

Stories of Village Life an Oral History Project

The Stuart Town Community

Hilary and Carmel Cohen, Laurie Pope and
Richard McGregor
Interview Transcript
29 February 2024

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This Oral History interview was conducted by John Bayliss with Hilary and Carmel Cohen, Laurie Pope and Richard McGregor on 29 February 2024.

Hilary and Carmel Cohen along with Laurie Pope and Richard McGregor discuss life in the Stuart Town and the changes the village has undergone over the years.

Transcript created by Simone Taylor



This recording created on 29 February 2024 is part of Dubbo Regional Council's oral history project 'Stories of Village Life'. Each recording contributes to the developing story of life in our region.

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(I): So, thank you everyone for participating today. Thank you to Dicky, to Laurie, to Hilary and to Carmel. We're here at Stuart Town in Hilary and Carmel's home - for the recording could you please state your full name. Carmel?

(C): Carmel Cohen

(H): Hilary Cohen

(L): Laurie Pope

(R): Richard [Dickie] McGregor

(I): Thank you everybody. So, as I said some general questions and then some information about village life and your part of that. How long have you lived in Stuart Town, Carmel.

(C): Ah since 1966.

(I): And were you born here in the district or did you...?

(C): No, I wasn't born here, born at Wellington, lived at Gollan.

(I): Gollan, ok.

(C): Gollan on the north side of Wellington.¹

(I): And that was where your family home was?

(C): Yes, and then we moved to Sydney. Yeah, and then I came back, for a reason. [Marriage to Hilary]

(I): And Hilary how long have you been in Stuart Town?

(H): Yeah, all my life.

(I): And your family home?

(H): Yes, mum and dads' home,

(I): Which is this home [where the interview was taking place]

¹ Gollan is located on the banks of Spicers Creek, near the villages of Geurie, Ballimore and Elong Elong. Approximately 1.15hours drive from Stuart Town.



(H): the same home yes

(I): Ok so [you spent] all your life here?

(H): Yeah.

(I): And what about you Laurie, you're from Stuart Town?

(L): I was at Lower Mookerawa

(I): And how far is that from [Stuart Town]

(L): 15 miles out of town - yeah 15 miles.

(I): And do you still live there or do you live in...

(L): No, it's under water

(I): It's underwater so it's a bit hard (laughs) So you live in town now?

(L): Yes

(I): And how long have you lived in town for?

(L): Ah about 1962 I think, yeah.

(I): And Robert what about you?

(R): I was born in 1958 in Orange, and I've been here ever since. 65 years so yeah.

[0:02:47] (I): Alrighty so for all of you I guess a different upbringing in a sense, just to get a sense of your schooling and things. So, Carmel - where were you?

(C): I went to high school in Wellington. - I went to primary school at Gollan and then to high school in Wellington - I don't know how many years back then five? [coughs] Five I think...

(I): Yeah, to the intermediate?

(C): More than the intermediate. [to complete the Leaving Certificate]

(I): And what about you Hilary?

(H): Yeah, no I went to school here until sixth class and then I went to Wellington High. But I left it the day I turned 15. I wasn't a real school goer. [all laugh]

(I): And then you worked with your father?

(H): No, no. then I got a job in a store called 'Fultons' EA Fulton in Wellington, it was a general store and I worked there for ten years. And I left there and then I come out here to Stuart Town and I drove a truck for chap for two years and then I went to the hardware store - A

Kitch & Sons [Hardware] which I think they've been there for 100 odd years. I went for two months to help them out and stopped 22 years in the Kitch & Sons Hardware, yeah. Then I left there, and I went bookmaking full time.

(I): And Laurie what about you -

(L): I started at Lower Mookerawa. I started when I was about 10 and I'd just turned, 14 went digging out rabbits.

(I): And long did you do digging out of rabbits

(L): Oh, for quite a while there was three of us, two Italian Prisoners of War and me and we had one water bag between for the day in the summertime. [laughs]

(I): We'll come back to the rabbits. What about you Robert?

(R): Yeah, I went to primary school here in Stuart Town and high school in Wellington. Left when I was 16 - sort of worked around helped my father went to shearing sheds with him and worked in orchards. Did odd jobs here then until I was 18 and then joined the railway and ended up being there for 42 years, and retired when I was 60.

[Laurie comments on Robert's microphone]

(I): Yep. So, schooling in those days - good fun? Hard?

(C): Yeah, it was for me I liked school, I enjoyed school [at Gollan]. Cause I think coming from 30 mile out of town you didn't have a lot of contact with other kids and that was high school - high school was so different.

[0:05:53] (I): And lots of kids at school?

(H): Yeah, down here we had two schools - catholic school and the public school and they were both full with pupils, yeah. And then when - sixth class then you went to Wellington. Moved into Wellington [High School] yeah.

(I): And the type of learning that you did, was it maths and science and English and those....

(H): It was supposed to be, but I wasn't - that's what it was Maths, Science, English and History.

(R): Yeah, sort of like it was just basic because nowadays you'll have young kids dunno where a town is or where this is or that is. Rivers or dams or anything. Whereas back in them days they give you books and atlas and made you sit down and do it yourself. Where today kids are clicking on a computer, and they've got no idea to be honest with you.

(L): At one stage you can do the intermediate at Stuart Town school.

(H): Yeah, I think.

(C): Dawny

(H): Dawny did - my sister did [completed the Intermediate Certificate at Stuart Town]

(L): A lot of people did the intermediate

(H): Yeah

(R): And we were more sport orientated kids back then you know. We had sports carnivals out here between the two schools and Mumbil and all those places and where now days you don't see many kids involved in sport. A lot that's with a lot of money two because you gotta pay insurance and what not, you know. But it's sad to see so.

(L): The intermediate with a schoolteacher by the name of Laurie Ward. And he played football for Australia but came to Stuart Town to teach. Yeah.

(I): So that early life of specially where you lived Carmel, but for all of you, hard life?

(C): Well, it was because, I mean, just after the war life was very hard. So, my dad was away and then [he] came back I think it took him a long time to recover, you know. He always worked hard on the farm. It was a good life.

(I): So, you would go to school and then after school or on the weekends - were you working helping with the family farm where you lived with your parents or were you playing sport, what was life like on the weekends after school?

(C): Oh well I think where we were, well we just helped dad a lot my brother and I. I had two - - - and we used to go with Dad all the time to help, you know. That was our life, I think our nearest neighbours probably would've been 4 mile - five mile [away]

[0:08:57] (I): Yeah, so yourselves in town were playing sport on the weekend was there cricket competitions and tennis or?

