

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, '*Beside the Seaside*'

Interview with Ian Milnes on 21st July 2015

Interviewer: Keith Percival

Ian is the fourth generation of the Milnes family involved in the printing industry. Welcome Ian and let's start at the very beginning; when were you born and where?

IM: Good afternoon Keith thank you. I was born in Victor Harbor on 10th December 1949, third son of Colin Milnes and Laurel Milnes of Victor Harbor.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

IM: I have three brothers and one sister; I have two brothers older than me and a brother and sister younger than me.

What work were your parents doing when you were born?

IM: When I was born, my father Colin, or Ian Colin Milnes known as Colin Milnes, was a printer compositor editor at the Victor Harbor Times here in Victor Harbor and had been for a number of years.

Did Mum help Dad? She wasn't working was she?

IM: No. Mum in those days, most wives were housewives essentially; Mother did not work, she was bringing up five children.

Her hands were full.

IM: Yes indeed.

And your education Ian?

IM: Educated at Victor Harbor Primary School, Victor Harbor High School as were my other siblings.

Did you leave school at sixteen?

IM: I finished school at the end of 1966; I'd just turned seventeen in December 1966 and enlisted in the Army in February 1967.

We'll come to the Army in a minute.

IM: Certainly.

Tell us your earliest memories of Ocean Street and Railway Terrace when you were a boy?

IM: When I was growing up The Times was located in Coral Street, No 13 Coral Street, not Ocean Street, and as a young lad, generally on Saturday mornings Dad would take me around to The Times, he was always working Saturday mornings before he went off to golf. I would be sweeping floors and tidying up, emptying rubbish bins for which they gave me a token amount; a couple of bob for spending money and I did that for almost every week of the year.

What do you remember about the actual street, the businesses and activities.

IM: Businesses in the street, I remember a number of them. There were drycleaners, it was Ocean Drycleaners alongside of The Times, I think that was, his name was Don smelt. There was the Pharmacy down at the corner of

Coral Street and Ocean Street, that was Ron Goldsack. There was Bells department store, that had been there, that was an institution. Of course the Library was across the road, as I remember there was a jeweller's shop diagonally opposite The Times and some other businesses around the main street which were there certainly through my childhood. In the seventies they faded away or changed hands. I remember a number of businesses around there run by people who were peers to my father or the same generation as my father.

Do you remember how many guesthouses there were?

IM: There were many guesthouses, and that's one thing that really sticks in my mind from those years. Victor Harbor had always been a very popular and favoured holiday destination for people from Adelaide and further up in the country. There was (sounds like Amerta), there was Phipps; there was Strathmore; there was Clifton; there was Warringah which is now The Anchorage; Imperial. There must have been a good dozen or fifteen perhaps even twenty scattered around the town and Summerlea Mansions. They were all very popular with out-of-towners during the holiday seasons.

The biggest one was The Clifton wasn't it?

IM: The Clifton was certainly very big; the Strathmore was big; another one comes to mind was The Central where Westpac Bank is now; that was quite large in the main street, but certainly Clifton was one of the larger ones of the guesthouses around Victor in that era. Very popular during summer and the school holidays.

Were all three pubs running then?

IM: Yep, yep. All very busy, Hotel Grosvenor was probably one of the busiest, then The Crown of course. The Hotel Victor was rebuilt, I think it was perhaps in the fifties, replaced the old one. All did a good trade but of course then you had six o'clock closing when they all closed at six o'clock and the police went around and checked. Yep, I certainly remember that.

Did you ever use the trains Ian?

IM: The railway to Victor Harbor as I remember growing up in fifties and sixties was a vital transport link to the town. We, I, myself and my mother once a year she would take me to the Royal Show and would take us up on the train; it was about a two hour, three hour journey I think via Mt Barker etc. Whenever they had to go to town it was primarily the railway or the bus. I don't think my father got a car until the early sixties.

Quite late?

IM: Yes, started driving, yeah. Didn't really have a need for it, didn't have a need for it.

What about supplies from Adelaide for the business?

IM: Everything generally came down by train. I can remember many a time watching the trains coming in, all coal burners from memory; Duke of Edinburgh and those big ones; massive engines coming down and the freight being unloaded. I can't recall how many employees there were there at the railway station. A lot of it was manual freight; you know, manual unloading. They certainly had a jib down a bit further near where the Whale Centre is now, for unloading heavy stuff. But a lot of it came out of carriages and a significant part of supplies for the town came down by train.

What is now the Whale Centre, that was the goods receiving yard wasn't it?

IM: Yeah, a big warehouse and a lot of stuff that was in there I think, from memory, could be secured in the lockable areas, not bond stores but lockable areas. That railway there played an important part in commerce, right through to Port Elliot; even stopped at Middleton, Goolwa then Strathalbyn. My father used to travel to see his parents, sorry his grandparents at Strathalbyn by train.

The trip to Adelaide was about two hours wasn't it?

IM: Yeah, look, I suspect it was probably a bit longer, two and a half perhaps three hours as I recollect. It was a long journey but you didn't know anything different.

Six hours in one day?

IM: Yeah and you know you'd go to the Royal Show in September during holidays and you'd get up early and the train probably left at 6.30 am, get up there, we'd get off at Goodwood, it had a stop there and you'd walk over to the Showgrounds and then at about five o'clock in the afternoon catch a train back. Get home at 8.00 pm or 9.00 pm; it was a big adventure for us.

A lovely day, especially for the kids of course.

IM: Yes, yes.

Ian, talking about the train, what supplies was Dad getting from Adelaide do you remember?

IM: There was the paper, apart from the newspaper, The Times, Grandfather and Father also had a printing section within The Times where they did business cards, letterheads, all stationery. I think at that stage they were probably the only printers in the town, or the district. All their paper supplies came down from Adelaide by train. If they needed some typeset, like linotype, speciality blocks where photographs were converted to gravure blocks; they would generally come down on the train unless they had some arrangements with a business person like Frank Howat in later years would do a weekly trip to Adelaide and bring stuff back for them. Invariably the majority of their supplies and bits and pieces would come down on the train.

In your father's time of course the printing wasn't actually done in The Times building any more was it?

IM: Yes it was.

When he started?

IM: No Grandfather and Father printed The Times in their era at Coral Street. Initially it was Railway Terrace and then it went to Coral Street after Grandfather purchased the business in 1922. In 1973 they ceased printing The Times at Coral Street when they converted to Web Offset printing and that was then done in Adelaide.

Right, we'll talk about that later.

IM: Yes.

That's interesting. When you left school what was your first job?

IM: My first job after leaving school I joined the Army. I was seventeen and enlisted in the Army and my parents finally relented and signed the papers after making me stay at school to get my Leaving Certificate which was a reasonable standard of education in those days. At the age of seventeen, off I went into the Army; it was a big adventure for me. I was in there for three years.

And you went to Vietnam didn't you?

IM: Yes in 1969 I was posted overseas to Vietnam; came back early 1970 and took my discharge and then went off and studied accountancy at night school and went into the accountancy profession.

When you were in Vietnam were you involved in active fighting or just support troops?

IM: I was in support troops, a transportation company; that delivered supplies and logistics to the task force.

So you didn't see live fighting?

IM: Just a little, a few incidents in convoys.

Can I ask you a silly question? Who decides who fights and who supports?

IM: In a War like Vietnam, nobody decides who fights and who doesn't; it just depends where you are and circumstances and the location of the enemy and Vietnam was a very different War from WWII that had conventional front lines. WWII, as we knew, the trench lines but Vietnam changed all of that so it was anywhere.

In fact, wherever you were you could have been attacked?

IM: Well conceivably yes; where we were based was regarded as a safe area but two years before Vung Tau had been mortared, had been attacked by the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive in 1968, so nowhere was really safe. Saigon was not safe; there were intermittent attacks there, terrorist attacks.

