody, I think

somebody might have stayed with them, but they wouldn't be moved, they just sat in their car, because they were just so terrified and very unhappy.

But a lot of the other people, we got them all into places. And some people, of course, had homes they could go back to; but some areas were still closed off, so other people came who had a property, took the horses out there. It's amazing how it just all clicked in. People think on their feet. It was good.

And then it rained. It was such a nice — — —. (laughs) Rained. I think it was about ten or eleven o'clock that night, it was this huge rain downpour. It was wonderful. I liked that. (laughs)

You had another funny story, actually, about people going bowling. Can you tell me that again, please?

When you have a disaster declared, it's a declared disaster and for so many days, until that disaster is declared to be over, at least for three or four days, the two or three days after, the roads were still closed off and the fire-fighters were still out. Nothing stops a really keen bowler, and all these old ladies tracked off down to Clarendon because it was bowls that day, (laughs) and it was still a declared disaster, we weren't supposed to be moving around at all. And there was still plenty to do. That was bowls day and off they went to bowls. I couldn't believe them. Until the disaster's declared over, you're not supposed to move around: (a) for safety, and [b] getting in the way of all the trucks and the people fighting the fires.

But fortunately Ron came home. Midnight I think they got home. So thankful to see them. My daughter wrote a poem about it at high school about not knowing whether her father would come home again. It was very moving. I found it the other day when I was cleaning out some of my archives.

What effect do you think Ash Wednesday had on the community?

It's like every disaster. Everything. Pulls people together, when it's really necessary. There's a lot of caring goes on. There's always people, too, who'll take advantage where they probably shouldn't have, and if you're local you probably know that and can steer them straight. I heard lots of stories. And I think the grief went on for a long, long time, the grief. There was a lot of grief that people didn't really know that they had such deep feelings about. Especially the farmers who had to go out with the

RSPCA¹⁰ and destroy cattle and sheep, who thought perhaps some of those animals might have survived; and they have told me that, too, that that was cruel to see the animals suffering. That was one thing, the animals, I think.

What was the best part about being in the Red Cross at that time?

I suppose you felt useful, like that you'd done all this training. It's like people at the fire station or you see the fire trucks at various fire stations are out cleaning and doing their hoses, and at least everything fell into place and you were able to do something useful. That was a good feeling, good to be able to do. That would be the most – being able to be of service to somebody who had nothing, nothing left, absolutely nothing, just everything was destroyed. And yet the next place would be okay and the fire would sweep through it.

I told you about the man who had news from his wife and said the fire was coming over the hill and he was at Ceduna with Telstra – Telecom at the time – and he got on the night bus, the Greyhound bus or Stateliner, and he was all night on the bus and he couldn't get a phone call through because the house had been burnt and he didn't know whether his family had survived. And when he got to Adelaide – I think it was about seven in the morning, it was all night he was on the bus – anyway, he lost his voice, through shock they say, and it was some months after before he could speak. That was a horrible thing to happen. He just couldn't speak, he was so distraught, all those hours on the bus not knowing if his family were alive. That was down the top of Bull Creek, Ashbourne, where the fire came over there, where they lived.

And I've got a lot of names in here and I often wonder where they are. I've got it written in the book where it says like, 'House burnt out, cannot find the people', and then I've initialled it and said, 'All well, they were found', and things like that. It's sort of like a bit of a diary. But that wasn't the official papers, that was my own diary so I could ring people and say, 'How are you going? Is there something we can do for you?' So Red Cross has been very useful in the community, I think.

Now we've dissolved the branch, but I think people like Lions Club and all the other service organisations, they do a very good job.

¹⁰ RSPCA – Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Also they had a single-house fire policy, Red Cross had, and we've been to lots and lots of single-house fires over our years, and that was when Red Cross would give a donation or some support; but then there's the Family and Community Services, is it now, they also come in and look at it, what people are needing, clothes. And one of the lists we had, the President would have to go out, see how many people in the family, what fittings they were, what sort of jobs they did, so that we had a list of what type of clothes they wanted, if the kids were at school. And I was trying to think of – at least ten or twelve I can remember over the years of different houses which have burnt down, just single-house fires.

You were also involved in the St John's Ambulance at Strathalbyn, you mentioned. What did you use to do?

I was just an ordinary member. (laughs) And we used to do home nursing, the women had to do home nursing as well as first aid. And then you have your ambulance transport nursing, that was another certificate. And we used to follow the hunts, all the voluntary – go-karts, any sporting activity, and the races; but the women were not allowed to go out on the race course at Strathalbyn, we had to sit in the casualty room. We could deal with any members of the public but we weren't allowed to – (laughs) if a jockey came off, we weren't allowed to go out of there, the men had to deal with the [jockeys]. It was some rule. It was very amusing, I thought.

