

**Diamantina Health Care Museum Inc – Oral History Project**

*This transcript is slightly edited version of the conversation on tape.*

*Researchers interested in the fine detail and vocal nuances of the interview are encouraged to listen to the aural version.*

Interview with: **Harry Lenning** on 31st August 1999

Interviewer: **Sue Pechey**

Place: 18 Emperor Street, Annerley

**SP:** Dr Owen Harris is listening and contributing.

**SP:** Mr. Lenning tell me briefly about your life up till the point where you became a teacher at the deaf and blind school.

**HL:** I lived in the country 12 miles west of Ipswich. My father was a storekeeper and in 1926 I sat for the scholarship and was granted a special scholarship because it was the year that we had the first great flu epidemic and I went home on the Friday. We had to sit on the Tuesday, with the flu and I missed out on the two subjects on the first day and went into the second and third day and my passes were good enough to be granted a special scholarship.

**SP:** So scholarship was the exam that you did at the end of primary schooling in those days wasn't it?

**HL:** Yes, I was 14. Then I went to the Ipswich Grammar School from the July until the following February.

**SP:** So that was six months.

**HL:** I applied for a position as a pupil teacher on the school section of the blind, deaf and dumb institution and was successful in gaining an appointment.

**SP:** Why did you choose that school?

**HL:** Want to know the truth?

**SP:** Yes of course I do.

**HL:** I was frightened of Dad.

**SP:** Oh right.

**HL:** We were going home from grammar school and I always wanted to be a teacher and dad asked me if I would like to be a teacher for the blind, deaf and dumb institution and I wasn't game to say no.

**SP:** Why did he ask you that?

**HL:** Well because the headmaster had only been there a few months and dad had done a lot for him. In appreciation of what dad was doing for him and when there was a vacancy – a notice in the teacher's gazette for a teacher, a pupil teacher in the blind deaf and dumb institution, he knew that I wanted to join the teaching service, he asked dad if I liked to be a teacher there because he had had previous experience when he was headmaster at Highfields in Toowoomba. A lad by the name of Basil Gallet had applied for a teacher and he got it. So I was appointed as a resident, at that stage all teachers were residents.

**SP:** Where was that school then?

**HL:** Where it is now.

**SP:** Oh right

**HL:** The terms of the appointment were that for the performance of 15 hours of week out of school supervision. Being a resident school the children had to be looked after before and after school, Saturday's and Sundays. For the performance of those duties we were given free board.

**SP:** Yeah I see

**HL:** Well I remained a resident teacher until 1940 and that year I wanted to get married. So with the assistance of the principal, I drafted a letter to the department seeking permission and I was granted permission to live out and if I continued to do the 15 hours a week duty I would be paid the value of the board.

**SP:** Oh right?

**HL:** A pound a week.

**SP:** So you got an extra pound a week for doing that 15 hours work

**HL:** Yes

**SP:** Let's go back to being a 14-year-old pupil teacher and a resident in that school. What were your living quarters, your own personal space? What was it like?

**HL:** The residence was built in 1893. It had two wings and the boys slept in that wing and the girls up on the floor and the rooms underneath along the side there, the men teachers slept on the bottom, the classrooms prior to my arrival were in

these rooms underneath the residence. In July 1926, the new school was opened and we had a room that was about this wide and about where that chair is two of us shared it.

**SP:** So that was a room that would have been what five meters by five?

**HL:** Roughly. That was the joker I shared it with.

**SP:** What was his name?

**HL:** George Ferguson

**SP:** George Ferguson. Right was that a happy living arrangement?

**HL:** I had good times there but they were times with the kids not the staff.

**SP:** Right. You slept there. Did you have a desk there? Were you required to study?

**HL:** I feel like I'm talking too much. I mentioned before that I sat for the scholarship.

**SP:** Yes

**HL:** I was granted a special scholarship; well from there I think looking back in retrospect my life was partly ruined. I should have started at the grammar school at the beginning of May or something like that. I didn't go and they decided to send me later and so I went after the next set of holidays and I missed out on all the introductions to the subjects,

**SP:** Yes

**HL:** Algebra, Geometry, Maths., History, Latin, French and so on. And no effort was made to coach me along those lines.

