

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'
Interview with Donald Bartel on 21st October 2014
Interviewer: Joan Sandford

You were born here in Victor Harbor?

DB: I was born down in Encounter Bay.

Yes.

DB: The house is still there which my Father built actually, and that's right down the bottom end of Tabernacle Road as you turn to the Bluff, it's the house on the corner.

Coming from this way, do you mean the first house?

Right on the corner as you turn, at the bottom end of Tabernacle Road and go towards the Bluff.

Has it got a big fence around it?

It's a green roof and it's, no it hasn't got a big fence.

I'll have a better look next time I go down there.

DB: And then while I was away at the war, he sold that and when I got home I helped him build the second house at the back. The funny thing about this house at the front which everybody likes to be on the seafront, Dad didn't want to live there because of the sea wind; he didn't like it. So he sold it and moved back off the front.

That's unusual isn't it? So, born at Encounter Bay, I suppose, did they have a hospital there or a nursing home, or birthing home?

DB: It was at home.

I believe your Mum was a Rumbelow.

DB: That's right she was; one of eight.

One of eight; so who was her Father?

DB: I think his name was Malen; there were several Malens. They were a fishing family; they came here early. They lost a lot of them, drowned at sea and that sort of thing.

On one occasion they'd been down to Kangaroo Island fishing just before Christmas trying to get a bit of Christmas money. Three of them on the boat and they were coming back, I think it was Christmas Eve and they got in a bit close of Waitpinga Beach during the night, got caught in the waves, went ashore. Uncle Wal was never found. Uncle Dave was drowned and Uncle Ly--- (name unclear) managed to get right out and climb right back up on to the back of the Honeymans. So that was a nasty episode.

Losing two of the family right on Christmas. Bad enough at any time; mm, nasty. So we'll go back to your story. You were born down there and you were second in the family?

DB: Yes.

Just the two boys?

DB: That's right.

You and your brother Ivan?

DB: That's right.

Ivan's older?

DB: Ivan's six years older than me.

He, of course, is not with us now.

DB: No, no. I stayed there until the war, I stayed home.

Is that the first house or the second house?

DB: No, the first one. It was interesting back those days. I joined up and I was accepted just before I turned eighteen, but they never called me up until I turned eighteen. It was quite an experience because one of my big trips from there was to go to Victor Harbor. (Laughs)

To enlist?

DB: Yeah.

Right.

DB: I enlisted in Adelaide actually. The Navy was a real education for me because I had to get out and stand on my own feet a bit. That was interesting.

And where did you do your training, in Melbourne?

DB: Down at *Cerberus*.

And what happened then?

DB: From there I went to Darwin. I was in Darwin for twelve months. I was on a six months at the Signal Station there and then I had six months on a little old tub called the *Southern Cross*. We had a crew of thirty odd on that.

You mentioned before at the start of the interview that you wanted to be a signalman. Tell me how you got there.

DB: When I went to join up they asked me what branch I'd like to be in and I said that I'd like to be a signalman. They said, "Oh, well have you got your Intermediate?"

And I said, "No, only First Year."

They said, "You'll have to do an exam then."

I sat down, did this exam which I could have passed in Grade 1 – there was no trouble! (Laughs)

Typical exam!

DB: So I went over to *Cerberus*. I passed without much trouble.

To be a signalman did you have to learn Morse code?

DB: Morse code, semaphore, coding, that sort of thing.

Is semaphore the flags? I'm a bit younger!

DB: Yes, but mostly we used lights on the boats. I'll tell you one funny incident when we were in, after the War finished we were, they tried to find things for us to do, we were still up in the Islands. There were three or four corvettes, which I was on a corvette at the time. They took us out on exercises and we were steaming along in line-ahead.

What does that mean? One behind the other?

DB: One behind the other. The leading ship is the commanding officer at that time. They hoist signals as to what you're going to do. As each one down the, you have to be able to read the signals from the start, the flags, then the next ship understands and they put theirs up and the next one and so on. We were at the tail end and we were having a bit of trouble reading it because the flags weren't blowing out too well. Anyway, yeah, we've got it. So up they went. Execute. They all went to port and we went to starboard! I thought great! Next thing we got a signal from the leader and it started: Good I thought, hallo, we've done alright then, bye! We had to turn round and face them. (Laughs)

So the flags got mixed up on the way?

DB: Yeah, they did.

Like that whisper thing, where you keep on whispering and the message changes.

DB: Then, at the finish, actually we were up at Zampagna in the southern Philippines when the War finished, we were coming back down to Morotai and then they decided they were goin' to send us to Hong Kong with the Occupation Force. So we went up to Subic Bay. Up until then we'd been attached to the American Second Fleet, working with them.

Subic Bay was a big American base and there were over three hundred ships in harbour when we got there. And there were about oh, probably eight or something of us.

There were four English submarines, three Australian corvettes and a Canadian armed Merchant Cruiser, and we all lined up and went to Hong Kong. Well we anchored out of Hong Kong the first night because we had to sweep the channel in; we were mine sweepers, to see that it was safe for going in.

The next morning we got up and couldn't believe it, there were battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers, anchored all round us waiting to go in.

Waiting for you to clear the way?