What do you remember about following the hunts?

They had the hunt at Strathalbyn and Kangarilla and Bugle Ranges, and we'd just go out, at least two members would go with the ambulance and follow the hunt in the ambulance. When they got to the stirrup cup half-time, then we'd sort of have afternoon tea with them and my husband would usually follow up in the car with the baby in the bassinet and I'd give it a bottle – (laughs) give her a bottle and follow home again. If there was an accident and I had to go on to the hospital, then we had our own car so he would take the car home with the children in it and somebody else would bring me home, but he usually took me, but there was an arrangement that if there was a fall – and there were a few falls – then somebody would bring me home.

Who were the people who went in the hunt?

Oh, just local people – horsy people, (laughs) the horsy people, I call them. Lots of people who are riders. And the Kangarilla one was a pretty hunt, going down through the flats on McLaren Flat Road there; and Bugle Ranges was nice. So it was very pretty to see them, and we never saw the fox sitting up on the rump of the horse, you know. (laughs) I think they put a drag through ahead of them. And there's polo, of course, at Strathalbyn, too, they play polo at Strathalbyn, and I think the St John's still cover that; but I never went to the polo.

Well, there over the years have been a number of different activities, some of them educational activities, in Meadows, haven't there, that you've been involved in? Can you tell me about some of those?

Oh, we've had floral art, they have floral art classes; they had Mothers and Babies,¹¹ we always had Mothers and Babies monthly, that was held in the old library where the antique shop is¹², that was a meeting room there, used to have a sister come and speak; and then we've had, let me see – – –. (interruption, exchange of remarks)

Lorraine, I'll just ask you again about the educational activities that you took part in in Meadows.

Well, we have both been involved with the Civil Defence, when the Civil Defence, which is now called – what is it called now? Emergency Services. It was 1965, and Ron and I both went to Mount Macedon and did a training course there and I did communications, so that was something. And we also helped with first aid classes, public first aid classes, for the public outside of St John, that was another thing we did. And let me see: Mothers and Babies; CWA, that was something else that was in Meadows, and they amalgamated with Bull Creek eventually closing about thirty years ago, and there's a sign in the Meadows Hall saying the money that was left over – and you may have heard about that – was used to buy chairs for the new Hall. And we've had art exhibitions, nice art exhibitions we've helped arrange, things like that. I'm just trying to see here anything else I might have missed.

I know they got some heart monitors and things for the hospital, that's some of the money that we raised at the cattle sales, the Strathalbyn, did things. And they had

¹¹ Mothers' and Babies' Health Association.

¹² Gaslight Antiques, formerly the Meadows Institute [SAS]

those foot pedal, like bicycle pedals, for people to exercise sitting in their chairs, we bought a set of those.

Is that through Red Cross now?

That was the Red Cross catering for the hospital, that was something useful that we did. I can't think of a lot of other. We've done things for the school, we've helped with the school when our children have been at school, and anything that's been there we've supported. Helped build the swimming pool at the school, was all voluntary. Men did that, they just picked and shovelled and wheelbarrowed out all the (laughs) dirt from where the school pool is now.

Well, I'll come back. You'd mentioned to me I think – so there were floral art classes.

Yes, and cake icing.

Was that just local women?

That was in the old Scout Hall, which is where the car park of the bowling club is now there was a Scout Hall there. Very draughty. And they had a lady come up from McLaren Flat and had classes there that everybody went to. Lots of people. Lots more people went to church and your flower arrangements for weddings and funerals and wreaths, it was more a thing that everybody was involved in doing; and now it's fallen down, it seems, to a few people. But flowers, I've always found flowers fascinating, (laughs) lovely, and you go to a concert or something and there's just this black stage and there's not even a palm tree anywhere. You think they could have put in a nice arrangement of flowers. And that's something that most of the – it's an artistic form, isn't it?

Was there still a flower show in Meadows at that time?

No. No. They've had them, in the old Hall. I can remember going to the Meadows old Hall, which is the car park now where the buses pull in at the school, big old hall there. But I don't remember – there was a flower show, I think, but very early, very early.

So you mentioned briefly there was a Mothers and Babies group in Meadows –

Yes.

– so you were involved in that when you had your – – –?

Yes, when the children were little, yes.

When was that, approximately?

Well, '60, '1, '2, and there's a lot of people – like we were married in 1960, so we've had three children, so we always went to Mothers and Babies to learn what you could learn. (laughs)

What activities did they have?