(L): Back in those days there was a lot of sport. There was a dance nearly every weekend. Tennis, football, cricket, plenty of sport. You might have to ride your horse to Stuart Town to get to the event, but it was good times. Happy times.

(H): You didn't say, plenty of gambling (all laugh)

(I): Not when you're in primary school I would think.

(H): No, but here in Stuart Town (Laughs)

(R): You'd know about that.

(I): And so, the pastimes that you've mentioned, dancing - the dances and those things was there a big social life in [Stuart Town]?

(L): Oh beautiful, it was an excellent time, the happiest time of my life just after the war. There was always something happening every weekend. Everybody combined and worked together, excellent.

(H): Yeah, the dances used to be big here. You know Balls and everything.

(L): Just occasionally there'd be a Friday night Ball and a Saturday night dance here, just occasionally.

(I): Were there Deb [Debutante] Balls here?

(L): Yes

(I): So, thinking of that it must have been quite a large community to host and maintain those social activities.

(C): Well, that's right.

(L): Well, every property employed at least two people, so you had a lot of people living in the district.

(I): And everything was held down at the community Hall?

(C): Yes

(I): Was it called that, then?

(H): School of Arts.

(C): School of Arts, yeah - But they used to have pictures [movies] at -Hall didn't they, early on?

(L): That was before my time

(C): Oh well that was...

(H): Yeah they had pictures in the School of Arts. Don Jones used to....[show them]

(L): The Linklater brothers, from Euchareena.

(H): That's right Bill Linklater yeah, and then didn't Don Jones...²

(L): He was always his assistant.

(H): That's what it was yeah.

(L): Percy, what's his name, Bayliss would take the money, and he had a little hurricane light that was his...(laughs)

[0:11:40] (I): So, when you drive into town now it doesn't show that there might have been all that activity. So, it must have been a very - quite a thriving village community in those days.

(C): Well it was, I think.

(H): Well, there was - five shops here. A butcher...

(L): Two butchers

(H): Two butchers and a bakery

(L): Originally two [bakeries]

(H): They all made a living. The shops, five shops, yeah.

(I): And then two schools as you've said.

(L): And a school at Farnham, school at Mookerawa, and a school at the river. Back in time. I remember your Mum and Aunty riding a push bike from where they live up to the school.

(R): In Mookerawa yeah.

(L): In Mookerawa.

(I): If you went to the big town was that Orange, Wellington, Dubbo? What did you consider the major centre.

(L): We always went to Wellington. It was too far to Orange with the old vehicles and a very rough road (sneezes) excuse me, a very rough road, it wasn't bitumen. So, we went to Wellington.

(I): And would people go to Wellington once a week? - or did things come out from Wellington to here?

² Bill Linklater owed projectors and used to show movies at the School of Arts in Stuart Town. Don Jones continued to show films after Bill Linklater retired.

(L): I don't think we could afford to go to Wellington every week (laughs)

(H): But Wellington, no it's where everybody went, it's thriving in Wellington once. It was a thriving little town.

(L): A very good town

(H): Yeah, but as Laurie just said - oh they probably go, what fortnight or something you know to Wellington. As I say we had five shops here.

(I): So quite self-sufficient in that sense. And not only for yourselves but for a lot people were [there] a lot of family gardens, home gardens and things growing your own vegetables

(H): Oh, don't know.

(C): I don't think so.

(L): Only some people that's all.

(H): Yeah, I think you could count'em on one hand.

(C): Water'd be the biggest problem.

(R): Laurie and myself, we were worked it out - what 14-15 fruit orchard there used to be.

(L): There were possibly a little bit more than that. Stone fruit - an agent told me once that if you didn't have Stuart Town peaches, you didn't have a Flemington Market. That's how good the fruit was. Very highly respected. That's in the State.

(I): Would you say it was a happy childhood and things that you had.

(C): Oh Well...

(H): Yeah, I had a happy childhood, yeah.

(L): Excellent.

(C): Our kids all did too, cause they were - well there was a lot of kids around in those days, I suppose.

[0:14:50] (I): So, the period we're talking about is the 50s, 60s particularly? 70s?

(C): I would think so.

(L): Back in the 40s.

(H): Oh, earlier yeah

(C): Even earlier

(L): Straight after the war.

(I): And then that continued on until maybe the 80s or so?

(C): Yeah, I think more when our kids finished high school and even yours (speaking to Robert)

(R): Yeah - then when the phones come in - the technology sorta bugged everything, you know. When I was growing up after school you'd ride a horse, or chasing rabbits or playing with your mates out in the paddock - that was it. Other than that, now days you don't see kids - you'd go down the street, there'd be kids everywhere whereas now days you don't see nobody.

(I): I'd like to talk to you about your working life if I may, so Carmel you went to school, [then] went off to university?

(C): No, we moved to Sydney, and I worked for - I worked at Woolies [Woolworths Supermarket] to start with and then became a telephonist on interstate and state exchange, because in those days it wasn't all automatic and that was a good job, really enjoyed it.³

(I): And then you came out here.

(C): When I got married and came out here, I didn't work until I started to work for Hilary when our kids were 10 or 12?

(H): Yeah

(C): I went with him working then. [As a Bookmakers clerk]

(I): So, Hilary I understand your father had the post run?

(H): Mail run yeah.

(I): Yeah, the mail run, that's what it was called the mail run. So how far did that go?

(H): How far was it to Mookerawa? Laurie?

(L): 15 mile

³ In the early days of telephone usage, people could not dial a number directly they need to speak to a telephone operator who would manually relay their call on a central switchboard. (Information provided by Carmel Cohen)

(H): 15 Mile, Laurie's parents was his last stop, down to where Burrendong Dam⁴ is, down Mookerawa - they were the last stop, Laurie parents. Then he had another one down what they call west end. I suppose round trip to here, did you measure it when do it?

(R): No probably, I don't know 20ks?

(H): Yeah - but he the two mail runs all his life.

(L): But in that mail run there was a post office at Mookerawa. The sealed mail bag - you tell the storey Hilary.

