

## TAPE 1

**00.00 This is Felicity Morgan interviewing Mr Dick Richards on 29 August, 2008 at his home about his contribution to the visual arts and crafts in South Australia during the Dunstan Decade. This recording is being made for the Don Dunstan Foundation Oral History Project and will be deposited in the Flinders University Library, Don Dunstan Special Collection, and in the State Library of South Australia.**

**00.30 Good morning Dick, and thank you for taking the time to do this recording.**

Oh, it's a pleasure Felicity. Thank you.

**00.35 I wonder if we could start this session by giving me a little bit of your own personal background. We're you born and raised in South Australia? What happened in your very early years?**

I was born in New Guinea and my mother and I moved down here just ahead of the Japanese, and my father stayed up to destroy the town [Bulolo], help destroy the town, so I've virtually grown up all my life in South Australia. My parents had a very strong social conscience (Laughs), and perhaps some of that drifted to me - my mother was a friend of David Unaipon and people like that. I met Don through Colin and Gwen Ballantyne. They had what was called "The First Sunday of the Month" a drinking party of lawyers, artists, writers, lots of actors, and Don used to turn up there so I probably met him when I was still at school in the late, mid, fifties. I was politicised by working as a trainee at Chrysler Australia Limited who had an advanced and positive social conscience about who they employed and how they employed. But I spent three years working in different parts of the Plant and there was a lot of bastardisation going on, unbeknown to management, or management felt they couldn't do anything about it, and some very sad industrial accidents: we had a Hungarian refugee who lost an arm in a press, and things like that. But worst of all I think, about 1956 or '57 there was a major drought and a large part of Chrysler's sales were to rural communities, and I think we sacked 4,000 men, you know just like that and I found it, you know, pretty difficult to deal with. And I gradually developed this idea that through, after listening to some of Don's speeches and getting to know him, I had this dream to start 400 small businesses employing about 10 people in, in...sounds a bit naïve, but in an environment where the sweeper would know the boss and the boss would know the sweeper, and to accommodate what we then anticipated to be a kind of *Grapes of Wrath* situation with lots of unemployed young people moving around from state to state. But the inspiration came really from Don. I think I met him again when he became Attorney General, and in those days the Art Gallery [of South Australia] used to hang pictures from the collection (Laughs) in politicians' offices,

and I was sent to hang pictures, so I got to know him a little bit better. And I probably saw him socially at Labor Party things because by then I was heavily involved in the Labor party down in Brighton with Hugh Hudson. [Minister of Education].

**04.16 We mustn't rush ahead too much because you're now getting well ahead into the seventies. Just take me back – you went to art school after you finished school?**

No, I went straight to do this traineeship at Chrysler.

**04.30 I see**

And then, when at Chrysler I developed an interest in industrial design, and I had this dream to start the first industrial design magazine in Australia, you know when you're seventeen or something you think.... (Laughs)

**04.45 Big idea!**

(Still Laughing)....you can do anything, but...And then I thought I'd better go to the Art School, so I discovered that you were actually paid if you signed up to be a[n] [art] teacher. I hadn't done very well at school, and I hadn't done particularly well with my studies related to Chrysler, but I found extreme pleasure and joy working in the old Art School which used to be on North Terrace.

**05.20 Uh- huh**

And I found the academic studies very interesting as well, and stimulating.

**05.30 And this was in the late fifties?**

It was from 1960 to '63.

**Right, OK**

And then I became an art teacher and quickly got involved in the arts administration within schools; they were so short of teachers in that period that I was fast-tracked into senior mastership – just bang – because I was a mature aged student. And that, I guess, was probably one of the most interesting parts of my, you know, younger life. And I continued to be heavily involved in the Labor Party. And, following that Dunstan speech at the Industrial Design Council in 1970 – I think he'd already put me on the Industrial Design Council [Committee] by then.

**06.28 Yes, you were by then employed by the Art Gallery?**

Yes, I started there as an Education Officer in '65.

**06.36 Ah right, so you left the school environment?**

Yes, well no, I was still teaching

**06.41 But you were [teaching] in the Art Gallery?**

Mmm

**06.45 I understand. And your area of expertise was industrial design and craft?**

Well, decorative arts and Asian art. I did that, but I sort of looked after everything in the Gallery that wasn't considered to be fine art – historical collections, weapons, coins, Aboriginal art and European and Australian decorative art – and then I was given an assistant and gradually I narrowed it down to specialise in Asian art.

**07.23 Ok. And in 1970 the exhibition you referred to was at the Rundle Street Design Council Gallery, is that correct?**

Council for Industrial Design (Offices and gallery were opened in 1969)

**07.40 Right. OK**

And Don really supported it and had a pretty good committee. And it was at this 1970 [exhibition] opening that I really got fired up when Don started talking about craft and design based industries. Then I called a meeting with a few people like Milton Moon and Margaret Douglas and Tony Bishop, friends of mine who were involved in mainly arts education. And we had an agenda, and Peter Ward must have got to hear of it, probably a conversation in the Sturt Arcade Hotel (Laughs) and next thing I'm having lunch with Don. And next thing I'm on a plane to London you know!

**08.40 So you were both, in your own way, you had a similar vision to Don in the area of industrial design and craft and so on...**

Yes, but...

**08.52 And he was having his in parallel with you, and then after this 1970 seminal moment you got together? Am I interpreting it correctly?**

Yes, yes. And he had this ability to sort of fast track things that he thought might work. And in London he employed me to try to organise a refurbishment of South Australian House and do other bits and pieces for him.

