

**VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'.
Interview with Mrs Liz Cooper on 18th November 2014
Interviewer: Jane Bohnsack.**

Thank you Liz for agreeing to be part of this exciting project.

LC: You are very welcome.

This is a discussion with Liz, her story of her life and memories of Victor Harbor. Although you were not born in Victor Harbor you may like to briefly talk about where you were born and grew up and also your family and what brought you to Victor Harbor.

LC: Yes Jane, I was born at Brighton, at a hospital called *Bindarra* in South Australia and my Mum and Dad took me home to Cox Hill Road where they owned a farm that joined three other farms owned by my father's parents.

Was Cox Hill Road named after your family?

LC: Yes, it went past their farms. My Dad planted a vineyard there and after four years he decided he wanted to buy a saw-mill down in Bains Road, Morphett Vale. The farm went up for sale and was sold very quickly. We were in Bains Road, he bought a couple of vineyards further up Bains Road; of course it's all city now. He utilised these for twenty-five years growing grapes and running a saw-mill.

The War interrupted in 1939 when he was employing four men in the saw-mill and of course they all enlisted, they were young lads eighteen to twenty-three. They all went off to War so he had to cut down on his milling of timber and got a part-time job when his petrol-rationing tickets ran out with the trucks at the flax mill which was an innovative thing that happened in Morphett Vale. He and his two brothers both worked in the flax mill, firstly growing the flax then cutting it. They called turning it over, retting it, in the field and then they had the mill where it was refined for use in parachutes and things.

I was about six and a half when the war broke out so I started school at Morphett Vale and the school is now a funeral parlour unfortunately. I was dux of the school for six years there and because of a bit of a turmoil with the Headmaster all of the people were sent to Port Noarlunga school where I also 'duxed' the school there.

The Headmaster there decided I was intelligent enough to try the entrance exam to Adelaide Tech which I did and got into it. I did very well at school, I matriculated and I went back as a junior teacher for six months, doing two other subjects at the University. My parents thought that earning £3.10.00 a week was far too little for all the money they'd spent educating me so my father got me a job as a private secretary which I absolutely hated.

During all this time, Ron, at the age of seven, me being seven; took me to school and I hated him because he was a big boy and he was annoying. He used to throw our hats in the creek and all sorts of wicked things but a funny thing happened when I turned fourteen and the hormones kicked in and we were together all our lives until he died at seventy-seven.

We were married in the Presbyterian Church in Morphett Vale and I think every resident of Morphett Vale was there, there must have been three hundred residents at that time. Then we went on our honeymoon to Victoria and into New South Wales and came back; we had his father's car. We saw the Queen's investiture as the Queen, in Victoria on the way around on our honeymoon. I slept through most of it because I was so tired with travelling all the time, I wasn't used to it.

However, when we got back we had to go to Kangaroo Island because that's where Ron was working. All our furniture and everything had gone over. He'd prepared the house, which he did a wonderful job of and we were there, I was there fifteen months and fell pregnant with Jennifer. I wasn't very well and the doctor over there didn't want to have anything to do with me, sent me over to Adelaide and my doctor in Adelaide said that he didn't think I'd better stay on Kangaroo Island because I may need specialist care, so I had to go back and pack up and come home.

Ron stayed on for another four or five months to finish his contract and the work he'd started and so we were at Morphett Vale. He straight away got a job with an elderly gentleman called Clutterbuck, who had racehorses and a very good Corriedale stud. We lived on the property and he had a house on the other side of the river from us. The stables were over there and Ron looked after the racehorses and the Corriedale stud. Sorted shearing and all those sorts of jobs. During that time he did a course out at Prospect with Chamberlains I think the name of the Caterpillar tractors were.

We had them on the Island where we were scrub clearing and he got his diesel, something to do with diesel which was new to the tractor industry apparently. When we finished with, we were finished with Clutterbucks because we came for a holiday at Prescott Sinclair's invitation to mind his dairy while he went off for a fortnight to make his niece's wedding dress and the bridesmaids' dresses and so on, so we made it our holiday, for two weeks.

Came down, we hadn't milked a herd of cows with machinery, we had one day with Prescott and off he went but we'd milked by hand, one cow which we had for the house at Morphett Vale. We had a great life at Morphett Vale when we were married because the only vehicle we had was a '27 Chev.

The night I decided I needed to go to deliver Jennifer we couldn't get the thing to work. It looked like dire straits there for a moment, so Ron got in the car and I pushed it down the hill to start it. He had to go down the hill, turn around, come back and I hopped in the car and off we went. When we got to my parents' place, two or three miles away, my Dad came out to look at the Chev. He said, "No wonder you couldn't get the thing to go, it's got two flat tyres!"

So we had to get in to this great big semitrailer, which he'd just put the tray on to bring some timber into the yard so poor old Ron in his clothes over his pyjamas and his cowboy hat had to sit on the back of a semi and off we went to Memorial Hospital.

That would have been a bit of a drive in those days.

LC: We got half way down Tapley's Hill, this is twelve o'clock midnight and I said, "Dad, you'll have to turn around."