So even though you were on support, were you always armed? Did you carry weapons all the time?

IM: No, not all the time, no. On leave, when we had leave in Vung Tau invariably we didn't because that area was supposedly regarded as a safe area and supposedly the word was that the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese used to have R&R relaxation in there too so there was probably an uneasy truce in fact was true. I guess they had to have time out but when we went on convoys we certainly were armed. Yeah.

You were in the Army for three years weren't you? Whereabouts in Australia apart from Vietnam?

IM: I started out, I did my initial training at Kapooka, outside of Wagga Wagga. I then went down and did my core training at Puckapunyal near Seymour. My first posting was then up to Ingleburn, outskirts of Sydney and then I was sent on detachments up to central Queensland like Rockhampton, Shoalwater Bay training area then New South Wales, Gan Gan, places like that, training areas. Then jungle training centre at Kanungra in Queensland then overseas. Mostly it was eastern states based.

Did you sign for a set period of three years?

IM: Three years, yes.

Did they ask you to stay on?

IM: I considered staying on and they offered it to me and they offered promotions if I would stay on but I wasn't quite sure so I erred on the side of caution.

What rank did you get to?

IM: I held the rank of Corporal at time of discharge.

You got out of the Army after three years and then you decided to go into accounting.

IM: Yeah, yeah. I had an inclination for book-keeping, figures, financial so going into, that progression into accountancy; that seemed natural so I formalised, get some qualifications and off to night school while I was working during the day in clerical type book-keeping, accounting position.

This was all in Adelaide?

IM: This was all in Adelaide, yes, yes. Then when I'd finished my accountancy, I chopped that, a five or six year course, I managed to do it in three years part-time by doubling up and cramming subjects in and then specialising in Taxation Law; that was my forte.

Three years you were studying; good heavens!

IM: Yes, yes. I doubled up; instead of doing say two subjects a term I'd do four and five a term. A lot of it was just natural; I breezed through this. I wasn't cocky I was just confident and I knew it and because it was all accounting-based subjects then it just came naturally to me. That enabled me to get through it quicker.

So then you came back to Victor didn't you?

IM: I was working in Adelaide at a taxation accountancy firm until 1979 when my brother Paul who was working in the business and had the previous year in 1978 bought out my Grandfather's interest said to me, "Dad's retiring, would you like to come into the business? We need your accounting and finance skills in there because the business is growing."

I thought about it and I thought yes, why not; a change of career.

So you and your brothers, Paul and Michael, became the fourth generation of the Milnes in the printing industry?

IM: That's correct. Brother Paul and I were the equity owners, the shareholders and the directors, and Michael at that stage chose not to, he had an offer to have a financial interest in the business but he had to commit himself but he chose not to. He stayed with us for a short time then went off and he and his partner purchased the Victor Harbor Dry-cleaning business and he had that for a few years until he then later re-joined The Times. He sold that then re-joined The Times.

Now Ian, your grandfather, Peter Milnes started with The Argus newspaper in Strathalbyn in 1911.

IM: Yes.

Then he transferred to The Times in Victor Harbor in 1917. His son, Colin, your father joined the paper in 1933. Can you fill in the gaps for us, starting with the first edition of The Times in 1912?

IM: That was published in 1912 and I have here, which I showed you earlier, a copy of it, it was August 23rd 1912. It was styled The Victor Harbour Times and Encounter Bay and Lower Murray Pilot, so it was a very long masthead, we call them mastheads; published on that day as I mentioned and the cover price was one penny. It was four pages, it was broadsheet in size which is approximately twice A3 size, and four of those pages, one sheet folded over, and we have a replica of it here we're looking at now. The first proprietor of The Times, if I can call it the Times rather than the mouthful The Victor Harbor Times etc, the proprietor, it was established by Joseph Elliot who was proprietor of the Strathalbyn newspaper, The Southern Argus, based in Strathalbyn of course. The first editor of The Times was Cec Elliot, or Cecil Elliot; he was a son of Mr Joseph Elliot and he was sent over to manage the newspaper on behalf of his family. He was young, and I think, a bit of a lad, and as family history recalls he was physically run out of town by some senior citizens, senior as in leading citizens of the town, for disgracing himself.

In what way, can you tell us?

IM: Yes, the family, he got shickered one night and he was, as we were told, he was up the upper level of the Town Hall and he peed over some citizens down there! (Laughter)

He was obviously drunk at the time.

IM: Obviously very shickered! Very drunk at the time so he was manhandled and run out of town. In his place, Joseph Elliot needed somebody to run the paper; the only person available he sent my grandfather over, Herbert Milnes, he was always known as Peter Milnes. Peter was born, if I can just mention, in 1897 in Strathalbyn and he joined the Southern Argus printing office in May 1911 aged fourteen so by 1917 when he came over here he basically had six years experience in the printing office and the newspaper, the Southern Argus newspaper under his belt. He was probably a bit young but he knows what to do.

He ran in 1917, in 1917 he is twenty years old; he had tried to enlist in the Army, we're talking 1914 – 1918, the first World War. He'd tried to enlist in the Army, his older brother John had and John was killed in 1916 over in France. Peter was deemed medically unfit and back in those days they would actually give somebody a badge and a certificate saying, you've tried to enlist but...

...You're not eligible?

IM: You're not eligible because of his eyes. He always had glasses; all his life virtually. So Pete took that on and he did a pretty reasonable job for the time, got by, with the editions kept on coming out. In 1920 he purchased The Times from the Elliot family and he did that using resources from his wife's family. He'd married Ivy Lavine Grosvenor in 1919, her father was a father of substance; he was later Mayor of Victor Harbor successful builder and we believe he put all the money forward to build, sorry, to buy The Times. That same year he built for Ivy and Pete, The Times building as we virtually see it today if you stand out the front. That's a purpose built building of solid stone, beautifully built; we haven't been able to source how much it cost but on the left hand side if you look at it is the business side, the newspaper side, the job printing side and on the right hand side was the residence. So in 1922 he took over The Times and his wife, Grandmother, she didn't do any work back in those days, the Grosvenor family was fairly well off.

Affluent?

IM: They were. That's probably a good word and they, none of the girls worked. She had about three sisters and none of them worked; for their dowry each of the girls was given a guesthouse. Like, Dad built a guesthouse as a dowry. Ivy never worked as I was saying not many of the Grosvenors worked. Anyway Grandfather toiled on and he became quite good at it; he became over the years a leading citizen in the town. The Times was highly respected then as it is now and he knew everybody around, people would come and seek his advice, counsel and stuff like that. At times over the years, maybe he was regarded as the unofficial mayor of Victor Harbor.

During the Depression years 1929 onwards, businesses shrank. You know there was a lot of unemployment, businesses shrank, cut back on expenditure. Pete kept the paper going, even though advertising revenues decreased, using family resources and that was very important as the newspaper was an important source of information throughout the community.

So he was really propping it up financially?

IM: He was propping it up financially so he'd invest money or bought numerous blocks of land and stuff like that but during the Depression he'd sell them off where he could and if he got a good price he kept The Times going. 1933 my father Colin, their only son, he joined The Times as an apprentice compositor, he was Ian Colin Milnes, everybody called him Colin and he joined as an apprentice compositor so he learnt all aspects of the trade, the newspaper, the job printing, typing and stuff like that. Letter setting, setting the letters bit by bit and we have some photographs of him doing that, hand-setting stuff; that was very meticulous. That's not part of the industry that I learnt in, there was computer technology by then. So Dad learned all that old technology as his father did and taught him.

That takes us up until your father joined them. He was a very busy man your father, wasn't he? Sorry, you've got more to say?

