

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'

Interview with Doug Jenkins on 24th November 2015

Interviewer: Joan Sandford

DJ: I was born in Victor Harbor, the youngest of six children, to Alec and May Jenkins. My father was a professional fisherman and his day started fairly early in the morning. He'd have to run the nets in the Bay and fish that he caught he would bring home and they would be boxed and iced and rushed down to the station to catch the passenger train that left about 7.30 I think it did.

He must have got up early every morning.

DJ: Every morning was an early morning and fish that he had left over; at that time, we had a passenger service every day to and from Adelaide. That was the only transport available to passengers coming to Victor Harbor for many years until Wallage's bus service started. He reduced the time to get to Adelaide by two hours; four hours in the train, two hours in the bus.

So a lot of people who wanted to just go to Adelaide for the day would go by bus wouldn't they?

DJ: Absolutely because I can recall when Mum used to take us on the rare occasions to Adelaide we'd be four hours into the station in Adelaide; you'd walk down to Rundle Street and she'd get two hours, three hours at the most shopping then we'd be back to the train to get back home again. So yes, it was a short shopping trip but the bus service certainly assisted in that.

Dad got his fish off to Edwin Daw Market in Adelaide where refrigeration wasn't the best so he had to get them in there in time otherwise they'd go off before the market.

Plenty of ice.

DJ: Yes, plenty of ice and the ice came from AMSCOL factory.

Right on top of the hill?

DJ: Yes they used to make the ice up there and Dad would go up there and he used to more or less have the run of the place to get his ice. I don't know when he settled up, he must have had an account there.

How did they pack the fish? In wooden crates?

DJ: They were wooden boxes supplied by Edwin Daw and they would have been almost three feet long, eighteen inches wide and a foot deep.

So they'd have a couple of layers of fish?

DJ: Yes. He'd put a layer of fish, a bit of ice, a layer of fish, some ice and hope that they got through alright. Normal weather, OK but really hot days it was touch and go. The excess of fish from what he sent to town he would bring home and that was available for locals and guest homes and my next eldest brother and myself, it was our job to go around to the guest-homes which were near where we lived which was 4 Hindmarsh Road where the Shell Service Station is now. We'd find out what the people wanted, their selection of the fish that was available and then we would deliver it before we went to school. School wasn't far away of course so we had just a short walk.

In the Old School Building?

DJ: Yes where Woolworths is now and so the regulars came but apart from the ones we delivered, the guest homes we used to deliver to, the other guest-homes used to call regularly to get fish. Of course when they had visitors and of course, come summertime they were all full and that lasted for quite a while.

They were a pretty regular customer of Dad's and there were a lot of them just between Grantley Avenue and Hill Street for instance there was, going from memory, there was one in Grantley Avenue, then there was Avonmore, Seymour, Belmont, Teralba, two others I can't remember the name of now. Listernvarna (sounds like), Carrickalinga, the Senior Citizens, that used to be one. Over the road from there was Nurtons had a guest-home for many, many years, so that's about seven or eight just in that short span of the town.

And there would have been more on the beachfront probably.

DJ: Yes, Pipiriki, the old one that what is now the...

The one by the train-line?

DJ: Restaurant, yes, that one and across the road was Pipiriki I think. There was another one down the front, the Oceanic. There wasn't that many more on the sea-front really. When you got back you got into areas like Clifton; the Miss Moores had accommodation and Stella Maris, look they were scattered all over the town, between the bridges and beyond.

I wonder how many there were all told? It would have been a lot wouldn't it?

DJ: I think, if you sat down and counted all of those places that considered themselves guest-homes you would have, between the bridges, probably twenty-five or even a few more because some of them were small; they weren't all big places like Clifton or Seymour. In the main street of course there was The Central Guesthouse. They were spread around and there was quite a lot of them so they were regular customers as well of Dad's. That sort of situation of guest-homes went on for quite a few years after the end of the War and then of course, people became, started to become a bit more affluent and they purchased their own vehicles. Then they would come to Victor Harbor still but they would drive by themselves and they might stay a few days and go on. This is when it all sort of changed from the guest-homes having the sole coverage of looking after the visitors, tourists, to people looking after themselves.

A lot of the farmers I think purchased a house and came down for holidays didn't they?

