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Full transcript of an interview with

MARGARETHA HANEN

on 2 January 2002

By Pauline Payne

Recording available on CD

OH 593/9 **MARGARETHA HANEN**

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Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, **- - -.**

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 593/9

Interview with Margaretha Hanen, OAM, recorded by Pauline Payne for the State Library of South Australia's Honoured Women's Oral History Project Part 2. The interview took place at Marino Rocks in South Australia on 4th January 2002.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

This is Pauline Payne, and I'm interviewing Margaretha Hanen on the 4th January the year 2002, and this interview is taking place at her home at Marino Rocks in South Australia. I thought we might begin with where you were born and when you were born.

Well, I was born in 1931, and that's in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands, in a little village called Oldeboorn.

Yes, and how do we spell that?

O-L-D-E-B-double-O-R-N. And I was born at home – in the house which still stands, incidentally, on the River Boorn – that is where the name of that little place comes from – and I do have some memories of that house although I left that house when I was two, but I remember a big marble hallway and playing with my father in the kitchen in the back, and the little path which led you through the meadows. Of course, Friesland is full of Friesian cows and meadows, and we lived right in that kind of flat land. And it is also, of course, full of water and full of sailing activities there, it's that kind of country it is. And my father was the burgermaster of the – well, the [Gemeente] council area which is called Utingeradeel, and after a few years he was appointed to be the burgermaster in Westellingwerf and we went there.

We should spell those names for the people doing the transcription. How do you spell that?

W-E-S-T-E-double-L-I-N-G-W-E-R-F, and we lived in the village called Wolvega, which is W-O-L-V-E-G-A.

And your father is burgermaster – that's like a mayor, is it?

It's like a mayor, but unlike here or in many other countries, mayors are appointed by the Queen, actually, and so it is quite an honourable position. And at the time – you know, 1930-31, my father was a master in law, and anyway he was always interested in social justice and working with people. I think he was very good with

people. And also in – you know, he was a socialist in his own way. As a student he had been marching for the – when the Communists came up and Troelstra was one of the real persons in the Netherlands who got things moving. Anyway, my father as a student was very involved with .....

And it means that you came from a background of people being –

Socially –

– seeing social involvement – – –.

– yes, and socially aware and concerned about let's call it the 'underdog', for the sake of a better word. My father came out of a doctor's family and so he was confronted with – well, problems people experienced, and anyway he had stories about that. So for him that was in a way a fulfillment in his life to get to that kind of position because of his law background and also his social justice notions which he didn't call that way at that time. And fairly progressive thinking about, you know, equality and that kind of stuff. So I grew up in the second village, really, Wolvega, which I mentioned, where we lived as a child, and that's where my childhood memories are, and where I had my primary school, of course, and girlfriends who I still have – still am in touch with.

Still in touch with.

Yes. Yes.

You would have been there for eight or nine – when the War began.

I was about nine, yes, so the War years I was about – well, nine to fourteen approximately, yes. And my childhood – I have excellent memories – my mother didn't work, she always had time for us, she always kept us going, kept us busy, had an abiding interest in her husband and her children and was very much the wife of my father in his position, so she had different responsibilities in that kind of capacity, I suppose. And we certainly had a rich childhood, I would say, and that I look back to with lots of pleasure. However, like wars do, they do change people's lives dramatically. And when the War broke out, my father, who had responsibility over that fairly huge country district, tried to keep the show on the road, (laughs) as it were, so that people would – could live on and not be worse off and what have you. And also there was a call from the Queen, who had fled to England at that time,

that the burgermasters should look after their people as well as they could under the difficult circumstances. At that time, of course, the politics were very heated – or not so heated, because in the First World War, of course, Holland was neutral, and the Kaiser – Kaiser Wilhelm – sought refuge in Holland, and so he just appeared at the border one day and they didn't know what to do with him so they let him in. That was (laughs) in the First World War. And it was a very tolerant society. There was a lot of compromise, and they felt good, in a way, I think, from what I understand, that they hadn't been involved with the War, and they fully expected that this time that wouldn't happen either. So when the Germans marched in it was, you know –

Shocking.

