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Transcript of an interview with

Reta Jacobsen

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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

This is an interview with Mrs Reta Jacobsen recorded by Helene Charlesworth in Mrs Jacobsen's home in North Perth on 29th May 1997 for the Battye Library Oral History Unit.

HC Can you please tell me your full name?

JACOBSEN Reta Agnes Jacobsen.

HC When were you born?

JACOBSEN Eighteenth February 1897.

HC And whereabouts were you born?

JACOBSEN I was born in Adelaide. We left Adelaide when I was two years old and went to Kalgoorlie and then came to North Perth.

HC What was your father's full name?

JACOBSEN Douglas Brackenridge.

HC What was your mother's maiden name?

JACOBSEN Agnes Givens.

HC Now your parents weren't West Australian born, were they?

JACOBSEN No, not West Australian born. They were born in South Australia.

HC So your parents moved to [Perth] in 1904. Where did they go to when they moved to WA?

JACOBSEN They went to Kalgoorlie for the gold rush but they didn't stay there very long and they came to Perth. Then they came out to North Perth.

HC Were there other children in the family apart from yourself?

JACOBSEN I was the eldest of the family. Now let me see. Well, Hilda my sister was born in Cahill Street Kalgoorlie, then the others were born all in North Perth.

HC In Kalgoorlie what type of job did your father do?

JACOBSEN I think he was on the council there, yes, and on the council in North Perth too when we came to North Perth.

HC Your mother, did she work at all?

JACOBSEN No, no.

HC And your parents were two years in Kalgoorlie, is that right?

JACOBSEN I'm not too sure that we were there that long. I'm not too sure about that, how long we were there. I don't think we were there that long.

HC Was there a reason why they moved to North Perth?

JACOBSEN Well, yes, because in Kalgoorlie life was very hard out there. They only had a house, like a hessian sort of a house, with all pepper trees around it. So I think things didn't work out satisfactory and they came to Perth. I think he was on the council here and still worked on the council.

HC Can you remember how your father travelled from home to work on the council?

JACOBSEN Oh, he only just walked. He had no conveyance. We weren't well enough to have anything like motor cars and things like that.

HC And what was the name of this street that your parents moved to.

JACOBSEN Angove Street.

HC And the number of the house?

JACOBSEN Ninety-seven. Oh wait a while. The first house we lived in wasn't 97, it was another house on the corner of Olive Street and Angove Street¹. The house at 97 was only after I was married. See, my husband bought that through the building society.

HC The house though your parents were living in, was it rented or did they actually buy it?

JACOBSEN No, only rented. We didn't buy anything.

HC The house on the corner of Olive and Angove Street....

JACOBSEN That was an asbestos home, yes.

HC And what type of roof did it have?

JACOBSEN Only iron roof, yes.

¹ Post Office Directories locate D Brackenridge in 1907 at Howlett St off Charles St; in 1910 at Avenue No 1 and Avenue No 2 near cnr of Bay View Road; in 1913 and 1914 at Avenue No 1 between Walcott St and Bay View Road; and in 1916 at Blake St near cnr of Knutsford St.

HC And were there other houses around it?

JACOBSEN Oh yes. The street was fairly full then, too. The police station was in that street. See, it was one of the main streets, Angove Street. Then it goes up to the North Perth School. Now the first tram that we had came to the Hyde Park Hotel, then it came along to Forrest Street, and then from Forrest Street to outside the North Perth School at Pells' corner, a newsagents there. Then from there, it went past the old home, 97 Angove Street, down to the North Perth Hotel. Of course, when we first came to North Perth they didn't have any trams then. There were old cabs used to go from the North Perth Hotel into town to take people. That was very interesting really - going back a long way.

HC And the house on the corner of Olive and Angove Streets, what kind of road was out the front?

JACOBSEN Oh, just a gravel road, only gravel, nothing expensive.

HC And what was in the garden?

JACOBSEN Oh, nothing much really. The gardens weren't very much in those days. Never any money to take any pictures, you know.

HC Did you have a veggie garden?

JACOBSEN A veggie garden? No, no, no time for that sort of thing. When we lived in Mabel Street, I used to walk down to Gooey's, the Chinese on the corner of Charles Street and Kadina Street. A Chinese couple had a Chinese garden there and I often used to go down there and get the vegies. Then there was a two-storey house and the butcher lived down the bottom. Often I'd have to get the meat and the vegies before I went to school.

HC And the house in Olive Street, how many rooms ...?

JACOBSEN Oh, only a very ordinary sort of a house, you know - a kitchen and just a couple of bedrooms.

HC And where was the toilet?

JACOBSEN Out in the yard, yes, away from the house, and the men used to come and take the pan away at night.

HC How often would they do that?

JACOBSEN Once a week, yes, once a week.

HC And did you have the mail delivered to the house?

JACOBSEN No, I used to go to the post office and get them. That's right, that was around in View Street and the teacher that taught me, she was in love with the Town Clerk in North Perth. I used to have to take letters around there to him. [laughs] The North Perth post office has just been closed, just a few weeks ago. It's moved down to.... where's it moved now? - down to Fitzgerald Street, down to the shopping centre down there. That's terrible, the dear old North Perth post office taken.

HC In the home, did you have electricity?

JACOBSEN Oh, not for a long time. Mostly lamps in those days. In the end we had electricity, yes.

HC Was North Perth a good area to live in?

JACOBSEN Really a lovely area. Everybody was so friendly and my brothers were born and we had a lovely midwife, a Nurse Wheeler. She was such a darling lady. She brought one brother into the world and Nurse Hobbley brought the other brother into the world. In North Perth in those days we were just like one big family. Everybody knew each other and I remember Walter Jorgensen, he was 21 years old and I was about fifteen then and everybody was invited to his party, and he ended up having a jewellery shop in Murray Street, Walter Jorgensen.

You might remember him. He was a lovely fellow. His father married Nurse Hobbley and she was the midwife. We were all like one big family then in those days.

HC So you knew your neighbours very well.

JACOBSEN Oh yes. They would all help each other. Any birthdays too we all met, you know. It was like a bush track from our home to the school, and sometimes the boys from school, they'd put bricks and big rocks so that we had to come through the reserve and then we would have to walk ever so far to get home. They used to do all tricks like that.

HC How old were you when you went to North Perth School?

JACOBSEN Oh, I went to North Perth School from the time I was seven years old, and to St Hilda's Church, North Perth. Then every Tuesday night the Girls' Friendly Society at the old hall opposite the old church.... I had a very happy life with church and North Perth School, very happy. I was a happy child, the eldest of.... see, I had two brothers and two sisters.

HC When you were going to school, did you wear a uniform?

JACOBSEN No, we couldn't afford uniforms.

HC And did you go to the school with your brothers and sisters?

JACOBSEN Yes, we all went together, yes. As a matter of fact, Mother used to buy some of our clothes from Sister Kate's (years ago she had a shop in Wellington Street) to help us along because Dad only working on the council, you know, didn't get much money. There was five of us to clothe. We always looked nice and I always remember my petticoat would be hanging down about an inch, and I used to get so worried. I'd say, "Mum, me petticoat's hanging down!" [laughs] She'd say, "Oh well, never mind, it's a nice pretty clean one." [laughs] Lace all showing.

HC And did the other children from around the street go to school with you?

JACOBSEN Yes, we were all friendly, yes, very, very friendly. There used to be a grocers on the corner of Angove Street and Daphne Street and it didn't matter what you bought in his shop, he always said, "Anything else besides?" My brothers when they were going to school, they used to say, "Mother, do you want anything from *Anything Else Besides?* We all called him *Anything Else Besides*. He was such a nice man but he always said, "Anything else besides?" [laughs] It didn't matter what you bought there.

HC And how far away was the school - just within walking distance?

JACOBSEN Oh, it was quite a long way from where we lived [in Mabel St.], yes, quite a long way in North Perth in the early days. We had to go through Woodville Reserve, as I told you, Woodville Reserve, and they had a gate going in and a gate getting out the other side. That was there and then they formed a bowling club at the top end of it. But North Perth was very, very happy days and I still live in it. I still love North Perth, and I still live in it now, you see, live down here in these units. There's 41 here.

HC And when you were going to school, did you enjoy school?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, I did, I liked school. Mr Hammill was the headmaster and Mr.... oh what was his name now? Oh, a lovely man taught me too - a Mr Hocking!

HC What subjects did you like?

JACOBSEN I liked all subjects. I liked school, I really did. Then after I left North Perth School I went to James Street. I used to go to James Street. Then I went to the technical school and learnt millinery and dressmaking there.

HC Getting back to North Perth Primary School, when did you leave in the morning? How long were you at school, the hours?

JACOBSEN Half-past-eight or quarter-to-nine the bells would ring. Mr Hammill was the headmaster and Mr Hocking was my teacher. Then after I left North Perth School I went to James Street.

HC Could you tell me something about the North Perth School, the buildings?

JACOBSEN Oh, a lovely building, really it was and it's still a lovely building. The reception hall is still as nice as ever and I went to speak to the children recently. It just took me back to North Perth School.

HC And did they have trees in the schoolyard?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes.

HC And a lawn area.

