

**VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'.
Interview with Jane Bohnsack on 31st October 2013.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.**

Jane, thank you so much for being willing to talk with us about your life and memories. I wonder if we could start with where and when you were born?

JB: This is really going back a long time now.

I was born in Adelaide in July 1944. I grew up in Largs Bay. Spent all of my childhood and my growing up years in Largs Bay. My mother and father lived down there and had been long time residents. My mother grew up down in that area. Do you need to know a little bit more about who she was?

Yes. I'd love to know. Who were your mother and father? What were their names?

JB: My mother's name was Florence May. She was one of seven children. Grew up down in Largs Bay. Her father was actually a sign writer and painter, and also an artist. They were very much involved in Port Adelaide and in that area, and were long-term residents of the area. The artistic side of my grandfather, he was a great landscape artist and he actually did some painting. Had contact with Hans Heysen. I'm lucky enough to have a Hans Heysen painting that he obviously gave to my grandfather. It's come down in the family and I'm the one that has got it at the moment.

So Jane, what was your grandfather's name?

JB: Chris McLennan(?).

So was he a member of the Royal Society for the Arts, do you know?

JB: Yes, he was. The museum has displayed at times a big hanging that he did for the Royal Society for the Arts—I think it was. It's a big banner. A few years ago it was hanging—every now and again they hang it in the museum. I was aware through one of my other cousins that it was hanging there so I did make a trip to the museum to see it. It was really quite amazing and quite emotional, I suppose, to think that my grandfather actually did that.

He was really very well known in the Port Adelaide area. Unfortunately he died fairly early in life. I'm not sure how old he was now but I didn't ever know him, and so it was obviously before I was born. I think my mother at the time was probably in her late teens, or something like that, because she actually was going to art school at the time and she

had to leave that to go home and help my grandmother look after the family. She ended up going into just office type work following that. The family was very involved with the Presbyterian Church down in Port Adelaide and that area. So that was from my mother's side.

What sort of person was your mother?

JB: Oh, she was a very loving mother. I only have one sister—Helen—who is eighteen months older than me and we are very close. My mother was one that liked to get things done, you might say, but a very close family oriented person. And she always wanted the best for my sister and me.

We both went to private school. First of all to a little private school—St Alban's Church of England Grammar School—that was down in Largs Bay. Unfortunately it doesn't exist any more. That went from grade one to year seven, which we both went to. Following that we went to Presbyterian Girls' College, or single college you might say, at Glen Osmond for our secondary schooling. It was a really long trip by bus every day.

Gosh, that would be a long trip!

JB: Going from Largs Bay up to Glen Osmond every day, and back.

You would've had to change buses, wouldn't you?

JB: No. We could actually catch the bus straight through.

Really?

JB: Yes. That was really good. Okay, sometimes we did change for other reasons.

(Laughs)

Also learnt piano for at least fourteen years with a teacher at Largs Bay. Her name was Mary Meakin. She was a very well known piano teacher down in our area, and we went to the convent for our theory side of the music. I probably enjoyed it more than my sister. She absolutely hated it but was forced to go. *(Laughs)*

Well, what about your father? What was his name?

JB: My father's name was Richard. He was a captain in the regular army. I'm not sure when he actually went into the army but I think he did have an administration job somewhere else before that. But all of my school life, he did go to war.

Going back a bit. My father was in the occupation forces that went to Japan immediately after the war. My mother and my sister and I went over to Japan and we were over there

for two years—part of the occupational forces of Japan. I think I was only about two or three.

Do you have any recall of that?

JB: Not really. Very vague. I don't think my sister can remember a lot either, which is probably a bit of a shame, but never mind. There probably wasn't very much to remember with all the devastation. Had lots of photos and stuff like that of the devastation over there.

I know my mother really enjoyed being over there with the social side of things. You know, we had servants in the house and there was a lot of social goings on for those few years. When we came back to Adelaide, we were obviously living in Largs Bay again.

Your father still in the army?

JB: He was still in the army, and he actually stayed in the army until I think I was about thirteen. I think he left because his health wasn't all that good. And then he managed to get a few administration type jobs with a few companies in Adelaide following, I guess, his retirement from the army.

About that time my mother decided she would like to go teaching. They had what I think they called pressure cooker courses, or something like that, that they put people through in twelve months to be able to do primary school teaching. She absolutely loved it and probably put 200% into her teaching. Loved the kids, and just loved that period of time. She was at schools all around the Largs Bay area—Largs Bay, Ethelton. They were her two main schools I suppose until she retired from teaching.

So were they very encouraging to you and your sister's education. Obviously by sending you to PGC they thought that was the path to go.

JB: They were. Although when I think of how education goes these days we weren't really encouraged to go to university or do that type of thing, which was interesting. When I left school there was no problem about getting a job. Everybody knew that you'd get a job.

What age would you have left school, Jane?

JB: I was probably seventeen.

Okay. So that's the early 60s.

JB: Yes. I went to work for an insurance company—Commercial Union Insurance—in Pirie Street.

Well, they were a big firm at the time.

JB: Yes. And I guess that's where I started my administration. You know, what you do in an office. Started at the bottom. Used to go to the GPO twice a day to collect the mail and do the banking and open the letters. Then I gradually moved up into different departments within the insurance company. Ended up doing cashier work.

It was there at Commercial Union that I met my husband, Peter. He happened to join the company. I'd been there probably a couple of years when he joined the company. He was going to be an inspector over on the west coast at Streaky Bay. We started going out. He was only in Adelaide for about a month for his training and then he went over to Streaky Bay. We obviously kept that relationship going, and consequently we got married and I moved over to Streaky Bay.

What year were you married, Jane?

JB: Can't remember what year I was. *(Laughs)* I would've been twenty-one.

So '65 or '66.

JB: Yes. Round about then.

I forgot to ask you what was your maiden surname.

JB: Wellbelove. Sorry, we didn't talk about that before.

We didn't do that, did we? That was my fault.

JB: A very unusual name.

Just going back a bit. My father was an only child and his parents lived up at Eden Hills. We did see quite a bit of them but from Largs Bay to Eden Hills at the time—early years we didn't have a car and we'd catch the train to go up there. Really quite enjoyed that. Had a few holidays up with them—school holidays.

