

**VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'**  
**Interview with Nathalie White on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014**  
**Interviewer: Keith Percival**

**Nathalie is the daughter of Jim Abbott who ran the famous ABBOTT'S BUS SERVICES in the area from the 1930s to the 1980s.**

**Welcome Nathalie.**

**NW:** Hallo.

**Let's start at the very beginning; when were you born and where?**

**NW:** I was born on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1940 in the Victor Harbor Hospital and it was a very hot day, it was about 112° F the day I was born.

**Wow! Of course you wouldn't remember that would you?**

**NW:** I can only remember what Mum's told me.

**Which street was it in Victor?**

**NW:** Where I lived, where I grew up?

**Where you were born?**

**NW:** In the South Coast District Hospital.

**Where were Mum and Dad living?**

**NW:** In Victoria Street, opposite where Harbor Traders are; where that gymnasium is now.

**When there were just houses there?**

**NW:** There weren't houses where Harbor Traders are, it was all vacant land there.

**Yes, but your house was opposite there?**

**NW:** Yes.

**So that was a run of houses opposite there?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**What did Mum and Dad do?**

**NW:** Dad was running his bus and taxi business from there; Mum was just a stop-at-home housewife, answered the phone and took messages.

**So right from when you can remember the bus services were running then and Dad had the bus services?**

**NW:** Yes, that was our depot where we kept all the buses and everything then.

**So the depot was next to the house of course?**

**NW:** Yes. Right alongside the house.

**Opposite Harbor Traders?**

**NW:** We had our own petrol bowser there in those days. Fill up all the vehicles from that.

**It must have been a big property to hold all those six buses and the semitrailers in it.**

**NW:** Yes it was built on two blocks. We had a bit of land one side and all the rest of it we fitted all the vehicles in and being from Victoria Street to Kingston Street behind; it went the depth of the block so we had a fair bit of area there.

**We'll come back to the buses later. When did Dad start, do you remember when Dad started the bus services?**

**NW:** I wasn't born then but he started them in about 1935 he lived at Goolwa then and he was transporting the children from Goolwa to Victor Harbor for their High School years. Mainly he was picking the children up around there when they were building the barrage across the River Murray. So he was taking the children to school from there. Mum and Dad weren't married then, which is why he was still living in Goolwa. After they got married in '37 they moved to victor.

**Tell us about your early memories of childhood.**

**NW:** It's a lot different from what it is nowadays. It was a quieter town; we used to ride our pushbikes all around the place and go to the pictures, go to the Saturday matinees and all that. A very quiet time then.

**You started school at what age?**

**NW:** Six I think it was.

**Six in those days?**

**NW:** Yeah, six I think it was.

**And where was your first school?**

**NW:** Victor Primary School in the old school room.

**What's where the Primary School was?**

**NW:** The Woolworths Shopping Complex, Victor Central Shopping Centre is there now. Kentucky Fried are right alongside it and the original old school building is there; that was one of my classrooms in those days.

**Do you remember your teachers at Primary School?**

**NW:** Yes. I had one teacher who taught me and his name was Ted Gare, he taught me and then he taught our three children at school. Another one was Edna Birchall and she came from Goolwa. She travelled on the semi every day and then go back to Goolwa on it. Oh, yes, Baz Walters; I was friendly with them and the children. There were quite a few others who were old teachers there but I just can't remember all their names.

**Don't worry about it. It's interesting that one of them taught your three children later on.**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**We'll come to that later. How many brothers and sisters did you have?**

**NW:** I've got one younger sister, that's all.

**So Mum was too busy helping Dad to have more children?**

**NW:** I think she might have been getting a bit old too to have any more, so that's all! (laughter)

**Nathalie what are your first memories of Ocean Street and Railway Terrace and all that central area there?**

**NW:** The main street was a two-way street in those days. Railway Terrace was similar to what it is now except it was a lot busier with the trains coming in all the time, the goods trains and that.

**It was mostly goods was it? How many passenger trains were there and where were they coming from?**

**NW:** they were coming from Adelaide and there'd be one in the morning; one would go from Victor to Adelaide and one'd come down here in the morning and there'd be another one come down in the evenings.

**And it was very busy with goods trains.**

**NW:** Yes it was, yes.

**Tell us about the sort of things they were bringing in those days or taking out?**

**NW:** Everything came down here in the railway trucks as goods which went to where the Whale Centre is now, that was the Goods Shed. Parcels, packages, everything plus superphosphate and if people bought cattle or sheep they'd bring them down and they'd unload them where the turntable is now. Then once all the goods brought to Victor there was a local carrier would go around and deliver them to wherever they had to go. Superphosphate was brought down in bags for the farmers to pick up then in later years they went to bulk super and the bulk trucks would have a big auger to unload them onto the farmers' trucks.

**Did the mail come down on the trains every day or did it come by road?**

**NW:** No, that came down on the trains. There weren't many buses running from Adelaide in those days but most of it came on the train. One incident, one thing that Dad had to do, he had the contract to meet the train and pick up passengers and take them to their various guesthouses or where they were staying. On Thursday night we had to pick up a package of fish from the train to take up to Mt Breckan; that was a rehabilitation centre at the time, for injured people, take the fish up there for them to have for lunch on Fridays.

**That was a special treat for Friday was it?**

**NW:** Yes that was a special treat for them.

**Dad also had the mail run; he delivered the mail didn't he?**

**NW:** Yes, he picked that up from the Post Office and he'd come out here nearly every day, he'd go through to Yankalilla and we'd get our mail bag dropped off Monday, Wednesday and Friday and then the other days he'd go to Yank and bring mail back to Victor to be sent away from here.