JACOBSEN We had to do gardening too. We had to have a little garden around our classroom and all that sort of thing. It was a beautiful school, it really was.

HC And how many teachers were on staff? Were there many teachers or just....?

JACOBSEN There was a lot of teachers really. Yes, plenty of teachers. It was very, very well-attended. Like I said, the children used to come from ever so far. They'd come from over at Mount Hawthorn. They'd walk up Angove Street to get to school from Scarborough Beach Road. They'd come from all directions - down near the Hyde Park Hotel, round that area too. It was a very lovely school.

HC And when you were eating your lunch, did you eat outside or in the hall?

JACOBSEN Yes, no we had it outside. There were lovely seats out there and we used to sit in the shade and eat our lunches and that. We were very well looked after indeed - it was a lovely school.

HC And what about at recess or playtime - did you play games?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, we used to play games. Then, of course, the bell would ring and we'd all have to get in a line and march into school. It was all done very nicely indeed.

HC And did you have slates or proper writing books?

JACOBSEN Oh, we had proper writing, yes. I can't ever remember using a slate. I suppose I did when I was seven, wouldn't I? Yes. Yes, I suppose I did.

HC And what were the desks like? Were they wooden desks?

JACOBSEN Yes, wooden desks. Two in a desk, yes. Quite nice really they were.

HC And did you form any friendships there?

JACOBSEN Oh, yes lots of friendships. They were all very friendly at school in those days, you know, never heard of fights or things like that. Everybody was happy, a very happy school. Lovely teachers we had, very good teachers they were, too. Two very nice ladies that lived in North Perth, they were very nice. Then there was.... oh, I can't think of her name - Mrs Wright's sister taught there. I can't think of her surname now. But there was a lovely infants' school. It was really beautiful.

HC And was the infants' school separate to the rest of the school?

JACOBSEN Yes, the infants' school, yes. That was down on the corner of Olive Street and View Street down there. Of course, there was the North Perth Town Hall. We used to have lots of nice functions there. The school would be taken there for lots of nice functions. They used to get up nice concerts. We learnt to sing and recite. We'd always get nice concerts. You know, they taught us to do all those sort of nice things.

HC And did you have assemblies in the morning?

JACOBSEN Yes. The bell would go and we'd all have to get into line and march into school. It was very good, well-organised.

HC And did you play sport? Did you have sports days?

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right, yes. I was never very good at sport for some reason or other, I don't know why. I was never good at tennis.

HC And after you left North Perth School, where did you go to? James Street did you say?

JACOBSEN Yes, I went to James Street and then I went to the technical school and learnt millinery and dressmaking. Miss Street used to teach us. I used to walk along.... fancy walking along the Terrace to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home. My mother used to meet it. When the tram would stop at Pells' corner she would meet me to take me home. Dear old Mum, she used to have a pair of scissors in her hand. [laughs] I can see it now.

HC And how long did you take the millinery course for?

JACOBSEN Oh, I took that for quite a while. I loved it really, millinery and dressmaking, and Miss Street. Fancy walking along the Terrace to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home from Barrack Street in those days! [laughs] Yes, I loved millinery and dressmaking. I was always very good at that. I liked that very much.

HC How long was the course?

JACOBSEN Two hours, yes from seven till nine, usually. I used to walk along then to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home. In those days the tram only came to the Hyde Park corner and it came then to Forrest Street and then around to Pells' corner and then down to the North Perth Hotel on the corner of Angove Street and Scarborough Beach Road.

HC And when you finished the millinery course, what did you do then?

JACOBSEN After that I worked in Albany Bell's. Albany Bell's had eight shops in Perth and I was going along the street one day with Mother and I said, "I'd love to work in that cake shop." Mother said, "Well, go in, we'll go in and see." I went in and the lady at the counter said, "Oh, you've got to see Mr Lightfoot, the manager. He's upstairs. Go down and see him." I went down and saw him and he said, "Oh, you'd have to start from the bottom of the ladder here." I had to start on the tea counter serving teas. They'd come out and say so many teas they wanted and all that, you know, pots of tea and you'd quickly.... First of all you had to start doing the dishes, washing dishes, then the tea counter, then a waitress. One thing I hated was being a waitress. I didn't like waiting on people, I wanted to get to the counter.

In those days Albany Bell's had a factory in Mount Lawley and all the pies and pasties would come in from there and the cakes and the biscuits and they had to be put in the windows. So I wasn't very long before I got to the counter. Then eventually I ended up being manageress. I had so many girls under me. Before I was manageress I was head of so many girls.

Then they sold the business. They had eight shops. Now, I'd better get this right. They had three shops in Hay Street, two in Barrack Street and they had shops in William Street and even over the bridge, from the James Street School. They had a shop over there in William Street. Then when the shop was sold, the Barrack Street shop, I was manageress there. Now that was sold to Kailis brothers and I stayed there until I was married. I was married from Kailis brothers that was late Albany Bell's. The Kailis brothers were very, very good people to work for too.

When my husband was courting me Mr Kailis would say, "Well, there's your lovely Aries up at the counter waiting to take you home with a bunch of carnations." He loved carnations and he'd be waiting for me sometimes to take me home.

HC So when you started at Albany Bell, how old would you have been.

JACOBSEN I would be about sixteen I think, yes, sixteen.

HC And were there other young girls there too?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes, that's right. About my age, yes. I stayed there and worked all those years there. I soon got so many girls under me when I was only... well, I'd have been about 22 and I had so many girls under me; I was the boss. I was always a boss.

HC Did you form friendships with the girls there?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, lovely friendships. Yes, we used to have great friendships and get-togethers.

And the Albany Bell big shop was opposite Sandovers in Hay Street. You'd be walking home and you'd wonder if the gas was turned off and all that and think, oh, perhaps we'd better go back to make sure and lock up. We'd go back to make sure to know everything was all right and that, because I had all these girls under me. We were very, very happy though. Quite a lot of girls too, there were in those days. You know, you had a big staff - kitchen staff and waitresses and there were counter staff. They were very happy days though, they really were.

HC Could you tell me something about Mr Albany Bell?

JACOBSEN Well, I think he was a Church of Christ minister, too. He didn't come into the [shop] very much. He didn't have very much to do with the shops. Mr Lightfoot was the manager and his son, Maston Bell, he was the one that really was more in. We saw more of him than the father.

The main shop and the office was in Hay Street opposite Sandovers, and that was called "Hay One". They had three shops in [Hay Street]. They had one opposite the Town Hall, a tea-room there; and a cafeteria opposite Foy and Gibsons. It was a huge place, a lovely counter with cakes and confectionery, and then downstairs was a lovely cafeteria. That was really lovely.

Well, that was three shops they had in Hay Street, and they had two in Barrack Street and they had, all together in Perth, eight shops. They had one in Wellington Street, and even in William Street, they even had a shop near the James Street School, over in William Street over the bridge. So the children used to come in there for their lunches at lunch time, and then the markets, there was the James Street markets and all the men from the markets used to come in for their lunch. It was a very busy little shop and my word, they made some money out of that shop. That was always busy at lunch time. You had to go for your life to serve the men, you know. So eight shops all together.

I spent not all my time in the Hay Street shop. I used to relieve the manageresses when they'd go on holidays in some of the other shops. Then I was transferred then to.... they called it Barrack Two. There was Barrack One and Barrack Two, and then that was sold to Kailis, people called Kailis brothers, and I stayed there until I was married at Kailis. They were Greek people, very nice people to work for too. I was very happy there. I stayed there until I got married.

Oh, I should have got my reference and given it to you. Oh, a lovely reference really, one of the nicest references that you could read. I was there for thirteen years and a lovely reference from Mr Lightfoot really. Oh, I should have had that for you because it's worth framing really.

HC Your father died early on in the piece. Where did he die?

JACOBSEN At the battle of Pozieres in 1916, in the war.

HC Did some of your wages that you earned at the tea-rooms go towards helping your family after your father died?

JACOBSEN Well, my mother got a war pension so she didn't really need any help from me. When I think of it I think I worked for.... it was pounds then wasn't it? - £1 25 [shillings]. Then I got a rise and when I got £2, oh that was a lot of money. [laughs] Yes, wages were very.... well, that was the average wage then. When I think of it, to be in charge of a shop and then be walking along Hay Street to get the tram home and I wondered, now did you turn the gas off? Are you sure you turned the gas off? I'd say to the girl that was in charge of that section, "Well, we'd better go back and make sure," and all that sort of thing. I had a very responsible position, very responsible. We used to hide the money that we took amongst the sweets. I'd hide the money, and then a lady from the office would come in the morning and read the register and, of course, the register had to be right too. But we'd have to hide the money in different places, you know. The responsibility that you had for that little wages, you know. [laughs] Oh dear me, yes.

HC Did you help your mother in the home at all?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, I had a mother that was a very sick mother and before I went to school I often had to do her hair because she had arthritis so badly she couldn't do her hair. Many times I had to go and perhaps get some meat down at the butchers before I went to school. Then after school I would call into the grocers and go to the post office and get the mail and all that. Oh dear, I worked very hard. I had a very hard life really as a child, I did really.

The happiest time of my life was when I met my darling husband and married him - a most wonderful man. I met him at St Hilda's Church, yes. Really he was a wonderful man.