**09.21 So did you think you went there as an ambassador for Don in the area of design and arts and crafts. Is that how you saw yourself to be?**

It was more specific than that. It was to provide him with a report after looking at the Kilkenny Workshops in Ireland that was a major influence on how we went about setting up the Jam Factory, the role of the Royal College of Art which was very powerful; they had a terrific system in the glass department, run by Sam Herman, whereby he had arranged premises away from the College where his senior students, post grad students, could blow glass and sell their wares whilst still students at the College.

**10.18 So whilst they were still studying they were actually developing a market?**

And business acumen, and yes, still supported by the College. And I thought this is terrific. And I actually bought quite a bit of glass from these people, they were really doing very well, and then...

**10.37 What year was that, your trip to Europe?**

I think it was '71. And I also got to know senior designers in Orrofors in Sweden who had a big influence on me. I'd met them first, we'd had a big Swedish glass, Scandinavian glass exhibition at the [Art] Gallery and some of the head designers from Orrofors, [mainly Gunnar Cyren] and [Goran Warff] one of the other, um large design companies [Costa Boda]...

**11.07 From the Finnish?**

No, mainly Danish and Swedish. So, long discussions with them when they were in Adelaide were also very, very stimulating and then I went to see their practice actually in Scandinavia. The British government had set up a very interesting thing called COSIRA, Council of Small Industries in Rural Areas that we found very attractive: a run-down town with possible tourist possibility, they'd go into the town and maybe help the hotel expand its hospitality side, if there was no butcher in the town or no baker in the town they'd try to organise one, and kept a watch on those projects.

**12.05 Was that run by the British Council or direct from the Prime Minister's Department in Britain, or ...?**

British government, but it was an independent council.

**12.16 Did they have a great success with it, do you know?**

Well, I was very impressed with it. I thought it was such a lateral idea to give all kinds of support.

**12.28 Almost Utopian!**

Yea. And also the British Council for Industrial Design was absolutely stunning. You know they had the most beautiful premises in down-town London and had worked miracles with supporting industrial design in Britain, you know, they really did.

**12.48 This scheme that you're talking about, I wonder whether there was any influence. I've got a document here which was given to me by Len Amadio. It was a sort of paper on Don Dunstan's vision for tourist development in South Australia. It was [delivered] at meeting in the Premier's Department in 1971 and in one section there's a whole lot of**

stuff about the renovation of Ayers House, about the improvement of food and drink, and so on, but there's one section here which says 'In the consideration of the re-development of Kent Town, plans could be made for the use of the old bluestone buildings of the Malt House. after demolition of the superstructures, to form a courtyard with a kind of specialist craft and hand ware shops, eating house facilities and places for playing, singing and concerts in the courtyard, now a feature of tourist activities in the re-furbished warehouses on the San Francisco side of the Bay at Sausalito' That's kind of the same thing you're talking about – a whole urban regeneration.

Yes.

**13.59 And that was 1971 so his mind was already in that frame of generating small business and so on.**

Yes, and just prior to setting up the committee of investigation to report to him on setting up the Jam Factory, he brought the Head of the [British] Council for Industrial Design out to Adelaide and had meetings with him and ran our proposals past him. You know, he [Don] went to a lot of trouble.

**14.36 So with your fact-finding tour around Europe and so on, do you think Don saw it as a tourism opportunity or as a genuine opportunity to develop artists and crafts people and artisans here in South Australia?**

It was to broaden the base of the economy. You know it was very frustrating; we were major suppliers of leather [but] the leather didn't fetch a high price because of bad fencing and the hides were damaged, so the leather was sold to Italy and processed and it was sold back to us, or to England. There seemed to be so many wasted opportunities; half the Fleurieu Peninsular has deposits of really high quality clay, certainly for making ceramics. Our opal industry hardly delivered a benefit to the State; the overseas buyers would fly in from Sydney with a suitcase of money, buy their opals and fly out again the next day and none of that added value happened here.

**15.49 And we had plenty of wool.**

We had plenty of wool. That was another one of our ideas; to develop an added value to wool production. And that time we were also very excited (Laughs) about the Cowell (Coughs), excuse me, Cowell jade prospects, which haven't really gone anywhere, but, yes, it was definitely to try and have a broader base for South Australian industry, and this notion of turning a relatively cheap resource into a valuable resource. We also were thinking, had our eyes on, Japan as a potential market.

**16.39 Well, at the same time he was very keen to develop tourism in this State and that's when he got involved with trying to get a major hotel organisation to put in a first class hotel, and of course, there was talk about Adelaide not having an international airport and it needed it to bring tourists here and so on, and that all kind of dove-tailed in with the idea of boosting the economy from the ground up.**

Well, yes.

**17.10 Um, you said that at the time [of the trip to Europe] you were actually employed in the Art Gallery, so were you sort of wearing two hats at the time?**

At the time we had a very, very enlightened Director, John Baily, and he saw...

**17.29 Who I just interviewed a couple of weeks back!**

A lovely man and an incredibly powerful influence on the Arts in South Australia. But John saw that work to do with the Jam Factory and the Design Council, and my work on the Australia Council Crafts Board, he saw that as a very positive part of my employment and he put quite a lot of resources of the Gallery behind the work towards the setting up the Jam Factory.