He said, "What for?" and I said, "I've forgotten my knitting!" He said, "Bugger your knitting; I'm not going back now!" (laughs)

We had to go out to Memorial Hospital, finding a park long enough to take the semi, was an absolute joke and my Mother was freaking out. Oh, that was a scream! Anyhow I had her at seven o'clock the next morning.

Prescott had been a friend for years; he'd done dressmaking with Mum at McCabe's Dressmaking Academy.

I just wondered how the connection there was.

LC: I'd known him since I was twelve. My grandfather was a breeder of trotting horses and hacks and ponies and things so I learned to ride them and Prescott's best friends bought my grandfather's property. Mrs Hawkes. They had horses too. Of course, the friendship started then with my parents and so on and yes, he came back after a fortnight and he said, "How would you like to lease the property for a year?"

We'd never been mixed up with leasing and we said that we'd have to talk that over so I rang my Dad and I said, "What do you think?"

"Oh," he said, "I think it's a good opportunity." He was leaving us the herd and everything and so we had to ring Mr Clutterbuck. He was absolutely furious, he came down in his great long Chev car and he really handed it to us, absolutely ridiculous, losing the best opportunity.

Really, in hindsight, we didn't because he sold off the land to the Housing Trust and there're thousands of houses there now, so we did the right thing. Anyhow for a year we were at Prescott's and the lease was up in about a

fortnight and Mrs Lorne, what was her name? Lovely woman, she was Lorne Warland. She'd married Ken Clarke up in Carrieton or somewhere like that; they had a station and he'd taken sick and died at Mill Road of a massive heart attack and she was a widow. Somebody must have dropped the word that our lease was up and one Saturday afternoon we'd just got back from, I don't know whether it was Ron playing cricket and me playing tennis and we heard this car come in the drive and I grabbed, all I had on was my very ninon over none on and I grabbed my dressing-gown, went to the door and little Jenny's right there. Jenny said, "Come in!" so she came in and I made a cup of tea and we had a bit of a chat and she said, "Well, I was told that you might be looking for a position Ron."

And he said, "Yeah, we probably would."

She said, "And how would you like to come and work for me. I've got no idea how to run this property and I've got." First of all she had Laube, Alec Laube was there milking the cows; he was, well I won't say. Then Gordon Fretwell, do you remember them, the Fretwells?"

Were they from Yankalilla?

LC: Yes. A butcher shop over there, he lasted about a year and then said he was quitting so Ron virtually took over the dairy from him. When she said would we go there she said, "I'll build you a new house. You'll have to come and live in part of the house where my father is until we get the house built."

Don Overall's Dad, Don and Mewett, Mr Mewett built it. It was the old Church of England, they took the cladding off, re-roofed it, put a lovely bathroom in, two bedrooms and it made a really nice home; we were very happy there. Then when everything was swinging along nicely she came one day and said, "I want to go to Victoria to visit my cousin, would you be able to look after Pa, Pop we called him, while I'm gone?"

I said, "How long will it be?" because I had to move out of the house down to Mill Road and she said, "Oh, I think I'll only be about three weeks." It turned into two months and we looked after the old chap; he was a grumpy old chap but he loved Jenny, he and Jenny got on like a house on fire. He could be very abusive, didn't swear but he had plenty of verbs. When she came back she came back with her cousin, Bert Cakebread and she said, "Bert and I are going to get married."

She'd known him for years and he was a widower so they got married and so they did up the house on the property for them to live in, in the meantime, Ron was doing the sheep and the cattle and so on and so forth and we were happily there for nine years.

It was a great life but unfortunately Cakie wasn't a very good driver, he was used to horses not cars, and we had a Fergie tractor that we put the hay out for the cows with and he was driving the tractor and Ron was on the trailer handing out the hay and he went up over a stump; the connection between the tractor and the trailer stopped on top of the stump and the trailer went like that and the load of hay fell on Ron and he couldn't get up.

I was at the house and he came down and he said, "There's been a bit of an accident, I don't know whether Ron's conscious or not."

Of course I worked on the ambulance so I went out into the paddock and Ron said, "I'm not unconscious, it's just I can't move my legs." I rang Lionel Lovell because he was my partner on the ambulance and I had a station-wagon and I said, "I think I've got a job for the hospital but I need to have help to lift him." We put him on a door and shoved him in the back of the station-wagon and took him to the local hospital.

They put weights on him and he was still on the door three days later. They put the weights on his feet but the bandage kept breaking and these little ball-bearings used to be all over the floor for people to fall over. Anyhow I wasn't happy with the service he was getting and I rang the doctor that we knew at Morphett Vale and asked him who I should take him to and he said, "Can you get him through this afternoon to me?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Well I'll ring my uncle, his name is Dr Hone and he's an expert on spines."

I said, "Right." I drove the two kids in the car and Ron on the door. It was a scream because every time I had to pull up at a stop sign the door came forward and he was against the back seat which was annoying him. We got to Morphett Vale and Dr Graham, whatever his name was, came out and took one look at him and said, "I can't handle this sort of thing; if you can get to North Terrace by four o'clock my uncle will see him."