HC When you were working at the tea-rooms did you belong to a union?

JACOBSEN Well, I must tell you about this. When I did get to the counter there was a woman called from the Trades Hall called Miss Shelley. She came to us and she said, "Now, you've got to join the union," and we said in unison, because the other girl had worked with me at the counter, and we both said, "We're happy. We don't want to join any union." She said, "I'm afraid you'll have to," and we had to join. We had to join the union. It was dreadful. It nearly broke our hearts really because we didn't want to have anything to do with her. She was a horrible person, she turned out to be too, a real red-ragger. But anyway that was that.

But you had a lot of responsibility too. When the waitress would come to get cake out of the window, they'd slide the dishes along, and you had to be on the lookout all the time to see that everything was just right, you know. We worked very hard for our money in those days, we really did work hard, truly we did.

HC Was this Miss Shelley an elderly woman?

JACOBSEN No, she wasn't, she'd be only just 30 I should imagine. A very strong Labor woman, yes.

HC Did she want you to go on strike at any time?

JACOBSEN No, no. She would tell them what they could have and see that they had the best of everything, you know, and that, and she was always coming in seeing that everything was going all right, you know.

HC Did you think she was a bit of a nuisance?

JACOBSEN Yes, we all did. Most of them liked her, of course, but we other ones, older ones, the other counterhand and I, we both didn't like her at all because we were so happy as we were before with Albany Bell's.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE A

HC Miss Shelley, we were talking about. How much did you have to pay union fees?

JACOBSEN Oh not much, it would be 2 shillings I think. Yes, I was trying to think of the right thing - 2 shillings I think it was, not very much. It wasn't very much to join. We all had to belong to it though. We had to belong to the union.

HC You were talking about you were a great church-goer. What church did you go to?

JACOBSEN St Hilda's Anglican Church, View Street, North Perth, from when I was seven years old. That's when we came to North Perth to live, and all the family went there too. My sisters, the other family was christened there and I was confirmed there and married there and I'm still vice-president of the Mothers' Union. We meet once a month there.

HC So your parents were regular church-goers, were they?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes.

HC Did either of your parents hold an office at the church?

JACOBSEN Oh no, no, no. No, none of them had anything to do with the church, only just, you know, come to church, that's all. They didn't have any office, not like I did. I was always doing something really, and the Girls' Friendly Society every Tuesday night, that was a great society. There's a big write-up in the *GFS Magazine* too, and a picture of me - a very nice one it is too.

HC So you attended Sunday School?

JACOBSEN I used to teach Sunday School, yes.

HC What age did you start teaching Sunday School?

JACOBSEN Oh, when I was about fifteen or sixteen, about sixteen.

HC And for how many years did you do that?

JACOBSEN Oh well, I helped on there I suppose for a few years.

HC When you went to church how did you get there?

JACOBSEN I walked really. Yes, of course, walked - no motor cars in those days, no. No, motor cars, down bush tracks and all that.

HC How large a congregation did the church have?

JACOBSEN Oh yes. We used to dress up. We used to go to morning service and evening service every night, every night seven o'clock church, dress

HC When you used to go to church, when you were a little girl, what did the church look like? Was it much different than it is today?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, it was a wooden building. Yes, well that gives you the history of when that new church was built, only it was a wooden building, a big wooden building. But it was a lovely building really, a lovely organ and a dear old lady used to play the organ and it was really a lovely old church, a lovely old wooden building. Yes, it was really lovely.

HC Did it have an iron roof?

JACOBSEN Yes, iron - a wooden building with an iron roof, yes. Or was it asbestos? Wait a while.

HC And garden?

JACOBSEN No, no gardens or anything like that. No, there were no gardens round it. Wait a while now. The church.... and then we had a hall and the hall was upstairs and downstairs. When I got married we formed what we called.... now what did we call it? - the Fellowship of Marriage. It was like a branch of the Mothers' Union. The mothers used to come with their little children and then later on when we joined the Mothers' Union upstairs and they didn't mind the little children coming, but at first we were on our own downstairs for quite a long time.

I worked very hard really at St Hilda's; all my life I've worked there. I'm still vice-president of our branch of the Mother's Union and I love my church and I go when I possibly can now. Sometimes I'm not able and I lie in bed and I think, oh will I get up and go to church? But church is so early, you know, in the morning, ten o'clock. I make it though. I've got a VERY dear friend that has a car and she said she'd have to go only once a fortnight now. She finds it's too much to go every Sunday. So I go when she goes now because she comes and picks me up and take me and helps me.

HC Tell me something about your Sunday School picnics.

JACOBSEN Oh yes, they were really lovely - something to look forward to. Peppermint Grove and where's the other place I said? Peppermint Grove and Point Walter, that's right, yes. That's where we used to go for our picnics each year, looked forward to that. Then we used to have concerts in the North Perth Town Hall. Sunday School life was a very happy life, it really was.

HC And the concerts....

JACOBSEN See, I had two sisters and two brothers. I was the eldest of the family and so we were very happy. We all went to church and we were a very happy family. My brother was in the choir there and we had a Thermana[?] piano and sometimes the choir would come home, often on a Sunday, mostly on a Sunday, or when they'd have choir practice, they'd come home to our place and

we'd have a singsong around the piano. My mother liked them to come any time they wanted to. We had this lovely black Therna[?] piano.

HC And the concerts at the Town Hall - what kind of concerts were they?

JACOBSEN Oh, they were very nice concerts, yes. We had some very good people that arranged them and it was very nice indeed, - lovely concerts we had.

HC Was the Bible read regularly in your home?

JACOBSEN No, I wouldn't say we had meetings of that.... We had to read it, of course, to get to Sunday School. Yes, I suppose just average, you know.

HC And your friends at school, did you go to church with them? Did they attend as well?

JACOBSEN What, dear?

HC Your friends from school?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, yes, dear, we were a very happy crowd really. North Perth School was really a lovely school. I was there just recently talking to the children there. They came and got me and I planted a tree and in two years time that tree will be grown and the North Perth School will be 100 years old. So they want me to be able to go to that ceremony in two years time - and this acorn tree that I've planted will have grown by then too.

HC Getting back to the church, did the minister or the rector at the church call in at your home?

JACOBSEN Always, yes, always. The Reverend Tom Riley, he was at Blackboy Camp, and I remember him so well coming to Mother and saying, "Now, you'll have some little trouble in getting your pension and things. Can I help you in any way?" He came from Blackboy Camp. He was the son of Archbishop Riley. Reverend Tom Riley, he came to help Mother with her financial business. They were very, very kind. They used to come regularly to visit. The rectors in those days did. They were always visiting our home.

HC And I guess you knew the rectors?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, very well. We were a very, very happy crowd we were in those days.

HC And you were telling me about Mr Wright.

JACOBSEN Oh the Reverend Tom, yes. Yes, how my husband was taken ill and he was in the Mount Hospital and I used to go and see him. Mr Wright would say, "Now look, you haven't got to come away early," and he'd tell me to stay there till about nine o'clock and he'd come always and get me and bring me home. So they've been such dear friends, as I say. When the home was sold I thought that I would get into the Anglican Homes and still I'm here and I've been here 22 years and I'm so happy. I've got everything I need here.

HC And the Reverend Wright is still here?

JACOBSEN Oh, they're still here, yes. They see me every day, every day. See, she's rang just to see how I am this morning, yes, and she's only just come out of hospital herself.

HC We were talking about the congregation of the church, how it is today.

JACOBSEN Oh, it's gone down so much. It nearly makes you cry really.

HC Are there any ethnics that go there now or is it a different crowd? Are there Asians going there now?

JACOBSEN No, we don't have very many Asians though we welcome them very much when we do have them. Our president of the Mothers' Union is a dear little lady and she's got lots and lots of Asian friends and they often have a special night together. Her husband's a Roman Catholic and she sometimes goes to the Sacred Heart over in Highgate, to the services over there. But she's a very, very wonderful person, Geraldine. She's a marvellous person.

HC I believe the Girls' Friendly Society has been a major part of your life.

JACOBSEN Oh yes, it really has been, really and truly. Yes, every Tuesday night we meet at the hall, the Girls' Friendly Society. My husband, during the war, he got some men together and we'd run a dance. It was a lovely evening and half the money would go to the Red Cross and the other half to the church. Yes, here's some of the men of the church too. They all worked together very well.

HC What position did your husband hold at the church?

JACOBSEN He was on the vestry. He had a very good job at McLean Bros & Rigg. He was the purchasing officer there. He had, as I say, a very good job and he was very welcome on the vestry, very welcome, for the work that he used to do. We used to have vestry meetings at the rectory and sometimes at my place in the lounge there. The men would meet there.

HC So your husband was a vestry man for a long time.

JACOBSEN Oh yes, he was a great churchman too. I had two young stepsons to bring up. They were school-age and they went to North Perth School. We used to sit in the second row from the front on the left-hand side, my husband Carl and I and the two little boys, we'd sit there and I still sit there in the same seat. I still sit in that same possie where I used to sit with my husband and the two little boys. Yes, I love St Hilda's, it's beautiful. You must go in. If the church is open, go in and have a look at it because it's a most beautiful church. You should have seen it on Mother's Day. It was absolutely a picture. Then on Whit Sunday, you know, the next Sunday, it was absolutely beautiful. They had all poinsettias, all red flowers, and all balloons and all that, you know. It was really a beautiful day, Whit Sunday.