**SP:** To help you catch up. This was Ipswich Grammar was it?

**HL:** Yes Ipswich Grammar.

**SP:** Yes right

**HL:** When I got the appointment to the deaf school, the principal had only been there for a short time, (S E Holly from Sydney) and he didn't know the rules and regulations regarding working. Certain things went on. Having passed the scholarship I should have been appointed as a PT1 pupil teacher first class and because he didn't know the routine and the others didn't tell me either, two other teachers doing their PT exam being coached by the former headmistress Mrs. Bryan, a lovely lady.

**SP:** Mrs. Bryan

**HL:** Mrs. Edith Bryan. She was upset because the manager of the workshops had brought a man up from Sydney who wasn't satisfied with the education. Instead of going for PT1 I had to do PT0 again or the equivalent to the scholarship and a chap who was in charge of my studies, I had a rotten go all the way through .He had come out from England and he knew nothing about the system

**SP:** No

**HL:** So consequently I was left on my own and being a lad of 14 or 15 I had passed the scholarship and I didn't have to study to pass it again and I ended up failing. I had to do again.

**SP:** You must have been well sick of it.

**HL:** I've met others who have had the same experience. I am quite capable of passing an exam and passing it well but the moment I went into that exam, my mind went blank. I just couldn't think. I had to start all over again. Well you can be fortunate and I don't know whether I was fortunate or unfortunate. The Inspector was a man by the name of William Flemmington, he was the man that was responsible for the introduction of the opportunity schools in Queensland.

**SP:** Right

**HL:** And you knew that did you?

**SP:** No I didn't know that but I've heard his name and I know a bit about the opportunity schools.

**HL:** His father was the first headmaster in Gamorganvale State Primary School. He was an original pupil of the school, he was the first pupil teacher of the school and he was the inspector of the special schools in Brisbane. So he knew my dad and mum very well but he was going up and contact dad; dad would meet him at the station and take him down to the hotel, then he'd go to the school. Also he'd take him up to Lark Hill while he was there and so on. I had a very good friend and if I didn't quite make the grade, you'd have to be examined in certain subjects by the inspector and he'd find out how many marks I'd wanted.

**OH:** You'd get a lucky break every now and again.

**HL:** He did that for a long time and inspection was quite often after that. "Good morning Mr. Lenning, how is your mother, how is your father, give them my kind regards good bye Mr Lenning". He was a lovely gentleman.

**SP:** So actually you got three scholarships and you got to PT1.

**HL:** I got to PT1, PT2, PT3 and PT4 and when I got to class three he couldn't let me out of the line. Getting back to that, you know the effect the examination had, I went to a chap in Dutton Park for tuition and we concentrated in the class three the final exam I had to get a pass over the English, Geography, History, School Management and Music. I had to get a pass over those. He anticipated that I'd get 80 plus in arithmetic geometry and algebra and I failed the three of them.

**SP:** Oh dear

**HL:** So this meant –“I have to advise that you failed the exam, your services are terminated as from the 30 April 1935.”

**SP:** Oh right

**HL:** So I was sacked. I had a very good friend in the East Moreton Teachers branch of the union. Bruce Innes. He was a mighty man.

**SP:** Bruce Innes?

**HL:** Bruce Innes He knew what was going on and he wanted to take Holly on through the union but I had to live there. Holly was a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Now, one of his favourite habits, he'd say you did something that you shouldn't have done. We'd have a meeting. He wouldn't have a go at you but he'd tear strips of me knowing that you knew you were the one he was having a drive at. Many a time I left that meeting and I would have packed my bag and went. The way he treated me and yet another day he would come around he'd treat you like a king.

In 1931 Mum had her left breast removed and in 1932 and she had a second cancer operation all under here by Dr John Hardie. Did you ever hear of him?

**OH:** I know of him. I'm far too young.

**HL:** He was one of Brisbane's leading surgeons.

**SP:** Dr John Hardie.

**OH:** He was the senior surgeon at the Royal Brisbane, Brisbane Hospital.

**HL:** He did the second operation and that was in 1932 and well Mum died in 1965 and she didn't die from cancer.

**SP:** My goodness.

**OH:** Wonderful

**SP:** Very good surgery.

**HL:** In that same year I had a lump under my right breast. I went to Dr John. We knew him as Dr John because his father was Sir David, Sir David Hardie. So he arranged for me to go to the hospital to have it done and I went up to Holly. Holly knew what was going on and in this he was absolutely wonderful. He said, "Now don't tell the staff where you are going. I won't mention it to anybody." We teachers had a housemaid and I did tell Mary Clements and swore her to secrecy, which she did. She did everything I asked of her and so I went in and had the operation. Then when I got in there I wasn't 21, "have you got your parent's permission."