We got to the Doctor at four o'clock, he came down to the car, station-wagon, and he said, "Straight to Wakefield Street. I'll let them know you're coming." I drove him to Wakefield Street, some men came out with a proper thing and put him on it and the next day he was operated on and had a spinal fusion; I don't know how many vertebrae they fused together. So I did it all on my own with my old station-wagon, acting as an ambulance.

I had a really interesting time on the ambulance, I loved that. I was on it nine years and it was during that time that the old house was bought in Torrens Street; it had a slate-tiled roof that leaked like a sieve and they formed a committee to re-build a Centre there which is there today. I was sort of involved in all that, fund-raising and all sorts of things for that which was good.

Perhaps we'll just pause there and we'll go on a little bit further.

Keep going.

LC: You don't know whether you got the first bit?

No, hopefully we have but we'll just continue and if we haven't we can just go back.

LC: It was there where we had to at Morphett Vale in the old Dodge, a ute, and looked after some really good racehorses and the Corriedale Stud was a big interest as well as he planted lucerne and we cropped it successfully. I hated being without work, however our daughter was born at Memorial Hospital and he came to pick us up in an old '27 Chev buckboard and whilst, when she was about a year old Prescott Sinclair, who was a great friend because he helped make my wedding dress, came to see us one day to see if we'd like to have a holiday at Back Valley while he did some dressmaking for his niece for her wedding.

We took a fortnight off to come to Victor Harbor on the 11th December and our little baby girl was a year old on 1st November.

What year was that?

LC: She is sixty now so take fifty-nine off that. We had a wonderful fortnight milking; he had about twenty-five cows and really enjoyed it. We met so many beautiful people in Back Valley; within two days we practically knew everybody and at Christmas, on Christmas morning Horrie Dunn came around in a ute dressed as Father Christmas, handing out lollies and Jennifer was highly delighted and so was everybody else. So it continued. When Prescott came back after the fortnight he said, "How would we like to stay there for twelve months?"

We contacted our boss at Morphett Vale; he went absolutely ape and he said, "I'll be down at Victor Harbor. How do you find Back Valley?"

We said, "Oh it's pretty easy." So we told him how to find it. Turned out he had a holiday house, great big old home on the seafront at Encounter Bay and tried to talk us out of wanting to go to Back Valley. That didn't succeed, we decided to go back to Morphett Vale and pack up our goods and chattels, put everything right and then we moved down to Back Valley for twelve months.

After we'd been there twelve months we were just getting stripped off after doing the shopping one Saturday, to go to the dairy and there was a knock on the door. I remember all I had on was my dressing gown and my knickers. I went to the door and there was this gorgeous lady standing there and she said, "My name is Lorne Clarke and I'm looking for someone to manage my property."

I said, "Come in." Ron came out fully clothed, so I said, "Ron, you make Mrs Clarke a cup of tea while I get dressed."

That is what I did and we sat down around the kitchen table and she said, "I want you to come and work for me. I'll build you a house and whilst the house is being built you'll live with me and my father on Mill Road, Encounter Bay."

That's how it all happened, I got a new house which was the old Church of England; they re-clad it and made it a house out of a Nissen Hut I think it was, Air Force or Nissen Hut, I'm not sure which. Anyhow it was very nice and we worked there for nine years, we had some wonderful years at Back Valley. The people there took us in like their family and, what can I say, there was a Progress Association there, that's right and I suggested at one of the meetings that we have a big Christmas party for all the kids, there were heaps of them.

Old Mr Brown, who was the Chairman, he didn't want to have a Christmas party, it was a load of rubbish, blah blah. One morning I had to go to the Post Office, Mrs Shakes was the Postmistress, and I was crying on her shoulder that he wouldn't let me have a Christmas party and old Bert Cakebread came in and said, "If you want a Christmas party you can have a Christmas party," he said. "Come over, in the meantime he'd married Mrs Clarke, she was now Mrs Cakebread, said, "You can have a Christmas party. Come over, we'll have a cup of tea and we'll talk about it."

I went over, I made all the plans; we got in the car about a fortnight before Christmas and went up to Adelaide and into Coles or somewhere and bought up hundreds of dollars worth of toys. We had the greatest Christmas ever, only a few nights before Christmas and all the kids got presents. We got an old sleigh and reindeers that the men had to dress up in which was a scream, brought Father Christmas into the Hall. It was the greatest thing and that went on year after year, I was there nine years and then Ron had a dreadful accident off the back of the trailer.

The old bloke drove the Fergie over a stump and it turned the trailer over with a heap of hay on it and he had to be raced into hospital. Things didn't go too well and then he had to go and have a spinal operation which he came out of very, very quickly. He wanted to go back to work but the specialist said no more farm work.

He applied for a job at, by that time we had two kids.

Was it the Corporation?

LC: Corporation, yes, which he got. That started his career in local government and then the councils of course amalgamated and blah blah blah. He went to Encounter Bay which became Victor Harbor.

You moved in to Victor Harbor from Back Valley?

LC: Well he was unable to work, do farm work, he had to find an alternative and we bought a house in Cornhill Road. I had a girlfriend who used to be a Welfare Officer, that I used to go out some Saturday mornings with, if I was in the City to look at her different clients and things. She ended up in the Welfare from going around to all the houses, checking up on all the ladies who were in bed and things like that.

