

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'.

Interview with Mrs Ruve Brookman on 3rd December 2014

Interviewer: Joan Sandford

Thank you for talking to me again. We might start off with your interesting Christian name.

RB: My Christian name has caused me so much trouble over the years. It is R-u-v-e and it is pronounced Roovee. It is an Island name because my grandfather was a missionary in New Britain and he went there as a missionary when he and his wife were only twenty-five. They had two boys and there was no other white woman on the island but Grandpa fortunately had taken a book on how to deliver a baby which he read while all this was going on.

I imagine she was pregnant before they left.

RB: Not before they left. No.

This was just in case?

RB: I suppose they thought it was inevitable. The first two apparently were alright, the boys were alright and then she was pregnant again and she must have realised there was something wrong or different, something different I suppose.

She must have been a bit overwhelmed with it all too.

RB: She could have been, yes. I certainly would have been. She decided to go down to Melbourne where her mother and father lived and so she went down to Melbourne in a not very big boat with the two little boys and it didn't have a rail around the decking and so it must have been a nightmare trip for her but apparently she made it. When she got down to Melbourne she had twins, two girls. They called them Malila and Ruve. Malila was my mother and that means calm and peaceful and the other one was Ruve which means a dove. They went back after a while to New Britain because when Ruve was eight months old she died of what they called then "summer diarrhoea" which I've no doubt we now call gastro-enteritis.

So that was all very sad so I suppose she was buried up there at a place called Kabakada That was the little village they lived in. Ruve's been a bit of a worry to me because nobody gets it right. I've been Ruth and Ruby, more Ruby than anything.

A name people recognise.

RB: Yes. When I had a little great-grand-daughter called Ruby I nearly died. I thought, oh it's not true. She has a second name of Kate so I call her Ruby Kate I refuse to call her just Ruby.

That solves the problem quite well doesn't it?

RB: Yes, Ruby Kate, I can say that without shuddering. (chuckles)

So your great-grandparents stayed up there.

RB: They stayed there until 1894 then went down to New Zealand where Grandpa went from one little town to another. One I remember was called Tukekohe and when I went to New Zealand I made sure I went to the church, just to see it.

He was a Uniting Church minister was he?

It was Methodist. Then he came back to Victoria where he was born but he was only sent to little towns because he used to recite Shakespeare and Methodists didn't "tread the boards". It wasn't done at all, so he was mostly sent to these little outback things where he proceeded to do his Shakespeare talks, and he also sang a bit of Gilbert and Sullivan. He was mad on Gilbert and Sullivan. I really knew the patter

songs from those operas before I knew, well they were sort of nursery rhymes almost to me. I've had a love of Gilbert & Sullivan ever since. He also, I think, voted Labour and that was frowned upon too, I think.

Probably.

RB: So he didn't measure up too well at all, he was really better off in New Guinea where he was out of the way a bit. And not such a worry to them. (chuckles)

He could have done what he liked up there couldn't he?

RV: He also was in a few churches in South Australia too.

And you remember him?

RB: Oh yes, he lived with us for a while. My grandmother died then he and my aunt lived together. They looked after my Mother virtually for quite a number of years and then somebody at one of the congregations he was in. I can remember this little lady – she sort of fell in love with him and eventually he married her but it wasn't happy at all and my aunt moved out. She didn't want to stay there. So then he came and lived with us, where we lived at Gumeracha.

You were on a farm?

RB: Yes we were on a farm at Gumeracha because one of the churches was where Grandfather was minister. My Mother met one of seven boys.

Your Father was one of seven boys?

RB: Seven boys. Yes, and one sister who ruled us all. She was a force to be reckoned with! So she married him, he was the only brother left in Gumeracha so he took over the farm. I don't think he ever wanted to be a farmer but that's what he turned out to be. It was really mostly sheep but in 1929 with the Depression he was forced into diversifying a bit so he grew vegetables. They sold them at the Central Market. Everybody bought things but at very low prices, it was a great struggle.

Yes, not much profit in it?

RB: No profit in it but at least if you are on a farm in a depression you eat. You've got your own milk, your own meat, you've got your own vegetables, grow your own vegetables.

There mightn't be much money.

RB: Not much money but you didn't, you weren't hungry.

No.

RB: Anyway we got over that and I was born there and my sister, three years later. We went to the little school in Gumeracha, I think there were thirty-one students as I remember. I remember there were only four of us in Grade 7. One of them was a Bank Manager's daughter. She went and so then there were just three of us; these two boys and me.

One teacher school?

