



TOWN OF
VICTORIA PARK



Interview with Diamond Walters

Interviewed by Jan McCahon

Part of Victoria Park Voices

The Oral History Collection of Victoria Park Library
July 2000

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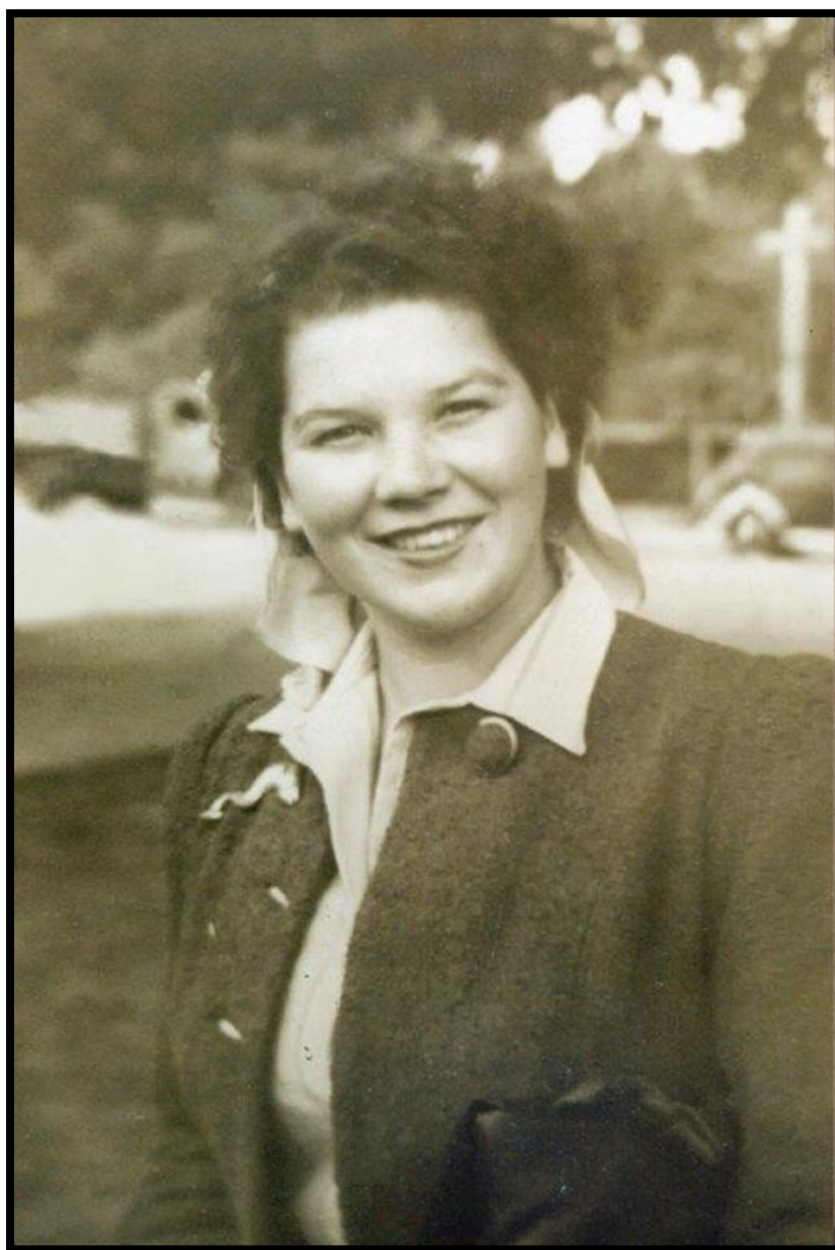
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VIC PARK

Interview with Diamond Walters

Part of

Victoria Park Voices

The Oral History Collection of Victoria Park Library



**Diamond Marguerite Toussaint (later Walters),
The Esplanade, Perth, 2 May 1942.**

Courtesy of Carmen Horton.

Interview with Diamond “Di” Walters

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NOTE TO READER

Readers of this oral history should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word and reflects the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Town of Victoria Park is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein: these are for the readers to judge.

INTRODUCTION

“WALTERS: ...my mother’s name was Grace Ethel Marguerite, and my dad called her Gem and when we were born she called me, she called [us] Coral, Diamond, Crystal and Pearl – we all had jewels names, so um but I think I got the most ragging ‘cause there’s plenty of Corals, and Crystals and Pearls but when I told my name to people, they were really wanting to know all about it.”

Have you ever heard the phrase, ‘she is a diamond of the first water’? It’s an old phrase that refers to a beautiful woman, often of uncommon beauty, and it originates from the relationship between diamonds and water. The closer in clarity a diamond appears to water, the more it is prized and the higher quality it is deemed to be. Our interviewee is Di or Diamond Marguerite Walters (nee Toussaint) who was one of the ‘gems’ born in 1924 to parents James and Grace TOUSSAINT in India.

Di was one of five children, three of whom, including herself were born in India. Di’s other two siblings were born at St Ive’s Maternity Hospital, East Victoria Park. The story of Diamond Walters as told in this interview by Di herself, is a powerful story of bravery, strength and fun. You’ll picture with Di, conditions on the ship as her family emigrated to Fremantle; imagine the early days of East Victoria Park, when houses and neighbours were few and far between; reminisce about school days, learning to sew and excursions on Sundays with the family to Como beach; as well as going to the movies at the Savoy Picture Theatre. As you listen, you’ll laugh along with Di as she recounts her story of the sanitary cart man and the need back in the day, to keep your ears open for when he would be paying a visit ... you didn’t want to be caught on the toilet at those times!

Di also recounts her time serving in the Army in World War II and how she met her husband, a New South Welshman in the camp at Karrakatta before demobilisation in 1946. This is a lovely, heartwarming recounting of a life well lived and love well shared, it celebrates family and living the Australian Dream.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS TO TRANSCRIPTION

Attachment 1 – Di Walters, Army Days, pp. 44-46.

Attachment 2 – Rewind article, pp. 46-47.

FAMILY TREE

Please note that the information contained in this family tree has been gleaned solely from information given at the time of the interview and that appears in the transcript. No attempt has been made to verify or research further. The family tree has been included in the transcript as a tool to the researcher.

James Frances Henry TOUSSAINT

b. 1901, Ceylon

d. aged about 68 years.

Grace Ethel Marguerite

b. 1900, Ceylon

d. aged about 77 years.

