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OH 508

Full transcript of an interview with

VINCENT M. (VIN) HEALY

on 05 November 1998

by Penelope Paton

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OH 508

VIN HEALY

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OH 508/1 APPENDIX 12 TRANSCRIPTION OF VINCENT HEALY INTERVIEW

PP: This is a taped interview between Penny Paton and Vin Healy conducted on Thursday 5 November 1998 at Mr Healy's home in Adelaide. Mr Healy, could you please tell me how you became involved in forestry?

VH: Yes, I..I left school in 1932 and ---the depression and I was had a very good leaving pass, with 6 subjects and I was unable to get any employment at all until, actually 1933, and in 1934 my uncle Bob Stolz, who was a forester in the Woods and Forestry Department, let my father know that there was a vacancy for a ...a youth at Mt Burr Forest to assist the er Research Officer Mr Rankin. So I was interviewed by the then Conservator of Forests, Edwin Edward Julius and I was sent down to Mt Burr Forest to camp there with a big bunch of men, I was only young of course, I was 17 then and I was sent to this camp and we had to look after ourselves of course and work for Mr Rankin and that's how I became involved in forestry.

PP: And I believe you went to Canberra to the School of Forestry shortly after that.

VH: Well ...after 15 months at Mt Burr I went to the University by the help of my parents and did the Preliminary Course in Forestry, then the Department gave me a ... oh I don't know what that was, not a scholarship a...

PP: Was it a studentship perhaps? [Probably a cadetship]

VH: I've forgotten the name of it, an agreement of some sort to faithfully go to Canberra to the Australian Forestry School and diligently study there and in return for two years, for which I'd be paid so much, 150 pounds a year, and er I was to, they'd pay my fares, and I was to serve them for two years after I'd left there, something like that, that was the agreement basically and my father had to countersign it. I believe this modern day and age those agreements are null and void actually, so I've heard, but... Anyhow they were ... that was the par for the course in those days. Which I did of course, I went to Canberra and passed there and got my degree in '39 and the Diploma in Forestry as well and resumed at Mt Burr Forest as Assistant Forester to ...by that time it was Sorby Adams was there, at Mt Burr and I was with him for some time.

PP: Did you find the Forestry Course actually gave you much experience in hands-on forestry?

VH: Yes, we had a lot of hands-on forestry in those days; I... I believe the course these days is a lot more theoretical, but we...we did a lot of hands-on, we did a lot of physical work. For example we all had a little bit of work in the...in the bush in hardwood, each of us had to cut a railway sleeper with a broad axe, and er not many people can boast of having cut a sleeper which was passed by the Railways or the Board actually, we all did that. We planted a lot of pines, we did a lot of things by hand as well as survey work and lectures of course. Fairly intensive lectures, we'd have, oh I can't remember now how the course went, but about three terms we'd have at least best part of 2 months away from school at various places. The first year we went to er... um Cooperook Forest it was near Tarree, and er...and we also went up to er, I don't know if it was that year or the following year, up to Millerran which was a cypress pine forest some distance west of Toowoomba, 40 mile, 50 miles west of Toowoomba, Queensland. We also put in some time at Batemans Bay and er... and a lot of time of course in the ACT forests; we were there every Friday, we had practical work in the ACT forests and, up in the ...actually I can show you a photograph over here, it only came to me yesterday. Look at this. (*Rustling noises*. Can you see a photograph there? PP: No. Maybe it's under the ... Oh is that it there? I can see a photograph just under that piece of paper.) That's a, that's at

Mt Franklin in the ACT, and er...that was a ski lodge and er...that was...oh god I've lost this thing, is this important? (PP: No you're fine) Yes that was built while I was there and er... C.E. Lane Poole who was the Principal of the Forestry School was also the President of the Canberra Ski Club and they built that on the top of Mt Franklin and um...that was opened by C.E. Lane Poole in July 1938 and I saw it again this year in 19... sixty years later, my son took me up there, in September I was over in Canberra and I went up there and he took that photograph. And it is still the same building. It's ...it's used by, oh you might have seen it yourself, by birdwatchers and naturalists and that sort of people, it's not so much er... for skiing now, except cross-country skiing, skiing has gone elsewhere from there now. But that was the central ski place at that time. But anyway that's by the by, that's nothing to do with (*coughing*) what we're here about.

PP: So after Canberra you went to Mt Burr (VH: Mt Burr, yes) and worked with Sorby Adams.

VH: Yes I was there for ... about 18 months and then I got married and then I thought I was joining the Army, but I didn't and I was...came back to Mt Burr and er... Sorby rang up Conservator, who by this time was Geoffrey James Rodger, who er...required me to immediately come to Adelaide, so I returned to Mt Burr from Melbourne and caught the train the next day back to Adelaide, where he gave me the job of organising the production of charcoal in South Australia. Charcoal was being used as a gas producer, what we called gas producer, in lieu of the, you might have heard of them, in lieu of petrol. and er...Ever heard of the things? They were the

PP: Yes I have; I believe cars were um...

VH: Yes, yes..anyhow I had to find out what charcoal was, and how the hell it was burnt and how it was made. We burnt ...We did a lot in the Department but we got a lot going privately too in various parts of the state. And er...I got charcoal burning going ...in South Australia in a big way. It was a bit of a joke, because the ...Liquid Fuel Control Board were going to fit 30,000 gas producers on motor vehicles in this state and the best they ever achieved was 18,000. So after about a year um...of charging all over the place with this charcoal business, we had an oversupply of charcoal and I was busy hiding from blokes...angry blokes who couldn't sell their charcoal. (*Laughter*) So, anyway it all got finally used up and absorbed, I myself was using it, I was running round in a utility which was fitted with a gas producer, so I knew all about what charcoal burning was about and gas production. ...I suppose we had more patience in those days of course; I can remember if you got from Murray Bridge to Adelaide in 2 hours with a gas producer you were doing very very well. And...

