

M0H 182/1-96

No. 8

THE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS, AUSTRALIA
SYDNEY DIVISION ENGINEERING HERITAGE COMMITTEE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN F C CLOSE

No: IEA 8

INTERVIEWER: RICHARD RAXWORTHY

DATE: 14 MARCH 1991

NO. OF TAPES: 1

INTERVIEW LOGSHEET

Minutes

- 1.0 Introduction: Interview of John F C Close, 14.3.1991
Interviewer - Richard Raxworthy
- Personal details. Born 1916, Double Bay in grandparents home.
Father in France with the Australian Engineers.
- 2.0 Childhood. Moved to Rose Bay.
- 2.2 School. Kerrsworth School, small school in Double Bay run by Miss Bourke.
City Grammar. Favourite subjects - maths and science.
- 3.2 Father's occupation and career. Electrical engineer. Graduated with degree in science from Sydney University. Awarded degree in Mechanical Engineering from Cornwall University, USA. Joined General Electrical Company. Returned to Australian briefly, married 1915. WWI. With Australian General Electric until the Depression. Retrenched during the Depression after 25 years with company.
Influences from father.
- 5.5 Family members involved in Engineering. Great grandfather - engineer in Newcastle.
- 6.5 Influence of mother.
- 7.5 Political and religious influences. Anglican Church.
- 8.5 University. Studied Engineering. Activities at university/traditional egg fight between freshers from Engineering and Medicine.

- 10.5 Lecturers. Mr Matheson - Electrical Engineering
Geordie Sutherland - Mechanical Engineering
Jimmy Gogol - Civil
1937 awarded Bachelor of Science degree. Returned to Engineering
and completed two more years
Professor Von Willa - Physics
Charles Fawcett - Chemistry
- 14.0 Practical work during degree.
- 15.0 Cockatoo Dockyard. Welder's labourer, description of work.
Ownership of dockyard. Work carried out/ ship building,
maintenance program on submarines.
- 18.5 Commonwealth Sugar Refinery (CSR). Two months work experience/
pay.
- 19.0 Living at Rose Bay. Tram fares.
- 20.2 CSR, Darling Harbour. Special night shifts on Sunday nights.
Generator at CSR. Malcolm King, later General Manager.
- 22.8 BHP. Description of trip from Newcastle to Whyalla on BHP's *Iron
Warrior*.
Whyalla. Living conditions. Assisted in work shop, occasional
trips to Iron Knob. Description of work and working conditions.
Comparison of conditions experienced by sons.
- 25.8 First job at Sydney County Council. Called up for WWII. Returned
to job in Construction Branch on return.
- 27.0 Army. Officer Training School, May 1940. Obtained rank of
lieutenant in Ordinance E, later the Australian Electrical and
Mechanical Engineers. Appointed to the AIF in August.
Embarked 28 December 1940. Experiences in the Middle East.
- 31.0 END OF SIDE ONE

Mr Matheson, 'Geordie' Sutherland, Jimmy Gogol,
Professor Von Willa, Charles Fawcett, Malcolm King

SIDE TWO

- 1.5 Experiences in the Middle East during WWII.
Return to Australia. Army appointments in Australia/ Victoria,
Sydney, Hunter Valley, Cape York. Borneo.
Demobbed - February 1946.
- 8.5 Return to job at County Council in Construction Branch. Organised
contracts for the construction of Pyrmont Power Station.
- 9.0 Claude Neon Ltd- Worked as Chief Engineer, supervised lighting and
sign operations at the plant at Botany. Mr McKeown - Manager of
lighting and sign operations. Installation of plant for winding
high voltage transformers for the lighting and sign operations.
Safety restrictions.
- 10.5 Management Consulting. Decision to enter management field.
W D Scott & Co.
- 11.5 Institution of Engineers. Became student member in 1932, later
transferred to associate member
1956 - Chairman of Electrical Branch
- 13.0 W D Scott & Co. Management Consultants.
- 13.5 United Capacitor Co.
- 14.5 Consumer Products Division of Standard Telephones and Cables Pty
Ltd.
- 15.0 Department of Industrial Engineering, University of NSW. Interest
in ergonomics/ development of the subject/ origin during WWII.
Ergonomics Society of Australia, started by Dr David Ferguson c.
1963.
- 17.0 Subjects of interest. Methods Engineering, Production Management,
Production and Inventory Control.
Final position at the university - Senior Lecturer.
- 18.5 Consulting work. Involvement in industrial injury and accident
cases. Description of work
- 19.5 Involvement with the Institution of Engineers, Australia.
Sydney Divisional Committee
Chairman of Electrical Branch 1956
Joined Management Branch [c.1958], Chairman.
Renaming of Engineering Management Branch to Management and
Industrial Engineering Branch.

Dr David Ferguson

- 23.0 Recent controversy re admission of non-graduate engineers.
- 25.5 Overseas trips. Trip to Britain 1954 - United Capacitor Company, owned by BICC. Went to UK to see how they ran their business. Telegraph Condenser Company, North Acton.
- 28.0 General Motors Institute, USA. Lectured in Michigan.
- 28.7 Computers. Programming courses in the early 60s.
- 29.3 Research for Masters Degree.
- 30.0 Thesis topic.
- 31.0 Interest in Ergonomics.
- 31.5 END OF TAPE