RB: No there were two teachers, Grade 1 and 2. It was usually a student teacher with Grade 1 and 2 and then a qualified teacher for 3 to 7. Once I finished that I went up to *Wilderness* school which was on the bus route from Gumeracha to Adelaide so I used to be dropped off at the school on the way and then picked up again in the afternoon. I didn't have to board although it cut into sport; but I played with the school over the weekend, the Gumeracha team. Basketball as it was in those days, now netball. I'm sorry that I didn't have a chance to play for the school. I'm not very good at sport anyway but I could throw a mean goal. My sister got into a team but she was nearly four years younger than I am so by that

time there were more buses. There was no bus on Saturdays when I was at school but then they got a Saturday bus.

How far would that have been?

RB: Well, look it's only twenty something miles but it's so slow, it's all through the Hills.

Stopping and picking up.

RB: And picking people up. I know I left home at half past seven and I'd get there in time for school which was nearly nine o'clock. I don't remember ever being terribly early at school. It must have taken a good hour and a half. Quite a lot of school children went on the bus.

Country children do, that's the only way they can get there. You were country.

RB: We were country, definitely country but now it's almost a suburb.

And when you were on the farm you came to Victor Harbor for holidays.

RB: Oh yes, yes. I can remember as early as three anyway, because my sister, I would have been three and a half and she would have been eight or ten months, nearly a year I suppose. She was bitten to death by mosquitoes, which were terrible at Victor in those days. She was just a mass of red spots and I think we had calamine lotion or something, so she was a mass of this white stuff all over her.

No antihistamines in those days.

RB: Oh no, nothing like that, no. It really was a problem. Anyway we enjoyed it at Victor, I loved the swimming and I really learned to swim quite early because my aunt and my father were very keen swimmers and there used to be a lovely area at the back of the Newland Church where you could swim. Every morning before breakfast my father and aunt would go down to swim and I'd go with them, much to the surprise of everybody else – I was only about five, four or five I suppose. Anyway I really learnt to swim down there. Also, I was allowed to go to the baths which were half-way along the Causeway.

There's not a sign of them there now.

RB: No, there isn't, you know they were so popular and Mr Eric Rumbelow ran them and we were given threepence and it was tuppence to go in and then you had a penny over. That penny bought you a bush biscuit and they were enormous I remember in those days and they had a crinkled edge which we used to nibble around the edge before we started on the really solid bit.

That probably helped them go further.

RB: A bit further, yes. Oh no the baths were wonderful. I don't know how long you could stay in the Baths for tuppence. Now I look back on it, we seemed to stay for quite a long time. Tuppence for a day doesn't seem much. I think it was probably tuppence an hour, I don't know. We went by ourselves. Perhaps Mr Rumbelow used to say, "Right everybody out." Or something. He'd remember what time you arrived or something.

You possibly went after lunch until nearly bedtime.

RB: Anyway it was great fun, we enjoyed that. We stayed in various places round Victor. Several little houses, I remember us staying in; one of those little houses, I think, was in Burke Street where they probably still are and all the fuss is about; piling them in or someone and we also stayed in one just down from the Church. I don't know whether it's the one that the dentist's got now. It was one of those I remember staying there, possibly more than one year. When we got a bit bigger we stayed in a boarding-house, it was called *Homely* and it was at the corner of Acraman and Hill Street. It's the first corner past Woolworths now.

There's a very old building.

RB: Yes, very old – typical old passage down the middle. We used to meet the same people there every year and we became quite friendly with them. It was run by Mrs Woodman, who was really very good. It was a pleasant stay. There were boarding houses everywhere.

I think it was a lovely holiday for the women, because they didn't have to cook.

RB: Yes. I think probably we stayed in houses when we were very small, because I suppose it's not really a place for a baby I suppose. I think we went there for a number of years but the track from Gumeracha to Victor was really quite extensive really when you think of it.

There wouldn't have been any bitumen.

RB: No and I know we used to get to that bit out there before you get to *Urimbirra* and you could catch sight of the Bluff somewhere as you come along there. "Oh, there's the Bluff!" and we knew we were nearly there.

After that long, tedious.

RB: And of course we had a Nash car and I remember the cases and things were on the running-board. We could only do about twenty, twenty-five I think, it took ages to get there.

It would have been a real expedition wouldn't it?

RB: Yes, expedition, yes.

So from Gumeracha you didn't have to go into Adelaide – did you go through Mt Barker or somewhere?

RB: No we came through, well it's the way we often come through now. Through Cudlee (Currency?) Creek.

Through Strathalbyn?

RB: Yes, not quite to Strathalbyn. We had to get up Willunga Hill though. I remember that, we had to. Now where did we come across from?

I'm not too sure how that would have joined up but anyway it worked out.