PP: And were those charcoal...well the gas producers um put on to other vehicles or just private cars?

VH: Oh nearly...cars and utilities, I don't think they were used on trucks, I don't I can't recall them on big trucks, they wouldn't have had enough power for that, wouldn't have enough power.

PP: And was it mainly mallee that was burnt for the charcoal?

VH: Mallee and hardwood, red gum, a lot of red gum was... Yes it had to be a hardwood to get a hard heavy charcoal, you had to get the density . I did have one, ...just for fun I got them to burn me a load of pine, I had a load of pine charcoal, that was beautiful stuff, but it didn't last ...you got tremendous speed out of it, but a bag of charcoal only lasted about 40 miles and it was gone. So everyone went round in a utility with bags of charcoal on the back or call at a place where you could get it, you see. It was messy, you always got dirt black all over you, it was a messy business, however... it's all history now.

PP: And after the charcoal days, you were into firewood, is that right?

VH: Yes, I had to find a source of firewood supplies for Adelaide and I roamed around all over the place looking for firewood. Oh I found a patch up in the mallee, near Karoonda and they said you can't touch that, that's national park, so I went further afield. I finally settled on a patch up north-east of Morgan, in pastoral country, out of Hundreds, and er...where you could go for your life and we set up camps there and started cutting wood up there. And just outside of Morgan we had a siding, railway siding was built there for this wood, and we used to have this er...13 saw benches and elevators to saw the wood and elevate it into railway trucks. So we sent off thousands of tons down to Adelaide, mallee wood, um...

PP: And that was during the war as well I presume?

VH: Oh yes yes yes, that went on for, I wasn't there the whole time, I set the thing up and got it going and then I was out of it for a while. I had a foreman there who ran it... I had to go down to Kangaroo Island at one stage and I had to go to Wanilla for the boss for one stage and had to go to Bundaleer for something too, I can't remember what that was.

PP: And who were the workers in the camps on the firewood cutting?

VH: Oh they were ...the first lot they all came from Loveday, from the internment camp they were all Italians and they were Italian internees. See er...in the middle of the war they got panicky about third columnists and all this stuff, so they rounded up every Italian who or every enemy alien, put it that way, who wasn't naturalised and they rounded up thousands and thousands of these Italians, packed them into Loveday, I don't know how many thousands were there. Fifteen, seventeen thousand, something like that. (*Cough*) I forget now, but there were thousands of them there, but...

PP: Was it men, women and children?

VH: Oh no, no, only men, only men, oh yes.

PP: So women weren't meant to be spies.

VH: No, apparently not; they were considered to be harmless, I presume I don't... There were some Yugoslavs, some Germans, we had a ...one camp of er... I think they were Yugoslavs... Oh what is the country next to Yugoslavia, starts with a 'B', er...? They were all considered to be about the same.

PP: Oh Bulgaria.

VH: Bulgarians, yes, yes Bulgarians and Yugoslavs, they were in a camp up at ...what is now the Barossa Reservoir, cutting wood there, but I didn't run that. All I had to do with that lot was um, when they cut that area out they were sent down to Mt Burr Forest and I had to take them down to Mt Burr. I was given train tickets and ...I put them on the train at Gawler and took them down to Adelaide, where I had to give them tea at the railway station and then put them on the night train to the South East you see. Of course I got to Adelaide and all their relations and friends from down Lockleys and all that way turned up and there were, I had about 30 or 40 of these jokers and by that time I had about 300 people milling around the platform, women and kids, and men and I couldn't sort them out, so I didn't know what to do, so I rang up the cops and they came up and closed the platform down and just sort of made...fed them through one at a time, women and children out, and

sorted all these men out and arrested them all and charged them and um...the next day and then sent them down to Mt Burr a day or two late.

PP: So they would have gone to the um internee camps down in the South East?

VH: They went to Mt Burr, yes, they were just working ordinary forestry work there, that's what they were doing. I'm not too sure what they... I just had the job taking them...of escorting them down there that's what my job, I took them down to Tantanoola and where they were met by the Mt Burr people, by Sorby and the Mt Burr people and taken to camp.

PP: And the firewood production was mainly from mallee, or was it from red gum as well?