**HL:** "No."

The nurse that I saw was lovely; I met some lovely people in there and worked with some lousy ones. Look I said and I explained I told about mum had her left breast removed and having the second cancer and I didn't want them worried and so on. So she just pulled down the blind and away I went. That was all right and I was just about ready to go home. Up until 1932 I had a brother in Brisbane and anything that they wanted to do from home they would write to Dudley because he was living with my grandmother. Well he came out in the middle of the depression with two chaps Jackson and O'Sullivan and they both came out at the same time. The other joker had been naughty and was married with a kid which we discovered later wasn't his. So he was kept on and Dudley was sacked so Dudley went home. So they wrote to me.

**SP:** Right.

**HL:** Ralph had a farm up at Rocky and dad was taking mum up to Rocky to see the farm and they wrote to me to book the seats because Harry didn't get the letter. The day came for them to go and they had heard nothing from Harry. He would have answered the letter and of course I walked into the office and Holly nearly fell off his chair.

**SP:** Oh dear

**HL:** He'd been a part of it. He agreed with me. He had to tell them all about it

**HL:** I didn't want to worry you and I didn't and it was all done for your sake and wasn't it dangerous blah blah blah. What did mum and dad do, they went straight up to Dr Hardie. So Dr Hardie knew nothing about it. So that the next

time he came down to see me. He said, “Why didn’t you tell me that your mother and father didn’t know?”. Well that was alright. So I got back.

**SP:** You just wove yourself a rather tangled little web?

**HL:** Yeah I did and nobody ever knew except Mary Clements. She go “where’s Mr. Lenning, have you heard anything, what’s wrong with him haven’t seen him for a week, where is he”

**SP:** So she was maintaining the secret?

**HL:** Not so long after that we got a new assistant matron – where was she when the operation was on she was the nurse in the operating theatre! Fortunately it was Mary she spoke to. She says that Mr Lenning was in the operating room and we went up there expecting to find a woman. So that Mary told her and she never split. I don’t’ think until this day that any one up there other than Mary and Sister Tymol, knew that I’d been in hospital and had the operation.

**SP:** Was that a malignant cancer?

**HL:** Dr John called it a college tumor

**OH:** a college tumor?

**HL:** That’s going back 77 years.

**SP:** Let’s go back to your early days as a teacher there. What did you know before you walked into that school, what did you know about blind and deaf people?

**HL:** I knew two things. The school was the Glamorganvale School was here and a family over here was Ganders and they had a deaf and dumb Mongol. Then we had over the hill from my grandmothers at Rosalie, I just can’t think of the name, she was a deaf and dumb girl who had come out from England. It was through her that I learnt the finger spelling and we used to talk to her.

**SP:** Oh right

**HL:** So when I went over there basically what I said before that I wasn’t going to say no that’s true. I wasn’t going to say “Dad I didn’t want to go to the deaf school”. My main view at that time was of this Mongol.

**SP:** Yes. Yes you had limited experience but you had learnt to finger spell. Finger spelling was what it was called.

**HL:** Actually what it is this becomes your writing pad and this is your pencil and instead of me telling you a story I am writing you a story.

**SP:** So your left hand is your pad and your right hand is your pencil. So you were pretty fluent with that.

**HL:** No I wasn't fluent. I'd only see her at Christmas time when I was down on holidays and then I had experience with her. I was walking up the hill and got off the tram and she lived up over up the hill and walking with her and she says I dreamt last night about you and we had a baby.

**SP:** How old were you at this stage? Fourteen?

**HL:** No a bit older than that wouldn't be much older sixteen or seventeen and I went in and told her grandmother. Well I never left that house again unless grandma went out to see if she was about.

**SP:** She put you off well and truly. Did you know how babies got made in those days?

**HL:** No I didn't. Getting back to the life of the school I was absolutely imposed upon. I was a junior teacher from 1927 until 1945 when I came back from the army. The teacher on duty was wanted to do something Lenning would be sent down the paddock. Well eventually Palmer left and McCann took me over. Well he was courting one of the members of the staff and he'd get me to do work for him and to start of with his girlfriend would say "You there Mr McCann" he would go "he'd be back in 5 minutes". So basically for PT2, PT3, PT4 and PT5 and class three. I not only got no assistance I was made to do hours and hours overtime and there theory was that I was working for the boss so I haven't got to repay you. I never got anything. So basically imposed upon.