RB: Yes, yes. I know it was always a great relief to get to the top of Willunga Hill.

It's been a very high, and still is very steep.

RB: Yes it is, yes.

So then you lived at Gumeracha and went to school in Adelaide.

RB: Yes, I went to Gumeracha School to Grade 7 then *Wilderness* after that. Then I decided to be a kindergarten teacher and did the course through the Education Department but I was a private student and so I didn't have to go out into the country anywhere. The Misses Brown, who ran the school, *Wilderness* at that stage, asked me to go back and teach. They offered me a job of teaching what would be the equivalent, it was called the Third Class, it was the equivalent of Grade 4. Well I wasn't trained for that.

You trained for kindergarten.

RB: Well I didn't train for that. I suppose the principles are much the same.

Common sense I suppose.

RB: Yes. Almost the same day I accepted that, I was asked to go to *Kings* and be a House-mother and teach in the kindergarten but I just felt I couldn't say no to the Browns having been at school there. I really regretted it a bit and just wish it had happened a day later.

It would have been all boys at *Kings* would it?

RB: All boys, yes but there would have been very few little boarders, it would have been the little boarders I would have been looking after. So they probably would have been little terrors and driven me mad so perhaps it's just as well I wasn't there. (chuckles)

You never know do you?

RB: No you do not!

But you can't go back?

RB: No. So then I was married, oh we got through the War years.

You didn't tell us about the interns you had at the farm.

RB: Oh yes, oh yes, well of course that was during the War of course, we're nearly up to the War now aren't we?

We're backtracking a bit now.

RB: Actually we didn't get those, we had Italian prisoners of war because they were being billeted out to farms. My father was asked if he would have a couple of Italian prisoners of war.

Would he have said no?

RB: I think he could have but I think it would have been unpatriotic I suppose; I don't know, I don't think he would have done that.

My mother sort of said, "Well I don't know about that but I've got girls you know." Apparently she gave in too and duly two Italians, handsome young Italians they were too, called Joe and Alf arrived. I think they were Guiseppe and Alfredo but we called them Joe and Alf. They had to live in the house and be fed in the house; they didn't eat with us though.

Didn't they?

RB: No, no but I learnt to enjoy Italian food. They cooked the meal sometimes but of course we had to diversify somewhat to provide a lot more food. If you're given extra help you've got to make food for them. The Torrens ran right through our property and so there was some **very** good land on each side of the bank, suitable for growing.

Plenty of water I suppose too.

RB: And water too, so we did that. Also they made us, I don't know, I don't remember who did it or where we got the material, but we had to build a dairy and had to get more cows. Then the cream was picked up from the road.

Did you have a hand separator?

RB: Hand separator, oh yes, I could do that. I think I even made the odd pat of butter, but Mother mostly made the butter, not that she enjoyed it much but I suppose she had to do things.

You had to do things.

RB: You had to do things you didn't normally do but that was all right. Now War started in '39 didn't it? Well, on January 13th 1939 we were burnt out. We had this enormous fire. We lost everything except the house and the car. My Father hastily drove the car out on to a bare patch in our backyard and hopefully left it there. It was all right except he forgot to switch off the engine and the battery was flat of course; but at least we had a car.

Did you save the house or did you evacuate?

RB: We stayed in the house and we fought the fire.

Did you?

RB: It's amazing what you can do in a fire. I can remember I could run. Do you remember those kerosene buckets?

Those square ones?

RB: The square ones. My Father had just dipped the sheep and the sheep dip was full of liquid that the sheep had been dipped in but at least it was liquid and we used to put the buckets in, lift them out and carry to it! I can't even lift one off the ground normally. I can remember trying and I thought it was so, there I was running. You were given extra or something. Anyway we saved the house. My Father, fortunately, used to grow lucerne round the house and his one instruction to us all was, "Throw all your clothes into the lucerne and then you'll have something to wear, because that's hard to replace!"

Really?!

RB: At least you'd have food. Nowadays they say to pick up your wallet don't they?

And your photographs.

RB: And your photographs. Anyway it was clothes in my case.

Well it was war-time and they were very scarce?

RB: Yes very scarce. Anyway, we got over that and then I think Italy fell in '40 I think it was so we didn't have, we would have got those Italians, I suppose it was low forties.

Soon after the fire. How did the sheep get on in the fire?

RB: Well, that was what I was thinking of when it reminded me. Normally we used to have a lot of people shooting on our property and my Father used to stand at the back door and shriek out to people, "You're trespassing on my land!"

When this fire came we just thought the sheep were going to perish but some shooter had left the gate open, which was always a big worry.

You didn't want them to but it was good this time.