I'm not sure where my grandfather worked. I'm not sure whether he was working in the railways, or something like that. Hard to remember. I know my grandmother didn't ever work.

Eden Hills would've been pretty primitive in those days.

JB: Yes. You'd walk from the train station up the hill and there were really just a few houses. I'm not sure whether their house is still there.

So what street were they in?

JB: Wilpena Avenue. Or Wilpena Street.

Where my parents-in-law live.

JB: Really?

Yes.

JB: I don't know what the number was.

Might be their place.

JB: Who knows?

**They bought it in the 1950s though.
Anyway, so that's your father's parents.**

JB: Yes.

Come back to you and Peter. You met and you married in the mid 60s and you moved over to Streaky Bay.

JB: That's right.

What was that like?

JB: Amazing. My poor mother, she thought her baby going from the big smoke over to the sticks, how was I going to cope? How was I going to manage things? But the people over there were just so lovely and so friendly. I wasn't homesick one bit.

Peter's territory was from Kimba really over to the Western Australian border. So probably a couple of weeks a month he'd only be home at the weekend. In his job he worked closely with Elders at the time doing the insurance side of things. He absolutely loved it. He was a great sports person. Played tennis. He didn't play football but he was sort of like the trainer fellow. We'd go to all the tennis matches and the football and really joined in with the community. As I said, there is a couple over there now that I'm still very close friends with and still see them on a regular basis. Still go over there and absolutely loved it.

I did manage to get a job at the District Council of Streaky Bay. I'd probably only been there a few months and managed to get a job there. There were only three of us in the office. Bit different these days. *(Laughs)*

I reckon.

JB: Had a very unusual boss in Don Amey. Unfortunately he passed away only about three or four months ago. He was just an amazing person. He was also the overseer. He

was just so casual but a really good person. He also owned a farm over there so he'd do a bit of farming, plus he'd do his other job.

And we'd do all the immunisations.

Gosh!

JB: Just everything. The three of us just used to do it all. And the payroll. And when you think how many staff they have these days!

We were only at Streaky Bay for two years and one thing I was very proud of when I left was that he said—and he had maintained that for years and years—that I was the best employee he had ever had. So I thought that was pretty good. *(Laughs)*

Yes, used to go to the council meetings and all those sorts of things. Absolutely loved it. And I guess that was my taste of local government. When we left there we moved to Clare. I always thought that I'd really like to go back into local government one day if the opportunity came.

And it was Clare with Peter's job?

JB: Yes. We moved to Clare with Peter's job. And at Clare, that's where we had our two boys—Michael and Nicholas. They were both born in Clare. Obviously I didn't work because I was busy having babies. *(Laughs)*

We found it a completely different social scene at Clare. Very cliquy. The friends we made were people like ourselves who had come into the town. You know, people from banks and those sort of businesses. We used to all meet on a regular basis. Had a really good social life but from Streaky Bay where we had barbecues, when we moved to Clare it was all dinner parties. So it was a completely different lifestyle.

Jackets and ties.

JB: Yes. It was. And going to bowls and all those sorts of things that you do in those sort of country towns. We were at Clare probably for four years and, like I said, had my two boys. Really enjoyed the time there.

Peter's parents, Joan and Geoff Bonsack actually lived at Victor Harbor. Geoff was the secretary/manager at the Victor Harbor golf club. We used to regularly come and visit them. Loved it down here. We decided that we'd perhaps like to be a little bit closer to them, particularly with having two grandchildren for them. So we made the move to come down here to Victor Harbor. Peter couldn't get a transfer and he changed jobs when he came down here. He went to work for the AMP. We moved down here and we've been here ever since. So I'm almost a local. *(Laughs)*

This is the early 70s?

JB: Yes, it would've been about then. I tend to lose track of dates and times and things. Because we were only up in Clare for four years our boys were still quite young but we moved down here and immediately one of them started kindergarten and we started getting involved with the community down here.

Was it less cliquey here?

JB: Yes. I'd say it was. Peter obviously joined the golf club. He was an avid golfer. And through his parents, too, we met other people. And also through the kindergarten, and then through the school. You gradually build up your friendships in the town. Certainly a different type of people down here as well. Not quite like Streaky Bay because I think the isolation of Streaky Bay makes people sort of bond more together.

I'd agree with that.

JB: It's interesting, just going back to the Streaky Bay days. It can be pretty hot over there and in those days the car wasn't air-conditioned so in the hot weather we'd drive along and have wet towels on our laps, and things like that, to try and keep cool. The road from Iron Knob to Kimba wasn't bituminised so it was pretty rocky, and guess what? On one of the trips it was a hot day and a windscreen broke. So it was a pretty horrific sort of drive to get back to Streaky with a broken windscreen—hot day—but we made it. Just something else to talk about I suppose. *(Laughs)*

So Jane, when you first came with Peter and your boys to Victor, what was the town like at that time? I'm talking about the town and its immediate environs. Can you remember?

JB: Certainly not like it is today. There wasn't all the development out on the road to Port Elliot. There were only a few odd houses out there. There wasn't anything much around in Encounter Bay. Certainly a number of houses around where I live currently have been here for quite a long time, but certainly none of the developments that we see today.

So when people came to Victor, there would've been, I guess, still a very strong holiday contingent.

JB: Oh, yes. There were still all the guest-houses down in the main street.

Warringah on the front.

JB: Warringah. And then in Ocean Street -

Oh, yes. What was that called?

JB: And Goldsack chemists had that big shop there on the corner of Coral Street and Ocean Street. The Hotel Crown, that had the lovely big staircases and all that before that was all developed. So really it was quite different.

Was Bells department store still going then?

JB: Yes, it was. That was there.

But there were still all those other guest-houses. And the primary school was just down here on the corner of Torrens Street and Crozier Road. Not really Crozier Road because it was down really more on Torrens Street, backing on to Acraman Street and Torrens Street. That was still there. Oh, yes, still on Torrens Street because that old original building is still in the front there where Miss Batty used to have year ones. I can remember taking my boys there. *(Laughs)*

Was she one of the Battys? The locals?

