

THIS IS INTERVIEW WITH ERIC AND EDNA
O'KEEFE at their home in Webster Drive, Caboolture.
1999.

Interviewed by Ron Trim and Gloria McEwan.

Ron Trim had this interview with Eric and Edna OKeefe at their home in Webster Drive, Caboolture in 1999. Gloria McEwan was also present.

Edna, shows us an old photo of Norma Kajewski and Elsie Collins of the Woodford Basket Ball Team taken in Margaret St, Woodford during the thirties. {Eric} This was taken up near the saleyards looking down towards the old mill, where you can see the Railway signals, in the background. They played on an old court behind Mrs Mitchells house. The next photo was Edna and Thelma Holland, in fancy dress, on the steps of the old Post Office, where the Post Office is today. {Gloria} Was the Post Office over the road at one time. {Edna} No, I don't think so, but when the Post Office was burnt down, they moved the telephones over the road on to the verandah of Billy Perkins house next to the Butter Factory on the south side. {Ron} We have an old photo taken about 1890, showing it to be a large building with house and PO together. Was this the same building that had been pulled down and built on the present block, after the 1893 flood.

{Edna} Well, I cant answer that, but I remember that the Post Office and the House were all together, as one. The Post Office was on the South side, and the house was attached. When we were working at night, Mr Loosemore would open the connecting door and walk into the Exchange to take over from us. When we were working by day, you could hear the children playing through the wall. Then next door going towards Caboolture, was a Barbers Shop where Mr Pearce cut your hair. Then next to that was the Alexandra Hall. {Eric} No, the Hall was built later, about 1938, I think. A man and his wife built it and ran Pictures there. We used to go to the old hall for silent pictures. {Edna} That was down in the bottom hall. You say that they never showed Pictures in the Alexandra Hall. {Eric} Oh, yes I think they did, because You and I went there once. {Ron} George Turner had the Yatesville Hotel from 1917 to 1923. and their daughter Mrs Hal Mason told me that he started up Pictures in the Alexandra Hall when he was there. {Edna} No, I think that that must have been down in the bottom hall. }Eric} I remember that they showed pictures down in the bottom hall in the 20s, but this other couple started up the picture show after the Post Office burnt down. (ALEC MARSHALL)
{Edna} Well, the Alexandra Hall was next door but one, when I was working there in 1936, because, at night, I would sit out on the back steps of the Exchange and watch the couples dancing through the open door. Anyway, the Hall, Barber Shop and Post Office all got burnt down in 1937. {Ron} Did Mr Pearce then move over into Merv Harris, the Bakers Shop then. {Edna} He could have done, but there was another Barber down below the bottom Pub at that time, called Ruff Kerr. He was next door to Carneys Hotel.

{Eric} I will tell you a funny story about that building. It was right next to Carneys, and one Saturday morning, Alan Spillman and I were playing pool out the back of the shop. Ruff Kerr sneaked out to us and said, come and watch this, Billy Brooker had come in to get his hair cut and shave, and Kerr used to sit him up on a board across the armrests to make him level as he was only a short person. Kerr was chatting away to him, and put the sheet around his shoulders and had the primus going to heat up the water to shave him.

They were chatting away when Kerr said to him, to shut up or he could accidentally cut his throat. He winked at the boys and put a good lather on Brookers face and throat. With that, he held the back of the razor up to the flame and made it pretty hot,. Then told Brooker to shut up again. With that, he put some red ink on the lather and then placed the hot back of the razor on his throat. With that, he jumped back and said Look what you made me do, Ive cut your throat:..He showed Brooker the mirror and with that he screamed and took off down the road. Hell, he could run, He was down as far as the Railway Gates before we could catch him. He really thought he had his throat cut.

A PRIMUS STOVE WAS USED TO BOIL WATER TO STERILIZE RAZORS

{Edna} I lived in Thornton Smiths big house, next to the bottom Baker. My Dad, Mr Hauritz had a Blacksmith shop behind this house but through the back fence in what is now the Bowling Club grounds. Eric Lovf lived in an old shed there, too, because he could not get on with his mother, who lived in the big house over the railway line. Well just below us was a small house where Alf Page lived and behind this was the Bakehouse where Smiths baked their bread. Next was Smiths house with the shop in the front, and last was another house, where Tom Becker lived in later years. There was a little gate in the fence behind the bakery, and we kids would sneak into the bakehouse and Mr Smith used to make us little loaves of bread, for us to eat. On the other side of our house was a vacant allotment, where the bullock teams came into Lovfs Mill when it was working. After the war, Pat Cannon built his house on that block.