DJ: Yes they did at that time but the thing was at that time while they were still using the public transport to get to Victor there were services in Victor for the tourists. There was Jim Abbott's bus service and he had several different types of vehicles from big buses to probably eight-passenger vehicles and in between. He used to run day tours around Victor to all the highlights; to Goolwa, to Port Elliot and out to Glacier Rock and Yankalilla and all over. He ran that service for many years and there was also another service run by Cecil Stephens and that was a horse and trap and he had a double-up horses and four-wheeled rubber-tyred, I don't know what you'd quite call it, but it took about twenty people and he used to take tours around to the different locations also.

Would they be down each side of the trailer sort of thing?

DJ: Yes, they used to sit opposite each other down the sides and the one trip I made there was no more room and I sat on the back step! That was fairly popular because it was a bit different so he operated for many years. They were very popular but apart from that people came to Victor and they just enjoyed being in Victor. They would walk the Island regularly when they'd come down; I think they'd do it probably two or three or four times a week they'd walk across to the Island. There were all the features then in those days; Nature's Ey, Umbrella Rock, Armchair Rock and all these and that's what they wanted to see.

Were there stairs up there in those times?

DJ: Not as fancy as they are now but you could get up there alright, no problems. Forgot where I was heading now. Oh the other entertainment was of course the boats on the Hindmarsh River. Extremely popular.

I've been on one of them.

DJ: We used to go on them when I was a lad and there were times when you would go down there and you'd have to wait for a boat to come in before you could get on. The people that came down had the regular things that a tourist would do, they would do all the time, but once they had their own vehicles of course they could go off wherever they wanted on their own. It started getting a bit different in lifestyle and it kept changing and changing until the guesthouses were just fading out and the smaller ones there wasn't a problem because it was a small income for them but for the bigger ones it was a bit of a disaster because whilst they were full at times now they were only half full and only for a shorter time.

There was another one opposite the Grosvenor too wasn't there?

DJ: Oh yes, Summerlea Mansions and there was one almost opposite the Post Office which was, no it's slipped my mind. Probably where the Inn is now, the City Motor Inn, it was just there or next door where Telecom is.

They must have just demolished most of them.

DJ: Oh yeah, well some of them were pretty old; that particular one opposite the Post Office, that was a fairly old building. Very popular, right in the middle of the town and it wasn't busy traffic like it is now. Before the motor car became more available there was very little traffic in the town, all week until Friday and Friday was the day that the outlying district farmers used to come in and do their shopping and for years and years when I was a kid going to school the Friday, The Grosvenor Garden Reserve had all the big trees and lots of nice shade, there would be horse and traps all tied up around that reserve because the farmers were in for their weekly supplies.

Was it any bigger than it is now?

DJ: The same size but more trees. They were large trees, pines I think from memory, a lot of them were pines but they were taken out. Yes there'd be barely room to park another horse and trap around the Reserve. Of course they had water there for the horses and shade. That was Friday and that was a big day in Victor.

There would have been a number of butcher shops and everything wouldn't there?

DJ: Yes, the butcher shops numbered three I think. I can remember there was Reid's butcher shop; that was just past the Apollon now, almost next to Senior Cits (Citizens). There was one almost next to the Post Office; there was Bruce and Hall's at the top where Subway is now and there was another one somewhere.

Birds were butchers here in the very early days; probably before you were talking about.

DJ: I can't remember.

Probably where that other Motel is.

DJ: Around by, opposite the Norfolk Island pine in the middle of the road there?

Yes, somewhere there.

DJ: There was a butcher there but I can't remember if it was called Bird's but it probably was.

Was it a two-storeyed place?

DJ: Did I say Bruce and Hall before? Yes I did.

Was it a two-storeyed place? Yes, I reckon it was.

DJ: Yes, there was a butcher shop there. There were about four butcher shops I think.

Of course there were grocer shops.

DJ: Grocer shops, yes.

There were a few of them weren't there?

DJ: There were quite a few of those and of course they all ran accounts even for locals, not farmers. You could run your account. They would come out on a Monday and get your order and deliver it Wednesday or Tuesday and then they'd come Thursday again and take your order and of course, the milky came and delivered his milk every morning. The baker came with his horse and cart so things were a lot more laid back in those days. Growing up as a kid in Victor Harbor, I look back and that was a pure delight. People sometimes say, "You've never moved away?"

And I said, "Why would I want to?"

They'd say, "Yeah but it's God's waiting house!"

What better place can you find to wait?

Just have a longer wait!