(H): Yeah, when he'd pick the mail up here, at the post office here at Stuart Town from here to what they called Mookerawa it'd just be sorted and they'd tie up with sting and Dad would just drop it into a mail box or people would be there to meet him, and then he'd go on down to Mookerawa Post Office. But when it left the post office here the people further up from the Mookerawa Post Office - their mail was put into another bag, sealed with wax and steamed and the very old lady had the post office there, she'd cut it open and she'd sort the mail out there and that'd be all loose again, and Dad'd just take it up to the people further on, and on the return trip when the return mail'd come back he'd have to call into the post office and Mrs Lee was her name, she'd sort the mail out and put it in another bag, seal it and put wax on it, put a stamp on it, and it'd just come back up to Stuart Town Post Office.

(C): Complicated

(H): Yeah, it was a funny sort of...

(R): Quite a business

(H): Yeah

[0:18:34] (I): Did you ever go on the run with him?

(H): Oh yeah. Carmel finished up doing the run when Dad got sick.

(I): OK

(H): Yeah, she finished it up, and that, and no he had it for years; years and years.

⁴ Burrendong Dam is a major water storage dam located on the Macquarie River, approximately 30 kilometres southeast of Wellington. Construction of the dam commenced in 1946 and was completed in 1967, following which it was officially opened by Premier of NSW Sir Robert Askin. The dam has the capacity to hold 1,188 000ml of water storage as well as flood mitigation capacity.

(I): You said that you didn't get along with school and you finished early, what did you do then?

(H): I went and worked in a hardware store in Wellington.

(I): Oh, Yeah

(H): At Wellington, Fultons, yeah - I remember - I was there for 10 years and I left there, and I come out here and I drove a truck for a chap for two years. Then I went back into Wellington then to another hardware store for 2 months and I finished leaving there after 22 years. And I went out bookmaking full time on the racetrack, yeah.

(I): Ok, and that would have taken you around the State.

(H): Yeah. I've done a lot of kilometres.

[0:19:50] (I): Just when your saying [you're] going into Wellington for work how did you get into Wellington?

(H): Car, I had to drive each morning, yeah.

(I): Yeah, so the roads wouldn't have been as good as what they are now.

(H): Oh no, and as Laurie said earlier the road from here to Orange, it was disgraceful.

(I): And Laurie you went rabbiting, but you would have done other things...

(L): Yeah, had a leased property, and I worked for him [his father] for a long time, and then I learned to shear. Then I went shearing at Warren and whatever come back and I drew two blocks here, one at the Land Board Hearings,⁵ and planted an orchard, two and a half thousand peach trees and then I brought another block of land with Dad, when he died I took over 1,900 acres of scrub and mountain country of Lease - it wasn't freehold⁶ I had to buy it, and that was a long time - Dad died in 1971, he'd a pretty hard life down in those mountains.⁷

(I): You said that peaches from Stuart Town had a great reputation?

⁵ 17 people applied for one block of land at Stuart Town, a Land Board hearing was held, and everyone was represented by a solicitor except for Laurie Pope who was represented by a Barrister. Laurie's application was successful. (Information supplied by Carmel Cohen)

⁶ Laurie received a special lease for three years, after which the land converted to Freehold, and he was able to purchase it. (Information supplied by Carmel Cohen)

⁷ The NSW Land Department was established in 1861 to manage all Crown Lands, this included the land leases, sales, dedications, as well as reserving and resume land in the public interest. The Crowns Land Act of 1884 divided NSW into three land divisions Central, Western and Eastern. Land Boards were created to manage the land within the division usually named after the location of the head office. Both Orange and Dubbo had Land Board Offices.

(L): The best in NSW.

(I): So, there was a lot of orchards in the Stuart Town area?

(L): Yea, there could have been 17 or 18 - the smaller orchards yeah. Every Sunday afternoon in my time there'd be a semi-trailer and a very big tabletop load of peaches go to Sydney market. One year, I had 10,000 half bushel cases of peaches and I wouldn't know how many all up - maybe around 30,000 peaches went out of Stuart Town.

(I): And they were the Hale Haven variety?⁸

L: Hale Haven, Hales, J H Hale's, - some plums.

(I): You didn't develop your own variety at all?

(L): No. Coles and Woolworths wrecked it, in the finish it didn't pay to pick them.

(I): And because it's dry country here and good - the type of soil they need?

(L): Very porous soil, well drained it needed that. But you needed water on top.

(I): So where were you drawing the water from?

(L): I put a dam in, I built a dam, 3½ million gallons. Trickle irrigation. Everything was good, but Coles and Woolworths didn't pay to pick the fruit in the finish.

(I): And your example of the dam and the drip work and things was that like everybody would have been doing something like?

(L): Oh, some didn't have irrigation. Some had different types, flood irrigation or whatever. yeah.

[0:22:50] (I): And that group of people growing orchards - growing peaches, were you are close group in a sense - would you have helped each other?

(L): Oh no, when it was on you were flat-out yourself. Mine was only 25 acres, and I think I employed at one time, 14 people per day - 14 or 15, yeah. A lot of people employed - all the district people employed – ran orchards in summertime there. They didn't worry about the hot weather then (laughs)

(I): No, no orchards producing anymore?

(L): You've got a job to find a peach tree.

⁸ Prunus persica 'Hale Haven' is a variety of peach tree known to be frost resistant and produce of large crops of fruit in early to mid-summer.

(I): They were just let to die or?

(L): Pushed them out, yeah. Terrible shame, but anyway now you wouldn't get anyone to pick them. There's just no one. A few doleys⁹ but nobody else.

(I): And Robert you mentioned that you ended up on the railways?

(R): Yeah, that's right, yeah.

(I): How long was that for?

(R): 42 years.

(I): Based here in Stuart Town?

(R): I was based out of Dubbo

(I): Ok, so does that mean you lived in Dubbo, or?

(R): No, no I travelled, and I worked in a, what you call it, migratory gang - where you went from place to place, replaced all the sleepers in the track. So, we might be in Cobar for two months, then we might be in Bourke or somewhere. We worked on the Bourke line before they shut it down. I virtually worked right out through the state doing that job.

(I): The Railway Station and surrounds would have been something quite big here in the day, cause it would have had the mail coming in -would have been used for stock and things, grain perhaps?

(R): Yeah, I can remember the stock yards up there and they used to have good shed there with all the fruit - back then the growers used to get there fruit by wooden boxes, until they changed over to cardboard ones. And they used have - as far as I know, there was fettler gangs that live here, and have told me they used to go out and live in tents along the track while they did their work and probably come - Laurie might remember that, do you Laurie?

(L): Yeah, just, yes.

(H): They just had to push the old trikes yeah. Out to work. No, the railways were pretty big, we had two station masters here. One'd go on at 6'o'clock and put the - what they used to call the mail train, first mail train through and then – and then there was two wasn't there?

