

**Don Dunstan Foundation
Oral History Project**

Record of interview

Mr Kym Bonython, AC

North Adelaide

2 July, 2008

Interviewed by Felicity Morgan
Don Dunstan Foundation
Oral History Project

00.00 This is Felicity Morgan interviewing Mr Kym Bonython, AC, on 2nd July, 2008 at his home in North Adelaide. 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.

Good morning Kym and thank you for taking the time to do this interview with me. This interview is about the Dunstan Decade in South Australia, roughly between the years 1968 and 1980, but perhaps before we start I should point out, for the record, you're universally known as Kym but that's not your given name. Would you just like to explain that little story?

00.46 (Chuckles) Well my real name is Hugh Reskymer Bonython. Reskymer is an old family name, in fact I've got a print of the original Reskymer, after whom I was named, only for some reason or other, he is ...Kim. I don't know why my mother called me...Kym, but I do know that Rudyard Kipling's book *Kim* was popular about the time of my birth, and so that's possibly a combination of ancestry and popular fiction.

01.30 And so you've been Kym ever since?

Yes, I have

01.33 Excellent. Well that's a good little story to start...

I wouldn't, I better not say what the Kym was changed to when I was in the RAAF during WW 2, except to say it started with the letter "F"!

01.42 (Chuckles) Okay, well maybe we won't go into that. (Interviewee chuckles). Now, as I said, this interview is about the Dunstan Decade: You were born in 1920, Don born in 1928 (Interviewer mistaken – should have said 1926), you're of a similar age and both with fairly high profiles during the period we're talking about, albeit in different circles, how much did your paths cross during those years?

Well I don't think I knew Don. I left school about eight years before he did and I don't think I knew him. My memory is so fragile these days. I'd say a few months ago I was on Adelaide radio talking about my first days at school, eighty odd years ago, but if you asked me what I'd done yesterday afternoon I wouldn't be able to tell you! But some things do stick in your mind, and I remember Don for the wonderful things he did for South Australia during his period as Premier, particularly in the field of the Arts.

02.53 Absolutely, and that's exactly why we were so keen to have you be interviewed. If you didn't have much contact, was it because you moved in different circles? Why do you think that was?

I don't know, except by the time he was, sort of, up and about and doing things – what was he born in – 1928 [26], so when the war started he would have been, what, forty two, no...

03.26 He would have been in his teens wouldn't he?

Yes, he would only have been in his teens when I went off in the air force.

03.33 Yes, yes.

So I didn't really have much contact, or none that I can recall in those...

...early days

...pre-war years. But after the war was over and I started getting interested in the Arts; I was always, from the year twelve, I was a mad musical nut, and from the time I was twelve I started taking moving pictures. But it was in the years from [19]60 onwards when I started my gallery in North Adelaide in '61 Don was... I knew him then.

04.21 Yes, I've got some questions about that. Now in your 1979 biography *Ladies Legs and Lemonade*, it's easy to identify three quite clear fields of interest that you followed over a long time, and for which you became very well known. And I'm talking about jazz, contemporary art and speedway racing, and during the interview I want to dip into all these areas, if I may. Firstly, on the jazz scene, you were responsible for bringing some of the world's greatest jazz musicians to Australia over some twenty or so years?

Fifty years

04.52 Fifty years. You were entrepreneur-ing for fifty years?

1954 to about 2002

05.03 Is that right. In the period we're talking about was jazz well recognised and well supported in Adelaide?

No it wasn't. It was just the fact that a neighbour of mine when we lived in Wakefield Street came back from studying at Cambridge and he brought some jazz records with him, and that was my first hearing of people like Duke Ellington, and the enthusiasm started and grew from those days, probably in the late twenties and early thirties.

05.40 Oh that's amazing. Was Don a jazz enthusiast, did he ever come to your jazz concerts or indicate any interest in jazz?

I can't recall that. He was certainly interested in my art activities which started in '61 professionally. I was buying pictures from the time I set up house in Mount Pleasant in the late forties, but I didn't get into it professionally until the early sixties, mainly because the artists that I'd come to admire most would so often say to me: 'Why don't you open a gallery in Adelaide because no one there likes our work enough to want to show us.' And that came to fruition when I opened my gallery in the early months of 1961.

06.39 Sixty one, mmm. Now just before we move away from your musical interests, you owned a record shop at one stage I believe, and I wonder if it was exclusively jazz or whether it covered the classical too?

It was a wide range and I remember one of my regular customers, or visitors, was the singer Kamahl.

Oh really?