HC Has it got lovely leadlight windows?

JACOBSEN Oh, it's beautiful. There's a window at the east end in memory of a lovely couple who went to our church.

A further interview with Mrs Reta Jacobsen recorded on 19th June 1997.

HC We were talking about the Girls' Friendly Society previously....

[break in recording]

JACOBSEN [not recorded] bush track almost from our place to the old hall those days, yes.

HC Was there a reason why you joined?

JACOBSEN Oh, I joined it because it was connected with our church. All the girls from church mostly went. It was mostly church girls, lovely friends. I joined it, and even after I was married, my husband, we called him a GFS-er because he used to arrange, he and another gentleman on the vestry with him, during the war they used to help us with the dance on a Saturday night and they used to give half the proceeds to the church and the other used to help the Girls' Friendly Society. We used to have bridge evenings in the cathedral, in the hall there.... no, in Hay Street the hall was. The Girls' Friendly Society had a hall in Hay Street, not very far from the Town Hall. We used to have bridge evenings there, and really it was a lovely organisation to belong to and I was so happy with all the outings we used to have.

But it was so nice that we used to have this dance and we used to dress up, you know, in nice evening frocks and that. The men used to arrange a nice evening and we used to have a nice supper. Their relatives were all church people, you know, and it was a lovely get-together on a Saturday night - during the war that was. But on a Tuesday night, every Tuesday was GFS night for years and years.

HC What were the actual aims and objectives of the Friendly Society?

JACOBSEN Well, to help one another really, and to be good Christian women.

HC And when you first joined, how many members were there?

JACOBSEN Oh, about twelve, yes, about twelve. We had a very good group, a very good group we had. We used to have bridge too. One lady, Mrs Woodhams, she was a great one to arrange card evenings, and we'd have bridge evenings sometimes or just ordinary cards. We'd play rummy and that but the men used to like the bridge evenings and then we used to sometimes go to the cathedral hall, the hall there. Every now and again we'd go there. It'd be a bit larger, and we'd invite other branches to join us there.

HC And the members, did they used to live around North Perth?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes, all North Perth, a very large group really and they all mostly came on to the Mothers' Union.

HC And how did you get to the meetings from your home?

JACOBSEN Quite dark really and we had to come through Woodville Reserve and lived quite a long way. It was quite a walk really and sometimes Mother would come and meet us. Mother would be saying she'd come and meet us after. My sisters belonged to it too, the three of us - it was my life, really and truly.

My husband, when we were courting, he used to love to come and arrange the dances and different evenings, and bridge. My sister, Hilda, I'll show you her [break in recording] she had a trained contralto voice. She was a most lovely person and she used to be in the choir. I belonged to everything in connection with the church but I was never in the choir.

HC When you were walking through Woodville reserve, was it very dark? Were you worried?

JACOBSEN No, not in those days you wouldn't be worried because everybody was so good really. The only thing you would be, coming home from school, North Perth School, sometimes the boys would put big bricks on the other side of the gate and you couldn't open the gate and you'd have to walk down the street and around before you could go home. The headmaster, if you reported that they got into severe trouble. But that's the only [thing]. But I was never worried about the darkness or anything like that or anybody grabbing you or anything in those days. No, everybody helped one another.

HC Were the streets well-lit when you were walking?

JACOBSEN Yes, they were lit up. The Salvation Army used to come quite a lot and play on the corners, you know. We used to have nice music. Frequently they would come; about every three weeks they'd come and play their music.

Yes, they were very happy days really. North Perth in those days where we lived was very, very happy. We were like one big family and there was Nurse Wheeler, she'd brought one brother into the world, and then there was Nurse Hobbley brought the other one into the world. There was a boy called Walter Jorgensen, and when it was his 21st birthday, I was only fourteen and they had this nice party, you know, and I was invited. I never forgot that because in the end, Walter Jorgensen had a big jewellery business in Murray Street, years after that. But although I was only fourteen I was asked to this party. It was one of the first parties I'd been to.

But then they were such happy days. Everybody knew each other and, you know, it was just one big happy family. Not now where you can't go out the door. You've got to lock up at six o'clock and I wouldn't go outside that door after six o'clock.

HC You were talking about Nurse Wheeler. What can you tell me about Nurse Wheeler?

JACOBSEN Nurse Wheeler, oh she was the most wonderful lady! She lived in Loftus Street in a wooden house. You know her? She lived in Loftus Street in a long wooden house and she was the maternity nurse who brought the little babies into the world. She was wonderful. Then there was Nurse Hobbley that lived not far from us. But Nurse Hobbley wasn't quite so popular as Nurse Wheeler. Nurse Wheeler, her family went to North Perth School and, of course, we all knew Nurse Wheeler.

HC How old was she?

JACOBSEN Oh, I'd say she would have only been in her late thirties. Yes, she had two children that went to North Perth School too.

HC And was she a midwife for very long?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, always, for many, many years, yes. As a matter of fact, you know I told you about the president of the historical society at Maylands? Well, she brought him into the world and he wanted to know if I knew where she lived and he wanted to see the house. I said, "It's still there, a wooden house in Loftus Street."

HC Did she wear a uniform?

JACOBSEN Yes, she wore a uniform. She never wore a cap though, not one of those big caps, you know. See, we had no road in front of our place in the early days and the doctors used to come in a sulky and visit us and that, and she used to come too in a sulky.

JACOBSEN Yes, yes, that's right, yes. No, the headquarters was in Hay Street, a lovely building there we used to go to, not very far from the Town Hall in Hay Street, the Girls' Friendly Society. We used to meet there for lots of lovely evenings there. Kim Beazley's father's wife.... what was her name now? I think it was Judith. She was a great one for arranging bridge evenings and card evenings. Yes, the Beazley family were very good Anglicans, very good, yes.

HC But the headquarters are now in Adelaide Terrace, is that right?

JACOBSEN They're now in Adelaide Terrace, yes. I'll give you a copy.

[break in recording]

HC help in the headquarters in Perth of the Friendly Society?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, we used to help there. I was just trying to think.... [pause] special evenings we'd always take a plate of refreshments, you know, cake and that. But I was not one to work in the office there. No, I wasn't there.

HC Did you used to help with fund-raising?

JACOBSEN Yes, we used to help, especially like little evenings we used to have and little dances and little concerts and things like that, yes.

HC What position did you hold at the Society?

JACOBSEN I was just a member.

HC Just a member?

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right, yes. I'm a vice-president of the Mothers' Union. You've read about me joining the Mothers' Union. I'm still vice-president of the Mothers' Union, and just recently our president was overseas with her husband and I had to take the meeting, and the girls said, "Oh, you did it as good as you did ten years ago." [laughs]

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE B

HC When you were fund-raising for the Girls' [Friendly] Society did you have cake stalls or anything of that nature?

JACOBSEN No, no. You see, living at North Perth.... oh, at our own little branch? Yes, our own branch yes, indeed, we used to have all sorts of things. We had a little bring-and-buy, you know, fêtes and things like that to raise money. But at headquarters I never did very much in there, mostly in our own branch, kept that going. It was a lovely branch though, it was really lovely. We had these lovely meetings every Tuesday night.

HC The money that was raised, where would you distribute that to?

JACOBSEN Well, we weren't raising that much money, you know. I can't remember. Now we had a very lovely president.... no, I can't remember making a lot of money really.

HC And the Girls' Friendly Society is still operating today at North Perth, is that right?

JACOBSEN No, unfortunately not, unfortunately not. We had a most wonderful person called Iris Hurdle[?] and she kept it going for years and years and years. She was a wonderful person. She passed away some years ago and I'm sorry to say we haven't got a Girls' Friendly Society and we haven't got any Sunday School. Our church in St Hilda's has gone down quite a lot, it has. Our rector we had recently has retired, Father John Cottier, he's gone now to live with his wife. She's the principal of Perth College.

[break in recording]

HC How long is it since the Girls' Friendly Society operated in North Perth?

JACOBSEN Oh years. I would say about eight years. It's a long time. Even when Iris Hurdle was alive it never operated in North Perth.

HC So it's many, many years.

JACOBSEN Yes. I haven't ever been one to have been able to organise anything in North Perth. I've had other commitments, you know.

HC Towards the latter years of the Girls' Friendly Society in North Perth, did you notice a decrease in numbers?

JACOBSEN Well, of course, I got married, you see, yes. Then yes, after the older ones got married then it did decrease, yes, it really did.

[break in recording]

HC What was your husband's full name?

JACOBSEN Carl Albert Jacobsen.

HC And was he the same age as you?

JACOBSEN No, no, he was five years older than me.

HC And did you and Carl have a long courtship?

JACOBSEN Yes, we did. We met at church.

HC When were you married?

JACOBSEN Oh, in September.... the eight of the ninth month 1934, that's right, darling.

HC Did you have a very big wedding?

JACOBSEN Yes, quite a nice wedding really. Married at St Hilda's, of course, and the choir then formed a [unclear] as we came out of the church and that. It was very, very nice. The reception in those days was at the Keogh's Hall in Newcastle Street. Yes, it was quite a nice gathering.