(L): Two mail trains

⁹ The Dole refers to a government benefits payment for people aged between 22-66 who are unemployed. A 'doley' is negative term for individual's accessing government unemployment benefits. By 2024 the term had changed 'jobseeker' by the Australian Government to describe this benefit.



(H): Two mail trains

(L): Bourke and the Coonamble.

(H): Through, and at lunchtime he'd knock off and the other station master'd work until the last two trains went back to Sydney at night.

[0:26:07] (I): And would a lot of people use - catching the train to Sydney or to further west.

(L): There wasn't so many motor cars around back after the war. The train was quite popular. Quite often you'd go to Wellington by train.

(I): And that would be the same going to Dubbo as well, and then to Sydney.

(H): Yeah, to Sydney and that.

(R): Yeah, I remember the mail train, it'd come through at half past nine of a night and you'd get to Sydney at 7'o'clock the next morning. Which is a long trip I'm telling you. Especially going over the mountains at Lithgow when it's nice and cold, in them old red rattlers.

(L): Yeah, but I travelled it once when it was nice and hot, and it was terrible. (All laugh)

(I): So, either way...

(R): Old steam trains, yeah.

(H): That's how the mail - when the post office over here would close at 5'o'clock - Dad would go over and pick the mail bag up and take it up to the railway station to go on the train that night, yeah. That's how they...

(C): They sorted the mail on the train.

(H): On the train, they had sorters, yeah.

(I): [It was] quite a flourishing village in the day with - a number of businesses to support the families, schools, social activities and the like and I guess employment as well either on orchards or perhaps on the railways or on farms or even just in local business. What was main impacts coming that supported the town's growth do you think? I know you mentioned the telephone coming, would have been the old switch board...

(C): No, it was automatic here.

(L): Stuart Town I think was the first automatic [telephone system] in NSW

(C): It was the first one - it was like a testing thing, and they put it in here.

(I): And what about electricity and the like for street lighting and those sorts of things, what was that improvement, did you notice that actually happening?

(C): I think that came in fairly early, didn't it?

(H): I'm just trying to think...

(L): I remember the Frappells and all of those houses that didn't have electricity that was just after the war, they got electricity.

(H): I was just trying to think when it come in here.

(L): Probably about the same or a bit early.

(H): You'd set up with the old kerosene lanterns and that you know. And then when the power come.

(L): Yeah, it was great to have electricity wasn't it.

(C): Very modern (Laughs)

(H): Yeah, bit better than the old kerosene lights and those pressure lanterns and that,. (laughs)

(L): Rabbit lanterns that's what we had. [Kerosene Lanterns]

[0:29:18] (I): Did the development of Burrendong Dam - Lake Burrendong have impact at all on the village, on Stuart Town?

(L): We lost 1,900 acres to Burrendong Dam. That was quite devastating. Dad only had a lease as I said early and that meant he didn't get any payment till it was over and then he got little because he didn't own the land. And we had just to sit there for 10 or 15 years doing nothing. It was awful and eventually Sir Robert Askin came to power and he did pay a little bit for the lease, and I think Dad got \$21,000 for 1,900 acres that's what he got. They were hard, bad times because of him not having freehold, yeah.

(I): So, if you had freehold land you were better compensated?

(L): In 1948 they paid them up and they leased it back.

(I): Where there many like your father that had the leasehold?

(L): Yeah, quite a few.

(I): So that would have caused a lot of people to leave the area?

(L): Well, where were you going to go, what were you going to do? You sat there with your sheep and survived?

(I): Yeah, so you were still grazing sheep and orchards still?

(L): No, no

(I): Orchards later?

(L): We were way down on Mookerawa we lived - only grazing country that's all. I think Dad run about 2700 sheep, yeah.

(I): The construction of the dam did that provide employment for locals?

(C): A lot of employment, I think.

(L): Oh, a lot of employment.

(I): And - were workers living here who came -

(L): There was people come from Copeton [Dam] and Glenbawn [Dam] down to here, to Burrendong. They built the village at Mumbil, and they lived in Wellington. There was a double decker bus come from Wellington every morning and all the local people they worked on the dam. I think there was about 800-900 people worked on Burrendong.

(I): So - for a while it would have provided some steady income and employment for the people.

(H): Oh yes Stuart Town did well out of it.

(L): Well, the Mumbil pub was doing about 40 [kegs of beer] at the time.

(H): They built hostels at Mumbil for the workers.

(I): None built here?

(H): no, but at Mumbil they built these hostels. What there'd have been four or five hostels they built?

(L): And the village over the creek (Hilary laughs?)

(H): But yeah, no, a lot of employment. What'd you say 800 or something?

(L): I think there was 800 or 900 people all up.

[0:32:25] (I): And did that improve services and facilities here in Stuart Town at all. Did extra things happen because of that influx of people?

(L): We got a bitumen road from Wellington to Stuart Town, that was about the main thing that I remember.

(H): It happened all at Mumbil.

(I): More at Mumbil than here. So, the changes to the village that meant [its] getting to the point now where there's not as many people living here, limited shops, facilities, and things. When did that decline start to happen do you think?

(C): Probably after the dam was finished, was it?

(L): It was after the orchards because there was still employment - you could be someone to work. And then it just sort of...

(C): Collapsed.

(L): Collapsed, yeah - us oldies don't think about it too much, but it started to die out the older people, and the younger people come here, what do you think Dick?

(R): Yeah, I think that when they started to bring in the supermarkets, the bigger supermarkets a lot people had different range of goods to get and then I can remember that when I was growing up the bakery's still here and butchers shop, and possibly three shops that I know of when I was growing up. But like they said, all of a sudden when progress and this and that, people just sort of got to the point where it was easier to go into town and buy all their stuff at one shop. Someone might get there bread and their milk here, you just the basic stuff. But when they started bringing all the other different types of foods and that, people sort of went their own way and yeah.

(C): Once our kids got older and left school, finished high school, well they all had to go away for work. Cause there was nothing around really.

(I): And then you end up having not as many people here so then not students at school, so the school has a decline.

(C): Yeah, that's right, declined.

(L): Well, the reason the schools weren't doing much good, because there were buses you could catch a bus to anywhere for school now. Molong, Orange, Wellington. Everyone goes on the bus.

(H): But when the two schools going, there were a lot of kids.

(L): Well, I think that when we were going down here [to school], I think there was about 60 or 70 kids.

(H): Down the river?