DB: Yeah. Anyway we did the sweeping, I think we only got about one mine. Well one blew up the stern of one of the corvettes. Messed up the steering, had to get towed back to Australia. We went in, I think we were second or third in line going in to Hong Kong Harbour. When we got in there was only one ship there and that was an old Japanese destroyer. So we went in and anchored. By the next morning there were one hundred and ten ships in there.

After you'd cleared it?

DB: Yep.

So when you found a mine, what did you do?

DB: We used to – we had paravanes out the sides they had a long steel cable out to this thing at the end and they'd go under the water and cut the mines off, cut the lines off the mines and then they'd float to the surface.

Right. Then you could detonate them?

DB: Yep.

So the mines were anchored to something?

DB: Yep.

Although once coming back from up there I was on watch and we were searching for a plane that had come down with, they were bringing injured back. I saw something floating in towards the shore and I said to my Officer of the Watch, "There's something in there, I don't know just what it is floating."

He pulled up and he said, "That looks like a mine." So he sent a motor-boat away to have a look at it. They got over as close as they could and came back and said that yes it's an old Japanese mine. We had some Army officers on board up on the bridge and they said, "What do you do?"

He said, "Oh we sink it with rifle fire. We just put a hole in it and it goes down." So, Bang, bang, bang next thing up went the mine, hit one of the horns on it and it exploded in shallow water, splashed water all over us, it was a mess for a while! (Laughs)

It didn't do us any harm, but gave us a bit of a shake.

You were about nineteen by this time I suppose?

DB: I might have been twenty by then.

Yes, what an experience.

DB: Yeah. At that stage, we had been attached to the American Second Fleet but then we were attached to the American, British Pacific Fleet, so we had a few changes around. It was interesting.

And did you leave Hong Kong to come back to Australia?

DB: Yes.

That was the end of it?

DB: Yeah, that was pretty much it. When we were in Hong Kong Harbour there was a typhoon alert and they said the big ships leave the harbour, the small ones can please themselves, whether they go out or stay in. We had as much chance in the harbour as we did out. Anyway, it didn't hit us there but about a day later, we started to head home and we were coming down the Philippine coast. Three of us in line-ahead and it hit us. Oh boy! I've never seen sea like it. Rough, wind, shocking!

You were in a relatively small boat, a corvette?

DB: Yeah.

A corvette is not very big is it?

DB: That night when I turned in I wasn't feeling very well. Got up in the morning and it was like that. Absolute flat.

Goodness.

DB: It changed that quick it had gone.

And then after the war, what then?

DB: We came down where possible. We came into Darwin and re-fuelled which was interesting seeing as I'd been there before. Then we, the corvette's name was the *Broome*. And where possible the ships called into harbours where they were named after so we called in to Broome and spent a couple of days there. They put on a meal at the pub for us and that kind of thing. Then we just came down the coast into Fremantle and we were paid off.

Like a more leisurely tour home.

DB: Oh yeah. By this time we only had one officer left, the Captain, who eventually lived down here. I got to know him quite well. So there was no discipline at the finish we just did virtually what we liked.

You would have been mates by then.

DB: Pretty much. Yeah, yeah. I had one funny experience with him. I had to, I was the only signalman left at this stage and I had to go up to the Signal Station at Fremantle to see if there were any signals there for us and then I'd go back on board. Then sometimes I'd just phone them through and I was talking to a WRAN on the phone one day and putting the signal through.

Who's that? The Captain?

DB: No a WRAN.

Oh, Iran the country!

DB: It got towards the end and it was a long one and she couldn't get it all on one page. "Just wait til I turn over." And I made a rude comment about her turning over. Then you had to give your name. (Laughs)

DB: And when she gave hers I thought oh, that's the Captain's girlfriend! So I was a bit embarrassed. I thought I'd better say something about it and when I was speaking to him the next day I said, "I made a bit of a blue yesterday and I told him what happened."

He said, "Don't worry about it, she's broad-minded!" (Laughs)

We had a few funny things happen. Then we came, when I'd finished there, came home by train and across. Just in old cattle trucks with a round roof on the top with bits of straw on the bottom for sleeping and there was flooding and we spent four days in Cook before we could get across.

Oh, really.

DB: Yeah.

I suppose there were no windows in the cattle truck.

DB: No.

How many would have been on the train?

DB: I don't know. There was a good many of us, quite a few carriages. They had WRANs and AWAs and different ones and they got a bit of a decent carriage. Well, anyone who'd had an injury got a decent carriage.

Just going back, I thought you said Iran the country but you were talking about a WRAN, a woman. A naval officer was she?

DB: Yes.

Sorry, we'll correct that! (Laughs)

DB: Yeah.

I thought it a bit unusual to be talking to Iran.

DB: No, no. A naval WRAN.

I should have woken up when you said she was the captain's girlfriend.

DB: Actually I got out of the Navy a bit earlier than I should've. We joined up for the duration of the War and six months after or three years whichever were the longest. I hadn't quite had my three years and because Dad was in the building and they needed builders they got me out a bit early.

And they probably didn't have anything for you to do anyhow.

DB: No, no.

Back to Victor Harbor.

DB: Back to Victor Harbor.

Quiet, in those days it would have been quiet here.

DB: It was, heavens.

We should go back – we missed out when you went to school, I think, didn't we? We didn't mention about school.

DB: Well for one thing, where the Lakes are down there now, that used to just flood. The whole area and Dad said, "They'll never build on there, never build there." And look at it now.