**SP:** What were you doing in those hours of overtime? Just supervising children?

**HL:** Oh yes we'd be down the playground with them and this was when we made love to the nurses. The night nurses quarters overlooked the boy's playground.

**OH:** So that even though you were apparently sacked in 35 they still kept you on?

**HL:** Well see that's another story. Bruce Innes and I went in to see him and I told him. He said we'd fix it Harry. So he wrote a letter to the secretary of the union and the secretary of the union wrote to the department. Now Holly was a man as I said could be a Jekyll and Hyde. He always kept in with people who could do things for him. So he had made friends of this secretary of the union so when Bruce Innes wrote to the secretary of the union. He rang Holly and gave him a copy of the letter that he had to write to the department. Well then Holly wrote a

similar letter to the department and it was getting very near to the 30th of April when I got word, Holly called me up and said what a fine fellow I am. I'm getting you sent to the training college and you can continue to live here and do your duties on a pound a week. By the time I'd paid for so much in government insurance. I paid nine pence in the pound for the relief tax for the relief workers. I got 11 shillings and eight pence a week.

**SP:** But you went over to Kelvin Grove to training college

**HL:** No in Turbot street

**SP:** Oh Turbot street of course

**HL:** Well I couldn't have carried on if I hadn't of lived at the school. Then Holly called me up at the office and of course I knew the background and of course actually what happened. Holly got a reply the same day as the union, which then had to write to Bruce Innes, who then had to write to me. Eventually Bruce wrote to me. I never let on to Holly that I knew all that because he would have probably taken it out on my bloody hide. So basically that's the story of my life.

**SP:** Yes well you were quite an experienced teacher by the time you'd got to some teacher training. So the teacher training must have been a bit of an eye opener.

**HL:** oh yes

**SP:** Was it useful or did you already know it all?

**HL:** How do you mean?

**SP:** Well you went for teacher training, you were already quite an experienced teacher.

**HL:** It was definitely an experience altogether.

**SP:** Was it

**HL:** I was already working in a school for deaf, with the languages is like that and you suddenly you go into the normal stream. It was a tremendous difference.

**SP:** So there was no training for you for special school. There was no different training?

**HL:** It wasn't until the 1970's that there was any training. Like I said before I was the last teacher appointed under those conditions. The teachers after me were transferred from the state service into ours. The blind deaf and dumb institution, there was industrial institution for the blind, the school for the deaf and dumb. I'm using the terms of those years, the school for the blind and the residential for

the blind, deaf and dumb children. Now the superintendent, the manager of the workshops was the superintendent and we were under the department of health and it wasn't until 1932 when Moore was the governor he could've told us that Labor was on the way out and the country party was on the way in. Dr Bottomley was the school doctor.

**OH:** Oh yes

**HL:** Anyhow this other joker came in and Holly had a sore foot and he had to keep his foot under the table all the time so that the doctor wouldn't know that somebody else was treating him. Holly was making his fight for a change of government. During the Moore regime, the blind deaf and dumb institution was split up. The home office retained the industrial section and the schools were handed over to the department of public instruction. So as of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1932, I was a teacher of the Queensland school education system.

**OH:** Moore was the Minister for Health when the new South Brisbane hospital was built. That's why one whole wing is called the Moore wing.

**HL:** That's right. There was the Gair wing

**OH:** Local member

**HL:** Local member: then you had Coll

**OH:** Undersecretary. Yes that's right

**OH:** Here's the photograph of the nurses quarters just adjacent to where they lived there.

**SP:** Oh yes

**OH:** The old nurses quarters. That would have been interesting.

**HL:** I feel a bit guilty.

**OH:** We want to hear from you. We want to hear about you.

**SP:** This is exactly what we want to know. It's locked away in your head. We want it. Tell me. Can you remember the first day you walked into a classroom?