(L): No

(H): Oh, down here. And the Catholic School was full.

(L): 20-30 up there.

[0:35:25] (I): Other things impacting on the village. Obviously Covid more recently. But the cycle things that come through. Drought and fire even floods I guess, was there a lot of impact on the village in that way?

(L): Nah, it was never a flood area. We probably had our share of bush fires in the district. That's about it, really. Do you think Dickie?

(R): Yeah - - - when we had that 3 years of rain, there were a few creeks that got up - biggest I've ever seen but apart from that were sort of in an area where the water goes that way before it starts getting bigger. I can only remember one big bush fire that started down at west end and it'd end up at Euchareena, but other than that there's on been minor bush fires and bits and pieces here and there, but other than that there's nothing else.

(L): I was about 16-year-old when I seen the first bush fire. Because before that there was nothing to burn the rabbits ate all the grass, millions, and millions of rabbits, it was just bare ground. After myxomatosis the grass [grew] and the bush fires happen.¹⁰

(I): So, if there was that many Laurie you would have made a good living then?

(L): Everybody in the district maybe a living out of rabbit skins and don't worry we ate a lot too that's about all [we ate] (laughs) everybody ate rabbits....

(I): And Covid how did that effect you out here?

(C): Didn't affect us that much...

(H): Oh, Not very much - not much at all

¹⁰ The European rabbit was first introduced in 1859, by rabbits had reached plague proportions and were devastating the landscape and impacting agriculture. In 1950 Myxomatosis (disease that effects rabbits caused by the Myxoma virus) was released into several areas around the Murray Valley near Albury to test its effectiveness at controlling rabbits. It was highly effective, dramatically reducing rabbit populations across Australia allowing the landscape to regenerate.

(C): We just stayed at home.

(H): We're isolated anyway.

(C): Got our groceries - just isolated.

(R): Yeah, it sort of didn't effect much cause like I said Carmel and Hillary might go town once a fortnight. So, when were you're in a small town like this, and years ago everybody congregated together, where now days you might just go to the post office you might see one person you know. You know, Hilary might be walking up the road and somebody pulls up and says gidday you know, other than that you never had much contact with people.

(H): Not like it used, to be years ago.

(R): No

[0:38:00] (I): So, years ago it would have been quite a different scenario of managing your interactions.

(C): That's right.

(L): Saturday morning everyone went shopping, Hilary's father down in the pub taking bets (Everyone laughs). Everyone would come into shop, sulkies and – that's true isn't it?

(H): Yeah, true.

(I): So, I think for a lot of small towns Saturday was the day - the social day as well as doing your business.

(C): Social, yeah.

(L): Plenty of horse and sulkies there was after the war.

(H): The pub back in those days when dad was doing that [bookmaking] it was busy over there and of a morning, Saturday morning.

(L): Saturday morning was a big morning on the street, a big morning.

(C): See we used to play a lot of tennis, didn't we?

(H): Oh, every night.

(C): Every night we used to play - early on.

(H): Mumbil would come in and Euchareena would come in.

(L): The River

(H): The River would come up. This was when we first got the [court] lights here - the lights were on every night of the week. And now there's one court down there and they spent a lot of money doing it up and putting new lights up and I don't think they've ever been turned on – the courts [lights] down there. But there's no young people - you know.

(L): No one plays tennis anywhere.

(H): No, well Wellington.

(L): Wellington there's no one playing tennis.

(H): But as I say there's no young people here.

(R): Back near Laurie I can remember that where Laurie lives now there used to be a golf course up there.

(I): Oh, ok, yes.

(R): It's only last week I found some stuff on the last race meeting the Stuart Town racecourse had -

(I): Where was the racecourse.

(R): It was back down towards the west end way [towards Wellington off the Road to Mumbil]

(L): About half to Mumbil.

(I): Oh right, yeah.

(R): The last meeting was 1944, you reckon?

(H): I think that's what you had, yeah.

(R): A big committee.

(H): Unbelievable.

(R): About 15 or 20 on the committee.

(H): That was without the president and the vice president, and secretary. That was just the committee.

(I): Why were there so many, do you think?

(C): Everybody wanted to be on the committee (all laugh)

(R): I think the last meeting, it was a Boxing Day meeting, wasn't it, January 27th?

(H): Yeah, a Wednesday.

(R): January 27th¹¹ on a Wednesday and they had a Ball after the race meeting. A big town Ball after the race meeting on a Wednesday. So, I don't why, so it must have been a holiday day, back then, or what it was.

(L): Will I tell the story about Les Lawson, a bloke by the name of Les Lawson was the judge [at the races] and they're coming up the strait and his horse was being beaten so he fell out of the judge's box and declared no race. (all laugh)

(I): Supposedly. Allegedly

(L): No that's fact. Fact, Bill Lang would tell the story.

(H): So, he was on the committee.

(L): Bill was on the committee - and no one won. There's only two horses in the race and they got to the barrier and both jockeys started to talk to each other, and they were both dead,¹² so didn't know what to do. And this Wally Cummin [jockey] - there was couple of [running] rails missing out of the [track], and halfway round towards the end he shot out into the scrub that was the end of that. That's Bill Lang's true story. (Everyone laughs)

[0:41:33] (I): So, what sustained the community overtime is essentially agriculture pursuits.

(L): Good wool grazing area, good clean fine wool. And that's been the mainstay income wise of the whole district. Right through to Mookerawa, Triamble, Burrendong. Yeah, good wool country.

(I): And the railway was that something that maintained the growth of the population and the development of the community.

(R): Oh, not really here, cause a lot of the blokes that I was growing up, they had to travel away to work. As I said we were based out of Dubbo so you had to go to Dubbo and work out

¹¹ Boxing Day is held on 26th January.

¹² This phrase 'both dead' refers to the saying 'running a dead horse' or 'flogging a dead horse' when there is no point in putting a lot of effort into a particular activity. In this case the jockey's decided there was no point trying to win the race.

of there. But now days like there's the XPT [passenger train] and Roger Fletcher runs his train everyday which doesn't affect us, - he's keeping the system open and using as is.¹³

(L): All the work on the railway now is very little by hand it's all machinery isn't. One time there'd be big gangs of you blokes working up and down the line now you never see that.

(I): Does the XPT [passenger train] stop here?

(L): Thank God, yes.

(C): Hmmm, - between Orange and Wellington it's the only stop.

(L): There was a big protest meeting over it. People protested 'cause they were going to close our railway. And anyway, we won battle and got it kept open, our station.