DJ: I worked away, even when I was in the building game I was away for about three weeks at a time, I'd be back here.

Did you go away on a certain job?

DJ: No, I really only went away for about ten months in the building game and I spent most of that time in Tintinara, working for a builder who was local here. Then I decided that I'd do something else and I went back in to the business of printing and I got a job in Myers Bulk Store. They had their own printing room and I worked there but then I was offered my job back at The Times office and I came back to Victor.

Growing up in Victor Harbor was good so when I was offered my job back in Victor I came back.

What were you doing?

DJ: When I was offered the job back in The Times office, when I was working at The Times and I was there for another nine years I think.

How often did they print a paper in those days?

DJ: Every week, yes it was once a week. It was printed on the site. It was a broadsheet for many, many years.

Like The Advertiser?

DJ: Yeah the big sheet, then it was eventually changed to the smaller version which was a lot more popular, of course, easier to handle.

Were you involved in the reporting or the printing or putting it all together?

DJ: No, no. The reporting was done by Herbert Milnes, the owner, and his son Colin and representatives, you might say, of all the sporting bodies, people who were designated to do the sports. That's how we got that information. Apart from that they used to do it themselves. Then...

Somebody would have to do the advertising I suppose.

DJ: Yes, advertising mostly just came; I don't think anybody ever went out, not while I was there, to sell advertising. They used to come in and take the space.

Did you set up the printing?

DJ: Used to set up the pages. We used to do what we called stone work in those days. It's totally different now. Colin and his father used to type up all the articles and that was sent, I think that must have been sent by bus, it's hard to remember now; sent by bus to Adelaide to typesetters. I don't know whether it was The News or The Advertiser or who did it but it would be set up in type then sent back to Victor on the bus.

That would be pretty bulky wouldn't it?

DJ: It wasn't so much bulky as heavy; it was very heavy being all lead of course. Then we would put it all together on the stone and then print them on what was called a Wharfdale printing machine – flatbed. Very boring job which tended to make you go to sleep if you weren't.

You'd have to be careful.

DJ: You'd still have to do the printing as each sheet had to be put in by hand.

Manually?

DJ: Yeah, manually.

There'd be hundreds and hundreds of sheets!

DJ: About a thousand, just over a thousand when I was there. Then they all had to be folded by hand and packed up and delivered. We used to post to individuals; there used to be quite a number posted to individuals and then there'd be some sent to Goolwa, Port Elliot, Middleton, Yankalilla, Inman Valley via Jim Abbott's bus service. That's the way The Times was distributed. It was always, panic day was always Thursday, getting it all ready and done; out on Friday morning. It was done actually late Friday night, Thursday night. It would be ready with some that had to go on the bus were done Thursday night, packed up and then the bulk of it done Friday morning.

So that was Victor Harbor in that era. It was good to see the changes made in some respects but in others I tend to, nowadays draw my head in and ignore it.

So you stayed at The Times for quite a while?

DJ: I was actually, two periods it was sixteen years I was there. It was good, I quite liked the printing game but I reached a point where I wanted to get outside rather than inside. That's when I first went to the building game and then I came back to The Times and then I wanted to get out again. I did a course on weeds and it all blossomed from there.

You went around spraying did you?

DJ: Yeah I did a bit of spraying for Council in the early days. The Council I went to of course, was the Encounter Bay Council. District Council of Encounter Bay and at the time I started studying for my weeds course I would have been about thirty-five, early thirties.

The Council office then was a very small building in Crozier Road where part of the parking area for Woolworths is now. It was extremely small building and it was the District Clerk and his Secretary were the only staff in the building and the Overseer of course used to come in every day and check. It was during that period they built the new Council Office where it is at this time but of course not the building that's there. It was much smaller than the one that's there now but at the time it seemed to be huge; quite large.

Was it taken down and re-built there where it is now?

DJ: Yes, they removed that one eventually. It did get to the stage where there was insufficient room for the number of staff because it was just increasing.

I suppose the rates and everything had to be dealt with and the place just got bigger.

DJ: Yes and of course, amalgamation took place which meant that double staff come together for a while.

That was Encounter Bay, so where was the Victor Harbor one?

DJ: The Victor Harbor one was where the RSL is now.

Oh, right.

