

New Oxford Gardens, Leederville Joane Gilbert OH0201

GILBERT: We used to go the Oxford. Dad worked there and it was great. We used to go there and the gardens were beautiful. That outdoor gardens was the most beautiful... It had a sign in neon over the front, "Australia's Most Beautiful Gardens." And the entrance was art deco and it was beautiful. They used to ask the clients when they wanted to close because their motto was, "We Freeze to Please" and a lot of people used to say they'd rather go to the movies outside in the cold, so they would stay open as long as the clients wanted them to for the season. And they had regulars, they had in theatre especially, they had people who booked and they went every Friday and Saturday night and they booked and they sat in the same seats. I met a man years later when I was working out in Belmont and he knew Dad and them and he said they always went every weekend. They went to the movies and they booked, and it was always full. It was the Bennett's, as I said Sid Bennett ran it.

ML: Yes. Now you mentioned George Byrne, what did he do there?

GILBERT: George was an usher and on the door like Dad. They didn't call them bouncers then, we used to say Dad was the "chief chucker outer" because if the kids played up down the front or out in the gardens at the sides then... He didn't throw many of them out but they all knew him and they just used to you know... he'd go around and rouse them up and... but they all knew who he was from the area and that so never caused trouble.

ML: And what were the gardens like inside?

GILBERT: It was beautiful. It was huge and it had deck chairs down the middle and then it had like garden seats either side. So there were the two, you know, the more expensive the better seating was the deck chairs.

ML: Were they fenced off from the others?

GILBERT: Yes, there was sort of a fence across behind the deck chairs and then there was an entry into that. There were fences around that, and the place where they showed the movies from was in the middle of it, a fence either side and then there were the garden seats which were long benches. They were either side so that was one of the reasons people like Dad and George were there to, you know, to get the right people in the right spot.