I suppose it's been gouged out.

DB: Oh yes, that was Herb Smith's land. He was a farmer and I used to ride across there on my bike to go to school. And up Tabernacle Road sometimes used to go up there but that was just a metal road and all down from Tabernacle Road, back this way was just sandhills. You couldn't get through there at all along the front.

It's a lot different now.

DB: Then another little interesting thing about how the place has changed. We were building contractors so we've seen it all happening. I lived down by the Hindmarsh River, it was my first home. Barb, my wife, said, "When are you going to build again?"

"When you find a block with a view." It was only a week or so and she found this one. I said to my brother, I've bought a block of land up there, up on the hill. Going to build up there. He said, "What? Why you moving so far out of town?" Look at it now. (Laughs).

Three streets from the river isn't it?

DB: Yeah, yeah. He couldn't believe I was coming away up here. There were very few houses there at that time.

It's been a very good choice. It's a beautiful spot. It's a big block too.

DB: Oh, I've been happy here. It is a big block. I'll stay here while I can handle it. And I'll say this, Veteran Affairs are extremely good. They help you no end with the Gold Card. I've got a cleaning lady once a fortnight for two hours and that costs me, I'm not sure if it's four or five dollars.

Goodness me.

DB: Another one, Vanessa. She calls twice a year. She's under contract to them, just comes to see if you need anything.

Really?

DB: She comes up with all sorts of suggestions. The last one when she was here last, she said, "How you going?"

DB: "I'm alright," I said, "I don't need anything." She's got lots of things for me along the way. And I said something about I've been doing the washing. It's a bit wet, things aren't drying too well.

"Well," she said, "you've got a good shed out there you want one of those folding clotheslines".

Right.

DB: I said, "That'd be nice and I see when I got it down I see when it came, \$190.00. That was nothing.

No, no, because of your service, you could have given your life.

DB: Yes, yes. Doctors, dentists, none of them cost me anything.

Very good.

DB: So it's saved thousands I'd say.

But you took a risk didn't you?

DB: Yeah, well we did what we were asked to do, wanted to do.

That's right. That's excellent. So you came back and you worked with your Dad.

DB: Yep.

So you hadn't been building up until then? I suppose you might have.

DB: I had started, I'd had probably three years with him.

OK.

DB: I had a fair idea of the building trade by then. Yeah. Then I came back, playing. While I was away in the Navy, when I was on the old *Southern Cross* up in Darwin, we only had thirty odd in the crew but we had Frank Galbally. He was a big-time crime bloke in Melbourne and Alan Killigrew. He played interstate for Victoria.

Really.

DB: Another chap from Western Australia played in the League over there.

Really?

DB: So with thirty odd crew we had a mighty good side. Our Captain, who came from Sydney I think, he knew nothing about it.

This is the football?

DB: Yeah but we'd get a chance if a ship would come in and we'd see if we'd get a game of footie with them. And we were going alright and to finish up he thought, he said, "Yeah, you're doing alright." He said, "When another one comes in, signal up, signal the Captain and tell him you'd like a game of footie and I'll have a crate of beer with him." (Laughs)

DB: He was getting a crate of beer out of it. He thought it was great, so he wanted us to play footie. (Laughs)

When I was on the *Broome*, not that we got a chance to play footie much, but I became the captain of

the football team on there.

When you got on land I suppose.

DB: Yeah, up in Ambon we played one or two games. That's about the only time.

And when you came home you played football here?

DB: I played for Encounter Bay until I was thirty-nine.

Did you?

DB: In between I played a few games for Sturt, in Adelaide. I was captain/coach two years straight. We were premiers one year and runners-up the next. I'd had enough of that. I played as captain, I don't know how many years, a good many years. We won a few premierships so we did alright. I'm still involved, in fact they honoured me this last year. They named the Best and Fairest Medal for the Club, the Don Bartel Medal.

Wonderful. That's nice.

DB: So that's rather nice.

And Ivan, your brother, he played footie too?

DB: Yeah. Not so much, but he did. He used to play in the dance band here a lot. He played the violin.

Really?

DB: Yeah. He was in the Army so we both had our time.

Do you play any musical instruments?

DB: No. No. Unfortunately I haven't got much in the way of hobbies now either. Kym comes and sees me quite often. Now I'm going up to Philip for eleven weeks actually. Eleven, not weeks, days!

Whereabouts is he?

DB: He's up on the Gold Coast.

OK.

DB: He's a paramedic up there. He's coming down next Saturday, he's coming back to school reunion here. He's only coming for five days and then I'm going back with him up there for the eleven days. Then his elder son, who's doing Law up there, getting well on with his course, he's coming back down with me to spend two weeks with Kym in his office as part of his course.

OK.

DB: And then he advised me, that was just for two weeks, then he was going to stay with me.

That will be good.

DB: And I got a phone call from him the other day and he said, "Papa, when I come down Mum and Dad are going to be in Hawaii, Brendan, his brother, is doing engineering, is going overseas for three months so I don't want to be here on my own so I'm going to stay six weeks with you."

Isn't that good?

DB: Yeah.

You never get to know them as well as you do when you're living with them.

DB: No, no.

How old is he?

DB: He'd be twenty-two I think. The other one's turning twenty-one while I'm up there.

And what's he doing?

DB: He's the one doing engineering.

Oh, OK.

DB: And he's very clever.

Is he?

DB: His last five results were three High Distinctions and two Distinctions.

Do you know what I've noticed, I might be wrong. You and your brother had two and you had two sons and I think your sons had two sons. Is that right?

DB: That's right.

No girls.

DB: No.

Strange.

DB: Kym's got two girls.

Oh, has he.

DB: The interesting one there, just recently Amy, the younger one, she just got married in Bali.

Did she?

DB: Kym said, "You can come up if you like, it's up to you. It's a long trip, we understand and really, we're just having some of the close family." And then they had a celebration down here when they came home.

Oh OK.

DB: Quite a crowd there, that was good. One interesting thing about that was, they found out, just before they were leaving because neither of them were involved in churches and they wouldn't marry them up there without genuine proof they were genuine. And two hours before they caught the plane they got married in the Registry Office in Adelaide. (Laughs)

So they had three ceremonies?

DB: Yeah. And then I said to Kym, well, we were talking about it, "Well we possibly could have got around it but we would have had to get a solicitor up there."

I said, "You want to keep away from them!" (Laughs)

He laughed.

Him being a solicitor! It sounds as though you've gone from the building trade to legal and engineering.

DB: And another, I'm talking about the family all the time.

That's alright.

DB: Christine, who unfortunately died when she was about fifty-eight.

Who was Christine?

DB: She was our daughter, oh we did have a daughter.

Oh, OK.

DB: She was a lovely girl, that's her up there, that painting.

Oh, beautiful.

DB: Courtney, who was quite a clever girl, she finished up Headmaster of Westminster in Adelaide and now she's up on the Gold Coast.

So where does Courtney fit?

DB: She's granddaughter.

Christine's daughter?

DB: Yep. She works for Channel 9 up there. She does the News and various things. I was talking to Philip she's just been over to France with her partner, who's a helluva nice bloke, for the World Championship Surfing and he won a silver medal, so he did well.

Yeah.

DB: Now Philip says that since she got back the head girl at Channel 9 either got put off or left and they've made her head girl for the present for six months.

Gosh.

DB: For six months just for a trial period. So she's doing alright.

Very good. So there are some girls there, not all boys.

DB: No, Kym's got the two girls of course. A funny thing about that, at the celebration they had up here, Sue, Kym's wife, oh, they did a lot of work, a tremendous amount of work. When it was finished I said to Sue, "Well I said, you've got one married, now, I said, you've got Lisa and she had a new boyfriend, a terrific fellow there, I said, she'll be next.

"Oh," she said, "I hope she elopes." (Laughs)

So much work in it.

DB: But I've had a good life here and I remember down there, you know the old boatshed and various things on the beach there.

Do you?

DB: Used to go in the boat a lot with them.

Did you go swimming out on the baths, out on the Causeway?

DB: I did. Uncle Eric Rumbelow used to run that and I used to teach swimming there in the summer.

You did?

DB: Yeah. I did a lot of swimming.

The fenced area was fairly large?

DB: Yep, what was it in the old days, what were they? Thirty-three and a third yards or something.

Would that be Olympic size?

DB: No a little bit smaller. He coached me a lot and I came second in the Swim through Adelaide when I was fourteen.

Did you?

DB: And then I won the State junior championships when I was a Junior in Adelaide.

And was that in the River?

DB: No, that was in the Olympic pool in Adelaide.

Was that the Baths in King William Street?

DB: Yes, yes.

I vaguely remember that being there.

DB: I did a lot of swimming. Then after the War I just gave it up.

Did you? What about down the beachfront? Do you remember the kiosks and things that were along there?

DB: Yep, I do. In fact, Barb, my wife's parents used to run it.

Did they?

DB: Yeah.

What was their name?

DB: Ireland. There used to be games there too, on the lawns. Roll 'em' up and Knock 'em down. Those sort of games and my Father used to run that.

Really?

DB: There was a merry-go-round there.

Yes, I remember, the horses went up and down.

DB: That's the one.

I liked that one.

DB: Yep. So we used to get there a bit.

Yes, I'm particularly interested if you can remember the kiosk, it was sort of open in my memory. My Grandfather used to go up and get a big tray with teapot and everything.

DB: Yep. Well that's probably there's two; one where it is now and one across where that Interpretive Centre, or whatever it's called, on the other corner.

Behind the tram barn?

DB: Well that was the longer one and it was probably more open. You could go and sit along inside and have your tea and scone or whatever they served there. They were there for quite a few years. Barb and her sister used to work in there. I used to get a free milkshake occasionally.

Did they do meals or was it just sandwiches and things.

DB: No, not they'd do a pie or a pasty, that sort of a thing.

What about the changes in Victor Harbor? A lot different now.

DB: Oh yes. Ocean Street a lot of old buildings have gone from there. Old *Pipiriki* round the front, was a big old two-storey there.

There were some beautiful old buildings weren't there?

DB: Oh there were. They've disappeared. Even a lot of the buildings we did, and we did a lot of buildings, they're getting knocked down and replaced now.

Really.

DB: Yeah.

You built in stone didn't you?

DB: No, brick mainly. Dad was a stone mason.

Did you do the woodwork part of it as well?

DB: We employed, we had carpenters, we had a workshop down opposite the Hospital at one stage. We had our own carpenters. My brother really, his main thing was tiling. He tiled bathrooms and I looked after the other part. We had up to ten men working for us.

Did you?

DB: Yeah. It was pretty busy at one stage.

You've been responsible for a lot of buildings here, then.

DB: Oh yes. Here and all round the district. Elliot, Goolwa, Strathalbyn, over in from Willunga Hill, we did two or three in there.

So if you were building at Strathalbyn did you stay up there whilst you were building or did you come back every day?

DB: No, we didn't, people, the one, the only really one we built there was for a chap McGraney. He used to work down here and then he was up there as a carpenter and when we went up we got a caravan and some of the blokes slept in that. Some of us in the house and they put us up meals so it was pretty good.

OK. It would have been too far to commute back and forth.

DB: It was in those days, yeah. When we were building here, there was three or four builders I suppose and with the roads and that, we didn't have any trouble with Adelaide people. We were building lots of holiday homes that people would build with the idea that they would retire here. So we had it pretty good but then they got the roads better and they all started travelling down. Competition got a bit tougher, I started to wear out and thought, that's it I've had enough.

I'm wondering who built my grandfather's home in Churchill Road. Apparently it was concrete poured between slabs. No 12 Churchill Road. It doesn't sound like your style.

DB: No, it wouldn't be ours. Appleby would have done that. Appleby, he did that. Two-storey house on the corner here he did that too. He was a bit of a character old Appleby. He was a very religious man and he built it for Goldsack who was the chemist down here for a long time. One day Ron Goldsack was there and he said to old Arch, he said, "That corner doesn't look quite plumb."

"Of course it is," he said and went and got his level and put it on it, took it away and smashed it with a hammer and said, "Damn thing never was any good!" (Laughs)

He wouldn't admit that it wasn't straight!

DB: No.

Oh dear!

DB: To build a chimney they'd box it all up, right up, then they'd screw up cement bags up through the middle of it and when it all set they'd light the cement bags and they'd burn out and that would be the chimney flue.

Heavens above!

DB: It was back when we used to get our material down by train. There was a big story about it and Appleby never had any transport and a load of timber might have come in on the train. "Follow me, men." He'd have a couple of them on bikes and down they'd go and they'd come back with it on their shoulders.

On their bikes?

DB: Yeah! (Laughs). Times change.

So you built with brick, did you have a brickworks here?

DB: There was at Port Elliot. There was a bit of a story to that too. I forget his name now he was a bit of a character too. At one stage we reckoned we weren't getting the number of bricks, we always seemed to be short. I spoke to the chap driving the truck and he said, "Look, I shouldn't say this but we've been told that 1000 bricks is 900 when we're loading." They used to come along and would pull by hand, the unloading, and they'd stack them but towards the end the stack would get knocked over. He said that they were told to do that so we couldn't count them so easily.

Come Christmas, or just before Christmas we got an account from him and told him, we're not getting the numbers, something's not right. Oh, he carried on a bit and finally he made us an allowance. He admitted we were right. A chap in Adelaide owned the brick kiln.

He went down, a lad from Port Elliot used to drive the truck and he was telling us after. He said that we went down and he said he wanted to go and see the boss down there. Said that we pulled up, he got in behind the seat, pulled out a rifle, went in and "Bang!", shot the bloke, come out and said, "Get going!" Killed him.

Really?

DB: Yeah.

Did he get charged?

DB: Oh yeah, he got gaoled.

Goodness. That was the boss in Adelaide came.

DB: No, the boss in Adelaide he killed. It was the manager of the brick kiln up here. Apparently they'd a fall out or something. So he shot him.

You don't do that every day do you?

DB: No. The lad driving the truck said that when he came out he threw the rifle in and said, "Get going!" And he said, "I did too!" (Laughs). The police caught them before they got home.

There wasn't a lot of crime around in those days was there?

DB: No, no, very little, very little. There wasn't the population. See I think it was when I was down in Encounter Bay I think the population of the area was about 1,200.

Right.

DB: We knew everybody along the way. Everybody out at Encounter Bay I called auntie or uncle. I was never far out. (Laughs)

And if they weren't, it was polite.

DB: It was polite.

But being from two local families.

DB: Yep.

Did your Dad come from around here?

DB: No. He came from up Eudunda way.

Did he?

DB: Mm.

Your German background.

DB: That's right. Yep.

His name was Friedrich, that's right isn't it?

DB: That's right Friedrich Johannes I think it was.

Definitely a German name.

DB: Frederickrick John we knew him as more.

Yes.

DB: That's where I got the John from I guess.

I guess so, tend to follow it down, don't you

DB: But he was a very good stonemason, a good general builder. He made a good job of that house down there, it's still standing.

Which one's that?

DB: The one where I was born.

Oh yes, yes.

DB: Still looks good.

And they eventually, your grandparents, your parents I mean, lived in Granite Street you said.

DB: Yeah they did. Well Dad, Mum died, my Mum died there.

Did she?

DB: Yeah. And we were just along the road towards the river.

On the other side?

DB: Mm. On the corner, opposite the kindergarten.

Oh, right?

DB: And at that time, when we built there, that was just a sand track down through there. Couldn't get through there with a car.

Really?

DB: So things change.

What sort of transport did you have in those early days?

DB: Oh, Dad, Dad always, he had an old Dodge ute for awhile and I think the last thing he had was a Bedford ute.

Right.

DB: After the War when we came home, I hadn't had anything up till then, I wanted something and you couldn't buy cars, you had to have special permits and things to get a car.

Did you?

DB: It was hard even to buy a second-hand one and finally actually I saw an MG in Adelaide, a new one. Boy, it would do me but I didn't have the money for it and no-one would lend me the money to get it, so I finished up with a motorbike. Which wasn't a particularly good idea.

It got you around I suppose.

DB: Yep I never came off it so that was something.

Did it have a sidecar?

DB: No.

And after you got married did you have a car then?

DB: I got a car just before we were married; a little Austin 8. It was good too. Since then I've had God knows how many cars.

That's the way it goes isn't it.

DB: But that's what happened with Barb to finish, she had dementia.

That's a shame.

DB: It's a terrible thing. I kept her home here as long as I possibly could but I knew she was starting to perhaps forget a few things. She had her own car, we had two cars, she used to drive. One day she came home – she hadn't been out long. She came in tears. I said, "What's wrong?"

She said, "It's just I was going to see Betty Mahoney," they used to paint together. Barb was a pretty good artist, she did nearly all this stuff. Betty Mahoney was a very good one too and she knew Betty well.

They used to spend a lot of time together painting and that but she said, "I went out and I couldn't find Betty Mahoney's place" She said, "I got lost." She'd run into the kerb and she came home in a real state and that's when we spoke to Clive Fowler. He said that she can't drive any more so we had to sell that car, and she went down fairly quickly from then on.

Did she still paint?

DB: As long as she could but she'd got bad arthritis at the finish in her hands but she kept a record of the paintings she did until towards the end. She didn't really, right at the finish, but she had a record of 3,000 paintings. She'd sold them all round Australia, America, Canada, Scotland, England, France, Hong Kong.

Did she do that one of your daughter?

DB: No, Alfred Engel did that.

It's beautiful isn't it?

DB: Yep but anything else in here she did.

The flowers there?

DB: Yep.

That's gorgeous, beautiful.

DB: They're all up along the passage, the bedroom.

I actually put a room out the back there because she started off, she was painting just in that little back porch there. It used to get in such a mess. I added out the back and it became a gallery and a studio.

Oh really?

DB: She spent a lot of time out there. Still quite a few paintings there actually.

Are there?

DB: Yeah. I sold a few of them after but I've decided now that I'll just keep them, the family can have them later on. They've all got paintings but they can do what they like with them.

And let them sort it out later.

DB: Yep.

And by then there might be more in the family too, to share that haven't already got some.

DB: Possible, quite possible.

Although there'd be a few here to go round somewhere, too. They've probably got their tags on them.

DB: Yep. I think some quite likely.

Can you think of anything else?

DB: I probably will after you go.

We can always do it again. (Laughs)

It's very interesting, as things have changed so much, haven't they?

DB: They have, they have. Yeah, with the building, we employed and trained a number who went out on their own eventually and did alright.

And some of them probably are still working here.

DB: Yep, well, I don't know that they're working. I think they've all got a bit old now.

They're the ones they've trained maybe.

DB: Yeah, well that's possible. Well Ken, possibly some of his. Tim Telfer, he was another one went out on his own, building.

Ken Collins, is he the Ken you referred to?

DB: Yes. Oh, there are others; Reg Arnold, I don't know if you know of Reg. He was our foreman – carpenter for some time.

Is he still around?

DB: Yep. Then we built the workshop just down from the Hospital there and eventually we sold that to him and Sid Griffin and they'd become sub-contractors to us then.

Talking about the Hospital, there was an earlier hospital somewhere else, I think.

DB: Yeah, in the town just up, somewhere opposite the Masonic Hall, somewhere up one of those streets.

Like in a cottage hospital was it?

DB: Mm.

Do you remember when the hospital that's there now when that was built.

DB: No I don't.

You didn't have anything to do with that one?

DB: Interesting thing talking about building, the Crown Hotel you'll notice that up on the front parapet there's *The Crown* written up there? That's all done in cement dressing.

Yes?

DB: Dad did that.

I think that might be heritage listed.

DB: I think it is, yeah.

There's been talk at times about it coming down or something hasn't there? Nothing's happened. It's a shame to take down our history.

DB: Yeah, it is, it is. I'm looking forward to getting up to the Gold Coast with the family up there again.

That will be nice.

DB: They spoil me a bit. I put up with it. (Laughs)

That's difficult isn't it?

DB: Yeah.

Do you read or anything like that much?

DB: I do. Generally, when I go to bed, I read and that helps me get to sleep.

It's good isn't it?

DB: When it starts dropping in my face I know it's time to put the light out.

Yes, I do that. (Laughs)

DB: But I've been pretty lucky healthwise fortunately so I've done quite well.

Yes, to get to eighty-nine you've done pretty well haven't you?

DB: Yep.

And you're still looking pretty healthy.

DB: Yep. Actually I reckon I've been better lately than I was, so that's something. I'm doing alright.

Well, I think we've just about covered everything we can think of.

DB: I haven't given you much but.

You've done well.

DB: You'll get something out of it.

Thank you very much for talking to me.

Interview 2 with Don Bartel.