{Eric} Remember Rudducks Pig and Calf trucks. Well Ednas father did a lot of work on their truck bodies, and one time they wanted the bodies to be double deckers so that they could cart pigs and calves at the same time. Mr Hauritz had to build all the fittings and one afternoon, he would bring in the truck, we would work on it and finish it so he could take it out next day. Well I had to help him and it nearly killed me, as I had to go to work after we had finished in the morning. Rudducks had a big job going then, with a few trucks and plenty of work. They had a big piggery down by the creek behind the Butter Factory. They got the buttermilk from there to feed the pigs.

{Edna} Over the railway from us was the Hospital run by Nurse Maher, It was called Araleun I think. My son, Tommy was born there with Dr Rankin.

{Ron} Then over the main road from there, was another Hospital, called Welwyn, Do you remember when it was there. {Edna} Yes, Dr Rankin started it up when the other one burnt down. Cannons lived next door to that one.

{Eric} In 1931 the flood waters came right up to the road junction just past Cannons. Did you ever hear about the wayside inn or shanty on the road just before you came to the hill near Jack Trims. Flux had a shanty there once, and every year the crocus bulbs would bloom there. It wasn't up near the railway line, it was just as you went up the hill.

{Ron} You mean Fluxs Hill. }Eric} Do they still call it that . They had a lot of fruit trees growing there up near the line, and when it was put in, they had to clear allthe trees away, and fell the lot. Back down the line towards Woodford, was where Bill Medland was killed. He was doing the length, and got caught by a train on the seven chain bend..

{Edna} Getting back to the Hospital, Welwyn, it was on the other side of the road but on the eastern side was Araleun, and you could go past it and down the lane to Lovfs big house.with windows allaround. There were a few other houses there too, Caseys, Thorntons, Beckers, George Page also. Then the hospital, and another, and our house, Polly Michel,and another. {Eric} Polly Michel lived out at Neurum in the railway yard, Alex Kirbys house. I remember helping her to get into the railmotor. They had a low

platform and she had trouble getting up into the carriage, so I had to get behind her and push. {Ron} They also lived in the second house up from the crossing in Archer St during the Fifties. {Edna} Well I remember old lady Brown in that house, and the next up the street was Parkers, they had a lot of boys, big lads, then there was Yates, Alec I think, then there was a little shop, and then Kicker Johnson. We mover into this house when we were married, and they had a big garage down the back. Where they worked on cars etc. There was a well on the footpath where you could pump water. Next up the street was another house, then a house on high stumps, then the Baptist Church, and then the Butchers Shop. Riddles had it then, a few more houses and Rudducks up on the corner. It was a big house with a tennis court on the bottom side. {Ron} Bob Boldery lived in the old house next door, in the fifties. {Edna} He wasn't there then, in fact I don't remember him in the Post Office either. He married a girl who worked at the garage, named Jan Stevensen, and the man on the counter was Robin, I think, and Linda Beanland, Violet Stewart, and myself, on the phones. When Linda left, Marie Kajewski came on and when I left to get married, you had to leave in those days at a certain age or when you were married, that was in Jan. 1937 and the lot was burnt down on the 23rd June 1937. {Eric} When we were married we had Herb Rudduck on one side and Alf Riddle on the other. Later on we moved up into Starkies house when they went out to the farm. That house was next door to the school and Grannie Trim lived next door, and then the Methodist Parsonage. Down the back of Starkies house was a lovely well, with good water. One Sunday we invited four people to dinner. There was Edna and me, Jan Stevensen, Chris Harrigan, the banana inspector, and two others. We had the first part of dinner, and Edna had a jelly setting down in the well. We used to lower things down on a rope to keep cool. When we were ready, I went down and pulled it up and took it into the house and set it down on the table. Much to my horror there were six little brown frogs sitting on top of the jelly. Well, I said, that's nice, just the one frog each. No one seemed to want any after that.