VH: Oh that I was concerned with, everything I was concerned with up on the river, that was all mallee, red and white mallee and but it was a good, where I was it was a good handy size stuff you know, 3 to 5 inch sort of diameter, and...you know a size that could be handled easily... And we had two camps up there, well we actually had three actually, one of them was shifted at a later stage of course. Of course everybody had to walk everywhere. Of course mallee as you know is fairly thin and you're cutting and you gradually get further and further...and finally it gets too far away to walk to work. It's easier to shift the camp than to um...have them walking for an hour a day sort of business. Anyhow gradually the supply of internees ran out, 'cos I used to discharge them. I had the authority to do that. I was authorised by the CAC - Civil Alien Corp it was called - to handle these people. I discharged a lot of them back to Queensland where they came from and ... some of them were too old for... you know they were old men some of them and they weren't capable of cutting wood, they weren't capable of doing anything. And I gradually you know sorted them out and gradually we started to run out of men and um ...that was getting towards the end of the war I suppose ...and anyhow the army had a whole heap of Italian Prisoners of War from the Middle East who had been in India and they'd , when the Japs looked like taking over India, they stuck them all on a boat and sent them out to Australia and landed ...landed them, so we got landed with a camp full of those. But er... they didn't cut any wood at all, oh they'd cut a few hundredweight that's all they'd cut a few hundredweight a day and then knock off, it was too hot. It was run by the army, I had no authority over that, that was an army camp. It was our camp and we were to get the wood but er...we got very little wood out of them. See the first week they were there, they put them in this camp and I went out to see the bloke in charge of the camp and I said 'When are we going to get some wood?' He said 'When we get the camp ready.' He had these blokes all painting white stones to make nice pathways round the camp and all this sort of business. (*Laughter*) That was a disaster, oh it didn't cost us anything, it didn't matter. So the whole thing finally got wound up and I was sent down to Penola, oh I was at Mt Crawford for a while. I was relieving there, 6 months I suppose, yes 6 or 7 months. And Paul Casson there he went to Tasmania. And I had a few other odd jobs around the state. I was at Wirrabara for a period, went down to Kangaroo Island for a look around for the boss, that's about all. I can't remember all the places I went to but I did a lot of running around all over the state actually, had a lovely time really.

PP: And then you were at Penola for quite a long time, weren't you?

VH: Well I went down to Penola in January 1947 and er Roy Daley was Forester-in-Charge there then and er I was put in charge in, I'm not too sure when, it would be in the records somewhere be about...

PP: 1949 I've got from my records; 49.

VH: Did I say that? Oh it's in the records oh well...

PP: No it's in the...records I think.

VH: records...Oh yeh that would be it.

PP: till 59, does that sound right?

VH: That would be about right, that would be about right yeh.

PP: And after that when Sorby Adams went into private enterprise, I gather you became Regional Forester in Mt Gambier.

VH: That's right, yeh yeh yeh, that's right.

PP: Until December 1969...

VH: That would be about right...

PP: when you came back to Adelaide.

VH: Yeh yeh yeh. That would be about right.

PP: I also found in the book 'A Hundred Years of Forestry in South Australia' that you were Acting Conservator for I don't know how long in about 1975.

VH: Oh I had two spells of that er yes I was for over a year, yes about a year or more, 18 months I think.

PP: When someone resigned, I forget who...um was it

VH: Jack Thomas retired, yes...

PP: Jack Thomas...

VH: He retired and I was his assistant and I was made Acting and I was Acting for ooh, at least 12 months, might have been 15 months.

PP: And did you resign at that stage or did you...

VH: No no no they called applications; I was getting old and tired by this time, they called applications for the job and... actually I brought it on myself really, what had happened was they were trying to amalgamate the Forestry Department, Woods & Forests, with Agriculture and I'd had a bit of a battle preventing this because we had ..we had nothing really in common really, we were a production department and they were an advisory department in effect at that time. So when that was finally settled, I wrote a letter to the Public Service Board, saying that now that this matter of amalgamation of Woods & Forests and Agriculture has been settled, there appears to be no reason why the position of Conservator of Forests cannot be filled. So I stuck my neck out and did that and they immediately called applications for it and to cut a long story, I didn't get the job. So... so I thought to hell with it and after a few months I got out of it. Peter **Southcott** got the job well I was a bit upset at the time, but then I thought oh...it's the best thing that's happened that I didn't get it really.

PP: So what age were you when you retired?

VH: Sixty-one, or sixty; sixty, yes going on for 61; yeh I retired early. I'd been going since 1934, that was long enough I think; that was the end of 1976. That was 42 nearly 43 years.

PP: As you know I'm very interested in the Native Forest Reserves in the South-East...

VH: Yeh yeh, that's the whole object of all this (laughter)... I thought we'd get there eventually.

PP: As District Forester at Penola and then Regional Forester at Mt Gambier, what was your involvement in the Native Forest Reserves and their management?

VH: Well well I had the management of Penola Forest, not only the pine part of it and the plantings and the logging of course to supply the mills, mainly Nangwarry Mill, but we also had to look after the hardwood forest, which urr we didn't devote much time to it. We used to urr...I used to burn off the urr... certain parts of it, mainly for protection purposes to get rid of the undergrowth on what we thought was vulnerable sides, the north ...in other words the northern side, to keep fire, any fire, wildfire that might come in from outside, mainly to protect the pines, that's what to protect the pines. ...Doing this we only burnt the fringes of the scrub and it might run through a block but the ...in the central blocks at Penola we left unburnt and I don't know how many blocks there were, but as far as I know all the time I was there and since, they've never been burnt, 3 or 4 blocks of scrub, they've never been burnt.

PP: That's what's called Nangwarry Forest Reserve now, but was it called that in your time?

VH: No, no, no.

PP: I think you called it Block 35 or...

VH: It's the Hundred of Nangwarry of course.

PP: No Patch 43 I think is what you might have called it last time.

VH: I don't know.

PP: No.

VH: Patch 43?

PP: Yes, you said something about Patch 43 that, as far as you knew, hadn't been burnt since the 1920s. And I think that is what's now called Nangwarry Forest Reserve. It's the big patch near Penola.

VH: No I don't remember saying that.

PP: I've got it written down.

VH: Patch 43?

PP: I think so, anyway...

VH: Doesn't matter. That doesn't ring a bell with me. Sorry.

PP: That's OK.

VH: That's the oh, that's the scrub which is immediately south of the hundred line, in the Hundred of Nangwarry. The scrub north of the hundred line we called the Little Forest, that was quite a big area.

