

**VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'.
This is an interview with Irma Springbett on 12th December 2013.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.**

Irma, where and when were you born?

IS: I was born at Victor Harbor on 4th November 1919.

That's probably as long as anybody in Victor has been here, Irma.

IS: I don't think there would be too many people in Victor Harbor at the moment that could match that. Not that had lived here all the time. I had a dear friend that died only a few months ago and she and I were born six weeks apart. We used to talk about our life a great deal, and I miss her terribly.

Yes, I bet you do.

Irma, who were your parents?

IS: My mother was Grace Joye. She was a descendant of a very old family. The Joyes were supposed to be descended from Admiral Nelson. So they were a seafaring family, and the descendants still are. They've got a great affinity with the sea.

My father was Len Hurrell, who was the grandson of a convict who settled eventually at Inman Valley. He was sent to Tasmania for seven years for helping to break a (*sounds like, thrashing*) machine. Of course in those days when I was young, and even in my father's day—he was one of eleven children—not one of their descendants ever had been told that he was a convict. He worked around Adelaide after he'd finished his sentence and carted stuff from ships by bullock wagon to Adelaide.

He couldn't read or write but every bit of money that he earned he put into land. Eventually he sold up pretty well everything except some that he had at Kuitpo Colony and settled at Inman Valley. He gave the land for the Inman Valley church and he is buried in the churchyard. His wife had put on his stone 'The Lord knoweth the secrets of the heart'. So if my father and his brothers and sisters knew, and I often thought they probably did, they never ever divulged that to any of their children.

So what was his Christian name?

IS: Isaac. Isaac Hurrell.

Do you know what part of England he came from originally?

IS: Oh, yes. He came from Norwich. I was able to get copies when I wrote the family book. I've got copies of his court case that took place in Norwich.

Would that have been in the 1820s or 30s?

IS: Yes, it would have been in the late 1800s. I've got the family book there. I was very fortunate that I've got such a lot of information from Norwich where he was brought up.

So your father grew up at Inman Valley?

IS: Yes.

Where was he living when you were born?

IS: He was living in Victor Harbor.

Do you remember the house your parents lived in, and you lived in?

IS: Yes.

Where was it?

IS: Would you know where the first bridge was? Over the Inman River?

Yes.

IS: Well, we lived right on the bank of that. Across the road where the camping ground is now was a paddock. Well, that was just across the road from our house.

My father was keeping company, as they said in those early days, with Grace Joye, who worked for a baker on Railway Terrace. The baker's ovens are still in that place. The chappie that had the baker shop at the time employed several girls and he leased the kiosk on Granite Island. These girls had to take a turn over in the kiosk, my mother included, and so when it came around to courting night my father would ride his horse from Inman Valley and he would walk across the causeway and meet Mum.

(Laughs) My mother was an incredible lady in many ways. She was very clever at sewing and she did a millinery course. She made herself what she called a little head-hugging hat because it was always blowing when she came across the causeway. She had long hair like most of the girls did in those days. She thought this little hat was pretty marvellous. Dad said on one occasion, 'Grace, I wish you wouldn't wear that hat when I come to meet you'. And she said, 'Why? I like it'. And he said, 'Well, I don't because every time I go to kiss you that damn feather that's sticking up in the front of it pokes me in the eye. One of these days I'm going to throw it in the sea'. She said, 'You wouldn't dare'. 'Oh, yes, I would', he said. He flipped it off and threw it over the edge of the causeway.

Oo!

IS: The last thing they saw of her lovely little hat was the feather sticking up like a periscope—(*Laughs*)—bobbing away across the waves. At the time Mum found a bit hard to forgive him for destroying her lovely little hat. But that was their courting days. And then the chappie that owned the bakery gave them their wedding reception at his place as a present. I've watched Railway Terrace (*sounds like, die*) as a lot of other local people have. Now I'm watching Ocean Street go the same way, unfortunately. And I find that very hard to accept.

Irma, tell me about your memories of Victor Harbor as a very young person, or a child, and what Railway Terrace and Ocean Street were like. Let's start with Railway Terrace. What was that like?

IS: Well, seeing as Mum had worked there for quite a while Railway Terrace was a very, very busy street because the train came there. And Davies had a shoe shop there. When the train came in at midday it brought the daily paper, which was immediately taken over to Davies shop. Mr Davies then hopped on his bike with the copies of the paper, which he delivered around the town per bicycle.

It was a fascinating shop. They had shoes and lots of other tourist-y things—photos and souvenirs and that sort of thing. So you got to know the people very well that were in the shops there.

The thing to do if you were on holidays in Victor Harbor was to meet the midday train. People in the pubs or wherever they were staying, they hiked off to the station just to see the train come in.

By the time I reached upper grades in school—there was no high school in Victor. There was a higher primary. The people in the town that were a bit better off money-wise sent their children to Strathalbyn every day on the train.

On the train? Of course.

IS: Yes. They hopped on the train in the morning. I can't remember exactly the time that the train used to go but it got them to Strathalbyn roundabout school time. I knew some of them. They had what they called at the primary school, an upper primary class, which I understood was about first year high school. One of the Warlands, who I knew quite well, she went on the train because her father was the Town Clerk at the time. And the chemist's daughter went on the train. And one chap's father that worked in Bells, he went on the train. Ordinary people could not afford to do that. So then they hopped on the late train

about four o'clock in the afternoon, and did their homework on the way home to Victor. That was the drill in those days until they got their high school going.

So for you, Irma, would you have done a year of grade seven and that would've had a Qualifying Certificate with it?

IS: Yes. I've still got it. *(Laughs)*

That was my next question.

IS: Yes, I've still got it.

Now that was really the equivalent of matriculation today, wasn't it?

IS: I don't know. I've often wondered.

Well, not fully, but that got you from school into the workforce if you wanted to.

IS: Probably it would've done. Yes, it probably would've done. By the time my sister, who was three years older than me, got around to high school age there was a big move in Victor, why did these children have to go on the train? It was very tiring for them. Why couldn't they get a high school going? So anyway the powers that be must've thought that it was about time, a lot of kids wanted to go to high school.

They looked around the district for a building that could be used for a high school. I understood that one of the buildings that they inspected was an offer from a farmer that they could use his shearing shed. *(Laughs)* Can you imagine the parents these days? Eventually they took over the old Wonderview Theatre on the foreshore. So my sister was one of the first of the intake there. And it came around to my turn that we had to go there, and look, it was terrible. Parents these days would've been up in arms about it, but I suppose that most parents were so grateful. The typing room was upstairs in the projection room. And other classes were in the gallery. The first year and second year were downstairs. The electricity place was next door and it had a long line of windows that you kept open and the engines thumped all day.

The generators, yes.