HC How many were in the wedding party?

[break in recording]

HC Was your sister in the wedding party?

JACOBSEN Yes, Hilda was, my sister, and a very dear friend that worked with her in the Taxation Department, Ann Johnson. I've got a picture of Ann here now. [pause] It's a lovely photo isn't it though? The two girls in the pretty [frocks]. Carl's sister made their frocks, beautiful frocks they were.

HC Was your mother happy to see you married?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, she was there, of course, the darling.

HC Your husband was a widower with two children.

JACOBSEN Yes, darling.

HC How old were the two little boys?

JACOBSEN The two little boys, they were just tiny little boys but the daughter, their grandma looked after her and she's just had her 80th birthday and

we had a very lovely party for her. She'd just started work so the grandma looked after her and I had the two little boys that went to school.

HC And did they used to keep in contact, the sister and the two boys?

JACOBSEN Yes. Oh no, they're passed on now. There's nobody left! Only Patsy's left, the one that's 80, just had her birthday just recently. She had a lovely party.

HC But when they were smaller?

JACOBSEN Oh when they were small. They used to come to church with us and sit in the left-hand side of the second row from the front. I used to sit there with the two little boys and Carl, and I still sit there. I still sit in the same seat that I sat with Carl and the two little boys.

HC And the names of the two little boys?

JACOBSEN [...] Paul and Ronald. Ronald was the elder of the two and then Paul.

HC And was it easy to become an instant mother to them?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, they were lovely little boys. The lady next door to me when I went to live there, she said, "My word, Reta..." she was a great church worker, "you're taking on something here, because the grandma spoilt them." See, Carl was a widower for many, many years. His wife died and he was a widower for a long time, and oh no, they were lovely boys, I loved them both. They were really lovely. Both killed. The elder one was killed in the war and the other one was killed just after the war.

HC And you ceased working when you married?

JACOBSEN Oh yes.

HC Were you happy to stop work?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, definitely, yes. I was very happy. After living in North Perth all my life I still lived in North Perth in 97 Angove Street, and that home is just as beautiful as ever. The fence painted nice and white and a pergola at the front and it looks so lovely. The man that built it was a contractor. He had four sons and it was....

[break in recording]

HC Previous to your courtship and marriage to Carl, did you have many boyfriends before then?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, I had several, yes, nice friends really. But nothing serious.

HC And what did you do to enjoy yourself? Did you go to the movies or the pictures?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes. Well actually the organisations I belonged to, they kept me busy too. Yes, I never used to go to the pictures very much at night though, only of an afternoon it would be. Then, of course, I went to night school. I went to North Perth School and then when I was fourteen I went to night school in James Street. I used to go to the technical school and learn millinery and dressmaking. A Miss Street used to teach. Then I used to walk along the Terrace to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home. Fancy doing that now! Opposite the Town Hall we used to catch the tram home and it used to come to the corner of Woodville Street - we used to call it Pells' corner - and Mother often came to meet me at night time. But in those days you'd think nothing of walking along the Terrace at that time to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home.

HC And did you have many activities at home where you could bring your friends home?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, we had a lovely Therma[?] piano and the choir was always welcome to come home and they often used to come and we'd have a little evening. My sister would bring the choir along home. Mother used to love us to have our friends and have a singsong around the piano.

HC I've not heard of a Therma[?] piano - could you describe it to me?

JACOBSEN Oh, the piano was a lovely big black piano - Therma[?] piano it was, really a beautiful piano. Yes, I remember Mother buying it off a doctor. It was a big auction sale and it was on the corner of Vincent Street and Fitzgerald Street. She bought the piano there. It was a lovely piano, it gave us a lot of happiness really. My sister used to play it and she had a trained contralto voice. She used to sing beautifully and there's one bush out there with a rose on it and I said to the man next door, I said, "I look out there and I think of my sister." She used to sing,

It was the last rose of summer, left blooming alone.
All her lovely companions have faded and gone.
No flower of her kindred, no rosebud is nigh,
To send back the blushes, for sigh, for sigh.

Then she would grasp all the petals and throw them on the ground. I forget how that went. But I was saying to Les, "I look out there and I think of that song *The*

Last Rose of Summer, and there's still the bush there with one red rose on it. You'll see it as you go out. [laughs]

[break in recording]

HC You talked about the Mothers' Union - was it primarily a church organisation?

JACOBSEN Oh yes really. After you got married you joined the Mothers. We carried on. We didn't have a branch in North Perth and the rector's wife was asked if she would come into town and would she be president and would I be secretary? We used to go into the city, into the meetings in town and then we'd bring the news out and we had a branch in North Perth. It was a very, very happy branch indeed and we called it the Fellowship of Marriage. Then mothers used to bring their children along to this meeting and then eventually we then moved on to the Mothers' Union and, of course, the children didn't come any more then.

But on the whole the Mothers' Union is a wonderful body to help other women for a Christian life. We try to get as many people as we can. We had a very lovely.... I've got plenty of photos taken of the group. I think one of the largest groups in the metropolitan area was St Hilda's years ago. But we've gone down now. We've only got about fourteen members now, only got fourteen members, but we still meet once a month. We still meet once a month. We have a service in the church. The rector takes the service and then we go over to the hall and we have our meeting there. A very nice meeting we always have. We've got a wonderful president, Geraldine, she's a wonderful president. After that we have a meeting and discuss all the different things, and the president and the secretary, they go to the meetings in town once a month and bring out all the news. Then we always have a nice afternoon tea.

Really we look forward to it. It's the second Tuesday in the month, Mothers' Union, North Perth, second Tuesday in the month and a really lovely afternoon it is. We meet at half-past-one. We have a service first in the church and we pray for all the other members and overseas and that too. It's a lovely meeting. I look forward to that. That's once a month on a Tuesday.

HC I also believe you were vice-president and president at one time - is that correct?

JACOBSEN Oh that's a long time ago. I wasn't president for very long. No, mostly just I took over the vice[-president]. We were always fortunate enough to have a good president. I just sort of helped when they couldn't come. [laughs]

HC And did you enjoy your role as vice-president?

JACOBSEN Oh I've always enjoyed the Mothers' Union very much indeed. I've enjoyed that very much. The Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union, that's my life. [laughs]

HC What kind of recognition did you receive for being part of the Mothers' Union? Did you receive a badge or any certificates?

JACOBSEN Yes, see, there's a certificate there. Look, see on the dressing table? That's given to me for 50 years, I think, I was presented with that. I've got a lovely picture of that being presented. I've got that here, I think.

[break in recording]

HC How have things changed over the years with the Mothers' Union? Have there been less mothers attending the meetings?

JACOBSEN You see, so many people work now and I think yes, the Mothers' Union numbers have lessened because of the different ladies working. But the members we have are very loyal and very loving. We've had them for years and years and we're a very happy group, we really are.

HC So would you say they're mainly elderly folk?

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right. Not too many of the new ones. We want some of the young mothers to come in but you see they work and it's so hard to get new members in, it really is.

HC What things did you achieve in North Perth with the Mothers' Union?

JACOBSEN Well, to love one another and to help one another. I think that's the main thing, seeing that everyone's happy and if you can help them, if you can do a good job for anyone, do it. And other people in the church, if you can help them. They're out to help other people.

HC In what way would you help people?

JACOBSEN Well lots of ways. If you can help them at all, if they're worried or complaining, you can help them to go to the doctor and to get attention, to look after themselves, to help them in any way you possibly can really.

HC Did you provide money to them or clothes?

JACOBSEN Yes, the last Saturday in each month we have a sort of a.... what do they call it now? - a what's-a-name stall and people take the clothes they don't want and anything at all. It's the last Saturday in the month there's a sort of a.... what will we call it? What do they call it now? I'm getting forgetful lately. A special name for it. It's advertised in the *Guardian* too, always the St Hilda's bring-and-buy, you know. Any old clothes you can take up there. It's marvellous what the people do take there - any old ornaments they don't want and things like

that. It's quite a nice morning. It's usually on from about half-past-nine till twelve o'clock, the last Saturday in the month. So that's something to remember really, at St Hilda's, North Perth.

A further interview with Mrs Reta Jacobsen recorded on 3rd July 1997.

HC You mentioned walking through Woodville reserve when you were a little girl.

JACOBSEN Yes, dear.

HC What changes have you seen over the years?

JACOBSEN Oh, lots of changes really and, of course, the bowling club and the croquet club and the tennis club, all there now, all at the top of Woodville Park. Woodville Park - they had gates from one side and for the other side, like at the end of Daphne Street there was gates and then the other. Then sometimes the naughty boys at school they'd put bricks and just stones and then you couldn't open the gates and you'd have to go right down the street and come around to get home. It used to be dreadful when they used to do that. We had to pass that on to the headmaster and he really punished them for doing it because it was so dreadful. They used to put these great big stones they got from somewhere. [laughter] We couldn't open the gates to get to the other side of the road.

HC Were there distinct paths through Woodville reserve?

JACOBSEN It was a lovely big park, yes, it was really lovely. It went right from Fitzgerald Street right up to Namur Street, I think it was. Let's see, there was Namur Street one side and I forget the name of the street the other side.... anyway Daphne Street ran into the Woodville Park. It was a lovely park really, a lovely park.