RB: This time the sheep got down into the Torrens which was not flowing but it had lots of waterholes and they were all down there in the whole length of the Torrens.

That saved a fortune.

RB: Yes, well then there were no fences so I think a friend, I suppose, from Cudlee Creek said, "I'll agist your sheep for you until you're able to repair some fences." So my sister and I and my Father and two dogs drove those sheep from our place down to Cudlee Creek and driving where there were no fences was something else again, they just went everywhere but we got them there but it is one of the days I prefer not to remember. Everything was black, it was awful.

The fire was a general big bushfire?

RB: Yes, yes. A bushfire, yes, I don't like to call them "wild fires", it's too American.

It doesn't sound right does it?

RB: No, but it started in Kersbrook which was over the range from us. The ladies in the Post Office used to ring and tell you if there was a fire.

Did they?

RB: Mm. A phone call, fire at Kersbrook and I remember my Father hanging up the receiver on one of those wall phones and saying, "Well, we're gone." We looked out and there were the flames coming through the hills to us we knew. That was when the clothes were thrown out with the lucerne.

And the car was moved.

RB: Yes. He said, "Save the hay." Well, saving the hay was something else again, the fire just leapt over and got into the haystack and it went up in seconds. I can remember the flames going right over my head when I went down there, obeying the rules to go down there.

To save the hay.

RB: Yes he had a long hose down there to, anyway it was absolutely hopeless, they just caught and went up in seconds, virtually. Fire is, have you been through a fire, you can't believe how fierce. It was awful. I remember looking at the hills, they came up behind our place and I remember seeing all the hills and trees and I looked up again and it was gone, it was all just black. The wind just blew it, it was actually burning in Gumeracha before we were burnt so it had jumped two miles or something, quite exciting really.

A good survival story.

RB: Yes. Then I was married then and we went to Port Broughton for three years and decided, my twins, I had twins and John had been born in Adelaide before them. Ben was still doing his intern year, he was a doctor. He then went up to Port Broughton and when John was a month old I took him up there. Sixteen months later I had twins, born in the little tiny Port Broughton hospital. It wouldn't be allowed now of course.

No.

RB: No, it just simply wouldn't have been allowed, you can hardly have twins in this hospital.

You wouldn't have known you were having twins.

RB: I did know actually! Yes, I knew at about five months. When they were two we moved to Eudunda, we were there for six years and while we were there my youngest daughter, Elizabeth, was born.

Ben belonged to something called the Country Hospitals Association and he was the delegate from that area. There were two doctors at Victor Harbor, called Shipway and Collins and they asked Ben if he would be interested in coming and joining them in partnership. Not that it really was a partnership, just come to Victor because they needed somebody else. I think it took us nearly a year to sell the Eudunda practice actually. We were there for six years and then we came to Victor Harbor.

Then it came to buying a house; I think Ben had a cousin here and he decided we were to meet him and he was to take us around. He said, "There are only two places in Victor that would be any use to you at all. One of them is *Carrickalinga* and the other one is the Ross Robertson and somebody else is wanting that." He'd put in a bid for that but of course *Carrickalinga* was much more suitable for patients than the one up the hill. You had to climb a hill, well anybody with a heart couldn't have climbed that hill and it was sort of out of the township, so we got to go to *Carrickalinga*.

We went and knocked on the front door and they opened the front door and I looked down and there was a tiny little hole, what seemed like a mile away, this great long passage and we decided anyway that was what we were going to have. At that stage it was a guest home and there were five beds in every room, five single beds and one tiny wardrobe and that's all they offered in those days.

A communal bathroom I suppose?

RB: Oh, yes, and there was no toilet inside. Oh, there must have been. Yes, I think there was one at the back, virtually where it is now but there was another one out beyond the big old underground tank. There was another toilet out there somewhere.

It was quite primitive.

RB: It was primitive, primitive, but it had a good name. *Carrickalinga* apparently had a really good name, the food was good, but people didn't expect what they expect now.

But they probably didn't have that much at home either.

RB: Possibly not, no. Anyway we decided that yes, we'd come so we arrived on December 13th 1955 and I had the first Christmas at *Carrickalinga* in that great big. It wasn't as big as it is now, it's L-shaped now. We didn't have the L-shaped bit, it was all across, where the L-shaped bit is but it was still a big room. There were about twenty of us and we had Christmas there. In the middle of Christmas dinner the front door bell rang and I went up to answer it, with a cap on my head! My husband was horrified by that. The person at the front door wanted a single and a double! (chuckles) It's been a joke ever since.