CHILDREN:

- **Diamond 'Di' TOUSSAINT**
 - b. 1924, Lady Kerzon Hospital, Bangalore, South India
 - m. 4 January 1947, **Victor James WALTERS**
 - CHILDREN:
 - Barry James WALTERS
 - Gail Marguerite WALTERS, m. ???? McLEAN
 - Carmen Rosemary WALTERS, m. ???? HORTON.
 - Debbie Ann WALTERS
 - Noelene Vicki WALTERS
 - Russell Victori WALTERS
- Coral Athenie TOUSSAINT
 - b. 1922
 - m. ???? WATSON
- Chrystal Heather TOUSSAINT
 - b. 1925, India
 - m. ???? BLESSIS
- Frank Fleming TOUSSAINT
 - b. 1930, Perth, Western Australia
- Pearl Rosemary TOUSSAINT
 - b. St Ives Maternity Hospital, Basinghall Street, East Victoria Park

TRANSCRIPT

This is an interview with Mrs Diamond 'Di' Walters for the Local History Collection of the Victoria Park Library. The interview was recorded in Mrs Walter's home by Jan McCahon. The interview commenced on Monday 24th July 2000

JM: Mrs. Walters, could you give me your full name and where and when you were born please?

WALTERS: Diamond Marguerite Walters now, it was Toussaint and I was born in India in 1924.

JM: And what were the names of your parents, when and where were they born?

WALTERS: My mother's name – Grace Ethel Marguerite Toussaint, she was born in Ceylon in 1900, and my father was James Frances Henry and he was born in 1901 in Ceylon. He was a year younger than my mother.

JM: What sort of work did he do?

WALTERS: He was an engineer. He did engineering work.

JM: And who did he work for?

WALTERS: Ooh, I'm not sure who he worked for over there.

JM: Was it private or government?

WALTERS: It'd be government, mm.

JM: Can you give me the names of your sisters?

WALTERS: Yes, there's Coral Athenie, it was Toussaint now it's Watson and she was born in 1922 and Chrystal Heather, she's Blessis now and her name was Toussaint, and she was born in 1925.

JM: You told me earlier the hospital that you were born in. Can you...

WALTERS: Lady Kerzon, Lady Kerzon Hospital in Bangalore, South India.



Diamond Marguerite Toussaint (little girl centre) with her two sisters and parents. Date unknown.

Courtesy of Carmen Horton

JM: What year did you move to Australia?

WALTERS: Um, I'd say it would have been about 1929.

JM: What was the decision made – why was the decision made to come to Australia?

WALTERS: Oh, because my father wanted us all to be professionals and have a better education here.

JM: Did he have a job to come to at the time?

WALTERS: No, he didn't really have a job to come to because I think the Salvation Army met them and my mother left servants and all over there and she came and struggled on her own and her first place was in Gosnells. I remember a great big 5 acre place and my mum had to milk the cow there, and she had a horse and we had a little cottage there. I think they were renting it, and a well, and granny came too, my granny came along with us. 'Cause my mother said when she married my father she married his mum as well. 'Cause granny always lived with us.

JM: What was her name?

WALTERS: Constance Harriet Toussaint – that's my father's mother.

JM: Gosnells would have been quite isolated at that time?

WALTERS: It was all bushy then – it was miles out so my mother had to battle on her own with three of us and another one on the way.

JM: How far would have been the nearest neighbour?

WALTERS: Oh, I can't remember that, I'm sorry. I was a bit little but I remember the well. We used to look down this big well because that's how we had to get water. And Mum used to milk this cow, and she used to make us have all this milk and cream, and in the finish we hated the sight of milk and cream. And now you would never get it so fresh.

JM: What work did your father do, once you were established?

WALTERS: Well, by then there was a terrible depression on here and my dad ended up on sustenance work and he worked on the Canning and Harvey dam

and then he had to go to Yarloop. I remember when I was little dad used to go away and work on the dams and Yarloop. I think all the men had to go on sustenance work then and when the first time he really got paid, was when the war came and he joined the army. He ended up a warrant officer.

JM: Where did he serve?

WALTERS: He served in – he did his training in Geelong, Victoria and he served mostly at Bushmead and Nungarin, and he was with the transport.

JM: So, you wouldn't have seen very much of him?

WALTERS: Not during the war, because I joined the army myself and my sister joined the air force, and we did our training at the WACA grounds, our rookies I should say at the WACA grounds, we did 3 months training before we were sent off on a - I was only 18 then, and we were sent off on a troop train across the Nullarbor which took 2 weeks to get over there because of the conk out in the middle of the plains and we weren't allowed to have a shower or anything. There was no water on the trains till we got to Adelaide and from there we had to take another troop train, sit up all night until we got to Victoria 'cause that's where I did my signal training, in a place called Ivanhoe, Victoria.

JM: How long in total would you have been in the forces?

WALTERS: About four and a half years.

JM: Just during the war time?

WALTERS: Mmm. Yes.

JM: And did you serve all the time in the eastern states?

WALTERS: Yes, most of my time was spent in army camps in the eastern states and we had to release the men for the front line. So yes most of my time was spent there until my discharge at Karrakatta camp.

JM: When was that?

WALTERS: 1946.

JM: Moving back to your family, what was...your mother was pregnant when she arrived,

WALTERS: Yes.

JM: So what was that child's name?

WALTERS: That was Frank Fleming Toussaint after my father's name was Frank.

JM: So he would have born in 1930?

WALTERS: Something like that.

JM: Where did you go to school?

WALTERS: I went to school – East Vic Park School.

JM: Was that from Gosnells?

WALTERS: No, no, no, from Gosnells we shifted around Vic Park. First we lived in Teague Street and then we lived in Esperance Street and then we lived up the top of Basinghall Street, and then we ended up in Etwell Street. The houses used to be 7 and 6 a week rent. And uh getting to Basinghall Street they had the big pine plantations next door which is now made into the Curtin University that was all bush from there to, right from there to Clontarf. We used to go over and see the boys over there. And their beds used to be like a hammock because I wanted Mum to bring a couple of them home. You know because they'd be over there working hard and everything else and as we walked over there we'd come across the swamp and we'd bring back a sack of wood on our back, you know, for Mum because it was depression time. And the wildflowers there were wonderful. So that was when we lived in Basinghall Street and then we moved to Etwell Street which had just 2 little planks at the time and ended up in the bush. We were the only one house or two houses there and there used to be beautiful wildflowers and all there. And the toilets, you'd go down to the toilet which was way down the back yard, we had a big back yard, and you'd um... What happened there was you'd have to cut up the daily paper into little bits and tie it up there, and then you'd be sitting on the toilet and the next thing you'd hear the horses huffing and puffing up the

lane. And up you'd have to jump while the fellow there changed the pan and all that business.