DJ: That became the library for awhile but it was the Council Office there and when the amalgamation took place they moved to the new building which Encounter Bay Council had just built. I was working there, I can't remember how many years or when amalgamation took place; whether it was '84. I'd have been there for quite a while before the amalgamation took place. Then the two Councils came together it was probably more workable that way. Introducing the laws to the whole district became a bit of a problem at times because in the rural area of the District Council of Encounter Bay there was no requirement to meet the building codes. You could build a house out in the rural area and you did not require Council approval.

You could just build any old which way?

DJ: Yeah and that went on for quite a while because when I built my first home after I was married there was no requirement for me to have a building approval.

And that was out there somewhere?

DJ: That was out at Hindmarsh Valley by the river. At that time of course, I was studying or was already the Building Inspector and I thought that I've got to set an example here so I had my plans approved by the District clerk that time. He was a qualified building inspector as well.

Was that Warland?

DJ: No, no, no. Warland was only ever in the little office in Crozier Road, Bert Warland. The Clerk that took over from him was Gordon Shields and Gordon was the Clerk when I first went to work for the Council. He unfortunately drowned one morning when he was down for a swim and then the Clerk who took over was Keith Adams. Keith was there until after I left. He became Clerk of Unley Council. Councils were changing and after I left Council, of course we had our bad period with Council. I don't know what you are aware of there.

Not a lot but I've heard something about it.

DJ: The Council of the day was, it is difficult to say, but they were actually suspended because of their way of dealing with planning, the Outer Metropolitan Plan.

This was after the amalgamation?

DJ: Oh yes, yes. The council was actually suspended and we had the Clerk and the Council, all in one, was Russell Arland who'd been the Executive Officer of the Adelaide City Council. He was extremely good to work for; very easy. Well he was very demanding but you give him what he wanted and he was easy to work for. The Council of the day was not easy to work with and I reached a point where I said, "That's enough for me and I'm off." I quit then I worked for other Councils, part-time, I'd even work two days a week here, three days a week there.

How did they sort out the problem?

DJ: The problem, I'm not sure that the problem ever got completely sorted out. When that particular Council got into office, I told the Clerk, Keith Adams, I said, "I reckon this will set Victor Harbor back ten years."

He said, "Try twenty-five."

He was far, far closer than I was because I don't think they ever quite got over that. It's difficult to say but it was a very hard time for Victor Harbor; however that's all past. It seems to be going alright but I take very little part in what happens now in Victor. Like I said, I pull my head in.

Step back a bit?

DJ: I enjoy living in Victor Harbor; I pay my dues to Victor Harbor. I still go fishing in Victor Harbor.

Do you take a boat out?

DJ: Oh yes. I've got a little boat here that I take out. A mate of mine and I go out together, so it's been good to me; Victor Harbor. I don't know what else I can tell you that would be of any interest. The tourist was the big thing. The guest-homes were plentiful. That all changed with the advent of the car and now it's very difficult for businesses to make that quid because people come down for the day and they probably half the time bring their own lunch. You can't blame them, they can go on the lawns have a nice picnic and barbecue.

It still gets really busy at Christmas time doesn't it?

DJ: It still gets very, very busy.

Then come winter-time you could shoot a gun down the street.

DJ: You used to say that, you could shoot off a shotgun down the street and not hit anybody. That was true in the old days; it's not as true as it used to be. I used to sell papers at one time and the chappie I worked for, he was very keen to sell all the papers he could so he'd make me stand on the corner and it would be bitterly cold in the middle of winter; wet and cold and I'd stand on the corner and I would say, some nights I'd be standing there and I wouldn't see anybody, not a soul in the street for half an hour.

Never.

DJ: Yeah.

There's one thing I'd like to see if you remember. Down on the seafront there used to be a big kiosk.

DJ: Yes, yes. Run by Ireland, Gilbert I think his name was, Gilbert Ireland. He used to have games; actually the kiosk itself was facing the eastern side of the sea. That was quite a long, old building, the kiosk. Then there was another kiosk on the, about, not too far from where the present one is. Alongside of that there used to be games; Roll up the Balls and merry-go-round.

Merry-go-round?

DJ: Yeah, a hurdy-gurdy was there. That was there for many, many years and it was very popular too. Again, it was the tourists who'd come down and that was their nightly walk down amongst the games, the hurdy-gurdy.

I remember my grandfather used to get a great big tray with a teapot and everything on it and take it down to the beachfront and we'd have lunch down there. Stay at the guest-house and eat at the guest-house, morning and night.