HC And did they have lawned areas?

JACOBSEN Oh no, not....

HC It was scrubby, was it?

JACOBSEN It was all just anyway but the only thing was when it was all cultivated was through the bowling club and the tennis club and all that, all those clubs. It was a hive of industry, it really was, a lovely park, yes, Woodville reserve.

HC And did they have wildflowers growing there at all?

JACOBSEN Oh, in the early days, yes, but they just went to pieces, dear, you know, picking them and all that. There were not many wildflowers that I can remember there.

HC So did you pick the wildflowers when you were little?

JACOBSEN No, we used to go in the bush. See, we had to bring our morning wood in and we used to go for wildflowers and after Sunday School, quite a number of us would go picking wildflowers. Oh, we used to go all over the place right over to Mount Lawley. We'd walk from Glebe Street right over to Mount Lawley picking wildflowers in the bush. They were really lovely days.

HC And did you used to pick Geraldton wax and all those kinds?

JACOBSEN All those - no, not any... only wildflowers.

HC Purely wildflowers.

JACOBSEN Yes, purely wildflowers. We never picked any of the other flowers that grew in the gardens. No, we never touched anybody's gardens. But after Sunday School that was our main outing, was to go picking wildflowers. We used to go right through Mount Lawley and there was a great big house.... this lady, she was the soldiers' queen. I forget her name now. All around her place there was wildflowers. We used to pick all these lovely wildflowers. Then we used to get morning wood, we used to go and get the morning wood, you know, yes. They were lovely days.

HC Why was that woman called the soldiers' queen?

JACOBSEN Well, she did so much for the soldiers, you know, getting different things.... parties for them and welcoming them home when they came on leave and all that sort of thing. She was very, very popular, a very lovely lady. This lovely big two-storey house she had. It was the nicest house in Mount Lawley, a beautiful big two-storey [house]. I think it's still there. It is still there - soldiers' queen's home, yes. It was called that.

HC And these were the soldiers for the First World War?

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right.

HC Did they have picnic areas at all through the park or was it too bushy for that?

JACOBSEN Oh no, we never had any picnic areas there. We had a lot of Sunday School picnics. We used to go to Peppermint Grove. We used to look forward to our Sunday School picnic. Once a year we'd have our Sunday School picnics and in the old.... I showed you the old church, didn't I? The old wooden

church. We used to have lots of concerts in there and different things for the war. On a Saturday night we'd have a dance and half the money to the church and the other half would go to whatever was on - mostly to war efforts and things like that. Yes, we were a very busy committee at our church and did a lot of good.

HC And with these Sunday School picnics how did you get to Peppermint Grove?

JACOBSEN In buses. Oh yes, we used to look forward to it. Once a year we used to go to Peppermint Grove. Nearly all the time at Peppermint Grove we used to go to for our Sunday School picnics. I used to look forward to Sunday School picnics.

HC You have lived many years in North Perth - what changes have you seen as far as the introduction of buses and trams and trolleys?

JACOBSEN Oh, lots and lots and lots. It was all bush really in North Perth, all bush. The first tram came to the corner of Bulwer Street where the Hyde Park Hotel is. That was the first tram. Then it came a bit further along to Forrest Street and then from Forrest Street then it came to what they called Pells' corner, near the North Perth School, and from there, right down to the North Perth Hotel. But when I was a little girl we had buggies - we never had any buses - that used to take us to town. The parents used to take them into town in these buggies; horse buggies they were. And there's a house over there, a wooden house, and the horses used to be parked in the back of her place.

HC Did she used to have a stable?

JACOBSEN At the back, yes. She's still over there in a wooden house, dear, Mrs.... now what's her name? It starts with a D. Is it Mrs Downs? She still lives over there and she still likes to talk about the horses being parked at the back of her place.

HC And in the buggies, how many people would it take?

JACOBSEN Oh two horses would draw this. There were seats on each side. First of all there were these little buggies and then there were these other bigger ones. What would you call them - vans. Vans. They had seats on each side and we used to go into town that way. That was before the trams.

HC And they used to take off from a certain spot?

JACOBSEN Oh we had to go down to the North Perth Hotel. The North Perth Hotel was a very, very popular place and just recently that's been all pulled down, you know, only about a year ago. That was a very popular place, the North Perth Hotel.

HC And would it cost very much to travel that way?

JACOBSEN Only threepence I think it was, only threepence or sixpence - threepence I think it was. Threepence and sixpence, and a penny was a penny. [laughs]

HC And how long would it take to go into Perth?

JACOBSEN Oh, it would take about half a hour, or perhaps more with the buggies, yes. That's right, it would take a little bit more, I think, than half an hour.

HC And when you got into Perth where would it stop?

JACOBSEN At the markets, usually on the corner of Wellington Street and over the bridge, on the right-hand side with the HUGE markets. They were very, very big. We used to love the markets, loved going in there for an outing. It was a huge place, yes.

HC And when you got to the markets, what would you do in there?

JACOBSEN Well, we'd have to perhaps bring some vegies home or some fruit home. We'd have a list of things to get. I remember walking around this huge place, a big tremendous place it was, you know, all cement floors. Yes, it was quite a big place. They were lovely days though, they were so happy and we used to be so happy in the old buses and that.

HC And when you'd got your fruit and everything would you get on a buggy and travel back home?

JACOBSEN Yes, we'd have to wait till they came, yes. We'd have to wait to get back. We couldn't walk all that way, although we used to walk into town through Hyde Park.

HC Oh really?

JACOBSEN Yes, we used to walk into town through Hyde Park quite a lot, yes. Get into William Street. Walk along Fitzgerald Street and then get into Hyde Park and then get into William Street and walk into town. Quite a lot really we used to walk to town.

HC And what did Hyde Park look like then?

JACOBSEN Oh, it was lovely. It's always been a lovely park. They used to have the band there of a Sunday afternoon, yes. It was really a lovely park. It's always been a lovely park and it still is, isn't it, a nice park?

HC And did the band play out in the open or in a rotunda?

JACOBSEN No, the bandstand, a lovely bandstand, yes, very lovely bandstand. They used to take a collection up around too. Yes, Sunday afternoon it was always the band there.

HC And was it a district band, a brass band or....?

JACOBSEN Oh no, there'd be trumpets and just.... not very much, you know, in those days, trumpets and drums and things like that.

HC And would you just sit on the ground or stand?

JACOBSEN Yes, we'd all sit around on the ground. There were seats though too around in the park. There were seats and people would come from Glendower Street and all around there.

HC You would go down as a whole family, would you?

JACOBSEN We'd all go, yes. Well, that was our outing really. But there was the pictures at North Perth, the Rosemount pictures. They were wonderful on a Friday night. Oh yes, and every Friday night the Rosemount had pictures and all the schoolkids used to go to that.

HC Oh, tell me about them.

JACOBSEN Yes, they used to go. Yes, that was their outing. It was a terrible punishment if you couldn't go to the pictures on a Friday night. I remember Ronald, one of our boys, he was having trouble with wetting the bed and he had to go off ice-cream and he was not allowed to go to the pictures - that was his biggest punishment, until he got better. I remember that so well.

They had the Rosemount Theatre in North Perth. Then they had the Rosemount Gardens, and that was at the side of the Rosemount Hotel were these gardens, you know, deckchairs.

HC That was like an open-air theatre, was it?

JACOBSEN Yes, it was open in the summer time. Everybody would go to the pictures in the summer time. That was your main outing really, was going to the pictures in the summer time, yes.

HC So what time would you get there?

JACOBSEN Oh, at half-past-seven, yes, about seven or half-past-seven, I think it was, of a Friday night. Only a Friday night, and the Saturday night was for adults. But Friday night was the kids' night, the pictures. It was quite nice really.

HC And you would see all your friends, would you?

JACOBSEN Yes, you'd meet everybody there. All the family would go. It was a family night. It was quite a nice night really.

HC And the theatre, would it have a great big velvet curtain up the front?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, yes. The theatre was very nice indeed.

HC What types of seats did it have?

JACOBSEN Oh they were quite nice, quite comfortable, you know, just wooden seats. I remember tossing them over and that, you know. But the deckchairs were nice. We'd always take a rug with us [laughs] - a cushion and a rug. They were very, very happy days they were really. See, I used to live in 97 Angove Street so I was quite handy to the pictures and everything there. Yes, we used to have great times really at the pictures. That was our outing. We'd never go to the city to see the pictures, of course, no. I think it was only about sixpence to go. [laughs]

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE A

HC Did they have trolley buses going through North Perth?

JACOBSEN Yes, they did in the end, yes, in the later part. I can't remember trolley buses though. Yes, I think we did have them in the end, yes, in the later part.

HC Did you ever travel by them?

JACOBSEN I used to travel by them when I went to Subiaco but I can't remember.... oh yes, I must have done, I must have done. The 22 trams, I remember the last tram coming down to the North Perth Hotel. That was where the terminus was. I used to live in 97 Angove Street and the loop used to be in front of our place where they used to change the loop.

HC Would that be noisy?