JM: How often would he have come?

WALTERS: I reckon he would have come about twice a week.

JM: Did you get to know the chaps on the sanitary cart?

WALTERS: No, no. We used to jump up and dodge them. No, you'd have to just jump up off the seat as soon as you heard the horses before they took that pan from underneath. You know, you'd have to hide. And then we used to have a baker Walkemeyer's, the name was, and he'd always come. Mum would always give him a cup of tea, and he'd come and have a yarn there for a while. The bread would never be covered, and we'd just get the bread uncovered and the horse would go miles off with the cart and walk eating grass and everything while he had a cuppa and stayed at our place about half an hour. And then the ice man would come and we'd all run out and get a little bit of ice off him. And then the milko would come and we'd have to put a big saucepan out the front for him and he'd come with his big can and dole out the milk, and we'd all come running with our little cups and he'd put a little bit in the cups for us.

JM: Each child?

WALTERS: Yes, whoever went out there.

JM: And that was an extra?

WALTERS: Yes. And then I forgot to mention these 'prop men' they were Aboriginals, and we used to have a line strewn right across the back fence and these men would knock at the door and sell Mum these props to prop up your clothes.

JM: How often did your Mum wash?

WALTERS: Oh, um I think she'd wash – 'cause she did my granny's washing and all,- I think she'd wash as soon as she had to because there were no washing machines. She'd fill up the bathtub, and rub the clothes and wash from the bathtub mostly.

JM: That's not a bathtub as we know it now, is it?

WALTERS: It was those big ones, those

JM: Galvanised?

WALTERS: No, it was those. I think now they're a relic with four legs on them. And then we'd have the troughs of course, sometimes you'd wash in the troughs. But to save water sometimes you'd wash in the bath.

JM: Would that water be re-used?

WALTERS: No, after a bath or something then they'd do the washing in that – to save water.

JM: She'd would use the scrubbing board?

WALTERS: Yes, yes, she would have used the scrubbing board.

JM: And what soap would she have used?

WALTERS: Um, I think it would have been the Peak soap. It was Peak like velvet soap. It'd be Peak soap. And then we'd have the copper there and two cement troughs, and sometimes she'd boil up and all that business, you know, boil up the copper.

JM: Did she use the Recketts Blue?

WALTERS: Yes, especially for bee stings. (coughs)

JM: Oh, right.

WALTERS: Excuse me. Yes, mostly for bee stings. That's what, I miss that Recketts Blue too, 'cause we used to put that in the water and make the clothes white and all that business. But mostly mum would wash in the troughs and then put the stuff and boil it up in the copper next door – we had a big copper.

JM: Did she starch as well?

WALTERS: Oh no, she didn't. She had a big family so she didn't do much starching but we did a bit of starching when we went to school. We'd go to this place in Roe Street, and it was a house where you learnt domestic

science. And we'd have to clean up the house and then sometimes we'd take the tablecloth or something and starch it up or a hanky and they taught us to starch there. We had to mix the starch and make it.

JM: How old would you have been at that time?

WALTERS: (coughs) I think I would have been about eleven, eleven or twelve in seventh grade.

JM: This is while you were at East Victoria Park School?

WALTERS: East Vic Park School, yes we'd get sent there and sometimes we'd be in the choir and go to His Majesty's when Mr. Egan was there. He was the choir master. And then we'd have sewing lessons with Miss Sheath. She used to look at our sewing and she was very strict. She used to make sure – we'd make beautiful little lavender bags and all those things.

JM: Did you embroider as well?

WALTERS: Yes, we did embroidering.

JM: With Miss Sheath?

WALTERS: Yes, we did a bit of all that stuff with her, yes.

JM: What about your studies? What sorts of subjects did you have?

WALTERS: In East Vic Park School?

JM: Yes.

WALTERS: Um, we had just the usual arithmetic and spelling and compositions and who was the best writer. I won a shilling once for being the best writer in fourth grade.

JM: What did you write on that occasion?

WALTERS: I just forget what it was now, but I remember that I ran home with the shilling for Mum, because you know it was depression and I thought I'd won the charities, getting that shilling.

JM: Who were some of the other teachers that you can remember?

WALTERS: From the infants - there was Miss Hanna who was our head teacher/mistress. She was in our infants school and there was Miss Sutton she was my first grade teacher and I had to write my big name there Diamond Marguerite Toussaint across there all by myself. So I growled at Mum for giving me such a big name, and then- that was Miss Sutton first grade and she's still alive today and she's a hundred and one. She's at Rowethorpe. And she's still got her faculties about her, and she was telling us she paid a shilling a week for superannuation later on.

JM: Did you as part of your schooling have concerts or extra..?

WALTERS: Yes, every Friday would be a concert for a penny and we'd have a concert at the school there.

JM: So you would take a penny in?

WALTERS: Yes, you'd have to pay a penny to go to the concert and getting back to the infants school we used to get free milk and it used to taste lovely. Little tiny bottles and nice and cold it was, we'd all get that free milk and it was really nice.

JM: Was that every day?

WALTERS: Yes, yes.

JM: In the mornings?

WALTERS: Yes, in the mornings, yes, mm.

JM: Did you go on excursions?

WALTERS: Not as much as they do today. No. We'd go to swimming lessons and that would be at Como and then later on we'd go to, when the trams were running, we'd go to Claremont Baths. That was the most popular place and you paid thruppence to go in there, and the trams would run right along to Mint Street, in Albany Highway, and stop there and later on they went right up to Welshpool road. And you'd hear the trams rattling past in those days. And we used to have Dundas Street behind East Victoria Park School and Mrs Bird owned Dundas Street and we'd go over and buy or get a ha'penny and buy a little lolly lipstick or a little

ice cream cones. They'd make toffees and put a lucky charm in. In those days they didn't hurt you and we'd go and buy one of those for a ha'penny each. If we were lucky to get a ha'penny to spend.

JM: That was the local shop was it?

WALTERS: That's the little school shop behind in Dundas Street parallel to Albany Highway. It was a quiet little place there. You didn't have to cross the road.

JM: Did your family go to church on Sundays?

WALTERS: Um, no but they sent us to Sunday School at the little Methodist Church in Duncan Street. There was a little Methodist church there and I used to love getting a little tiny card with a prayer on it, and we'd save about six of those and then get a bigger card and we used to go every Sunday and enjoyed getting those cards.