She became a Child Welfare Officer and the first guinea pig in the job when it came Christmas was me! She phoned up and she said, "Oh Lizzie I've got a couple of kids I can't place for Christmas, Victor Harbor would be a lovely place for them to have a holiday." I didn't even confer with Ron, I just said, "Oh OK. When can we expect them, blah-di-blah?" She phoned up this day and said that there's two kids coming on the bus.

On that day?

LC: Yes! OK. We had no idea who we were getting until they came and they had, poor little beggars had a letter that said what their names were, what their ages were and where they were from. One was from Morialta Children's Home and she was very, very black; she was a sweet little girl, she had come down from above Alice Springs somewhere and she'd been orphaned and stuck in Morialta so we got her. Another girl, called Elizabeth,

who'd been a bit of a brat, we were only having them for the holidays thank goodness! That was inroads into her continually looking for homes for children and I was virtually the scapegoat for any that nobody else could handle.

You must have been very good at it.

LC: Look, Victor Harbor was the perfect place for kids; there was no danger, there was no fear of children being molested in those days or anything, it was a wonderful time. A lot of them didn't want to go back but there were strict rules in the Welfare. We got, well we got half of Cheryl's family one Christmas, one of them, her and Cheryl and Pauline stayed on. They cried and didn't want to go back and arrangements were made for them to go to school here and so on. Pauline was with us for about six years; Cheryl was with us for ten years. She got ratty when she was fifteen and the best thing was for her to have some discipline which I couldn't provide.

So over the years you really had a number of children.

LC: Yes, but when we got Cheryl she wasn't going to be a permanent because somebody had put in to have her. They tried her with somebody called Cooper at Myponga but that didn't work out and then we got her.

She had a wooden leg which caused quite a furore and it was always breaking and I was always running up to Adelaide to get it fixed. She used to often take it off down on the beach before she went in swimming and you should have seen the dogs all coming around her leg, sniffing and wondering where it came from. I'll never forget one of the little Munchenberg kiddies, Cheryl went into the shower and left her leg on the floor in the dry area and this little kid came running out and said, "Somebody's lost their leg in the shower, Mum!" Everybody heard it, we knew who the leg belonged to. Yes, she's always been a bit of a character; that's who I just got the things from, from Sydney.

When did you become involved in real estate?

LC: Well, I'd only been at Back Valley about a fortnight when we made it our permanent home and there was an ad in the paper for a secretary for old Colonel Reid; so I applied and because I'd been to Adelaide Tech the old boy, the oldest man Gaetjens had had quite a few secretaries who'd gone to school at Adelaide Tech so he was very impressed with my resume.

There were a heap of people lined up that were being interviewed and I thought I've got no hope of getting a job with all these people; they all looked very clever. I got that job, they shifted from upstairs in Ocean Court across the road, next to the doctors' rooms and we were there for, I don't know, probably about twenty years. Then Mr Wallage came to see me one day, and he said, "I want you to sell that place of mine on the corner which used to be the drycleaners, the bus stop, you name it." I went and had a look at it with him and put a price on it and then I rang the boss and said, "There's a good possie for a decent-sized office on the corner of Ocean Street and Torrens Street."

He said, "Oh Mr Wallage's place?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Oh, I'll come straight down." He did and saw Mr Wallage and signed a contract that day and then he came back to the little office and said, "You needn't think you're going to get paid commission for selling me that."

"OK Mr Gaetjens."

That was really good because during the time, the twenty years we were in the little office I had two children, Julie and then Cindy. I gave my boss a terrible fright when he came back from holidays and I had a bassinet in the office. He didn't even know that I was pregnant; I wasn't either but Julie was a specially chosen child. That frightened him a bit but at the back of that office we had a flat which was quite big really in those days. It was let out for holidays so as it adjoined the office so that the babies could go in there and have a sleep and business

wasn't so rip-roaring in those days that you couldn't mind your child. Then we shifted into the big office and that had, they created two flats at the back of that so it helped me a lot really.

I started as the secretary but after three months I thought, this old bloke's sleeping his life away in there. I should be doing something about it so I applied to get a licence. Nobody knew about women getting licences then, they should be kept in the kitchen with their hands in the sink. Anyhow he said, "Oh you won't get a licence (this is my boss), you won't get a licence because the Real Estate Institute's deadly against women in business."

I said, "Oh, are they? Just watch me!" So I applied and did the study that was required by correspondence and got my licence within I reckon another three months and I started selling. It was absolutely fantastic Jane, because nobody had really worked the area and I found all sorts of innovative ways of, you know, getting around and I used to go visiting, letting properties, on an old bike. That's a fact!

You wouldn't do that these days!

LC: No, I had to go and look at a place in Field Avenue; I was going past Pam Munchenberg's house and this great Labrador came out and I wasn't the best of riders of a bike and it sort of got too close and got its foot in a spoke of the bike, tipped me off. In those days the kerbs were made of bluestone and about that high and I went into the bluestone, pitched myself into the kikuyu and out came Pam. She didn't give me treatment, "Oh," she said, "it's a lovely dog, it won't bite you!" There I had the chain wrapped around my wrist and my arm was caught up in the front wheel and she's telling me that the dog wouldn't bite!