JB: Yes, she was. I think she only passed away a couple of years ago.

I remember her. Just.

So the community grew at different times of the year I suppose.

JB: Certainly in the summer there were a lot more people down here. We really enjoyed Victor Harbor, and I can say the development sort of happened and living here you don't tend to perhaps notice it quite so much.

Did you keep involved with the church down here, Jane?

JB: No, we didn't.

I was thinking about your piano playing and all that.

JB: No.

You often get rung in.

JB: Yes. Going back to my growing up, I was involved with the church and with the PFA. You know, the youth group. Used to have some lovely times. Go to camps up at Strathalbyn at Glenbarr. And I've come across a few people even these days that I used to know through the church and they were in the PFA as well. It's really lovely to meet up with them and talk about old times, you might say.

Glenbarr is an interesting place, isn't it?

JB: Yes.

Yes, that would be interesting.

So Jane, down here with your young family, there were all the facilities here that you required?

JB: Yes, they were.

Those early years of your boys at school, what made you then get involved with local government again in the early 1980s?

JB: Perhaps going back a couple of steps. I wanted to get back into the workforce. In Peter's job it was one that he was pretty flexible so he could be home whenever he wanted to, which made it easier. So I did manage to get a part-time job with a milking firm that used to be here called (*couldn't decipher name*) as their office manager. I was there probably a few years, and I'm not sure quite how long now, but unfortunately they closed due to I guess the industry. They were milking machine manufacturers and I guess bigger people came on the scene. Howard Wright, who was the owner, decided to close shop. So obviously I was without a job.

It wasn't all that long before I was approached by the Ford dealership to go and be their office manager. They were only part-time jobs because of my boys. Same scenario. I was there until they closed as well. (*Laughs*) I thought, well, this is great.

So from there no job. I did know Keith Adams at the council. I think we had got to know him probably through Rotary.

And Keith's position at that time?

JB: He was the district manager. The district clerk he was called then. This was immediately after the council was sacked. I wasn't there when they were sacked.

That was a very famous incident.

JB: Yes. Very famous.

It was in the September that he rang and said, 'I want you to have a look at the paper. There's a job coming up here'. He thought I'd be interested in it. He couldn't say I had the job. So I applied for the job at the council and I was successful in getting that. So that started my career I guess in local government.

By that stage my boys were a lot older and they were in high school so therefore I could take a full time job, whereas previously I didn't ever have a full time because of my boys. I didn't want to be a full time worker. I felt their upbringing was really important. You know, you have to take them to their sport and all those other things.

So I started working at the council, initially in debtors and creditors. I hadn't been there all that long and I thought to get further you need to have some qualifications. So that's when I started studying. I thought that if you want to get anywhere you have to improve your knowledge and skills, which I found a bit daunting having not done any studies for quite a large number of years and to suddenly having to go back. And it was all by correspondence—to try and do these assignments. I thought, my gosh, I'm never going to be able to do this, but I stuck to it and did manage to get my diploma in local government administration.

I then went on and decided that I'd perhaps go into human resource management because I could see that was perhaps an opening.

So this is some years down the track?

JB: This was directly after I did my diploma in local government administration. I thought I'd like to experience the class situation so went to TAFE in Adelaide. I used to go every week, drive up and down to Adelaide for lectures.

That's a big ask.

JB: Managed to do all that, and passed all that.

Coming back to when you first came to council, the building was where the current council is but not the same building.

JB: No. Much smaller.

Can you tell me about the people and the place?

JB: Obviously a much smaller building. We used to have upstairs and downstairs. In the area where I was, which was sort of all in one—you'd come into the front counter and there was the cashier. Then there was the lass who would do the rates. We had a treasurer and a deputy. It's hard to think back but really it was only a handful of people in administration.

We had the district clerk and his secretary. I'm not sure whether we actually had a planner. I think we might have. We had an engineer downstairs and a weeds person and a person looking after the works side of things. And I guess over the years gradually they started to employ more people.

The office configuration started to change. We had to actually expand out. So from one wall we expanded out to accommodate a lot more because we then sort of had planners and health inspectors and those sorts of people. So the staff gradually expanded to accommodate the requirements. And I guess legislative changes came in. You know, a lot

more rules and regulations. You have to have the people to be able to give the approvals, or to monitor.

So Jane, when you first joined the council, were the services pretty much for the people who lived here all year round?

JB: Oh, yes.

Was there a concentration on tourism as well then?

JB: No, not really. No. We didn't have a visitor information centre then. They had their 25th anniversary I think last week, or the week before, so that wasn't in existence. Certainly when I first started there wasn't really any tourism as such. People just came. You didn't have to have a tourist officer.

Yes, that's my memories, too.

JB: Really?

But in the first ten years you were in Victor you would've begun to see the spread of the town, wouldn't you?

JB: Yes.

When you first came, that pretty much was the decade in which things began to move.

JB: Yes. And I'd say in that ten years, certainly probably more happened then than has happened—I think it's been gradual over the years. You know, they'd need another building officer, or they'd need another planner. And obviously in the heyday they couldn't keep up with the building applications. Certainly I think in the last four or five years that's really slowed down, which has probably been good in a lot of ways.

So when you first arrived here with Peter and the boys, would it have been like a large country town still?

JB: Oh, yes. It was really just like Clare, you might say—size-wise.

So there was still agricultural production all around?

JB: Yes.

Now this might be difficult, but can you think when that might have begun to change?

JB: Well, I know they seconded a guy called Jim Suttle. He came from the Premier's department to look at the planning and oversee a lot of the development that was starting

to happen. Obviously I think there was such an explosion that they needed—and in those days I wasn't quite as involved as what I had been the last fifteen or so years with my time at council. I know that he came from the Premier's department. He used to come down.

So his charge was to get it in order and make sure it wasn't -

JB: I think so, yes.

This would be twenty years ago? Or more?

JB: Probably would be twenty years ago.

So things had really begun to move at that point.

JB: Yes. And I think Ed Noack was here at the time that Jim was seconded down to us as well.

And Ed had come from the State Government heritage branch I think—originally.

JB: Yes, I think so.

Yes, I reckon.