PP: I don't know that.

VH: You don't know the hundred lines.

PP: No, I don't ...

VH: Well do you know where the fire tower is? Is that still there?

PP: I don't know.

VH: Well you know hundreds do you?

PP: Mm.

VH: Well most of Penola Forest was in the Hundred of Nangwarry, which stretched from what about 6 miles south of Penola to Tarpeena. That's all... all that was the Hundred of Nangwarry and went over westward to nearly, not quite, to Kalangadoo. That's another hundred over there. This scrub was behind the ...south of the hundred line and east of the, what used to be the Penola Forest Headquarters, in that area there. That was all scrub. And right out, right out the eastern end there was a few patches of pines there and then there was the ...and from then on the pines belonged to South Australian Perpetual Forests. So... it's probably easier to show it on a map. But that's roughly how the... that's where the scrub anyhow I'm talking about in the hundred of Nangwarry, that's the scrub that hadn't been burnt. Now whether that was a good thing or not I don't know, but...possibly it wasn't, I don't know.

PP: Would you say that um the management of the native forest, or the hardwood timber as you call it, was designed for forestry purposes or for conservation or for both?

VH: We didn't really give it much thought really. I suppose conservation was the idea for keeping fire out of these blocks, that... we would have had conservation in the back of our minds then. And the only other thing I did in the way of conservation was to, one year when I had a bit of manpower to spare, we put the men through, right through the place, mainly on the fringes to cut out all the pines, that hadn't been burnt by these odd fires, there'd always be a few surviving, to cut all the pines out because the pines were gradually invading, you see from ... birds and that sort of thing bringing in seed. And leave it so ...you'd get pure scrub, pure stringybark. But apart from that I don't think we did any conservation activities at all. As far as forestry concerned of course we did early in the piece cut a lot of posts there, we had to do a lot of fencing and that was a pretty tedious job. We finally designed our fences so they um...used a minimum amount of timber. And er put in what we called lightning fences, which were just as good, all they had to do was to keep rabbits out, that's all they had to do, we didn't have any other animals to worry about, cattle or sheep or anything. So so...we just put in these rabbit-proof fences which only had to put a decent sort of a post every 5 chains, so we minimised the use of hardwood. Not from the conservation point of view

to be perfectly honest because it was too much hard work ...getting these posts cut. Anyhow as I've told you before we we... later on we had this experimental pressure kiln from CSIRO Forest Products for treating pine posts and we treated several thousand of those and we had a stock of pine posts then to keep us going for years. And didn't need any...go out into the forest splitting posts anymore. And that's continued for this day of course, every post used nowadays would be treated ..treated round. But prior to that it was all split posts.

PP: And that would have been stringybark would it?

VH: Stringybark, yeh, they'd be split and they'd be..they'd be reasonable sort of trees too they'd be split from ... they'd be good trees, the pick of trees in the scrub. We sold a few...a small trade in selling posts to the people in the town would come out and buy a ...get a permit to split a hundred posts, but that wasn't big trade at all.

PP: But they were harvested to some extent, they weren't just left um and not.. not harvested?

VH: Yeh, yeh, we didn't have any log-cutting, there was no saw mill with logs cut at all. There might have been in the earlier days, I wouldn't be aware of that. There were certainly at Caroline. Caroline Forest had actually ... you mightn't have cottoned on to this yet, at one stage had a hardwood mill. The Forestry Department had a hardwood mill at Caroline. That cut out about sometime in the 1930s I believe, but that produced er..quite a bit er..of hardwood flooring and that sort of stuff.

PP: And what species would that have been from mainly?

VH: That probably would have been *obliqua* I should imagine, probably. It was stringybark. Caroline was always a little bit stronger forest than Penola.

PP: Stronger, what do you mean, taller?

VH: Taller and bigger and ..., it is a bigger rainfall up there, down there. Our rainfall at Penola was down a bit you know.

PP: So what would the rainfall at Penola be?

VH: Ohh, 25, 26 depends on which end of the forest... the rainfall gradient in the South-East is quite strong you know, but...as you go across towards the coast it's ..it's something like an inch every ten miles, or probably less than that. I mean Tarpeena had a lot more rainfall than we did I knew that and that was only what 6 miles from our headquarters and they always registered more than we did. That's on the road down to Mt Gambier.

PP: The other question I have refers to why the Native Forest Reserves were left in the first place, was it because of some idea of conservation in the future or was it because the soil wasn't suitable for pines or a combination of reasons.

VH: Well you'd have to go right back to the early days of...to the beginning of the Department when anything that looked like a forest was was...reserved as a forest.

PP: Yes, but why wasn't it um...cleared and planted to pines?

VH: Oh oh because it wasn't suitable for pines, we didn't consider it suitable for pines. Yeh, that's why.

PP: So that's the rationale behind leaving those areas as opposed to other areas.

VH: Yeh yeh yeh.

PP: And that would have been picked up by the Unplanted Lands Surveys. Is that how the assessment was made?

VH: Oh it was pretty well generally known before then, yes that that was...was mainly not for the purposes of conserving hardwood, but for the purpose of seeing how much of the country we had left to plant. That was the object of that really. You see all Caroline ..finished up to Caroline.. the whole of Caroline was scrub at one time and that eventually year by year we knocked over a couple of thousand acres a year there ... a couple of thousand acres a year gradually praps pretty well all gone, eventually it all went.

PP: So you're saying in the Caroline it was a matter of clearing native vegetation but up near Penola there was a lot more cleared land anyway.