**To Adelaide?**

**NW:** Yes.

**We'll come to the mail runs later on. Anything else you remember about Railway Terrace and the trains? What about Ocean Street? What sort of shops and businesses do you remember?**

**NW:** Central Guesthouse, Tudor Guesthouse was where Mitre 10 is now. We had two banks, ES&A Bank down towards the northern end of it; Commercial Bank was up opposite The Avondale where Avondale still is. I think that's about all. Oh the pubs; yes there were three pubs, the Hotel Victor looked a bit different to what it looks now that was a lot different. The Crown was a bit different to what it looks now; that had accommodation there. Then we had the picture theatre where I worked as an usherette and also we had the Southern Bakery in the main street where that little mall is that goes through from there to, I can't think of the name of the street.

#### **Not to Railway Terrace?**

**NW:** Not to Railway Terrace, no it went through to, that mall, it wasn't there then.

#### **Not Coral Street? Through to the reserve?**

**NW:** No opposite where Brandwood Motors was. Brandwood Motors were on that corner. Southern Bakery was there and we had several greengrocers, couple of grocer shops in there and one grocer's shop was run in latter years by Sal Eddy. They used to ring up everyone around the place and get their grocery orders, a lot of time they used to deliver them.

#### **Including yours.**

**NW:** Including ours, yes.

#### **Were Toop and Toop there in those days?**

**NW:** No, no.

#### **They hadn't started then?**

**NW:** That service station that they took over that was Griffins Garage where I had a couple of uncles working there as mechanics. There was no Medical Centre there. We only had Dr Douglas was the main one in the first one that I knew, my doctor; his property was where Woolworths Shopping Centre is now. It was a beautiful place he had there. Another doctor did start up down opposite the Masonic Hall. Another one started up where Clifton Guest House was but that's now where Veg Out is. Another thing, we did have one dentist in Ocean Street, actually it might have been two dentists, they had rooms each. They were kept pretty busy I think.

#### **The two doctors you mentioned were they on their own or did they have other doctors with them?**

**NW:** No, no they were all on their own and Dr Douglas he used to go to call outs in the early days in a horse and buggy.

#### **Really?**

**NW:** Yes. Dr Shipway.

#### **I must explain for the listeners, Nathalie's husband keeps prompting her with certain things! That's the voice in the background you can hear.**

**NW:** Oh yes, further up in Crozier Road.

#### **Now what about Bells?**

**NW:** Oh yes, Bells. That was the highlight of a person's trip to Victor. You could go in there and buy anything. The most interesting thing there was where you put the money, the cash in a little container and pulled the cord and sent it off up to the office upstairs. The ladies clothes all used to be upstairs and groceries were there and everything you wanted you got from Bells.

**I didn't know they sold groceries which is unusual for a department store. It was a department store?**

**NW:** Yes, it was.

**Clothing and groceries...**

**NW:** And shoes and haberdashery and out the back there was curtains and linen and stuff like that out the back of it. It was a very busy shop.

**Did they also have craft supplies, for knitting and materials for the ladies to make things?**

**NW:** Yes they would have sold wool; in those days we used to do a lot of embroidery so they sold a lot of doilies and sewing threads and things like that.

**So it was like a mini Spotlight?**

**NW:** Yes, oh yes.

**So let's go on to when you started work. Before we get to that weren't there two cinemas in Ocean Street a long time ago?**

**NW:** No, just the one.

**Just the one, Hoyts? That cinema opened in 1928 and I've forgotten the name when it was first opened.**

**NW:** And then, I can't remember the name either, but then they had a fire when it burnt down but they rebuilt it. It was still only the one cinema.

**After the re-building, is that when Hoyts took it over?**

**NW:** Yes.

**So you got a job as an usherette, that was your first job wasn't it?**

**NW:** Yeah, well, main job. I did work for Pauline Davies in a shoe shop in Railway Terrace for two Christmas school holidays just to help her out and then I went on to work for Dad and then at the picture theatre.

**The picture theatre was your first real paid job wasn't it?**

**NW:** No, working for Dad was the first paid job.

**That came first?**

**NW:** Yes that came first and then I got my driver's licence and then I could drive to work at the picture theatre.

**When you first started at Hoyts, which is now the Victa Cinema, how many hours or days were you working?**

**NW:** Could be four nights a week. We would be rostered on and when we'd get to work they'd say, "Would you want to work right through tonight or do you want to finish up after interval?" So if I'd already seen the film the night before the next time I'd say, "Oh I think I'll knock off at interval."

**I've seen the film so I want to go!**

**NW:** In those days, especially in the summertime we had full houses every night of the week, it was really packed. We had to put a sign out the front saying "Full House".

**It doesn't happen so much these days unfortunately.**

**NW:** No, the days of television, I left just before television came in so I didn't miss much after that.

**Hoyts got all the latest movies didn't they? All the releases down here, same as Adelaide?**

**NW:** They used to come down on the goods train too and were dropped off outside the picture theatre. All the big canisters.

**Big canisters and 35 mm.**

**NW:** Yeah. What are we up to now? Oh, during the Christmas holidays we'd have Ranch Nights on Wednesdays; odd nights, Sunday nights when the town was very busy we'd have a midnight session. A midnight film night but that was only in the summertime when there were people around.