And he was at either high school or university and he used to come in on Saturday mornings and listen to recordings of his favourite singers like Nat King Cole and things like that. But no, we covered all sorts of music, although we were known for our interest in jazz and light music, and it's ironic that my youngest son has been in the record business himself, in Hindley Street, for several years.

07.45 Is that right. Was Don a browser or a buyer from your shop, do you recall?

No I don't recall that. I'm afraid my memory is going to be rather negative.

07.56 That's alright, don't worry, that's okay. Let's move on to contemporary art, which was...I believe you're known as the "Father of contemporary art in Australia"?

(Chuckles) I hadn't heard that! But Don certainly was an enthusiastic supporter of my ideals to raise the visibility of contemporary art, particularly South Australian artists, and we can only be proud and happy about his contributions to making that wish come true.

08.38 Very interesting, yes. You had a love of art and acquiring art works from quite a young age, but it was mostly in the traditional kind, I believe from your book. Tell me how you moved into contemporary art, because in your book you say: 'It was not easy to indulge a taste for contemporary art if you lived in Adelaide.' What exactly did you mean by that?

Well, most people who bought paintings, my mother included, were buying Hans Heysens and George Whinnens. In other words, very traditional kinds of art, and it was only after the war I started moving around and I first saw the works of people like [Sidney] Nolan and [Arthur] Boyd and so on that my taste gradually moved into that area. My mother, before her death in 1977 had, not long before, told me that I'd left her behind (Interviewer chuckles) and the things I liked now [then] didn't appeal to her. Well I'm finding the same thing now; I invariably say to people that as far as jazz is concerned: 'As the giants pass on, in my opinion they are not being replaced by people of equal stature'. Now I'm feeling a bit the same way about the art of today; what the critics seem to rave about, in most cases doesn't appeal to me at all.

That's interesting, yes.

I'm a grumpy old man in many ways (Laughs)

10.27 (Laughs) I'm sure you're not. When you first opened your gallery in North Adelaide in 1961, it was the same year you published what was to become a series of art books on modern Australian painting and sculpture, a very exciting time in the art world. You say in your memoir that 'Modern Australian Art had come to stay and you felt you had played a useful part in breaking down some prejudice against it'. What exactly did you mean when you said prejudice?

Well, um, Adelaide, as I say, was not interested in the newer movements of art, and I was just fortunate, I can't be any more descriptive than that, but I started to take

an interest in artists who were shortly to become internationally known and it was just a fluke of chance that I finally opened my gallery when those people started to make a name for themselves. And my mother, I give all credit to her for getting me interested in art in the first place, and she went along with me for a long time, but in the latter years she failed to appreciate some of the people that I liked.

11.54 Yes, well you were very prescient in your selections weren't you – you had a wonderful collection I believe.

Yes, well you know, buying art as I was in the late forties, early fifties, I picked up, some later to be known as, masterpieces: I think I paid a hundred or a hundred and fifty for [Russell] Drysdale's *Drover's Wife*, which is probably his best known painting. Over the years, offsetting some of my losses in jazz concerts and modern art I sold off some of my treasures, and the *Drover's Wife* and another Drysdale, the *Portrait of Margaret Olley*, and the Sidney Nolan of *Burke and Wills at Cooper's Creek* I sold to an American who had assembled a modest collection of Australian art, and gratefully, when he died he willed them back to the National Gallery of Australia. If I'd kept them... my first exhibition in 1961 was by [Lawrence] Daws, and I made a practice never to buy the plums out of an exhibition before the public had had chance, so my collection was made up of either things I bought from exhibitions that didn't sell out or, on occasions, I'd go to an artist's studio, like what I saw, buy something and arrange an exhibition for him. But the thing was, a year after the bushfire, the bushfire was in '83, [in] 1984 during the Adelaide Festival, Barry Humphries put on an art display during the Festival - I'd already shown him in my Sydney Gallery in 1967 – anyway, one of his exhibits was an empty wine bottle with about an inch of ash in the bottom and he titled that *Kym Bonython's Art Collection* (Laughter). Now if I hadn't sold those treasures they'd have been amongst the ashes in that bottle. So that's some minor consolation to the fact that I did sell so many plums, but I lost more in the [bush] fire because the house was on fire, the ceilings were falling in and all that was saved, art wise, was a portrait of me by John Brack that was on the hall table just inside the front door, which I gave to the National Portrait gallery last year.

15.08 That was a very generous gift. When, during the period we're particularly talking about, just on the subject of prejudice again, you were invited to sit on the Council of the South Australian School of Art. Was that primarily to break down some of the prejudices?