VH: Well yeh we..course we were buying land all the time too. Penola did have the advantage of er..having some cleared land or alternatively country which had been gum country with only scattered, quite scattered trees on it which had quite possibly been partly cleared anyhow, might just be an odd red gum here and there on it. There's quite a bit of red gum country at Penola.

PP: That's cheaper obviously to develop than having to knock down scrub.

VH: Oh yes, oh yes, yeh yeh, yeh.

PP: Does Caroline grow better pines because of the better rainfall?

VH: No no I think ...a very uniform sort of a pine as I recall.

Side 2

PP: You were referring earlier to the fact that the Caroline area has a higher rainfall than Penola. What effect does that have on the growing of pines?

VH: Well Caroline as I as I recall it was a very uniform sort of a forest, the pines would be mostly mill range in site quality and...the rainfall would be only one factor of course, there's soils and everthing else. I don't know these modern-day experts might understand it. Sorby had a pretty fair idea because he always said Penola was a rhizopogon forest and all the other forests were boletus, that's the microrrhiza, you.. know what they are?

PP: Mm.

VH: There's practically no er...boletus on Penola at all, it's all rhizopogon and that's why the nature of the trees there is different. They're always taller, a little bit slimmer, a little bit more finely branched and er...slightly thinner crowned than the other place, where they're heavier crowns and ...a bit heavier limbed and so on, and sometimes better quality. So I think Caroline would have all been boletus forest. But er...actually I only came across it recently I I.. Sorby's thesis on this

er...what do you call it dieback theory, it's never been published, I think the er.. I think it was pooed by all the experts but he had this thing that he called the frost theory which he maintained that frosts had a lot to do with the cause of dieback. Course we used to stop dieback by just spraying with zinc, you see but er..

PP: But now I assume it's in the ..you put super in the soil, do you, before you plant or..?

VH: Yes, they do now, yeh, they still probably have to spray with zinc, I don't know, I presume they do. But we didn't have much dieback at Penola. They used to get a lot at Mt Burr. Ahh before they started treating with zinc of course. The spraying was zinc sulphate, ...a two and a half percent solution or something like that would do it prevent it, that was all that was necessary.

PP: And that is aerially sprayed is it?

VH: Well most of it was done by hand with knapsacks, with just a couple of squirts on a tree.

PP: On a small tree.

VH: Yes, when they're small, oh yes oh yes, but we did do aerial spraying one year, but it wasn't screaming success because I was at that time as well as Penola I had Comaum Forest, which is somewhere further north and we had a lot of dieback up there and the er...after the aerial spraying the dieback developed with streaks across the place (laughter), it hadn't been completely sprayed, you could always pick out the streaks of where the zinc had gone, where the zinc hadn't gone. We had to turn round and spray the whole thing again by hand. But aerial spraying was not...well in those days anyhow it was a fairly primitive occupation and dangerous and I er...that was done early in the morning when they had to fly very low, it was very dangerous, I didn't like it.

PP: The Unplanted Lands Surveys, we've touched on obviously, but did you actually do any of those?

VH: No, I had nothing to do with that. No, no.

PP: So it wasn't done in your time or you...

VH: Ohh I knew it was being done, it was done by Norman Hall. He was in charge then, he's long since gone, he went to the Commonwealth and he's retired, he's probably ohh hell he was ten years older, he's probably dead by now, I haven't heard of him for years and years and years. Yes he'd be well into his nineties if he's alive. Yes he was in charge of that.

PP: So it wasn't something that you had a lot to do with.

VH: Oh no no no no I had nothing to do with it.

PP: Surely you would have used the results of it though.

VH: Yes, yes only for the purpose of clearing scrub, but that er was a very broad scale thing, that was mainly for the purpose of giving the Conservator an idea of how much country he had left to plant. We still had to have some more detail to ..to see.. that was only a guide that's all, you had to have a more detailed thing to determine where you're going to plant or not. Cause I think they were only...I think they were about 40 chains apart those strips, well strip survey at 40 chains in that sort of country is done in a hurry, it was done in a hurry and it was very broad ranging, very wide.

PP: Do you know what it consisted of?

VH: No I don't really, I don't know, as far as I know they just went through, I don't know, I'm guessing; they would have just gone through and identified what species of ..er vegetation was there that's all; they would have been looking mainly for manna gum ..we always look for manna gum, presence of some manna gum to to er give us an idea of whether we could grow pines there or not.

PP: And what about size of the trees, would that have been noted do you think?

VH: Oh that probably would have been too, yes, that would have been noted I should think. You haven't found the unplanted land surveys yet?

PP: Not yet, no, I think I'll have to go to the South East for that.

VH: Oh, I thought they'd have it in Adelaide somewhere, of course it was a report to Adelaide.

PP: Well I've tried to chase them up, but it seems that most people think they should be down there. Uum, we've sort of talked about the trees...

VH: Course ..the surveys done on any land we purchased, there were surveys done, that was done by the Working Plans crowd...they'd report on any lands offered for sale, but that was nearly always cleared land, I can't remember buying any scrub at all, it was always um.. cleared land, or there might be odd scattered trees here and there, but that's all. They'd mainly do a soils survey, so that was unplanted lands surveys I suppose from that point of view, yes, but that was done well by that was always done right up .. I had contacts with Elder Smiths some of the agents there and we'd get an awful lot of land offered to us and it would be handed over to them to do the survey and reporting. ...land valuation and then we'd buy it or not buy it, maybe bid at auction or something like that.

PP: Was there any grazing of native forests when you were down at Penola?