**HL:** Yes

**SP:** What was it like? Were you on your own?

**HL:** I was led in by a Mr Holly and handed over to Mrs. Bryan.

**SP:** Right. So you and Mrs. Bryan were teaching a class.

**HL:** I was just looking on for a start. Then I'd have to take over. A funny thing, the deaf have always used sign and I often laughed. Dulcie Rankie was a student in

the class and she was there in the room and they did a lot of handwork in those days. She was threading beads and I was a trainee. First of all you do all blue and then you do all white then you do all blue and then a white a blue and a white and then you do a blue a white and a red. Then so you do the pattern. So I'm sitting there one day and she walks up and she signs, I'm fed up you do it.

**SP:** So she handed it over to you.

**HL:** Yeah another day she came up and she looked me up and down and said you're a liar. And turned around and went for her life. They were a lovely lot of kids.

**SP:** How old were those children?

**HL:** They would have been around 6 or 7.

**SP:** How many of them in a class?

**HL:** Well it was always recognised that 10 was a full class but I had 23 one year, 18 another year. I know I shouldn't talk out of turn but I was 50 years on the staff and I had served 50 years under lazy headmasters.

**SP:** Yes, yes. Tell me you said that they did a lot of handiwork. Are you saying that they weren't given the sort of intellectual education that mainstream children got?

**HL:** You're right. What do you understand about a child that is born deaf?

**SP:** I have two friends one is deaf and one is deaf and blind and that is the limit of my experience.

**HL:** And how old were they then?

**SP:** I have known them since we were teenagers.

**HL:** Well see

**SP:** They had a full education and one of them went to Oxford.

**HL:** Deaf children are like normal children. You have a class full of normal children. We went up to Junction Park and asked them would you mind lining up all the children numbering them. You picked out any fifty children you'd have bright, extra bright, ordinary and dull. Well you put that into a deaf school and the same thing happens. I'd have a chap that comes here that went through the school and the most you'd get out of him was ah. He's got no voice.

**SP:** No speech

**HL:** Basically from the day we are born we hear. Mum comes up to you says hello dolly, hello dolly come to mummy and it's just like you've got a 44 gallon drum

and you put a funnel in it and you pour the language in and eventually the kid gives it back. Well the child who is born deaf gets nothing. So if it receives nothing it gives nothing. Of course today you've got all your hearing aids and they get them from an early age. One of the first lessons I learned from Mrs. Bryan was that we had to take speech with every child every day. You knew it was hopeless but you had to do it. You taught speech through feel, and touch. I had three sisters come on the same day. Maude Davies, she was the oldest and every day for three months I had to sit down and take that child for a speech lesson. Mrs. Bryan had a room bigger than this and I'd be down there and she'd be up here and she eventually came over and said "Mr Lenning you needn't take any more speech lessons with Maude." At the end of three months all I got out of her was ahhhhhhhhhhh. But she said "I wanted you to know that every deaf child is capable of making a sound."

**SP:** So notwithstanding their limitations was there any attempt for instance to get them through scholarship?

**HL:** No; not in those days. I met a little deaf boy up here the other morning going for a walk and he's only about this high and going to the preschool. He's got two hearing aids in. Bright as a button. Her sister has a deaf boy about six or seven years older and he's not worth a bob. The thing is with this hearing aid if you don't get it right at the start you don't get the best advantage from it. What you've got to realize is that when you go to the hearing aid place or get your hearing tested, they don't test your hearing, they test your loss.

**SP:** Yes

**HL:** You've got a loss. Like I'm getting a second hearing aid in November. When you start to speak you repeat the words of your parents and they might say some ungodly words, some of them do, and the kid gets his tongue around it. Older kids won't be able to say those words. So when a child in my day came to school and they had no hearing and so on. Their organs have been lying dormant and the only exercise they got when they scream or howl. So the easiest way to explain it and the German's come out and they can't say an r. Even though they have perfect hearing their mouth organs are not made for it.

**OH:** What's your first memory of the Diamantina Hospital? The nurses' quarters by the sound of it.

**HL:** Well they overlooked us. The first memories again I was imposed upon. We used to show films on Friday night. Well Friday was the worst day of the week to do duty on.

**SP:** Why

**HL:** The others could get away for the weekend but you didn't knock off until 9 o'clock. Bryce's the Greater Australasian films presented a screening to the schools and to the hospitals each week and on Friday Bryce would deliver the films to the school. Hand machine and on Saturday morning I had to take the films over to the hospital. So this was my introduction; we came along Cornwall Street alongside "Oc's" (Oscar's) House and we went down and along the verandah. In there were all cancer patients and we got down to the hall at the back and we'd place the films outside the door. Now I wasn't game to look left or right. I walked down, like this both ways. Then there was a general story that the patients, if they could get cat. Have you ever heard about this one.