Well, they just studied like food and diet. And we had functions, like for fundraising – afternoon teas and things like that – for the kids. It was before you could have – there was no child care or early things for little children to do at mums' and babies' functions, so it was very good for new people in the town, that's what we thought, because nowadays you've got your kinder[garten] children and there wasn't anything like that. And I also helped – we set up the kindergarten when it was on the – – –. The original kindergarten was in Nottage Hall at the back of the church, when Sharon was little; and Ben Gibson, he was one of [them]; Cate [Gibson] was there. And then we'd have to put it away every day at the end of the time and then bring it all out next day because other things were being used in the Hall, so it was a fairly big relief when they got the kindergarten built down the bottom, that made a difference.

Were any of your children able to go to the new kindergarten?

No. No, I just missed out on that. I went to the celebration that they had recently. Was that forty years, was it, forty years? Or thirty years, was it?¹³

May have been thirty.

Thirty. We did get asked to that, so that was nice.

You mentioned Nottage Hall, and that was [built] with money left to the town by Mr Walter Nottage.

Walter Nottage, yes.

¹³ It was forty years [LN]

What do you remember about him?

Well, he was just this really old gentleman when I got there, he was my neighbour, he lived across the back, and he had been widowed for many years and his wife was older than him but had died a long time back. I did have the dates. And he was a great gardener and very generous and used to regularly go to church, and very prim and proper, staid old fellow. And he left five thousand pounds to the Church for the use of the community for a hall, the community and the Church for a church hall, and that was built mainly by voluntary labour at the rear of the Methodist – Uniting Church, now. And so that's for the whole town to use as well. He had no family, they had no children, so he often used to come over to take a quiet interest in our kids and bring me over potatoes and onions, and that's where the kindy is now, like where his home was and his property. And he had the land all up Brooks Street, so Ken Smith told me, and he had a little dairy over there, so his land went there; and then right up across the road, up to the top of the hill the other side; and I think his brother had the other land which verges onto Nottage Road, which is called Nottage Road, going out to the Perrini's Winery.

I think he left some other land to the town, too, didn't he, Walter Nottage?

I think it might have been – would it have been where the seniors are?

Yes.

That was his paddock, that was his potato paddock. So he may well, I think that might have been so, yes. His land went right down through there, to the road where the seniors' village is now¹⁴.

I think another sort of identities of the town were the Rowley family.

Yes.

What do you remember about them?

Well, Mr and Mrs Rowley¹⁵ were always very active in civic affairs and she was the Patron of the Red Cross, and Arnold was in everything that went on – he was in the

¹⁴ Nottage Park retirement homes on Battunga Road [SAS]

¹⁵ Arnold and Ada Rowley [LN]

Civil Defence, too – and they were great, staunch Anglicans, very pillars of the Church. And I know his son, John. And then the daughter, Virginia, and then John's brother – and I can't think of his name¹⁶, but he's much older and I didn't really know him, I can't think of his name – but they have always been townsmen, townspeople, were very good-hearted, generous people. They've been around a long time. In the fire, he was always in the Emergency Fire Service when he was younger, Mr Rowley, and he passed away at home.

John asked me to go out, it was his father – you mightn't want to put this on – John's father was supposed to have met the Bishop of Cape Town in Adelaide at the Adelaide Club and he didn't turn up, and John rang me from Adelaide and he said, 'I'm a bit worried about my father. Could you please go out and see how he is?' And I'd been going out, through the Red Cross, to put drops in his eyes because he'd had an operation on his eyes recently. And I said to my husband, 'Well, you'd better come with me because I don't know what I'm going to find'. So we went out and he'd passed away. And the radio was still going. And I rang the CFS and asked them to come out and deal with it properly and not to come with their sirens blaring, and then we stayed there and helped them and got somebody to come out – John was coming up, and we went to get a friend of John's and he was there to meet John and look after him when John got out there, because we had to wait for the Coroner to come. There's all those things that you mightn't be aware of, but they take so much time. And the police were way out on the freeway at Callington, and they took a long time to come. So they were there from about – we went out and it wasn't dark, and it must have been eleven or twelve at night by the time – – –. And then we also went down to the road and waited for the funeral director to come from Mount Barker after the police had been there; and we went out and took drinks out to the police who had to be there and took them out something for their tea, because they were there a lot longer than they expected to be; and made it nice for John when he came and had his friends take him away. But you might not want to put that on the tape.

¹⁶ David Rowley [LN]

But there's things you just do as neighbours, don't you? There's little things aside, sometimes, that you're able to do from what the main event is that smooths the way for people. That's what I feel is nice to be able to do.

I'd just like to ask you some general questions about the town, now.

You can delete that if you want.

What do you think are the main changes, from your perspective, since you moved here?

Well, you hardly know anybody now, unless you've got children at school. If you've got children at school I think that makes a difference. Now our children are grown up and away. Even high school mothers. But most, a lot of people, work in Adelaide, come home at night, and both the couple are away and there's not many people at home during the day. That was another thing that we stopped doing the Red Cross Calling for, because there was nobody at home during the day. And in our street there'd be three people of fifteen who are still at the house during the day; the others are all away working. That's the biggest thing, it's a dormitory suburb.