VH: No, no, no there wasn't any, there was no; well there weren't any fences, you couldn't keep the stock in there. There wouldn't have been any... no, you couldn't have kept animals on that, domestic animals. Where we had purchased land which was often mainly only scattered trees on it, before we'd plant it, we'd lease it out, for grazing purposes, that would be grass country of course.

PP: So why would you lease it out?

VH: Oh we'd lease it out... very often we'd lease it out to the vendor actually, sometimes that would be part of the deal, we'd strike a deal with the person selling us the land. We'd buy the land at such and such an acre and they could lease it back at 5% of the purchase price per annum, that was the general ..general figure, 5%. They'd pay 5% of the purchase price per annum for a year, 2 years, 3 years something like that until we wanted it. We didn't always want this land straight away we were only getting a stock of land for future planting. It was generally planted within 2 or 3 years.

PP: I guess that kept the grass down having stock on it.

VH: Yes, oh yes and we'd get a little bit of revenue too and keep the grass down sure. Sometimes one or two were a bit tougher than others, we had to break it down to 3% sometimes... they were a bit more cunning (laughter).

PP: Could you describe to me the average day in the life of a district forester in Penola in the 1950s?

VH: Oh dear oh dear. Well we'd go to work at.. in the summertime at 7 and the men would be there at work and they'd be given their directions for the day, if they hadn't already given them the day before; sometimes the gangs went straight to wherever they were working anyhow. Otherwise they'd assemble at headquarters there and be given their directions for the day. I think that was the summertime hours 7am to 5pm; in the wintertime, and they'd have a long break during the day, and in the wintertime I think it used to be half past 7 to half past 4, a very short break in the day because it got dark down there pretty early, it's a little bit further south than Adelaide. We juggled the hours a little bit according to the season; in the summertime we wanted to keep on a bit later just in case of fire and late afternoon was a still a bit dangerous sometimes. I was only ever caught once with fire once the men had knocked off, but that was a bit of bad luck.

PP: And then what did you do, once the men had gone off to work, what did you do?

VH: Oh ... well if I hadn't already milked the cow I'd go and milk the cow, and then I'd go to work, but I mostly went to work, I might go out in the bush somewhere and look at something or ..do something in the office.

PP: You must have had quite a bit of paperwork I would think.

VH: No I didn't do much paperwork, no, we kept it to a minimum, because it was mostly done on a ..mostly done on foot or driving round, that sort of thing, most of your work was. You didn't ah.. we didn't have a lot of paperwork. We had a clerk there, Ossie Petherick, he did all the paperwork and um..

PP: What about salaries for staff, were they handled from Adelaide or by the district?

VH: Oh no, no, no, no, oh well ...the men on the forest, they were under an award, the Government General Construction Workers' Award, it was called and they were part of that. Staff, we were under the Public Service Act, public service salaries fullstop. Foresters' range and clerks' range and so on and that was their salaries. It was never enough of course but that was that, we got it. But later after I came to Adelaide I was on that Board, the Government General Construction Workers' Board, which determined wages at that time for forest workers, um ..certain employees of the Engineering & Water Supply Department, some Highways Department employees and all that range of occupations were all determined under this Award and we had certain special classifications under the Award for um our particular occupations some of which of course we eventually eliminated and we used to meet about every two months I suppose before a Conciliation Commissioner in Adelaide and fix up anything that had to be fixed up. The Union would be represented and that was it, there was never any problems really, it was quite simple. We did eliminate a few things, we had a special classification for charcoal burner at one stage (laughter) was able to get rid of that. They got a bit of extra money. The forest workers got one rate, that was the base rate and after they'd been there 12 months, if they were considered experienced, they were given an extra something or other per week, which made them what was called a maintenance worker and they were skilled at all forest work, they could plant pines, do this, do that, put up fences, everything else that a forest worker had to do. They became a maintenance worker, that was it.

PP: When we spoke last time you mentioned that poles were cut for telephone poles, for a system of mobile phones.

VH: I was very keen on communications and I went to ...actually a chap came over from Western Australia and he was an expert on bush telephone systems and he told us how to do it and I established quite a... we already had a few phone lines but I put up a lot more phone lines round the forest and to certain locations in the forest and to certain people's houses; we had houses in those days that were scattered in somewhat remote parts of the forest too, they're all gone now and ...we'd have a phone line to each fire tower too. We had two fire towers and these were earth return phone lines, single wire earth return ...widened that system out and we had to get a lot of quite a few poles or a lot were run along fencelines, we had to have poles where we crossed roads or where we had a logging track or anything like that, we had to have the wires high enough. So we had to have quite a few poles and they were a bit scarce, a bit hard to find; this was in the days before we had treated material. Anyhow I got some down at, a whole patch of manna gum poles down at um what we called the Island Swamp, that was down the south end.

PP: The south end of Penola?

VH: Towards the south end, yes, there's a little, a strange place there, a bit of an island in a swamp and these must have been, a patch of manna gum in there, they were all uniform size all pole size, they must have been from some previous fire, or something or other, they'd all grown up about the same time, I don't know what the occasion would have been...

PP: Were they particularly tall trees?

VH: Yes they were reasonably tall and reasonably straight and I could get a good you know 30 foot pole out of some of them, or 25 foot pole, which was quite good, so we decimated that area. It was a beautiful little patch of country, in fact it was rather a shame in a way. The rest of it was ...just stuck dropper things on fence posts and just strung our wires along there.

PP: And you said last time that people could plug their phones in to this system when they... ?