**18.03 Very enlightened. Tell me then, go through the process of how you translated your report when you came back to Don, with Don's already very visionary ideas about how to improve this State in terms of arts, crafts and the economy – how then did that translate in what ended up as two things: The South Australian Crafts Authority which then opened the Jam Factory. Can we just go through those two steps?**

I met with Peter Ward and Don in London and had very long discussions, particular with Peter, and the report that I wrote really outlined the potential of what might be achieved and recommended that a committee of inquiry be set up. It was a very short report, a simple report, and Don promptly did that and the chair and the secretary of this committee came from his Department, the Premier's Department. And, typical of Don, when he set the committee up, he had a balance of Labor Party and Liberal Party people.

**19.26 Can you remember the people that were on the committee?**

Earle Hackett, Dr Earle Hackett was the Chair, Caroline le Mercier was on it who'd been a very successful marketer of Scandinavian design projects. Another gentleman, Gwynn Jones who'd been a very successful designer and marketer of leather clothing. Um, Tony Frewin who I think was Marketing Manager for the Festival Centre, brilliant man with high energy. He was also, I think, on the Music Board of the Australia Council. Um, then there was the guy that was running (Coughs) excuse me, the Industrial Design department at Torrens College, um....

**20.27 Quite a large committee**

...a Mr Searsey who was an accountant, professional accountant, and Liberal party person. We all fought like cats and dogs (Laughs), oh, and Marcia del Thomas who was a really powerful personality and remains so, who was heavily involved in craft associations. (Coughs).

**21.03 Yes**

Will you excuse me for a moment (Coughs)

**21.05 She was a weaver wasn't she?**

Potter (Coughs) and she....(Coughs)

Sorry, potter, potter.

**21.09 Just a moment. We are turning off for a minute so that Dick can get a glass of water.**

## **21.16 END OF TAPE 1**

### **TAPE 2**

**00.00 This is Felicity Morgan interviewing Mr Dick Richards on August 29, 2008. This is a continuation of the interview, tape 2.**

**I think Dick we were talking about the make-up of the Committee of Inquiry into Craft that Don Dunstan set up and you were talking about the potter, Marcia?**

del Thomas

**00.28 del Thomas, yes.**

Marcia had enormous energy and it was she who actually eventually found the premises for the Jam Factory, literally the old jam factory on Payneham Road [which] had become an ordnance store for the military, and Don rang Gough [Whitlam] and got it for us for a peppercorn rent.

**00.49 Fabulous**

Yes, and that was a major financial advantage

**Absolutely.**

**(Dick starts to speak, interrupted by Interviewer)**

**00.55 Don't run away with the story: The Craft Authority had not, at that stage, been set up, had it? This was a pre-cursor, this [Committee of] Inquiry?**

Yes, it met and travelled around the country in South Australia, visited a lot of manufacturing businesses, talked to a lot of people and then eventually produced quite a hefty report, which amongst many things, recommended that a Craft Authority should be set up.

**01.33 Was this happening in conjunction with your commitments for the Australia Council [Committee of] Inquiry into Crafts. Were they going hand in hand?**

Yes, I was on that too. And of course that was a big influence. It was a lot of work. We travelled all over Australia and produced a very substantial report.

**01.53 Yes, I spoke to Kym Bonython. Kym Bonython chaired that I think, didn't he?**

He was a brilliant Chairman, Kym, he was absolutely brilliant, because it wasn't easy. (Chuckles) Again, a fairly feisty committee and, you know, we met with a lot of country

groups, women weavers for example, potters, metal smiths. It was quite a heavy task actually. Um...

**02.28 Did that Inquiry, The Australia Council Inquiry come up with their findings, if you like, before you started, or were you going concurrently?**

I think it was concurrent. And a whole group of artists and craftspeople that I got to know very well in Sydney also had a big influence about my thinking about the eventual Craft Authority, which included Helge Larsen, Darani Lewers, Maria Gazzard, a whole lot of people who were very well travelled and had done a lot of thinking about the state of the crafts in Australia and how to promote it. So I had the benefit of a great well of experience of other people.

**03.18 Mmm. The other states were they planning on similar things, do you know, do you remember?**

Melbourne set up a similar project, also (Laughs) called the Jam Factory, and that folded. Sydney through the Crafts Council of Australia were very, very active in developing and marketing strategies, and the Australia Council also, once it became established, started to spend a lot of effort and money on bringing people from America and from England and Europe to lecture and teach in Australia, and to provide opportunities for Australian crafts people to develop through travel, education, studio grants. And that really has paid off; such a joy to go around and see the high quality of craft production in Australia which must be contributing to the economy.

**04.34 Absolutely. So, the Craft Authority was set up as a result of your Committee's inquiry and investigation, and the Craft Authority of course, was intended to be a permanent and ongoing thing. What was its principal role, what were the main objectives of the Craft Authority of South Australia?**

The main objective was to train people professionally in the crafts and to do that by bringing top practitioners to Adelaide with an international reputation to head up workshops where young people would be taught, but also to contribute to production, which would, um, be sold and help support the whole enterprise. Well, I was a bit naïve, you know. I used to make a lot of jewellery and exhibit jewellery as well...

**05.37 You mean in your back garden, kind of thing, in your shed?**

Yea, yea, in my shed, and I naively... I was deprived of having training. There was no training facility for jewellers, young jewellers and older jewellers in Adelaide. And I thought young people would jump at the idea of practising under someone like Sam Herman, who was internationally famous, but they quickly (Laughs) discovered that they wanted more money, and some of the heads of departments decided *they* wanted more money. Sort of, my naive utopian (Laughs) dream slid into a bad dream.