We used to have a new resident's kit that we made, that was somebody made that at the church, and I think Gill¹⁷ at the kindergarten did it, too, she did something like that for new residents, so that you could give them a package. That was another thing that we did in the town, so you could give a new resident a list of numbers that they might call and call on them. But there's just so many people come now, I think it's just gone by the board.

What do you think are the best things about living in Meadows?

The Bible says, 'Be content wherein you find yourself' – and I mean I'd like to have travelled, I'm not well enough to travel too far now – and if you're home and you can hear the birds and you can get out of bed in the morning that's pretty good. (laughs)

People are friendly and supportive, and we've had very good neighbours. We've had very kind neighbours to us over the years who've looked after us, and we try to look after people. We've been recipient of lots of help and care when I've been away [in hospital], and it's helped Ron a lot; and I feel that we're still country enough to if

¹⁷ Gill Bowman, Director of the Kindergarten [LN]

you say you need – you wouldn't even say you needed help, but my husband would come home sometimes when I was in hospital a long time, there'd be a full meal on the doorstep, beans all cut up, soup, dessert, and this went on for months, months and months, unasked-for. People are very generous. Very thankful. Very thankful to live in a town like Meadows, I think that's it.

Are there any particular other events or incidents about Meadows that stick in your mind?

(laughs) Yes. When Sharron was only toddling, my eldest daughter, we had a circus resting in Meadows. I don't think they were doing very well. And there was no other houses up our street, just our house and the one down behind the SAFF¹⁸ service station, and they had elephants, lions and hyenas and a generator, and they were there for nearly ten days. And they locked their foal in our yard one night and we heard this bang, bang, bang down the veranda. I think they put the foal in there so that the mare wouldn't wander away and I don't know what else it did, and then I looked out in the garden and Sharon is standing – she wasn't even up to the fence, she was only two or eighteen months old, just toddling – and there's an enormous elephant standing outside of the fence, pruning my Lorraine Lee rose. So terrifying. The elephant's there, pruning my rose – you know, nibbling all the tops of my rose – and there's this child, (laughs) my firstborn, looking over at this huge elephant. 'Come to me. Come to me, very slowly. Come to me.' Anyway, she came up across the garden, but the elephant took no notice of her. I was horrified. And anyway, they came down and got the elephant. It had just wandered away. It still had its chains on its legs. So my rose has been pruned by an elephant. And I was really glad when they went, because the animals were making big noises. Yes, that was funny. (laughs) I often think of that. I often say to Sharon how she nearly got trampled by an elephant in Brooks Street. (laughs) You'd never believe it, would you? Silly.

I've asked you all the questions that I planned to ask, so unless – is there anything else that you were hoping to say?

Oh, I don't know whether there's any interesting things in that book there, my Red Cross book. Just I got a long service badge from Red Cross; and then I found that the

other day about Henri Dunant, the Red Cross principles, which is quite good reading and it doesn't ever go out of date.

Did you want to just explain about your long service badge?

Oh, it was just that – yes, I just got that when I was – do you want to see that? Yes, I thought that was nice. And it's not supposed to be worn except if you're on an official Red Cross function, but I have worn it to a funeral of a person that it was nice to have that. Always nice for your kids to have, I was quite proud to get that. But it was one year shy because I really did one year longer than that.

And when we went to Darwin we went out to live at Gove and we set up a Red Cross branch, so we had like a steering committee and we were working for the bauxite mine for Nabalco at the time – it's not called Nabalco any more – and we set up a donor panel for blood transfusion, because we didn't have night landings, any at all yet there, so anybody who had a major accident they had to wait for the blood type to go to Darwin and then come back the next day. And so that's what we went around and set up. Sold some [paper] flowers and we fundraised and set up to buy eskies and all the tubes and things that we needed, and they set up this donor panel right in Nulunbuy so that if there was a major accident at the plant they could go straight to hospital and call those donors in there. So I was really pleased to be involved in that.

That's not quite Meadows, but this was why they didn't want to give me my long service badge because I was four years away out of Meadows, and my word wasn't good enough and I was trying to find the Northern Territory records but I had trouble getting them. But that was quite interesting, we had some cyclones come up, where our training for the CFS was useful – like of Emergency Services, Civil Defence at that time – so we helped set up ready for the cyclones. Three cyclones came through on the different alerts while we were up there, so our training came in handy. Doesn't matter where you are, you can put it to good use, you see?

Well, thank you very much, Lorraine. It's been a pleasure to interview you, and thank you very much for coming along.

¹⁸ South Australian Farmers' Federation

Thank you for asking me.

Thank you.

I hope people don't think I'm an old lady raving on. (laughter)

END OF INTERVIEW