I don't remember. I suppose I was asked because I was obviously interested in what they were doing down there, but I don't recall meeting[s] or what was discussed, or anything like that now I'm afraid.

15.46 That's alright. In those early years in the late sixties and early seventies when Don Dunstan was rising to power, do you think he was a man who broke down prejudices?

Yes, I'm sure he did. Yes, he supported a number of people who went on to make international names for themselves, and I'm sure his enthusiasm for the modern arts has gone as long way to making us what I still believe we are today; perhaps the most culture prone state in the country.

16.33 Mmm. In 1970, which was a big year for Don Dunstan, he was re-elected as Premier, a position he was to hold for nearly a decade, do you

recall how you, and the people with whom you spoke and dealt, felt about the platform of reforms that he had put to the electorate in the 1970 election?

No, I'm afraid I can't answer that. I just remember, in the back of my mind you know, how those things improved under Don's guidance.

17.09 Right, because you'd made a mention before we started the interview about your particular political sentiments.

Yes, well, I came from a wealthy family, and all of whom would have been conservative voters and, I've had a number of Labor friends like Barry Jones that I've kept up contact with, but on the other hand I don't suppose I can pluck any name out of the hat. On the other side, one of my brothers-in-law was a senator, but I'm not a political sort of person.

18.04 No, I realise that, I realise that.

I don't go out in the streets to join the crowds favouring one party or the other.

18.17 And in the 1970s you were pretty busy with all your various interests.

Yes, I mean when I had a gallery in Sydney from 1965 to nineteen seventy...end of seventy seven I think it was...

18.39 Seventy six I thought it was?

Seventy six was it, yes, well the end of seventy six. I had a gallery [show] every month in North Adelaide which I'd have to hang, prepare the catalogue and so on. During the summer I had the Rowley Park Speedway every Friday night and again I had to promote and make up the programme for that and be present, and I also had the gallery in Sydney with equal responsibilities where I'd have a show every month and I had to go up and hang that. So I had a flat above the first Sydney gallery, and I did a lot of travelling.

19.28 You did a lot of travelling!

It makes me tired to think of it! (Chuckles)

19.30 I can imagine. Um in fact you met Nugget Coombes...

Oh and I had, I didn't mention, I had the radio show...

19.41 Oh that's right, your...

...every week. I went to receive, I think it was the AC, in Canberra, and, who was the Governor then...I'm trying to think of the name...(Pause)..anyway, I'll think of it later. I went to Canberra to be invested with this medal and, Sir Ninian Stevens, that was it...

Ah yes.

And I was introduced from the queue to Lady Stevens and her first words to me were 'Oh, my husband and I used to lie in bed every Friday night listening to your jazz programme' and I said 'Well I really didn't expect to hear that' (Chuckles).

20.37 Interesting thing. In fact you were so busy in 1970, but I believe you met Nugget Coombes at the [Adelaide] Festival in 1970 and at that time he was the Chair of the Australia Council and he invited you to become a member of the Board.

Mm.

20.53 Was your time on the Australia Council [Board] a happy and productive one?

It was indeed, yes, and I got very friendly with...oh lapse...the writer on the back pages of the...

21.15 Phillip Adams do you mean?

Phillip Adams, yes. I got...Phillip Adams, Barry Jones and I were all very good, close friends during those years, although I certainly don't agree with very much that Phillip Adams says these days! (Laughs). And we are still on a friendly...he came over a couple of years ago and opened an exhibition at Aptos Cruz and it was just like old times, we were laughing and joking together [so] I've managed to keep a few of my non-Liberal friends (Chuckles).

21.52 That's good, because, again from your book, I got the impression that it lost some of "fun" when the [Australia] Council split its activities into different boards; it became more impersonal you said. Was that because it became more bureaucratic, is that what you meant?

I don't know. I suppose under a certain federal government they may have forced that action upon them [The Australia Council] because of the financial demands that the Council was making. But I felt no resentment from the government; I'm trying to bring it to mind...

22.45 You were four years, weren't you, on the [Australia] Council?

About that. I had a bit of a confrontation with one of the ministers, but I can't think who it was now, about something I'd written, a statement I'd made in public, and I remember going down to Melbourne to his office to see him, and that was the only personal involvement I had with federal government intervention in what Council was trying to do.