**06.21 You thought everyone was going to do it just on love alone?**

For love, for love (Loud laughing). Ah dear!

**06.29 So the idea then that you picked up from the Royal ...the place that Sam Herman worked...the Royal...its called?**

Royal College of Arts

**06.46 Royal College of Arts, yes, where he [Sam Herman] had this glass blowing, if you like retail outlet, that then was the genesis for the [Jam Factory]?**

One of the many things, just another little step. Also, importantly Sam and I got on very well; he was a very gregarious and easy going person, highly energised. He agreed to come to South Australia to set up a teaching workshop and production workshop if the Jam Factory eventuated, or the Craft Authority eventuated. And that was a very powerful thing for Don. I think if Sam hadn't committed very early the project may have faltered.

**07.32 Because of these constraints with people, local people saying they wanted to be paid more, and teachers wanted to be paid more?**

No, this was before it all happened. In 1971 he [Sam Herman] was enthused by the idea and agreed to come, and I was able to say to Don 'Look we've already got the world's top glass maker'. I was obsessed also with wanting to start glass making again in Australia, and I had refused to drink out of glass in my own house for about nine years, until I eventually got the throw-aways from the Jam Factory's first production. Yes.

**08.09 How wonderful. Um, did others with international reputations follow?**

Yes, they did. Prue Medlin, a very, very respected local person, but who had spent quite a lot of time in Europe, in England, she was a brilliant weaver, she agreed to head up the weaving workshop. Vagn Hemingson who's a Danish metal smith and jeweller who had been trained in the George Jensen workshops, he agreed to come, and people like Frank Bauer who was one of Australia's best metal smiths, I met him and recruited him. And this is where the Australia Council helped quite a lot; they put quite a bit of money into the setting up of separate studios in the Jam Factory. For instance, Frank Bauer was set up and had two paid apprentices from the Australia Council Crafts Board. We brought out a Canadian potter to set up the ceramics workshop. He couldn't cope with the flies or something (Laughs) and disappeared (Laughs).

**09.36 Did any of our local potters, Milton Moon for example, did he take any part in the Jam Factory?**

Milton was definitely a powerful advisor and one of his best students came in and headed up the ceramics workshop...(Long pause)

**09.56 Are you trying to think of his name?**

Yes, can we pause for a moment?

**Alright, I'll pause. We're just pausing for a minute.**

**10.09 END OF TAPE 2**

### TAPE 3

**00.00 This is Felicity Morgan continuing the interview with Dick Richards on 29 August, 2008 and this (Coughing in background) is tape 3. Dick was just wrestling with his memory for the potter who headed up the school of ceramics in the original Jam Factory. Off you go.**

It was Jeff Minchin who is still potting, and really one of Australia's top potters. The leather workshop was headed up by an Italian guy who unfortunately had a stroke. I think the pressure of moving to South Australia and the pressure of setting up his leather workshop he had a stroke and we had to repatriate him back to Italy. The leather workshop continued for some years and then finally faltered.

**00.57 That's a shame. It's all to do with the strength of the leaders in those circumstances isn't it?**

Yes, he used to make the most beautiful kangaroo hide kit bags (Laughs) and things like that; small ones for women and big ones for men.

**01.12 Wonderful. And in the original Jam Factory, the artisan groups if you like, covered glass blowing and weaving and jewellery [making] and pottery and was there furniture as well?**

At one stage we had a furniture maker who hired space. The Jam Factory building was quite vast and had an enormous underground cellar. It was in bad shape and we had a big problem with pigeons and things like that, but we had lots and lots of room and we had all kinds of different tenants coming in for a while and leaving.

**01.58 So some were self funded and others were funded through the Australia Council?**

Yes. And Vagn set up a very good [jewellery] teaching school there as well, Vagn Hemingson.

**02.12 It sounds very exciting. So that was opened, I believe, in 1974, is that correct?**

Yes. November.

**02.24 And it had been an enormous effort on your part and the other [members of] the Committee of Inquiry, their part, and Don Dunstan and his vision as well, to keep the whole thing moving forward.**

A lot of people put a tremendous effort into that, and when we actually set up the office and the art gallery and the shop space, a young architect friend of mine designed it and it was all done in lightly varnished pinus radiata because Don was trying to push radiata for interior design use

**03.05 Oh yes.**

So we had this enormous pine line up – shop and shelving and yes...

**03.17 All out there on Payneham Road.**

On Payneham Road, yes.

**03.19 Could we just go back? I want to ask you something in a minute, but could you just go back. You said quite a while ago now that Don asked the Head of the Industrial Design Centre (correction) Council to come to South Australia. Do you recall saying that about ten minutes ago?**

Yes. I had met him and was very impressed by him

**He came from where?**

From London. The [British] Design Council premises and exhibition space was really quite stunning. This was sort of post Carnaby Street and London was very much charged up with all kinds of things and he was a wise man and Don brought him out to review the initial findings from the Committee of Inquiry.

**04.18 And do you think he was a great help?**

Oh absolutely

**04.22 Do you remember what his name was? No, look I'm not trying to do a memory test here, don't worry about it. But that was interesting because Don, he did believe in excellence didn't he?**

Absolutely

**04.35 And seeking out the Head of the British Industrial Design Council to come here to advise I would say, not having known Don the way you did, was typical of him wasn't it?**

It was, and you know, Peter Ward schooled me quite rigorously to always, and John Baily too: 'Don't just get your own ideas up, get other people who are well known, wise, important and experienced to actually say it for you'. And Don expected that too. He wanted an international focus and background to it, he didn't want just, you know, another little crafty thing (Laughs).....