VH: Oh yes you could hook, well a navigator could, you could hook on to the wire, because most of it was within reach you see along the fencelines and you punch an iron spike well into the ground for the earth and hook it on to the phone and we had these little... everyone had these little mobile phones for their vehicles and you could wind up and they'd nearly always get through.

PP: Did they get used a lot?

VH: Quite a bit, yes. I remember once a Conservator came down, Bednall, he reckoned it wouldn't work. We were going over to Kalangadoo, to the pub as a matter of fact, and we got to the western boundary, that was the end of the ... right on the Kalangadoo Road and there was a post with this wire ..."I bet you can't get through from there". I said I bet I can and I hooked on and I got through and went straight through, he was staggered...; he thought it was a bit of a joke, but it worked alright. But it was handy; I suppose it was a bit of an over-reaction to the danger of fire, we were we were very fire conscious and that was a sort of an over-reaction to that probably. Course since then of course radio came in and superceded all that, that's all went out by the ...button-up boots old history. But that was pre-radio days.

PP: Did they ever get burnt those lines?

VH: I don't think so, they weren't there long enough; we only had a few years with it before the radio came in.

PP: Talking about big trees, what would be the biggest stringybark you've ever seen in the South East?

VH: Oh I don't know, heavens I can't think.

PP: I mean sort of bole size, rather than height.

VH: Oh lord, I suppose about 24inches diameter.

PP: That's not particularly big.

VH: No they weren't very big, might have been a bit bigger than that.

PP: Compared with the Mt Lofty Ranges that's not big is it?.

VH: Oh no, oh no, 24... might have been a bit bigger, probably didn't take much notice of them, not at Penola we didn't have any big ones there, as you've probably seen yourself. But I'm thinking more of Mt Burr, the old scrub there behind headquarters, I don't know if it's still there or not and Caroline of course it was somewhat bigger there, might have been a bit bigger 30 inches.

PP: And do you have any idea how long stringybark live?

VH: No, no idea, no idea, I should think probably I don't know, I'd be guessing 80, 100 years maybe I don't know, guessing. Red gums live red gums live for a long while don't they?

PP: Yes they do.

VH: Allegedly I sometimes wonder about that; anytime there's a fuss around a tree, you know around the suburbs or something, ever noticed, it's always a 200 year old tree, always the same age. (Laughter)

PP: They have to have been here before the white settlement I think that's why it's 200.

VH: Yes yes, actually I think some of these trees they... a red gum grows a lot ..little bit quicker than they think

PP: Yes they do.

VH: and they're I think some of them are not that old at all, that's my humble opinion.

PP: Probably the true test is if you cut them down and do the ring test, but of course then the tree's gone, hasn't it?

VH: Well you can't do ring tests on a red gum can you?

PP: Can't you?

VH: Oh no no no, oh no.

PP: Oh I thought you could.

VH: No.

PP: I thought you could on most gums.

VH: Well an expert might with a microscope, might show on a microscope pattern. I thought the only eucalypts that show ring patterns were the ash, the ashes.

PP: In the eastern states? You mean ...mountain ash and alpine ash?

VH: In the eastern states yes, they show some sort of a ring pattern, but I don't think any of the eucalypts here have.

PP: There is a red gum in the Botanic Gardens which has been polished up. You can sort of walk through the middle of a really big old tree which has been burnt out and they've got a

VH: In the Botanic Gardens?

PP: Yeh and they've got a big ring that's been polished next to it and you can see quite obvious rings in that. It's towards the northern side of the gardens where it's near the Park, Botanic Park.

VH: I've never seen that and I often go the Botanic Gardens, I'm there at least twice a year.

PP: Well it's near the you know the Italian big swimming pool and then there's a little rotunda at the northern end of that Italianate garden, well if you just go a bit further to the north-west from there, it's very dark there's lots of big trees, you walk through this old red gum which has been burnt out and the big polished thing next to it.

VH: Oh is that so? I'll be blown. That's that's getting towards the what's called the Childrens' Garden, not the Childrens' Garden, the Students' Garden.

PP: Yes getting there down that way yes, yes, on the sort of southern border of that I'd say, a lot of ivy growing over things near it too.

VH: Oh I've missed that; I generally ...the Italian Garden, it doesn't appeal to me at all.

PP: No I don't like the Italian Garden.

VH: ...the wisteria most years, the wisteria thing and then I head the other way mostly, down towards where all the Aracaurias are and that sort of thing and that little patch of mallee scrub.

PP: Yes I like that bit too.

VH: I believe they're going to shift the Herbarium for this stupid wine museum.

PP: Yes.

VH: Crazy, God they're mad (Laughter). That's got a bit of history that Herbarium, it's not that old, but it's valuable, valuable [indecipherable] I go in there occasionally.

PP: Yes I was there this morning actually.

VH: With questions. Were you?

PP: Yes I took some plants in.

VH: Oh I've found them very helpful, a few times. I had trouble a year or 2 ago I got Council you know all these street trees, they sent these clippers around to clip, to trim the trees and they mulch them up and blow the stuff into a truck and you can buy that stuff from the Unley Council. Well I bought half, well about two-thirds of a truckload here one day for \$15 I think, I thought it'd be good mulch round the garden, spread this stuff all over the place and next thing I've got these things, about a year later, these things popping up, you see kept pulling them up, had great big long white, if I missed any took a hell of a lot of pulling out and I kept on pulling them up and I finally pulled a couple up and took them into the Botanic Gardens. Whose the bloke there, well known, he's on the radio a lot?

PP: Oh Paul um...yes.