JM: A lot of families, on a Sunday, would go down to Como beach. Did your family?

WALTERS: Yes, Mum would catch a tram and go down and yes we'd take some sandwiches.

JM: You would have spent the day down there?

WALTERS: Most of the day. Yes.

JM: That was during the summer months?

WALTERS: Yes. Yes that was a real outing for us if Mum said she'd take us. And we'd catch the old rattler tram and away we'd stop at the little shop there near Como.

JM: And then walk down to the beach?

WALTERS: Yes. It wasn't that far because it didn't have the highway or anything there. It was just nice.

JM: Did you ever go to the zoo as a family?

WALTERS: Yes, we used to hear the lions from the zoo from our place in Basinghall Street and I suppose we would have gone to the zoo. Yes. I probably

went to the zoo because we would always hear the lions roaring from our place and right opposite our place was bush and then there was the Methodist Home for Children and if any bush fires ever came us kids would have to put it out with sacks. Dad and us would put out the fires and we'd just get these sacks and you know wallop into the fire.

JM: Did they occur very often?

WALTERS: Not very often.

JM: And it would have been during the hot weather?

WALTERS: Yes, mmm. But if we – we didn't have a telephone or anything. If we needed anything urgent we'd have to run across the bush to the Home, and they'd let us ring there.

JM: What year would that have been?

WALTERS: It would have been about um...let me see. I reckon I'd have been about 5, I suppose, it would have been in the thirties, early thirties it would have been. So we used to walk to school right from the top of Basinghall Street right down the bottom there and then I don't know whether you know Steve Kargottich's surgery? Well right there it was St. Ives Hospital, a little homely hospital and that's where my sister was born, the youngest sister. She was born at St. Ives.

JM: What's her name?

WALTERS: Pearl Rosemary.

JM: And what year would she have been born?

WALTERS: She would have been born - She'd be about 62 now,63. So I don't know what year that was. Yes so that was where she was born, that was St. Ives Hospital there and then later on it moved over to Hubert Street, St. Ives Hospital. And on the corner was Aitkens Store and we used to ride our bikes down, it was so far we'd ride our bikes from the top of Basinghall Street and Mr. Aitkens, (you don't know John now do you?), well his father used to let us put our bikes there, and catch the tram wherever we wanted to go to save us that long walk. and on the other corner near Mint Street was Ashbolt's and you used to get the lovely

smell of all the spices and you know the wooden floor as you walked in and you'd just get a bit of this and a bit of that and it had a real different nice smell then.

JM: That's when they used to have the biscuits in the barrel, wasn't it?

WALTERS: Yes, yes they did.

JM: And it was weighed by the pound?

WALTERS: Yes, yes, and um...and opposite there was Mrs Dewer. She had the grocery – she sold the greengrocery store and she used to shuffle out in her slippers, little Mrs. Dewer. And Mrs. Maloney had the dress shop, you'd go there if you wanted needles or anything like that, any haberdashery. And then further down, which is Ngala now, that's where Jennings the butcher was, and we used to have to walk all the way down there if we didn't ride the bike for my Mum's meat. But we would fight about who was going because he'd always wrap these boiled lollies in the parcel. You'd get all these boiled lollies with the fish and all different things, and by the time we got home they were mostly all eaten, but the meat was intact.

JM: It would have been quite a hike.

WALTERS: Oh, it was but you got used to it. Because I remember one day I went to school and um I wore this red hat, I don't think I told you about this did I. Anyway I wore this red hat and when I got to school I didn't know, the teacher sent me home, and I said what for? And she said I had red dripping all down my face and everything, and I had to walk a mile there and show Mum, and come back again after she'd cleaned up my face and all, when I was little.

JM: The dye had run?

WALTERS: Yes, and mostly we'd go without shoes 'cause it was really- it was really a depression in those days because all we had to eat was bread and treacle. Sometimes my brother would throw a potato in the fire, we all had fires then, and we ended up breaking out in boils because we didn't get fruit and all. I remember I went into the pines and got a couple of sticks and put them under my arms to make sort of crutches and they

dug into me so I had to get two pillows to put under that because we broke out in boils.

JM: Did you get boils under your arms?

WALTERS: No, I put – not the boils....I'd put the... The boils would be all over your body and I'd made these two crutches, I went into the pines, you know the pines next door and made these two long sticks to help me to walk. And then it used to stick under my arms, not the boils the sticks, and um anyway what happened was I got a couple of cushions and put them under to help. But in those days (coughs) everybody had a little fire burning, you know. You'd manage to go to the pines or the bush and get some wood and you'd never ever smell it, but now if anyone ever has any fires you can really smell it for some reason or other.

JM: I think that's because the wood's not dead long enough.

WALTERS: I don't know what it is but in those days see when I started work I'd come home about uh... You'd come home about six o'clock because you had to work from nine till six in those days. And you'd see all the little chimneys going, and you took no notice and it was nice- nice and homely. And your mum's would have a nice dinner waiting, a nice hot dinner, and as we walked in the gate right up the street you'd hear "Dad and Dave" or "Martin's Corner". And as you walked in you'd just catch the end of one of those.

JM: What was Martin's Corner?

WALTERS: Martin's Corner that was about – I think it was about these um fellows.. oh I just forget about that one. I just forget to tell you properly about that one.

JM: That's okay. What was the job that you did when you first left school?

WALTERS: Well, when I first left school my father as I told you wanted us all to be professionals, and I wanted to leave school at sixteen and he says "No, you're not leaving!" So I saw this job advertised at - it was called Wilson & Johns, - a florist job, and I put on this – someone had given me this little green dress a little teenager -I'd be about 15 then, and I put this dress on and when I went there, there must have been about 300 girls

in the queue which stretched right around near Boans. Anyway I joined the end of the queue and I couldn't believe my luck that I was chosen to work in their shop and when it came time for school I had to tell Dad I wasn't allowed to leave the job. So that's how I managed to leave school and then I went and worked at Woolworths for a while and then Baird's. And then I joined up from Baird's – the army. When you were 18 you had to join up.

JM: When you came out of the army you would have been...?

WALTERS: 23.

JM: What did you do then?

WALTERS: I came out of the army and got married because I met – he's , my husbands from New South Wales. He was born in Tamworth and at 18 they were trained on broomsticks for 3 weeks and then they went to the front line in New Guinea and when they came back they had, after 2 years of fighting over there in New Guinea, um he came to our camp and we met over a barbed wire fence and that was down at ???Balkim. So then after - you asked me after the war what did I do – well then, he came over when he got his discharge, and we got married.