23.26 That's interesting. You became more involved with the Australia Council when you chaired the Committee of Inquiry into Crafts - travelling extensively all over the country; interviewing crafts people; sending out questionnaires and taking written submission. Now Don Dunstan was particularly keen to encourage South Australia as a crafts centre; he had a vision to make this state a centre for excellence in excellent design and craft manufacture. Did your enquiry in any way assist him and South Australia to develop that vision in setting up the Craft Authority and the Jam Factory? Are you able to identify any cross fertilisation?

No, but I'm sure Don Dunstan would fully have agreed with what we were trying to do and I've no doubt those areas in South Australia have benefited accordingly.

24.21 Yes, because there was one South Australian I believe, Dick Richards from the Art Gallery, he was on your committee too, wasn't he?

Yes, he was, yes. He's retired now. I see him occasionally in the supermarket. Yes, he was... I can't think who else from South Australia...

24.39 He was actually quite responsible for assisting Don, I believe, in setting up the Jam factory and the Craft Authority,

Oh was he, yes.

I was just wondered if you knew any more about it than that?

No. Again I plead old age and memory lapse.

24.55 (Laughs) Just staying with the subject of committees, Don was known for setting up committees and boards, particularly in the Arts area. With your experience with the Australia Council and the Craft Enquiry Committee, did Don Dunstan attempt or succeed in co-opting you for any of his boards or committees?

I don't think so. He'd certainly know he could depend on my support for most of their decisions, but I can't honestly say anything in particular, other than South Australia wouldn't be the place it is today had it not been assisted by Don Dunstan to set the ball rolling.

25.53. Mmm. Mmm. If you had been approached by him to sit on boards or committees do you think you would have readily accepted, or...?

I probably would have said I'm doing too much already!

26.04 Yes (Chuckles). In your book I believe you were asked to go on the Australian Dance Theatre board but you declined, and you mentioned that, 'it would have been something of a breach of family loyalty.' Could you explain what you meant by that?

I'd forgotten that I'd said that. No, my niece Elizabeth Dalman was involved with the dance company and I don't know whether there was any problems with the [SA] government over that.

26.37 She was dismissed from the ADT. Was that what it was referring to?

I don't think so. No, I can't answer that.

26.47 Alright. Well, let's move on. Now I believe you were on the Board of Governors for the Festival of Arts, is that right?

Yes.

What were those years?

I first, actually my first big national jazz tour, was when I brought the Dave Brubeck Quartet here at the height of their fame, and that was for the first Festival – same as

you were saying about my first art book, you got your dates a bit skewed because that was launched during that same Festival.

1960?

Yes

27.30 I'm sorry I thought it was later than that, your first art book.

No, no, because I remember we did it down at Tennyson and Laurie Thomas, the former director of the Queensland [Art] Gallery and I had a photograph [taken] of us all together, which went with the fire, but that was 1960 I'm almost certain. We can look in the...can you just turn that off?

Yes, certainly

27.59 END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2

00.00 Recording. This is a continuation of the interview with Mr Kym Bonython on 2nd July, 2008. We were just interrupted while Kym went to check a date in his library. (Kym confirmed that the launch of his first book – *Modern Australian Painting and Sculpture* – was 1960).

Now where were we Kym? We were talking about the Board of Governors of the Festival of Arts.

Yes, I was on that.

Were you there originally, on the original board, from 1960 on?

I can't remember. I can look in *Who's Who* and look if it's there

00.48 I'm sure it's on the public record. I wondered whether you were on the Board during the development and design of the Festival Theatre, and whether it engaged your Board at all.

No, I didn't have anything to do with the building of the Festival Theatre. Of course I welcomed it and I remember Gough Whitlam coming over – maybe that was the time – the day it opened

01.20 Yes, that was the first opening, I believe, yes.

Yes, and I think he came out to my house at Leabrook (Long Pause)

01.30 And were you on the Board of Governors at the time the Festival Centre, er, Festival Theatre, was first built?

I think so. I can't be sure. You'll have to look in *Who's Who* – they've got my dates.

01.45 All the dates, yes. The Festival (Clears throat), excuse me, the Festival Theatre of course was originally going to be constructed on your old family home site at Carclew, wasn't it? What did you think of that idea?

Well I thought...I remember thinking at the time, 'It's going to be difficult because it's going to be right under the flight-path of the aeroplanes and things', and I was against it because I didn't think it was, for what it was going to be, it was in the right position and I was a bit vociferous about that aspect and relieved when they picked the spot where they did build it.