Anyhow I got rescued by some nice person across the road and they took me down to the doctors, there was nothing wrong with me, just bruises and scratches and things but I did be very careful about riding the bike around the back streets of Victor.

I bought a little Morris Minor, citrus-coloured Morris Minor from Mr Yarwood, his property was where Coles are now. I really enjoyed that little car, of course with the kids that wasn't big enough so eventually after earning a bit of money I got another car. The two little babies used to be in the back of the station-wagon everywhere I went; listings out in the donga, over at Goolwa and places you couldn't even find a survey pegs at Goolwa.

It was terrible. Half that land hadn't changed from the time it was cut up in England. It was a good job Ron took a part-time weekend job with Fred Gaetjens doing surveying because it was a big, big help to me. We found we had to go miles to find pegs to pick up different ones, especially ones that were still owned by people in England. They'd be deceased and the land had to be disposed of; it was complicated. The worst place I found, I'd only been licensed about two years I reckon and a place that was quite new built out at Hayborough, had to come on the market because people having to go back to Adelaide because of sickness. We went out to find the pegs and it was one of the early Bartel buildings, and when we found the pegs, I said to old Colonel Reid I think it was, "We'd better get a professional to do this."

We got Fred Gaetjens down and the house was built over about three feet over the boundary so all the others were all out. There was a string of transfers, fresh in the job and you strike something like that, it kept me awake nights. I wondered how it was all going turn out. They had to come all the way back to Chiton where there was an old red house and the people owned four blocks there at the time. They worked from the street back down, it was a mess! Money had to change hands and transfers had to be done and some people got their knickers in a knot and were taking people to court. It was a mess but it finally got sorted! Thankfully the Goolwa Council owned that territory so they had to be involved in that mess.

There were a couple of places down in Russell Street that were similar where builders didn't, if the people said, "That's my block there." They just built there. It happened a lot at Christies Beach too. Very interesting the first years in real estate. I wasn't really happy just being a salesperson so I did a Manager's Licence then I decided to become a Valuer; that was quite a long course which I gained, very happily, the only woman in South Australia.

Good on you.

LC: There was another girl doing the course at the time but she didn't get her full licence, she only got a very limited licence because she worked for a company in Adelaide. She badly wanted it to prove to the people in the company that she could do it. I believe she went back afterwards.

You also got your auctioneer's.

LC: Yes, I got that during that time as well. Yeah, I got a bit of publicity with that; I went on the ABC and Channel 2, all sorts of interesting things. I did some interesting auctions, many, many moons later. This is getting off my life story a bit. We went up to *Puttapa Station* for a fundraiser for the Royal Flying Doctor. We'd donated quite a bit of stuff because Max and Jenny were friendly up there.

We were sitting at the breakfast table on the Saturday morning because there was a band coming from down Port Lincoln way and people coming from all over the place had already arrived, with caravans, this is for a woolshed ring-a-ding. The owner of *Puttapa* went to the phone that rang and this auctioneer from Alice Springs said, "We're having a bit of trouble with the plane and we can't, we're not going to make it for tonight. I'm sorry I'm letting you down. Bad luck."

She said, "Oh that's alright, we've got a top auctioneer here from Victor Harbor and she'll be able to handle it, no worries!"

I'm sitting there at the table, nervously saying, "I don't think so." She came up, Pauline, she comes down for the quilting thing.

She said, "You can do that Liz."

I said, "Oh, can I?"

She said, "Yes, no worries Liz." So I did and we raised, I think nearly \$4,000.00 that night. To start off with the men were very diffident about a woman being an auctioneer but I got them going. We raised a lot of money with that auction; it was a great night, a great night.

You would have seen lots of changes to Victor Harbor during your time in real estate.

LC: Yes, I think I helped knock it into shape a bit. I did my first auction at a property out on the corner of Mill Road and Waitpinga Road. It was owned by the Sweetman family and originally I think it had been an old saw mill because the cellar was full of sawdust and it was very decrepit. There was a lot of very old junky furniture in it as well. My boss came down from Adelaide and he said, "You'll never sell this place in a fit; no-one'll buy this."

He was very, very, you know, had his nose in the air over it. I said, "We'll sell it."

"No, no you won't." Anyhow I did my first auction and didn't put a foot wrong and guess who the purchaser was? Alfred Engel! He and Peter Matthews were there and Alfred bid for it and paid \$4,000.00 I think it was for it and it was a mess, there's no doubt about that. Bon Gaetjens was absolutely gob-smacked, he said, "You were so professional Liz, you did everything right; I'm very proud of you. Congratulations!"

The next one I did was on the seafront at Encounter Bay and the purchaser, there was a block and I put a reserve on it of \$5,500.00 and everybody said that you'll never get \$5,500.00 but I had three people there bidding and I got \$6,500. That was the biggest sale on the seafront and one of the Trim boys bought it.

What year about, would that have been?