**OH:** No I don't think so no

**HL:** And they nursed it, took it to bed with them and slept with it and all the rest of it. The cat would get the disease from them, free them and they'd be able to go home. Well of course as you know the cat's got the disease but it didn't free the patient. We were it was heavily drummed into us that we hadn't to have any contact what so ever with a cat that had come from the Diamantina.

**OH:** A lot of the patients had TB of the lungs. So theoretically you could have got that infection.

**HL:** Yes that was the one they were frightened of.

**OH:** Yes you mentioned Oscar Staubwasser, the son of Frederick Staubwasser.

**HL:** That was my first real experience there. I'd go in every Saturday morning with the films and on Monday morning Bryce's would call at the hospital and pick up the films and take them back.

**SP:** You never ever got to see the film though?

**HL:** Oh yes

**SP:** Oh you did

**OH:** Sitting on a table like this.

**HL:** You'd see it on a Friday at the deaf school.

**SP:** Oh right

**HL:** And I got in more strife than enough cause there'd be breaks in the film and I wouldn't mend it properly and I wasn't very popular over there. The story of the cats was if a member of the hospital staff caught a cat, it was taken to the incinerator to be burnt. If you look along here, this is the night nurses quarters, Cornwall Street here and night nurses quarters and this was the incinerator there.

**SP:** What a horrible story

**OH:** Next to the septic tank.

**HL:** The septic tank was there and the septic tank serviced the school, the workshops and the hospital.

**OH:** That was the first septic tank I believe in a public institution in Queensland.

**HL:** Was it?

**OH:** What about the nurses. Let's hear about them. What did you used to notice about them? You were only a young bachelor. You must of noticed a few of them there.

**HL:** Oh yes I had a few friends amongst them.

**SP:** Did you socialize with them?

**HL:** Not much. They called me baby.

**SP:** So you were in long trousers at the age of 14. But you were still quite small.

**HL:** Oh yes, I was only about 5'2". I grew up after that. The sign for gal and that was the sign for boy and you spat. But they were very friendly the nurses they were very good. They were a damn nuisance.

**SP:** Why?

**HL:** Well see the night nurses overlooked the boys' playground. Everything had to be quiet for the night nurses until 4 o'clock.

**SP:** Oh yes of course

**HL:** So on Saturday morning and Sunday morning if the, deaf boys made plenty of row There would be a phone call. The night nurses can't sleep could you quite the boys please. So then Matron would be running down saying sh sh sh sh.

**OH:** Was that Miss Chatfield that made the phone call.

**HL:** Well she was the original wasn't she? I was just trying to think of her name.

**OH:** She was the original matron and then became the superintendent.

**HL:** When she died they brought the cortege around the hospital.

**OH:** Did they really?

**HL:** So that the nurses could pay their respects. She was very popular.

**OH:** She was very highly respected in the nursing profession.

**HL:** You know as much about the septic tank as I did. All I know that there were cockroaches in the septic system by the million and when we got the sewage they disappeared. Along here they had chooks.

**OH:** The hospital not the Staubwassers?

**HL:** No the hospital had chooks.

**OH:** They were adjacent to the fence to the blind school.

**SP:** How many?

**HL:** I don't know. Probably a lot of the scraps from the hospital were thrown to them. The piggeries would come and collect the scraps. You had your problems then with the diseases, the TB and the cancer patients and I don't know what else. I know they used to line up every week at the deaf school and tip the scraps into them.

**SP:** kitchen waste

**HL:** kitchen waste in the old 44-gallon drums and take them to the pigs. So that was the fowl yard. Another interesting thing that you may know more than I do, along this side along here they had. Say it's this table well on this side would be bricks and that side bricks and that would be canvas and canvas and there inside would be one or two TB patients.

**OH:** Tents

**SP:** There were outside tents for TB patients.

**HL:** But they weren't called tents.

**OH:** No they were called pavilions.

**HL:** So you knew about them?

**OH:** Oh they were world famous.

**HL:** The tennis court was down here. George Ferguson used to play. He was one for the girls. He would sit down and write a letter to his girlfriend walk down to the post box and post it and then go back and meet one of the nurses. I was rather shy. I did chum up with one and the night we arranged to meet she diced me. That was my only experience. No I can't remember just how the buildings were all individuals and so on. Separate wooden buildings.