(C): And there's a big loop over there, isn't there.

(R): Yeah, they built an extension loop where they can put longer trains in, in the future.

(I): So, what involvement have you all had in the community? Apart from Bookmaking (all laugh)

(R): Making a lot of money.

(I): Where you involved with your community groups?

(C): Yeah, yeah with the school groups, and tennis, anything that was going on. We all - everybody participated and helped or whatever [to do what needed to be done].

(L): The whole town worked together.

(C): Yeah, they did.

(I): Was there a local show each year.

(L): No.

(H): No, Wellington was our show.

[0:43:59] (I): And then as you said the racecourse in its day was - not in your day, but in the day was something that people would have been involved in as well.

(R): Well, you remember you said you went once didn't you, as a kid?

¹³ Fletcher International Exports is a most integrated processors and exporters of lamb and sheep meat products. Fletchers Internal Exports operates two processing facilities (abattoirs) in Dubbo New South Wales and Albany Western Australia.



(L): 1944 - you said 1944?

(R): 1944

(L): That's the one I would've went to, Jeez I'd only be a little kid.

(I): And then the committees for the tennis?

(C): Oh yeah, they all had committees.

(I): And Balls and those sorts of things, were you involved in any other those - that work.

(C): Yeah, I think everybody was involved.

(L): Everybody was involved.

(H): Everybody was involved yeah.

(C): Everybody worked for everything.

(H): Ah Dickies mother [Bid], Laurie's wife [Ruth], Carmel, Cath Frappell [Norma, Rene, Nita, Patsy]. There were about six ladies.

(C): Eight if that's what you're saying.

(H): Eight, they put two books together.¹⁴

(I): This is the history of Stuart Town?

(H): The history of Stuart Town, yeah.

(C): I think you've got those haven't you Simone (Speaking to Local Studies Officer recording sound for the interview)

(H): Oh, well there you go, Simone.

(C): She's read them too.

(I): And you were part of that group, yeah? Was that hard to do or easy?

(C): Well, it didn't seem to be because all the information came from locals.

(L): Every family contributed their family history.

¹⁴ Hilary is referring to two books about the history of produced locally: *Whispers from Ironbarks* (1988), produced by the Stuart Town Bicentennial Committee; and *Branches for Ironbarks a journey through time 1898-1989* (1998) produced by the Stuart Town Book Committee.

(C): And then we all just sort of put it together.

(I): And they were produced for a centenary of Stuart Town or anniversary?

(C): Ah the first one was the centenary, I think.

(R): '88

(I): The Bicentenary?

(C): The bicentenary

(R): 1988

(C): Yeah, '88 and the next one was '98 I think. Well, it was - each family sort of did their own thing. They sent in their family history, all that sort of thing for the second book - We only had to produce it realistically, cause everybody did their own family tree and what their families did, and all that sort of thing.

(H): They were good days then, weren't they.

(C): See there was a lot of gold here early on, really early on. Wasn't there?

(L): Yeah - Farnham was the gold area, not Stuart Town, Farnham.¹⁵

(H): Which only about...

(I): Going back towards Orange.

(H): It's only about 3-4 mile out.

(I): None there now?

(H): It'd be there somewhere John. But I don't know how you're gonna get it.

(L): When I had the ground there, I've seen about six nuggets come out the creek near Tom Fitzsimmons [property] about that size [indicates with his hands] - about two to three ounces. Bloke from Dunedoo got one. Tom Fitzsimmons had three beautiful ones, I could have brought'em for nothing nearly, but I didn't worry about it then. Mathew Keirle got two.

(H): Did he?

(L): Yeah.

¹⁵ Farnham is located on the banks of the Boduldura Creek, 1km drive from Stuart Town, on Burrendong Way.

[0:47:30] (I): Something you might not have an opinion on, but I'm just wondering is there something that you all think is unique about Stuart Town? Special about where you live?

(H): Well, I'll never move from here I suppose. So, I'd never move. You reckon you wanna leave (talking the Laurie) But you'll never leave. (All laughs)

(L): Yeah, so where I was born on the Macquarie River at Mookerawa - a real good thing there, we used to swim everyday cause it was right on the river. But it was so far to town, very isolated. Then the Dam put us out in '66 so we come up here.

(I): Perhaps it's uniqueness or special quality is what just alluded to before about the community - all working together for whatever it might have been.

(C): Yeah, that's right.

(L): Now you don't know your next-door neighbour. That's true, isn't it?

(C): They come and go a bit. But I mean it's convenient, we're close to Orange, close to Wellington. And these days with your cars and everything you don't have a problem. For medical or whatever, you go to town, socialise.

(L): I've got about three or four neighbours not far away from my house, I don't know them. They're all strangers.

(H): I wouldn't know - if I went over the street and there was ten people over there, I don't think I'd know any of them, you know. And once you used to know everybody. But as Laurie said you don't know your next-door neighbours.

(I): Challenges or limitations to living here. I don't mean that your isolated and miles from anywhere, but is there anything that your lacking, I mean obviously now because you can drive, but is there anything?

(C): No, I don't think so. I think the only thing you miss is like when we're playing tennis and things like that, there was always that part of socialising. But there's no real socialising anymore to certain extent, really is there? There's just nothing going on.

(H): There's no dances...

(R): We had three cricket teams here, like two junior sides and a seniors side, and we were lucky enough one year to win the three comps. One out at Wellington too, playing at Wellington. But now days there's nothing. You know, they don't even play cricket in Wellington now. It's got that bad. I don't know what they problem is.

[0:50:30] (I): And each year there is the Ironbark Festival - does that draw former residents back to town or?

(C): Oh yeah, at Easter time.

(H): Yeah there's a few come back for it.

(L): But it's mostly strangers though.

(H): Oh yeah, 90% would be strangers, but a few still come back for it.

(I): And has that been a good thing? I guess on the day it would be a good thing [for the town]

(C): I think so, yeah.

(I): You're not involved in [the Ironbark Festival]

(R): The problem now there's a lot of older families that are not here. Laurie's the only Pope, and there's Hilary and Carmel and my family. Like I said back in those days everybody got together and knew everybody, and now those families have sort of died out and you have new people come in and won't interact with you, and won't talk, you know stuff like that, and I think that's half the problem. So, when we go, there'll be no one here that was original, you know what I mean. Unless our younger families move here or wanna keep living here or whatever.

(I): So, there's not many of the original families still living here?

(C): Not really is there?

(R): probably only what four or five?