DB: Fishing down at Encounter Bay with the Rumbelow family. Well I used to spend a lot of time out in the boat. Graham Rumbelow was my cousin and we used to go out a lot but Uncle Ween, Malen Rumbelow, he was a top notch.

And what did you call him, Uncle Ween?

DB: Yeah. And he was a top notch mullet fisherman, back those days when they used to haul round the fish. It was quite common for them to catch a hundred dozen. Yeah, heaps. Then unfortunately they had the little old, I don't know if you've ever seen the photo of the old fish shed they had on the seafront there in front of where the shop is now?

At Yilki?

DB: Yeah.

My Father used to go there and buy fish.

DB: Yeah. And they used to bring the fish in and put them in there and cover them with seaweed and wet it all down and then they had to get them down to the train and go to Adelaide. Half the time if we got stinking hot weather they wouldn't take them in Adelaide.

No ice, mm.

DB: No ice, so that used to cost them a bit of money.

There were a lot more fish around then.

DB: I remember another time too, with the cray-fishing, Graham and I, school kids, we used to have a Craypot, perhaps two, that we could just row out and set.

Graham Rumbelow?

DB: Yep and we'd sell the crayfish and I forget, six pence each I think they were. One day, we had a craypot out towards Wright's Island there and when we went and picked it, it was nearly full of crays. We couldn't believe it! They were all undersize but it was just about full of them. We were that excited and what had happened, Uncle Li used to set his pots down at West Island and he'd kept all the small ones on his way home and put them in our pot! (Laughs)

That was a trick.

DB: It was.

So you had to leave them.

DB: Yeah they had to be tipped out.

Let them grow.

DB: Another time we were out there, there was an old wreck from the early days, one of the big ones, just not far out there and we set a pot on that. When we pulled it there was a great octopus in it. We didn't know what to do so we tied it just over the stern, rowed like mad for the beach. We got in there and pulled the boat up and went round and the pot and octopus had gone! (Laughs)

When you say it was a big one, how big roughly?

DB: The octopus? Oh it had a big span I suppose, long legs.

Did you often catch octopus?

DB: We used to get a few. Kym, my son, he still goes out and sets craypots. He's got David Virgin, he was one of the Virgins the builders, and he's got a boat up there. He doesn't use a lot himself, if he's home he goes out with Kym, otherwise he lets Kym use it. Another chap, used to be a butcher, Trevor

he was a butcher, he goes with Kym and they set pots and get a few crays.

Is that the butcher in the little?

DB: No, he was down, I think there's a baker down there now, across from the Crown there. Trevor, Would it have been Richards or some name like that?

That's not the one I'm thinking of.

DB: He hasn't been there for some time, but he goes. They enjoy it, they do a little bit of fishing out here too. I had boats, one after the other, different types, different sizes. Finally, a chap down the road moved down here and he's keen on fishing he said, so he'd go with me. We went out seven times I reckon I took him and he's seasick six times. (Laughs)

He was good, "No, I'm alright, no, no I'll be alright." He would stick it out but to finish it got too much and then I had no-one going with me and I was feeling a bit old and this ramp down here is a terrible place.

It's not really safe on your own is it?

DB: One day I was sitting here and I looked out to Barb and it was calm, beautiful and I said, "Dammit, I'm goin' out in the boat." Off I went and it was flat calm, no swell or anything there. Went out, fished, got a nice feed of fish and come in. By then the tide had changed and it was washing up on the beach and I pulled the bow on the beach and went up to get the trailer. By the time I come back she'd washed up on dry sand, side on like that. Talk about struggle to get it floated. I came home, I was always fussy with it, gave a good wash down, a good clean up, cleaned the fish and I come in and I said to Barb, "Well, I'm bugged, and that's it, I'm going to sell it, I've had enough of this." So I took it back up to Goolwa where I bought it, "Yeah we'll sell that for you."

Was it a motor boat or a row boat?

DB: No, motor, canopy and all sorts of (?), it was a nice boat. It had a decent motor. "Yeah, we'll sell that." Anyway it'd been there a while and hadn't sold and Barb and I were goin' for a drive one day and I said, "I'll just have a look in and see how it's looking, see if it's clean." Yeah, they were looking after it and I said to the bloke, "Look if you haven't sold it by Christmas I'll take it home and I'll use it over the summer or I'll sell it from home."

"Fair enough," he said. So I said that I'd leave it here for another couple of weeks. A week or two later I was goin' up to Goolwa again and I thought that I'd go and have another look. When I looked it had quite a big sign on the side, "Urgent Sale, Doctor's bills to pay!" He sold it that week! (Laughs)

That's a good one.

DB: I laughed. "Yeah," he said, "I've got a few tricks."

Saved you the bother.

DB: We used to go the Coorong and that a lot, fishing up there. Barb would go with me sometimes. Had a lot of fun fishing.

Might be in your blood, the Rumbelow part of your blood.

DB: That was another thing in the Navy. When the War finished they let us keep a few detonators on board we could use for whatever we liked and we used to go fishing with them. One time we're coming to this reef, looked it all up on the charts of course, opened her up and away we went. Had to get speed up so you could get clear of it, but apparently it wasn't very deep and it went off and it nearly blew us out of the water and then looking there was fish everywhere! Away went the motor-boat, when they got out there they were flying fish and they were coming good! (Laughs) Didn't get many of them.

