



Nora Clarke

Interview Excerpt 9 June 2017

Oral History Project

Reliving the past: Stories from our communities

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Interviewee: Nora Clarke
Interviewer: Helen Thompson
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Transcription: Helen Thompson



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Dubbo in the 1950s

In this interview Mrs Nora Clarke talks about her experiences of the 1955 flood. At the time of the flood she was a young married woman living at her family home located on Serisier Street in Dubbo, raising four young children. Mrs Clarke also talks about her memories of seeing Queen Elizabeth II when she visited Dubbo in February 1954.

This recording created on 9th June 2017 is part of Macquarie Regional Library's oral history project "Reliving the past: stories from our communities". Each recording contributes to the developing story of life in the Dubbo area.

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(I): Do you remember if there had been a lot of rain in Dubbo in the days leading up to the flood?

(S): Oh, it rained and rained for days! First off, I never ever thought that the flood would, like, there would be - the river would come up as high as it did. And I can remember going down to see the, how far it had come up, before we went to bed that night. And it had come up half way up the thingummy, the back of the, oh, that place - - -.

(I): The Talbragar Shire building?

(S): The Talbragar Shire building.

(I): So, on Bultje Street, sort of?

(S): No, up in Macquarie Street.

(I): Uh hm.

(S): And, oh, we went to bed quite comfortably. Thought, you know, it wouldn't go any further than that. Oh, no, not much. Anyway, the old chap that lived next door to us, 4 o'clock in the morning, he comes banging on the door, and saying, "..... coming round the corner!" "Coming round the corner!"¹ And the water, was coming, because there was an old galvanised iron fence, in front of a like, it's a - on the other side of us, and round the corner, and the, it must have - put the water round, and that's what's brought it round in front of us. And the problem was, the road had been built up quite a number of times over the years, and the house was well below road level. And that's why we got so much water in. We got six feet of water in the house. And it made - made a job of it, I can tell you. But anyway, we picked up our kids and away we went. We had four then.

(I): So what time was it, do you think, when - - -?

(S): 4 o'clock.

¹ The neighbour was Aub Green per her daughter Lyn.

(I): When you found out. Did you do anything in the house before you left? Or did you just grab what you could, and go? Or?

(S): No, there was water coming in, then. And I put things, (laughs), up on beds, thinking, “Yes, that'll be high enough”. So much for that idea! Everything got covered (coughs). Everything was covered in mud. It was horrible. And a lot of stuff we could never use again. Some stuff was washed. When we got to my cousin's place, Alec, he worked for Taylor's – Joe - George Taylor, he was a mechanic, and he had his father's farm truck. So he brought the truck down, and, it could go through the flood water, and he could, he - - -.² I don't think we did that the first day, I think it was the next day, when the water started to go down a bit, and, they, he and Ron, picked up as much clothing as they could and brought it back, and Bett and I washed it in a little - little Hoover washing machine, that she had. You know, one of those little square ones? And we washed every day, the three weeks that we were there (laughs). And of course we had - I had four children, and she had two, so we had to keep them going at the same time. But we managed, we had a lovely time together (laughs). We stopped at that house in Bishop Street, and it had a verandah all around, and that's what we camped on, at the time, so - - -.

² Alec James Armstrong and Elizabeth Ann “Betty” Armstrong lived at 26 Bishop Street, Dubbo (1954 Australian Electoral Rolls). Alec worked for Harold W. Taylor Ford Sales & Service, Macquarie Street, Dubbo.