JM: So what year would that have been?

WALTERS: "47. January 4th '47.

JM: And what work did your husband then start to do?

WALTERS: Oh well, he – Before he joined the army he worked at a place called ???Lindstroms over in, - a grocers shop in Newcastle, and when he came out he helped my cousin. They had a grocer shop so he helped them for a while. And then my father was with the Main Roads Department, so he took him up with him – they were working up at Bindoon – and he took him up there, you know, to start him off and anyway he ended up with the Main Roads for 34years.

JM: As what?

WALTERS: Doing – he was a ???cartage contractor. He had a truck.



Diamond Walters on her wedding day, 4 January 1946.

Courtesy of Carmen Horton.



Victor and Diamond Walters on their wedding day, 4 January 1946.

Courtesy of Carmen Horton.

JM: When your Dad came back from the war, where did he start working then?

WALTERS: Um...oh, he started with the main roads. He bought a truck – they were using these army trucks in um the war, I think it was a chev, whatever it was, he bought one of those and he started with the Main Roads. And then he - after a few years my husband bought - by then he'd got another truck and he got into the Main Roads through my father.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE ONE

TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

JM: Mrs. Walters, can you describe the trip when you came out from India with your family?

WALTERS: Yes, I'll never forget that boat trip, we were so seasick. They weren't stabilised in those days. My granny and my older sister were the only two that could get up and go for any meals. We just couldn't go - we couldn't even get out of bed it was so rough and tough there. And when we got to Fremantle I can still smell the oil in those boat sheds where your luggage and all go into, and I can still smell that oily dank smell in there.

JM: How long would it have taken?

WALTERS: Ooh, well roughly I'd say it had taken about a week to get here. It sure was a rough trip. The boats are more stabilised now and the name of the boat was ???Bill D'amiens – that was the name of the boat we came on . So where it is now I'll never know. (laughs)

JM: Can you describe how your – the lady who looked after you....?

WALTERS: The ???ayah.

JM: Yes.

WALTERS: Yes, ah she was...they're like second mothers to you over there. And when we left India she was crying her eyes out and she missed me so much, and probably my sisters ayahs missed them just the same 'cause they were very attached to the little ones over there when you hired them. And they were like sort of nurses to them. So when Mum came over she really missed them because she had to battle on her own. She was one of the pioneer women.

JM: So getting back to your husband, he - would he have worked out of town?

WALTERS: He worked from here to – he's been to Shark's Bay and he's been to Geraldton and quite a few out of town places, he's worked at, but mostly in the metropolitan area – tending to the roads – road construction.

JM: Did you accompany him on any of the trips out of town?

WALTERS: Um, no, because I had the children to look after, and um, you know he wasn't away that much. And then he had to go and do the roads at Rottnest Island and I'd take the children over and they'd go to school there three months of the year, every year, till the roads were done there. And um they enjoyed that. It was their second home. We'd go in the winter months and that was the best time to go to Rottnest if you want a nice rest. Go for walks and everything over there.

JM: Where did you live, permanently after you were married?

WALTERS: Well, we lived in Etwell Street. We bought an old house off Mum and Dad, and that's where we lived and I went to East Vic Park School and all my children went to East Vic Park School. Then they went to Kent Street School which was built later on because we never had Kent Street School. I went to the Perth Girls School there at East Perth, you know, where the police are now. I went up there – they were a professional school there.

M: Perth Modern School was it?

WALTERS: No, no. My elder sister went there she became a teacher, but I went to Perth Girls School where the traffic police are now, on East Perth, and now I believe they are selling it.

JM: Where did your mother and father move to once you bought their house?

WALTERS: Dad built a home in Basinghall Street around the corner. He used to go up every day and he built another home there. He built it by himself.

JM: So when did they die?

WALTERS: Mum died when she was 77, because I'd remember her age is with the years and Dad died when he was about 68.

JM: Can you tell me the names of your children and when and where they were born?

WALTERS: My eldest child was Barry James Walters and he used to be a great lover of your library in Vic Park. He used to live in that library or any library. He used to just love reading. And he was born in King Edward Memorial Hospital, and he would be 53 this weekend, and the next is Gail Marguerite, um...her name's Mclean now, and she's 50 on Friday. She was born in King Edward Memorial Hospital. And the next one is Carmen Rosemary and she's Horton now, and she was born at St. Ives Hospital in Hubert Street. And the next one's Debbie Anne Walters and she was born at St. Ives Hospital in Hubert Street, and she would be 3 years younger than Carmen. (or 2 years younger - that girl). The next one is Noelene Vicki Walters and she was born in St. Ives Hospital as well in East Vic Park and she would be... She's 42 on Christmas Day this year. Oh and then there's (laughs) another one Russell ...Russell Victor Walters and he's 36 this year. He was born at South Perth Community Hospital.

JM: There's a gap between them.

WALTERS: Yes, and he's just had a little boy and he had it at St. John of God's in Murdoch. But don't ask about all the grandchildren!

JM: How many?

WALTERS: Eleven now. One's only two weeks old. A little grandson, and my hubby's proud because he's going to be carrying on the name, and he's only 2 weeks old, Liam, his name is.

JM: What work, what occupations have the children gone into?

WALTERS: Um, my children? Well, the first, Barry, he was up in Darwin for 13 years, he was with the government. He did all sorts of work with the aboriginals and all that business, and employment officer. He was with Public Services and the second girl she's a school teacher, and the next one a stenographer. At the moment she's with the Agricultural Department, and the next one is umm..

JM: What's Noelene's occupation?

WALTERS: Oh, she's been studying very hard and now she's a teachers carer and she looks after this fellow. She's been looking after him for the last five or six, four or five years and he's in a wheelchair and studying in high school at the moment and she's doing that work.

JM: And Russell, what does he do?

WALTERS: Oh, he's a pilot.

JM: That's with Ansett?

WALTERS: Yes.

JM: How long's he been working there?

WALTERS: He's been there about 5 years or more. But he was working up in Darwin with the Customs Plane. He had to watch out for all, you know the people not supposed to come into the country, and all that business.

JM: That's a surveillance plane?

WALTERS: Yes. He did all that job and then he got a promotion with Skywest and just before that he was over at Jandakot and he was teaching, oh he was teaching, I'm not sure of the word now, what you call it, but he was over there and he got – he won a trophy for the best instructor. He was

an instructor there. Instructor of the Year Award and he 's still got his trophy over there, at Jandakot Airport.