They'd only stunned them?

DB: Yeah.

They would have been big too, wouldn't they?

DB: We had them on one occasion we had them. It was stinking hot weather and sometimes we'd leave the porthole open. The Mess I was in wasn't far out of the water and we couldn't do it but somehow we got a helluva smell in our little dormitory, it was quite small, nowhere near as big as this room. There was ten of us in it and we had a sewing machine in there, and what's the smell? I searched and searched and searched and finally I found a flying fish in behind the machine. Got in there and it'd gone off a bit.

Not a good smell. What did you have the sewing machine for?

DB: Oh, someone must have decided they wanted to do a bit of sewing.

It wasn't for any particular, you didn't have sails to mend?

DB: No, no.

Goodness, that's strange isn't it?

DB: Yep.

It had to be bolted down did it?

DB: I guess it was.

Yes, must have been.

DB: Yeah.

I think everything would be secured in a boat.

DB: Oh, had to be. But you know, it was, well, when I say, it wouldn't have been, not from here forward the size of the room we were in nor that wide and ten of us. We were all watchkeepers so we were on watches at different times, so we were never all in there at the one time, so we got away with it. We were coming out of Subic Bay, it was stinking hot and had the porthole open and it was Captain's inspection on a Saturday morning. Used to come round and see if everything's alright. We'd just got out a bit and got in a swell, through the porthole. Boy was there a scramble getting that water out. Before inspection, we would have been in deep trouble.

One other little story I'll tell you. This Captain we had on the *Broome*, he was a horrible bloke. I think he was getting old and I think he was in ill-health but he was nasty. And from the day I stepped on board they told me I had to look, they said, "You'll be for it. He's always had it in for a signalman and it looks like you're the one."

I stepped on board with my hammock, in my Number One uniform, he collared me, he said, "Up to the paint locker and get some paint and up on the bridge and start painting."

I didn't have time to change, I'm up there with paint going, it was not pleasant at all. And then as time went on we just didn't get on and we're in Subic Bay actually with all these ships and the chap that was on watch before me, two Australian corvettes went past, went up the harbour and they'd gone out of sight by the time I got there and he said that there'd been two went through. We were that busy with signals, we had a coder there taking them around for us. He took one down to the Captain and he come back and he said, "Captain wants to know who the commanding officers were on those corvettes."

I said, "I don't know, he never put anything in the log, and never told me anything about 'em." So he went back and told him I didn't know.

He said, "He's useless, he's goin' mad down there."

I said, "I'll go down and see the silly old sod." I stepped in and he jumped and nearly landed on top of me and red in the face and spittin' and splutterin' and yellin' at me.

Fortunately the signal officer was there too and at the finish it was just wore me down that much I couldn't take it any more and just stood there lookin' and guttin', "Yeah, yeah."

No yes sir or anything and he got madder and madder to finish up the signal officer said, "Signalman, get back to the Bridge and stop answering the Captain back." Which was the best thing that ever happened.

There was only one officer on board that got on with him and that was old Bruce, the Engineer Officer, all the younger ones, he used to give the sub-lieutenants, he gave them hell. The next time I was on watch up on the Bridge, up come this young sub-lieutenant Fowles (?) stepped up on the Bridge and he shaped up to me and he danced all round, and I said, "What's goin' on?"

He said, "You took a swing at the Old Man didn't you?"

I said, "No I didn't, I didn't want to spend the rest of my time in the cells."

"Look," he said, "wouldn't have gone past the First Lieutenant. All you would have had to say was 'I was talkin' to the Captain, the ship rolled, you put out your hand to save yourself and landed in his face', he said." "That was brilliant," he said. That's what he thought of it! (Laughs)

No, he made life unpleasant for just about the whole crew. Then he would have left them for a different ship.

You'd wonder why he was like that wouldn't you?

DB: Yeah, well I, when, when I first joined her in Sydney and we were going north, we called in to Townsville and the Officers got doctors down on board to try and get him to go. Yes, they knew what he was like but he wouldn't go.

Perhaps he had a mental problem.

DB: Yeah, I don't know what it was. Another one, on the *Broome*, the *Southern Cross*, this Frank Galbally, he become big time law bloke in Sydney, in Melbourne, he was our Supply Assistant, he was studying Law at the time. One day he was down the hold doing something and this Lieutenant Rhodes, oh he wasn't much chop either. He's got up at the hold, "Galbally!" Frank just ignored him. "Galbally! Galbally, you can hear me!"

"Yes sir, I can hear ya," he said, "I don't call you Fowles and I'm either Supply Assistant Galbally or Mr Galbally." He called him Mr Galbally from there on. (Laughs).

You can see why he was successful in Law.

DB: And eventually we had, there was a cabin up on deck. She was a Mission vessel before the War, with the two bunks in it.

Right.

DB: He got me to move in with him because the Cook we had, oh he was a dirty sod, and he was sharin' a cabin with him. He said, "One day," he said, "I grabbed his shorts and I threw 'em overboard and I ordered him out of it so would you like to come up with me?"

DB: So I did! (Laughs)

Oh we had some funny ones.

Yes, funny.

DB: Anyway I won't hold you up any longer.

Thank you very much, those last little episodes were interesting.

DB: Oh, a couple of things you might get something out of.

Yeah.