IS: The teachers had hard time. It was draughty and cold. The doors rattled. It really was tough going. The foreshore was our playground. And you weren't supposed to go anywhere near as far as underneath the jetty but some of the young ones did. Our assembly line was where the children's playground is. There was a little tuck shop in there somewhere.

Was the Memorial Garden being built about that time?

IS: Oh, no, they were built when I was very, very small. They were absolutely the main attraction at Victor. You know, early photos and so on. That is where the first tap, when we had the Hindmarsh Valley reservoir built—they had a big turning-on ceremony at the Solders' Gardens. Some big-wig from Adelaide came down and that's when they had the turning on of the tap from the reticulated water.

So can you remember the reservoir being opened? Or the water from the reservoir?

IS: Yes, I can. I've got a photo of myself and Mum and Dad, and brothers and sisters and a couple of our 'rellies', taken on the partly constructed bank of the reservoir. This is painted by Prescott Sinclair from an old photograph, which I have, bringing the pipes for the reservoir.

Oh, look at that!

IS: It's a very precious photo. I've got four photos of them. They're working with bullock teams and so on.

It was one of the doctors that said we must have reticulated water, otherwise there is going to be an outbreak of disease because they had the long-drops. Oh, I can remember having to go to the loo when I was a child and hearing the night-cart coming over the bridge. It frightened the life out of me because I'd heard a couple of people say that they were seated in the loo when the night man came. *(Laughter)* Another person said that they were seated in the loo and an old goose that they had came in the back and nipped them in the bottom. *(Laughs)* Lucky for the night-cart! Even at the back of the church they had the long-drops. And the doctor said that we have just got to have other water.

The first meeting they had his suggestion was lost. They didn't want to have it. It's incredible now to think that anybody would want to vote against that.

I know my mother's uncle was the engineer for the project.

IS: Really?

Yes. It was a very important project at the time.

IS: Oh, it was. The meetings they had, and so on. It was mostly horse-drawn vehicles but once they started work on it people went Sunday driving out to have a look at what was happening.

So Irma, can you describe what the house was like that you grew up in down off Victoria Street?

IS: Well, I suppose it was a fairly simple building. I think it was rough plastered outside, using some cinders from the railway yards. It was grey and it wasn't terribly attractive. It had two big front windows, and a front door, and a fairly large kitchen at the back. We didn't have a proper bathroom as such for quite a long time. The wash-house was out the back in a shed separate from the house but fairly close. The loo was just a little bit down the track, behind the peach tree.

Yes, my sister and I shared a double bed. When my brother came along he slept in a different room. My mother unfortunately contracted rheumatic fever when my brother would've been about two. It affected her heart so much that she never really walked again. So my childhood was pretty upsetting because very often we had to have a nurse installed in the house. I often admire my father now because it must've been pretty tough on him. We were sometimes sent to our 'rellies' at Inman Valley because the house had to be kept very quiet and the nurse had to be installed.

Was that a district nurse, do you remember?

IS: Possibly. On one occasion Jean Warland, who had trained in Adelaide, came back to Victor and was with the family, and she came and nursed mother for quite a while. She contracted appendicitis and it killed her. Didn't know what to do about it, and she died. She was a lovely lady. I've got quite good memories of her. She was a dear, sweet person.

We used to have a housekeeper. She was a funny old thing. One I remember quite a lot. My father was a vegetarian, which was unusual in those days. We used to have quite a few visitors come to visit Mum and the question often came up, 'You're a butcher and you're a vegetarian?' Dad worked for Bruce and Hall's, butchers in Victor, for quite a number of years. Dad's answer was, 'Well, if you had killed as many animals as I have you might be a vegetarian, too'.

One of Mum's spells in bed, which often lasted for weeks—my father loved a stew and he'd pick out every bit of meat and row it up all around the edge of his plate, and I started doing the same thing. And that was alright. My mother came back to the table and she was quite horrified.

The other thing that Dad would not eat, and I've never known why, was the white of an egg. And on his morning toast he'd have these two little yolks side by side. So I started doing the same thing. And the old housekeeper used to get in a bit of a flap. 'You know

you'll never grow up to be a big girl if you don't eat up. You must eat up'. Mum came back to the table and found out what was happening, and she said, 'I've given in to you over the meat but I won't give in to you over the white of an egg. So eat it up'. I've been doing it ever since. *(Laughs)* But not the meat.

So you've been a vegetarian since then?

IS: Yes. I'm still a vegetarian. I cannot bear to see people chewing away at chops at a barbecue, chewing away at a chop bone or something.

I think your father's influence is still there, Irma.

IS: It upsets me. My grandson's in charge of the paper at Alice Springs and his little girl, who is four, rang up and she said, 'I've been on a barbecue picnic with the originals. I had kangaroo tail off the 'barbie''. Honestly, I was nearly sick. I thought this dear little girl chewing away at the kangaroo tail. Well, I don't know, I don't know how people can eat meat. My brother and sister both ate meat, and they've been dead for some time.
(Laughs)

But your father worked at the local butchers.

IS: Yes.

Where was that shop?

IS: About where the clothes shop is. It started off being a church clothes—Lifeline I think it started off.

Oh, yes. That's just down from the Wheatsheaf Bakery, you mean?

IS: Yes, around the corner there. I've got a photo of Dad sitting up on a really high butcher's cart. They had the meat in the back and they used to drive around the town. You could go out and pick out your meat that was in the cart. They wouldn't do it now, would they, because they'd say that it should be on ice.

It was still going on when I was a boy. In country areas.

IS: I'm pretty sure that Bruce and Halls, butchers, had the first ice room in the town.

So your dear father, even though your mother was ill, would walk to work of a morning?

IS: I think he rode a bike.

You were telling me earlier, Irma, that Victoria Street was very wide even then –

IS: Yes.

- and that your memory is that it was supposed to have been the main street originally.

IS: I didn't know it when I was little. I used to wonder why it was such a wide street. It's only in more recent years that I read somewhere that it was surveyed to be the main street. I remember when the big church was built. My father levelled the site.

This is Newland Memorial?

IS: Yes. With a hand operated scoop and horse-power. *(Laughs)* And I went to the opening of that with one of my aunts from Inman Valley. She was a great church lady. That was a big day in Victor Harbor. It's pretty sad now to see that the congregation has shrunk so much. What the future of the church is, I wouldn't know.

Is that the church that your family attended?

IS: Yes. The Reverend Gordon married my mother and father in the old church. My brother is named Gordon after him.

I went to the opening of the hospital.

That would've been a big deal.