Anyway, it was an excellent house for bringing up the children and it was very much in the centre of everything. It was easy for people and the chemists were just round the corner virtually. It was easy. As the years went by, of course we always had the Police Station opposite, that was good fun, I liked it. You never knew what was going to turn up at the Police Station. It was quite a, what's happening over at the Police Station now!

Interesting.

RB: Then Woolworths came. That was quite good too but I became a terrible shopper. I didn't ever make a list, I'd think, Oh gosh I'd be making a cake and I'd think, oh heavens, I haven't got any sugar so I'd go over to Woolworths to get some sugar and, oh gosh I haven't got something else. It really didn't do my shopping any good at all – it was too convenient. It was just across the road and also, because the school had been there, the children went there for school but then Woolworths came. The school didn't really worry me. There was a house on the corner actually, not part of the school grounds but there was a house there.

Between you and the school?

RB: Yes, on the other corner there was a house.

There was the Clifton too wasn't there?

RB: That was down the road, the next corner. But right next to us was a very colourful house, it was painted, – they'd tried to make Victor look like the Sunshine, the Gold Coast and they'd painted this thing pink and blue and yellow and it was horrible.

Unusual too.

RB: Then the school moved and they knocked that down, Woolworths decided to buy the whole thing and they put the school down where it is now. The last straw was the motel, the Apollon. We didn't know what it was going to be and when it became a second storey, you may have noticed it was like living in a fish bowl believe you me.

Privacy's gone.

RB: Yes.

Can we go back to earlier days when you moved into Carrickalinga and tell me about the cellar and the long passage, the huge passage?

RB: When we moved into there it was a very big house but of course we had four children and Ben had to have, he consulted in the house then so we had a consulting room and a waiting room and we put a door between the two. The patients used to come in the corner gate and then enter from the side verandah.

The phone was out in the passage, half way down the passage and this passage we found very early in the piece, the children, it was covered in lino and the children used to run up and down and Ben came out and said, "I can't hear through my stethoscope with these children rushing up and down the passage."

So I said, "Well we'll have to carpet it." We had a friend in John Martin's at that stage and we went down and we said we wanted carpet for a passage. It was a very well known name carpet at that stage and it was ribbed.

Axminster.

RB: Axminster!

A beautiful wool carpet.

RB: It was, no I don't think it was. No, it was a new thing, something the result of the War I think.

Feltex was it?

RB: Feltex. Yes. No, it was something –minster I think not Ax. Ax was the good one. Isn't that terrible, I can't think, it was corded, looked corded. Anyway, we said we wanted. He said, "How much will you be wanting?"

Ben said, "Well the passage is seventy-five feet and eight feet at the entrance hall – eight feet by twelve. It was another room virtually, the passage the rest of the way is six feet.

This man clapped his hand to his forehead and said, "Oh my God, that would cover my whole house!" Anyway we got this sort of crushed strawberry colour carpet and put it down. It made a huge difference to the noise, which is what it was supposed to do.

Was it fitted electrically or was it 32 volt?

RB: No, no we did have proper electricity, yes we did. The kitchen was a disaster, absolute disaster. It had a lot of cupboards but they were only wood and no doors, they were shelves. At least that's what I tend to remember now.

It would be a dust trap wouldn't it?

RB: Shelves, yes and there was one tap for, oh we had. We didn't use the mains water much because we had this enormous underground tank. An enormous thing with a great dome, bricky thing on top.

I think the town water was pretty awful too.

RB: It was, it was brown, it was awful water so we were delighted to find this rainwater and I think Dr Shipway was organizing this. When we went to see this place there was an old sort of water storage place but it had a sort of chip heater that you lit a bit of a fire in and then, according to Dr Shipway they said, "We have water for twenty-four hours with this thing." We thought, oh good!

When we got there, before we got there, Dr Shipway said that had burnt out or something so we had to put in an electric one, but he only put in a small one. He didn't think of a family of six, you know and so it wasn't highly successful and we had to turn it to J rate to heat it up again during the day if you had any number staying with us. It wasn't a terribly great success but in the kitchen there was this one tap and the tap, the actual tap was as tall as I was. To hold a kettle or a bucket or anything under this thing and turn on the tap was almost impossible. Well I said to Ben, "This has got to go, I can't possibly work under these circumstances."

Fortunately he had an uncle who was in the furniture trade and he had it all made in Adelaide and they brought it up all made and I remember the cupboard that went the whole length of the kitchen, they had to get it in diagonally across the big room. They had to put it over the wall and gauge the doors so that it would just fit and be able to turn it, it was huge. Well it's a very big kitchen really.

That is huge.

RB: And there was a cellar with steps down to it at the window end. We decided to forgo those and made a solid floor there and made a little eating area out of that bit. Then the cellar underneath, we stowed all. Dr Shipway died three weeks after we arrived here.