IM: Yes, I'll just add, in about 1928, my grandfather employed his wife's, Ivy's, second cousin, a chap by the name of Arch Grosvenor who, born 1911, as a messenger and apprentice without indenture. Now I've not come across that title before but obviously there's no committal or there's no warranty that you'll do an apprenticeship. Anyway Arch learnt the trade as editor while Grandfather concentrated on managing the business and selling the advertising and setting it and bits and pieces like that. He was there, Arch was there for a few years until he went off in I think the mid-thirties.

To The Advertiser I believe?

IM: Advertiser? I think that was in later years. I think that at one stage he was, and I'm not sure of the years, but he was at The Murray Pioneer as an editor and at The Advertiser so he gained experience in country newspapers and then of course in metropolitan.

How long was he Editor for the Victor Harbor Times?

IM: I beg your pardon?

How long was he the Editor at the Victor Harbor Times?

IM: I think until about 1936 as I recall my father telling me, about 1936 he then went off. My father Colin, was in there in 1933, he's learning the trade, September 1939 War was declared and people started going off and enlisting. You start creating labour shortages. July 1940 our father Colin, he decided to enlist in the Army so he enlists, that immediately creates a shortage of labour at The Times. One month before then another Times employee, Lewis Edward Sheehan, he was known as Chick Sheehan. He was a printer and compositor, he enlisted in the Army 29th June 1940 and unfortunately both of them subsequently became prisoners of war of the Japanese.

During those war years Grandfather Peter, perhaps I'll go back one step. During the war years as most people would be aware, rationing was introduced, widespread rationing, almost everything was rationed – food, clothing, including newsprint. Newsprint was rationed but Grandfather somehow managed to secure an ongoing supply of newsprint. The newspaper didn't grow in those years going by page numbers, it just kept at a steady I think four pages, sometimes six pages. But he always managed to get a supply of newsprint.

You don't know how do you?

IM: I don't know but I think over the years he'd, because he had a position of influence in the town he of course knew the politicians, the local members, the state members, importantly the federal member but I don't know who it was in those days. He would have used his offices to ensure that he could get what he wanted.

I'm surprised that newsprint was rationed because it is an essential service for newspapers for people to keep up to date with the War.

IM: But see the government needed paper for all their manuals, their publications, propaganda and stuff like that. It was carefully rationed but it was obviously obtainable so Grandfather managed to secure an ongoing supply.

If you knew the right people.

IM: Yeah. Exactly, exactly; par for the course.

(Indistinct.)

IM: Yep, yep. So not only was he looking after his business but also I think the government saw it as newspapers as a primary source of dissemination of information and War news and propaganda and War news for the public. Government Victory Bonds and Loans and things like that.

Of course there was no television in those days.

IM: No TV; radio was widely listened to but newspapers were always there, coming out every week, yep.

So he kept the paper going, published War news and importantly and probably sadly was publishing the Casualty Lists of local men who were killed, starting in the first one, local man killed was Harold Reginald Wilson killed in I think it was 1940 or '41 in the Battle of Tobruk. Wilson's Point or Wilson's Hill outside Victor on the Waitpinga Road, there's a memorial up there.

So he's publishing that and then gradually there's more, they just keep coming in consistently. Right through end of 1940, end of the War in July - August 1945. They were just the casualties and also those that were wounded but also those that had been taken POW in 1942. Like Colin Milnes, Chick Sheehan, there's Howard Nightingale, there's just a whole string of local men.

A lot of them when they joined up they went off and they were posted to the same Unit. One was the 2nd Third Machine Gun Battalion and its supporting Units. There's Howard Nightingale, there's Chick Sheehan was in that, a number of guys from Goolwa, Port Elliot, all went away together, fought in the Middle East, successful there against the Vichy French came back and were diverted to Java, all captured together. Just a whole string of them. These are all the names getting published and sometimes the newspapers got hold of it before the next of kin. You know, you're reading about it in the newspaper.

Terrible.

IM: Terrible.

Terrible to read it in the paper, yes.

IM: Yes, yes. So that goes on and from that point of view The Times like other country newspapers served a very important, had a very important place in the community during those war years.

Ian, do you think, being an accountant, The Times was running at a loss for the whole of the War period?

IM: No, I don't believe so; my recollection talking to Grandfather Pete years ago, you know when I was doing the accounts and stuff like that we talked about a little bit of history here and there; it was really only the Depression years that they weren't making money.

Right.

IM: They weren't losing money hand over fist, they were losing a bit here and there and he's having to dip in every now and then but during the war years they are still advertising, people are still wanting to sell their goods and if we printed out some copies from Trove, War years 1939 to '45 I think we'd still see advertising there.

I noticed in the copies I've seen there was tons of advertising still, particularly in supermarkets and department stores.

IM: Yep, yep. He was comfortable during those years and remained comfortable.

So basically covering costs?

IM: Yes, yes, War years covering costs, making a profit, yep. 1946 Colin Milnes and Chick Sheehan they were liberated in 1945 from the POW camps were sent home to Australia, repatriated home, demobilised in February 1946 and shortly thereafter they joined The Times again. Dad remained there until his retirement, had difficulty adjusting, nowadays you put it down to War, post-traumatic stress disorder. I remember Chick Sheehan when I

was growing up he was there and he left The Times I think in about 1966 – '67. Just, I don't think he could cope any more, ended up with a War Pension.

How old was Dad when he left The Times?

IM: When he enlisted?

No when he left The Times.

IM: Oh he retired in 1977, when he had just turned sixty.

'77?

IM: He retired in 1979, born 1919.

Right.

IM: That works out to sixty years in my book.

Yes. So '79 when he retired?

IM: Yeah, not seventy-nine.

Yes I meant 1979.

IM: Yes, yes. When you're an accountant you have to be very specific.

Yes, yes. So what year did Granddad retire?

IM: Grandfather retired in 1978 when my brother, Paul, bought out the business but I'll go back a few years. After the War years, 1954, Grandfather restructured the business and set it up into an incorporated company, you know, things like liability and limited liability were starting to raise their heads and defamation insurance was now starting to be taken out by country newspapers. So that was restructured as a private company with Father, my father, and Grandfather being the directors and shareholders. That continued along, I think it was probably early sixties. Dad, Colin, was appointed Editor of The Times so Grandfather was stepping back just a little bit from that responsibility but still actively engaged in the business.

In 1964 Paul Milnes, one of my older brothers left school and joined The Times as an apprentice compositor, starting out there. He stayed basically at the end of the year as he told me later, his being an apprentice compositor wasn't his forte. It turned out that when he went to Adelaide and worked for a printing company up there he went into Sales; he was selling printing and advertising. That was to prove to be his strength, his forte.

He went off and was quite successful in what he did; he went to Queensland and worked in a position as Sales Manager for the Gladstone Observer newspaper that at that stage was owned by Murdoch; one of his provincial newspapers. Was quite successful at that; he caught the eye of a chap from Adelaide by the name of Alan Smedley who owned the Balaklava Producer, the Eudunda Courier; the Inland Revue, a second newspaper in Broken Hill and in Whyalla owned the Spencer Gulf Pictorial newspaper.

He asked Paul if he would take on the job as Manager there which he did after agreement and proved quite successful in that newspaper. That newspaper was up against the Whyalla Newsgroup, the Whyalla News which is Jock Willson in those days and gave them curry! He was good at that. In late 1972 Paul got wind of, through connections in the Country Press Association in South Australia that a retired News executive, I think his name was Boland was planning to come to Victor Harbor and start up a new newspaper which would be in opposition to The Times.