**In the season?**

**NW:** Yeah, yeah.

**Did you tell me something about Sunday night midnight shows, the Ranch Nights?**

**NW:** No that was mainly on Wednesdays.

**On Wednesdays; it would have been a bit funny on Sunday nights. You said that the cinemas weren't allowed to open on Sundays, were they?**

**NW:** No they closed the entertainment, like hotels, they weren't allowed to open on Sundays.

**At all? Even for mornings?**

**NW:** I don't think so. Not that I ever went in them then. What else?

**On cinemas. Any funny stories you can remember during your time at Hoyts?**

**NW:** Several times I'd go to work there thinking I'm going to be an usherette and they' say, "Oh, you're working in the ticketbox tonight, selling tickets, the girl can't get to work, she's sick."

Another time I've got there and they've said to me, "Oh you're working behind the sweets counter tonight."

I've said, "What? I don't know the first thing about it!" Oh well we'd muddle through anyway with the help of the manager, muddled our way through it. You never knew what I was going to expect when I got to work.

**In those days you weren't just doing one thing like tickets or in the cinema you were doing everything.**

**NW:** Multi-tasking!

**That's what they call it now, I love that expression.**

**NW:** Another time they'd go, "Oh Nathalie you're working downstairs tonight, you're not working upstairs. We've had a change around; we're training someone new or something."

**In those days there was only one screen and two levels, the Circle and the Stalls. Now of course it's two screens. One up and one down.**

**NW:** Two screens yes.

**After you started that in 1956 for Hoyts and in 1957 you joined the Tourism Information Centre didn't you?**

**NW:** No not '57.

**Oh later than that?**

**NW:** A lot later than that. That'd be about.

**Were you still at Hoyts when you started there?**

**NW:** No, no. We were married and living out here then on the farm.

**So you were at Hoyts for four years from '56 and you got married in 1960?**

**NW:** In '60, yes.

**So you started the Tourism after you got married?**

**NW:** Oh yeah. That was when we bought, after we bought Calista; when we handed it over to Andrew, can't remember what year it was. About 1986 I think it was. I didn't write that part of it down.

**The Tourism Information Centre you're talking about?**

**NW:** Yeah.

**You said you were with them for twenty years?**

**NW:** Yeah, well I started with them when they were at Railway Terrace and then they moved round to the seafront so I put in twenty years at both places.

**So they moved to where they are now which is next to the Causeway?**

**NW:** Yes, yes. Then we started off with half the building it is today because they enlarged it during that time.

**What did you learn about other than Victor Harbor? Did you do any bookings or hotel bookings in those days?**

**NW:** No Dad never did any bookings like that. All we did bookings for were our tours that we did all around this area.

**From the Information Centre?**

**NW:** No this is from Dad's office.

**I meant did the Information Centre do any bookings?**

**NW:** Oh yes. Before I finished there we ended up doing bookings for everywhere; Sealink and accommodation all over the place.

**For tourists?**

**NW:** Yes. It got that busy that I just couldn't cope, they had so many people there and having to use a computer all the time it got too hard for me.

**Can you remember when they brought the computer in, roughly? After you started obviously. Late '80s, early '90s I suppose.**

**NW:** Yeah.

**I know some people who work in the Information Centre and they won't touch the computers, they won't do bookings.**

**NW:** I wouldn't do it either and then even trying to ring Sealink to do bookings there, you could be on the phone for hours, not hours but ages, waiting to get through while they do all the paperwork.

**That was going through to Adelaide for bookings probably?**

**NW:** Yeah, I guess, yes.

**For Sealink?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**At the same time you were at Hoyts, Dad was teaching you to drive wasn't he?**

**NW:** Yes, he taught me to drive on the land where Harbor Traders is now.

**In his yard or garage?**

**NW:** No it was just a vacant block of land that he taught me to drive on.

**Across the road, so you just drove on the dirt?**

**NW:** Yes, and it was a Packard 8 vehicle I was driving, it had dickie seats you could fold out and have in the middle so it was a big old Packard. No power steering or anything and then I went from that to the Austin A40. I graduated on to that, but that was my earliest.

**So you started driving in the cars first obviously. Did you get on to the buses?**

**NW:** No I only drove the Ford bus from the picture theatre or from our office home one day and that was very slow; I wasn't used to driving a big vehicle and I panicked. I did have, we had a Volkswagen Micra bus; that was my school bus. That was really good to drive, I liked that one.

**You did eventually do, when you got your licence you started working for Dad didn't you?**

**NW:** In School bus runs.

**You always used the same bus all the time.**

**NW:** No not always, whatever was available. (laughter)

**We'll come to the buses in a minute. Did you ever go on the roads while you were learning?**

**NW:** No, it was all off the roads.

**He was a good father and kept you off the roads?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Because some people would have gone on the roads.**

**NW:** No I didn't do that.

**Did you enjoy learning to drive?**

**NW:** Yes, it was really good.

**Because you knew it was the family business.**

**NW:** Yeah and Dad was very good; he didn't get aggro or anything, he was very calm and cool and collected.

**Was he the only person who taught you?**

**NW:** Yes.

**So Mum didn't get involved in the driving?**

**NW:** No, no. She did drive a bit but not very much.

**Did she drive the buses?**

**NW:** No, no, just the Austin A40. That was more her style.

**Did she ever do any of the paid work with the passengers?**

**NW:** No she didn't, she just stopped home, and she didn't do anything like that.

**We'll come to what she did later on. The buses wouldn't have been very easy for a teenager; it would have been hard work.**

**NW:** Yes, yes. Especially juggling them in and out of the shed when the one you wanted was at the back and you had to get the others out of the way so you could get what you wanted. That was a bit hairy at times.

**Especially reversing when you're learning, very difficult.**

**NW:** Yeah, yeah. They didn't all have side mirrors like we've got these days. You had to look out the back or whatever.

**It's interesting because it's law now, you've got to have side mirrors now by law but in those days you didn't.**

**NW:** No, no.

**Just one reversing mirror.**

**NW:** Yes things were so different in those days.

**Anything else you want to tell us about learning to drive or taking over as a paid member of the staff?**

**NW:** No, I think that's about all that I can remember. Dad had two taxis and a hire car and I used to drive whichever one of them was available at the time. One of them might have been out on call and I'd drive whatever was there to drive.

**Let's talk about the buses.**

**NW:** Alright. Yes.

**Did Dad start up the business, as you said before you were born? Did he start from scratch with one bus and work his way up?**

**NW:** Yes he did but I can't remember which bus it was that he started from Goolwa with.

**The first one?**

**NW:** Yes, I can't remember what make it was; it could have been the Maudslay because he had a Maudslay but I can't remember now.

**He had six small buses in the end didn't he? Six buses and three cars for taxis and hire?**

**NW:** Yes. We had one school bus that went from Mt Compass to Victor that was an International, another one we did Willow Creek, Waitpinga school run that was another big bus. Then the school bus from Yank that Bob (her husband) came to school on and then the semi. They were the main big ones. Then we'd use the smaller vehicles for other smaller runs around the place. I had the Volkswagen that I used for my Yilki school run. Before Dad got the newer buses there were older buses and I can't remember their names.

**Do you remember how many they seated?**

**NW:** There'd be about forty-five, something like that, forty?

**They weren't small buses were they?**

**NW:** No, they weren't, no, no.

**The semi-trailer seated forty-eight.**

**NW:** Forty-eight, yes, yes that's forty-eight.

**Some of the others seated over forty?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Were the smaller ones like the current mini-buses?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Like ten seats or twelve seats?**

**NW:** Yes, yes. In the really early days he had a Diamond T bus and that would have carried eighteen or twenty. That was when I was only a kid that he had that one. And a Studebaker, that one would have carried about fifteen or eighteen I think. Then he had to gradually build up to the bigger ones because of the popularity or increase in population.

**Now tell us about the famous semi-trailer one.**

**NW:** Yeah.

**When did he get that one?**

**NW:** He bought it new and took delivery of it in; I was a little kid when he got it! 1946.

**That's when he first got it?**

**NW:** That's when he first got it - 1946.

**He bought it as it was; it was already fitted out with seats for a bus?**

**NW:** He had it made for how he wanted it.

**He had it built for him?**

**NW:** Built for him. Yes, by JA Lawton and Sons.

**In Adelaide?**

**NW:** In Adelaide yes. Contrary to rumour, no children were allowed to sit up in the luggage compartment. That was specifically for the kids to put their school bags and things like that in.

**I read somewhere that if a kid misbehaved they were made to sit in the luggage area.**

**NW:** No, no that.

**That wasn't allowed?**

**NW:** They couldn't actually get access to the luggage compartment. They could but they couldn't. It needed a bit of manoeuvring for them to get in there.

**Who loaded the bags into the luggage area?**

**NW:** Oh the kids put them in or else, put them in the back and put them in the luggage racks that were in the bus. We always had a person, adult, travelling in the back with them. There was a telephone communication between the front and the back, all they had to do was press a buzzer. Many a time I've been guilty of playing in there on the weekends with friends and flattening the bus battery by using that intercom. Yeah.

**Naughty girl!**

**NW:** I feel very guilty about that one but we did have a schoolteacher, Edna Birchall, she travelled on it daily so she was very, very strict person.

**So she was the adult, or one of the adults, in the back?**

**NW:** Yes, yes. When she gave up we always had a person, we had several people that worked in the office before me, and they travelled on there, over and back, just to be in control in the back.

**Did that only apply when there were kids on board?**

**NW:** Yes, yes. But they were pretty well-behaved; I don't think they ever had much problem with them or I don't think they did. Most of them liked being in the back.

**Do you know why it was built as a semi-trailer with a prime mover and not like a regular bus?**

**NW:** No, I don't. He'd seen other semis in South Australia and he just.

**He wasn't the only one?**

**NW:** No he wasn't the only one. There was one, Whyalla Roadlines and another one that used to do long trips around the place. Then his prime-mover, each one was different. His bus was different to the others because I've got old photos of them here. I did find out there was another one over at Renmark that used to carry passengers over there too so ours wasn't the only one.

**So they even came down from the Riverland?**

**NW:** when we first had the semi Dad used to have two men working for him that played football for Glenelg so he did a big trip with the Glenelg footballers to Mildura and they stopped at The Grand Hotel there for their football trip.

**Did he take the semi-trailer for those trips?**

**NW:** Oh yes, yes. That was the idea of it all.

**Nathalie, can you remember how many staff were employed?**

**NW:** In my time there were five men but we did have a few odd ones that did a bit of part-time work; they weren't permanent, they were just doing part-time work; perhaps driving the taxi or things like that. Dad's brother, Uncle (sounds like France), he was our main mechanic and then Uncle Francis' son Gordon, Gordon Abbott he had the crash repair place here in Victor. He started off painting vehicles for Dad so that was his job, doing painting, and maintenance and things like that on them.

**You had one main service mechanic and with his son?**

**NW:** Yes.

**Did all the staff drive the buses?**

**NW:** Yes, and Uncle France too, he ended up driving the semi as well. When Dad was doing other things he'd drive the semi. They were all fairly handy at doing things like that.

**You also said that you took over the garage?**

**NW:** We took over the Golden Fleece Service station at the end of Ocean Street where Subway and the hairdresser and baker's shop are now where that was.

**And also your booking office?**

**NW:** Yeah we moved from our office alongside the picture theatre up to Golden Fleece Service Station and did everything from there. I'll tell you one thing; when we moved in there, we hadn't been there long but we were doing servicing, putting petrol in the cars and doing everything, driveway attendants and I walked out there one day to serve this chap and he had a Volkswagen and he probably thought I was a bit naive and he said, "Oh, fill up the petrol and check the radiator for water."

He probably thought, oh yes, she won't know, she'll probably go and look for the radiator and I said, "I'm very sorry to tell you but you don't have a radiator." He didn't fool me that day, but I should have made out I was looking for one and asked, but I thought, no I'll let him know he's trying to be smart.

**Good, good as long as you told him.**

**NW:** Yeah.

### **Nathalie, was Abbott's the only bus service in the area for a long time?**

**NW:** Yes, though Briscoes used to come down from Adelaide and go back daily but they were more or less run from Adelaide. Then Bond's Tours used to do the same thing. Briscoe's used to come through Yank to Victor, Bonds would go the Old Willunga Hill way. We were the only ones that did local tours; some of the tours we did we used to go on trips, afternoon or morning trips out to Orange Grove Tearooms out at Inman Valley and there they'd have morning or afternoon tea depending on which day it was going. Then at Glacier Rock when the tearooms were built there, we'd do the same and come out there. All the time, if Dad was doing these trips he'd do a commentary on everything around the district. During the early years, Inman was renowned for its citrus, the oranges and lemons it grew until about the mid 1940s we had two very bad frosts, wiped out the whole of the citrus industry here. That was two; another one was a day trip to Cape Jervis and Rapid Bay and he'd have a barbecue lunch somewhere; probably at Rapid Bay; that was the main place that he'd do that. He used to take everything with him on the bus; they'd have lunch there and then come home.

Hindmarsh Valley waterfalls; that used to be either a morning or an afternoon trip and he'd take morning or afternoon tea for them. Another one was a trip going to the Murray Mouth by boat. That was a day trip; they'd have lunch there as well. Then he used to do casual trips around dances, Back Valley Hall used to be a lot and gymkhanas, Guy Fawkes nights and every Easter he'd take one bus, the semi, to Oakbank on Monday and another bus through Goolwa to Oakbank. They were more of the trips and then he was always transporting schoolchildren somewhere around the district for Sports Days. Royal Visits when we'd decorate the buses and that was quite an interesting time doing that, decorating them all with the colours on them. Another thing, during the War years all the vehicles had to have black out; half their headlights blacked out and we had, I think it was three vehicles we had that had gas producers because of petrol rationing. We had gas producers we had to fire up in the morning to get mobile.

### **So you did all that as well?**

**NW:** Yes, Dad had to do all of that; when I was a little kid but I can remember. You used to see a lot of seagulls flying around with one leg either missing or whatever; they burnt their feet when they landed on top of the gas producers. That was quite a common sight in those days. Also, talking about War years, houses all used to have blackout curtains at all the windows and their used to be an air-raid warden who used to walk around at night inspecting all the houses to see if they could see any lights in the houses. Even up through the airvents; if there was a chink of light coming through there you used to have to cover your airvents over. Yes, things were a bit grim in those days.

### **In the War years, yes.**

**NW:** Yeah in the War years.

### **Everybody suffered.**

**NW:** Yes.

### **So, apart from the regular school term runs, he fitted all the other things in as well?**

**NW:** Yes. That was all done in between the school hours, yes.

### **Tell us about the postal runs for Australia Post.**

**NW:** That was done every day of the week but everybody that was on that run from here to Yankalilla, then he'd go round Waitpinga and come out that way; that was the days when you would put out your mailbags. Tuesday and Thursday he would just go to the Post Office and pick their mail up and deliver mail to the Post Office on those days.

### **To the Post Office?**

**NW:** Yes, a Post Office at Yank and one at Willow Creek and at Waitpinga. There wasn't one at Inman Valley in those days; they had to get their mail from mail bags. Then he used to carry freight as well, bread, drycleaning, medical supplies from the chemist shop; all sorts of things they used to carry.

**But not milk?**

**NW:** No, because everybody was farmers and had their own, or the majority had their own cows in those days; even if it was only one or two.

**Or they got it from a local farmer?**

**NW:** Yes.

**Wasn't Mum involved in the business at all? Doing bookings?**

**NW:** No, she, if someone rang up and they wanted a taxi or something she'd organise all of that; get in touch with us or whatever; but she mainly stopped home and fed us all and looked after us all.

**And during this time, before and after you married, Mum and Dad were still living in Victoria Street?**

**NW:** Yes.

**Did they stay there until they died?**

**NW:** Not quite. Dad sold the house and then they moved further up Victoria Street, opposite, at the end of Harbor Traders it was and then he, no he sold the bus business before he sold the house then they moved up there and then he took on hiring out caravans; that was to keep him busy when he didn't have the vehicles to worry about.

**It was after he sold the bus business?**

**NW:** Yes.

**I thought it was during the end of it.**

**NW:** Just when he sold the bus business.

**Do you remember the year that he sold the business because he ran it for a long time?**

**NW:** Oh, yes, in 2003 he sold it.

**He would have been well into his seventies then?**

**NW:** Yes, he was.

**In 2003 there must have been other bus services going apart from his?**

**NW:** Yes. When he sold the business the government took over all the school bus runs and they had government vehicles; plus there was Goolwa Bus and Coach and a couple of other private ones started doing it as well.

**He kept the bus runs until he sold the business?**

**NW:** Yes.

**And the Post? They probably had their own trucks by then.**

**NW:** I think when he sold the business, that's when he gave up the mail run.

**I think your husband wants to chip in now!**

**Bob White, Nathalie's husband:** He sold the buses before 2003.

**NW:** I don't think so.

**Before 2003?**

**BW:** When did he get the caravans?

**NW:** About the same time.

**NW:** I should have worked that out a bit better than that.

**It was before 2003, probably late '90s?**

**NW:** Late '90s, yeah, that's probably better.

**Bob W:** It's more than thirty years ago. He'd sold the buses because he was driving the caravans by then.

**NW:** Yes.

**So we're looking at round '85?**

**BW:** That sounds a bit better.

**NW:** Yeah.

**I thought it was a bit late.**

**NW:** I don't know, we must have got something wrong there.

**Shall we say mid eighties he sold the bus business?**

**NW:** Yeah.

**Was it sold as a going concern, as a business?**

**NW:** No, no, no. The chap who bought the business really didn't want much to do with the school buses so that's why; he just bought the business for the taxi side of it.

**What happened to the buses?**

**NW:** Dad sold them separately in Adelaide.

**Not as part of a business to be carried on?**

**NW:** No, no the chap didn't want to carry on with that but then he didn't last very long in Victor anyway, the chap that took over.

**Because he wasn't as good as your father, that's why.**

**NW:** No, no; that's it, yeah.

**We must get on to the caravans then. Then he bought fourteen caravans to be hired. That was for ten years, so it would have been just before 2000 when he sold them?**

**NW:** Yeah.

**He was still under seventy when he bought the caravans.**

**NW:** Yeah and then our kids used to go and help him a bit when he was busy, putting them on site. They'd go with him and help him set them all up.

**Caravans?**

**NW:** Yes. Andrew, our eldest son, he'd go with him and help him. He liked doing things like that.

**Which site were the caravans on? They weren't moved were they?**

**NW:** We had to move them. We had them from Port Elliot, in Victor, at Adare. We used to put them all over the place for people. And over at Carrickalinga.

**So you moved them around depending on hirers?**

**NW:** Yes, depending on where people wanted them. They'd never be permanently in one place.

**Not like the caravan parks now?**

**NW:** No, no. We couldn't even leave them there when they were empty.

**And you and your husband were still helping with the caravans then?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**We're coming to your husband, we haven't forgotten him! But the caravan business work wasn't as hard as the bus business was it?**

**NW:** Oh no, no.

**Because they were just hiring them out but you still need to maintain them.**

**NW:** Yes, only cleaning part and when you had a whole heap of people go around to half a dozen vans, you had to go from one to the other to clean them all and get them ready for the next lot to go in. Most people stopped in them for about a fortnight and a lot of them left them really as they found them so there wasn't really much cleaning to do.

**I suppose it's like hotel rooms and apartments and some are very clean and some leave them like a pigsty.**

**NW:** Yeah.

**Nothing you can do, more work for the cleaners. Now Nathalie, let's talk about when you made the big step and you got married. You were aged twenty in 1960.**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**So where did you meet your lovely husband that you married?**

**NW:** It was a blind date! I went into a Miss Victor Harbor competition and there was a Ball that night to present the prizes and we had to have a partner. I didn't have a boyfriend in those days, I was only sixteen. A friend of ours talked Bob into taking me to this Ball and that's really where it all started from.

**Where love bloomed as they say.**

**NW:** Yes.

**You said you were only sixteen when you met him?**

**NW:** Yes.

**So you waited for four years before you got married?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Courting for four years?**

**NW:** Yes, I was too young to get married and had to wait.

**Did you get married in Victor Harbor?**

**NW:** Yes, St Augustine's Church.

**Where did you live after you got married?**

**NW:** We lived in a little cottage in Kingsford Street in Victor until our house was built out here; out on the farm.

**Your husband Bob, was he a farmer then?**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Where was his property before you bought here?**

**NW:** It was here at Inman Valley.

**Here, but not on this block?**

**NW:** No, he lived just up the road a bit in the family house up there.

**And then you built this house after you got married?**

**NW:** For us to live in. Yes, yes.

**And the marvellous thing is you're still in the same house.**

**NW:** Yes, that's it. At least it's still standing and that's something.

**It was built by a local builder wasn't it?**

**NW:** Yes, Don Bartel. Actually we were living in the cottage at the back of his house when we had this built.

**So it was all in the family!**

**NW:** Yes, all in the family.

**Apparently he was the biggest of the local builders, wasn't he?**

**NW:** Yes, he was and Bob used to play football for him in the same Encounter Bay football team. It is in the family.

**Wasn't Don one of the coaches eventually? Did he coach eventually?**

**NW:** He was captain, yes.

**That's right he was Captain not a coach.**

**NW:** I didn't think he was.

**Tell us about when you moved into this lovely house.**

**NW:** It was very different from living in Victor and being used to electricity, just going to turn a switch on and you got that. We had kerosene lanterns to light our way, a wood stove in our garage which was very iffy. Depend on which way the wind was blowing as to whether you got the fire alight in the morning. We had no hot water; the only water we had was rainwater tanks which had to be carted from the tanks up to the house and heated up on the wood stove.

For baths, we'd go up the road to Bob's brother's place and have our bath up there but that would be an all in together sort of bath to save water, hot water again. We'd go up there and they had 240 volts but we'd have to take our extra, 32 volts, sorry. We had to take our lamps with us because you could only have one light on in the house at that stage. It had just about had it, take our lamps with us so we could see what we were doing. A kerosene fridge in the kitchen, but we got by. Mum used to do the washing for us, I'd take that in there and then that would come out on the mail bus to us.

**Marvellous.**

**NW:** We got the power on in 1962, we were four months without power altogether and Andrew was born in the meantime. We did have, we've got dam water connected to the house so we at least got dam water for gardens and lawns. Now we're right, we don't know ourselves now with the power on.

**Now you've built on to the house?**

**NW:** Yes, we built the enclosed back verandah and turned the garage into a rumpus room sort of thing.

**And you're still here fifty-two years later. Now tell us about the growth of the farm? When you moved in here the farm was non-existent was it?**

**NW:** Well all of this area here, we had 450 acres here on the main farm but then in 1966 we bought a property over on Sawpit Road, called Calista and then eventually we split up our partnership with Bob's brother John and we took over the farm then. It was still in the same house on the old farm. We built a new dairy and started milking over there and our eldest son was in partnership with us and he's still living over there now. It was so much better when we were on our own; we could do things that we wanted to do.

**When you moved into this house from the cottage, you had no animals or crops – you started from scratch didn't you?**

**NW:** No we were milking cows here, yes.

**Tell us about the slaughterhouses, because in those days it was all done down here wasn't it?**

**NW:** Yes, the local butchers that had their shops here, they had, from the early fifties the slaughterhouses were closed down due to health reasons but there was one slaughterhouse owned by Reid's where Investigator College is; one behind the new Police Station and one out on Henderson Road. They supplied the local butcher shops for a long time.

**It seems a lot of slaughterhouses for such a small area.**

**NW:** Well there were at least three butchers' shops; there was Field's in Ocean Street where Australian Pensioners place is and then there was another one down at Golden Fleece Service Station; that was Harbour Meats there and then they moved from there down to Harbor Traders. Another butcher shop was around in Torrens Street where the Apollon is now; a butcher's shop was around there.

**Then the government changed all the health regulations and they closed the slaughterhouses down.**

**NW:** Yes.

**They had to start using an abattoir in Adelaide then.**

**NW:** Noarlunga Meatworks was about the main one; nowadays they've got the slaughterhouse going over at Murray Bridge and there's one over at Normanville. A lot of meat, animals, go through there.

**There is an abattoir at Normanville?**

**NW:** Yes, yes. It was small but they've really enlarged it now I think. There are a lot of trucks, there's one truck goes past here about three times a week; it has that Iced Coffee thing on the side. The saleyards over at Mt Compass, they cart all their animals over there to be killed.

**There's only one abattoir now in the southern Fleurieu?**

**BW:** At Normanville.

**NW:** Yeah, yeah.

**The Christies Beach one is the next one to Adelaide is it?**

**NW:** Yeah or Murray Bridge. I don't know if there's still one at Noarlunga or not. No.

**How many children did you have Nathalie?**

**NW:** Three. Andrew's still on the farm. Our youngest son, we bought some land for him further up on Sawpit Road and he's built his own house on that. Our daughter is back here living in Victor after a few years living in Perth so they're still around.

**Only one of them's a farmer?**

**NW:** Andrew wouldn't say full-time now as there isn't any money in farming so he's taken on a lot of farm-orientated work like spraying pastures, working up land and doing hay for people but it's all to do with farming. Phillip runs a few head of cattle over there but he's working for Victor Wardrobes in Victor three days a week and two days a week with Neville Lush's Racing; racing motor bikes. He's working on motor bikes.

**What is your daughter doing?**

**NW:** She's doing housework at The Anchorage. She started off working at the Hotel Victor but now she's at The Anchorage, she's been there for a long time now.

**They're all busy?**

**NW:** Yes, they're all keeping busy.

**And you've stopped work when you started having children didn't you?**

**NW:** Yes.

**Just became a Mum!**

**NW:** Until they were old enough and went to school and then I got out and did a lot of work; milked the cows when there was no-one else around to milk them. Then we used to do hay and silage.

**So you didn't really stop work?**

**NW:** No, no it was just a different form of work.

**Not paid work anyway. You still worked hard with Bob didn't you?**

**NW:** Yes, that's for sure, yeah. One day when we were doing silage; I'm not sure whether people would know what silage is.

**Just explain it to them.**

**NW:** Silage is when you have a crop chopper and you chop it all up like a lawnmower. Then you'd take it out in the paddock and dump it, then Bob would roll it with another tractor to roll it in to a flattish rolled heap which we'd cover with plastic and throw tyres on the top. It's good tucker to feed to the cows when there's nothing much around.

**We see a lot of that around now because of the drought, one of our endless droughts.**

**NW:** Yeah. One day we were out, very busy, went out to, I was on the forage harvester and Bob was rolling the stack, went out on the motor bike, did some work, came back for lunch. Had to get some fuel and as we were going back across the river, out the paddock, the bridge, the little plank bridge the kids had built we went on that and it collapsed and I went up to my boobs in water! Anyway, we got back out to the tractor and I thought I'm not going to drive round here sopping wet, so I took my clothes off and hung them on the fence and went on driving the tractor.

**BW:** You had bras and knickers on.

**NW:** Oh yes I had knickers and bras on and when I was driving around the paddock, the next thing I could see a car coming over to us. I thought, oh well, keep on going he'll probably go down to see Bob but no he pulled up where I was and he took one look at me half-naked, sitting on the tractor and turned and bolted down to Bob and said, "What the devil's going on up there? She hasn't got any clothes on!" (laughter)

It turned out that it was a neighbour but he wasn't expecting to see what he saw!

**What did Bob say?**

**NW:** Oh, she does it all the time! She always does. So I might have had a bit of a reputation then for stripping off in the paddock; I don't know. (laughter)

**That's a lovely story. Now tell us about your hobbies, I know you didn't have much time for hobbies but you did some.**

**NW:** No I didn't have much time but –

**BW:** Fruit trees.

**NW:** When I met Bob he was in the Victor Rural Youth so naturally I had to join up with the Victor Rural Youth. From there I went on to. Then after we were married I joined the Inman Valley Red Cross where I've been a member for over fifty years now. Then because Bob had always been in the CFS, well naturally I was hooked in to joining the CFS and we're still in the CFS. After we'd given up milking we did take on playing a bit of Night Bowls until we started the Inman Valley Orchard. Because we were doing such long hours at the orchard we gave up playing Night Bowls but we still fill in a bit when we're needed. That's about all I really had time to do.

**Are you still actively involved with the CFS?**

**NW:** Yes. We're not going on trucks anymore but we're in Brigade Support, go on the radios, do whatever we're needed and I'm in Logistics which is doing dogsbody doing all sorts of things that need doing for them but that's all part of Operations Support.

**Very important.**

**NW:** Yes, 'tis.

**I can never understand why they keep advertising for volunteers. I don't know why the locals don't want to get involved in the fire service.**

**NW:** They just don't want to, now the biggest problem is there's not many farmers around now and any young ones, they go off somewhere else to work. We did have about five recruits here a few years ago. They did truck driving courses at CFS expense but they've all gone off to other jobs now and we've lost those five young qualified firefighters. We are in need of more truck drivers, that's why we're looking for volunteers now.

**There are a lot of farmers leaving; they can't survive on their farms.**

**NW:** The young ones work have to look for work elsewhere and the biggest problem now is that once you turn seventy you've got to do all this truck-driving experience and that which Bob gave up when he turned seventy. That's one big drawback because we've got older members like us who can't drive.

**They enforce that age limit for drivers?**

**NW:** Yes, when you turn seventy you've got to do this driving fitness test and everything and Bob just thought, no it's getting all too much so he gave that one away. The new trucks are so big and high now for us to struggle to get into. (laughter)

**You need a ladder to get up there?**

**NW:** Yeah, not as agile as we used to be.

**But you're still doing a very important job.**

**NW:** Yes we try to anyway. As long as we can still manage to do something I guess we'll keep with them.

**Good. It's very important for all of us.**

**NW:** Yes, just to be able to be on the radio and communications, that's one good thing.

**Nathalie, you've been marvellous but here are a couple of questions to finish off with. How do you think Victor Harbor will develop over the next fifty years?**

**NW:** I've been thinking about that and I don't really know. I was thinking turn the top end of Ocean Street into a Mall and have it more tables and outdoor eating and things there. Then if this new development comes on Kleinig's Hill, I'm just wondering if the main street will just die. It would be horrible to see it die because there's so much history there.

**It's not doing well now; it's in real trouble mainly because of the Woolies shopping centre – that started the rot, so they need to do something to rejuvenate it.**

**NW:** Yes, that's it, I don't know whether the mall is the way to go. This weekend coming up with the Rock 'n Roll Festival, when they close it off for things like that it's marvellous because people get out and walk all over the place and enjoy themselves.

**I think that eventually half of it will be a mall with outdoor eating and things like that.**

**NW:** Yes, I think so but then will there be enough people come there to sustain all the shops, eating places income and all that, that's the only problem.

**The problem with Victor as you know it's a seasonal town and they live off school holidays and Christmas.**

**NW:** Yes, but I'd like to see them pull those big high trees that are in the street because they make such a mess, and just put small little bushy shrubs there.

**They're talking of adding more trees now in the re-development of Ocean Street.**

**NW:** Yes, yes. No, you can just see what a mess those trees make now when they lose all their leaves.

**I think eventually, maybe not in our lifetime half of it will become a mall. At the Crown end, that half.**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?**

**NW:** No, I don't really think so, it'd be nice to have more supermarkets out the other side of town just to get away from all the congestion in the town but then I think, what's going to happen to what's there now, so that's another question.

**I know what you mean but we've got to think ahead about when say the populations doubles. They'll need more shopping centres.**

**NW:** Yes, it would give more employment anyway if they did that, with more supermarkets or shopping centres.

**You know this talk about Aldi?**

**NW:** Aldi I think.

**Aldi might come down here and Bunnings and Coles, a bigger Coles, so it will take a few years for it to improve anyway.**

**NW:** Yes, yes, but perhaps we won't be here by the time all that happens.

**Don't say that!**

**NW:** They've been talking about it for so long.

**You've got another twenty years to go. (laughter)**

**Thank you Nathalie, you've been marvellous, and Bob.**

**NW:** Yes, his comments and reminding me of things that I forget.

**It's important.**

**NW:** Yes, yes.

**Thank you for contributing to the Oral History Project.**

**NW:** It's my pleasure to be able to keep some history alive.

**Thank you my dear, thank you very much, and you Bob, thank you.**