IS: You know, people worked so hard for that hospital. Dad eventually had one of the very few trucks in Victor Harbor, and people did a lot of voluntary work there. On weekends Dad carted loads and loads of sand to build up the site, which in winter time that whole area down there where the hospital is now, and roundabout, that was under water for months of the year, covered in reeds and rushes. That's where the local blokes used to go to do their duck shooting.

I did not know that. I knew that it was under water but I didn't know that -

IS: As soon as the duck season opened the shooters used to go down there and bag a few ducks. The Aborigines camped on camp reserve. They lived there. I remember that quite well. Little old humpies they had. Nobody bothered about the Aborigines in those days. They were part of the community. But then when they had to build up the site for the hospital because it was so low lying they moved the Aborigines to Goolwa. Goolway.

As your grandfather said.

IS: As Grandpa would say. And a lot of people were very sympathetic towards them. The kids came to school in bare feet. The teenagers played footy for the Bays in bare feet. I don't think anyone looked down on them at all. They were more or less accepted as part of the community. But they moved them from there and Dad in his delving down for loads of sand unearthed three Aboriginal skeletons. He rang the museum and they came and picked them up and took them to Adelaide, and they remain there to this day. I was talking to a part Aborigine not all that long ago and he said that they were still there.

So what was out beyond the hospital when you were young, Irma? Out Encounter Bay towards Yilki.

IS: Well, there weren't any houses and that there. The thing was that in the winter-time the Inman River was so fast flowing and in flood time—it doesn't do that any more. I hate the look of the river now. It's overgrown with bushes and it's green and it's horrible. The river has changed so much. Not only just down this end of the river, but up through Inman Valley. They don't get the floods like they used to.

Did the Hindmarsh used to flood as well?

IS: I suppose so but because we lived right by the river my brother and I used to climb up on the roof of the shed and watch the things go past, like pumpkins, and oranges from the orange growers -

Of course. Yes.

IS: And once we saw a dead pig and a couple of cars. That all washed down the river.

I forgot that Inman Valley was famous for its orange groves.

IS: Yes, it was. Orange Grove Tea Rooms. Glacier rock was often flooded. I suppose because other 'rellies' lived in Inman Valley we knew quite a bit about the river from about twelve mile up—what it looked like. Doesn't look like that any more.

Well, that's really a big change, isn't it?

IS: It is in the time span I suppose. You expect buildings and so on to change but when natural things change, like the ice age and so on that you learn about at school—Glacier rock was taught even when I went to school as being pretty significant in what happened to the area, and down as far as The Bluff. Sometimes I just ponder over these things.

Irma, what was it like growing up in Victor? What were the important things for your family?

IS: You mean leisure time?

Yes.

IS: Well, we all went to Sunday School for a start, but people don't now. My grandchildren wouldn't know what Sunday School is. Or my great grandchildren.

A lot of our social activities revolved around the church. The annual church picnic was absolutely the thing for the year by which you went in horse-drawn vehicles, or sitting on the back of a truck. (*Laughs*) Which of course is not done now.

Went on a school trip when I was in grade seven and we went to Adelaide seated on the back of a truck, and rows of packing cases down the tray of the truck. We pulled up and went through Parliament House. We had two teachers with us. Some of the girls went down to the railway station and came back with cherries and other fruit that we didn't see very often. So I decided that I was going to go down and get some cherries. When I came back the truck and the children and the teachers had gone. (*Laughs*) I was standing there in front of the railway station feeling like a real lost soul. I think I'd been to Adelaide twice. All I knew was that we had been to Parliament House and that was that.

I saw a policeman walking past and I thought, oh well, they say that we've got to go and ask a policeman. So I started to walk towards him and suddenly there was an accident right in the middle of the road and the policeman took off and went to the accident. (*Laughs*)

And I'm still standing there like a lost soul. Around the corner came the truck and the teachers and all the kids on the back. I was so pleased! I thought that I was going to get into awful trouble but the two teachers were so excited to see me still waiting there they told me what a good girl I was not to run away and that I had waited there for them. They made quite a fuss of it. They said that I did the right thing. So the rest of the day I was so thankful. But the policeman left the accident, chatted up the teachers and the truck driver. The truck driver got into a lot of trouble. You shouldn't have children on the tray of the truck. The boys were dangling their legs over the edge of the tray. You know, sometimes I think, did it really happen? But of course it did.

So those church picnics that were so important, where were they held?

IS: You go out to Inman Valley about four or five miles, or out to Hindmarsh Valley. We had to wear our sunny hats and have a tape around our neck, threaded through the handle of a mug, and that was part of the equipment for the picnic. We all had to take our own mug.

Was this a tin or enamel mug of some sort?

IS: Yes. And then in the afternoon we had races. Oh, it was a really good day. Sometimes they had a magic lantern show.

Did they really?

IS: Yes.

Outdoors?

IS: No, not at the picnic but as entertainment. And of course we had socials relating to Abandon Hope to try to teach you when you grew up you weren't supposed to touch drink at all. I don't think that worked very well. *(Laughs)* Yes, our Christmas parties and things were all church oriented, I suppose you'd say.

We had pet shows from day school once a year. That was a big do. We had parents' visiting day at the school. I don't think they have those things now.

They have grandparents' days now.

IS: Do they?

They do.

IS: Really?

Yes.

IS: My kids are pretty well past that now. The younger ones, some go to kindergarten or whatever now. Things are very different. They like me to tell them what it used to be when I was going to school and they sort of look at me sometimes as much as to say *(couldn't decipher word/s)*. *(Laughs)*

Let's look at the primary school. Were teachers there quite strict to you, Irma?

IS: Gosh, yes. It upsets me. My daughter is a school teacher and the things she tells me about school. She teaches at Willunga High School. She is that tired at the moment that she can hardly wait until tomorrow.

We used to have a spelling test every morning.

Tomorrow, by the way, is the last day of the school year.

IS: Yes. She is just dying for tomorrow to come. She has shown me some of their work at times. And some of these kids are year 12. She teaches English to all the classes at that school. But honestly, how they expect to get jobs in that line of work, I don't know. The spelling test was really important, and if you didn't get it right, well, you had to sit in and write out your mistakes.

The other thing was punctuality. The school gate was shut at nine o'clock. If you were a minute late there were two volunteers, or two girls or fellows there with a notebook and your name was written down because you were late. Our head teacher had a thing about punctuality, and it stayed up here all my life.

In your head. Yes.

IS: My friend that just recently died, she was the same. I would say all the children that went through the school when he was the headmaster would have had that ingrained into them, that punctuality in life was very important. And so basic things, when I went to school that we had to obey, they seem to be missing today—a lot of the aspects.

Would your school day have started with the oath of allegiance and all that sort of thing?

IS: Yes. Of course. I love my country, the British Empire. *(Laughs)*

Yes, that's it. That was still going when I was a boy, too.