{Ron} Do you remember when electricity came to Woodford, {Edna} No, we had left Woodford then, and moved into the Railway house at Winya. In 1939. {Eric} We went to the start of work on the Somerset Dam, I remember. We were single then and we went down on the truck owned by Ronnie Ferris. It was in 1936. A mob of us went up to Villeneuve, down Westvale road and up past the old bridge that used to go to Mt Byron. My old great uncles had property down there and I started work there when I was 15. They were the McManus brothers, my mothers Uncles. I got 10 bob a week. They bought land when the Government cut up some of McConnells, They got 500 acres for one shilling and a penny halfpenny per acre. They had a few blocks, one up Wiangi Creek, and another up under Mt Byron. Lonely country, the dingoes howled all night. We camped in an old slab hut, iron bark, with a stringy bark roof. The bunks were slung from the rafters on plain wire, so that the brown snakes could not get into your bedding. They were really bad down there, they were everywhere. You could do without one of those in your bunk. The dingoes were bad, and at night, we had to bring the dogs into the hut with us or the dingoes would kill them. We also had to bring our saddles and gear in with us too, so that the dogs did not chew it up. They loved to chew on the oiled leather, and they ruined it, too. What with the dingoes and the curlews making a racket, it was pretty lonely for a kid. The old bullock drivers always had to take the keystings out of the yokes at night, or the dogs would eat them. End of side A

IA n old bloke that lived near the Neurum Railway station, got killed unloading logs. I don't think it was Dave McGilchrist, it may have been Dan O'Reagan. {Ron} No, it was not Dan, but it was an Irish name. {Tom Power was his name} Anyway he had been unloading logs and was laying on the ground. He was just laying there, and someone went over to see if he was ok. They lifted up his hat and his brains were everywhere, a log had got him in the head.

{Edna} I can remember old Dave English bringing logs into Woodford. There was also skinny Billy Draper, Harry Cannon, Ernie Johnson, he had a farm over the creek, and Ned Johnson and the Eatons. {Eric} There was a story about Ned bringing a load of logs in from out in the forestry, and he got bogged in that little gully between the Cemetary and the dump. The Rev. Ranwell was going out to run a funeral at the cemetery, and while it was being held, everyone could hear Ned in the bog. After it was over, Rev Ranwell rode up to Ned and asked if he could cut down on the language. Ned asked back, what could he do. The Rev said, why he could not trust in Providence. Hell, said Ned. He is the laziest bugger in the whole team. {Ron} Eddie Axelsen was telling me about when he played football for Woodford when he was the Minister here between the wars. A team from Moore came down to play them one day, and one of the players came up to him and asked if he would point out the Parson that was playing, Well Axie pointed out Jack McSweeney, and after the game the player came up to him and said, Well you got me there. He also told about when the Diggers were collecting to pay for the Diggers Hall, he went around the district on horseback, looking for funds. One day, he called on Paddy McAuley at Neurum. Paddy was an Irishman not noted for his generosity, but Axie knew he had to show the flag. Much to his surprise, he left with a donation of a bullock to sell. {Eric} Do you mean Axie from Villeneuve. I remember him well. I thought a great deal about him. He was a wonderful man.

{Eric} There was a trfansport man who had a Garage at Kedron. They used to run trucks up to Kilcoy during the war. His name was Claude Barron, and he went around the district selling new cars. He was the agent for Riley cars and one day he called on Paddy, and tried to sell him a new one. He said to Paddy, why don't you sell that old Ford and buy a new Riley. You know, you have plenty of money, so I'll do you a good deal. Paddy thought about it for a while, and Barron said, Come on, You cant take your money to Heaven with you when you die. No, said Paddy, and you cant take the bloody car with you either. {Eric} I remember in the fifties, going down to see old Paddy, with Pat Howe, the school teacher from Villeneuve. He was pretty crook in those days, and Pat and I would go down at night and roll some cigarettes for him as he was getting pretty shakey. When we started rolling them, he would bring out a bowl to put under us, so that we did not spill any. We used to meet him at the pub at Villeneuve, when we were playing dice with Ledger Crofton...Paddy would come in, and say, Could someone lend me ten bob. Usually someone lent him the money, and then he would come in with us. When you won, you had to shout, and when Paddy won he would shout us a beer, which was 4 pence, but when you won, Paddy always asked for a rum, which was 6 pence. He always ended up on top. Later on, when Shakey Forsyth was in the hotel, I often went fishing down in Neurum Creek in Alf Gulbrandsens. We would catch a few for Gully and what was left, we would take them up to the pub for old Shakey. We would end up playing dice, Pat Howe and Me, and Pat Hart and Paddy, when he came in. Of course, he stung us for ten bob, and later on he would say to Shakey, Better rub off the slate that I

owe you. Before he left, he would book up another bottle of rum and going out the door, he would turn around and say, ;One day, Ill die and beat all you buggers;

{Edna} I just remembered that up past Hazel Rudducks was a lane, and a chap had a garage there. His name was Tommy Garson, and he married a Fredin girl. {Ron} I can remember Cyril Wickham lived back there after the war. He was a blacksmith.