(C): Yeah, Mark Flemming and some of the Pulbrooks. But not a lot.

(L): How many of your family lived in the district? How many of your families? (Talking to the other members of the group?)

(H): Cohens

(C): Were the only ones now

(L): Dozens, and dozens, weren't there?

(H): I know we got - Ross' out at Store Creek [he's] a Cohen [cousin]. But yeah, no the families are just dying out, you know.



(C): And then the young ones have all had to go away to work.

(H): Got married.

(C): Got married.

[0:52:43] (I): So, what do you see for the future of Stuart Town? Status Quo?

(C): It'll never get any bigger I suppose.

(H): Very little

(L): They're all new people, the old people that we used mix and stay together and work together and that, and they're just new people you don't meet them even. I can't see anything big happening at all in the future.

(H): Well, there's gonna be none of the old ones left is there? Years ago, I had two sisters and wouldn't we Laurie, some nights we'd be here till 3 or 4'o'clock at night and they'd be playing the piano and we'd be singing and everything, there'd be a heap of us, wouldn't there, you know. But there's nobody left, like that.

(C): And you don't have that, you know you don't visit people like you used to - well there's not enough young ones to have their sing song.

(H): Well, there's none to have. Nobody.

(C): No, that's right.

(I): Is anyone continuing to collect local history and things.

(L): This is our only man capable of doing it properly... [indicates Robert]

(C): Well, I think we've passed all this on - this is his responsibility.

(H): He's the youngest.

(C): With a little bit of help from Laurie and me. (laughs)

(L): No, he'd like to do it. But the committee that's in charge of it, well I won't talk anymore.

(C): So, he's in charge now, we're giving him all the information. So, it's not lost we don't want it to be lost, what we've done and built up we don't want to lose, which can easily happen.

(L): Carmel has anyone been in that room at the hall to see what's left?

(C): I don't think so.

(I): So, there's no small museum or anything like that at all in Stuart Town?

(L): There's an archive - there was.

(C): There was an archive.

(H): Is it still there though?

(C): Well, we don't know.

(H): You wouldn't know.

(C): So, what the rest of us have got, Dickies in charge (laughs)

(L): Did you ever investigate - the day we met down at the pub I talked about Noel Grimes.¹⁶

(I): From Vietnam?

(L): Yeah.

(I): In terms of?

(L): He should have got some very high rewards for what he went through to finish, they made that movie on him. He was survivor of Lang Tan.

(I): No, I haven't not yet, no.

(L): Noel Grimes - Long Tan or something the movie, I'm not sure.¹⁷

[0:55:46] (I): Ok, anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

(C): No, I don't think so.

(H): Carmel, tell them about what you donated to the library in Sydney [NSW State Library]

(C): Hilary's uncle – [Hoy Lee] well Hilary's aunt married one of the Lee sons, from the earliest store down here [in Stuart Town]. And when they left, all left and went away he [Hoy Lee] gave us a safe. He said, 'oh there's a safe down the shop, it's yours. Whatever's in it, it's yours.'

¹⁶ Noel Grimes (born in Wellington NSW on 4 Feb 1945) was conscripted for National Service on 30 June 1965. He was posted to 12 Platoon, D Company, 6 Royal Australian Regiment, serving in Vietnam. Grimes received a citation for a gallantry for his steadfast actions during the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966.

¹⁷ *Danger Close, The Battle of Long Tan*, is a 2019 Australian war film, focusing on the Battle of Long Tan during the Vietnam war. It was directed by Kriv Stenders, with Nicholas Hamilton playing the part of Noel Grimes as part of a large ensemble cast.

So, we brought it home. Hilary rattled it around and he said, 'Well there's no gold in there and there's no money,' We didn't have a key, so he said, 'We'll think about opening it one day.'

Did we have it for 30 years? [asks Hilary] and we decided to open it. So, we opened it, cut it open and there was all these papers in the there, letters, all sorts of things. So, we got them out and sorted them all out and we said, 'well what on earth are we going to do with this we can't read Chinese.' It was lots of letters written, 1898 early 1900s. So boxed them all up and we put them up in the shed and they were there until five years ago, a Chinese lady from Bathurst came and I was telling her about it, and she said, 'oh can I have a look,' Well she was so excited, she said, 'this is amazing.' She said, ' you need to have someone to look at it,' We said, ' Who are we gonna get to look at it.' Anyway, we had another couple come and they looked at it and they said - she was Chinese too, and they said, 'really this is history,' she said, ' You need to give it somewhere that will look after it,' So they put the information on a USB stick and sent it to the library in Sydney, the State Library.

(H): No, we took it to the...

(C): No, they took the USB stick, and they looked at it and they said they were interested in having a look at. So, we took it down last October. We took it down, and they were very excited about it, and they've taken it. We've donated it to them.

[0:58:35] (I): So, what was the information - about the Chinese people living here in this area?

(C): Yeah, and a lot of information from the shop, you know letters and accounts and all sorts of things wasn't there. And - they'll have to get somebody to translate the Chinese letters because it's written in the old Chinese not the modern Chinese. But they have found somebody to do it, so it'll be interesting to see what's in those letters. Was amazing, wasn't it Dickie? Dickie saw it.

(R): Yeah, and they even had bonds, there was land in Hong Kong...

(C): No Canton¹⁸

(R): Canton or something

(C): The deeds

¹⁸ Guangzhou (once called Canton) is China's third largest city, located in the Guangdong Province, located on the Pearl River, approximately 120km from Hong Kong.

(R): The deeds for land, so I don't know whether that's still live.

(C): No, I think the 50 years is up.

(R): He was getting excited.

(C): And there were things like shares in the Lucknow mine¹⁹ that they had. But I mean there gone now. But people had given them that to pay their accounts back in - way, way back. So very, very interesting.

(H): A lot of letters of families in Stuart Town. You would have been very interested Laurie in them.

(R): And back in - the owner of - Yee Lee's father, if someone went and brought something he had to bater with'em, so there's all these letters that people had written like Ronnie Halliday he put his Indian motor bike up as collateral so he could buy something out the shop, another bloke put his house up. Another bloke put his sewing machine up, and then came back for the sewing machine up off Yee Lee's father, some of it was unbelievable. That's the way he worked, if you didn't do that you wouldn't get any goods, and that's the way people worked back then, unbelievable. Unbelievable some of it.

(C): Actually, we've only just signed the papers, haven't we?

(H): Yeah - so the library's got it, they're very excited about it.