At that stage Web type-setting and offset printing was just starting to come, just starting to be introduced into the metropolitan newspapers for industry, not so much in country newspapers but it was a cheaper technology. Anyway my brother was tipped off about this and he came down and met with Grandfather and Dad and said, "This is what's going to happen, this is what you should do! You should convert to computer type-setting, throw the linotype out and all of that stuff and that old method printing and go to web-offset printing." He gave more good reasons and cited examples, this is what we've done in Gladstone, this is what we're doing up in Whyalla and you should really go."

Anyway Pete and Colin thought about it and they decided yes, we must do this so they made that decision. It required significant investment in the technology, to buy that technology, and Grandfather, the majority his money, he made that investment, he made that commitment and they then converted, started to convert to computer type-setting and web-offset printing. The first edition came out in 1973.

That was web-offset?

IM: That was web offset, yes.

In 1973?

IM: 1973. April 1973 was the first edition of The Times printed using computer typesetting and printed web-offset and it went to a tabloid size; it went from broadsheet down to tabloid because that's the size the printing press was best able to produce. That was done in Adelaide at a company called Smedley Press Pty Ltd which was the owner of Spencer Gulf Pictorial and Paul was directly working for at the time. He was now a full-time employee of The Times in 1973 and he's selling advertising, he's doing photography and importantly, the new processes and new technology allowed you to take a photograph, say at 10 o'clock and by 11 o'clock you can produce what we called a PNT bromide photo mechanical transfer bromide that's suitable for paste-up ready for web-offset, plus making for web-offset printing. Rather than having a photogravure block made in Adelaide and take three days or four days to get to you.

We're coming to that later on, the matter of printing. One of the questions is about photos. Before we leave Dad, I believe that your father also had another small business in Victor Harbor? What was that?

IM: Yes. Grandfather, we have a photograph here amongst us in the family but the photograph is a classic photograph. Grandfather, Peter Milnes, this was taken in 1938, and alongside of him is Tommy McGubbin Senior who was a WWI veteran, highly decorated, lost an arm, amputated, wounded in action, and Jimmy Lee. As it was told to us in later years they were all SP bookies in the town.

Working together?

IM: Well working together but probably doing deals like fixing the odds and things like that and they were never caught, never charged or anything like that.

So it was all underhand?

IM: All underhand, of course it was!

You didn't have a proper betting shop or anything like that?

IM: I never asked my father directly but brother Paul tells me that Colin followed on the tradition and he was doing stuff too like, on behalf of people, both together; some of this betting on the side.

Which is a nice little bit of extra pocket-money of course.

IM: It was, added to, nothing was ever boring back in those days.

Dad never became a councillor or was involved with Council was he?

IM: Not that I can recall but I think they preferred to stay out of local politics; they tried and I believe they did a good job of reporting the local councils and back in those days there were two councils; District Council of Victor Harbor and the Council of Encounter Bay until they merged. The others, Port Elliot, then there's Goolwa and Yankalilla; they reported the Council news and held them to account from time to time when they needed to be held to account. They had a good relationship; there was a wonderful District Clerk back in those days, Bert Warland; highly respected.

Warland Reserve.

IM: Yes, yes and some good Mayors too and Grandfather cultivated relationships as they cultivated relationships with him; they saw the newspaper as an important part of projecting an image and getting their message out to the community. I think they all worked well together.

The newspaper got on well with the Council because they could all work together.

IM: Yes, yes.

There was never any big fallouts or disputes?

IM: No. Running Council is a very difficult job. Now it is so much more difficult. I've got a lot of time for this Council down here because they've got to manage limited resources; they've got a huge area to manage and it's almost like trying to walk down the middle of the road and please everybody. Somebody's going to tip you on one side aren't they? It's not an envious job and I think council maintains a pretty good relationship with The Victor Harbor Times.

It's common knowledge that all newspapers often have disputes with their local councils and criticise them and don't always agree with what they are doing.

IM: Yeah.

As long as that doesn't become a major war, it's part of the newspaper.

IM: Yes and I think using the word disputes is not the right word; the Editor of any newspaper is entitled to express an opinion and what that opinion is, the editor should try and gauge the mood of the community and say what they think is in the best interests of that community. Councils don't always get things right; sometimes they get it wrong but a good council will say we've got it wrong and they'll fix the problem. A newspaper's responsibility to a country town, here, Strathalbyn, Pt Augusta, Whyalla is to report on what the council is doing and provide this is what the community's opinion is or what you should be doing, this is what we need.

Ian, all businesses have problems as we know but did The Times have any major problems? I know one you will talk about but was that the main problem, the flooding?

IM: The flooding was a natural catastrophe; an Act of God. No, over the years we never encountered much difficulty; we had good relationship, working relationship with the Union, the Printing and Kindred Industries Union which governed our employees. We enjoyed a good relationship with them so we didn't have any industrial problems; we looked after our employees, exceptionally well, particularly during the era when Grandfather and Dad looked after their employees and we progressed that on.

We paid our staff well; journalists were always hard to get in the country and what we did we paid our journalists based on the metropolitan award rather than the country award. The metropolitan award was a good degree

higher in wages than the country award much to the annoyance of our Country Press Association who said what are you doing you're setting, raising the bar.

Did you do that to try and encourage journalists to move down from Adelaide?

IM: Exactly, exactly. We wanted quality journalists with some experience to move from Adelaide, to move from another position so we offered them higher wages and they were rewarded for their efforts. They did a good job and we managed to keep most of them for a good deal of time.

Now Ian, let's talk about the printing processes. It started with hand set in 1912 and can you take us through the changes?

IM: Yes and that was virtually letter by letter, metal type and also blocked wooden type; we've still got some samples of that here, the family's still got some. Then it progressed to lino-type machines where the operator, the compositor as they were called, would type and this machine would produce stuff in metal and press

Was that like a typewriter keyboard?

IM: Yes, almost like a big typewriter. We'd didn't have those machines at The Times. Where there was a need Grandfather and Dad had that done in Adelaide at Adelaide Linotype or in Adelaide which was around the back lane where the Adelaide News was on North Terrace. That would be sent down by bus and train to Victor Harbor; that was expensive and it was slow, particularly when it came to using photographs in the newspaper. To get a photograph made you had to send it to town to get a block made and we've probably got some samples left around there. That was tedious and expensive. When it went to computer typesetting and paste up and all of that.

Which is the webset?

IM: Which is web-offset.

In 1973?

IM: Yes in 1973, the whole technology changed overnight. Instead of lead type it's coming out on a photo-mechanical special photosynthesised paper where it goes through a developing tank once it's typed; it's like a positive piece of film. That's positioned on a page, you get a photograph. My brother would take the photograph; he would then develop that negative film in the dark-room which is specially constructed at The Times. Then when the photograph is dry it is then taken back into another dark-room and we would make what we called a PMT bromide – photo mechanical transfer bromide using copy proof positive paper and copy proof negative paper; CPN and CPP. That produced a picture which had a lot of dots in it and if you looked at it under a magnifying glass you'd see there were all dots and that was needed for the printing web-offset process.

That was all positioned on the page, they then made page negatives, A3 size, one per page, they were stripped together in a certain sequence; four of these pages makes one printing plate and we always had to print in sequences of four pages tabloid. So we had four, eight sixteen, sorry twelve, sixteen, twenty, twenty-four etc. Couldn't do thirty, couldn't do thirty-four, couldn't do twenty-two or seventeen or anyway. It went to Adelaide for printing at Smedley Press and turned around in a few hours and back to Victor Harbor. It changed overnight virtually.

Do you remember when you first started printing photographs in The Times?

IM: Yes, 1973, April 1973.

That's just when webset came in?

IM: When web-offset came in. We were doing it before but using this block process.

Which is time-consuming and expensive>

IM: Yes, time-consuming and expensive, yes.

You mentioned when I talked to you before about going to America didn't you to bring back?

