



## Sidney Louis Ey

**Member of the Gawler RSL and a veteran of the Australian Army 9<sup>th</sup> Division World War Two.**

**Interview Number One ... the growing up years .. 1916 to 1939**

**Interviewed as part of the Gawler Oral History Project in February 2018**

Interviewed by Barry Neylon on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Sid was interviewed in the presence of his friend Wayne Clark of the Gawler RSL who was able to contribute to the conversation.

Sidney Ey was 101 years of age at the time of this conversation.

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The transcript of interview number one is as follows:

**Sid:** Sidney Louis Ey; born 31st May 1916. Louis Ey was my Father. Elsie Dawkins was my Mother. They had four children; Will, Sidney, Kath and Muriel.

**Barry:** So, you were the second child of the family.

**Sid:** Yes.

**Barry:** Can you tell us about the first home you lived in.

**Sid:** The first home was at Number 4 Moore St. Gawler, just up from the Congregational Church.

**Barry:** When you were very young do you have any memories of that home?

**Sid:** Well, there were two cattle sales or horse sales a month. One behind the Bushman Hotel and the other where Coles Supermarket is now. I was very interested in watching those sales by climbing on the fence as a young lad .... and watching the sales.

**Barry:** Have you always had an interest in animals?

**Sid:** Oh yes! We always had a cow for milk in the backyard. That's where Light Square is now. We shifted there in 1926 from Moore Street ... and that was a family home. Dad lived there until 1979 when he died.

**Barry:** When you shifted house back then what was your Dad doing?

**Sid:** He was with his father running the Chaff Mill where the Coles Supermarket is now. There was an old flour mill there. He and his brothers ran that until 1932. When Grandfather had died in 1928, the three boys had been left on an equal footing. And it didn't work out. So Dad decided he was going to get out of it and that was the stage when my brother and I left High School and we joined him in a grain store in Jacob Street. He was the Farmers Union receiver for wheat and barley at Roseworthy and North Gawler. And my brother stayed with us for 18 months and then he decided he wanted to be a chemist. He went and did a Pharmacy Course and became a chemist. I stayed on with my father until about 1934 and then I decided I wanted to do a Wool Classing Course. I did that, and I visited stations all over South Australia as a roustabout. That was up until I became a Wool Classer in my own right. I did two sheds ... one at Gulnare ... and one at Naracoorte on y own account. It was after that that I decided to join the Army.

**Barry:** Now let's just go back ... because you were travelling around large parts of South Australia How did you get around?

**Sid:** Sometimes by train and then we were picked up. Koobaloo station was out from Burra and I worked there on two occasions. We went by train to Burra and then we were picked up by a station truck and loaded up with all the gear for the shearers and everything else and we were perched on top of the gear (chuckles) and you can just imagine the dust we collected. I think it was about 60 miles from Koobaloo to Burra. By the time we got there on dirt roads we were pretty choked up with dust.

**Barry:** Talking about train travel, when you were a young lad did you ever travel to Adelaide?

**Sid:** Our Grandfather use to take a house at Port Elliott for a month and we would go down there with them by train. Probably about 6.30 in the morning the train left North Gawler ... tin trunks and all the gear that was going with us ... and the whole family would go by train to

Adelaide and then we would catch a train from Adelaide to Port Elliott. And we would enjoy ourselves for a month at Port Elliott.

**Barry:** That would have been lovely. Is that something the family did every year?

**Sid:** We did that for probably 8 or 9 years until we had left school and that sort of thing.

**Barry:** Where did you go to Primary School and how did you find that?

**Sid:** Gawler Primary School. Oh! it was alright. We had to walk there and run home for lunch and back to school again during the lunch break. it was only half a mile or so from the school.

**Barry:** How did you go at school?

**Sid:** Oh! I was just reasonable. I wouldn't say I was a brilliant student. Mathematics was my strong suit and figures have always been my strength. My sister was very good at mathematics too and she caught up with us in Grade 7 and there was quite a rivalry between the two of us ... who finished on top in mathematics.

**Barry:** Were you involved in sport at all?

**Sid:** We had a lawn tennis court at home ... on Light Square there. We used to play tennis there. Mum played croquet on the tennis court ... and I also was a member of the Todd Street Tennis Club for many years. I was a reasonable tennis player. Yes.

**Barry:** You grew up in a time which was quite interesting ... you lived through the Great Depression, you also had people like Donald Bradman, Smithy, ... and of course a famous horse called Phar Lap. Did things like that or those people leave an impression on you at all?

**Sid:** Oh No! We were not gamblers. We didn't go to the races or anything like that. But reading the papers and that, you knew about Phar Lap and Bradman and Ponsford and that.