VH: You'd know him. He just laughed, oh he said, you've got desert ash seedlings. I said what will I do and he said just keep pulling them up and I'm still pulling them up, I'm still odd ones I've missed in a bit of groundcover or something, all of a sudden, God that's one of them, yank it out. Yes they're still coming up. And that's well over two years later.

PP: Yes mulch can be a bit of a trick.

VH: Yes so I've sort of got a bit sour on mulch after that.

PP: We haven't talked at all about um the feelings of a forester when you go out into the forest or into the bush. Did you have a sort of an affinity for being outside?

VH: Oh yes I loved the place, I loved the place. Yes I was I was very attached to Penola, very attached to it because originally I'd been logging officer there I'd thinned a lot of it, I'd marked it for thinnings, seen a lot of it come through ... as many as 5 thinnings and over the years, not all in my time and I really loved that place. I could have cried when it got burnt out, you know in that Ash Wednesday fire. I was down there for a couple of weeks, 2 or 3 weeks later actually and I've never seen anything so devastating in all my life. When I was down in Mt Gambier as Regional Forester, you know I had the job sown up, I only had to keep logs up to Apcel and Cellulose and State Mill and see that the place ticked over and you know to be perfectly honest I could have done that job about 3 days a week, I had a ball. They called applications for Assistant Conservator and I didn't bother to apply and next thing Wally Grey rang up from the Department and he said, "Vin the applications closed for that Assistant Conservator's job and your application hasn't come in yet". Oh he said you'd better put one in, the boss wants you to. So I wrote a one line application and bunged it off and the next thing I had the job. (Laughter) I wasn't that fussy, I was never that happy in Adelaide, to be perfectly honest, that's one of the reasons I retired early, it was just a paper war the whole time, inundated with dockets. You'd go away for a week to the country on some job or other and you'd come back and there'd be a table that big loaded up with files. ..It just got too much. The way the system was operated in those days you couldn't.. there was no where down the line to pass it to. At least you had to look at them, no it wasn't funny looking back on it. If I hadn't got out then I wouldn't be here now, I can tell you that.

PP: Mm, but you did manage to escape into the field sometimes, did you?

VH: Oh yes, I'd be away at least, at least one week a month, at least one week, sometimes two. Not enough, I didn't get out enough. I didn't see enough of the... I used to love going up north to Wirrabara and those places, I used to love that. Got up to the River a little bit too a few times, I used to go up to Murtho about once a year, look at that, Murtho that's up the other side of Renmark. I was very fond of that place.

PP: Mm we talked about that last time that I was here.

VH: Yeh yeh, I suppose, I don't suppose anything has changed there, is that still a forest is it?

PP: Yes.

VH: Thought was to hand it over to National Parks. We've done nothing with it really, we've tried, but we've achieved nothing. I don't know why. It's... see when the Japs were there we tried very hard...that was wartime, you can't stand in the way of things but I tried to keep all the good red gums there for seed trees, which would...I think I achieved that. Didn't worry much about the box which I should have and um... but when did we have the floods, 54 was it, 54 floods?

PP: 54.

VH: would have thought there should have been some regeneration, by the time I got up to Adelaide as Assistant Conservator and went back there to have a look around, by that time of course, that bloke who had had a lease on the place, forgotten his name now, he had the orange place on top of the cliffs above the, alongside the forest, he'd had a lease, grazing lease, you see we said right we've got to terminate this grazing, forget the few bob revenue and try and get some forest going here. There's no new growth going on anywhere. So we terminated his lease, he screamed his head off, he went to the Minister and carried on like a yo-yo, but we held our ground then we had to make sure of the fences, then we found that there were still 5 or 6 cattle running round the place. So he said they were wild and he couldn't get them out. So we hammered him and hammered and we finally got them out. And we sat back and waited for another flood or two see if there's regeneration, but I don't think we've still haven't got it to this day. Oh and [indecipherable] too; went to a lot of trouble getting rid of rabbits, put up a few rabbit-proof fences here and there and er... so it's a sad place that in a way. I think it's deteriorated over the years. Then there was a survey done of that, a vegetation survey done by Paul Casson, way back, way, way, way back before the war and ..I think if you found that you'd find that it was a vastly different place now. I know one thing that's happened, the lignum has spread all over the place; now there wasn't much lignum before, you know. Now I don't know what makes that spread but...

PP: Well it may be something to do with the ..all the locks and weirs on the River I suspect and the altered flood regime.

VH: Was it, I don't know? There would have been a lot of locks there long before that; they've been there for a long long while now.

PP: That's true. I think less water is coming down now cos so much is being used for irrigation.

VH: Oh that's in recent years, oh yes well that's a shame too. But I believe they overcame that at umm.. what's that big red gum place? Barmah.

PP: Mm, Barmah Forest.

VH: They've managed to secure enough water to keep Barmah going. Barmah would look like going out. I've seen Barmah, it's a very interesting place. Ever been there?

PP: No.

VH: It's worth seeing. It's ...er it's just south of Deniliquin.

PP: It's in Victoria though, isn't it, not in New South Wales?

VH: Well Barmah, well it's actually in New South Wales, it's on the border, it's on the River, I think it's New South Wales. Kerang is the Victorian side.

PP: Oh OK. Right.

VH: Kerang would be the nearest town and Kerang is in Victoria. But you cross the River, Barmah is just over.

PP: Oh OK. I think we're about to run out of tape.

VH: That's OK, I think we've run out of conversation, anyhow.

PP: I might take this opportunity to thank you very much for the interview.

VH: That's been a pleasure.

PP: Good.