02.34 Mmm. Mmm

Well I mean we get the roar of the planes [here], and the people who paid millions for these new apartments across the road, the planes will be only metres above them and the whole building will, I'm sure, shake, and I think some of them are going to be a bit disillusioned when they finally move in at the irksomeness of aeroplanes landing so close to their roof-top.

03.12 Yes indeed. Now Don Dunstan of course was responsible for developing the Festival Theatre into what is now the Festival Centre; it was his idea to increase the size and capacity of the complex. Do you think that has worked as an entertainment complex and do you think it's a testament to Don's sort of vision of the performing arts?

I do. Yes, yes, I do think that. I mean I think the acoustics of the theatre could be improved but I'm sure they can be. But other than that I think it's been an outstanding success.

04.01 Well, it's certainly still holding it's own in terms of [public] facilities and the ambience and the bars and all those things.

Yes, yes.

04.11 When the Playhouse opened at the Festival Centre it's well recorded that Don spoke to the opening night audience and read a poem by John Bray who was the Chief Justice of South Australia. He was a good friend...

He was my cousin...

04.23 ... a good friend of Don's and your cousin, and I believe you very much admired him.

Yes, I did.

04.29 Did John Bray bring you and Don together in terms of the social world or...

I can't connect the three of us I'm afraid. It may be, but I think Don probably got to know me because of the things I was doing and he wanted to be...to share in those opportunities...

04.57 Well, I believe he was a close friend of Clifton Pugh

Oh yes, yes

05.02 And from that statement I wanted to ask you what his [Don's] interest in art was; was he a gallery goer, was he an art buyer, an art collector? How was he supportive in the visual art world?

I don't remember him every buying anything from me. But I just think he gave people opportunities they would not have had, had he not been enthusiastically supporting what they were trying to do.

05.39 Mmm. Well he certainly had an impact in the craft area in setting up the Jam Factory.

Yes. I never went into his house so I don't know what he had hanging on the walls or anything like that, so I can't be specific.

05.57 Right. In your... again going back to your book, *Ladies Legs and Lemonade*, you made more than one reference to conservatism in Adelaide in the mid seventies. For example when you sold your gallery in North Adelaide in 1975, it was bought by Richard Llewellyn – somebody you describe in your book as having excellent but specialised taste in art – and according to what you say you wondered whether his art would be palatable to conservative Adelaide. Was the conservatism that you describe in this instance just in the area of art or was it still, because this was mid Dunstan term by then, was Adelaide still a very conservative place did you feel?

Yes, I did feel that. I don't know how long Richard Llewellyn had it, but it was bought then by er...

06.58 It was bought by somebody called Andris Lidums

Oh, yea, Lidums, who allegedly said 'I'll give Adelaide what it wants'. I said 'If that's what it wants I'm glad I've left'

07.11 That's the other, second part, of the question. So what are you describing there? Was it just the art going public that was so conservative or did you see conservatism even in this era of Don Dunstan if you like, liberalising, and social reform and the licensing laws and entertainment laws had changed and so on?

I think the preponderance of, for the sake of calling [them], better known people in Adelaide were still pretty conservative. I mean I never had the desire to become a member of the Adelaide Club; that was mandatory if you wanted to get into the upper echelons of acceptability in Adelaide for quite a long time. In fact I only recently resigned from the Naval and Military Club because the only time I go there I go there as a member of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem who hold their monthly meetings and lunches there. But I'm a bit of a pleb when it comes to going out to dinner; I'd rather go to Paul's Fish Café or the Barbeque Inn or somewhere than one of the elite social clubs. And I still, as from the past...I nearly died just before Christmas, last Christmas, because I got pneumonia in the right lung and I believe the doctors told my family there was a chance I mightn't pull through. I have. I've lost about 15 kilos in weight, but I still eat the same meat pies and sweets and things that have always been my downfall in the past!

09.21 (Laughs) well, it's interesting because at the time we're talking about it sounds like you were a bit of a rebel, a maverick, and of course, Don was

also, and a lot of the conservative element in Adelaide I understand at that time, were very angry with him for being on the wrong side of politics.

Yes. I saw him and somebody else performing at the Festival Theatre one night. Who was that?

It would have been Keith Michell?

Ah, Keith Michell, yes, that's one of my memories of Don; I think he had a boater, a straw hat, you know

09.58 They were doing a sort of vaudevillian kind of an act, yes

Yes, yes, and it was typical of his enthusiasm and desire to be active in the field of Art as well as being instrumental in a lot of those things happening at all.

10.20 Yes, well he certainly made a lot of Arts policy, which still survives today.

Yes, indeed, and should never be forgotten.