JACOBSEN No, it wasn't very noisy. When my husband was in business, he was a purchasing officer for the firm he worked for, and he sometimes used to come home for lunch and I'd have it set out, on a warmish day, out in the back. That would be really a great break for him to come home and have lunch. I'd have it set out there and then he'd catch the tram back to town. He had his timetable and all that. But he often used to come home for lunch. It was quite a break for him, especially if he was working back a little bit. I'd have it set out in the back in the garden.

We had a rotary line and he had a beautiful awning made, such a pretty one made, with stripes to go over it, and then we had our white tables and white chairs. We used to do a lot of entertaining in the back of our place, 97 Angove Street. We had this lovely big awning, then we had two tables and then chairs, you know, to entertain anybody. It was quite nice.

Then we had lattice-work right across the yard and it was bougainvillea, a pretty purple bougainvillea and an orange one. The orange one was the one that went right across the lattice-work. It was such a pretty back, it really was. It was a lovely back for entertaining.

HC So was your husband very keen on gardening?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, especially carnations. We had carnations from the front of our place right down to the backyard, and we had a windmill so we had plenty of water. When he was courting me he used to always come with a bunch of carnations. [laughs] He loved carnations, yes. We had carnations right along the fence, right down. See, we had a windmill, plenty of water, and from the front gate right down to the back gate.... We had to bring the car around Olive Street and come in the back lane. The garage was down the back.

HC There was a laneway at the back of the house, was there?

JACOBSEN Yes, a lane at the back of the house and the garage was at the back, and the house went right across the front. You see, there was no garages at the front. None of the houses hardly had garages at the front. They nearly all had their garages at the back. So different, you know. That's why I never learned to drive. I never learned to drive a car because I would have had to.... this great big iron fence to have to open up and then to open up the garage. I've never wanted to learn to drive. We had a lovely Hillman car when my husband died. I was very sorry that I never learned though because I loved bowling and I was a great bowler. I belonged to the North Perth Bowling Club and then I found that I had to depend on friends to take me to the pennants and different other places we had to go to.

My husband and I were the instigators for the North Beach Bowling Club. This is history, we used to go to North Beach on weekends because we had a big lovely bungalow out at North Beach. My brothers were master builders and they built this beautiful big bungalow and my husband said to me - I remember him so well saying, "Look, we've left the bowling club behind. It's time we had a bowling club out here." So right-oh, he talked to some of the men out there and they formed it. They formed a tent and we ladies made afternoon tea and they first of all purchased the land and we all put in money for debentures to buy the land. The ladies, we used to go and make afternoon tea and the men cleared all the block of land and then we got the bowling club going. They were such lovely people that joined, mostly country people. It was a lovely bowling club. It's one of the best now, even now, it's one of the most popular ones. It was really lovely, the North Beach Bowling Club, yes.

We were members of the North Perth Bowling Club those days but we loved North Beach and we used to go out there and stay for quite a long time. We loved the bowling club out there, and the people were lovely. They were so nice - different. All country people, you know, they appreciated the bowling club. It was really lovely.

[...] Of course, that's really what did happen to the North Beach Bowling Club when they had anything special. We put money in, you see, in debentures to get it going and when they had anything special they used to always send me an invitation after my husband died, sent me an invitation to anything that was on there. I used to love going out there. They used to make quite a fuss of me too really. I used to love going out there. It was quite nice really. It's now one of the most popular bowling clubs. Of course, now it's extended and made very much nicer now than what it was in those days. But still, they were such happy days. One of the ladies, a schoolteacher out there, she and her husband used to have bridge on a Friday night. My husband and I loved bridge and we used to go out there every Friday night and play bridge. She used to have a lot of friends out there. She just opened her home and she used to have about four or five tables of bridge in her home. She had a big home. She was a schoolteacher, she used to teach school out there.

[break in recording]

I had a wonderful husband, I really did. He was a man that loved entertaining too. He loved going places, you know. Some men they don't like going out do they, but he loved.... and with the Girls' Friendly Society I used to go every Tuesday night to that, and during the war they'd arrange dances. He got a committee going and some money would go to the church and if there was any over, to the Red Cross. A lady, one of our neighbours who lived two doors away, she said, "I've never seen a couple like you two. You're always dressed up and going out." We'd dress up in long evening frocks and look very smart. [laughs] They were such happy days while he was alive, they really were.

[break in recording]

HC You were talking about the North Perth Bowling Club and you were one of the early members, were you?

JACOBSEN Yes, I was one of the early members. I never used to play in pennants very much though. I just went up for the joy of playing bowls. But some of the ladies that played when I used to play are still playing there. That's true, that is. One is Marie Goodall. Marie Goodall is still playing there and she played when I was there. The secretary, I think too, that's there now - I forgot her name - she's still playing there too. So the old members that joined when I joined, there's still some of them playing there. It's a lovely bowling club. Really it's a lovely bowling club and croquet club, and the croquet people they have cards every Monday afternoon. I've got lots of friends and the bowling club ladies go there. Every Monday afternoon they have the cards there. But the bowling club never had.... they left it to the croquet ladies to run that and they do still. I've got friends that still go. All those years they've been going every Monday. They wouldn't miss Monday. The four of them still go to play their bridge.

HC And for how many years were you a member?

JACOBSEN Oh, until I came down here because I couldn't walk up the hill to play. I've been here 22 years, so that was 22 years ago. Yes see, I've been here 22 years and it's when I came here I couldn't walk up the hill, you see, to play bowls. I had bad legs; I've still got bad legs.

HC And did you hold any positions there, secretary or....?

JACOBSEN No, I never held any office there at all. I was just a member. In both clubs I was just a member. I paid financially. [laughs]

HC You were married after the Depression in 1934.

JACOBSEN Yes.

HC In what ways did the Depression affect your mother, if any?

JACOBSEN I can't remember really.

HC Did she suffer any shortages of food?

JACOBSEN No, we never suffered any shortage of food. We were always well looked after, yes, very well.

HC So there was no need to curb your spending or ration food or anything like that. You were very fortunate.

JACOBSEN Yes, we were very fortunate.

HC Did you see any effects on other people in North Perth?

JACOBSEN They used to have a lot of second-hand places, you know, for people to buy clothes. Sister Kate had a place in Wellington Street. It was very, very popular and she used to have clothes from everywhere, and a lot of the people from North Perth used to go there and buy clothes, you know, second-hand clothes - but they were good. I remember a lot of people going there in Wellington Street just over the bridge. She had a big store there.

HC So in North Perth you didn't notice any shops closing down or anything?

JACOBSEN No, no, no. No, everything was quite good really. North Perth was always a nice suburb.

HC Did any men coming knocking on your door during the Depression asking for food or work?

JACOBSEN No, no, never.

HC Did the Girls' Friendly Society or the Mothers' Union help during the Depression years?

JACOBSEN Yes. My husband used to help organise a dance on a Saturday night and that would go towards the church and war efforts. There was always fêtes and things helping the different organisations. We were out to help everybody really, especially the Girls' Friendly Society.

HC So there was a good community help system?

JACOBSEN Always a good community in North Perth. North Perth was a wonderful suburb, really it was, and has always been really, a wonderful suburb.

HC During the Second World War did you notice any changes in North Perth?

JACOBSEN No, not very much really. We seemed to manage fairly well with everything, you know.

HC So there was no shortage of food?

JACOBSEN No, we just managed well along, yes, everybody helping one another. A very happy suburb North Perth has always been.

HC And were there any air-raid shelters built, can you remember?

JACOBSEN No, I can't even remember running.... oh yes, I can. We had one built down our place. They were false alarms they would try out, and we'd run down, yes. That was in the very early stages of the war.

HC So it was built in your backyard was it?

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right - in the backyard, yes. Sandbags there were. The different neighbours had them built. They all helped one another.

HC So the neighbours built them.

JACOBSEN Yes, that's right, yes. Only once I can remember going down there. [laughs]

HC And what was actually down there?

JACOBSEN They had big bags of sand right along. The hole was long and low but there's bags of sand there. I don't know why, but anyway that was....

HC And did you have food down there?

JACOBSEN No, we never had any food, no. I think it was just a practice it was, I think really. We never had to really run down, I don't think. It wasn't that bad.

HC So there weren't any trenches or anything?

JACOBSEN No, there was nothing like that. There was nothing to worry about really.

HC In what ways did you personally help the war effort? Did you do any knitting or anything of that nature?

JACOBSEN No, I've never done very much knitting or crocheting in my life. I wasn't one that ever did a lot of knitting and crocheting. I have a friend who for Graham Maybury, she's made 200 squares. She keeps knitting these. She wouldn't be sitting down like this if her fingers wouldn't be going like that. Well, I've never been one to crochet. As a matter of fact I couldn't crochet any lace or anything like that. I've never been one to crochet or do a lot of knitting. Strange, isn't it? I've never been one to do any.

HC Did you ever have any soldiers into your home for meals or whatever?

JACOBSEN No, no, never entertained them.

HC Did you notice any ARP wardens in North Perth checking on blackouts and that the drapes were pulled and things like that?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, I think they used to. At night time they'd see that everybody had their windows blocked up and things like that. That was in the early stages of the war years but that's all, dear, nothing to worry about.

HC Were there many men walking around North Perth in uniform?