But my memory of that, say, late 80s/early 90s is that along the Waitpinga Road there were really only a few smaller blocks there.

JB: Yes.

But they were large small blocks. They were acres.

JB: Yes.

And some of the houses were built in the late 70s/early 80s, like, by the Butler family -

JB: Yes. None of that development had taken place.

So Encounter Bay was still -

JB: Oh, yes.

I'm just thinking too. Would that be about the time that Nexus furniture set up?

JB: Yes. Around in Maude Street.

So this is the beginning of local industry.

JB: Yes, it was.

It's interesting thinking about that, isn't it?

JB: Yes. You tend to forget about a lot of things that happen. And I guess that's probably one of the good parts about what you are doing—this project.

When Jane and I came down here in 1985 as part of a State heritage survey that area around Maude Street had only just stopped being dairy farms and such like. So up until the early 1980s it was still agricultural.

JB: Yes.

Within five years –

JB: Boom!

- it's industrial. Or semi-industrial. And at the same time, from what you're saying, if twenty-five years ago is that tourist information centre, it's about that time that tourism begins getting organised too.

JB: Yes. So lots of changes happening.

So what about for you as a family? Your boys went to school here?

JB: Yes, they went to school here. They did all their education down here. As much as I would have liked to have sent them to Adelaide we just couldn't afford it. There wasn't the choice—like, these days you've got Investigator and Encounter. And a number go over to Strathalbyn or down to McLaren Vale. Those options weren't there.

McLaren Vale is Tatachilla. Lutheran, isn't it?

JB: Yes. They have a bus that comes here, as does the college Murraylands.

Murraylands at Strath, yes.

JB: They have a bus that comes here and takes students over to there. They weren't available.

That is a recent change then. That's the last fifteen years probably. So education was pretty much state-based. And your boys were here.

JB: Yes.

And was it relatively easy while you were working at council to balance looking after the boys and Peter, and Peter looking after everybody too.

JB: Yes. Unfortunately Peter actually left. I think the boys were probably about nineteen/twenty. He had an interest elsewhere. So times change.

But going back to my career where I really decided that I wanted to make something of myself, Peter actually had cancer of his mouth. It was the time that I was working at the Ford dealership and I thought that I could be left with two boys to bring up. I guess my

life changed and I needed to make sure that I was going to be able to provide for them. And I guess that was one of the things that perhaps he felt was difficult to handle because he was always the dominant very outgoing person, whereas I'm quite a shy, quiet person. But that sort of spurred me on to make sure that I would be able to provide for my boys because they were obviously the most important thing to me. That's why I ended up going into the study and doing all that as well.

Because you could see perhaps the need in the future.

JB: Yes.

And as it turned out, it's probably just as well you did, too.

JB: Yes, that's right. *(Laughs)*

So did the boys stay in the area or did they go off to work?

JB: No, they both stayed in the area. They both still live here, and all my grandchildren are still here in Victor Harbor, which is just lovely to have the whole family here. Michael, when he left school, went to work at the Victor Harbor Golf Club. He had done part-time weekend work out at the golf club, changing holes and doing watering and stuff like that. They gave him a job when he left school. He then did his horticultural certificate, or qualifications, and when the person in charge left he managed to secure that job as the head greenkeeper. He's been there coming up twenty-eight/thirty years.

No wonder the golf course is so good.

JB: He really prides himself on his presentation and how that works. So that's Michael. With Nicholas, he was quite a good golfer and when he left school he decided he'd like to be a professional golfer. So we said, 'Okay we'll give you twelve months and if you can prove yourself we will support you for the twelve months'. In those days there was no dole or any handouts like that. But Nicholas is a little bit too laidback. It was too easy to just stay home in bed or not go out and practise, which you need to do if you are going to go into that line of work. So that didn't work out.

He decided he'd like to go into hospitality. He managed to get a traineeship down at the Hotel Crown. So he did his traineeship in hospitality and he worked at the Hotel Crown for a while until he got married and then the hours and that sort of work are not really good for a family. He managed to get a job at the Victor Harbor quarry, and he's actually been there in various roles ever since.

That's out off the Waitpinga Road?

JB: Yes, it is.

I didn't realise that was still functioning so much. I guess it's very necessary around here.

JB: It is but unfortunately it is closing down and I think by the end of the year he's going to be without a job. They've offered them a job in Adelaide but he doesn't want to move to Adelaide. There are only two of them there now. So it's really quite sad that its come to this. I guess the building industry has slowed down a lot and people are unsure about things.

Let's hope home sales lift a bit down here. That would be good.

Jane, I wonder if we could come back again to your early days at council. Can you recall some of the people who worked there and who were councillors at the time as well?

JB: I've seen quite a few come and go. *(Laughs)* Liz Cooper, although she wasn't there in the early days, it was more of the recent years. She wasn't there thirty years ago. I think it was Garnet Parsons. Was it Garnet?

That makes sense, yes.

JB: Eric Ashby. John Crompton. Cliff Thorpe.

Cliff Thorpe was always a bit of a character because he always knew that I was really interested in cricket. So when the Ashes series were on he would always come around and have a chat to me about cricket. That was always interesting. It was nice when some of the elected members would actually come and speak to the staff, rather than just being as the elected body.

I think Bill McKenzie. He was on council. Oh, I have a mental blank. So many. You can see their faces.

Were they mainly farmers or were they -

JB: Mainly farmers. What was his name? Out from Back Valley.

Not John Ellers?

JB: No. He had a property out Back Valley way.

Parawa?

JB: No. Back Valley. And he was on council for a large number of years.

I'm thinking of Lester James but he's further on.

JB: No. He's passed away now. But they were mainly farmers.

In those early days we had wards. That made a difference to a bit of the dynamics of the council I think. You know, having the wards rather than area council like we are now.

So was it just Victor Harbor Council rather than the City of Victor Harbor then?

JB: Yes. I think it was only in 2000 that we became a city.

So in effect it was still a rural council?

JB: Oh, yes.

And were the main interests roads and -

JB: Yes, roads and rubbish. They were the main things really.

What I'm thinking of, Jane, in that sense then you were saying that tourism took care of itself. So so did the trades and so did the shops and the retail. That all just took care of itself?