IS: Yes.

Not the Empire. I think it was Commonwealth.

IS: I wonder when that was dropped.

I'm not sure. It would've been in probably the 1960s I would think. But it wasn't the Empire, it was the Commonwealth. So it was a bit different. So there you are growing up in Victor in the 1920s. Tell me the features of the town at that time. What was an exciting trip into Victor Harbor for you, Irma?

IS: Well, you had to go over to Granite Island on New Year's Day. That was a big thing in Victor. The train came in absolutely chocker-block with people. It was the thing to do, to go to Victor Harbor on New Year's Day. They had motor-boats and motor sports and swimming sports off Granite Island. It was one of the big days in Victor. And what is Warland Reserve now, they had stalls there selling fruit and various things. It was a very exciting day at Victor Harbor.

I do remember they had a Grand Prix 'do' one year. That went out from around Port Elliot. That created a lot of excitement. These little old motor-bikes.

Yes, I've heard about that motor-bike Grand Prix.

IS: Yes, that was another thing. Port Elliot was only a very sleepy, little old town but now that's jumped ahead quite a lot.

Yes.

IS: I can vaguely remember a plane landing on ground not all that far from the hospital. It would've been about the first aeroplane that came to Victor Harbor, and pretty well everybody from Victor Harbor went down to have a look, including myself. I'd seen an aeroplane up in the sky but I'd never seen one on the ground.

Irma, I've heard that story before and I'm trying to remember who the pilot was.

IS: Well, I should know.

It wasn't Jimmy Melrose, was it? You would've heard of him.

IS: I wouldn't commit myself.

I can't remember but that must've been exciting to see an aeroplane.

IS: It was. I believe there was one that landed on Granite Island before that, or roundabout the same time, but I didn't see that. I've often wondered how the heck it landed on Granite Island. I've read about it but I didn't actually see that. But this one, you see, we didn't have so far to go as a lot of people from Victor.

As you were growing up would motor-cars have been the norm around Victor Harbor or would horses still have been the way of transport?

IS: There were a lot of horses—horse and cart, horse and buggy. 'Rellies' from Inman Valley had horse and buggy. Two horses and a buggy. My aunt and my cousins had their sunny hats and they were always tied underneath their chin with a veil, and I used to say I wish I had a hat with a veil. I was really envious of my cousins. I thought they looked so smart. They would come into Victor with their produce on a Saturday morning. There was a hitching post by Bells and they would take their produce in—eggs and butter and whatever they brought in from the farm—and that would come off their groceries. Sort of contra account.

This is with Bells?

IS: Yes.

Bells was on the corner of Ocean and Coral Street, wasn't it?

IS: Yes.

Directly opposite the bank.

IS: Yes.

Well, the building is still there.

Did you know that Bells was originally based from Strathalbyn, Irma?

IS: Yes. My sister worked there for many years after she left school. And we knew most of the people. When you bought things there there was a lady sitting up really high in like a little perch. The change went up there—whizzed up there.

On wires?

IS: Yes.

So they had the little docket holders on the wire?

IS: Yes, a little cassette or something with change in it.

And they pulled the lever?

IS: Yes. That was fascinating. I can just remember dear old Mr Bell. I must've been only about four because it would've been before my Mum was confined to bed. Mr Bell boarded at a place where the telephone exchange is now. Seaforth, the place was called. He was a dear old man, with white hair. He was a bachelor, but he loved children. If the children came into the shop with their mother he would roll up a piece of paper into a cone and fill it with boiled lollies. He'd tap you on the head and give you this cone. Oh, we thought it was wonderful because we didn't get many lollies in those days. We always thought Mr Bell was such a nice old man, and when I went to high school I was in Bell House. I was disgusted when they changed the names of the high school houses to those of Greek (*couldn't decipher word*) because there was Shipway House after the doctor, and Bells, and Warlands. I thought it was absolutely sinful to change those well-known men who did a lot for the town.

Irma, you mentioned Bells, which was obviously a feature of the town, but what other shops were down along Ocean Street, and other buildings there. The hotels, of course.

IS: Yes. Well, (*couldn't decipher word/s*) there was a fruit shop there, and of course there was the Central guest-house. New Year's Eve they used to have a band up in the Central balcony and they closed the street and had street dancing.

Did they really?

IS: Oh, yes.

That's amazing.

IS: I wish they'd still have it. That might take on really well. (*Laughs*)

What a great idea!

IS: Well, I don't know why they ever gave it up. Of course the Central is not there any more anyhow. They used to have really good turnouts on New Year's Eve. Everybody went to the main street and joined in with the dancing and that there. And then there was Hardy's Chemist shop. Then later on that was Laylaws(?). When I was in my teens there was—I don't know whether you'd say a deli but sort of a restaurant, but the people that owned it used to stay open until about two o'clock in the morning.

Did they really?

IS: Yes. My mother always said, 'Don't you go to that shop. You've got to be in this house by midnight. No later'. By gee, we had to be there, too. But the rougher people perhaps used to go to this place because it was open, and they had coffee and whatever. You know, girlfriend and boyfriend. A little but sceptical but pubs were only open until six o'clock.

Yes.

IS: So there wasn't the drunken element around the town. Now and again they would go and buy a few bottles I suppose before the pubs shut.

Did you ever go out to eat anywhere at all as a family, or not so much?

IS: You didn't go to the pubs like they do now for meals. Very, very rarely. Only perhaps if you were travellers or something like that that stayed at the pubs. That chair there and that one you are sitting on came out of the original Victor Hotel.

Did they really?

IS: Yes.

Gosh, Irma, your house is full of treasures.

IS: Yes. That's because its been altered quite a bit now but the Davorens had it when they came to school and I was going to school.

There was basically every shop you could need in Victor Harbor I suppose.

IS: Well, yes. There was a men's hairdresser there. Then there was the paper shop. And they had the billiard saloon in a back room and that was where the young blokes headed on a Friday night when the shops were open. That was a big night in Victor. And even if you had a boyfriend they usually disappeared in the billiard saloon for a while and have a bit of a game and picked you up afterwards.

Their priorities were a little different.

IS: Len Perks had a shop in the main street, a shop of men's wear. His son, Mark Perks, is a very famous doctor now. Mrs Perks had a hairdressing business in the Southern guest home. They had four boys and worked hard and gave them a wonderful education, which stood them in good stead. They're pretty clever kids these days.

Irma, tell me, were the guest houses a very important part of Victor Harbor?

IS: Oh, yes. The guest houses were all booked up well ahead of time in Victor for the summer.

What were the stand-out ones? Were there any?