Oh dear!

RB: So we got all his stuff and Ben put it down in the cellar, nowhere else to put it at that stage. We were using all the other rooms. The first winter we had a sort of flood from the sea being very high so the water table rose and all the X-rays and things got wet and were floating around in the muddy water. It was no great tragedy I don't think. [both talking]

It would have been messy.

RB: Oh yes it was messy. It dried out after some time.

Did it?

RB: Mm. I don't know what else about *Carrickalinga*. I saved it, have we talked about saving it?

No. You decided you were going to move, you were thinking about moving.

RB: Yes we decided it was just that we were like fish bowls, living in a business area. We decided we'd have to go and at that stage the Apex Club had decided that we needed a Senior Citizens' building and they had already bought a caravan and were regularly sitting in the main street and down by the Causeway selling these tickets like mad for the thing. Ben said, "Have you thought of using an existing building because we are going to put *Carrickalinga* on the market and it might be a very good Senior Citizens?"

They had a bit of a talk but then they were building the motel next door and they'd got to the second storey. Then they needed a swimming pool and a car-park so they decided they'd buy *Carrickalinga*, knock it down and put this car-park and swimming pool. I didn't think that was a good idea ----- (indistinct). No way was I going to allow that so the Apex people, I don't know, Rotary might have got behind it too, anyway, I don't know. It sort of fell on receptive ears at any rate and the Council offered us so much, I can't remember how much it was but it was quite a lot less than the motel was offering. The Council didn't have any money of course and they asked the government, the local government, federal, the **State** government to give them the money but no, they were as poor as church mice that year and sort of been about '70, '75, '76 I suppose and so they asked the federal government.

The Federal Government agreed to lend them the money as long as it was paid back in a certain time, so we accepted the offer from Council.

So meanwhile the doctor's surgery part of the house had moved over.

RB: Yes, yes. We moved over from the. The surgery closed in the house. Now you were allowed to. No, there was something about, anyway. We certainly didn't consult in the house after 1963. We bought a house, which was opposite us at that stage and it was a boarding house called *Woodbine* and on a smaller scale but similar, you know, a passage right through the middle and all the rest of it. It was Dr Jim Nicholls came after Dr Collins left. He decided he wasn't going to consult in his own house. He had ten children, eleven he might have had, anyway, a lot of children and it didn't suit him at all. We decided to turn it into a, and then of course, we had a couple of office girls. That meant that I was free! It was wonderful, I didn't have to answer the phone, I didn't have to answer the door, so I took up golf again. That was just the joy of my life, not that I was any good at it, but I did play it.

So they moved over there and that was good. Then we decided we'd move house and we moved down to the front at Franklin Parade, Oakham Street, corner of Oakham Street. We lived there for eleven years. *Carrickalinga* was wonderful, the children loved it, two of the girls were married there.

Of course, the children with all that room.

I remember one morning, it was Easter and we woke up one morning and there were nineteen boys in sleeping bags in the big room. Nineteen boys!

Girls had had a party had they?

RB: No, no, the girls didn't even know they were there. Apparently the boys had all something or other and John said, "Oh come and sleep at my place." I don't know where they had been but they were suddenly there with all these boys. Well the girls absolutely loved it. Four or five girls staying too so they went and made egg and bacon and tomato and toast and fed all these boys. They were all mostly *Pembroke*, well they were *Kings* in those days. They remember the house with great affection I think for the children because they had such fun there. And they used to have a Christmas party every year, Christmas week party and plenty of room to have it and it didn't worry anybody, because there was nobody there to worry really.

Carrickalinga has been a great success because it's used by a huge number of people.

It's such an imposing building really isn't it? It's a lovely old place.

RB: Mmm. It's so solid. They had to re-roof it. I don't ever remember it actually leaking but it must have fallen into.

Probably got ---- (indistinct). Probably was going to happen probably.

RB: Of course they altered the back, you know, very nice toilet area.

There'd be a meeting room there.

RB: Yes.

It's very well used.

RB: Yes, it is. I don't envy them. I don't know who sweeps all those verandas but that was a major task. The verandas went right round the house.

I think the wind might do a lot of it. There is a garden.

RB: Yes, I think there's a garden. I planted the holly tree.

It's huge.

RB: It's huge. I suppose people use it.

I think we've got a bit of an idea for using it for the Christmas Tree Pageant, some of it.

RB: Oh yes, I wouldn't be surprised. I've planted one here too.

Have you?

RB: Yes, because it's ----- (indistinct).

I don't think there are any berries on it yet.