**05.22 A little hokey town basket weaving set up.**

(Laughs) that's right!

**05.29 He was interested in looking at the big picture....**

Yes, and aspiring to an international quality, an international recognition for the Jam Factory The interesting things about it, the wonderful thing about the Jam Factory is that it's been supported by both sides of Parliament, which is truly wonderful, and it's just gradually got better and better and better, and I find it absolutely energising to go in there and visit the studios, and the quality of the workmanship that comes out of there is absolutely first rate.

**06.04 Mmm. Yes. I wonder if I could ask you now to read a small passage from the opening of the Jam Factory in November 1974, and Don Dunstan summed up his reasons for supporting it in this little passage.**

Yes. “The South Australian Craft Authority was established by the Government for a number of reasons. Firstly, we had crafts people in the State whose achievements were so distinctive that we believed they needed support. Secondly, the Government wanted a situation in which such achievements affected the design criteria of the State’s mass production industries. Thirdly, we wanted to encourage the development or continuation of rare or interesting skills gratuitously, not because of any one person or group of people would necessarily make a profit from such a programme, but because it was a nice thing to do, a civilised things to do”.

**07.04 That end.... (Reading) *Design South Australia*. Dick has just handed me a marvellous little catalogue here, and this was the original obviously, the original catalogue. How lovely. Those words of Don are though, especially the bit about “...because it was a nice thing to do, a civilised thing to do” really epitomise the man do you think?**

I totally agree with you. He had this ability, you’d go in with half an idea and you’d come out from a meeting with him with ten ideas. And he just gave you such a confidence to do things, and to think up things. Yes, he was a pretty amazing guy.

**07.52 Before we get on to other aspects of your knowledge of Don, just staying with craft and art, I believe Don had a high regard, and was exposed to it too, to the William Morris influence here in South Australia. Have you got any knowledge of that?**

Well, I think its part of his deep interest in Fabian socialism and in the political ideas of William Morris. And of course Adelaide has had a very curious and fascinating link with the Morris factory, and he would have been well aware of the William Morris collections that are in South Australia. I reckon [the Art Gallery of] South Australia’s got a tremendous collection.

**08.46 Yes, they primarily came through the Barr Smith family, didn’t they?**

Yes, yes.

**08.49 Who were devotees of William Morris back at the turn of the century, the previous century? (Laughs)**

(Laughs) Yes. A very powerful influence. I don’t know whether Don went to the Adelaide Club very often (Laughs). There are carpets there designed by Burne Jones.

**09.09 It’s amazing isn’t it? You’ve answered almost everything, all my questions relating to the setting up of the craft Authority and the Jam Factory, what other notes do you have that you wanted to point out in that regard, if you like in the professional side of your life with Don?**

Well, he continued to support funding the Jam Factory in Cabinet, he kept an eye on it, he used to come to our exhibitions, he always insisted on the Jam Factory producing gifts when he had to give gifts on state occasions, you know to overseas people and overseas visitors, so it became very much a part of his life.

#### **10.02 It had his “royal” warrant! (Laughs)**

Absolutely. He also involved me, through John Baily, in the lead-up to the establishment of the Festival Centre. He also involved the [SA Art] Gallery and me in the beginnings of the Film Corporation. I think the Film Corporation consisted of one cameraman at that point (Laughs) and I was able to get an Australia Council grant to do a little movie on an exhibition on wool that I'd done at the Gallery-very small, modest beginnings. He also involved the Gallery in plans for Monarto

#### **10.55 Mmm. That was the satellite town in the...**

Murray Bridge area. And he also involved me [through Len Amadio] and the Art Gallery in Penang week; we put together a well funded, big exhibition of South Australian products.

#### **11.14 That was part of the Sister City thing was it?**

Sister City thing, yes. The wine people tended to stay in the cool room drinking wine all day, but other people (Laughs) actively promoted their products.....

#### **11.22 So, was it you and John Baily who were the magnet, if you like, that Don went to on all things artistic, visually artistic I mean?**

See John had, in those days, direct access to the Minister. The Art Gallery was a separate government department and we had direct access to the Minister

#### **11.45 Who of course was Don?**

And Hugh Hudson before him. So John had a unique position where Ministers and the Premier would consult with him and he would advise them. He'd [John] had a Harkness Fellowship to America and he travelled quite well and he was very, very successful at putting forward positive ideas politically. Unfortunately he got wooed to go and start up an ill-fated art college in Sydney which was a great loss to South Australia.

#### **12.49 Don needed people like yourself and John and a variety of other people around to help him see his own vision or realise his own vision?**

Yes. South Australia was a pretty narrow place in the fifties and suddenly, after Don became Premier, my friends in Sydney would apologise to me because they didn't come from South Australia (Laughs). It was really quite funny when [Bob] Askin was Premier in New South Wales.

#### **13.24 That was a grim time!**

Yes, it was, it was and suddenly Don was seen to be doing things for theatre, for visual arts, for crafts.

#### **13.37 And film, mmm. Do you think that we've explored sufficiently about the development of the Craft Authority and the Jam Factory?**

Yes, I think so.