IS: Dad used to deliver milk to Clifton and Linger Longer, and pretty well all the old big guest homes. And Lincoln guest house was run by the Misses Andrews. But anybody that could even erect a tent in the backyard—oftentimes the owners would move out into a tent and let their house for the summer holidays. It was a time when they could make a little bit of extra money. There were people on the dole. Days of depression were pretty tough days in Victor.

I wanted to ask you about that because you would've been about ten years of age when the depression hit.

IS: It was pretty hard going for most families, particularly with Mum having to have so many doctors call at the house. People did in those days because they didn't have the transport to go to the doctor a lot of the time. Old Dr Douglas he was a funny old chap.

When recently one of my granddaughters was pregnant and she was going around to the clinic I just happened to say to her, 'Of course when I was having my babies we never went to the clinic'. She looked at me and she said, 'You didn't go to the clinic? Where did you go?' I said, 'Oh, we went to the doctor's house'. 'You went to the doctor's house? Whereabouts was the doctor's house?' I said, 'Well, Dr Douglas was where Woollies is now. Dr Shipway was at Carrickalinga'. And she said, 'Was the doctor always there?' I said, 'No, he wasn't always there. You had to sit and wait'. She said, 'That's a bit funny'. I said, 'I thought it was funny when they said you had to go to the clinic'. So times have changed a great deal in doctoring and the services.

Did Dr Douglas have a surgery as part of his house that you'd wait in?

IS: Yes. And if you had to wait too long Mrs Douglas made you a cup of tea.

Was he Dr Frank Douglas?

IS: Yes. And then Dr Shipway built a house not far from Dr Douglas. The same thing applied there. I know our neighbour at Back Valley got bitten by a snake early one morning and my husband had to rush him in to the doctor, and the doctor came out in his pyjamas to fix him up.

So Irma, that Victor Harbor that you grew up in as a child, how was it affected by the depression? Was it that people didn't come for holidays so much? Or what happened?

IS: Well, I think there were still people that came for holidays. The camping ground was along the beachfront from where the Masonic Hall is. The camping ground was along there, and people used to come camping quite a bit. Old Mrs Page had the paddock opposite our house and she had cattle in there. I can't remember when the camping ground was moved. Yes, people did come to Victor but not quite as many people. The shops felt that pretty hard because they looked on the summer, and still do, as their main time when they get a bit of extra money.

Was your Dad still in work?

IS: Oh, yes. Dad was never out of work. He was never out of work. I think the shops had a hard time, particularly chemist shops and shops that you'd think about as having a few luxuries, they felt it. Also the grocers had a lot of outstanding debts during the depression. I know that it was a pretty tough time. People would do any sort of work really. And we used to have a lot of swaggies come around, and very often they slept under the bridge.

My father never refused to give anybody a meal. It was sad to see these old hobos looking pretty derelict and having to sleep under the bridge. We were always taught to be polite to these people, and feel sorry for them that they were reduced to that sort of a lifestyle.

So as you were growing up, Irma, you said that you went to high school at the Wonderview. Did you go to the new high school eventually?

IS: No. The theatre in the main street got burnt down.

Yes, so it did.

IS: So the people that showed the pictures said, 'We want the Wonderview back'. And they more or less kicked the high school out. I suppose you couldn't really blame them up to a point. So again, they were looking around for a place to have high school. Eventually they allowed them to go into the church hall. I've got a photo of people taken on the steps of the church hall.

This is Newland hall?

IS: Yes. My brother was one of those kids that had to go there until the high school was finished being built. It was being built but it was nowhere near ready for them. I don't know how many years they were in the church hall, but Fridays when school finished all the desks in the rooms that were used had to be pushed to the back of the hall so that they could have it for Sunday School. Yes, that was a bit of a busy time I suppose for kids but they accommodated themselves. They could run down the beach at lunchtime. I suppose these days they would frown on that sort of replacement of a school. Once they got the high school opened and occupied there was great jubilation among the parents because they realised that at last they had what they should have had years before.

So Irma, at what age did you leave school?

IS: I think I must've been nearly fifteen.

And did you go into work immediately?

IS: No. I had to stay home and look after my mother. My sister had done it for the times that she had left school but she was offered a job at Bells. She badly wanted to go there so I had to take my turn at home. But once Lydia was working in Bells, with the black dress and everything, oh dear, oh, dear, it was a big day in the family. You know, my sister works in Bells. There was an upstairs and a showroom and everything. She used to come home with the latest fashions.

We reckoned that Dad was a bit old-fashioned. My sister came home on one occasion, 'We've been unpacking the new swimwear. And Mum, they've got these backless bathers. Oh, I do want a pair of these backless bathers'. Mum said, 'Oh, no, Dad wouldn't hear of it'. So Mum was given the job of talking Dad around.

Oo!

IS: So eventually she was allowed to get these backless bathers. And then her boyfriend wanted a picture of her wearing them. Oh, dear, you would've thought a bomb had been dropped. Dad wouldn't hear of this. He even disapproved of bobby sox. You know, showing all that bare leg. Anyhow Mum was given the job of talking Dad around, he wasn't to be quite so old fashioned. Eventually Dad gave permission for my sister to have her photo taken for free.

We had a brush fence in the front and the side of our place. Dad said, 'Providing Lydia stood in the corner there of the two brush fences and didn't turn around at all, she could have her photo taken. And I've still got the photo. She had her bare legs and her little bobby sox on, and she looked very demure from the front view of herself in these bathers. I can remember when shorts came into fashion. No, no, no. We were playing tennis at that time. No, you are not going to wear shorts. Only boys wear shorts.

Then beach pyjamas became fashionable. Oh, we thought we were made. You know, this is alright, didn't have any bare legs or anything to show. No, Dad wouldn't go along with that. You only wear pyjamas in bed. You can't do that.

When you think back over some of those—I often wonder if Dad's looking down from heaven at some of the bathers - *(Laughter)*

Or lack of.

IS: - that they wear these days.

So did you play much sport, Irma?

IS: Yes. I played hockey. Played basketball. We had to do a certain amount at school. Tennis was about my favourite. Oh, I don't know—basketball. I wasn't a bad runner. I was fairly fleet at hockey and played hockey for quite a while.

Irma, you've talked a little bit about the depression being a fairly sad time. Do you recall the outbreak of the Second World War on September 1939?

IS: I remember the war, yes, because we were all pretty terrified that our boyfriends were going to go to war. My sister's boyfriend said that he was going to go to war. They got married and he went off.

So he was Sid – what was his surname?

IS: Lush.

Oh, right! One of the Lushs from Inman Valley?

IS: Yes. Well, he was descended from them.

Yes, so he went off to war. He was at Darwin for quite a while. And then my brother went off to war. He was in New Guinea.

So what was his Christian name?

IS: Gordon Hurrell.

Yes, you did say that. Named after the Reverend Gordon.