**OH:** Did you actually know any of the Staubwassers? Did you know Oscar?

**HL:** Oh God yes. You became quite a good friend.

**HL:** I became quite a good friend. I was telling doctor before that I made a lot of money for him.

**SP:** Yes how?

**HL:** I went to him with my eyes, Norma went to him with hers, Ralph with his, don't know whether George did. Annie thought the world of Oc and she knew more about Oc's family than any of us did.

**SP:** He was an eye specialist wasn't he?

**HL:** Oh yes. He was a gentleman and his father was a gentleman. Up home we had 3 acres up here and there was a road here and a road here and the shop was down there but we carted. Dad's father built the second butter factory in Queensland and in the early days the wagons went round to the farms collecting the milk and took it to the factory. Well then he turned round and he had a dairy in with the shop and the farmers brought their milk **down** and separated it. The cream went to the factory and they took the milk back to the calves and the pigs.

**SP:** They took the separated milk back?

**HL:** Well then the next stage was when they got their own separators. Grandfather Lenning had his wagons going around to the farmers and picking up their cream and taking it to the factory. Around 1910, 1912 the factory closed down.

**SP:** That was the factory that was the second butter factory in Queensland.

**HL:** Yes

**SP:** And that was at

**HL:** Kirkholme

**HL:** and later became Haigslea.

**SP:** Haigslea

**HL:** During the First World War they cut out certain names. Well Kirkholme became Haigslea and Marburg went to Townsend but it didn't stick and went back to Marburg. And strangely enough I discovered only recently that the family that Dad bought this bit of land from George Peck. He came out with his father from Marburg in Germany. When the factory closed down Dad undertook to cart the cream to the station and it went by train to Booval. They used to watch George. Dad retired in 1948. You had to run to a timetable and he was taking the cream to the factory. In 1928 there was a big railway strike and

they had to get a bus, a truck, to cart the cream to the factory and they never went back to the train.

**HL:** Annie is watching George go up the road, just checking on his time and watching him and she happened to put her hand over one eye and she discovered she couldn't see out of the other. There was a panic on Pearl Barbour and our Dad and Mum took Annie to see an optometrist and the optometrist said that she had to go to a specialist and gave her the name of a specialist in Brisbane to see. The next thing they do, they told me about poor Annie and the glaucoma and I had to make an appointment. I didn't go to the doctor they told me to I went to Oc. I went and made an appointment and I went down and took Annie to see Oc. Well he saved her eyesight and that was in 1951 and she lived till 1976.

**OH:** He must have been back from England only a short time then.

**HL:** I think that it was my first experience with him. Annie reckons that he didn't know what to do. Cause you can just imagine Oc as he was very particular and very methodical. Evidently Annie only had a local and he'd say that we're going to do this and Dr was there and say yes that's right and that's correct.

**OH:** So he was training this still

**HL:** evidently.

**OH:** Under a more senior person.

**HL:** I don't know if he was training or doing the training but Annie says when it was all over he had to ask the doctor what to do. But it wasn't that at all but he was explaining probably the one with him and he was the one doing the operation. Well Annie always came down to my place and well I took him in. Well she knew his wife's name and she met his wife, she knew how many kids he had, how old they were, what they were doing and before she got out of the chair there was nothing about Oc's family that she didn't know.

**SP:** What's Oc's real name?

**HL:** It was Oscar.

**SP:** Oscar Staubwasser?

**OH:** Did you know any of his sisters?

**HL:** I knew one of them.

**OH:** Do you remember which one it was?

**HL:** No. But she had an experience during the depression. She used to get the tram home to Dutton Park and she was walking it was a night time, after 7 o'clock at night and she was being followed. So she ducked into the deaf school for safety and she waited there until 9 o'clock. Karnecki was on duty and when he put the boys to bed and was free he escorted her 200 yards down to Oc's place. There was a great cooperation between the school and the hospital. Do did you know where the helicopters landed before they built that helicopter pad at the hospital?

**OH:** In front of the geriatric unit over at the deaf school?

**HL:** It landed where they land now.

**OH:** Yes that's right

**HL:** A helicopter would be landing in so many minutes would you kindly see that all children are out of the way.

**SP:** That the children were out of the way

**HL:** Usually they were in school and they had to play safe and they landed on the boy's football field. They then would have go through the workshops, around Kent Street, down into Cornwall Street and into the hospital.