10.28 Now, you've just briefly mentioned your move to Sydney. You had run two galleries I believe from 1965 to 1976, but am I right in thinking you didn't live in Sydney for that length of time?

The situation was that certain dealers in the eastern states were snapping up the, you know, better artists and the upcoming artists and I recognised that if I wanted to stay in contention I had to move to Sydney. So, a friend of mine, Betty O'Neill, ran a gallery above the Hungry Horse restaurant in Paddington, and I took over from her in '65. But it had no...the only storage space was downstairs in a curtained off front, not even a door that you could lock, and patrons in the cafeteria could easily pull the curtain and remove a picture. And besides which, by then, I was representing people like Brett Whitley who painted on a large scale and these were just small intimate rooms which couldn't accommodate the larger works, so I decided to build a gallery on a vacant bit of land nearby. That opened in late 1967 I think it was. And that would have been one of the biggest commercial galleries anywhere I would think because it was a big open space that had previously been a sulphuric acid factory I think. And I had galleries that ran on four sides of the square. There was a back gate at the northern end and an entrance from Victoria Street, Paddington. From the front entrance you actually entered through what had been a little housing...

13.05 A little terrace?

Terrace, yes. And it had wonderful space, beautiful big courtyard, we put living trees in, much to the inconvenience of people going home from work! (Chuckles)

13.25 I've seen one or two photos in your book and it looks like it was a wonderful space...

It was

13.31 In fact I've visited it in Sydney, I've been there.

Did you? I sold it to, oh what's his name, the advertising...Singleton. John Singleton.

Oh yes, yes.

And I went in there a few years later and was horrified to see he'd subdivided it into a number of different...it was...I think he lived upstairs in our apartment. It was primarily his agency but there were a lot of other, an increasing number, of small businesses there, the courtyard had gone to rack and ruin, and I think they removed the trees that I'd planted there.

That's must have been disappointing.

Yes, it was.

14.15 So the years that you actually, after you left Adelaide and you actually moved to Sydney, were just one or two, one or two years?

Yes, I think about...I think I moved to Sydney about '72 or something like that. For a while I was living in Adelaide but when we...um...no...

14.45 It's a big ambiguous in your book – it's sort of '75, '76, would that be about right?

Well '65 was when I had the Hungry Horse Gallery.

Yes, but you were living here, weren't you and travelling up?

Yes, I was living here, then in '67 when I built the new gallery we had an apartment above which shortly thereafter we moved there to live, and I sold my gallery in SA to Richard Llewellyn, who in turn sold it to the other people. And I still go past today and remember what it [the Sydney gallery] was, and how we didn't have a storeroom, and I bought that house next door from an old lady and we used it as a storeroom while I was building one of my own in the backyard. And then I sold it for...I don't know what I paid for it, less than a hundred thousand I think, but I believe it's worth about eight hundred thousand now! (Laughs)

15.53 More probably, more.

It's an example of my...I've always said I've got a good eye for a painting, but lousy judgement on when to sell them! (Interviewer and interviewee laugh.) But I did have to supplement my finances because of all the somewhat risky ventures I was closely involved with, like the speedway and the concerts and showing a sort of art that took a while to take on.

16.27 Did you like Sydney?

Yes I did. I preferred the peace and quiet of Adelaide and (Pause)...

16.41 Well you certainly...in the your book you said you 'found it easy to fit back into the Adelaide scene where we had so many friends that after a few months it was almost as though we had never been away.' How would you describe the Adelaide to which you returned, what were the changes in society that you noticed?

Well I suppose a lot of Don Dunstan's initiatives by then, you know, were in full swing. It was a much less conservative place by then than it had been before, and I liked the, you know, you could move around here much easier than you can in Sydney.

17.29 From the traffic point of view you mean?

Yeah, yeah, so one felt much less constricted living in Adelaide than in metropolitan Sydney.

17.39 Mmm. Did you think that Sydney was, if you like, a much more cosmopolitan city, a more advanced city, or did you not find that – other than the traffic and the limited population?

Well, they [Sydneysiders] were more interested in the sort of art I was presenting there than they had been in Adelaide. That would come, but it was already existed (sic) in Sydney and we had a very nice, above two wings of the gallery, apartment, for my wife and I and our three children.

18.23 Yes. And when you did return in 1976 do you have any recall, or could you describe the mood in your circle of business associates, and friends and acquaintances, were people generally excited by what was happening politically in this state?

I can't remember I'm afraid. I can't remember.

18.48 The zeitgeist didn't strike you particularly – you know the spirit of the times – what was happening, how Adelaide was breaking new ground in a whole range of different things?

No. I just appreciated being back home and we went to live at Mount Lofty; that was lovely.

19.12 Very pleasant. Mmm. So are you saying then that the reforms that he [Don Dunstan] was introducing didn't really have any direct impact on you and your businesses?

Oh no. I think, you know, Adelaide was catching up in the art field and I attribute that to Don's initiatives. As far as jazz concerts were concerned Adelaide was always a bit of a gamble, whereas you could almost be sure to get full houses in Sydney and Melbourne, they weren't quite as appreciative here, and I'd bring out some famous musician, but in the Town Hall would only be three or four hundred people there...

20.17 Not good for your hip pocket!

No (Laughs)

20.20 And did Don come along to your concerts or did he come to parties where the good and the great of the jazz world were...when they were here?

I really can't remember, but I'm sure he must have. Yeah. But really, as I say, I'm embarrassed to be doing the interview a bit because my memory's so dodgy these

days. I can remember certain things from my youth, but my memory for current things is... See, I've forgotten your name already, that sort of thing...(Laughs)

21.07 (Laughs) I wouldn't bother to keep a memory cell for my name, but it's Felicity, by the way.

Yeah. There's an actress, an Australian actress, and I keep on saying 'Oh yes, so and so', and the next day I've forgotten it, and I've done it a million times, just one thing, you know, I just don't seem to be able to hold certain information.

21.36 I'm sure it's not uncommon. Um, can you go back a bit to when you did come back to Sydney (Interviewer should have said *from* Sydney), you bought back your North Adelaide gallery when you returned, didn't you?

Yeah

21.53 And you said that the Adelaide art buying public was catching up a bit, so obviously life wasn't quite such a struggle to sell your exhibitions?

I was appointed to head up the Jubilee Board in 1980 when David Tonkin was Premier at the time, shortly to be succeeded by John Bannon, and, as I say, we were living at Mount Lofty and it was a pleasure to drive down, I don't think I'd enjoy it as much today having to do that driving every day, but life was good back up in the [Adelaide] Hills.

22.52 Mmm. And not so long after your return you decided to stand for election to the Adelaide City Council and I wonder what prompted that decision because you've already said in this interview and by all accounts in your book, you'd never really had much interested in politics, local or otherwise. What was it that prompted you to stand for election?

I suppose maybe a desire to emulate my father who had been Lord Mayor several times, and who was on the City Council for 43 years. That might have had something to do with it.

23.35 It was nothing to do with righting wrongs or making a difference with what you saw was going on in the city?

No, no, I suspect my aim was to make Adelaide a brighter, livelier place rather than use it as a political vehicle.

24.01 Did you have much contact with the state government and Don during those couple of years when you were on the Council and he was still the Premier?

When did he start?

He...

When did he cease?

24.16 He ceased in '79, and you I think went on the...

'79. I'd only been back a couple of years...

24.25 Yeah, you went on the Council in 78 though, I think. I wondered if there had been any cross-over, and whether you'd had much to do with him?

Not that I can recall. I mean I used to see him around and we'd always have an amicable discussion, but I'm not much of a society...I prefer to sit at home and watch the telly than go to a cocktail party (Laughs)

24.56 Yes, although I believe you would have been at the opening, when Gough Whitlam opened the Festival Centre? You were there, no doubt?

I'm sure I was, I can't remember, but I'm sure I would have been.

25.11 Mmm. When you were...we haven't spoken yet about the third area of your interest, and that was speedway racing, both as a competitor and a promoter, plus you held the lease on the Rowley Park Raceway for many years. I believe you were influential in Adelaide becoming the Grand Prix city of Australia? Can you elaborate on that?

Oh yes, indeed. Well, I was on the Council and Russell Arland was the Town Clerk, and then I'd been, by that time, I'd been...well I started managing the Speedway in about '54, so I said to Arland one day after a Council meeting, 'Is there any reason why we couldn't have a car race within the city area?' and he said 'No, no reason at all, and my only advice is to try pick a course to influence on the least number of permanent inhabitants.' The first thought was around the Torrens crossing over the zoo bridge and up Frome Road, or something like that, but somebody said that the Frome Road Bridge was not wide enough to comply with Grand Prix requirements. And it was probably a blessing in disguise because the noise of the cars would have driven the animals mad.