RB: I had a few this year, I think it was a very cold winter and I had a sprinkling of little red berries on mine. I don't know if that one did.

They would have gone by now would they?

RB: Yes, July, you see it's the opposite, when it's cold.

Northern Hemisphere.

RB: Yes, yes. *Carrickalinga* has been a success. We saved it that time but I saved it a second time because Woolworths wanted it for a car-park. They knocked down the house behind *Carrickalinga* which belonged to an elderly couple but I think one of them died so they just knocked that down and turned all that bit into.

Dr Shipway's house was down there too?

RB: Oh that was on the next corner. That was part of Woolworths, close to Crozier Road, well it was on the next corner this house was. Of course, we sold that, it was part of *Carrickalinga* when we came. There were eight garages along the back and a laundry. I've never seen such a laundry like it. I think it would be the length of this room, fifteen or more feet. It was a washing machine that had a fire under one end to heat the water and then you had rinsing water, then blue water, then it went through a wringer, then it went into another trough. Then I think you put your baskets or whatever.

Hand mangles.

RB: Hand mangle and a hand wringer of course. It was a huge thing, it took up the whole room.

Boarding house days I suppose.

RB: Yes. There were also three front flats where along the back.

Oh yes, they've not long gone.

RB: No, I know. They were our garages and one was a store-room. One car, Ben had a car. Then there was a little flat, the bit we sold had a little flat on it. For the first two Christmases those flats were let to holiday-makers. Oh, the noise. We had twenty-eight children there the first Christmas. I thought I'd go mental but you know, the people had been promised and we thought, oh we'd better let them but it was dreadful, simply dreadful. And of course, they all used this pathetic little toilet. It really should have been condemned, I think.

Earlier you told me about the smell of Victor in those days.

RB: Victor always. (both speaking - unintelligible).

Going right back again.

RB: Victor did smell. I can remember when you went came to the top of the hill, you know, where you turn off to Port Elliot this smell would rise and people would say, "Oh yes of course it's the seaweed," but my Father said, "Seaweed my eye, this is not seaweed!" (chuckles). And of course it was all the open toilets at everybody's house and of course in the summer it was terrible.

I don't know, it must have been an awful job to be a plumber or something.

Yes. I remember the mosquitoes being really bad.

RB: Oh the mosquitoes were shocking.

And you said about your sister being covered with bites.

RB: Yes, yes.

So, you've been in the Hospital Auxiliary.

RB: Yes, well there have been quite a good auxiliary I think since the hospital. The Hospital was built in '29 and the Auxiliary was formed in '30. But when I came, I mean, the doctor's wives just joined the auxiliary. The Hospital was virtually our bread and butter. You know there was no, in the surgery there was nowhere to put in stitches or, here they do so much sort of minor stuff in the rooms. There was nothing like that, everything was done at the Hospital, if you needed one stitch you were sent to the Hospital.

I really felt you should work for the Hospital and so did the other wives, we all belonged to the Auxiliary. We used to raise the money with Petticoat Lane.

Petticoat Lane?

RB: Petticoat Lane. It was the first Market ever I think, it was the whole of Warland Reserve. The districts around used to help us and various organisations would have a stall. That's how we really raised our money.

Similar to the Sunday Markets now?

RB: Yes, just like that but much, much bigger. We had entertainment, Marching Girls. We had a huge Craft tent. Anybody who had an interest in craft set up there. I remember one man had a wonderful train set and that was very interesting for the children, they thought it was great. Somebody did potting and somebody else would be doing patchwork.

Was this just once a year?

RB: Once a year on Australia Day. Now Australia Day used to be on the Monday of a holiday weekend and it was a great success until the Education Department made it a four-term year and it messed everything up because they started school on that Monday. There was no holiday weekend and they said that Australia Day had to be on the 26th so that was the end of Petticoat Lane. But we raised a lot of money at Petticoat Lane.

The Hospital has certainly expanded.

RB: Goodness me, yes.

They're doing a lot of things there now

RB: Oh yes, wonderful help like the dialysis.

And chemotherapy.

RB: And chemotherapy. It's wonderful for people not to have to go away and it's improving all the time. There's that enormous building that's going up, Fleurieu Health Service Centre I think.

I don't know what.

RB: I think that's what it's going to be. Also, I can remember when they put in the helicopter.

That was another huge advantage.

RB: A huge advantage. Actually we are well-served down here.

We're very lucky.

RB: We're lucky.

And so many specialists come and so on.

