# From the Oral History collection: Hec McMillan Audio transcript

Hec: I was christened William Hector McMillian, but the name William has gone into total desuetude, and I’ve been Hec as long as I can remember. Born in Manly on the 21st day of February, 1919. Arrived here in March 1926. Can’t be sure of the exact date. Father had come down a year before. He was one of the original blue collar building workforce and when our cottage in Ainslie was ready we joined him. I was seven years old. The limestone plain stretching in every direction was very little on them.

We were the fourth family into what is now Ainslie what is now Paterson Street. We had to walk down across open paddocks to what is now Gorman House. It was the Canberra Hostel those days – single people’s hostel. That was as far as the buses could come because there wasn’t a road beyond that, and we used to take bus to Olympia Park School which was then a primary school.

You had more on the south side in that Blandfordia, which is now part of Forrest. It was there. Manuka wasn’t, but the Eastlake shops, as they were then known, of which they were about four – J.B. Young’s, Hammond the jeweler, I think R.T. White, the tailor, and somebody else. That was the central business district if you like at the time.

Then with the construction of Civic Centre, of course, the Sydney and Melbourne buildings the bias switched to the north side.

Ken: Now as a young boy did you play around the old Parliament when it was in construction?

Hec: No, we didn’t because it was difficult to get to. We had Corroboree Park up in Ainslie. We had Mount Ainslie just at the back of our house practically, and that’s where we did most of our play. We knew every square foot of Mount Ainslie. We built cubby houses, we fought the war, we did all sorts of things that boys do, and let’s face it, those days with rudimentary radio and no television, that’s all you could do.

Ken: Did you go to the opening of the old Parliament?

Hec: Yes, I did. I was on the lawns on May 1927 with my baby brother, and Mum and Dad. We had a car by then, an old 1926 four-cylinder Overland, 30 inch wheels, and yes, I was at the opening. I remember the then Duke and Duchess of York arriving in the horse-drawn carriage, and Dame Nellie Melba starting to sing the national anthem and apparently realised that she was being amplified, and sang a few lines and then shut up and didn’t sing anymore.

Well, it was a great sense of occasion and flags everywhere, and as I say, army, navy, air force detachments. Planes flying overhead, and a lot of big, black shiny cars coming and going. I wasn’t terribly aware precisely what was going on but it was good to have been there.