LC: I can't tell you. I've burnt all the diaries because I thought nothing was interesting to people. It's amazing how quickly that the Encounter Bay seafront caught on because it just went from \$6,500 to millions.

Compared to what you'd be paying now, it's incredible really.

LC: I reckon you'd be lucky to get a block there under \$600,000 and it would only be 450 square metres maybe. I think I got a bit of competition with one of my cousins, Morrie Wilkinson for a while in Albert Place. Then Peter Burns took him over and then Denis Smith. There's been some interesting.

Then you left Gaetjens and set up your own business.

LC: I was with them for thirty years, more, I think I was with them for thirty-two years, thirty-three years. I was in real estate for forty-six and a half years. I bought out Myles Pearce, who then became Century 21 and then when we'd been there for a long, long time it would have been fifteen years maybe, a bit more; I had a very sick husband and I decided that I had to quit and I didn't quit fast enough.

During all that time I was very lucky, I was involved with Zonta.

I think you were a foundation, charter member.

LC: Yes, I was a foundation member and I was the Chairman for a while, whatever you call Presidents.

President, yes.

LC: Yes and I got involved in everything in the community that I was requested to do I think. I had some fun times with the Whale Tail Fountain and getting the seal on the rock out on Granite Island.

That was when you were involved with local government, wasn't it?

LC: Yes. No, Ron was. It's been there for a while now, hasn't it?

Yes, it has.

LC: That was a fantastic result, I would never have done that without the help of Robert Barry though; he was fantastic and Silvio Apponyi was very reasonable too.

He's still doing things.

LC: He's absolutely magnificent; you'd never know it though. He's such a lovely, quiet, laid-back person.

What about your time in Local Government? You became a councillor, elected member.

LC: Yep.

It would have been another challenge.

LC: I started off, I ran for the Corporation against Brian Waye. I think it was Brian Waye, John Simmons and so on, but I ran in Brian Waye's Ward and he beat me and so I didn't get in. It gave me a bit of a taste and of course, for a long time after that, my husband was involved in Council too so it made it difficult for me to fairly do the job.

My time in Local Government was like Real Estate, it was interesting. Every day I learned something new, I did learn to keep my mouth shut quite a lot, which was unusual for me. There were times when I didn't, but I found there were good goals in local government and I think there was a lot achieved over the years I was in there.

What would have been some of the major achievements over your time in Local Government?

LC: I think the Planning, we had several lots of planning; when I first went in we were planning and we made lots of inroads, but then, like ten years down the track we're doing planning again and so it went on. It was good to be involved with changes that were taking place.

Technology came to hand during that time; I can remember when we got a computer at the Council and they said it would cut down on staff. Right, we'd only need one person to work the computer. We got a computer, then we had to get another computer and so it went on until everybody got a computer. A lot of time's spent behind computers these days. This was one of the things that was a bit of a challenge for me because I didn't like sitting in front of things, I like to be out and in the action.

Mark you Jane, not only in Local Government did I see a lot of changes but I did; things that were done by Rotary, Zonta, Apex and Lions, Clubs that gradually evolved with projects that improved Victor Harbor. Like the Rotary Art Show, the Visitor thing out on Adelaide Road. Zonta planted a Park.

Out at Nangawooka.

LC: Out at Nangawooka, but they also, the first one they did was up in Mt Breckan.

That's right, a playground.

LC: Yes, and we planted heaps of trees and things, which developed – it was like a desert until we did that. There's been so many wonderful things evolve over the years which I've been part of, not instigator of all of them but I'd say the Rotunda was another thing.

I think you managed to get the plans of that from Brisbane City Council. Is that correct?

LC: Yes, Do you remember when we were on the trip.

To a Zonta conference.

LC: A Zonta Conference in Brisbane; that was quite an accomplishment to get that returned to its former glory. Again, Robert Barry was a big help with that. He and Ron and I were the three that turned up to do the painting on Sunday mornings because I think everybody else was involved in Church.

There's been some great things come over the last thirty years that wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Zonta and Rotary and those.

No, the Service Clubs played a big part.

LC: they've been fantastic. I was glad to see the Whale Centre re-established. Seeing that dirty old building doing nothing was a disgrace. I know it will never make a profit but at least it's a good tourist thing that's steady. The development of the Tourist Office, I was very much behind that. And the horse tram which has been my baby ever since I was seven. My first trip to Victor Harbor with my uncle and cousins was in an old Overland Whippet. My Uncle George said, "What's the first thing we do when we get to Victor?"

I said, "The horse tram." So that's what we did. We took our picnic over to Granite Island; it was a pretty rickety old horse tram I can tell you. That's been an absolute joy to me to see how that has improved and I think that's on the right track.

I'm very sad about the kiosk closing on Granite Island. Whatever's going to happen?

I don't know. Granite Island itself has changed a lot from when you first went over there.

LC: Yes, it was a free place.

It had lots of gardens.

LC: When we first came down to Victor that was, the gardens there were fantastic, they've gradually disappeared. When Ron was in Council the toilets kept disappearing! (chuckles). He hated going into the sea to retrieve the toilets.

You've had lots of interest in other organisations in Victor too, I think?