(C): And it'll be on - well he said they will probably have an exhibition when it's all sorted and everything. But once they've got it on the thing [library catalogue] - and you'll be able to go the library and watch what they've done on screen, like they do.

[1:01:20] (I): Well-done being custodians for 30 years or something, without knowing what it was.

(C): Yeah, in cardboard box in the shed. But anyway, we finally found something to do with it.

(H): We had a bit of fun going through it, didn't we.

(R): I photocopied a lot of the stuff. Unbelievable some of it, yeah,

¹⁹ The Lucknow Mine was part of the Lucknow goldfield discovered in 1851, located near Orange NSW. It was part of the Wentworth Main Mine, which operated between the 1850s-1950s.

(H): That was the English stuff, you know.

(C): What we could read.

(R): They even had like rolled up – they must have been ledgers when they done there year, weekly or monthly thing, it was in Chinese.

(C): Rolls

(R): Scrolls, rolls something like that, it was unbelievable.

(C): Tied up.

(R): And there no gold in it but, was there.

(H): No gold or money, only papers. And we've done no good out of them.

(I): A different sort of gold.

[this section of the interview was recorded later and edited together with the main interview. There is some sound distortion and background noises as Carmel was making tea and coffees during this interview]

[1:02:20] (I): So, Laurie, you mentioned the previous conversation about Italian Prisoners of War working for your father on the farm, at the orchard. Tell me a little bit more about that.²⁰

(L): No, there was no orchard down there, it was on the farm though, they were digging out rabbits, mostly. But we had three Italian (coughs) prisoners of War, strangely one was Alonzo Polma, the other bloke was Giacomo Ritzello and then the other fellow was Jacinto Pasaquenty but they were called Jin, Lorenzo and Giacomo and they were total gentlemen, they lived in the house with us, they were just lovely, lovely people.

(I): So how old were you when they were living there?

(L): Well, I was born in 1936 and that'd be about 1943-42. So yeah, very young but I remember I was with them all the time, yeah. [background sounds Carmel stirring tea in a mug]

(I): And where'd they come from to your place?

²⁰ During the Second World War, between 1941-1945 Australia detained approximately 24 000 Prisoners of War (POW) from primarily from Italy, Germany, and Japan, 18,000 of those POWs were Italian. There were three levels of Camps or facilities to manage POWs in Australia. Prisoner of War Internment Camps (large, guarded Camps located around the country), Prisoner of War Control Hostels (smaller camps established for specific projects) and Prisoner of War Control Centres (usually referring to the placement of Italian POWs on private farms).

(L): Ah, the Prisoner of War Camp in Cowra - the Japanese were well guarded over there - very strongly guarded and the Italians were let to do what they wanted. They didn't want war they didn't want anything, only peace. They were just good people.²¹

(I): Were there many other Prisoners of War in the district?

(L): Yes, [the] Harris's, Johanson, Redhill [property] that was just in our little area here, there'd be eight of ten of them. And strangely the Italians we had were southern Italians, southern Italy they're a dark skin, black hair, and the northern ones are a blonde people, yeah.

(I): And did they - you said that they weren't that well-guarded did that mean that they would come into town into with you?

(L): Yeah, yeah. Some people resented them, but mostly they were accepted everywhere. Because they were just perfect gentlemen. Yeah, I told you story about the rabbit. The rabbit under blackberry bush. They were only with us at the Mookerawa for a few days, and Giacomo wanted to shoot the rabbit, and he was asking Mum for the gun, and I thought to myself, as little kid, you know the Prisoner of War's wanting a gun. Mum gave him the gun he went and shoot the rabbit and went and put the gun back behind the door.

[1:04:53] (I): And how long were they with you?²²

(L): About 3 years and they had to go home at the end of the war, that's international law. But Giacomo and Lorenzo came back to Australia - working for Dad.

(I): And how long did they stay this time?

(L): Ah, well Giacomo finished up - he went up near Gundagai and he brought a property and Lorenzo worked on the dredge at Wellington and then his wife in the finish she wouldn't come out here and he had to go home. And in 1988 Ruth and I went over and visited him, we had a week with him. A beautiful week we had, a guest of the Italians. Plenty of spaghetti and plenty of red wine. (laughs)

(I): Did they mix in with the other Prisoners of War.

²¹ The Cowra Prisoner of War Camp was one of 28 major camps established in Australia to house prisoners of War. It was designed to house Italian detainees but also hold detainees from various nationalities including Japanese, Korean, and Javanese.

²² Italian Prisoners of War captured in North Africa during 1941 were evacuated to India, Ceylon (Sir Lanka), South Africa and Australia. The Australian War Cabinet decided to employ Italian POWs as rural labour, with employers (often farmers operating small businesses) paying £1 per week plus living costs. A limit of three POWs per farm was imposed. From 1945, when the war ended, and 1947 all POWs were repatriated home.

(L): Oh yeah, they used to come to church, and they meet the other Italians, oh yeah great reunions, yeah. But they were just gentlemen, pure gentlemen, yeah lovely people. Very poor area where they come from in Italy. Very, very poor. There wasn't much happening in Australia after the war either, or before. It was a very poor place. But I have very fond memories - Giacomo died in Canberra and his son become a doctor, yeah. And the rest of his family still in Canberra, yeah.

(I): At the start of all this, did your father - did he put his hand up to have Prisoners of War?

(L): Yes, he applied for it - there was no one to work on the properties so he heard about them I guess, and applied and he had three prisoners of war in no time.

(I): And then who paid your father for their employment.

(L): Dad paid so much I don't know; I don't remember I was too little. And he paid so much per week. It wasn't very much. It was more or less a home for them.

(I): But the government didn't pay your father?

(L): No, no. Dad paid a little bit. And there was a canteen, an Australian army canteen that used to come out every couple of weeks and supply them with clothes, dyed red army clothes that's what they had to wear, tobacco and anything else they wanted. And they had a shop in Wellington that you could go to - the army shop, yeah.

(I): It ended up being a good memory for you because of going to Italy and meeting the family.

(L): Well, they became sort of fathers to me, they looked after me that well. I was little boy that was looked after.

[1:08:03] (I): Well, thank you Laurie, thank you for that.

(I): Well, thank you everyone for participating. Thank you for your time today, Carmel, and Hillary, Laurie and Robert 'Dickie'. Thank you so much for your time and your stories as I said before your story will form part of council's Oral history project with the Western Plains Cultural Centre. And the final bit is, this interview is conducted by myself, John Bayliss on Thursday 29 February 2024

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