RB: Yes. It's incredible when I think of it, because we didn't have an ambulance. We did have an ambulance but it was a sort of covered buckboard thing, you know. Doctors got called out to any accidents, or anything, and I can remember on a number of occasions Ben would go out to where he was told an accident was only to find there was nothing, only to find there wasn't really anything to worry about and everybody had gone away and not told them. That happened quite a number of times.

You said earlier that you very seldom got a full night's sleep.

RB: Oh no, goodness no. I can remember one occasion we just didn't go to bed at all, one thing after another and Ben had to work next day. That didn't happen often. Looking back on it I can say oh you'd never have a night in bed – that's how it felt. You're never sure when you were going to be in bed. They have a lot better time now and with mobile phones and everything. Ben would be out at say, Waitpinga fixing something up and somebody from Mt Compass would want him. There was no way of getting on to him; he had to come home to get the message. But that's all in the past. I think doctors have got it made, actually. They don't have to go out for anything.

They can have certain hours off, can't they?

RB: I think they have whole days off. "I don't work on Thursdays" – that would be lovely, wouldn't it.

Things have changed. You'd notice a lot of changes.

RB: Oh a huge number of changes, yes.

How many years have you been in Victor Harbor now?

RB: What's the date now? We came in '55 so it's fifty-nine this year on December 13th.

So it's not very far away from the anniversary is it?

RB: No it's not. I haven't got my watch on now.

December 13th, and it's 3rd December.

RB: So in ten days time I'll have been here for fifty-nine years. We've seen a lot of changes. I'm a little bit disappointed in Victor Harbor. They've pulled down far too many of the old buildings and really, I've been a member of National Trust for years and years and years now. We've really tried to save buildings but the developers have always got to.

Snap up that extra dollar haven't they?

RB: They always say there are white ants and damp and you've got no way of proving that they're right or wrong, but anyway I think the National Trust over the years has done a bit. They certainly helped me save *Carrickalinga* the second time because I was working at Ayres House at the time and so the head officer, I went in and I said, "I think we need help in Victor Harbor" so they got a temporary stay on it, I've forgotten what it's called. A bit of a toothless tiger. Also, I think it stopped it at that stage and now I don't think they'd dare pull it down.

There'd be a lot of backlash if they tried.

RB: Victor's not what it was. The shopping's gone back very badly. Bells Store on the corner was an excellent, at least a very good clothing store for quite a number of our things that you now have to send away for you or go to Adelaide for or something.

Good quality items. I guess even men's suits and so on they'd probably have them fitted up, too did they?

RB: Well there were very good men's stores, there were two good men's stores, one down in Harbor Traders and one down by one of the fish shops, there was a good men's store there too. Of course our Mr Menswear is probably the best shop in the town. You could get quality clothes there.

Did you ever go out fishing or anything like that?

RB: When Ben retired we moved down from *Carrickalinga* to Oakham Street and he got a little boat and he'd go fishing. I was not really a fisherperson. I used to go out and take a book you know! (chuckles). I loved swimming, I loved the water but fishing, no, fishing's not my style.

Not your style.

RB: But Ben used to love it and he used to catch quite a few from the ---- (indistinct). Fresh fish, yes.

There's usually been a fair bit of that around down at Yilki or somewhere.

RB: Yes.

Rumbelows.

RB: Oh yes, the Rumbelow's shop down there, yes. Yes that's still there but in a different setting.

Different format now.

RB: Different format but a very good shop. Different people, helpful and pleasant. The little deli saves us many a trip into Victor.

From out here?

RB: Mmm.

What about the horse-tram that would have been running when you came and then it stopped again for a while?

RB: It did, now let's think. When I was young of course it certainly was the horse tram. Then when I think, we came back, one horse-tram had been pushed into the sea and one had gone to Clare I think.

Really!

RB: There was no horse-tram, then somebody started a tractor thing with a couple of little carriage sort of things.

I remember that, it wasn't the same was it?

RB: That's right, I remember that. Then they decided to build a tram.

I think the tracks were probably always there weren't they?

RB: Yes, they were I think.

Not too sure.

RB: No. Anyway I can remember Barbara Wiese came down and opened the tram, I remember, I think it was '84 but I could be wrong. Anyway I remember that. The tram was an attraction.

Was that a Mr Honeyman at that time?

RB: Mr Honeyman used to drive the tram, oh yes, I knew him.

There've been lots of people since.

RB: Yes there have.

I think we've covered a lot of ground.

RB: A lot of ground.

What time is it?

RB: 4.15 pm.

We've been chatting for well over an hour.

RB: Yes we have.

Unless you can think of anything else I think we might...

RB: I don't think so, no.

Thank you very much. It appears to have worked this time.

Please check spelling of Kabalda in New Britain, Malela (name of second twin) and Pupacowi a small town in NZ.