{Edna} In my day, there was my father, Mr Hauritz, and Mr Kajewski had a shop up near the Bush Nurse. I think he worked for Webbs. {Ron} Mabel Robson told me that when she was a girl, they lived in an old house where the bush nurse lived. One day, a bullock wagon ran over a three year old girl in the front of their place and she turned out to be a Raleigh girl. {Eric} Well Raleigh worked about with a team and married a Mcpherson, who had the Glenfern hotel. When the pub closed in 1916, they pulled it down and made a house for Jack and Grannie, and Sandy married a girl who worked in the pub, and the rest of the timber was used to build a house for them, next door. Jack and Sandy ran the farm for many years. The licence was bought by Ted Stanton, and passed to the Villeneuve Hotel. {Eric} Talking about pubs, I remember the bloke that was in the top pub at Woodford when we lived there. It was Charlie Russell. His brother Harry Russell had the Exchange hotel in Kilcoy some years later. The top pub in Kilcoy was on the corner of Rose street and Mary Street, .I cant remember the people who had it, but their daughter married Gus Ferling. It was Donaghue, or something like that. {Edna} You went up the hill to St Margarets opposite Dr Millar. It was an old boarding house, and Dr Millar made a hospital out of it. My children Brian and Patricia were born there. {Eric} Dr Millar was a card. There was no one left with their tonsils, adenoids, or appendix in Kilcoy. He was good at it, he had done it that many times.

{Ron} Well, now we will talk about Winya. It must have been one of the biggest rail yards in Queensland. {Edna} Yes it was and run by a woman, Me. 300,000 super feet of logs in three days I think. During the war, American soldiers came up to hurry up loading, and they were Negroes, and the nicest men you could ever wish to meet. They were wonderful men, and they were sent up to help load girders, as the railway was too slow for them. During the early part of the war, the railway was part of the line of defence or something, and then the soldiers from overseas arrived back They came up from South Australia and they were camped everywhere in the district, wherever there was a patch of bush. {Eric} Remember when they left Glenfern, well I got a Primus out of that. Sandy Raleigh could have had all the floor boards from the tents, but he talked too long and the sappers threw petrol on the heap and burnt the lot. McLauchlans got enough biscuits to last the pigs for years, and Raleighs got a heap of cheese for the pigs. They buried a lot of stuff too. {Ron} Do you remember when they used the big Garrett engines on the line. {Eric} Yes, they were too big for the branch lines. They had no flanges on the driving wheels, and they would drop off the line and run back on again. There was not a lot of trouble with them but the next train was always in trouble, sometimes derailed. They came up with big loads of bren gun carriers and such, and the branch lines were too small for them. They had to get a push up the Daguilar range with another engine. I nearly got wiped out one morning in the blue metal cutting where Handcocks mill used to be at Villeneuve. I was doing the length and coming back from Royston bridge, I was coming round the bend in the cutting when I felt this vibration on the rails. I knew it was a train so I threw myself off the trike just as it hit me. I dived into the ditch, but the buffer on the engine hit me in the back as I was diving off. All I remember was my tucker box

flying through the air. Anyway, they stopped the train and were walking back looking under the wagons for me. I was too bloody weak and frightened to stand up, and my back was covered in oil from where the buffer had hit me. I was lucky to be alive. {Ron} Yes, that was what happened to Bill Medland, He was killed by a light engine coming up behind him. {Eric} No, it was a cattle train that caught him. The story went, that the driver walked up to Julls to get a sheet to put over the body, but Mrs Jull said no, and gave him a clean chaff bag instead. {Edna} Eric got a letter from the department over the incident. They told him he had to more alert and careful in the future. {Eric} Those damn Q trains were the worst, Q for Quiet, they called them. They never ever told you about them, when they were running, or anything else, you just had to watch out for them when you did the length {Ron} Remember Joe Armanasco. {Eric} I certainly do. I worked with him for years. {Ron} When I took the mail down to the station at nights, he would tell me some tall stories, about 12 foot Black snakes,etc. {Eric} That was when he was away out west in the prickly pear days, I was talking to a bridge gang that knew him in those days. They were at this little place, and Joe was the ganger and Mrs was the Station misteress. Joe had some goats for milk for the kids, and the old billy was giving the bridge gang hell, pinching their tucker until they got mad and caught him and painted him stripes with blue ink then a stripe of red ink. They did him all over and then let him go. He ran over to the nannies and they took fright and went bush for three days and the children were without their milk. He had a daughter, Moya, I think she died. The family went to Toowong when they left Villeneuve, and he played bowls at Toowong. I suppose that they are all dead now. Did I ever tell you about the time she asked me to be her partner at some Deb Ball at Kilcoy. I turned her down saying that I was a married man and why couldn't she get a single man to be her partner, so I think she got Aalgie Runge in the end. You know, Joe wasn't a bad old bloke. Barney McErlane the Inspector gave him hell. I have seen him give Joe a lecture about something, and after he had gone, Joe would go and retch. Poor old bugger. Barney knew he had him under his thumb, and could give him a hard time. {Ron} Who was on the Woodford length at that time. {Eric} Jack Withers was there but he wasn't ganger till later. I cant remember who the ganger was. It was a pommy bloke I think. {Ron} Do you remember Ben Hunt. {Eric} No, he came after this pommy bloke I think. {Ron} We had another bloke as ganger after Withers I think, who was frightened with fires. He had had a tough time out west, and only burnt when he was told to. He lined up all the farmers who joined the line, and told us to be ready one Wednesday morning. Well, it rained a bit two days before, and then a stinking weserley blew for days, and sure enough, on Wed, morning, he lit up, much to the disgust of the rest of the gang. We chased that fire for days. And every one abused him, but he said that he was only obeying orders. End of side B