LC: Oh yes.

What were they?

LC: Well the Choral and Arts Society I joined in the first week I was permanently in Victor Harbor I was introduced by Phyl Battye. First, she introduced me because I went to Church and sang in the choir with Mrs Cakebread and she snaffled me. I spent fifty years on stage and when I went overseas I got myself involved with different bits and pieces. The main thing I did was introduce the Tidy Towns to a little place, well not a little place it's a city bigger than this called Quan Thanh. They invited me along to one of their local government meeting – they call it Town Management – and I told them about Tidy Towns, keeping their area clean and I showed them the Tidy Town, or Keep South Australia Beautiful and I had Keep Victor Harbor Beautiful.

When I went back twelve months after I'd talked about it there's Keep South Australia Beautiful all over their rubbish bins! Instead of Keep Malaysia Beautiful or Keep Quantarn Beautiful and I was going along in a bus taking photographs of the bins with Keep South Australia Beautiful, which was quite fun. I went to Borneo, some people I'd sold a house to on the seafront at Encounter Bay invited us to stay, not stay but go to their area and he made arrangements for me to meet local government in Borneo.

It was a place called Miri; there were magnificent resorts there. One was called the *Rihga Royal* and it was magnificent, you couldn't believe it unless you went there. This couple had made arrangements for me to meet the local government management there. They informed the hotel, they put a red carpet down the marble stairs, I had a stretch limo to pick me up, a bloke with white gloves on to open the door for me and I went to the Local Government Institute there, where they had all these local papers with flashing cameras and goodness knows what.

I was interviewed and we talked about all sorts of things that were happening in Australia and what they could do over there. There was machinery and things like that and then I was taken back. Oh the morning tea, it was sumptuous and then I was taken back to the stretch Mercedes to the Hotel. The Mercedes actually belonged to the Hotel, I didn't know that at the time and the red carpet was there and all the staff were out laughing. Half of them couldn't speak English and my daughter Julie was very impressed but the Edmondses decided to move from the Shell Company there because things were getting a bit nasty in the oil business and they came and lived in their house in Encounter Bay.

It was good, they were wonderful friends, we had a marvellous time at Miri at the Yacht Club where they lived. All nationalities who worked for the Shell Company came to the Yacht Club. There was a Scotsman and he was in full garb and the perspiration was pouring off him while he was dancing. I don't know how he could put up with it.

The only thing to drink that we knew of was Jacob's Creek and of course I'm not a wine drinker so one glass of Jacob's Creek and I was anybody's pretty well. It was a great, great experience going there but having the next morning after I'd been to the Local Government Management in Miri the owner of the *Rhiga Royal* came to our table and she said, "Do you mind if I sit down."

I said, "No, not at all."

We got talking and she said, "My husband would like to meet you."

I said, "Would he?"

"Yes, he comes from South Australia." This was a Chinese lady speaking. And when he came over to the table his relatives were, oh what's their name? He was head of the Waterworks for years. Anyhow, he'd just bought a hotel in Adelaide, the Adelaide actual, the one out at North Adelaide. It was the Australia Hotel there for a while and then it got sold on. Yes, so we had quite a long and happy little chat. The following morning we had breakfast with him of course; very interesting, the people you meet.

You were awarded an OAM, some years ago. What did you receive that award for?

LC: Yes. A lot of people got together that I didn't know anything about; it was my Local Government experiences, my Choral & Arts experiences; a few other things.

Services to the Community.

LC: Oh yeah, that. Yes that.

That was a great honour.

LC: It was a great surprise as well I can tell you, and it took me a long time to find out who nominated me but I found out that it was the guy on the telly, Caldicott, Peter Caldicott's parents. He was a Dr of Divinity and I didn't know until a very long time afterwards that he'd nominated me; Cindy let it slip. Lovely old couple.

A very worthy recipient you would have been for that.

LC: I guess so but there's plenty of other people that don't get, that do a lot in the community that don't get.

Over the years you have done a lot of service to the community of Victor Harbor.

LC: You only do what you enjoy doing, don't you?

That's true. Yes.

LC: I always put my hand up; I was a great volunteer as a kid. It doesn't rub off, it doesn't go away when you grow up, put it that way. I've met so many wonderful people, been to wonderful places, yes I love this town.

What would you say would be the biggest change that you've seen in Victor Harbor over your time here?

LC: I think the prices in real estate are one thing that are very impressive and I think the Councils over the years have done a lot of work; the Ring Road, getting the paddocking for the horses, developing down on the seafront; I think that was a great accomplishment. The most recent one as well as previous ones, when we got the money for the Whale Tail Fountain it had to include the landscaping and the paving to the Causeway and the re-development of the Kiosk site was a huge improvement. It was a big thing and although there was controversy over it I think the people who were controversial should look back now and see what a big difference it made.

I thought it could have gone further with the two-storey restaurant, lots of things, but you can only get what money will buy really. I think the re-development of the Victor, many years back now, I saw three changes there. I saw the old one go down and the new one built with the swimming pool then that was bowled and the latest one went up. The old guesthouses went and Motels, well the Motel on Victoria Street evolved from the *Dalblair* guesthouse.

I think the development the Council did on the Esplanade, on Flinders Parade I should say. That was a huge controversy but money wouldn't buy it now, those units; they're a good size, they're a different design. I know people didn't like the design but they fitted in really well. I think there's been some great things happen that there's been people in the community that have pushed and a few who shoved; I think the Council has done a great job getting where they've got. I know everybody blames the councillors but local government have got rules and a lot of people find it hard to follow them don't they?

They do, they do.

LC: I think the development of the Council Chambers, a lot of people knocked that but I think in the long term it's been a really good move and especially the Library; that was very controversial but people have come to live with it haven't they?

They have.

LC: The numbers have about trebled; and the boat ramp, I think that went on for thirty-five years and we finally got that, a few years back. I know the Mayor of the day worked really hard on that and so did the Council staff.

Any other organisations you are with, Choral and Arts for?

LC: Fifty odd years and I'm still their patron.

That certainly provided a great.

LC: Mainly, I've had to get involved with children's things like the Primary School, the High School. Tennis, I've played tennis all my life virtually and I played at Back Valley, then when I came in to Victor I played on the Victor courts. That's another thing; shifting those courts was the best thing ever, those courts were terrible to play on in the wind, absolutely terrible. I'm glad they are being put to a better use; I don't know that they get used a lot but you know I've never seen anyone play on those courts.

Oh, I have seen them.

LC: Handball or whatever they play?

No, I haven't there.

LC: I've never seen a person there, amazing isn't it? I do see an occasional tourist down on the one court that was left, or two. Yes, but the others are far superior, out of the wind. What else can you think of Jane?

Football Club, I was involved with the Football Club.

And the Yacht Club.

LC: Yes. Horrie Dunn and I started the Netball Club at Encounter Bay. He was with me, we were at a do and I was grizzling because I couldn't get in to a Netball Club, we called it basketball then. There was nothing for us older people, like I was fully twenty-three; so he and I got started on the Encounter Bay one. We played on an old dirt court and funny old poles which Ron made I think. We turned into a really big Club. Ron was involved in the Football Club and the Cricket Club which meant the family had to be involved. We'd only been here two or three months and, more than that, six months and someone asked Ron if he was interested in boating. Oh yes he loved it but we only ever had a row boat on the river where my Dad had a shack.

I think it was Warren Parsons suggested that we go down to the Yacht Club; we were at Back Valley then. That blossomed as well; it was only a tin shed then and we all got together and built the first one, which is now used for Emergency Services or something. I used to work and go and play a couple of games of tennis, come back, work in the galley, go back and play my last game of tennis, it was really hectic. We were with the Yacht Club for thirty or forty years.

We built a yacht, well I didn't; very much to my disgust, one was built in my front verandah which was enclosed at Cornhill Road. I had a lovely Wilton carpet in the lounge where I had to take my clients into and the dust was terrible, cleaning up after it every time he worked out there and then we had to get all the windows taken out and a crane to get the boat out of the front verandah, because it wouldn't fit through the door. Oh dear!

Lots of happy memories.

LC: Yes and like I was very involved with the Primary School, we had a heap of kids going there sometimes eight, depending on who was living with us at the time. And the Kindergarten, we helped build the Kindergarten; that was John Chambers and his wife. There was supposed to be a committee because Kindergarten was underneath the old Cong. Church Hall for lots of years and we decided to put this building up; well, the first few weeks we got

volunteers and then they all just sort of weaned off. It ended up John Chambers and Pat and Ron and I putting a roof on; little did you know you were not supposed to be putting nails in asbestos but that was the original roof was asbestos. Besser blocks, my hands used to be bleeding at the end of a day and as soon as ever it was built we got lots of people come along to be on the committee and so on, which was good. Mrs Lalor was the first.

Was she the Patron?

LC: Yes, she was the first Patron and that sort of evolved over the years. We had to find bits of old carpet for the kids to sit on and everybody's left over toys. It was hard going there for a while but that's been a thing that's evolved. I was definitely there from the beginning.

Anything else you'd like to add?

LC: I joined Alfred Engel's art class, I don't suppose I'll ever be much of an artist but I love art and I have sold a number of paintings would you believe? I have to practically lie down now to paint and to write. I've had a lot of fun at the art classes; I've known Alfred for thirty years or something and it's really now my social morning out. I've met some wonderful people through that. We've had lots of things that we've run for Zonta that have been very successful in my time. It's just you get too involved and have to give up something, Jane.

Yes, that's right.

LC: Just have an accident off your back stairs and you have to give up everything for a while.

Well Liz, perhaps we'll close the interview. Thank you for your time and being part of it; you've certainly lived a very interesting life in Victor Harbor and Back Valley and before that. Had a lovely family, had a lovely involvement with everybody in Victor Harbor. There wouldn't be many people here who wouldn't know who Liz Cooper is.

LC: I don't know Jane, when you hit eighty.

Oh they still know you!

LC: You reckon? There's not many of us left.

On behalf of the Library and the Project that we're doing, we certainly thank you for being part of it.

LC: My pleasure Jane.

Thank you.

LC: There's lots of gaps I can tell you!