**13.50 Let's move on then. You said that you knew Don, not only at a professional level, but also personally and politically, and you touched on your meetings with him when you were very young, but then again your friendship developed when you were newly appointed to the Art Gallery and you had to go and hang arts works in the Premier's Department. Take it up from there, your personal involvement with him.**

Yes, I was a bit nervous, you know a young person from the Art Gallery, and Don was just terrific. He'd accept what we offered him. We tried to fob politicians off (Laughs) with things we didn't want to show, but he was very good and very positive and I was very impressed by him. In 1971 I think, there was some trouble in the Norwood Labor Party and Peter Ward asked me to move into the Norwood electorate and play, with Neal Blewett and others, a role in the Norwood Labor party, so I bought a house in the electorate.

**15.04 Having not been living there before?**

No, I was living in a slum in lower North Adelaide (Laughs). So I bought a tiny little cottage opposite the building that was later to become the Film Corporation, and joined up with the local Labor party and a whole group of us worked very, very hard, particularly with the Italian community and the Greek community, a lot of door knocking, a lot of energy. Neal Blewett was a fabulous Chairman.

**15.34 He was the Chair of?**

The Norwood Labor Party, and there were some terrific older people who were the kind of foot soldiers of the Labor Party.

**15.46 Would that have been people like Marjorie FitzGerald and her husband?**

Yes, yes, and other older men who were the salt of the earth, but passionate you know, and worked extremely hard, but it was fun too. And there were great parties too, particularly the Greek parties (Laughs).

**16.12 So I understand, yes. How was Don, because he had a couple of rocky elections didn't he?**

Yes.

**He didn't swim through all of the ones he went through?**

No.

**16.22 Which particular part of the electorate did he have the most difficulty with?**

I never went into it. I just did what Peter told me to do. There must have been some dissension within the Party, and let's not mention branch stacking or anything like that, but...

**16.45 The word hadn't crossed my lips!**

(Laughs) Yes, it was good, and Neal Blewett is a person of considerable intellect and charm and it was great fun.

**17.04 Did you follow his [Don's] political career, follow and assist and be a supporter of his for the whole of his decade in power?**

No. No, a lot of people who were close to him became very disillusioned with him and we begged him to modify his behaviour and he just shrugged that off, not directly to me, but certainly other people close to him: 'If people want me it's warts and all.' You know that really upset a lot of people.

**17.43 This was from the mid seventies on or before that?**

Yes, I think I probably distanced myself from the Labor Party in 1975.

**17.53 Did you really?**

Yes, it was very, very....He had so much to offer and he started to blow it, you know, and behave quite badly in public and hurt a lot of people. He could be quite ruthless with his seductions. Yes.

**18.14 So you're suggesting that it was his personal life that got very much in the way of his political acumen?**

Yes, and I've got a theory about it: When I was in London with Peter and him and Don was going to some very important function...

**18.31 What year approximately?**

'71

**Oh in '71, right.**

He asked us to help him dress, and we sort of straightened his tie and patted him on the back and said 'You look wonderful, don't worry' And I noticed on his bedside table a whole collection of prescription bottles, and at some of the meetings I attended at South Australia House, he would pass out, he'd go to sleep, and the whole meeting would pretend that he wasn't asleep, and it used to send me screeching up the wall, you know. And I've recently tried to analyse why his behaviour deteriorated and I think he might have been...see in those days if you wanted to sleep on a plane your doctor gave you a prescription for Mogadons, and you could have uppers and downers and I think he might have been adversely affected by a cocktail of prescription, legal prescription drugs. It's just a theory because it seemed to me that it was so crazy for a man to self-destruct, you know, as he did, after achieving so much.

**20.01 He was aware he was falling asleep, I presume?**

I don't know

**20.06 Did anybody actually say 'You fell asleep in that meeting'?**

No, the king has got no clothes. No, everyone kowtowed to him. I don't know.

**And that was as early as '71?**

Yes

**20.18 That was very early on in the piece.**

Yes. And I found it very distressing.

**20.28 I can imagine that you would have done**

Because, you know, we really adored him (Interviewee's voice is choking up)

**20.39 Do you want to have a break for a few minutes?**

I wouldn't mind another drink. Can I get you a drink of water?

**Yes, I'll just stop this.**

**20.47 END OF TAPE 3**

**TAPE 4**

**00.00 This is resuming the interview with Dick Richards on 29 August, 2008. Dick was just talking about being in London with Don Dunstan and Peter Ward in 1971 while Dick was on his fact-finding tour regarding arts and crafts, prior to setting up the Craft Authority. Dick, was it just a coincidence that you were in London with Don Dunstan and Peter Ward?**

Yes, it was a pure coincidence. Because I had received a Gulbenkian Fellowship and the British Council support to also do a study of designs of museums and art galleries. So apart from working on the report about the future of craft and design-based industries, [for the Dunstan Government] I was also going to visit all the new art galleries in Germany, England, Scotland, and also in America, Holland, and Scandinavia. I think half way through that trip, it was a seven-month trip, Don and Peter were visiting London on State business and I was able to meet up with them. And it was very stimulating for me because when Don was going to meetings Peter didn't always have to accompany him and we [Peter Ward and Dick] went and looked at things together and I found Peter incredibly stimulating and interesting and very positive, and we had a lot of fun as well, you know, it was a terrific time together.

**01.58 That must have been such a distressing thing for both you and Peter to see Don going into a sort of self destructive mode?**

Well I think...yes, that was only one incident that I witnessed in London. But I found it, pretty, upsetting.

**02.24 Mmm. What about his public persona, his behaviour in public, back here on the home front?**

Well, he was very naughty. He didn't care who he was seen with, yea.