DJ: Yep, that's right. Down in that area where the games are now and the little boat ramp is, there used to be toilet blocks up by the railway line; very old block. I remember it had a green leaf hedge around and there was a sort of a raised area that had whale bones on it. That was always an attraction for the tourists, to have their picture taken by the whale bones. Then on the beachfront, there were poles, four posts in the ground and a big pole across the top. The local fishermen, mainly my Dad used it to put nets on.

Oh, did they?

DJ: And those nets used to stay there until he wanted them.

Was that to keep them out of the way?

DJ: Keep them out of the water or he'd dry them out and mend them. He'd do it on the beach quite often, then he'd be ready to put them back in again. And a boat, he'd keep a boat down on the beach there sometimes. One or two of them over at the jetty.

His boats would all have been row-boats wouldn't they?

DJ: Oh yes, yes. He did have a couple of old dinghies with motors in when he used to go out to the crays. But no vandalism; not in those days.

No, no. You could leave your door unlocked couldn't you?

DJ: Well you did.

Half the time people didn't have a key.

DJ: Door didn't have a key, or didn't have a lock. Yes it was quite different. There used to be a chain across the fence, Dad would unhook the chain, drive the ute down and drop the boat off on the beach because he had to repair as well. He'd paint and caulk the boats. They were old heavy plank flatties and then he would fill them up with water after he'd finished, he'd fill 'em up with water at home until they took up a bit and then they would shove 'em on the ----- (indistinct), and shove 'em on the trailer then launch 'em there then take 'em out to the moorings. Quite often, as many times as not, they would sink before they got to the mooring. Or just as you got to the moorings they'd sink so you'd clamber out of 'em and you'd be able to pull 'em on endless ropes, back out and tie 'em up. And leave them there for a couple of days and then come back and pull 'em in and get in and bail 'em out. You could bail 'em out by that tie.

Were they safer sunk?

DJ: They'd sunk.

They liked 'em to be sunk?

DJ: Oh yeah, yeah; they'd just go down to water level, the top, the gunwales of the boat would be at water level and after a few days they would take up the planks and swell and seal all the bottom. Then they'd be right.

Made them waterproof.

DJ: Yeah made 'em water-tight and they'd be right for two or three years and they'd do the same thing again. He had quite a few boats and it was a constant job of keeping them up to use, keeping them in use.

Safety the thing, you don't want them to sink when you're out fishing.

DJ: Well you'd never take 'em out when they were leaking like that. There was only one flattie of that kind that was never in the water all the time. When the tide came up it would be in the water, it'd take up a bit, then the tide would go down so it was drying and damp wetting at the same time. That was up in what was called Boundary Creek. He used to access that one by vehicle and row along Boundary Creek to where the shacks were. He had a shack on Ewe Island and that one used to leak constantly but it wasn't that far to go so if you kept rowing pretty well he'd get there and bail at the same time.

Could he swim?

DJ: You know I, yeah, I think he could, I think Dad could.

Would have been a good idea for a fisherman to be able to swim.

DJ: Well, it wouldn't have done much good because he always had thigh boots on and they would be one of the worst things apart from chest waders.

You'd fall in the water and drown you anyway.

DJ: Chest waders were the worst; thigh boots were about --- (indistinct). He knew, he came out from England, he was fishing in England before he came out here. So he knew what he was about.

What part of England did he come from?

DJ: Cornwall. He came from Scilly Isles and I thought for most of my life that he was Cornish until I talked to somebody one day and he said, "What did you say his name was?"

I said, "Jenkins."

He said, "That's not Cornish, that's Welsh."

They're very close together.

DJ: I said, "That can't be right."

He said, "That's Welsh." Dad did work in the mines at Cornwall so he probably came from Wales. He worked in the mines for a while and then he went.

You'd have to wonder why he came down here wouldn't you.

DJ: Yes, I think it was, he was in the First World War and they got assisted passage and there were three brothers came out. Two of them stayed and one of them went back. Dad was one that stayed and the other one was Bill Jenkins and they settled at Streaky Bay, of all places, first of all. Then family history here's a bit vague to me but as I recall Bill Jenkins came to Victor Harbor and wrote to Dad and said, "Come to Victor, it's a good fishing spot."

So Dad came and he first lived at Encounter Bay but of course at Encounter Bay there was the Rumbelow family, there was three or four Rumbelows fishing, three Ewens fishing. They were professional full-time fishermen living and he had the opportunity to buy the house that I lived in a lot of my life where the Shell Service Station is. He bought that so he then started fishing out of Victor. He was the only full-time fisherman for many years. Then there was part-time fishermen started and they numbered quite a few. Hutchinsons, James, Bliss, Pearsons and Bill Jenkins. He used to do a bit of part-time fishing, even when he became a Member of Parliament.

Oh, did Bill Jenkins? Representing this area?

DJ: Yes. He was.

He was your Dad's brother?

DJ: Yes, he was my Dad's brother and he would be in Parliament sitting until they broke up in the wee small hours and I used to, this was after Dad died, and I used to do a bit of fishing then with the nets for Mum and I'd see him down at the beach in the morning and he'd be running his nets. He said to me, I said to him, "You're a bit keen," I said. "You break up at one o'clock and you're out here running your nets."

He'd been down and set them and he'd say, "Doug," he'd say, "if I couldn't come down and do a bit of fishing, he said, I'd die!" He just loved his fishing.

The two of them fished, but as I said, by then Dad had passed away and brother Ed, he was fishing at Streaky for a while, so the fishing became less.

There was good fishing prior to and after the closing of the Goolwa Barrages. After the closing of the barrages it got very good for a while because they used to use the big hauling nets in the Goolwa Channel and the Coorong and catch tons of fish in one haul to the point where they would have to fill up their boats, run them up to Goolwa, box 'em, ice 'em, send 'em off and then go back to the same net that was still in the water and pull up another boat-load of fish. This would go on until other fishermen would come and put their nets around the first net and anything that got out was in that net. So there were a huge number of butterfish in these schools because they came in to breed and there was nowhere for them to go. The barrages were closed. This was in about 1935 or something.

---and that's got rid of the butterfish then?

DJ: They're there but nothing like the numbers that there used to be. Of course, I think it was in about 1935 they opened the barrages and the fishing was very good for a while. Then of course, Dad fishing in the harbour here, was pretty good because the fish didn't have anywhere else to go. They'd go up there and too many of them and they 'd stay out and I don't know what their actions really were. He used to get a lot of good butterfish in Victor.

What about your mother's family; were they?

DJ: Mum's family was German; they came from Germany. She was born in Australia as were the rest of her family, there were fifteen in her family and they were market gardeners in Brownhill Creek.

What was her surname?

DJ: Tilley.

Tilley?

DJ: Mm, Tilley and there are still a lot of Tilleys and Fosters and all the relations, Hills, there's still a lot around the Mitcham area and up Brownhill Creek way. Yes, she was from a gardening family; she met Dad in Victor because she was working at Seymour Guest-home.

Was she? Fancy that!

DJ: Yes, so I was part German and part English. Although Mum was.

It would be a bit tricky in war time.

DJ: Well it wasn't for me. I have recollections of Grandma and Grandpa.

It would have been hard for them.

DJ: They spoke very little English. The family all spoke English of course, the fifteen children but I can't really recall my grandparents on Mum's side or Dad's side of course because I never met them. I've met some of the children since. The family of the Jenkinses are still in Scilly Isles, in Bryher and still carrying on the same business that the previous family. My cousin Brian and his wife ran a guest-home, I think it's in Bryher or one of the Isles and their son and daughter-in-law are running it now. And would you believe, their son and his girlfriend are in Australia at the moment and I'm going to have lunch with them tomorrow; sister-in-law's place.

Well I never!

DJ: They're spread around but the Jenkinses are still in contact with the Jenkinses over there.

Isn't it good to keep in touch?

DJ: Well most of my family, brothers ----- (indistinct); three in heaven three in Tas. Have been over to, no that makes seven, that's not right, my niece I'm thinking of now, some of my niece and nephews have been over to England but my sister, yes my sister's been over there. So yes, there's been contact kept all the years.

Your father kept in touch with his parents probably.

DJ: Not much; Mum did most of that. She kept in touch with all the Jenkinses and of course we used to see the Tilleys. We'd go to Adelaide now and again to Mitcham and my brother, next eldest brother and myself used to have quite a few of our holidays at Mitcham staying with aunties.

That was an outer suburb then I suppose.

DJ: Mitcham was, I suppose you would call it an outer suburb but the train, the tram rather, stopped about a hundred yards from one Auntie on one street and a hundred yards from another Auntie on the other street. So we had no problem, walk a hundred yards and you were on the tram and straight through to Adelaide. Of course we had plenty of cousin that were still living in the area so we were looked after, taken off to the pictures or the City Baths or wherever we were going. It was good.

Seems like you had a pretty good childhood.

DJ: A very good childhood and when I see what some of them suffer now I think, you know, it was extremely good. That's the way it goes I s'pose.

Yes, it does doesn't it?

DJ: During the War, like I say, we never, we didn't lack anything really. What we lacked we never had before so we didn't know.

Yes, rationing wouldn't have worried you too much?

DJ: Rationing; well there was butter rationing, there was sugar rationing, meat rationing and all of that but no, we managed.

Rabbit wouldn't have come under the rationing would it?

DJ: No, all the rabbits and ducks that you wanted except in closed season of course. We'd sometimes, it was not easy for Dad to pass up a good feed of ducks. He could fish for up to about four days over on Ewe Island when he wasn't fishing here.

Where's Ewe Island?

DJ: Ewe Island is, when you go across to Hindmarsh Island, the next Island you go along to is Mundoo Island and the next one is Ewe Island.

So it's Ewe not New?

DJ: No, Ewe as in sheep.

E-w-e.

DJ: E-w-e. It faces the Coorong on the sea side and is bordered by Boundary Creek on the other side and it goes quite a way.

So that would have been freshwater fishing up there?

DJ: No, you'd be fishing in the Coorong and Boundary Creek at times and that was all tidal, as it is now. If he was fishing for the four days he would generally come home on the Friday to be sure he had fish for the Catholics, regular customers, and he'd get the fish back to the Goolwa station boxed and iced and send them off from there, then come on home. If he was getting ready to come home and there was a heap of ducks around, if the date wasn't quite right, it didn't matter too much and he'd come home with some ducks as well. I can't even recall whether in those days there was a closed season for ducks; there may not even have been a closed season. So we had rabbit, duck, fish, all the time fish and we used to have regular meat all the time. We had regular meat all the time it wasn't a problem.

Most people had their own garden and vegetables and things.

DJ: Yeah. We had a huge garden and Dad was the worker and Mum was the, well she was a worker too. She had experience with market-gardening because a lot of it had stuck because when she was growing up she must have learned a lot about the garden. Then I got a piece of the garden and she used to tell me what to do and how to do it. So yes, we grew a lot of vegies; used to sell the vegies to some of the guest-homes, Seymour in particular. They'd come home and they'd want half a case of tomatoes. No problem; we could pick half a case of tomatoes every day.

It must have been a big garden!

DJ: It was a big garden; I assure you it was a big garden.

And the fruit trees I suppose?

DJ: Never had many fruit trees. I remember a big old fig tree and lemon tree but as far as fruit trees were concerned we didn't have many of those. We used to get fruit from people who did have fruit trees because Dad would take a feed of fish out.

Barter system.

DJ: More or less a swap system if you like. We used to go to a place at the bottom of Waitpinga Hill which was Adey's farm and Dad would take out some fish or crayfish and he'd come home with some butter, home-made butter. We supplemented the butter ration so we never lacked for anything in particular. Some things you couldn't buy anyway. Some lines of lollies you couldn't buy. Juicy Fruit chewing gum, you couldn't buy that during the War.

Goodness.

DJ: Yes, you could not buy that during the War. It came off rations, my next eldest brother again and myself; we also used to go to Bull Creek on holidays and stay with a woman Mum used to work with at Seymour. We used to call her Auntie and she found out somehow that chewing gum was no longer rationed and we had two bob each so down to the little shop, a mile or two down the road and we each bought two shillings worth of chewing gum. A penny ha'penny a packet!

That would have kept you going for a while.

DJ: Yeah some lollies were not available during the War.

You really missed that chewing gum?

DJ: Well, I suppose it was just a novelty that we could get again because we used to get a bit of gum from our two brothers. Alan was in the Navy and Eddy was in the Air Force because they always got a distribution of these sort of thing. It wasn't Wrigley's chewing gum it was a different brand but it was chewing gum.

Probably an American one.

DJ: Probably American so we got a bit of that; our regular was right off the market. Apart from a few things like that; clothing was another thing that was pretty hard to come by because you had to have ration tickets but then again there wasn't.

Everybody mended their clothes I suppose, didn't they.

DJ: Yes of course they did. They knitted jumpers; there wasn't that much money to spend on clothing anyway it was a pretty tight financial thing but like I say, we never lacked a thing.