26.52 I was going to say it would have frightened all the animals.

Yes. So, I think Tom Chapman was a part of the Jubilee [organisational] structure, and he was married to Wendy Chapman who was the Lord Mayor, and I think it was due to her that we got into Victoria Park, which is something I never contemplated; [that] we had any chance of getting into Victoria Park, and polls were taken amongst residents and I think it pretty much matched the poll that was done in Melbourne when they stole it [the Grand Prix] away from us – about 80% were in favour of it and 20[%] weren't. And of course we had to, to get it, we had to take it the year before the Jubilee. My intention was to have it as a part of the first Jubilee celebrations, but we took it in '85 because that was part of the deal and I noticed that an ever present visitor to our race-days was the Melbourne financier Ron Wallace, Walters, no, he's a big wheel in Melbourne, (Actually, it was Ron Walker) and I didn't realise that he was trying to steal it away from us, which he succeeded in the end in doing. I mean Bernie Ecclestone, the head of the Formula One organisation is a notoriously difficult man to deal with, but I think it was a bit ungracious. Well, the first person I spoke to was Sir Jack Brabham, he said 'You're wasting your time mate, you'll never get it, certainly not in Adelaide.' And I contacted everybody else that was involved internationally in the sport, like Vern Schuppan (A South Australian, born in Whyalla and an international name in motor sport) and so on, and John Bannon by then was Premier, and he sent people to England to talk to them and we got it. And as the cars moved off on their warm-up lap for the first Grand Prix I positioned myself right next to Jack Brabham, and I dug

him in the ribs and said, 'Well, Jack you said this would never happen', and he gave me a wry smile!

29.59 So you didn't... those ideas of bringing the Grand Prix here were after Don Dunstan ceased to be Premier. You didn't have any negotiation or dialog [with him] ?

No, David Tonkin was the person who appointed me to that role [on the Jubilee Board], and I'm not sure how soon after that that John Bannon became the Premier. But you know it brought the Eastern end of Adelaide alive and it's still persisted. It did a lot things for Adelaide, and I know the drivers preferred the Adelaide circuit to the Melbourne one.

30.43 Oh, Is that right?

Yeah. And it did big things for Adelaide and was one of the big coups of our Jubilee year.

30.55 Mmm. I haven't got very many more questions, and you're probably getting a little tired, but...are you alright?

I'm always tired! (Laughs)

31.05 I wonder if I could allow you to just "free range" a little bit about the period of time when Don Dunstan was the Premier - '67,68 and then again from 1970 to the end of the decade - is there anything that you particularly remember that we haven't covered, personal contact with him, conversations with him?

No, nothing much that I can recall, only being that strong remembrance of all the good things he did for furthering the Arts and raising the profile of Adelaide internationally, and him being a good, warm hearted friend. You know, I didn't go out to dinner with him or anything like that, but we remained friends for most of his life and for most of the time from the nineteen sixties onwards.

32.23 Did you support...you supported a lot of his actions in the Arts, may I be bold enough to ask if you supported him politically?

I don't think so, no. I've always been a Liberal supporter, and whilst I can admire things that Labor politicians, state and federal, do, and remain friends with a number of them, I still am a Liberal at heart even though I don't always agree with some of the things they do.

33.00 (Chuckles). Well, last year you were accorded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Adelaide *Critic's Circle*, did you know that Don Dunstan was also a past recipient?

(Chuckles). No, I didn't know that

33.13 (Laughs) What do you say to that?

Well, I feel honoured that I too have been recognised. Certainly I had no idea that such was to happen, but he deserved it more than me that's for sure, for what he did during his term as Premier.

33.34 So you might say that it puts you in good company?

Yes. (Long pause)

33.44 I think that I, as I say, might have completed all my questions. If you have anything that you want to say that hasn't been covered, I'd be very happy to turn off for a minute if you want to have a think, would you like to do that?

Yes.

34.01 Okay, I'll just turn off for a bit.

Would you like a cup of coffee or anything like that?

34.04 That would be very nice.

We're just breaking for a few moments.

34.07 END OF TAPE 2

TAPE 3

00.00 This is Felicity Morgan, um, this is recording number 3 with Kym Bonython, 2 July 2008. After a short break I just want to say goodbye to Kym.

00.17 Kym, thank you very much indeed for giving me your time, it's been an absolute pleasure for me, and I don't think there's anything more you want to add?

Well, I apologise for, as I say, for my fading memory, which is remembering vividly some of my more youthful moments but not much [else]. Certainly not today when I have trouble remembering what I did yesterday (Laughs).

00.51 (Laughs). Well, it's been a pleasure for me and thank you very much indeed.

Thank you

00.56 END OF TAPE 3