JB: Yes.

Gosh! Bit different, isn't it?

JB: Yes.

What about the sporting groups? Were they connected with council then?

JB: Obviously they had their ovals and things like that but there wasn't quite the connection like I think there are these days. But very strong sporting groups I think in those earlier days. I think they are strong now but I think they were perhaps even stronger then because being a smaller community more people would tend to play their sport, whether it was tennis and cricket in the summer or football in the winter. I think we can see that, say, with Port Elliot Football Club having to disband a few years ago.

That was a change, wasn't it?

JB: Yes.

Well, I mean there's a lot of characters gone from that area, too.

JB: Yes.

Port Elliot would've been part of the Goolwa set-up then.

JB: Yes.

So Victor was really this area.

JB: We've always just been Victor.

You were talking about those members who bothered to come and talk with you, and many of those names ring bells for me.

JB: Dorothy Tilbrook, you would've known from Whalers.

Yes, indeed.

JB: And there was another guy—Evans. He was a solicitor/lawyer from Adelaide. Is his first name John? I'm not quite sure. He had a property up on the hill near the quarry and the thought at the time was that he was just coming down because he obviously wanted something from council. *(Laughs)* You know, like a lot of people say with a lot of people that perhaps sometimes stand for council, 'Oh, they must want something'.

Can you recall any other people from Adelaide having a great interest in the area like the Gilbert family who restored the old mill in Encounter Bay? Very famous architects of course. Were there families like that who came down regularly that you got to know from council as well?

JB: Probably not that I got to know unless they were an elected member. But they maybe had some involvement with some of the other staff.

The McLachlan family owned a number of houses from memory.

JB: Yes.

Still do. And they would've been coming for decades. Yes, decades and decades and decades.

JB: The sister of Ian McLachlan—what was her first name? I can't quite recall but she had a property just by the yacht club. She was one that always complained. You know, if the towels went up at the yacht club she complained about it. She was always complaining about something. She doesn't own the house any more. She sold that of recent times. She'd ring up and everyone would shudder. *(Laughs)*

Were there any elected members that you found really, really difficult or they mostly just wanted to do their job and get on.

JB: There were some that were difficult. There were some that were very supportive of staff. There were some that were not supportive of staff at all. So it was interesting. You have the good and the bad I suppose. And some can function better together than another group. Just depends on the dynamics of the group.

Jane, can you remember when—what we were talking about earlier—the big expansion began and when that chap was brought down from Adelaide to oversee it. Would that have been the late 80s? Or mid 80s?

JB: Yes, it would've been roundabout that time, I would say.

How difficult was it to cope as a person working in council at the time when things suddenly began to gee-up and you needed more room here, and more room there.

JB: I think you just cope. I'm one that just makes the best of whatever. I don't get stressed about too many things, and I'm a fairly even-tempered person. So if you've got to do more with less, you've got to do it. It's just the way it goes. Life gets busier and you've got more to do but you just do it.

So when you went into the human resource side, did your job take on all sorts of different angles?

JB: Oh, yes. There was a lot more paper work that you had to do, a lot more interviewing people. I think I came into that sort of role when that became really important, certainly in hiring staff and managing staff. Oh health and safety started to be a big-ticket item, with policies and procedures and documentation and all those sorts of things. And work cover. The paper work just became horrendous almost because you had to document absolutely everything.

And was the staff beginning to grow quite quickly?

JB: Yes, it was. Although it's always difficult to be able to have the money to put on more staff when you've only got ex number of dollars. Putting on staff is always a big-ticket item, and with all the different areas, certainly had to balance out in which area was the most need.

Can you remember some of the major developments that began occurring where council just had to keep growing to keep up with it?

JB: Probably there have been quite a few but I think with all the development and everything that was happening it was just opening up a real minefield really.

In what sense, Jane?

JB: In what we needed to do. You know, staff-wise, to be able to cope with that. In the early days you had building and planning all as one. Well that had to be separated—the planning staff and then these were the building staff. And I guess it was probably

legislative changes that came in, that you had to have planning approval as well as building approval.

Yes, that's true.

JB: And then council started having to have the development panel as a separate committee, and things had to go through them. It was a big change I think, particularly in the building and planning side of things.

So much more complex.

JB: Oh, yes.

But that's a result of state legislation, isn't it?

JB: Yes. But, you know, this is one of the problems for poor old local government. The state government want to divulge itself from things, so local government can do that but then they don't give you any money. So you have to cope with the costs of that but you are not getting any extra grants or funding to actually be able to do it.

So it's no longer just roads and rubbish but its tourism facilities and an overarching overview of all parts of development. So it's just not a matter of saying, well, yes, that house can go on that block. Now all the infrastructure has to be checked and double checked.

JB: I guess one of the biggest developments that happened that I can recall is Encounter Lakes. I think that was the start of a lot of the bigger developments down here in Victor Harbor. That was a huge project at the time. You know, having to dredge out the lake, and out to sea, and all the houses started to go around. They were all on ex number of sized blocks, and then after a few years they decided to shrink the blocks a bit because you'd get more houses.

So this is off the Bay Road around the hospital area? Adjacent to the hospital—no, hang on!

JB: No.

Not the trotting track side.

JB: That's more recent.

Yes. The other side of Bay Road.

JB: The other side of Bartel Boulevard. All that area around in there. That really was a huge development. And I guess from Encounter Lakes, then it started to spread out

around Encounter Bay. That's probably been one of the biggest developments in the early times.

Because housing was relatively sparse out there then, wasn't it?

JB: Yes.

It's not any more.

JB: No.

And when would McCracken have started? After that.

JB: After that, yes.

So at the same time as those developments were going on was tourism beginning to move as well?

JB: Yes. It was probably fifteen/twenty years ago that council employed a tourism officer and we've had a tourism officer ever since. That person used to be down at the Visitor Information Centre initially, and then as tourism grew that became a separate identity and the tourism officer was separate again from the Visitor Information Centre.

Okay, so initially they are one, and then things start to explode, so to speak.

JB: You know, there are more advance—probably in the last ten years I guess. Oh, no, it wouldn't even be that long.