**OH:** This whole blind, deaf and dumb institution is now owned by the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

**HL:** Have they got the workshops yet?

**OH:** I can't answer it but a research institute is being built there.

**HL:** The last I heard they had applied for the industrial institution but they hadn't sort of come through.

**OH:** I don't know the answer.

**HL:** There's the telephone wires used to be across there and during the war I think they brought in a waterline through the Diamantina in case the one in Cornwall St was blown up.

**OH:** So you weren't there during the war, you were at Roma, what was it Goondiwindi.

**SP:** You enlisted. What were you?

**HL:** I ended up an administrative corporal. I volunteered in October 1939 and I got knocked back medically unfit.

**OH:** What was wrong with you?

**HL:** I had a varicocele down below.

**OH:** Oh God

**HL:** Dr John Hardie, he was a colonel in the First World War, a military cross winner. He was doing his time in England when the First World War broke out. He volunteered for service and served with the Australian Army in France. So when I got knocked back I went straight up to see Dr John. I always called him Dr John. I told him. When did you go out, if you come back an hour earlier I'd have been there.

**SP:** Oh dear

**HL:** He was a wonderful man. He examined me and he said Harry I think you should have it done. I said before I make a final decision do I want it for my normal health or to just get into the army. No, he says you want that for your normal health and I had it done at the Mater. Colonel McCartney or somebody was his assistant. Colonel Hardie did the operation. When the Japs came in, I volunteered again and this time I was accepted. I went into the Exhibition Ground on the 5th January 1942 and course we had to go before another medical board before you were finally accepted. I go into this room Dr Hardie is in this side and another doctor on this side. He's busy there and I'm busy here and of course I strip and the first thing he sees is the scar on my breast.

**SP:** Yes

**HL:** He says who did that? I pointed to him over there. Any other problems? I said yes, I had a varicoscele in the left testicle. He said who did that? I said Dr John. He said Oh John. He says Hello Harry what are you doing here?

**SP:** Yes

**HL:** So he comes over and he says I reckon the operation I did isn't a success and he says this one was. The people you meet. Dr Hardie was very upset when they appointed paid doctors to the general.

**OH:** It caused a lot of trouble.

**HL:** He had given, he would leave a surgery full of people if he got an urgent call from the hospital and he'd go and do the operation and come back. When it came to a point with the doctors at the Brisbane General if you didn't do this you didn't get it. The services I've given to that hospital doesn't warrant my being appointed to the staff then he said I don't want it.

**OH:** Yeah That was a very contentious issue and caused a tremendous crisis.

**HL:** You'd know more about that.

**OH:** I'm so young; I wasn't around then.

**HL:** But you've heard. See the only one I know when this was going on brother Dudley went to see Dr John about one problem. He said I suppose Doctor you've have no problem getting appointed to the staff at the Brisbane General with your experience. He said no Dudley if I've got to pay money to be appointed then I don't want it. If my services, if my record of service isn't sufficient then I'm out. Then there would have been a lot like him.

**OH:** Yeah that's right.

**SP:** Have we covered the territory for you Owen? For your purposes?

**OH:** I mean one of your more intimate associations really was going over there every Saturday morning with the film.

**HL:** That's right.

**OH:** How long did that go on for? You'd get the film at blind, deaf and dumb.

**HL:** Well it went on during the war.

**OH:** During the war was it

**HL:** Well it went on up until I left in 42. 1942 it was still going

**OH:** So 39 to 42.

**HL:** No no.

**SP:** Much earlier

**HL:** No. It was going before my time. Up until 47

**OH:** Up until then.

**HL:** I got in enough trouble.

**SP:** When did you get married?

**HL:** The 28th September 1940.

**OH:** You moved into this house that year didn't you?

**HL:** Yes I bought this house on round about 12th February.

**OH:** So all being well next year, 60 years in this house?

**HL:** Yes.

**SP:** Big party

**HL:** Oh we've passed that stage.

**SP:** I think that perhaps we could finish now. Thank you.

**Transcribed by: Nerida Wood September 2005**

**Edited by: Robina Williams October 2005**

**This transcript has been checked by Owen Harris on behalf of Harry Lenning**

**Signature on hard copy by Owen Harris**

**Date 4<sup>th</sup> October 2005**