**02.41 The whole [John] Ceruto thing was.....**

Mr Ceruto was not a nice person. You know it was just the whole thing, it was seedy and unpleasant and it should never have happened.

**03.00 Did you continue your political support for Don even when you found his behaviour really distressing and...**

No I withdrew, and...

**03.14 What period would that have been when you found it just too much for you?**

I think it was the Ceruto thing – that was the final straw

**03.23 And that was '74/75?**

Somewhere around then, yes. And it was just, you know, as a person that was seen to be, you know, involved in the Labor Party I got a hell of a beating everywhere I went about having to try and justify Don's behaviour, because it really, really upset a lot of people

**03.53 People just on the conservative side of politics or across the board?**

Across the board. And of course the other side had a field day. Yes, it was a very unpleasant time.

**04.10 And yet he was still continuing to be innovative and visionary?**

Sure, sure. But he lost the support of many of his key foot soldiers. He really did.

**04.28 In his electorate in Norwood, did you continue to be a foot soldier for him, but at arm's length? How did it affect you as a member of his electorate actually?**

I stayed in the Norwood Labor Party even after Don left office. I then worked for Greg Crafter until he became elected and then I probably gradually dropped away.

**05.02 And sold the house in Norwood?**

Eventually, yes (Laughs)

**05.07 Yes, it's an extraordinary thing that Don did have almost like a Janus face, the two sides of his personality.**

That's well put, that's well put.

**05.20 Yes. Was his relationship with his second wife a positive one for him, do you think?**

Oh absolutely. Yes. When Don was living in an apartment in Norwood he used to just drop into our house for dinner so we used to see quite a bit of him. But [we saw] less of him when he married Adele.

**05.56 Mmm. Understandably**

Yes, he was really rocked by her death. A very beautiful woman, very feisty, and she just really suffered. Yea, but...

**06.17 There's been a lot of conjecture, and for somebody that worked with him professionally, helped him and was a foot soldier for him politically, and was a friend, a good personal friend, you knew him from more angles than most people, because he kept parts of his life separate from other parts of his life, but you seem to have crossed through into those different domains, when his resignation came, in his pyjamas and all the stuff that everybody knows....**

He was a brilliant actor so some of us are not entirely persuaded. (Laughs)

**07.01 Tell us your spin on that?**

Well, some of us were a bit disillusioned by that also, we thought it was just too well staged (Laughs)

**07.16 What was the cause of him finally bowing out then do you think?**

I think a combination of things. He must have started to realise that he was losing popularity and he was probably genuinely worn out as well, burnt out, worn out. He became...sometimes he'd come round for dinner and other people were there that he didn't know, and he would sort of, almost sulk and I'd have to feed him lines so that he could get into the conversation: 'Oh Don, what happened, you know, when da, da, da' and he'd come alive and be the centre of attention. He was a complex person, he really was.

**08.14 Yes. Do you think that was because he expected people to do a bit of kowtowing to him?**

Oh yes, he enjoyed the limelight and he was a great ham (Laughs) in public sometimes.

**08.30 But he wasn't a proud man was he, an egotistical man?**

Well, he was a politician, a very successful politician, and that goes with a fair dose of ego I would think, but no, I didn't think he was...

**08.45 And a thick hide!**

Yes, but he was never patronising. He always treated you seriously and he was quite affectionate too.

**08.57 Sometimes more than he should have been perhaps?**

(Laughs) Not to too many! (Laughs) Oh dear. He did like attractive young women and men around him, he certainly did. He also, towards the end, he got a bunch of, he encouraged a bunch of, I thought, rather sycophantic people around him, and my late wife, Ikuko, who adored him, refused to go to the parties, she said: 'I don't want to be associated with people like that'. And there are incidents that people would urge him at a party so he'd play Chopin, badly and the piano wasn't tuned and everyone was standing around drooling about this marvellous performance and Peter and I would disappear into the kitchen. (Laughs)

**09.58 Have another drink!**

Have another drink (Laughs) and deeply embarrassed by it all.

**10.03 Was Don a big party goer?**

No, not really.

**10.06 Because he wasn't a big drinker, was he?**

No, no. He had to give up red wine too, it affected him in a negative way, but he was never a boozier.

**10.15 No, no. When he left office, actually I heard one person who was close to him say to me that they felt that he was a traitor, what do you say to that?**

No, I didn't feel that...

**10.30 (Interrupts) Not a traitor, no, I beg your pardon, it wasn't a traitor, it was that he had "let us down."**

Oh, for sure, for sure, and it was a silly awful end and it shouldn't have happened like that at all. It would be interesting to talk to a psychiatrist about it. But I remember some of us being quite cynical about Don's farewell performance, it was too good.

**11.04 Yes. Moving on from after he retired, he was pretty badly done by in South Australia wasn't he, in terms of recognition on boards and committees or in semi-public life, what have you got to say about that?**

I found his move to Victoria curious but I can understand that he had probably had enough and wanted to escape. I think there was a heavy air of disillusionment still, after he retired and started to recover. But, you know, time heals and, I certainly didn't become a close friend again, but I certainly had warm and pleasant experiences with, you know, meeting him later.

**12.07 You went and had meals with him and that sort of thing, did you?**

No.

**12.12 You didn't go to his house?**

No and I didn't (Chuckles) go into the restaurant either! But that was interesting – you know Steven Cheng is a brilliant person, he's a scientist, you know, he's a respected scientist, but I

don't think either he or Don were very good about managing the restaurant. People like Cath Kerry (Chef and owner - AGSA restaurant) and [other] South Australian chefs had all got in and tried to help with menus and get them going again.