I was just thinking, when I was very young, there was a tram going to Victor but it was a converted tractor with a couple of wagons on it that went across to Granite Island. When would the horse-drawn tram have been brought back? Twenty-something years ago?

JB: I'd say that would be between twenty and twenty-five years ago.

In my memory, that's the beginning of a different approach to things.

JB: Yes.

And Granite Island had been let go to a large degree and suddenly there was more focus on it again.

JB: Yes, which was really good to see. Unfortunately these days I think it's gone backwards a bit. It's really quite depressing to go over there, which is a bit of a shame.

Yes.

JB: The horse-drawn tram must be about twenty-two years because I think a couple of years ago they had a celebration, which I think was twenty years. Yes, the building of the trams and how that all came together was really -

Did the council have a hand in that?

JB: Oh, yes. Council owned the tram and the development of that. That was really quite an exciting time. A lot of extra work, and then you have to staff it and do all the other bits and pieces.

You've just triggered something in my mind again, Jane, and this would be before the horse-drawn tram I think, that Victor Harbor had a history book done for the council -

JB: Yes.

- and that involved that wonderful artist—and I'm just trying to get his name.

JB: Ainslie Roberts.

I still remember being at Griffin Press and seeing Ainslie's drawings coming in and thinking my goodness me. But that must've been a big event, too, for the council.

JB: Yes, although we did have lots and lots of books. You know, it took quite a while to actually sell them, but we did. Lots of history in there. And people have said that another one should be done but really the cost of it is huge.

Yes, it is.

JB: Yes, lots of history. Lots of things to look back on in that book.

Was Ainslie Roberts living down here at the time?

JB: No. He had a holiday house -

That's what I thought.

JB: - at Encounter Bay, just close to the café. His main home I think was at Blackwood but he spent a lot of time down here in Victor. Council does have a number of his paintings. While I was at council I was fairly involved in the art collection.

How did that come about Jane?

JB: Through the Rotary Art Exhibition. Council had actually received, prior to the Rotary art show, donations of paintings from Peter Matthews. He's a well-known artist down here at Victor Harbor.

Peter is Christopher's father.

JB: Yes.

Peter is a wonderful artist.

JB: Council has a number of his paintings.

He died though, didn't he?

JB: Yes, he has. But through the Victor Harbor Rotary art show council would donate ex number of dollars each year and with that we'd get a painting. So we've been able to increase our collection over the years. We've got a pretty good collection.

Jane, there's always been quite a few artists who've come here too. I think Terry and Lorraine Lewitzka moved down as well. They still live here?

JB: Yes, they do.

I can recall them moving in the early 90s. So that's over twenty years ago now.

JB: I guess it's a really lovely, peaceful place and if you like being by the sea, which a lot of people do, it's a lovely spot. And there are lots of areas to paint. You know, the coastline, Petrel Cove, King's Beach, The Bluff, Granite Island.

I love that Petrel Cove/Kings Beach area. That's glorious, around there. So coming back to the tourism. We were talking about the horse-drawn tram. Was that roundabout the same time that the cockle train was coming in, too?

JB: The cockle train, that's always been coming -

So that was a constant.

JB: Yes. I can remember when my boys were small we'd catch the train to Adelaide and someone would pick us up in Adelaide then drive us back, because it was a couple of hours trip. But what a wonderful train trip it was. We'd hop on the train here and go up through Strathalbyn, up through the tunnels, through to Adelaide.

What were they running on it then? Diesels?

JB: The trains that we went on were just like little railcar type things. Obviously it was in the summer months. Probably school holidays.

Were they using the blue ones then? I'm just trying to remember.

JB: Yes, I think so. It was magnificent and it's really quite a shame that that's not operating any more. It's great catching the train from here to Goolwa, and I've done that a few times with my grandchildren, but to go through to Adelaide it really was good. But it just wasn't viable.

So Jane, I'm sorry to keep coming back to the tourism stuff, but I'm also thinking—you talked about the Tourist Information Centre. What about whale watch? Was that a big initiative?

JB: That's only been in more recent times.

Was that council again?

JB: Yes. Council acquired the whale centre because the people who had set it up were in financial difficulties. The tourism commission begged the council to take it on and gave us a grant to help sway our decision, I suppose you might say. *(Laughs)* And so, for good or bad, council did take it on.

Elizabeth—oh, what's her surname? The coordinator at the time, she started the whale watching. It seemed people were more interested in whales. They probably have always been coming to Victor but there wasn't the big thing promotion about them like it has been in the last, probably, ten years I suppose.

Yes, it's really taken off.

JB: It's really taken off. And in the whale centre they've recruited volunteers to be able to do the whale spotting to be able to tell them where the whales are.

So did council purposely go about having that area down where the causeway goes out—is that what they call it still?

JB: Yes.

Out to Granite Island. I was thinking that the horses are there. There were camel rides there at one stage

JB: Yes. They're still there.

Was that all part of council's initiative to have a focus around the gardens outside the Crown and that whole area?

JB: I think so because that seems to be the focal point, and particularly the causeway going over to Granite Island. Let's face it, a lot of visitors that come down, they'll go down the main street, 'Oh, there's an island. We'll walk out there'. So that seems to be the central hub, you might say.

What about the building of the new centre out on Granite Island itself, which is probably fifteen years ago. Was that council as well?

JB: No. Council don't have any involvement with Granite Island at all.

Is that state government, is it?

JB: Yes.

I didn't realise that.

JB: There have been noises that (*couldn't decipher word*) council should take it over but -

What a headache!

JB: Yes.

It would be, wouldn't it?

JB: Yes.

Being quite honest. I don't think it's even being rude.

JB: Tourism costs council a lot of money. None of our operations run at a profit. You're not going to take on something else that doesn't run a profit. You just can't do it. You've only got so many dollars.

In the change in services at council, what are some of the successes? I mean the new building, which has been there for not all that long, amazes me that every skerrick of it is used, and it's vital. And in particular the library.

JB: That's another interesting story. The library used to operate by the Town Hall. At the time we were proposing to move it there was a big outcry. You know, nobody will ever go there, and no-one will use it. You know, the feedback was just—it was going to be the worst thing since sliced bread. But since it's been there, wow! The numbers have absolutely skyrocketed.