IS: Yes. My mother took a turn for the worse when Gordon was away and Dr Shipway, who was the drafting fellow that had to do all the examining of the recruits and so on, he pulled a few strings and soon got Gordon home on compassionate leave and was able to see Mum before she died.

So she died during the war, did she?

IS: Yes. The chap that I was keeping company with, he was on the farm at Back Valley with his parents. He went in to enlist. I was pretty upset about all that. Anyway he had had an accident on the farm where a ploughshare had cut his heel and part of his foot so the doctor wouldn't pass him. He said that he would never be able to march and so on. Anyway, whether that was the real reason, he put him in a reserved occupation. At the time he was burning charcoal on the farm to keep industry going. And so that was also partly why I think they knocked him back.

What was his name?

IS: Mervyn Littely.

Well, charcoal was also being used for the gas burners on cars, wasn't it?

IS: Oh, yes. We used to have trucks come down from Adelaide picking up loads of charcoal. He worked after midnight on lots of nights to get the charcoal pit undone and come home all blackened in the face.

When did you marry him?

IS: 1940.

So you were a pretty young girl.

IS: I was just twenty-one. Yes, he was one of South Australia's best mile runners that they had ever had. He came second in the Stawell mile once.

Did he really?

IS: Yes. It was four minutes something. Listened to it on the radio. But strangely enough, he had had rheumatic fever. He was brought up on the goldfields. He had rheumatic fever when he was about twelve. Although he'd worked like a slave and being such a good runner and footballer they said that that had weakened his heart. You never know. The doctor explained to me after he died that very often a person who had rheumatic fever and recovered from it didn't feel the real effects of it until they were in their fifties. And strangely enough, I knew in my lifetime three other people in their fifties that died who had had rheumatic fever. Why don't you hear of rheumatic fever any more?

Because it's been controlled. My sister had it when she was a little girl.

IS: Really?

Yes.

IS: That's a strange thing. I've not heard of anybody in more recent years who has had it. Unless they'd had it earlier in their life and got over it, or some had not got over it, but the doctor said that when they reach their fifties that very often was the result.

So your husband died when you were only forty-two you said.

IS: Yes.

That must've been pretty tough, Irma.

IS: Yes, it wasn't all that good.

Now how did you adapt to Back Valley? Did you like it out there?

IS: Well, there were no telephones and the road was only a road of stones. I only got a mail about once a week. I missed the telephone more than I missed anything in my life because we'd always had the phone on at home. Our number was 38 Victor Harbor. The doctor was number 2 I think. We had to have the phone on because of Mother's illness. So I missed that more than anything.

The neighbours were good—the Cromptons and Kirks(?). People worked out which day they would come into Victor for their provisions. So everybody did other shopping for each other. If you wanted something badly, well, you went over to 'Crommies' because you knew they were going Tuesdays and so and so was going Thursdays. And they would get anything that you needed.

Yes, the road was a bit of a drag because that was pretty unnavigable, the number of bad things that happened to cars. They rattled along and bits fell off. And you got punctures. Trees fell over the road, and when there was a storm the road flooded when there was a lot of rain. It was pretty hard going.

I reckon.

IS: Yes, it was pretty hard going.

Did you have a long-drop on the farm, too? You wouldn't have had the night cart come up there.

IS: You never had anything like a septic tank or anything.

During the war—would you remember Radio 5KA?

Yes.

IS: They were put off the air. Well, they bought a farm in Back Valley.

5KA did?

IS: Yes. And I'll tell you what, the stories that whizzed around! You can just imagine in a community of people—three men and a home guard. Poor old things they could hardly walk around and tote a gun, but still –

It was really Dad's Army, was it?

IS: *(Laughs)* Yes, it was very much so. And then 5KA came and bought this farm on the top of the hill. Well, oh dear, oh dear! The spies—the stories that went around were absolutely fantastic. Well, they had a gas producer on their vehicle. So they had to come up to our place and get their charcoal. And so there was Uncle Tom or—I can't remember all their names now—would come up and I used to think here he is from 5KA. He's coming

up to our place to get his charcoal. *(Laughs)* I used to be pretty scared to go to the door even to get the money. They would come and pay the money.

Anyhow the people were asked to keep an eye on their activities. So there was one old bachelor—Andrew—who came from Wedge Island and he worked for Cromptons and had this little old hut. He was a pretty alive old bloke. He said that there were funny lights sometimes up there. And they had a big Alsatian dog. So nobody was really game to go too close to spy on them. The dog would have bitten them in halves. And there was Uncle Cyril and Auntie Dora. I got to know a little bit about the ones that were there. They had two or three vehicles. Anyhow some nights a plane would come over the valley and that was a bit unusual. The plane would be winking their lights. Keeping an eye on the people up yonder. So you had to feel a bit safer, that they weren't getting anybody to come and bomb the place. You can imagine the stories that went around.

Of course.

IS: It went like wildfire even without the telephone. Anyhow there was a report about a suspicious light. The Police came out and they went to every house in Back Valley trying to pick your brains and asking you about these suspicious goings on. Some said that, yes, they had seen a light winking around up there and wondered whether it was signalling to a plane that went over sometimes. You didn't know what to believe really. *(Laughs)* So the Police did a fair old job of interviewing everybody. And this old Andrew was a great chap for living off the land. They finally found out that it was Andrew going around his rabbit traps at night with a lantern. *(Laughter)*

So it wasn't so suspicious after all.

IS: When I think back over those times—some nights you'd be in bed and you'd hear the planes going over, and you'd think, gosh, are they going to drop a bomb any time.

Did any of your friends join the Land Army or the WAAFs or anything like that?

IS: Mr Keen was in the Land Army. And Mr White, who lived in Inman Valley. There were two or three others that hadn't—well, Keens were gardeners mainly and milked a few cows. They used to have a gun and go *(sounds like, drilling)* in Victor once a week or so, or something like that. We used to think it was a bit funny. We didn't feel terribly safe about it. *(Laughter)* I suppose they thought that it was the right thing to do.

So although the war years were sad in some ways, there were some pretty funny situations, too.

IS: Oh, you did. You had some funny situations. Of course everything that ever happened in the Lower Inman Hall was for the comforts fund or the army in some way. Then the fellows would come home from leave and join the dances, dancing around in their uniforms. That made you sad because some of them I had gone to school with. And then there were a few, of course, that didn't come back, and there were tree-planting things for them down Memory Grove. When I look back on that time it was a time of love and family life, and bearing children and so on. I suppose it was not an unusual lifestyle for those times.

For those times. How many children did you have, Irma?