JM: Rather a nice achievement.

WALTERS: Yes, it was, so he's worked very hard. They all went to Kent Street High School.

JM: Were you involved with Parents and Citizens?

WALTERS: No, I used to go and help with the canteen work. I did the canteen work there.

JM: How long did you work there for?

WALTERS: Well, I think the children were there for about 5 years so I'd just go and volunteer and do a bit of canteen work there.

JM: Who was the manager while you were there?

WALTERS: Um...ooh, I forget. I do forget, and I did a bit of that in East Vic Park School as well. They had a little canteen there.

JM: The canteen opened in 1966.

WALTERS: At Kent Street?

JM: Yes.

WALTERS: Oh.

JM: When your children started at Kent Street High School, what did they do for their lunch break?

WALTERS: Well, if they didn't buy anything at the canteens, whichever they were there, and sometimes I was a volunteer at the canteens. They didn't buy their lunch there – mostly they'd come home and bring half their friends with them. Sometimes I'd get quite a few there for lunch, 'cause we lived so close to the school.

JM: What would you serve them for lunch?

WALTERS: At home? oh mostly sandwiches. I'd make sandwiches.

JM: But you'd make them for all the kids?

WALTERS: Yeah. Oh, I'd make sandwiches or whatever was going there, and a bit of cake.

JM: That would have been homemade cake too?

WALTERS: Yes, yes. I'd make a big cake in a baking dish and it was gone in two minutes. Flat.

JM: o you'd be making one every day?

WALTERS: Oh, well no, not every day they'd come like that, and then some of them they'd want to bring them to stay the night. A few of them would stay the night. They'd want to stay the night and all that business and have sleepovers.

JM:: So Etwell Street was quite close to the High School, wasn't it?

WALTERS: Yes, yes. But I remember when Barry first started, this little duckling strayed into our yard and uh then it never ever went away from there, so he stayed there and he grew into a great big drake, and I remember when Barry first went to school on his bike, and he used to take the drake with him, on the handlebars, and the drake would fly home again when he got to Kent Street. And then when we went away East, 'cause we had to go visit my husband's people, - we drove across the Nullarbor , he had to sell it, and he was that upset and he said,- this man came and bought the drake- and he said " Will you promise you're not going to eat him?" He said "It's for breeding". So with that he let him go.

JM: That would have been easier to take.

WALTERS: Mmm.

JM: Did your children go swimming during the swimming ????

WALTERS: Yes, and they used to do running and swimming.

JM: So, would they have gone to the pool in Kent Street first off?

WALTERS: I don't think they had a pool then when they first started.

JM: Not in the school. This was a chap who had – a family had a pool in their back yard, and apparently the local children swam there.

WALTERS: Oh, I never heard of that one. Might have been later on. Could have been later on 'cause I know they used to go to Skipworths opposite, so if they wanted to buy anything they'd go to Skipworths.

JM: What's Skipworths?

WALTERS: Opposite was Skipworths store, you know where you could buy your lunch and all.

JM: Right.

WALTERS: Sometimes they'd go to Skipworths there.

JM: Did they have the tuckshop?

WALTERS: They had the tuckshop there. They'd go there and buy a drink or something. Probably after school, but I know Skipworths were there for a very long time.

JM: And when they went swimming, was that at Somerset Street Pool?

WALTERS: Umm, I'm pretty sure it was. I'm pretty sure that's where they used to go to Somerset. That'd be the nearest pool.

JM: Yes.

WALTERS: Umm. I'm pretty sure that's where it'd be.

JM: Did they go into the competitions?

WALTERS: Ooh, they could have done. They could have done, but mostly I remember them in the running. They used to do a lot of running. They'd go to um...Taylor Park, is it? at the Causeway,...

JM: Yes.

WALTERS: That's where they'd have their competitions. The school would have their competitions there.

JM: Was that the interschool sports?

WALTERS: Must have been, yeah, and then I know I used to go to the, in East Vic Park, we'd go to that Rec. next to where you are – it was a sports ground.

JM: Oh, the Recreation Centre? Yes.

WALTERS: Yes. I looked at that the other day and I thought gee , where've those years gone. Many a time we'd go there and watch the school sports and all.

JM: So the sports would have been on the grassed area...?

WALTERS: Mmm. Mmm.

JM: So that was before the Recreation Centre was built?

WALTERS: Oh yes, oh your Recreation Centre and Library... Mint Street was the Library then. That wasn't there then. Your library and all wasn't there then. That's progress now. It was all houses I think. A couple of houses there.

JM: Did you, as a family, use the trams?

WALTERS: Yes. That's all we could use until the buses came halfway to Berwick Street, and we thought that was wonderful just to walk from Basinghall or Etwell Street, from there down to Berwick Street. And that was a hike.

JM: So where would you have done your shopping?

WALTERS: Albany Road - used to call it Albany Road I still do. We used to do all the shopping there.

JM: At Ashbolt's the same as

WALTERS: We'd go to Aikens or Ashbolts and we'd go to the Italians there. The Italians they had a fruit shop too. I think it was after Mrs. Dew???????? because she was very old and we used to go to the Italians ????? " Lettices" Letizia's ??????,the Italian people, and the butcher's was Jennings. And we used to go to the old Savoy Theatre of a Wednesday night, Mum and Granny and all, we'd all go down. For sixpence you'd see two good pictures at the Savoy Theatre and sometimes if we'd worked hard Mum would give us money to go to Saturday afternoon to see Roy Rogers and all the Saturday afternoon shows.

JM: They would have been serials, on Saturdays?

WALTERS: Yes, oh you'd just sit there and the next thing the kids would go like this [stamps feet on the ground] and there'd be such a noise in there and next week you'd get more, it was a serial, and you couldn't wait for Saturday to get back there again. But they were the best days. You didn't have much money but they were the best days. You could leave your house unlocked and open.

JM: The population was quite small too wasn't it?

WALTERS: Yes, yes. But we never even had a key. People would just come in and you'd know the neighbours, gradually you'd get a few neighbours and they'd just come in. Never ever locked up and if the kids went anywhere they'd be halfway down the street and they'd yell out "Mum, I've left the key under the pot plant" and the whole world would know where the key was, but it didn't matter.

JM: What...when your children um went to the pictures, did they also go to the Savoy?

WALTERS: Yes.

JM: Or the Broadway?