JACOBSEN No, no.

HC Do you know if at the North Perth school, whether they had any special things there during the war for the children, for their safety?

JACOBSEN No, we didn't, no.

HC So there were no trenches dug or sandbags?

JACOBSEN No, no. I can't remember anything during the war that happened in North Perth school.

HC Your stepsons enlisted during the war, didn't they?

JACOBSEN Yes, Paul in the air force and Ronnie in the military, yes.

HC Did other friends of theirs also enlist?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, they had lots of friends, yes, lots and lots of friends they had that joined up the same time as they did.

HC What about young women? Did young women enlist from North Perth?

JACOBSEN Do you know I can't remember anyone - not one. No, I can't remember.

HC With your stepsons in the services, what actually happened to them?

JACOBSEN Oh dear old Paul.... well, he came back and he died in an accident, Paul did. Then Ronnie died through just an illness. They both of them just through illnesses really, yes.

HC So it wasn't actually caused....

JACOBSEN Not through the war, no, no.

HC When did you join the Women's Service Guild? How old were you?

JACOBSEN Oh.... let me see now. [pause] I suppose around 50 years ago, I should imagine. I'm one of the oldest members really. We used to meet once a month on a Thursday on the second floor in Wesley Buildings. Yes, that goes back a long, long time.

HC Was there a special reason why you joined?

JACOBSEN Yes, because my friends joined and I loved to be with them, and I loved what we worked for too. We did a lot of good in Perth, the Women's Service Guild. If anything was wrong in Perth and all different things that weren't right in the council, they would write and get everything righted. It was a wonderful organisation, a wonderful organisation. I'm proud to be a member because the committees were so good and the women in it they were so clever the things they used to get done for Perth on the council and different things. Anything wrong they would see that it was righted. It was really very good organisation to belong to.

HC Was it a big organisation when you joined?

JACOBSEN Yes, yes, a very big organisation. We had some very good, educated women. They were really lovely women to be with, you know. No, I loved it, I loved all the members.

HC Did you find it very stimulating?

JACOBSEN Yes, very much so, yes. I looked forward to the meetings.

HC Did many women from North Perth belong to it?

JACOBSEN Let me see.... I think only about three of us really, three or four of us, not many.

HC Was your mother a member?

JACOBSEN No. My mother belonged to the women's.... what did they call themselves? With the medals and things.... I showed you all the medals, didn't I? The soldiers' wives organisation, she belonged to that.

HC Did you hold any office positions?

JACOBSEN No, not in the Women's Service Guild, no.

HC And are you still a member?

JACOBSEN Well, they sent me for my birthday a most beautiful bouquet of flowers and all that. I wrote and thanked them and all that. But it's all wound up now, so there's no members now. It all finished last Thursday.

HC I believe you were actively involved in setting up the King Edward Memorial Hospital - is that right?

JACOBSEN No, I was there when they decided that any money should go there. It was Edith Cowan, it was her that the King Edward Memorial Hospital is really built.... she was the one that suggested it. She said, "We should have a hospital for bringing babies into the world," and she was the instigator of the King Edward Memorial Hospital. Was that on the television? It should have been. Yes, well she was the one, Edith Cowan, she was the instigator of the King Edward Memorial Hospital for babies. Of course, the university is called after her, isn't it, one university, yes.

HC The ladies that were there actually involved in the Guild, were they young, old, socialites or whatever?

JACOBSEN No. They were well-educated ladies I'd say, and ladies who had an interest in everything that was happening in Perth. They were interested in all that was going on and they were out to help different people too. They were really one of the nicest lot of ladies that you could ever meet - really very nice, serene and happy and very nice ladies. You could take a leaf out of their book, they were so nice.

HC Have any major changes occurred with the Guild over the years?

JACOBSEN Well, you see, I haven't been for years now. See, I've lived here for 22 years and I haven't been to any of the Guild meetings. I've got a very dear friend, June Greenslade, she was our secretary and her husband used to do anything that.... we used to meet, as I said, in the Wesley Buildings on the second floor, and anything that wanted doing in the room, like a carpentry job or anything, it didn't matter what it was, he was there to help. June was our secretary for years and she's still one of my best friends. He is the president of the Historical Society at Maylands. You often see his name in the paper, Frank Greenslade. It was in last week's paper too. See, they want to now amalgamate with Bayswater, I think, or something like that and I think he's all for it. However, June is one of my best friends, June Greenslade. She was our secretary and she's been the secretary right up until last week when they sold out - finished. Yes, June Greenslade.

HC Did you have to pay a subscription to belong to the Guild?

JACOBSEN Oh yes, we paid so much every year. Not very much it wasn't - I've forgotten now. Just our membership every year - like most organisations you have to do that, don't you?

HC What other projects did the Guild get involved with? Can you remember?

JACOBSEN Well, anything for the better of Perth really. Whatever was happening in Parliament or anything in Perth. They were really after the betterment of Perth so you couldn't say much more, could you? That's what they really were. They were wonderful ladies.

HC Were there any projects that you were involved in?

JACOBSEN No, not actually, no. I didn't take a big part in anything like that. I just always helped along with anything that was going, you know.

HC From North Perth how did you get to the Wesley Buildings?

JACOBSEN I used to catch the tram. I loved going too.

HC As a family in North Perth, what did your stepsons become involved in? Did they become involved in sport or Boys' Brigade?

JACOBSEN See, they were just very, very tiny when I got married. They went to North Perth School. No, I can't think of them being very, very fond of sport - not like my brother's children. No, they weren't great ones for sport, no. I can't say that there was anything particular that they did that you could commend them for.

HC What about church activities?

JACOBSEN No. They used to come to church when they were tiny with their father and I and I still sit in the same seat that I sat with my husband and those two boys, on the left-hand side in our church. I still sit on that same seat. [laughs]

HC What kind of changes did you see between the years that you attended North Perth School and the years that your stepsons attended the school?

JACOBSEN They were very happy days for the boys at school and when I went just recently to school, I was amazed because somebody said there's a lot of foreign children were there, not many Australian children or English children. I was amazed to see so many Australian children and it was lovely to see their parents came along too and to see so many. But there was more than the foreign children and that's what they said. They said that North Perth now is mostly Italian people but I was amazed really that morning that I went, and the children really... I showed you the pictures, didn't I? I had them all of me with the children,

didn't I? I must get some copies of those on better paper than what was in the paper. I've just got the copies in the paper, the *West Australian* paper.

HC When your boys were attending the school, was it a larger school than when you were going?

JACOBSEN Oh, they'd made some improvements, yes, a lot more improvements. They were very, very happy at school.

HC So they enjoyed the teachers and the lessons?

JACOBSEN Yes, they did, yes. They were very lovely boys. There was no trouble at all with them. They were so lovely, lovely boys.

HC After they left North Perth School, where did they attend school?

JACOBSEN I'm just trying to think back now all those years. I think they just joined a firm with carpentry in. They didn't go to any other school. I can't remember them going to any other school - not like me. When I left North Perth I went to James Street school, then I went to night school in the Terrace and walking along the Terrace to catch the quarter-past-nine tram home. [laughs]

HC With your sister Hilda, did she marry a North Perth man?

JACOBSEN No, she didn't. She married a man from Wiluna and lived at Wiluna. They went to Wiluna to live. She had a lovely trained contralto voice and used to sing beautifully. She was in the choir at North Perth, St Hilda's, for years and years. So was Albert, my brother too. He was there too in the choir.

HC How did your husband spend his retirement?

JACOBSEN He was not retired very long because he died in the Mount Hospital. Now that takes me back a long way, doesn't it?

HC So your husband was relatively young when he died, is that correct?

JACOBSEN Yes. Yes, he died in the Mount Hospital. As a matter of fact he was still working. He hadn't retired. Wait till I tell you this, now it's all come back to me. He was going to a dinner with the manager at the Adelphi Hotel and I was playing bowls and the morning before he went (I remember so well), he got the other side of the bed and we made the double bed together, and he said, "Well, I hope you have a lovely day at the bowls," and I said, "I hope you enjoy the lunch." I was playing bowls and the eldest boy, he came at the bowling club and went like this. Carl had a stroke. All Carl could say was, "Reta, bowls." I belonged to the North Perth bowls and out at the Beach bowls. Of course, Carly didn't know which one I went to (that's the oldest son), so he came up and saw

me in the bowling club. He came in like this and he said, "Dad's had a stroke and he's in Mount Hospital," and that's where he died, in the Mount Hospital.

Mr Wright then was our rector and when I used to go in to see Carl at night I'd stay with him. He'd say, "Stay till nine o'clock at night," and he used to bring me home. Then when Carl passed away I said to him, "Oh no, what am I going to do?" I rang him and I heard that he was on the committee of the Anglican Homes and I said, "I'll have to perhaps go to the Anglican Homes now - will this be sold?" He said, "No, you haven't got to do that because we've bought into Eton Court." He said, "There's still two units vacant," and he got his son to come and get me and there was this one and the one next door. He wanted me to decide on which one I was going to have. Well, to make a long story short I came down and decided. But my brothers, they were master builders and they didn't want me to come here. They didn't think it was good enough.

HC Thank you, Reta, for your time. End of interview.

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW