

**VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'.
Interview with Doug Schultz on 23rd April, 2014.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.**

Well, Doug, where and when were you born?

DS: I was born in the Victor Harbor hospital in 1943.

Doug, could you tell me a little bit about your parents? Your Mum I remember extremely well. Was she a Verco?

DS: She was a Verco and grew up as a young girl in Mount Compass where her parents were farmers, and from there went over to Point Sturt. From there, back to Mount Compass and then down to Victor Harbor.

So Doug, you were born in the early 1940s, as you said. That right?

DS: Yes, that's right.

What are your very first memories of Victor Harbor?

DS: The first memories of Victor Harbor are living on the foreshore down towards Yilki, along that foreshore road there. Franklin Parade, I think it is. And I lived in a great big old house there that was about thirty metres from the beach and we could run out the front door of that, across the sand track, down the bank to the beach side there. Always fun to walk out there.

That would've been you and your brother?

DS: I had two brothers. More particularly, one brother and I used to do that sort of thing, yes. Often with my Mum at that stage. Dad wasn't living home with us at that point. He was still over at Point Sturt.

So Doug, was it a pretty simple place in those days?

DS: Victor Harbor?

Yes.

DS: A little village, I would've called it. We lived, as I say, not quite down to Yilki and that was out in rural country really. There were cattle and things like that roundabout the place with a few houses beginning to be built along that foreshore road. There were some more established houses but not a lot.

So this would be by the early 1950s we're talking now?

DS: No, earlier than that. Late 1940s recollections there.

And Doug, was a lot of the land, inland from Encounter Bay, very swampy at that point?

DS: Directly behind us across to what now is Bay Road was, every winter, swamp land. Quite a number of acres in there. One of the local fishermen that I knew—one of the Ewens—he used to say that in what's now Lord Hobart Crescent, he could get into a flat-bottomed boat and row across to the other side of what used to be the racehorse to the edge of the River Inman.

That's extraordinary.

DS: End of winter. When the water was there.

Bringing up the Ewens, a local family, who were some of your other neighbours. Ewens is a very well known name.

DS: They weren't close neighbours. They were just local fishermen. The Ewens and the Rumbelows, they were two of the old local names down there. Ewens were neighbours for a few years later on when we shifted to a different house—one of the Ewens family. I don't know where they're up to now. George and—there were two of them. They used to feed the pelicans. Everyone will know about the pelicans that used to come down from Storm Boy fame, so they say anyway. They used to feed them when they came in with their dinghies with their fish, down Encounter Bay.

So right down Encounter Bay, going towards The Bluff, was pretty much rural land as you remember it?

DS: A lot of it was just rubbish-y—what would you call it? The main road became where the houses were built, and then one or two smaller roads behind that, but up on the side of the hill there, which is now all houses, that was teatree and other sorts of shrubby stuff with a lot of little tracks in and around. The only house that I remember up in the middle of all of that was owned by some people called Geytenbeek(?). You might even know them, Rob, I think. They lived up there and they were sort of in the middle of nowhere up there. It was just like going into nowhere. Just muddy dirt roads in winter time.

So was there a store at Yilki in those times?

DS: Yes, there was. There was a little store down there. You could buy fish and a few goods, yes.

So Doug, just with my limited knowledge of Franklin Parade, there would've been the old Fountain Inn, the old Yilki Tabernacle, back inland, and a few other bigger houses built probably decades before.

DS: Yes. At that point, when we shifted there, those front houses were beginning to come on the scene. There were a few, next to my grandfather's house. That's where we lived with him. Just what's now three or four houses away, there was a timber-framed place that I can remember as a little kid.

I can picture that. It's still there I think.

DS: Yes, that is still there. It's got seaweed in the walls for insulation, from my understanding of it.

That would be right. In fact it's 1930s/40s style, almost, weatherboard house.

DS: Yes, that would be the one.

Doug, did tourists come in in your boyhood?

DS: Yes. I think there have always been tourists at Victor Harbor from what I've read as well. There were just so many guesthouses—the old two-storey guesthouses—that were around the place, around the town itself in Victor Harbor, and then down our way. The place my grandparents had bought had a couple of what we called little flats on the side, and he rented them out occasionally. He was very involved in one of the local churches down there at Victor Harbor and so we quite often had people that would be looking for a holiday, or something like that, staying in that part of the house.

Was that your grandparents' house you were living at in Encounter Bay?

DS: Yes. Mum and Dad were apart at that point of time. Mum came 'home' to her parents who had just retired from a farm at Mount Compass and they'd bought this place. There was a flat on the side. We lived in the flat for maybe three or four years.

That was very entrepreneurial of your grandparents I think, Doug. (Laughs)

DS: It was. I think of him now. He was sixty-six, or something or other I think, when he actually went there, and I think, oh, he was only young. (Laughter)

Yes. Indeed.

Tell me about your memories, more about Victor Harbor, the town part.

DS: The town part itself? If I think back to that there's just a few things that always comes to my mind. That's the old bridge that used to go over the River Inman because we went back and forwards over that every day if we went into town. That's just downstream a little bit from where the current bridge is.

Along Torrens Road there was the fibrous plaster manufacturer, which now may still be a Stratco place or something or other. A big building place there.

Yes, it is.

DS: And next door to that used to be a cool drink-making place, which later on became a second-hand dealer place.

Going along Torrens Road, you would come to what we called the round front church, the Congregational Church that was there. And then if you kept going you came into Victor Harbor township, the end of the main street. I can still remember horses being tied up to posts out the front of what was the old—I think it was Field's butcher, right on that corner there, with the bakery across the road from there.

Main street, I haven't got a lot of memories apart from a three-storey—I think it was—boarding house down the middle called the Central. There was another place nearby called, I think, Havenmore(?), or something like that. There were a number of boarding houses that were down along that main street.

Going a little bit further along you came to what was Bells Stores -

Yes.

DS: - linked in with a shop over at Strathalbyn.

The other side of the road I think there were a couple of other double-storey places where you could stay. There was one on the corner of Coral Street and the main street—Ocean Street. Now what was that called? I don't remember now. Summerlea Mansions, might be the name.

Summerlea Mansions.

DS: People named Davies owned that when I was aware of who owned it.

Go down a little bit further. The so-called new fire station was on the right-hand side. Yes, several Banks down there on that side of the road. The State Bank, which was The Savings Bank of South Australia then. ES & A. Toop Motors was on the right-hand side by the fire station, where you could hand pump your fuel up into the top and then siphon it

out into the petrol tank on the car. As a little kid that was always fascinating to see that happen.

Would that have been the same Toops that were up at Peterborough?

DS: May be related. I'm not sure. They do have people over on the Peninsula or the West Coast somewhere that are definitely related.

So Doug, by the time you came to your school years, did you attend the local primary school at Victor?

DS: Yes.

Which is now part of the Woolworths set-up there.

DS: Yes, that's where I went to school, in the Victor Harbor Primary School, which was probably not a large school. I'm not sure, maybe a couple of hundred kids going there. And a number of buildings, which grew with the coming of the post war kids—I was just a little bit ahead of them—and consequently the school had to grow, too. I can still remember when they commandeered some blocks of land in behind—next door to them. There were several older spinsters living in one house down there and they had a pomegranate tree, which made exceedingly good ammunition to throw at one another in the school-yard. *(Laughs)* We used to pick up a bit of that in the process. You would go to sports day on what was called the extended oval, and you actually had to go through some old wire fencing, as a school class, to go and play on the oval when that first opened up. Hardly an occupational and health thing in today's world, is it? *(Laughter)*

Doug, what was your schooling like there?

DS: Well, I didn't like school all that much so I'm a bit of the wrong one to ask on that. I enjoyed some of the subjects. I enjoyed the fun of it. In the older years I had already made up my mind what I wanted to do when I left school, so grade 6/grade 7 I think I probably was looking more to go to work than to go to school, and I probably didn't learn well. I was taught well but didn't learn well. I give honour to my teachers. In primary school especially I give honour to them because they were predominantly people who'd come out of the war years, and a lot of them had served in the war. Our Headmaster, Henry Gent, was a one-legged man. I can still clearly remember him. My class teachers, several times, were men that had fought in the war, and they commanded respect. I knew that I was in the presence of someone with some standing. I appreciated that.

So I guess it's very different from the modern understanding of discipline, too, Doug, in those days.

DS: Yes. I never got the cane in primary school, but that was a potential hazard for anyone who played up too much. *(Laughs)*

So in terms of social life in Victor for a young lad, what was on the go there?

DS: For kids. Sport wasn't like it is now, but there was sport around. If you were good enough you could get into one of the junior footy teams, or join a tennis team. I was very involved in the local church with my Mum. The Church of Christ had a tennis team down there. I enjoyed playing tennis.

For social activities. In my young years, the church I went to there had no hall or anything so we used to rent the Masonic Hall on Saturdays once a month and the church would have a Saturday night social. That was just a regular thing through the year. So your social night was a Saturday a month and you'd go along and enjoy that. Sunday was very much back and forwards to church. So that was very much the way we were brought up. As I got a little bit older, well, the sport thing became a bit more involved, and so on.

So Doug, what about things like the movies down in Ocean Street there.

DS: Yes, that was there. I never was a keen one on movies. When I was a middle teenager—fifteen years or so old—I used to go to the movies reasonably regularly with my older brother. He was an usher there and I could get in for the tax on the ticket, which was threepence at the time. So I could go Monday nights or Tuesday nights for threepence, just paying the tax on the ticket. So I went to quite a few. I can't remember what the films were about but I used to go along to them.

My brother had a licence then and, as much as anything, my interest was in being a bit of an idiot in the motor car with him, and playing cat and mouse with the local Policeman. So you can tell where my life was heading. *(Laughter)*

So Doug, this is just what others have told me. Was there a milk bar adjacent to the picture theatre there in Ocean Street?

DS: There would've been yes. There was a little shop, I think probably just outside there somewhere or another which may have turned into a jewellery shop later on. I'm not quite sure now. I never had a lot of money, and didn't want to spend it. At fourteen I had started work and -

So you went to high school for a time?

DS: Yes. Went to high school for two years.

That would've been the so-called new high school I guess, was it?

DS: No. That had been there a while. I'm not quite sure when that was there. That would've been there for a while before me.

A bit closer to Encounter Bay.

DS: We'd shifted then and lived on what's now Maude Street, so high school wasn't far away. About three quarters of a mile.

Before we get on to your working life, Doug, who were some of the local identities? Can you remember any from your youth?

DS: You're scratching the back of my brain now, aren't you? George Fisher was one who ran the local electric company before ETSA came down there, and then I think he must've picked up responsibility of one of the head people in one aspect of the—what would that have been called then? It wouldn't have been ETSA but whatever ETSA was—South Australian Electric Company? I don't know what it would've been called.

Adelaide Electric Supply Company.

DS: Whoever it was that came down there, which must've been middle 50s somewhere or another. I can still remember the posts going up down our street.

But George Fisher, he was someone who was well known. He was fairly involved. He was on the Fire Brigade and all sorts of things.

So Doug, that powerhouse was down opposite the Memorial Gardens? Is that right?

DS: Yes, that's right. I think that's all disappeared now. Down by what was the Wonderview Theatre. One big old electric engine down there that used to regularly conk out and have to get fixed up again. But George Fisher would be one that comes to mind as a local identity.

A man called Lew Toop. He was the owner of Toop Motors, the Holden dealers, or General Motors dealers probably initially, and then Holden dealers when the Holdens came out. My recollections of some of those people were probably more a little bit later, but there was Field's butchers. I don't know them well. I just knew them as a little kid going into Mr Field's butcher shop, and things like that.

Some of the old folk who looked after us as preachers in the church I can remember back in that era. Bart Manning would probably be one of the oldest. He might have even been the one that started the Church of Christ down there I think.

And as I say, the Ewens and the Rumbelows. The Rumbelows when we lived down Encounter Bay way, well, there were Rumbelows everywhere down there. So there was Aunty Sis, and some of the others there that my grandparents related to quite closely. They were down the way, a little bit apart from us, but people that we did know, and relate to.

Yes, they certainly have been there for a long, long time.

DS: Yes.

Doug, coming back to you embarking on your working life, what set you out wanting to be a carpenter/builder?

DS: Probably that jolly grandfather of mine I think, and then later on my Dad. Both of them were pretty handy. If you're a farmer in 1930 and 1940 you'd have to be, wouldn't you?

Yes.

DS: But as a little four-year old boy I can still remember him standing me up on a petrol box, standing the petrol box on end by his bench, and he'd stand me up on there. He had a little hammer that he made for me with a short handle on it and I used to get up there while he was doing something one end of the bench and I'd bang away on a piece of wood my end of the bench. And I used to love tracking around behind him just to help him do. I was probably in his road a fair bit of the time but I certainly learnt a lot, and loved doing it. And later on when Dad came home again, he was fairly handy as well. With the job he had, he had the middle of the day spare and I often used to try and help him whenever I was around and he was around. Doing the same kind of stuff. Bit of handyman stuff. So probably from a four-year old I wanted to be a carpenter. I've got photographs there of me in overalls and boxwood rule and nail bag as about an eight or nine year old boy. So it must've been fairly imprinted by then. *(Laughter)*

So who was the builder that you ended up being apprenticed to?

DS: I was never apprenticed to a builder. I actually started as an improver, as it was called. That was sort of an alternative to being an apprentice, in the country. Bartel Bros(?) were the ones that I started with. Ivan and Don Bartel were the two people that

were running that business at the time. I only worked for them for about six months and then I changed who I worked for to a fellow called Rod Crosby. That's another old name locally down there—Crosby. I'd always wanted to work with Rod but his wife had been quite unwell and she was living in town and going back and forwards to hospital all the time, so he shifted. When I actually left school he'd shifted so I started work with Bartels, but when he came back to Victor I went back working for him for a couple of years.

So Doug, what type of work were the Bartels and Rod Crosby doing at the time?

DS: Bartels were very much into house building in that smaller town of Victor Harbor, as it was then. Homes. Holiday homes. They used to build holiday homes for Adelaide people that would want to have a holiday home down there.

Farm situations. Quite a number of dairies. Things like that that were being built. So most of it was house building with Bartels, and they were good builders. I really appreciate that six months I had then, and probably another six or seven years later I came back and worked for them again. And I very much valued what they put into my training as a carpenter.

With Rod, he was just a single man who put me on as a worker along with him. Again, an improver type thing. He used to do a lot more on farms and smaller work and a little bit of cupboard work. And a little bit of plumbing. You're doing some drain laying here I notice. We used to lay earthenware pipes occasionally. Gutters, roofing—all sorts. Wide range of stuff. Not just in that limited sphere now where you do first or second fix. Timber, or something. It was just a wide range.

I guess it was a bit like if you were a doctor in the country, you wouldn't just be a GP.

DS: You had to do it.

You had to do it, yes.

DS: Shearing sheds. Fencing. I remember building a fence up where the stone wall going up Cut Hill is there, trying to dig holes for fence posts in that bluestone stuff that was six or nine inches under, and in there with a hammer and a cold chisel trying to dig a hole that was deep enough to hold the fence post up. Terrible job! Before hammer drills.

(Laughter)

Long before hammer drills.

So Doug, just thinking about that period that you came into it as an improver in the late 50s/early 60s, was there a good deal of building beginning in Victor Harbor at that time? Or going on?

DS: Yes, there was. There were a number of builders. Bartel Bros would've been one of the bigger builders down there but there were a number of those bigger builders. And Victor Harbor was a growing town and, as I say, numbers of them would be from Adelaide. Or people who had worked in the mallee or south-east or Balaklava, they would say that they were going to retire at Victor. We built a lot of homes for people that were retiring at Victor Harbor, or in a few years would retire. So they'd build their house, use it on holidays, and then later on come and retire down there. A lot of that was happening.

Doug, I've had it said to me by some folk who have lived at Victor all their lives and are now very elderly that originally the two rivers were the boundary, more or less, of the town and there wasn't much else other than that. And you had Adare up on one part of the hill, and then Mount Breckan a bit higher up. But this seems to be the period that it begins to move out of those confines.

DS: Especially along the road to Port Elliot. That must've been opening up in the late 50s I think. Along the coastal side of it there. You can't believe it! There was a dump along there. There's a beach called The Dump. That used to be the town dump, which is not far from that corner going off to Port Elliot up at the top of what used to be Kleinig's Hill. That was opening up, but especially down Encounter Bay because of the views and so on there. That land that I said was teatree land, that was bit by bit being opened up by developers and they were selling off land and building up on that hill.

What type of houses were being built? Can you describe them?

DS: I started working with Bartel Bros in 1958 and almost exclusively we built double brick—solid brick—homes, and those homes would've been predominantly tiled roof, either clay or cement tiles. Cement tiles had come into being then. They were a bit cheaper than the clay tiles. Timber floors. Generally pine. Someone that had a bit more money would perhaps put in a hardwood floor, a jarrah floor or something like that. But almost exclusively in that era it was solid brick. A bit later on when I was working with my second boss, he built a number of timber-framed places and had weatherboard outside. More that 1940s timber-framed type stuff. That was still around the place. But Bartels, mostly, were solid brick.

The Bartel Bros, as they were called, their father was also a builder before them, and he'd given up that and let the boys take that business over and he actually produced cement bricks. He built them in the backyard of his house. He had a spare block out the back. On Tabernacle Road. He had his house down there and he built these cement bricks. You'll still see many of the homes built with cement bricks. It was always fascinating to see the

round cornered ones that you had on these cement bricks to go around the corners so there were no sharp corners on the edges of the houses. Very much done by himself and a workman.

So this is all strip footings at the time I guess.

DS: Yes, all strip footings.

So basically, Doug, it was to last, as you said, for a variety of people from retirees to people wanting a holiday home.

DS: Yes.

I can picture on the foreshore in Victor itself, running down from the Hotel Victor towards Encounter Bay, there are a number of houses along there, maybe from an earlier era again, but they seem to be holiday houses for pastoral families or whatever.

DS: Yes. Numbers of them would've been probably a bit like now, maybe an investment or looking towards retirement, or something or another like that. From Encounter Bay right around the coast, back to the Hindmarsh River, you go along there—Flinders Parade and so on—a lot of those lovely old homes were built by some of the pastoralists further up north.

McLachlans.

DS: McLachlans, and those sorts of folk, yes. Yes, they built the places down there. But they were built to last. The Bartel Bros drilled into us that 'we were building a house, we want it done, we want it done well, and we want it to last It's our name'. That was one of the things about those folk and the other local builders was that they lived in the town. Many of them had actually been tradesmen themselves so they knew the game they were about, and they wanted to actually build another house for someone else in five years/ten year's time. So they wanted their present house they were building to stay there and look something when it was finished. And as workmen working for them, we were actually employed by them. We weren't 'subbies', we were employed by them in that era. We were told that work has got to be good and we were told if it wasn't. That's what I valued about that period.

Did you know any of the other builders?

DS: Yes. There was a fellow called Arch Appleby. He did a lot of building there. I think it must've been just following, or before, the war—I've only heard this and I've seen the

work—he had some agreement with the local railway down there where he picked up the cinders, the burnt coke and coal, and they made cinders concrete and poured wall homes out of that. So to look at them they were just, say, a six or eight inch thick wall of poured concrete, but it wasn't stone in it, it was actually this leftover from the trains that had run down there. There are quite a number of those down in the Victor Harbor area. There was HC Viereck(?) & Son. And a little bit later on there was Doug Cox, a good builder down there. I used to get on well with Doug. Later on his son, who was about my age, came into that business with his dad. They are probably the ones that stick in my mind mostly.

Just want to come back to the expansion of Victor Harbor over those years in the 50s and 60s. My memory is that where Adare is was one of the big developments that seemed to take off in the 60s or early 70s?

DS: I'm not sure when they opened up Adare—you'd have to look in a history book to find that—but that became a racetrack for us boys when we got out licences. So there you are, that tells its story, 16 on to 43, that's about when that was opened up. And we used to tear around those tracks. Now that area stayed pretty much uninhabited for quite a number of years and then bit by bit it got going from there. The initial roads were put in there, and surveyed in there, but it just sort of sat there. It never took off. Probably because it never had a view, and you could still buy a block somewhere where you could get a view. It wasn't on a hill, it was just over the back there and all you could look at was the river or the scrub. So that was the Adare one.

There was a little bit of stuff opening up out what we call Greenhills, up over the hill to the north of Victor township. A little bit was opening up over there. But predominantly it was opening up Encounter Bay, which was from the (*couldn't decipher word*) and down towards Yilki to The Bluff, and also back along the Port Elliot road. There was a new subdivision or two opening up on the northern side of the Port Elliot road.

So Doug, when did you decide to go out on your own?

DS: We started work, Click go the Shears, in 1966 as builders in our own right.

That was you and Mavis?

DS: Mavis and I in partnership as builders down there. We'd hummed and haad about it for a while. At that time I was working with Bartel Bros, and the whole issue of subcontractors was coming in and we were told that sooner or later we were going to have

to finish our working as employees of them. And what would we do about it. They(?) had opportunity to work in with a bricklayer who I knew very well -

Who was that, Doug?

DS: A fellow called Ken Collins. He and I worked together for many years, and he was very kind to me. Had been for many years before that, too.

But that was coming, the whole issue of subcontracting work, which was a real downside to the building industry for quite a number of years in fact.

Why was it a downside, Doug?

DS: The issue became the quicker you did your part of the job, the more money you would take home. It was basically piecework. If there was a house that was termed twelve square, or seventeen squares, you would get ex dollars per square. So you would have a house that was fifteen squares, multiply that by so much per square, that's the money you'd take. If you could do that work in three days, instead of four, you had four days pay. So everyone just went flat out and the quality of work just went down because of it.

The subcontractors had nothing to lose, and numbers of them actually worked in Adelaide initially. I was working for Bartel Bros as an employee but subcontractors were coming down, and that's what was beginning to happen. So we had the writing on the wall that one day we were going to be unemployed, in that sense, and we chose to go into business ourselves. I was a qualified cabinetmaker so I did cabinet making work alongside of anything else that had a bit of wood in it.

And was there a call for your services, Doug, at that time?

DS: Yes. This man who was the 'brickie', he went into house building, and consequently I had a verbal agreement that I would do his timber work, and that used to range from putting up the post and rail fences on a block of land for someone through to doing first fix, second fix, wooden windows, cupboards, you name it!

So it was joinery and cabinet work?

DS: Yes. I used to do joinery and bit by bit as the years went by I employed different people. At one stage I had six people working for me in joinery/cabinet making and first and second fix.

So Ken Collins, was he designing his own houses, too?

DS: Predominantly, yes. He used to draw a lot of plans. That was very typical of that era. The Bartel Bros as well, they used to draw their own plans up. Talk with the client and work out—they'd draw the plans, submit them to council and build the building.

So in the late 60s/early 70s, that was an era of rapid growth down there, Doug?

DS: Yes. If you drew a graph it was just going steeper and steeper through those years. I was down there at Victor Harbor until 1983 and it was still on the up, and I think it's still been on the up predominantly since then.

So when you were first married to Mavis, where did you live? Maude Street, at that point?

DS: First of all as a married couple we rented in a home with an aunt of mine in Oval Road in the township itself. Just alongside the River Inman. From there we shifted out to a house that I did a lot of work on building myself on Bay Road. Just out past the hospital, so not far out of town now. It's in the town now really.

Yes.

DS: We lived there for a number of years and later on went out to Back Valley on some farmland.

Doug, do you have any particular memories of buildings of that era when you were in your own business? Any particular memories of buildings?

DS: Well, one of the things that I've always enjoyed doing is trying to make a go of something or another, and some of the curly jobs you do, to try and nut them out so that the person who wants this work done has something that they're happy with at the end. I've always enjoyed that sort of thing. People say, 'Oh, we can't do anything with this', and I'll say, 'Well, you can. What about —' And then you talk that out. So there's that aspect of work I've always enjoyed, and still do.

But if I look back to particular places that I've enjoyed doing I would say probably a house I built under the architect John S Chappel. For a farmer, six or eight kilometres out of town, that was most unusual. I didn't do a lot of architectural work but to do that and to get my head around it, and to work in with the supervisor of that job, I found maturing for me. I was a fairly young carpenter at the time. And something to be thankful for was to have been able to build a home like that. That was very good.

I've always been inventive, as I said, so when we built two-storey houses we had all kinds of ways of trying to get this house together with all kinds of mechanisms that now you'd be put in jail for occupational health and safety lack of information (*Laughs*) but we could actually do it ourselves rather than spend someone else's money.

Doug, what were the council like to work with within the town itself? Were they very strong on certain regulations, or what?

DS: During my building years, quite a number of the first years, there was the one building inspector there, and I found him actually someone I could talk to and very good to get on with. Not everyone found him that way.

What was his name, Doug?

DS: A fellow called Doug Jenkins. If you tried to take the building inspector for a ride, sooner or later he would find out, and that didn't make going any easier for people in the council. I've always worked on the principle that you find out what someone wants, you find out what you are allowed to do and what you're not, tell the people what they can do and what they can't, and if they want to go the way you can't go, I'm out. So generally speaking, if I was uncertain about something, and when you're young and learning the thing there's a fair bit of that, I'd go and talk to Doug about it. So you had that working thing there. He learned to trust me and I learned to trust him. So if there was something going he would know that if he didn't hear anything, things were okay, and if they weren't, I'd be there to see him anyway. So I had no problem, but I wouldn't say that was the case with numbers of others in the community.

So somebody like Doug in his role as building inspector, he basically wanted people to be in their house for a long time, not for a short time.

DS: I would say so, yes. I guess in one way we don't like anyone looking over our shoulder but at the end of the day the council's role was to make sure the house didn't fall down on your head later on. If I don't want to do something or another, I don't care about that. But he did, and that was his role in council. And because I didn't want the house to fall down either, you're on the same thing, so you can get somewhere.

And from what you were saying, Doug, when the game changed and the 'subbies' came in, there would've been people cutting corners left, right and centre I guess.

DS: Yes. And if something was seen to be wrong and the building inspector is the bloke who has got to come along and say something about it, well, none of us likes to be told what we've done is no good.

Yes.

So Doug, come 1970s and you move out to Back Valley?

DS: Somewhere there.

It was Back Valley, wasn't it?

DS: Yes, it was.

Had your work progressed to the point—you had your own workshop and you said you had quite a number of people working with you, one of them I think I can guess who it was, who set up a rather large business later. Did you have a joinery itself?

DS: We had a workshop. My first workshop was where I was living in Oval Road. I built that as a garage-cum-workshop before I was married in fact, and used to do a few little home jobs for people. From there I shifted to Bay Road, as I said, and when we built our home there I built a workshop there. During that period of time I had three people working for me in that workshop, and then when we shifted out to the farm there was an old pig shed there, which we turned into a workshop and did a few modifications to and so on. So in each of those places I've had a joinery workshop. In the later years it wasn't just me in them, it was other people that I had working in them with me. So, yes, that just developed as we went along the way.

So when you came to that point in the early 1980s that you felt that you should move down to be part of New Creation Ministries, was your work almost as much as you could handle, Doug? Or more than?

DS: I think it was more than I could handle. I was a bit of a clunk, to use a funny word. When we were out on the farm I was running a small herd of beef cattle, I was very involved in the local church, I had six blokes working for me and trying to do more than was right in that. That was in one sense. As I look at it now, it was out of order. And the family was growing up, and probably in some ways numbers of those areas weren't being attended to properly, but my own testimony is that God put his finger in the middle of all of that and changed it. So there we go!

So by the time you made the decision to move were you working any differently on housing? Were there new styles that were brought in for housing, for instance? New methods of building?

DS: Brick veneer was in then, and had been for a while. Working with Ken Collins, just the way he worked, we still stayed very much with the solid brick. He and I believed in solid brick homes. I don't think they are the answer to everything but we believed in them. They weren't in fact all that much dearer to build. And so we used to encourage folk to put a little bit more aside to build their home and have a solid brick home. That also gave some 'brickies' more work rather than carpenters at the time, which was handy. So we predominantly still, in that era, did solid brick homes, but some brick veneer. So there was that change.

During those years it was very much a competitive thing to try and keep your prices down. So you found that the pitch on the roof year by year became lower because that would save a row of tiles. The height of the walls would come lower because that would save either two rows of bricks or four rows of bricks. And so what was once what they used to call nine foot ceilings came virtually down to eight foot ceilings, and so on. That was all cost cutting. And you find that through that period of time the introduction of aluminium windows became quite a thing. There were steel windows prior to that but predominantly it was wooden, and then the aluminium became a better product to use than the steel. So you've got all of those things. And again, the thing that was driving all of that was the cost of a house. If you put wooden windows in a house, you had to have ex dollars more so that you could have them.

Just because of the cost of manufacturing?

DS: Yes. Labour costs on building them, and the selling point always is aluminium doesn't rust, or rot. So that's the selling point. Well, I guess aluminium seals wear out, so you've got another problem there. You've still got a problem whatever. And in more recent years you've got the whole coming into being of the steel frame homes. They don't have white ants eat them. *(Laughter)*

There'll be something else.

DS: There'll be something else. They'll rust. *(Laughs)*

There'll be imperfections—somewhere.

DS: Yes.

So Doug, by that time, too, developments had changed, the way I've seen it anyway. The type of developments being done around Victor was changing. I've spoken to Peter Leane at length about his part in—I think it's Bay Village. Is that right?

DS: Yes.

And that seems to be a completely different ball game that was going on.

DS: Yes. The way of owning a home had quite often changed—the size of a block, what a person was looking for in a home. 1950s and 60s, if you had a bathroom you were really pleased and tiles became a lovely thing that you could have in your bathroom. You then go on, as we've come to now, where you've got so much that's inside of a home. A block of land in more recent years becomes smaller and smaller. Is it Rosetta Village or Bay Village? Rosetta Village I think is the one that I think Peter Leane was –

Yes, Rosetta.

DS: Bay Village was the other one over by the hospital there. In the Bay Village people were looking for something in their retired years where they didn't have to worry about building a house. They didn't want a lot of land and these things became a thing that entrepreneurs, builders—whoever else—people investing money, would put their money into that and have it as a development that would make money for their shareholders. And Rosetta Village was somewhat similar. There was a thing coming in there that I think worked something like this: You buy your house, but you basically rent the land. If you want to up and shift your house you can take it with you, or whatever. I don't know whether that's still the same now. I'm not quite sure. But there is some unusual way there. Basically all you have is your little area with enough room to put a few pot plants and so on around your building. Now that's all new. That actually came into being after I'd left Victor, so that must've been in the 80s somewhere.

Doug, had larger developers who were thinking of bringing tourists in begun down in Encounter Bay by the time you were there?

DS: Yes, they would've. People would've come in and cut up a certain number of acres of land and cut all the roads in and so on. That was just becoming a way in which those areas opened up. Again, I'd sort of shifted from there pretty much, from that actual house building, before that became the in thing.

Some of that happened down along the coastal way, down along the road at Middleton, for instance. Dodd and Page opened up a section of Middleton there. That was quite early on. And some funny stories there that others could probably tell you better than me about painting the grass and rain coming on it, and the green grass going blue on opening day. And a few things. A swimming pool set up about forty or fifty metres from the beach, and

it never took off for years. The swimming pool became a sand hole really. Just filled up with the sand that blew around.

Goodness me!

DS: But you go down there now, there it all is. Middleton.

Yes. Middleton is very different, isn't it?

DS: Isn't it? Yes.

**I remember Bunny Basham at Port Elliot once telling me that as a lad he could go out in the sand hills and there was nothing. He said his view got blocked.
(Laughter)**

DS: Yes.

So that would be the case.

DS: It would.

Doug, looking back over all the years you've known Victor, what would be perhaps the biggest change in the town that you can recall?

DS: I've lost track of it a little bit because I've shifted. But growing up in the town and it being a small town, a village really—I don't know how many people would've been there in 1950. Less than 2,000 I reckon in the area. Pretty much you knew who lived in the town and good enough to say hullo, and there was a friendliness in there. I go back there now and then for holidays and that same friendliness is with some, but that aspect of the town I think is very much lost. I go back there now, not with regrets at what it is now in regard to what it was, everything's got to change, but it's become very much a tourist town and to me it just seems a bit thin and tinny. Whereas before people were on about different things. They weren't just on about having a holiday, or just having a razzmatazz at Victor Harbor for the weekend, or a week. If they went to Victor Harbor in 1940-something it was because they'd saved up enough money to have a honeymoon down there. For instance, they'd hop on the train, they'd come down and have two weeks in (*couldn't decipher name*) guest house, and that would be in their memory forever. So there's that aspect of the relational thing of one to the other in the community, and so on. It's still there but for the person that just comes and goes, I think they come and go and take what they can get and away they go.

You've raised something that's really interesting to me, Doug, and that is that transport was very limited in the 40s and 50s, and early 60s even, so the train played a very important part?

DS: Yes.

I'm pretty sure a lot of kids that lived along the coast towards Goolwa would have come over perhaps by train to school even at one stage.

DS: We had Abbott's school buses.

That's right, yes.

DS: So there's another name that was local. Goolwa had a school of sorts over there but high school kids came across. There may have even been primary school kids, now that I think of it. Yes. I think the school children would've come by bus. But the train, certainly you could go to all those little towns between Victor Harbor and Adelaide. You could go on the train.

Back then it wasn't even that every family had a car, let alone every family has three or four now. We rode bikes pretty much in our early days. Mum rode a bike for many years. I had a younger brother who wasn't all that well and he sat on the back of Mum's bike if we went somewhere or another. That's how we got around. Dad had a work ute, which he was at work with, morning and night, as a dairy herd tester. So the car was never home. So just quite different in that respect of how you got around.

So whether that limited growth as well at the time—maybe.

DS: It would've to some degree. Like, there would've been people with vehicles and there would've been people that came down building their homes down there, but to a much lesser degree.

I spoke to one lady who used to come down before the Second World War and her father had built a so-called caravan, but it sounded like a luxury home on wheels in a way. But she said that was about one of the very few of that form of transportable housing. They would only come down at regular holidays, over Christmas. And it seems the town had a life with people coming in and out all the time, too, Doug.

DS: Yes. In those earlier days they sort of owned the town in the sense that they came down there and that was their town where they went for holidays. They built their shack there. We'd call it their shack. And I can remember in, say the 1970s, people were beginning to build shacks that were two-storey solid brick homes, and we couldn't understand it because that was far and above what the average local person's retirement home was, but it was just a weekender for someone in Adelaide who built their weekender down there. You can still go along the foreshore roads and see some of the blocks that

have got a quarter acre block and there's this little old asbestos house still sitting there. That used to be the holiday houses.

So they really were timber-framed dwellings -

DS: Timber-framed. Asbestos. What they could afford, yes. And then later on, especially over the Port Elliot side of Victor Harbour and through to Port Elliot, there were a lot of what was called Blunt's homes. They were built up on metal stanchions and what we call a transportable. Just sat on top there. You always knew that when they put those up, in four or five years you'd have some work to do because all the little skinny bolts that held the roof on would rust out. Port Elliot, doozy of a wind would blow through there and half the roof would go off and you'd get the job to come and put it back on for them again.

That was handy.

DS: That was work in progress. *(Laughs)*

I haven't heard that before.

But your comment about those asbestos type homes, Doug, did people build some of those themselves?

DS: A lot of them would've been, yes. A lot of those would've been put up pre-war. So they were just out of what they could get, what they could scrounge. Some of them were pretty wobbly and shonky. Interestingly, some of them are probably right in the middle of some quite nice looking home there still.

So Doug, just bringing things together, what was really most satisfying about your experience in the building down there at Victor over those years that you were involved?

DS: Very much the people I worked with. I like people, I'm interested in what they're about, and I've had some wonderful people working for me. I really mean that. And quite a number of them over the years—if I added up all of them I don't know how many there would be, but I've enjoyed every one of them. They haven't always been easy to work with but I find that as a bit of a challenge to see if we can get on together and make something together out of things. So that would be the one thing.

The other thing on the actual production of a house, or something or other like that, I like new ideas if I can see that they'll work. Otherwise I'm a bit slow to take them on. What I know stands the test. I like to stick with that unless something else can be shown to be better, and then I'm happy to have a go with it. I've enjoyed the new things that have come into the building game, even like something where you pull a trigger and electricity

runs through and makes a saw or something like that work. We started without any of that. It was always push a saw, push a plane.

Totally manual.

DS: When I first started work we had one half-inch electric drill, which worked in the workshop but nowhere else. And that was it. The rest was hand tools.

So even a drill press would've been hand, Doug?

DS: No. If that was in the workshop that probably had an electric motor on it somewhere.

**That's something that hadn't occurred to me.
Doug, is there anything else you'd like to add?**

DS: Two other names have just been running around in my head, or one name particularly. There were Kleinig brothers, up the top of the hill. That was always fascinating to go down there and see the chaff getting chopped up and all the bags of stuff that were in their storehouses and so on.

And there was the old Amscol factory there that had the cheese making and so on. Two of the things that have pretty much disappeared now.

And the Amscol factory is now a Lutheran Church.

DS: That's it. And just out of town there was a couple of different saw mills—local saw mills.

Doug, thank you so very much for being willing to share your memories. It's been a delightful time.

DS: It's been good for me to raise them up a bit, too, Rob, before I forget them. *(Laughs)*

Thanks, Doug.