WALTERS: Yes, no not so much the Broadway- the Savoy. In the summertime we'd go to the open-air pictures which is next to Ngala now. They had it where the car yard was- they had a...Ooh I'd set my hair and curl my hair just to walk down there with all the kids and we'd sit on the deck chairs, and we thought that was wonderful.

JM: That was during the summer?

WALTERS: Yes, yes, otherwise it would be in the Savoy.

JM: And did you go to any concerts or functions in the Town Hall?

WALTERS: Yes, yes. We used to go to the Town Hall to dances and different things there they had. You know I remember the old Town Hall. That's pulled down now and the kids used to go to dancing at the Library Hall there opposite...opposite where the Broken Hill Hotel is. That's where they used to learn dancing in there.

JM: So it wasn't operating as a library at that time?

WALTERS: What's that?

JM: The library building.

WALTERS: No, no. The library was at Mint Street. That's where the library was.

JM: Did they have the school concerts at the Town Hall?

WALTERS: Um, no I think they just held them at school and sometimes we'd go to His Majesty's Theatre for concerts, when Mr. Egan was there.

JM: Did they join the band, the music band, at East Vic Park?

WALTERS: No, they weren't never in the band. Never in the band. Well, when I lived in Teague Street, we'd go home from school, and probably have a ha'penny or something, there'd be a market right opposite where ???Mainwarings??? were, I don't know whether you'd know that, and let me think, what's there now, um...oh there's a car yard, just between Sussex Street and Kent Street. As you go to town, the left hand side they had these markets, and when we were kids, in we'd go with our ha'penny, and there's all sorts of things, but there was this little woman Mrs. Hope and she was about ninety, and she used to serve the toffees. And she'd get the toffee in her hand, no wrapping in those days, and get the toffee in her hand and the little hammer and smash it up like that and give us a ha'penny's worth. Ooh, we used to think it was lovely, to get a bit of toffee to eat on the way home.

JM: So that would have been in a big hall?

WALTERS: It was a great big hall, and then I think afterwards Meadowlea took over it. Remember Meadowlea? They had that for a long time. Then they made it into the housing commission home, and now that's pulled down and it's for lease for different offices again. Have you seen that place there? Yeah.

JM: Did you ever go into Perth for a day's shopping?

WALTERS: Yes, I did and uh... I did, and it was lovely in Perth in those days, it was. Perth's very boring now and it was lovely in those days. There'd be Boans, Moore's, Cox Brothers, um ???Corows, Baird's if you couldn't find

anything you'd go into Baird's to find it, and it was really lovely. It was very interesting then. But now I'm afraid, I don't know, something needs to be done in Perth really.

JM: So you would have had your hat and gloves?

WALTERS: Oh, when I was working we'd wear a little hat with a veil on and all to go to work in, and gloves and all, yes, yes.

JM: So it wasn't as formal as that when you went shopping?

WALTERS: Well, Mum used to send me when I was about nine or ten, to get biscuits and stuff from Baird's or Boans or something. You could buy a whole pile of biscuits for thruppence and broken biscuits, and we used to go and get all that stuff.

JM: But you'd go in on the tram?

WALTERS: Yes, I'd walk a mile down the street, and go on the tram all excited 'cause Mum trusted me to go to town to do her shopping for her.

JM: And the tram would have let you out fairly close to Baird's, and Moore's and Boans?

WALTERS: Right in Hay Street it'd let you out, and then coming back you'd catch it in Murray Street. It came back through Murray Street and you'd get out there, but it would go 'cause I remember it'd rattle past in Woolies in Hay Street there was Selfridges, Woolies and all those shops and Coles. Nothing over 2 and 6, in those days. You wouldn't have been a twinkle in your father's eye. (Laughs)

JM: Did you know about ??Peet & Co.?? when you were growing up?

WALTERS: Peet & Co.???? My father used to deal with them, and they were down the bottom end of Vic Park.

JM: Is that who he would have rented the house from?

WALTERS: Yes, probably from Peet's. Mm.

JM: Were you conscious of the advertisements for the opening up of subdivisions of the land, particularly in Carlisle area?

WALTERS: Well, I ...it kind of... how do you mean about that question?

JM: Uh, there were a lot of advertisements about ???subdivision/selling a property.

WALTERS: Yes, but we never thought it would get up to as dear as it was when we...you know we used to think 250 was dear.

JM: It was all relative though wasn't it, to your income?????

WALTERS: Mm - that's right yes. Mm. Amy Johnson.

JM: Oh, the pilot.

WALTERS: Yes, and see the aerodrome was where the police do their training now.

JM: Yes, Maylands.

WALTERS: Maylands aerodrome. I remember as a treat she took us - how we got there I don't know, but we got there and we saw Amy Johnson come in and Kingsford-Smith, would we have seen him too. Yeah, and we went there and we saw Kingsford-Smith and the aerodrome and all that.

JM: They used to have the air shows over there. Did you ever get to those?

WALTERS: Yep, probably. Mm. Yeah - we've always liked the aeroplanes. It was like Perth airport when you used to go there you'd meet all the people right at the bottom of the gangway, and now it's so terrible with all the - you know, they've got to have security everywhere and all that business. I did a tour of the airport the other day, we got invited over, and oh, what you see behind the scenes. So they've got good surveillance there now, you know with all these druggoes and stuff.

JM: And that's keeping track of the people as well as the luggage?

WALTERS: Mm. Mm. Yes. There's a lot of good security there now. (Pause) Now I'm not on am I?

JM: Can you tell me about the shrine in Higgins Park?

WALTERS: Well, it's - the shrine is situated in that new RSL Hall there near Higgins Park, and it's got all the names of all the people that joined up during

the wars, and on the shrine and we had a nice service there the night before Anzac Day, and we saw all our names on the shrine.

JM: You and your sisters?

WALTERS: My sisters and I and my father's name's on it. The name's Toussaint, because we all joined up from East Vic Park

JM: Can you tell me the background of you and your sister's names?

WALTERS: Well, my mother's name was Grace Ethel Marguerite, and my dad called her Gem and when we were born she called me, she called Coral Diamond, Crystal and Pearl – we all had jewels names, so um but I think I got the most ??? ragging??? 'cause there's plenty of Corals, and Crystals and Pearls but when I told my name to people, they were really wanting to know all about it.

JM: Did they make fun of you?

WALTERS: Um, no not really, but my husband reckoned he got the most precious one, he got the most precious jewel. (Laughter in background and a man saying " diamond ").