I think a lot of it has to do with Ben. He's a pretty good operator. He runs really good programmes, and I think just the atmosphere down there as well. It's lovely and airy. People can go and read any paper.

There's also IT. Since it's opened IT has been pretty important for everybody. There's an IT room where people can go and book a computer for a length of time and go and do whatever they need to do. So that's been extremely popular.

And all the children's programmes. They've got the space and room to be able to do that. It's amazing. You know, people were saying that books would probably go out of fashion. Books will never go out of fashion. People like to touch and feel those sort of things.

They have an incredible number of people that go through the door every day. Incredible!

So how did you find the move of the library to there and the change in the building itself?

JB: Oh, fabulous. Fabulous.

Did it make your job easier, Jane?

JB: Oh, yes. I didn't have to go down to Coral Street any more. *(Laughs)*

So you were overseeing it by then, were you?

JB: Yes. When I became director that was part of my portfolio—the library. So I'd have to regularly go and see them around there. So really having them all under the one roof makes it so much easier. You know, you can just pop across.

Actually we must come back to your career, too. Let's talk a bit about that. So you do that early study and then go into human resources. What happens then?

JB: The position of director became available. I did apply for the same position a few years before but wasn't successful in it. Graham Maxwell actually got that position. But when the city manager left and Graham went into that role I applied again and I was successful in getting that role. That had always been my goal, I suppose, to have that position.

So what was the position?

JB: I was director of corporate and community services. It's changed again now but I had finance, library, all the administration, human resources, tourism, community services. All of those different departments had to report directly to me.

They probably didn't exist when you came to council.

JB: No. *(Laughs)*

Well, the library did.

JB: The library did. When we first started we didn't really have a community services programme or staff there for that either. So really the change has been unbelievable.

And this is what you were saying, too, that other levels of government have parcelled off what they may have done at one time, and now council runs those programmes.

JB: Yes.

It seems to me, Jane, just looking into that sort of position, it would've been more than just a 40-hour week.

JB: Oh, yes, it was. I'd be at work every day just after seven, and sometimes—not with this council but I can remember, going back a few years, it could be ten/eleven o'clock at night.

We had one council that after the meeting they used to like to go into the chamber and have a drink. And because I'd say that this is the last drink, do have to work tomorrow, I was told by one particular councillor, 'It's your role to be here as long as we want to be there. I'll stay here and drink as long as I like'. So that's pretty good!

What we used to do is that we would make sure that the bottle of whisky, or whatever it was, wasn't full. So we'd empty some out and hide all the other bottles. *(Laughs)* Because they wouldn't go until it was finished.

Oh, gosh! Okay.

JB: A few of those little tricks we used to do. *(Laughs)*

We won't name the council or the councillor.

JB: No, we won't. We won't, but I vividly remember being told that.

So the expectation was that you just be there, and that's it.

JB: Yes. I'm paid to be there as long as they want me to be there. I thought that was a pretty good attitude. Not. *(Laughs)* Interesting though.

You are the ones that have to bear the brunt of the public on any issue, so you've got to be there early in the morning.

JB: Yes. Well, I used to find that by starting early I could get so much done before all the staff came and before the phone started ringing. Some days I could have on my desk the same thing at five o'clock that I had there perhaps at half past eight because of all the interruptions and the phone calls and one thing and another. It's just what you did.

So your work-load has increased out of sight.

Now the other thing I've noticed about Victor that must have changed council and your role, too, is that—okay, it had been a big destination for people to come and stay over summer holidays for over 100 years. The retirement option though comes in to play during your era, too, Jane.

JB: Yes.

It seems to me this suddenly becomes the place to retire.

JB: Although I guess that's always been the case.

But to the degree of the last thirty years?

JB: No. But I guess that's as the population has increased so people tend to perhaps think that I'm not going to retire in Adelaide, I'm going to come down here. Probably doesn't happen all that much but there are a number of people that actually do come here to retire and then they get sick and find that perhaps they haven't got quite the medical services that they want, and then they move back to Adelaide. But I think that's in a minority really because there are so many services that you can get and do come down here now. And we've got the helicopter that can be down here in next to no time. They can be back up in Flinders within a quarter of an hour. It's just fantastic.

Incredible, isn't it?

JB: Yes.

So Jane, was part of Encounter Lakes more of a retirement village area there?

JB: I think there is a bit of a mixture now. I'd say it's probably more retired type people because the blocks are so small. If you've got a family they don't want to be coupled up in a little place with no backyard.

So when you and Peter and your boys came here in the 70s, it's a very different place it seems to me.

JB: Absolutely.

How did it change in that sense in the age of the people here, and such like? Or when?

JB: That's probably difficult to -

I can perceive there's been a huge change over forty years.

JB: I've been growing older as well. *(Laughs)* So you more or less say that you've grown up with it.

I notice now, say with the volunteers at council, that it's really retired people who've moved here. A lot of them have moved here, I should say.

JB: Oh, yes. Council has over 300 volunteers that work in all different programmes, and most of those are people over 55.

Were you responsible for bringing some of those programmes in, Jane?

JB: Probably some of the programmes, you couldn't do it without the volunteers. And with the Visitor Information Centre, that couldn't operate without the volunteers. A lot of the community services programmes have volunteers to help run their programmes. They have paid coordinators of the programme but they need other volunteers to facilitate a lot of the things that they do. Working with families and what have you.

So if you were to talk about some of the larger changes you saw in council, what would you talk about?

JB: I'd say probably the community services area. Tourism. I think the building and planning side of things. A lot more regulations, and things like that. Occupational health and safety is absolutely huge. They're sort of self-insured. There are certain standards that they have to comply with, and the expectations are horrendous to achieve that, which requires extra staff. We had to put on an extra person just to do oc health and safety because we just couldn't cope with what was required. Just all the paper work.

Did you ever find the pressure seem too much on some of those issues?

JB: At times. But you get over it. You have to move on. *(Laughs)* If you give in, you might as well -

I don't know if this is indicative of all councils but I found, for instance, with some of the Riverland councils that I know well, and Victor Harbor council, there's a spirit of camaraderie in the place.