**Barry:** Tell me something about your first push bike.

**Sid:** Yes, I had a push bike. In fact, I borrowed a push bike. One of the workmen who was working at the Flour Mill had left it in our place. I hopped on it and I went down Reid Street and turned into Jacob Street ... and as I turned into Jacob I hit the turf (laughter).... because I hadn't ridden a bike before. I was probably about 14 or so. (laughter).

**Barry:** The main street of Gawler is very different now to what it was then. Can you describe what the main street was like in terms of the people .. the shops .. the traffic.

**Sid:** Well the footpaths were half the size they are now ... and you could park. They had various types of parking there over the years. There was ranking, there was angle parking. The shops were fully occupied ... not like now. The grocers use to call at the home and pick up an order and deliver it later in the day. The baker ran a horse and cart service. The butcher ran around with meat in a closed box in the back of a horse and cart. It was a totally different experience to what they have today.

**Barry:** Did you have any favourite shops in Gawler yourself?

**Sid:** The lolly shop was always a popular one to go to .... try and get a sweet from Mum or Dad ... whoever was taking us to the shop.

**Barry:** Where was that shop?

**Sid:** Almost opposite Lyndoch Road. It was a green grocer and lolly place and that sort of thing.

**Barry:** I do have to ask you about water troughs opposite Pioneer Park.

**Sid:** Well the water troughs were for the horses. There was one there opposite Pioneer Park. There was one outside the Bushman Hotel. There would have been more down the street somewhere or other. I've just forgotten where. And at Gawler South there would have been water troughs too.

**Barry:** Were there still horses in the main street of Gawler back then?

**Sid:** In the 1930's there were still wagons coming to North Gawler with loads of wheat and barley to North Gawler Station. We were loading them on to trucks to send away to Port Adelaide.

**Wayne:** Even in the 1950's they were. There was an old water trough in front of the old Willaston Hotel which ...

**Sid:** Oh! The Willaston Hotel. No. There was one opposite Wards Shop just over the bridge. Just over the bridge there was a water trough there too.

**Barry:** That paints an interesting picture of Gawler which is so different to now.

**Sid:** The farmers would come in with their wagons with about 6 horses towing the wagons. Some were German wagons .... there was the wide and longer flat top which they would

stack up with wheat and barley. They didn't have motorised transport in those days other than an old fashioned 1924 Ford Buick car which Grandfather had.

Mum was given a buckboard .. what we call a buckboard ... just a single seater with room at the back for storage.

**Wayne:** A tray. The original ute.

**Sid:** And he had a Hudson, then Oldsmobile. Then in 1936 I suppose it would be ... Grandfather had died ... Mum had an inheritance .. and she bought a Dodge.

**Barry:** Did you learn to drive at all?

**Sid:** Yes, I taught myself to drive. That would have been in either the Oldsmobile or the Hudson. I was 16 at the time and I learnt myself. Of course, there wasn't much traffic around in those days. You didn't have any trouble.

**Wayne:** I can remember in the 1950's the horse and wagons coming down to the North Gawler Railway Station and loading these enormous stacks of wheat to be sent off to Adelaide and there were a lot of farmers around who had 6 horses in their teams. There used to be a "lumper" ... like a man who use to be very famous around Gawler ... was it Harry Barnes? He was the guy who carried the wheat up the stacks.

**Sid:** Jack Callory was the agent, and he ran those stacks in North Gawler Railway Station.

**Wayne:** They actually extended across the present Murray Street and a big area next to the Willoughby Surgery. That was all occupied by wheat stacks ... wheat and barley stacks. And when I first started in the stock agent game many of the farmers use to use horses in the 1950's ... and that is one of the reasons a lot of the farm houses were situated in the centre of their farms ... so they could keep their horses and go out and do the farm work around the farm and that is why they are all situated in the centre of the farms.

**Barry:** Were there picture theatres?

**Sid:** We never went to the pictures. There were picture theatres in Gawler. One use to be in the Institute and then they built a picture theatre down the corner of Carlton Road and Murray Street. But we never went to pictures.

**Barry:** Did you have a wireless at home?

**Sid:** Yes, Grandfather had in the 1930's, when I was at High School, a cabinet with a big loudspeaker, batteries in it, and two great big poles in the garden for an aerial. It wasn't until we left school that Father would buy a wireless .. because of our studies and homework.

That would have been .... well I left in 32 and my brother did too ... and my sister would have left in about 34.

**Barry:** In 1939 England declared war on Germany and of course Australia was involved.

**Sid:** Yes

***End of Part One ... “The Growing Up years”***