IM: Yep. After I joined The Times, perhaps we can cover that a little bit later because there's a few other points that The Times did and my brother really, brother Paul, really brought The Times into the twentieth century and after this Grandfather Peter really couldn't keep up with it. By then 1976, 1977 his health is starting to deteriorate a little bit, he's probably about eighty-two years old or eighty years old. So in 1978 he bows out, sells his interest to brother Paul. In 1979 Dad's saying well, you know, I've had a pretty long working life and the War years really knocked him about so he decided to retire and that's when I came in and with the technology it allowed us to cover events on the Monday morning, Monday was our production day. Monday morning we'd have photographers here, there and everywhere over the weekend, ever since the last edition, covering events; sporting fixtures, the football, the basketball, the netball, all that stuff, tennis, cricket, all the winter and summer sports throughout the year. And feature those in the paper. My brother had learnt in his time in newspapers up in Queensland, heads in papers sells paper; if you've got young Tommy in the Junior Colts on Saturday and he's in the paper, Mum's going to go out and buy a couple of copies and come in and then buy a black and white print of it.

It was heads in paper, that was the important thing and during our tenure we employed two photographers, full-time, and one was an apprentice or apprentice cadet and they just went out covering all events and then my brother backed them up and the editor and the journos backed them up where needed. There wasn't an event on the southern Fleurieu we didn't cover.

The person who chooses the photo is the editor isn't it?

IM: Correct.

Only one person?

IM: One person generally; the editor in those earlier years was my brother Paul. After I joined in about 1980 or '81 we then employed an Editor from outside. We brought him in, appointed him Editor and so that passed across some of the responsibility. Brother Paul was always classed as the Managing Editor so he was like the Executive Chair or Executive General Manager of that so he had the last say but generally we left the Editor to his own devices.

So the Managing Editor is doing two jobs, General Manager and the Editor?

IM: Basically, yes.

A full-time job?

IM: Yes but he relinquished a lot of his editorial responsibilities to the Editor who, at that stage, by that time, was Graham Rich and General Manager's responsibilities was myself.

When did colour first come in to The Times?

IM: We started using colour on occasions, I think as I recall, the first time we used colour was 1982 when we published a seventieth anniversary edition of The Times and we reproduced on the front page was that (showing interviewer) and on the back page was the last page and then in the middle, the centre two pages, and we used a local artist, Peter Matthews now deceased, had painted a landscape scene of the Bluff, Encounter Bay and Victor Harbor. We had that photographed, it was colour, oil painting, had it photographed, scanned and we reproduced

it into the middle of the newspaper. That was the first time we used colour and it was a fantastic reaction from the public.

It was a huge step forward wasn't it?

IM: Yeah, yeah. So it demonstrated we could do colour; the lead times for using colour in newspapers then even though we had technology was pretty good it required colour scanning and we didn't have the equipment to do that. Now they have, they've got that, Apple Macs tech; we didn't have it back then, it was a specialist trade house material.

Yeah, August 1982 was the first time we used colour in The Times.

Was the ink used a lot more expensive than black and white?

IM: It was but not so much the ink, it's the production process; apart from producing the negatives required you need a negative. When you print black only you only need one negative and that's black K. when you print colour there's a breakdown of colours, CYMK; cyan, yellow, magenta and black. You need one negative for each colour and the separation of the colour is done under a very specialised process, colour scanning. So there's that cost there which if it's being used by an advertiser they would bear that cost. Then there's the printing cost because you require three more printing units, a printing unit for each colour.

Of course.

IM: Yep. It can be done but it's more expensive.

You've virtually covered the actual changing, the improving of the printing process. You're really up to date with the computer technology aren't you?

IM: Yes, very much so. That technology was changing fairly regularly and in 1983 brother Paul and I made a commitment to purchase the latest technology available for newspapers. It was, the brand was Copygraphic (sounds like) out of the United States, a world-wide leader in newspaper composition and advertising make-up terminals and we purchased what was called an ONE or a one system, classified editorial system, but the software today is based on that. We purchased that together with a big advertising make-up terminal about this wide and about that high and with a big screen on it. Back then, 1983 I think it was a commitment of about \$250,000 for us which was a lot of money but we knew this was the way to go.

The training was going to be very specialised, part of it entailed the advertising terminal called the Advantage and I was sent to the US to train on that and that I did there in February in 1984 from memory. Went to Massachusetts which is just outside of Boston on Highway 128 and known as the Technological Highway of America and there was the headquarters of the Copygraphic Corporation where I did some training there and learnt how to do that. At the same time, met some other people who were doing similar type training and cultivated contacts with them because America was always in the forefront of newspaper technology so what these guys were doing we should be doing as well. So I thought I should maintain contact with them which we did.

Came back and when all the equipment was installed a couple of months later then showed other production staff like Colin Megaw how to use that; brother Michael who by then was back working for the company, how to use that.

Did you import the initial equipment from America

IM: Yep it all came, all our newspaper equipment always came out of the US because they were the forerunners in technology in newspaper production. As long as I was in the printing industry until 2000 they were still the leaders of printing technology, yeah, yeah.

But the first equipment that you purchased when you went over, you brought back?

IM: No, no I didn't bring it back with me. It was over there at the Copygraphic headquarters being manufactured as I was there. They showed me a production line and they just trained me up on a particular terminal, the hardest one but also the one that would generate the most income.

But then Australia produced the equipment here did they?

IM: No, no the equipment was imported, it was always imported; we never manufactured, Australia never manufactured printing equipment that I'm aware of.

That's still today?

IM: Yes it comes from overseas.

That's amazing isn't it?

IM: Yeah. Well they've always had the IT, it's always been over there; always developed there.

I'm surprised there are so many newspapers and printing processors in Australia that we aren't producing the equipment ourselves.

IM: There's not that many newspapers in Australia in comparison with the US.

Oh no, no.

IM: No. Proportionately New Zealand has more newspapers than Australia per capita.

While we're on equipment, the old-fashioned rollers are still in use you told me. The rollers for printing the actual paper, they still use three don't they?

IM: The old printing press that we had in there the old Wharfedale Press that Grandfather and Father used in 1973 that got smashed up and taken out of the building. That worked on a roller technology transfer of impression to paper and ink and all of that. The newspaper presses of today are similar technology rollers but there's more technology involved in them. They print at much higher speed, better reproduction, high quality reproduction and it's all to do with the technology in the presses so the only thing you might say that's common is there is a printing roller in that 1912 Wharfedale Press and there's a printing roller in this Goss Web Community or MAN roll and press.

Is any of the old equipment left for the public to see in Victor or Adelaide?

IM: No. Look there may be some of the old printing presses, the small printing presses; I don't know if the School of Graphic Arts. There used to be a School of Graphic Arts at Croydon, they might have had a bit of a museum down there; I don't know if they've still got it. No I don't believe there's any left. Even our old computer technology, as we change from one generation to the next headliners to one system it had no value. It was no good to anybody else. It was not like a Smart terminal like we have now they were virtually scrapped, just scrapped. Unfortunate but there's no place to store it; floor space was at a premium.

Of course, I was just thinking if Victor Harbor had a real museum space that would probably be in there now; you would have given it to the museum.

IM: Yeah one doesn't like to throw these things out if there's not so much an intrinsic value there's a heritage or historic value and like part of the family but you've got no place to put it.

It's a shame in a way. I'm sure, maybe Adelaide in the big Museum has some sort of printing.

IM: Perhaps.

Yeah. Ian, Let's move on to the RSL. I know you're very active even now in the RSL. Was your Dad an active member when he came back?

IM: He was a member per se, active I'm not sure, I don't know I would describe him as active. Keep in mind a lot of those men, all of those men that came back then resumed their normal lives as best they could, they're raising families, the RSL was a social gathering point for those men. Principally as I recall on a Friday night they met initially in the Town Hall upstairs before they shifted round to Flinders Parade. Dad, what he could, he reported the activities of the RSL where he could. I can't recall whether he was on committee or anything like that of the RSL. Certainly, the day he died he remained a Life Member of the RSL. He firmly believed in the institution.

But you are much more active than Dad was aren't you?

IM: Well I was active but only after I retired. When Colin retired he went off caravanning and holidaying with Mum and we certainly, holiday, my wife and I after I retired but moving down here I'd always been a member since I returned. My father, Colin, had signed me up as a member of the RSL here since 1970 when I came back. I maintained that membership but was never an active member because once again next generation, making a career, working, stuff like that, raising a family, moved back down here in 1984 and I thought I would resume contact with the RSL. I knew a number of the old Diggers around because my father knew them and introduced me and went down there and I was impressed by the then Secretary who, a chap by the name of David Miller, a retired teacher and he subsequently became President and I thought well I'd like to work with this guy and work for him and do what I do best which is finances, looking after finance and money so I took on the job initially as Treasurer after the then Treasurer, Wally Peake. Then got involved in 2008 we decided to start a history research team to research those local men and women who served in the Armed Forces WWI, WWII principally. So I've been involved with that ever since.

Do most RSLs do that history thing?

IM: Look I don't think they did in the past some have some involvement in history research, others have, people like ours have more than most. I think what we produce down here is pretty high standard and the RSL in Adelaide has complimented us on that. We've done a good job down here but it's only because we've had a President and committee that's backed what we're doing.

You've obviously got it on your website so anybody can access it?

IM: Yeah it's on the website and we intend to keep adding to it as we further our research. We've got an awful lot of stuff to be uploaded to the website; it's just a matter of finding time and people. We're a bit short on the ground for volunteers so finding time to get it all on there.

It's a lot of work because you've virtually got to go back through the entire lives of all the people who died;the whole life.

IM: Yes we, one of our research team members is an amateur genealogist, Bruce Lane ex-Navy and I'd say, Leonard Victor Reid served in WWI with distinction, when was he born, who his parents were, who his siblings were etc so Bruce does all of that information and gets what he can for us. Similarly for WWII so that's a start so we know where they were born and then we search school records if they are available, where they were educated and we go through Trove, it's a big help in searching. So and so got married in 1947 and all of those things.

It's a helluva job.

IM: It's a helluva job but there's so much; the internet makes it all possible. Without the internet we couldn't do it and wouldn't attempt to do it.

Imagine the hours you'd spend without the internet.

IM: Oh yes. Well I'm self-taught in this research, learning as I go along and having studied, been at Law School for a couple of years after I retired the research you've got to do for Law helped me in this research for this military history.

The history process, was it your idea to do it?

IM: I guess so. I was looking at our War Memorials at some stage I think in 2006 and I remember as I was growing up my father saying so and so Keith Sweetman served and Len Reid served and this and that, he's WWI and I'd look at the Honour Rolls and I'd think, now where's Ned Hammett, where's Tom McGovern and names like that Father went to school with. They're not on the Honour Roll so I started researching that and we found out there was a substantial number left off the WWI Honour Roll, WWII Honour Roll and I thought, let's check this further.

You can't just say to somebody, put their name up there, you've got to have evidence, citations to say why they should be up there. They were local, they were educated here, they were born here, they worked here; you need evidence to substantiate that, to corroborate that. So we started doing the research and then some local people would find out, say, somebody might walk into the RSL, "I hear you are doing some research. My grandfather served in WWI; I don't know where or what, he never talked about it can you tell me what?" so we would research on behalf of those people.

Enquiries kept coming and coming and coming. I remember talking to a woman, a lady I went to school with her. She's married now and she said, we had a display in the Hotel Victor one day and she was in there having lunch, then as she turned our display was put up the day before our Victory in the Pacific dinner or ANZAC and it was left up there for a week, by agreement with management. As she was sitting there she looked around and saw a photo of her father up there. He fought in the Battle of Tobruk and he was a Platoon Sergeant and he had, and I'd read the account of his serving there and he'd lost a number of men in his platoon. Tobruk was a pretty hard fight and quite a few casualties in the 2nd 43rd Battalion. Anyway, she approached us and I said, "Your father had a pretty rough time over there, he had men under his control and he lost men so that would no doubt have affected him for the rest of his life."

She said, "That explains now why he was so remote from us and why at times he was pretty hard." It gave a whole new perspective of her father and how his behaviour post WWII when they were coming up and that was probably repeated in many families around the country.

One of the hazards of war.

IM: It's the after-effect. You'd come home with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Manifests itself in many different ways.

As you say, they're never the same again. It's permanent damage; it really is frightening.

IM: It is.

Ian I read somewhere that country newspapers are the eyes and ears of the community. Do you agree with that?

IM: Certainly, absolutely. I look over the history of The Times, what our family's done in the various generations and news reporting from 1912, war years importantly '39 and '45 and post that. Absolutely and I think they are even more important in this day and age where the technology is changing and news reporting is changing. The

government does press releases by five o'clock to make news services at seven o'clock. Too often in the metropolitan papers, coverage of country news is neglected for the sake of space and money, cost. It really is up to newspapers like The Times to inform the community of what's going on. You and I may have access to computers and can look up on a council website and see what they are doing, minutes and stuff like that, the agenda for next week. A lot of people still can't do that. You go out to Waitpinga and I'd say that reception for BigPond out there, well the internet, is pretty lousy. You go over to Deep Creek, over past Goolwa, Currency Creek terrible. The newspaper is such an important part of country towns, country life.

That's right, exactly.

IM: Country reporting, yep.

Do you think with all the in the future technology, do you think newspapers will survive?

IM: Look, I believe so. Metropolitan newspapers have diminished in circulation; people are busier now than they were years ago but they're still selling newspapers, they're still producing, they're still an important source. The Advertiser, The Australian, country newspapers more importantly, because it's got the local netball teams, you don't see those images in the Sunday Mail or The Advertiser for weekend competitions. You pick up The Times, any edition of the year and there's very good sports coverage, whatever's going on the southern Fleurieu it's there. It's really an important part of the community.

It's vital for the newspaper apart from sales.

IM: Yes.

I've always admired the sports coverage for The Times, it must be a quarter of the paper is the sports section I would think.

IM: Sport in country towns is an important part of society.

Of the community, yes, yes, yes.

IM: Yes.

With all your experience, there has to be a lot of funny stories. Can you tell us a few?

IM: There is, we had a few over the years. One of them was we employed a printer and his name, we used to nickname him Stretch. He was almost like two bob short of a quid, an intelligence (indistinct). Gerry, I won't say his surname, I can remember it now but I won't say his surname. Colin Megaw would certainly remember this as brothers Paul and Michael. Our Monday production day was a long, long day. It started about seven o'clock and you'd go through generally until 2.30 Tuesday morning. It's under stress and pressure and add a bit of humour; every now and then we'd play pranks on one another. One of them was, Gerry as I said was two bob short of a quid, in the dark-room he would make our PNT bromides for this and that. Anyway we had, going in to the dark-room, the dark-room generated a lot of heat and the dark-room had air-conditioning ducts. We'd stand outside in the production area and we'd get up to the vent and we'd go, "WHOOOOO!" (laughter)

This would carry through. Gerry would come out and see what the source of the noise was and we've all got straight faces. He said, "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what Gerry?"

"This noise." He'd go back in and we'd do the same again. He'd come out again and we've all got straight faces and wandering around and then I think Colin or Paul might have said, Colin Megaw that is, Colin might have said, "Oh there's a rumour, there's a spirit." By this time Grandfather had died; a spirit wants to come back and live

here or something. Anyway, this went on and on and I don't think we ever told him, we just stopped doing it. (laughter)

So he still thinks there's a spirit there?

IM: He probably does! Another time it was serious at the time but there was a humorous side at the very end. One summer, I think it was about '82 or '83 we had very heavy, almost torrential summer rains and with our additions out the back of The Times we extended out the back to the boundary to increase the production area brother Paul and I, the gutters which were quite a sight, couldn't cope with the sheer volume of rain on this roof. It backed up into the ceiling. Anyway we weren't to know this we just thought a bit flowing over the gutters and this 'n that. The rain went on for a good solid day and overnight.

It must have been the Tuesday or the Wednesday we came in and there was some water damage here and there, coming down the walls, some carpets got wet, brand new carpets, we'd just had this area fitted out. One room was fitted out as a client/staff lounge, relaxation area. We had a fridge and a bar and if you wanted to take the Mayor out there for a drink you could, and all that stuff. It was all very nicely decorated and a brand new carpet, furniture, wall fittings, paintings and there was water damage down there so we called in the insurance company and reported this and they came in and they sent the assessor down. He's looking, oh yes it's not too bad, not too bad, anyway there's this enormous noise and neither of us knew what it was. He was standing close to the door as I was, then all of a sudden the whole ceiling caved in. What had happened, the water, the rain had back-flowed into the insulation batts in the ceiling and just soaked it all up and the weight eventually, like this, what do you call this here? Not masonite.

Gyprock.

IM: Yeah, gyprock. It just caved in under. It all just broke and everything just came tumbling down. Carpets, furniture, everything, paintings, oil paintings, Peter Mathews, Margaret Woods, stuff like that; thousands and thousands of dollars. Damage cause? There's this insurance assessor there.

Who actually saw it, yes.

IM: Who saw it.

So he couldn't dispute it could he? (laughter)

IM: Couldn't dispute it. So that was quite humorous because normally I think an insurance company always treats claims with.

With suspicion!

IM: With suspicion.

Thank God you were insured, I'd say!

IM: Insurance back in those days, we always made sure that we had everything was based on replace old with new or repaired. Absolutely, probably more insurance than we needed but you can never have enough. So he saw this, filed his claim and just said, "Go and get it done. Don't need to get two quotes, just get it done."

So we did that but one of the items that was damaged was our archived copies of The Times and we had them going back in folders filed by year, to 1912. Grandfather had filed them then at the end of each year he'd get them bound and we had those. They were out there in that room and that area. There was the lounge area then there was a garage storage area and all of that had come unstuck too. All these papers were damaged, virtually seventy odd years.

They were all saturated?

IM: They were all water-damaged.

So you couldn't read them again?

IM: No, once it dries out, paper sticks. So how does one replace these? Well, they are almost irreplaceable, you can't go back and print them, it's just humungous. Brother Paul came up with a solution, he said, "Look the only place in the state that's got a copy of The Times is the State Library."

By law you are required, every newspaper, has to send a copy of their newspaper to the Library. So they had a copy. The State Library could go through and microfilm, photograph and microfilm all of the editions and supply us with a copy at the same time they're doing that process for other newspapers. They can advance ours if somebody wants a paper.

The insurance company readily agreed to pay for it so the State Library got their microfilm copy advanced many years because somebody was paying the wages to do it and at the same time we got a copy but we donated ours to the Victor Harbor Public Library, the Council, to go into the Library on the condition that we have free and unfettered access to the microfilm at any time. One of those on spools where you wind it. So the Victor Harbor Library ended up with a copy of all the editions so that was good.

That was one good thing that came out of that disaster. Whilst it was a disaster and I call it that it didn't affect our production in any way. There was some financial loss but of course we had insurance and were adequately covered. As I said, the funny thing was having the insurance assessor right alongside me when all this damage happened.

You were very, very lucky.

IM: I only wish my brother had been there to take a photograph.

Those are a couple of funny stories, what about, were there any major disputes or scandals or people threatening to take you to court or anything?

IM: Yeah, there was one that comes to mind. I haven't got it in my notes but now you come to mention it, it comes to mind. In I think it was 1984 there was a chap by the name of Brian Warming who purchased the Royal Family Hotel. Brian Warming was a publican. A few years earlier he had purchased the Old Rose Inn in Sturt Street.

He started discounting beer. He started doing thirteen to the dozen discounting beer and caused a revolution in the liquor trade in South Australia. He was expanding and I knew quite a bit about his set up and his modus operandi because I used to work for the accountants that were accountants for him. He came to purchase the Port Elliot Royal Family Hotel.

He gave me a call one day and said, I want to advertise and I want an advertisement on page one of the newspaper. In those days, 1984, the Hotel Victor was advertising down the bottom of page one, had a strip ad fifty-two weeks of the year. He said, "I want that position there."

Brian Warming was a guy used to getting his own way. He was also, previous to his hotel activities a car dealer and it was rumoured that, this is before the days of consumer legislation, he had a couple of heavies that would carry, they would pack guns.

Really?

IM: Yes! He always had a lot of cash, this guy. Anyway he called me over and said, "I want to advertise," and when I got over he said, "I want that space there."

I said, "I'm sorry, that's under contract to the Hotel Victor."

I know he's a mate of yours, we know him, Mr Temple, yes, he's considered a mate but he's contracted for that for fifty-two weeks of the year, he's got the first option to renew at the expiration of that. He argued black and blue that he wanted this, and I'll pay double, I'll pay triple. I said, "You cannot have it."

He was getting very argumentative, drinking at the same time and I said that I'm going to terminate this conversation here and now. You know our position, we have a contract, that space is not available. That's it.

His parting words were, "If I can't have that space you won't go to print." And that was a direct threat. I came back over to The Times this Monday afternoon, after five o'clock, told my brother, reported that almost verbatim. Anyway we finished the production and I said to Paul as he was going, "I'm going to stick around, I'm going to stay here until you guys come back in the morning." I brought my old army stretcher in and I'm going to stay here on the premises just in case. Back in those days I was licensed to have a rifle.

A pity you didn't have your gun with you. You did have your gun with you?

IM: Yeah. I took the threat seriously because I knew his background. Anyway, nothing happened which was good but I recall we reported the threat to the CIB anyway, just so it was on the record. Nothing happened, he was all talk; he had his five beers and this and that. That was a direct threat I took seriously at the time; you can't be too careful.

Did he ever come and ask for that same spot again?

IM: No, he did some advertising spasmodically; he was one of these guys who said, "I'm going to spend a lot of money with you." Blah, blah, blah, but didn't do much. I can't recall how long he had the hotel but he eventually sold it. He's now deceased, died some many years ago. (both talking) but we survived.

That was your only serious.

IM: Yeah as I recall. The rest of the time we got on well with our advertisers, the community, did the best we could for it. Loyalty was returned to us.

Today I still think The Times has still got a very good connection with the community and the community loves the paper.

IM: It has. I still see a lot of people around the town that I know from the old days and I meet new people as they come in and I introduce them, this is The Times, this is the local newspaper. Those people that come from country towns, and retire here, say from West Coast, Ceduna, South East and that, they're very familiar with country newspapers. They look for it. People from Adelaide that I meet that have moved down here I introduce them to The Times say, "This is your source of local information."

They do a very good job in this present day and age. You know with technology there they still have a big advantage over technology, the internet and all of that. Yeah, people may have Facebook and this and that but the news and coverage in The Times is second to none.

That's right and anybody can access it throughout the world now. Incredible.

IM: Exactly. We travel overseas quite often and I have always had home delivery here, each Thursday morning when we go overseas I now subscribe digitally to The Times so when we're in France I just, Thursday morning, bang, it's there. Just dial up and I've got it and I can look at it page by page.

Ian we're running out of time; I'm sorry but just one more question from me. You've lived in Victor Harbor all your life?

IM: Not all my life; I moved away when I served in the Army. I came back in 1979.

Only Adelaide then?

IM: Yep. To Adelaide; came back in 1979 to Victor Harbor. Moved back in 1986 to Adelaide when we sold The Times we had a printing business up there; moved back here in 2004 so this is my third time back.

But the majority of your life's been in Victor hasn't it?

IM: Yep.

How do you think it will grow and develop in the next fifty years?

IM: A couple of years ago I read a forecast where they were predicting the population then, I think, was 12,500, by the year 2025 I think it was going to double; or 2030 it was going to double.

That's right.

IM: With the advent of the road being developed into dual, two lanes dual highway, north and south I can only see the town growing even more and it will just be a big expanse. Here we tend to expand out. Overseas, you go to places like France, they go up. High density living here, everyone wants their quarter acre don't they? That's just inherent in the Australian way.

Victor Harbor is going to keep growing; its proximity to Adelaide now, you're talking one hour and ten minutes with traffic going well with the Expressway. With the dual highway it's going to cut down so people will be building out there, almost extending suburbia to Mount Compass and then Mount Compass will be to Willunga. Hopefully they'll still keep some green belts; it's just going to continually expand and the facilities you've got here in Victor Harbor, over the years I've seen it grow. You now have visiting surgeons coming down here, specialists on a very regular basis; before they were only accessible only in Adelaide. You've got talk of Aldi coming here, Coles want to expand. Talk of Bunnings coming in; it's just going to get bigger and bigger; which is good for the community because it creates opportunities, employment, the local economy.

They say, if you don't grow you die.

IM: Essentially yes. What I'd like to see in Victor Harbor, most of the expansion unfortunately is going to happen on the broad acres; we need to see the main street re-vitalised. The Council, I think through their Development Corporation is moving in the right direction, just need to see businesses re-vitalised in that precinct so that the main street of Victor Harbor does not die.

That's right.

IM: We don't want a Walmart on the outskirts of Victor Harbor that's going to suck all the business out there. Yeah.

When you were a kid of course, Ocean Street was the main shopping centre. That was it.

IM: Exactly.

All the shopping was in Ocean Street wasn't it?

IM: Yes, in Ocean Street and in later years the Harbor Traders was built by Harry Zerner and a few shops down there because there weren't enough shops in the main street; but it was always the main street. That's where business always was there, it evolved there; it started there. The butchers, the Four Square store, the Central Provision store, the delis, the cafes.

I think until the population doubles we won't see a vast improvement in Ocean Street I don't think, but I may be wrong.

IM: Driving down, I like to drive around the town regularly to see what's happening, to keep up to date with what's happening, time there you used to see too many empty shops in the main street. I just drove past, just near Johnno's Pizza Bar on the northern end of Ocean Street, couple of empty shops there. Now there's a business and their signage is going up and not quite open and called RAW. Organic fruits and nuts and all that type of stuff but they're successful. Go down further and the bookshop is closed; that struggled for some time, so now there's an employment type agency in there.

I've not seen it yet.

IM: So that's occupied; successful businesses in there, good operators, like Mr Menswear, you've got some delis that have been there, had a succession of owners for decades and decades like The Avondale and a few others, the Ocean Deli down there. I'd just like to see businesses there.

Don't forget the Original Fish Shop.

IM: The Original Fish Shop there, they've been around for a long, long time; I knew the owners back in the fifties and sixties, I grew up with them.

That long ago?

IM: Yeah, yeah.

Ian is there anything else you want to talk about before we finish?

IM: I'd just add, we spoke about brother Paul, myself and our father Colin, and Grandfather, we mentioned just in passing younger brother Michael who joined The Times originally just before me; in production part-time, then went off, purchased the dry-cleaners. Came back to us and worked in production.

Good worker, when we sold in 1986 he stayed on, he didn't have a financial interest in the paper but started teaching himself photography which was an interesting aspect and became a full-time photographer then plus production. Self-taught and his photography, he was known for getting out there and getting right on the ground and getting photographs and placing himself almost in harm's way in some cases to get a good photograph. He won some outstanding awards. He was photographing a paramedic coming in to rescue a guy in a precarious situation. The paramedic was subsequently awarded a bravery medal, Dave Roper, ex Vietnam veteran and Michael was there and should have got the second medal. He didn't but he got an award for that shot, soaking wet, waves breaking over him. Anyway he turned out to be a really first class photographer.

Went off and joined The Advertiser, I think in about 1991 from memory and went on there to win a succession of awards for The Advertiser. Dame Roma Mitchell Awards and stuff like that for precarious photographic coverage. Criminals coming out of court and being assaulted and threatened and stuff like that so he is a journalist for News Limited to this day in Adelaide; photo-journalist. He was that last one in the family to remain in The Times but took up advertising skills, journalistic skills and he had photographic skills as brother Paul did. But he went on and continued that tradition so he's still in the newspaper industry.

So he's the only one left of the family you mean in the newspaper industry?

IM: My brother Paul, his oldest lad Ben, is a printer for News Limited in Brisbane and in the production in the printing plant out there, and I think Senior Production so he's in the printing side. Michael's in the journalistic side.

So we've reached the fifth generation.

IM: We have, we have indeed in the industry is quite an achievement and all of us in the family look on it and say, "That's pretty good."

You've got Joseph, Peter, Colin our father, there's brothers Paul, Ian and Michael and then there's Ben so we've gone right down spanning from 1911 onwards.

That's marvellous; the family's kept it in the family.

IM: And over those years the changes in technology that we've all seen in various aspects of -----(indistinct). The typing, the typesetting, the photographing of it or the printing of it, huge changes, dramatic changes in technology.

And it will continue to change I'm sure.

IM: The Victor Harbor Times in my brother's era, 1973 onwards, were leaders in newspaper technology in country newspapers throughout Australia. We were one of the first if not the first to introduce the transmission of data over the telephone line from Victor Harbor to Adelaide in anywhere in Australia so we were leaders in technologies. So that was an achievement, something to be proud of.

One thing we didn't mention is that the current owners of The Times is Fairfax Press.

IM: Fairfax Ltd, a publicly listed company, they came by ownership of The Times when they merged and took over Rural Press. We sold in 1986 to the Wilson Bros, the Wilson boys which were a South Australian regional publicly listed company at that stage. They in turn in later years sold to Rural Press which was founded by John Parker, then he was the owner of the Stock Journal. He took on a partner whose name was John B Fairfax, Marinya Pty Ltd who was bought out of Fairfax Newspapers by his step-brother Warwick Fairfax and got a huge amount of money. He invested and allowed Rural Press to expand exponentially.

Then unfortunately made that terrible mistake of ego getting in the way of good business sense and got convinced to merge back into Fairfax Newspapers and everything went pear-shaped after the GFC and never really recovered. He lost, it's rumoured, not rumoured it's calculated that John B Fairfax lost something like \$600,000,000 of his investment. The shares in Fairfax went from \$4.00 down to less than \$1.00. So now they're making changes in Sydney to try and restore profitability and credibility to the financial structure of Fairfax. Unfortunately the country newspapers like The Times throughout Australia, and they've got a huge number of them under their belt profitable but they're being forced to squeeze their costs even more and cut back in order to prop up Head Office. We saw in The Times a couple of weeks ago some announcement about things they intend to do but we're not sure what they are going to do but hopefully the coverage that The Times offers to the community here won't suffer. Yeah, because somebody else has screwed up over there in Sydney.

Let's hope not because we need The Times.

IM: Absolutely, absolutely.

Ian, Thank you and thank you for sharing your history with us and contributing to the Oral History Project.

IM: Pleasure. I'll look forward to receiving a CD in due course. Thank you, Keith.