JB: Oh, yes. I think one of the big things is the contacts you make within the local government community.

Going back a few steps. I was fairly involved with the local government managers' group. Initially it was called the Institute of Municipal Management. I was on their divisional council. I was actually the first woman in Australia—woman, because it was a real bloke's group—to actually be on their committee, which I did find really difficult because they were such a blokey group. But the contacts I made over that period of time when I was heavily involved in that committee have proved to be just so useful. Because you know so many people throughout local government you can just get on the phone and, 'what are you doing about this, or that', and 'how are you handling this?' Those contacts are really important. Really important. And you do meet up with them at different meetings. At local government meetings and workshops and all that sort of thing. Very handy. And it's really vital to have that contact with the bigger local government community.

To be able to have that breadth of knowledge available is actually a big change, isn't it?

JB: Yes. It's very handy, particularly if you know them personally. They are not just somebody on the end of the phone.

Or end of an e-mail.

JB: Yes. Well, e-mail's a big thing. The use of e-mails has probably been one of the biggest changes throughout my career. And also mobile phones. A lot of people these days have mobile phones almost connected to their body. How did we ever do it before? I'm sure we coped very well.

It's worth the thought.

JB: But certainly e-mail and electronic transfer of information would probably be one of the biggest changes that I've noticed over the years.

Is there anything else you feel you'd like to say about your time in local government?

JB: I just loved every minute of it.

Yes.

JB: I did.

Yes, I bet you did.

JB: I really loved my job. Really loved it. Had a great time. Obviously there were highs and there were some lows but overall I really enjoyed it.

Now we come to another side of your life and that's the Zonta side. Just trying to think, what other sides are there apart from Zonta? Plenty I suppose.

JB: That's probably one of my main interests I suppose you might say.

How did you get involved with Zonta because it wouldn't have been here when you came here.

JB: No. Zonta is an American organisation.

This is thirty-five years ago. Michelle Parsons, she married David Parsons, one of the well-known Parson family. She was a member of Zonta in Adelaide and she moved here with her husband, David, to go on the family property. She could obviously see perhaps an opportunity for a Zonta club to be here. So her and a couple of other people—one of the main ones was a woman called Heidi Taylor—started contacting different people who were in business, because you have to have a profession or a career, or be in a decision making

role. They sent out all these letters. Obviously I was one that got a letter. And as a group over a period of a few months decided that, yes, we perhaps would like to start a club down here. So I was a member of the club from day one. We've still got six charter members, including myself, after thirty-five years.

That's pretty good.

JB: Yes. I've found it very rewarding and very interesting. Certainly meet lots of other like-minded people. Been to lots of conferences and workshops and the world convention in Melbourne a few years ago. Earlier on in our time our district went over to New Zealand and I was lucky enough to go over to a conference in New Zealand. I was president of the club at that time. This is going back probably twenty years ago. But I'm another recycled president. I'm currently president again. *(Laughs)* I guess I've held all roles that you could in our organisation. I've been president, secretary, treasurer, board member. You name it, I've probably been it.

And are younger members still coming in?

JB: No. We are finding it very difficult to be able to attract younger people. As we say, thirty-five years ago we were that much younger but we all managed it. Lifestyles have changed.

Yes.

JB: Dramatically, I think. So we are finding it difficult. We still do have twenty-five members. We had a bit of a membership drive a couple of weeks ago. We've got two that perhaps are interested in joining, which is really good because we really want some younger people, not all over sixty.

A lot of programmes that we do do benefit women. That's what we focus on—helping women. So we've been going along doing our bit and trying to raise money.

Well, it certainly provides women with a lot of ways of learning different skills, doesn't it?

JB: Oh, yes.

Particularly public skills.

JB: Absolutely. And I think that is what has really helped me as well. And we do some pretty good work. One of our projects, and all clubs do it, we make breast cushions. I don't know if you've seen them. They are out of satin and they just fit under your arm here for women that have had their breast removed.

No, I've not seen them.

JB: We mainly supply Flinders Hospital, and we would supply them with 400 a year.

Gosh!

JB: It's just staggering the number of women, and there are some men as well who do have breast cancer. It's really quite frightening. That's one of our major projects. Plus we make birthing kits. You would have heard about them as well.

Heard about that side, yes.

So apart from that side, Jane, what other aspects of your life are there to consider?

JB: With that and council I really didn't have much spare time. *(Laughs)*

I've got four grandchildren, and two (twins) are just finishing primary school. They are very sports oriented and I guess one of the good things about retiring is that I've been able to go to some of their sporting things and do some things with them now that I've retired that I couldn't perhaps do previously.

I've also enjoyed doing a lot of reading. I hadn't been able to do much of that. There were always papers for council or something. *(Laughs)*

I was thinking that. Paper warfare.

JB: Yes.

Jane, where do you see Victor Harbor going in the future? After all your years of experience with council and such like.

JB: Well, it seems to be continually expanding. As much as you'd like to think that perhaps it won't too much, I think it's just inevitable that it will. How far it goes, I don't know. They had said that the Ring Road was the line in the sky, I suppose you might say, but eventually that will probably happen. Things have slowed down quite a bit. So how quickly that all happens I don't know. Yes, it's hard to really know and it's hard to think—there are a lot of shops struggling in the main street so you wouldn't want to see a lot more -

Outer retail.

JB: No. Because that does take it away from your central part, but if you're going to have development out you have to provide something for those people in the outskirts. But I know that once Woolworths came, and they expanded and expanded, that's when a lot of

the shops in the main street seemed to suffer. This is just my personal opinion, but I think they need to change the dynamics of the shops in the main street.

Yes.

JB: And that they are open Saturdays and Sundays and all public holidays and have some different types of retail to try and -

That appeals more to visitors. Maybe.

JB: You go to Hahndorf any weekend and there are masses of people just walking up and down, up and down, all the time. The road by the whale centre, by the railway line, I can imagine some nice little cafes and little coffee places in some of those old heritage buildings along there.

Well, Jane, you've been very, very kind to talk about your memories at Victor. It's been really lovely. Thank you very much.

JB: Thank you.