{Eric} We were all in the pub one night, Alan Spillman and I and in walked Bob McPherson. How about we tin kettle old Colonel and his wife from down at the boarding house. They got married at the weekend. { This boarding house we think was where Dot Hickey lived in later years} Any way, we ducked round the back of the pub and got old four gallon tin and anything to make a noise, and coming out on to the street, there was Fitzgerald, the Police Sergeant waiting for us, Where the hell do you blokes think you are going to, he said. Bob McPherson told him about the tin kettling, so he said, Fair enough, Ill come with you. So off down the road we went, and made a hell of a noise, With that ,the woman of the house came out and wanted to know what the hell we were doing there. So Bob McPherson made his little speech, saying we were pleased to hear that they had married and wished them all the best for the future. She screamed back at him that they were not married and to get the hell off her property or she would ring the police. With that, Fitzzy moved forward, and said, Could you give me fine minutes to get back to answer the phone. You know, we would be in the pub, and Fitzzy would come in, and say, its near closing so have your shout and finish up. {Ron} Who was in the bottom pub in those days. Wasit Billy Perkins. {Eric} No, Carneys were in the bottom pub, but we spent a lot of time in the top pub. Billy Perkins was the auctioneer in town then, and I remember a story about him. When some one moved away, instead of taking their furniture etc with them, they would have a sale on the grounds. Old Kicker Johnson was leaving so he decided to get Perkins to sell his stuff. He was holding up a saucepan and chatting away, one and nine, one and nine, when Granny McSweeney sang out that there was a hole in its bottom. Billy never paused, one and nine, one and nine, two in yours and one in mine, one and nine. Alan Spillman was a mate of mine, and he married Phillis Lee, and they lived in Coronation Av, just across from the station. We all played a lot of tennis together at weekends, on a court behind Edgar Finters house. To get to it, we used a track across the swamp where someone had built a narrow footbridge. This Saturday, we saw Spilly come down from the pub, and he was a bit wobbly then but he went home, changed his clothes, put on his whites, and head for the foot bridge. Well all went well until he was about half way over when he toppled over backwards and fell in. You should have seen him. He was white down the front and black down the back. WE all laughed, and he had to head off home and put on some fresh gear. We used to go to dances a bit at weekends too. Some of the local ones and often those a bit further away. I remember one time we went with Ron Ferris in his old truck with seats down both sides in the back. Well we went out to Neurum to a dance, got pretty full. And started back home fairly late. Just as we were coming on to the Monkey bong Creek bridge, Skinny Billy Strain,ran his hand up Elsie Collins leg, so she just put her hand under his leg, and heaved him backwards out of the truck. Someone yelled out, man overboard. And Ronnie backed up to pick him up, and off we went again. Well, next day, I was going up the street, and met Skinny up near Evans Café. He was a bit of a mess, bent over, and I said what is wrong with you today. Oh, Eric, he said, I don't know what is wrong with me today. I woke up this morning, aching all over, and I feel that I have been in a fight or something. I know that I was a bit full last night, but I don't know what has happened to me today. Well I said, if you had not put your hand up Elsie Collins leg, you would be feeling alright. He got over it in a few days.

This was the end of our talk and sadly, they have both passed away. May they be at rest.