**12.44 Mmm. Yes, it was not a success was it, although the first one I believe had been a success, but the second one was not such a success?**

I just didn't want to see Don not being perfect, you know. Sounds silly doesn't it, but I just didn't want to go there, because I'd heard such bad things (Laughs) about the food and the service.

**13.06 Where do you think that, you're almost, the way you're speaking about Don and have done through the interview that you adored him, that there was a sort of adoration thing happening there?**

Oh sure. He had that power; he had a lot of charisma. And he did so much; the State Theatre Company...

**13.25 The Festival Centre**

Yes, and getting people like Anthony Steel who just changed things for ever, you know, he was brilliant. You know Anthony Steel set his office up in the Board Room at the Art Gallery, thanks to John Baily, and I think John Baily was the first Chair [of the Festival Centre.Trust].

**13.48 He was, he was the first Chair**

And we got really in to all of that, very, very interesting. Anthony is such a charismatic person as well and also you know, if you went to Anthony and said: 'Oh I've seen this fantastic group in London' next thing they'd be in the next Festival, you know he'd chase them out, like *Fires of London* (A British contemporary music chamber group) and things like that.

**14.10 Did you participate, you and John Baily from the Gallery, participate in [selecting] the art works at the Festival Centre?**

That was John, John's genius. I was there with people from interstate recently and they were staggered at Fred's (Williams) paintings there. And that was John, because John was a good friend of Fred's and I think they went painting together in the Coorong. People criticised that purchase, and now looking it, millions of dollars worth, and they're so beautiful

**14.50 But a very clever acquisition**

Oh fantastic

**14.55 In wrapping up, and I'm only wrapping up because I feel we're getting to that part of the interview, unless you've got other things to say, I was going to ask you two things; how do you, can you, sort of sum up in retrospect how do you think Don Dunstan was, as a Premier and particularly in your area, and then, or maybe the second one first, at the time how did you move in your moods up and down with Don and is that still the same. Do you still remember the way you did [felt] at the time?**

Well this morning I had a look on the net, just to refresh, you know my memories of Don and it's astounding the legislation that he put through. Like the [protection of] the Coorong [which] is now dying, but he also hired interesting, powerful people. When the Whitlam government collapsed he recruited several key people, like John Mant (Coughing in background) to come to Adelaide and John prepared the legislation for the protection of the Coorong, stayed here for quite a few years and, you know, really did some marvellous things. And there were several others that came..... (Coughing in background)....

#### **16.21 Sorry**

that came too from Whitlam's office. So that's the sort of thing that he did, you know. He probably met Johnny Mant when he'd been visiting (Coughing in background), visiting Canberra. So looking on the net it's.... (Coughing in background)

#### **16.44 Keep going**

...it's a powerful reminder of the breadth of the things that he did. And typical of Don it all happened quickly as soon as he got into power, as soon as he got Attorney General, out comes this legislation.

#### **17.01 He was a dynamo**

Absolutely

**17.03 Yes. We're just pausing for a minute; Dick's gone to get me a glass of water. (Coughing) Oh! Oh thanks very much Dick, a bit of coffee grounds got down my throat. We're both having coughing mornings.**

**17.28 Um, yes, he was a dynamo and he certainly galvanised this State and put it on the map in terms of Australia. Is that memory, your [memory] looking back or is it the same memory you had, or the same sense of what Don was doing for this State, at the time?**

At the time we were well aware of his social justice legislation in particular. There were bad things happened too; the problem was with [Police Commissioner Harold] Salisbury and it went really quite wrong although Don was in his rights – there was a vast collection of police files on all kinds of people, mainly from the left side of politics and gays. You'd go to a gay party and walk out half way through the party and there'd be plain clothes police writing down the numbers of the cars that were parked outside, you know. Sure there were gay parties but there were an awful lot of heterosexuals (Chuckles) enjoying themselves there too.

**18.45 It was a very difficult thing I think wasn't it, because, of course, homosexuality was actually banned, of course, in those days.**

Yes

**18.55 Even consenting adults in private were actually committing a crime?**

Committing a crime, and he addressed that, which took courage. But I think his relationship with Aboriginal people was just fantastic. And we were so, well, proud of him, you know.

Other little things like he used to drive, when Tom Playford didn't have a driver and Don did, he drove Tom home (Laughs) up to Norton Summit (Laughs)

**19.37 After a day's sitting in the House you mean?**

(Nods)

**Is that right?**

Late at night.

**19.42 That's astonishing, yes. So, his legacy?**

Well, I think it's all around us. The Festival Centre, The Jam Factory, the powerful conservation laws, goes on and on and on

**20.02 Mmm yes, yes. Well, I think that just about winds it up from my point of view and unless you have any other notes, or bits you wanted to say... I'll give you a moment to look through...**

Not really. I don't want to take credit for some of the things I was involved with because it was a very broad number of people were involved and also I was just one of many people that Don was friendly with and I wouldn't describe myself as a close friend, it was always "the Premier" and "the Curator", you know. But I certainly enjoyed his company and very, very much.

**20.54 Well, thank you very much indeed Dick, it's been an absolute pleasure.**

I apologise for getting a bit emotional (Laughs)

**21.00 Not at all, not at all, I think it's lovely. Okay, I'll switch off.**

**21.06 END TAPE 4**