That was very good. I think we've just about covered a lot of things there haven't we?

DJ: I think we have. We get into too modern stuff if we go any longer.

We're trying to talk about the old days.

DJ: Yeah the old days.

Well, thank you very much, it's been most interesting.

DJ: I was gonna say that another entertainment thing that was on the Island was the New Year's sports. New Year Water Sports.

Oh yes, I was going to say I've seen photographs of the loads of people over there.

DJ: On New Year's Day it was traditional that the horse tram was so overloaded it would come off the rails but there was, on the old Working Jetty and off the building that covered the old lifeboat area, that was the location of the New Year's Day Sports and there were swimming sports and motorboat racing and that was a huge event for the tourists. If you see any pictures of that in the old days it was crowds, it was really, really crowded.

I've got some photos of that, they're amazing.

DJ: There used to be quite a lot of swimmers, good swimmers come from other areas to take part.

They'd have a bit of a life ocean swimming, not in baths?

DJ: No, no, no. It was just a couple of ropes, cork ropes over the length of the baths but no it was open swimming and diving. Diving used to take place off the top of the roof; the high dive was off the roof of the building.

The water must have been nice and deep.

DJ: Well it was deep enough because even in the baths which were halfway across the Causeway there was a high-diving board there but if you didn't have a high tide you only had four or five feet of water.

So were the baths fenced down to ground level? They didn't have a floor in them?

DJ: Yes. No, no, no. It was just palings driven down into the sand.

To keep out sharks and things?

DJ: Yes but it didn't, it probably wouldn't keep them out if they were really keen to get in because there were holes in the planks that had rotted through because we used to dive down inside, swim out through the holes and come back in so if we could do it the sharks could do it!

They could have.

DJ: So it was only about four or five feet of water there unless it was a high tide. That was off the tower, I forget how high it was. It was too high for me but there were a few divers had troubles there; hit the bottom. Yeah. But over there where the Sports were it was deeper. It was a big day with big events.

That must have gone on for years and years and years.

DJ: It went on for years and there was only the one small kiosk over there then and they used to do a ripping trade during those days but in winter time of course they'd be very quiet. They maintained that kiosk for many, many years and I'm not sure whether that one was added to or whether it was pulled down to build the present one.

On the same spot though?

DJ: Mm it strikes me that it's odd that they can't manage to keep one running, a kiosk. We didn't need a restaurant in the first place but they tried to make a big deal of it having a restaurant over there but people can't get to it conveniently so what's the point of having a restaurant when people can't conveniently get to it?

It probably gets a bit expensive these days if you get on the horse tram and pay for that.

DJ: They did run a transport service over there. I don't know whether it was done by the people running the restaurant, I think it was. They'd have a bus every half hour or whatever, picking up people, taking them across because some nights it would be raining and blowing.

I went over there once for a wedding reception and they had a little bus for us.

DJ: Yes.

But it wasn't a regular thing in those days. That all happened years ago.

DJ: Well they did try that but I don't think it worked for long because they didn't get night patrons or not many anyway. I think people still like to go to Granite Island for what Granite Island itself has to offer, not what we or the Council or whatever development people put there.

I used to like the chair lift coming down.

DJ: Well the chair lift was a bit of a novelty.

I don't think it cost anything did it?

DJ: Oh it was private enterprise.

Was it?

DJ: Yeah, oh yeah, I think it cost you alright, it cost.

I don't remember paying to go on it but I remember going on it.

DJ: You would have paid, or somebody would have paid, but again it's a man-made development which, in my opinion, is not what people really want to go over to Granite Island for.

You used to go and look at the Eye ---- (indistinct) and I believe a rock or something has fallen over it now.

DJ: Nature's Eye? I believe so.

I read somewhere about that.

DJ: I think if it was only just a rock fallen over it they should move it; blow it up, shift it because Nature's Eye was quite a feature and by the time people had walked over or got the horse tram half way or whatever and walked around the Island and seen the particular sites, they'd had their fill. OK. All they needed was a cup of coffee or a drink, an icecream, a pasty, something simple to keep 'em going. The restaurant I think is unnecessary, the fish platform I think is unnecessary, it's not what people go over there for.

It's all so expensive.

DJ: We're into the modern stuff that we weren't going to touch on!

Perhaps we'd better call it a day had we?

DJ: I think we call it a day.

Well thank you so much.