JM: That'd be right wouldn't it.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE TWO



**Diamond Walters and family watching the construction of the Narrows,
circa late 1950s.**

Courtesy of Carmen Horton.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1 – Di Walters, Army Days*

*Notes by Di Walters, as shared with her daughter Carmen Horton.

Always remember when we were doing our Rookies Course at the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA) ground.

On our very first parade our Sgt Major told us 'when he yelled ATTENTION we had to smarten up and do just that.' We thought he was just sneezing when he said 'Achow' and took NO NOTICE of him. We soon learn[t] what 'Achow' meant after he roared at us!

Same Sgt Major took us around Queens Gardens in East Perth on our route march for our first Gas Drill. After explaining, 'when he blew his whistle we had to put on our gas masks, find a hole in the ground and jump in it and be still. He blew his whistle – we saw the 'hole dug out of the ground ALL piled in together! He just stood with his hands on hips there looking at us all appalled saying 'One damn bomb and it would settle the lot of you'.

Remember the 'troop trains' going to the East to Ivanhoe (Melbourne) and our further camp posting in NSW always conking out for two weeks at a time on the Nullarbor – Usually 'hot box' trouble. We'd have to wait 'til the parts arrived to fix the train up. No showers allowed on the trains, as the water was scarce – When we eventually arrived at Woodville – Adelaide and saw gleaming white baths, showers etc – what a great feeling to shower etc again. Even washed our clothes (Army issue by hand) and had to dry them somehow on the next troop train going to Melbourne.

When we got our postings in Sydney camps there was the 'Blue Light Depot'. We sure were young and naïve and in we charged to get our photos developed in there. We soon learnt 'The Blue Light Depot was definitely NOT for developing photos!!!

On the staff at the WACA apart from the Drill Instructors, cooks etc were Major Hymus, Captain Hornsby, Captain Hershaw (medical doctor), Lieutenant Jessie Robinson (from 6ML) and not forgetting our handsome (male) 'Lieutenant Julian', who all did such a marvellous job 'pulling us really raw recruits into line Army style!

Not forgetting we had to get four under one shower, that sure took a bit of getting used to.

Getting our first Army issue uniform and going home on our 'first leave' in uniform with our kit bags slung over our shoulders. Felt so proud of my uniform to show my parents. My dad had to show me how to 'tie my tie'.

While on 'leave' you could stay at different places for 'one shilling' a night – breakfast included Lady Gowrie Centre in Perth (Barrack Street) and Cottesloe Beach front (all transformed from previous building and made into 'billets' for the troops of World War II (so very long ago now).

Met husband Vic at Balcombe Camp, Victoria 1944-45. He had leave, with his 'Air Warning Wireless Group' who'd just returned from servicing in the front line against the Japanese in New Guinea. They were very surprised to be in the same camp as women. Had a big barb-wire fence separating the males from the females in those day (not like now!). Vic was also in the 'Kokoda Trail' in New Guinea where lots of fierce fighting took place and was one of the lucky ones to return home unharmed (except for malaria). Some of the soldiers were only 16 at the time. Vic was 18 when first leaving Australia on a troopship from Woolloomooloo Docks in Sydney. Their ship was loaded with ammunition bound for New Guinea. The day before leaving the 'Centaur Hospital ship was blown up' by the enemy on the same route (with lots of lives lost).

Women proved to be a great help during the war by taking over the men's jobs and releasing the men for active service overseas.

[the following numbered points are believed to be Di Walter's answers to questions asked by her daughter Carmen, but only the answers are given, not the questions.]

1. 18 years.
2. Australian Women's Army Service
3. Did our Rookies at the WACA where we received our uniforms, Army and Gas Training and then went to Ivanhoe to be trained as Signal Women.
4. Switchboard Operator with several Army camps in NSW (12 Aust L of C Signals area).
5. Yes. Knowing it was a great war effort.
6. Lots of women worked in offices as they joined up to take over the men's jobs to enable to the men to go into combat in the 'front line' of the war.

7. Sometimes I was afraid for our fighting men in the front line.
8. Going to the Eastern States from Perth to our postings on the Troop trains. Always they'd conk out for two weeks in the middle of the Nullarbor – we'd line up we hundreds of troops with our plates for meals and sit around a big fire for a sing song. We'd hop in with the train driver to help him shovel the coal in to get the train moving while he was awaiting parts for his hotbox etc.
9. The Japanese submarines entering Sydney Harbour.
10. Yes I did.
11. Lots of friends – about 15 of us slept in the one hut and worked together all the time. We are still all friends to this day.
12. No didn't want a war and to have so many people sacrificing their lives. The men were so brave – they wanted to make a better place for future children to live and enjoy in.

ATTACHMENT 2 – Rewind Article

Article about the Walters family's memories of living on Rottnest Island in the 1950s
by Carmen Horton (daughter of Di Walters)

(Over page)



Rewind

CARMEN HORTON RECALLS HALCYON DAYS LIVING ON ROTTNEST IN THE 1950S

I love this photo, which was taken in the late 1950s on Rottnest Island with my sisters and the tearooms behind. I am in the front on the right.

My family lived temporarily on two occasions on Rottnest Island for three months at a time as my father, Vic Walters, was working for the Main Roads Department helping to construct the roads on the island. On the first occasion, we came over on a barge with heavy machinery as well. The second time we flew over from Perth with MMA. It was the first flight for my sisters and I. What a thrill.

We attended a one-teacher school from Year 1 to 7, which was in a house opposite the playground on the main street. Later, on our second visit, a new primary school had been constructed because of more children living on the island. It was on the way to The Basin.

We had a fantastic life riding our bikes around the island, fishing with our parents and enjoying all the

quokkas, which were so cute. Some lived under our cottage and some were found in the outdoor toilet.

We made friends with the children of the general manager, Des Sullivan, head nurse, lighthouse keeper, general store owner. Everyone was so happy as most of us lived nearby and enjoyed swimming, riding our bikes and having fun.

My older sister was not able to stay on the second visit as there was no high school on the island and she had to stay on the mainland with my brother, who missed life on an island as he had been attending high school.

They did come over for visits on the ferry. I think it was called the Wandoo or Zephyr.



I was so lucky to have had the opportunity to spend time on this beautiful island. I also remember the salt lakes, where there was a huge building where salt was kept. We loved the bakery, where you smelt the fresh bread, and the pies and pasties were delicious.

Our butcher was the famous football player and coach, John Todd. What a life.

What's your favourite photo? Send a high-resolution image to play@wanews.com.au and tell us in no more than 250 words why you love it. Please include a photo of yourself.

6 > PLAY