IS: Three. Two boys. Malcolm was always with his father, for which I thank God. When he died Malcolm was nineteen and he knew all about the land and the cows and everything, and it's still his life. Richard was working in the bank in Victor. The two boys weren't old enough to inherit the farm and we had to wait until things straightened out a bit. Merv always said that if Marilyn wanted to go to university, she should go. So we all went without to send her to university. The boys sort of put on hold their affairs and we all sent her off to uni, boarding in Adelaide. Then when the boys were old enough to inherit the farm, well, Richard said that he was not staying in the bank any longer. He couldn't stand living in the city. He had to be transferred to the city and he didn't like it. After a little while we bought the adjoining farm. As the boys got older and marriageable age they separated the partnership and bought more land and they both got more land than they did have. They both bought some land at Waitpinga as time went by. Well, now Craig, Richard's son, is living on part of the one at Waitpinga. So they are still involved in the land. And Craig manages Greenhills Park out here.

Irma, so this is coming into the 1950s and 1960s and further on. When did Victor Harbor begin to change, bit by bit, from that little town that you knew that had the summer influx to becoming a place of retirement as well as a holiday town?

IS: I reckon that I've been here nearly thirty years now, which sometimes I think I must've miscounted, but I don't think I have. *(Laughter)* And yes, I've noticed a big change after that time.

After that time.

IS: I suppose it was possibly because I was living here instead of living out of town. But Victor has always been my place, the place that I come to for various things. Lifestyles have changed a lot. When I came in here to live I was pretty stressed out I suppose, but I

decided that I had to do something, that I couldn't start living here and fretting about the past. So I joined a writing group, and joined other things, and made myself do things.

Tell me about the writing group, Irma.

IS: *(Laughs)* It was run by one of the high school teachers. Then when she gave up Madeline *(sounds like, Brunarto)* took us over. She was a writer herself and a very cluey lady. She said, 'If you do what I tell you to do, you will all end up good writers'. Oh, gosh, was she strict! And very often I cried all the way home. I was living in Back Valley at the time I joined the group. I cried all the way home and I thought I will never be able to do what she says because I could see that I was writing in perhaps an old-fashioned way, like we had been taught at school. My teacher always said, 'One day you'll write a book'. And I thought that it's only smart people who write books. But anyway, I must've been a bit pigheaded or something—*(Laughter)*—because I stuck it out and I tried to write as she said we had to write. It was pretty hard going.

My husband said to me, 'You will never write a book. You don't use the right sort of words'. He did one part of the homework on one occasion and when I took it to the teacher she just read it and she said, 'This is not your work'. So I confessed and I said that it wasn't and that my husband had said that I should've have written this. She said, 'You go home and tell him that he's old-fashioned'. *(Laughter)* He was a very well educated boy. He went to the Strathalbyn High School. He was a pretty cluey chap. He liked to use big words. But she said, 'If you want your work to be read by a lot of people you don't use those jaw-breaker words. You have to use language that the average person can understand'. So I suppose she was quite right.

Irma, when did you remarry?

IS: Again with the dates. About 1962 or 3 I think it was.

And who was that to?

IS: Les Springbett.

And he was the one that was educated at Strathalbyn High School and used the jaw-breaker words. *(Laughter)*

IS: Yes. He went to high school at the time of quite a few of these Victor people who went on the train to the high school. So he knew Lorna Warland and some of the others through his high school days.

How did you go in the end with the book though, Irma? What happened about the book? You did learn to write, didn't you?

IS: Yes. I was involved in about six books that we did, mostly stories about Victor Harbor. And Granite Island, and the history of Granite Island. Oh, various things. Lots of them.

And you told me once that on a trip to Canada you just popped into the National Library to check if they had it. (Laughs)

IS: It was the family book that I was mostly concerned about. But all the other books we had book launchings and all that. It was really quite exciting to know that the things that we had all written and belonged to the class were very well accepted and recorded a lot of history about Bell's shop and—oh, lots of things. So a good collection.

And did you find that after all the stress of the writing group and everything it was worthwhile?

IS: Oh, yes. I got a lot of fun out of it and made some good friends. Quite a few of them have died since.

(Continued after a pause) - to the council for about twenty years or so and helped to name a lot of streets.

So you were on the nomenclature committee?

IS: I was for a long, long time. I enjoyed that. Ken Collins was in charge of that. So they've got a Springbett Drive named after me and Barbara Springbett. That was very interesting because I was able to relate to a lot of the early residents that, you know, a lot of people had forgotten. We submitted a list of names of early residents. So it was good to know that some of those people are remembered in the streets now, in the new subdivisions around the place.

There have been big changes since you moved up here to Warland Avenue.

IS: Oh, yes. There have been a lot of changes. Sometimes now when I hear the name of the streets in the new subdivision I think, oh, where the heck was that? I've got to go and look on the map because I can't remember all the new areas. But yes, I enjoyed that because I thought it was very worthwhile. And you had to submit why a certain name should be remembered. I didn't have anything to do with naming Springbett Drive, it was suggested by somebody else. Yes, it was good to be able to do that because there weren't a lot of people around that knew the very early residents that had land around the place and have died.

Irma, what would be the biggest changes you've seen in Victor Harbor?

IS: Do you mean the changes with places, or people, or attitudes of people?

Places and people.

IS: I don't think that there's a civic pride. I don't like the way a lot of young people don't seem to respect authority in the town, and what the town and the district expects of them. We were taught to be proud of our town. You didn't want to be doing anything disgraceful. I think the drinking laws and the role of the pubs have done a lot to change things around. I'm pleased that the schoolies behave a bit better but why they have to do that I don't know. We never had to let off steam in that way. So civic pride has changed I think, quite a bit. Young people don't seem to be instructed, or if they are they don't take so much notice as what we did in our day. We were proud of our town, and behaved fairly well. I think the street lighting has changed a lot. *(Laughs)* When I was young the street lights ended about Harbor Traders. And from thereon there were no street lights until the hospital was being built. So we were able to have electricity on at our house because it had to go past us over the bridge. Yes, it's a bit hard to pinpoint.

What about physically with the buildings and development here? What's been the biggest changes of all to Victor? The old Victor you knew.

IS: Well, I think the Esplanade is one thing. I'll get back to the tides. And the sea change—what they talk about quite a lot. When I was young the water often used to come up in the high tide, and then there was a wide strip of beach—quite a wide strip of beach—from where the playground is now out to where the sea normally would go. My daughter, being of an enquiring mind, when she was teaching she rang up the council one day and she said, 'I want to know about this change that's supposed to take place and how far above sea level is Victor Harbor', and so on. So they told her at the council chambers. She rang up one day and she said, 'You'll be alright Mum, you'll be sitting up there on top of the hill. The water will only come halfway up with this climate change. You'll be right, sitting up there'. I said, 'What about the shopping?' 'Oh, well, that will all be under water in time'. I said, 'Well, what am I going to live on?' So we had a bit of a funny talk about it. *(Laughs)* I used to go on duty at National Trust, and much to my delight in the passageway of that old building they had a photo of what I had been talking about. There was a seat on this wide stretch of beach from the playground. You would never sit on that seat now.

Is that right?

IS: You can go and have a look if you like. I suppose it's still in the passageway. It was an old wooden seat. But I can remember this wide strip of beach. We used to play on that and go for a swim and so on but it's not there any more. So climate change has come about. Also, you could walk from the land end here across to Granite Island by the reef.

Oh, yes.

IS: And the Aborigines never had canoes or anything and they used to fish off the reef, and you could walk across there without getting your feet wet. My mother, having worked on Granite Island, had often seen that. My friend that died recently said that she and two of her children, when they were very small, had walked across to Granite Island by the reef but she said that you wouldn't do it now. So that is one thing that I suppose I never thought I would ever see. Plus the rivers.

Yes, you mentioned that before.

IS: Years ago the wide mouth of the Inman River, and the Hindmarsh, were a feature but that's changed. It upsets me. *(Laughs)* Because every time I go over the bridge and I look over the sides I see all this murky water. It used to be clear. And sometimes the mouth of the river would be closed over. On one occasion it trapped in a big school of mullet fish, and that was just at our back door. Half the people in Victor came down to catch the fish. Oh, it was exciting! They came down with little nets and everything and paddled around. The darn fish were stranded in a *(sounds like, bed of the)* river. They were flapping around and everybody in Victor had mullet for tea I think. *(Laughter)*

I've noticed the growth of trees. Council policy I understand now is not to plant pine trees around roadsides because they do so much damage. That's another thing. Some of the trees have grown so big that they have become a nuisance and have to be removed. You can overdo those sort of things.

The Soldiers' Gardens, which of course were a feature of Victor Harbor, you couldn't say that they were a feature any more. I suppose partly the trees took away a lot of the moisture of the beautiful flowers.

Yes, the swimming arrangements make me cross because they rave on about this swimming pool—and swimming pool, and swimming pool—and what it's going to cost. They've got the sea out there. I know that's old-fashioned but other places want these swimming pools. I don't know why they can't go and swim in the sea if they are so keen on it. A lot of people have private pools I suppose. Things like that.

And they've moved the council chambers from up here down there. Took a while to get used to that. But that's what's going to happen. They've got to keep going further out, and further out.

As the development spread. So what was once the swamps out there and then the farmland is all houses now.

IS: Yes, there's a new housing development down on Tabernacle Road, which I never thought I'd see anything like that happen. Richard's cut that paddock for hay for years and years and years. I forget who owned it but they used to say to come and cut the paddock. But they've got it all laid out now in streets and pavements and lighting and so on.

Irma, is there anything else you'd like to add about your memories of Victor Harbor at all? You've given so much. It's been delightful to hear these stories.

IS: Oh, I don't know. It's just as I remember things. I'm very thankful I've been able to live in Victor Harbor.

Things that sort of amaze me are people after being away for years come back and say—I had some friends here only the other day from Back Valley and she said, 'Oh, I can't get over the main street in Victor Harbor. And the traffic! Oh, it's almost lethal trying to drive around here'. (*Laughs*) I couldn't help but agree. I was driving up until I broke my shoulder a year ago. I didn't intend to go on driving much longer but when I try sometimes to think where a certain place was, or a certain thing, I think what was there before that? And sometimes my mind boggled about it because you grow along with the changes and it's only when you're talking to somebody like my friend that's been here for a long time that we agree about the changes.

We used to play a game that we'd try and remember everything that went down one side of the main street. We'd start off with the Hotel Grosvenor, and we'd go along and get perhaps halfway, and then she'd say, or I'd say, 'Hang on a minute! Wasn't so and so there before that?' 'Oh, yes, so they were. So we'll start again'. We never got it right. Never got it right. It's amazing how quickly a lot of local people, like myself, do forget—up to a point—unless somebody jogs your mind. You have to accept these changes whether you want to or not. Some of the things they've done to Victor Harbor horrify me but it's not a bit of good, is it? (*Laughs*) They say that's progress.

That's what they say.

IS: And so more or less you have to go along with progress. Sometimes I wonder if certain things have progressed, but lifestyles have changed such a lot as well. Had its affect on progress.

When you say that, do you mean people need more these days, or demand more these days?

IS: They do.

For instance, the type of shopping that was once the norm is no longer what people want.

IS: One thing that has surprised me is that a few years ago there was a shopping complex planned for the foot of Waitpinga hill. Well, that has disappeared. I think they have now sold some of that land into building blocks. I don't know quite what happened to that. When I was going to school we had two of the Dennis children, whose parents lived at Waitpinga, and they had to come to Victor Harbor to school. So the parents would bring them part way. They did have a car and the mother could drive. They would come to school, and after school they had to start walking. Of course they had to go around the long way across the Inman bridge where I lived. Sometimes they'd walk as far as the foot of Waitpinga hill before their mother or their father came and picked them up. They were stuck with shearing or something on the farm and couldn't pick the children up. There was one of the Battye girls. She drove a little sulky. And another girl came with her. She left her horse and sulky opposite a place where the pine tree is. You know, where we were just talking about Lifeline? The big pine tree there.

Yes.

IS: Mr Gribble had a smithy there—a horse-shoeing smithy—and they left their little sulky and horse there all day. They drove from The Bluff every day. Wouldn't do it now. Kids won't walk. They want a ride everywhere. And not all that keen on riding bikes to school. They go on the school bus, no matter what. Gee, I would've been pleased to sometimes have a ride from Victoria Street, down the bottom end, to school. It was a bit of a drag when it was raining and cold, and when it was very, very hot. I don't know if kids these days are softer or whatever. They like to have everything laid on, don't they?

It's a different world view from your upbringing, Irma. Very different.

IS: They like to have their swimming pool and everything else, with the new technology and plugs in their ears and they go along listening to their music and they don't know

anything that's happening in the world half the time. (*Laughs*) My great grandchildren—and I'm not exempt from this sort of lifestyle. I do have to compare that, sometimes, and ask are they better off? I don't know.

I guess you've got to say that it's just different times, isn't it?

IS: Yes.

But you obviously didn't feel the need for those things.

IS: Didn't know about it. But it makes me wonder what sort of technology they're going to encounter as years go by. Or will it all fall through?

Well, Irma, thank you so very, very much for being willing to talk so beautifully about your memories. It's been a lovely time.

IS: I don't know about whether it's been any help to anybody or not.

Very much so. So thank you, Irma.

IS: You're welcome.