– completely baffling, yes. And in fact, before the War, there was quite a large segment of the population which was very interested in what was happening in Germany, as I understand it, and because there was a lot of culture there, a lot of things were happening, and of course people were not necessarily aware about the bad things that were happening in Germany, but particularly to some of the good things that came out of that regime. So when you read a bit about the history in that period, you know, to be pro-German wasn't really unusual. (laughs)

How did it affect you in your family? What happened to you in your childhood?

Well, so what I'm trying to paint is a picture of the general mood, and I think of course my parents were very much part of that general mood, too. And the Germans, in the beginning, were not terribly difficult –

Or oppressive.

– yes, and there are even stories of, you know, women running out with cups of coffee. And then there was a lot of resentment too, because the Queen had left the country with her Cabinet, right? There was a lot of anger about that, apparently. And I think even at that time we had spin doctors, because the people fled to England, and when that was picked up there was this resentment against the Queen, you had the Queen's spin doctors who wrote about, you know, that the Queen had done this for a good reason, and that all these wonderful people were going to have resistance against German and the kind of trend of thinking, a certain thinking

pattern, was set in motion whereby from the – in a way, from the government-in-exile, the anti-German feelings were encouraged. This is, of course, from a bit of reading and a bit of picking up things along the way. So that started. Then, of course, also the Germans became more violent with picking up the Jews and what have you, and a lot of Dutch people were used to working together and compromise and not take, you know, black and white stand and so on, and kind of veer in between things, but as time wore on that became more impossible because the Germans became much more harsh and so on. So my father was caught in that kind of situation politically, and my father – politically, I think, looking back – was fairly naïve. I hate to say that, but I think there was – – –.

Looking back on it you – – –.

Yes, yes. And of course you also have to see that in the time because he came from a family which was kind of a benevolent, and you do good to people, and the politics are, well, you know, you stay a bit out of that because that is – whatever. So you look for the good in people rather than the bad, and of course (laughs) that doesn't always –

It's not easy.

– that's not easy. So my father tried to also veer in between the dilemmas that were presented to him between looking after the people he was responsible for and the German demands. So that was difficult, and the tension was in the home. But nevertheless, you know, we lived on happily as children and that was fine. But then some resentment started to come because there were stories in the town, for example, that the burgermaster was stocking up food in the attic. And why was that? Because the children – my sister and I and the friends – we played shop up on the attic. We had great things going on in the attic in the winter and we had shops and dolls – whatever you had, you know. We just played and played and played. And of course we had a few beans and little drawers and so on, so we had – yes, we had the little shop. (laughs) So the people who wanted to be difficult and who were already critical of my father because he was in a way a social reformist, they found a stick to hit him with and lots of other little stories, you know. This is just a little example. But anyway, in 1994 things became so difficult for him –

1934. Sorry, 1944.

– '44 –

'44.

– became so difficult for him that – – –. Because he had to assign people to work on the railway lines which were destroyed by the English bombers so that the transport couldn't go through to Germany, and my father knew full well that if these people were going there they would be killed, so he refused to do it and he went underground with my mother. And as children we didn't know where they were, but we were taken to an aunt in Leeuwarden where we stayed for the rest of the War, and she was a doctor, a medical doctor, and with a housekeeper, and we had a – sounds crazy, but a relatively good time, because we didn't go to school, we just had lots of fun doing things, playing piano and having a bit of schooling and – – –.

Did this disrupt your school career, or – – –?

It did, yes, it did. We did have a bit of schooling informally and it was mathematics mainly, and I never understood mathematics very well, so it was very boring as far as I was concerned. But anyway, we made – we were busy with craft things out of scraps because that's all we had, and we had little to eat but always enough not to go hungry. My mother came every now and then, wherever she came from, to see us [on a bike – MH].

By this stage you're – what do you call – you're about thirteen?

Yes, yes.

And I need to move us on a bit to –

Yes.

– when you went through your secondary education –

Yes, so – – –.

– and your social work – – –.

Yes. So when we went – when the War finished we were reunited, and we went back to the village where we used to live, but my father was – and I can't translate that word properly, but he was – he hadn't been *good* in the War, and so he couldn't

fulfill his function any more, so he had to go through a miserable process of being judged by all the people who knew it all much better, and at that time there was an awful lot of black and white; there was no grey any more, and that was horrible. So for us the post-War years were almost worse than the War years, if you know what I mean. Anyway, then secondary school started and we went to a secondary school in Steenwijk, we biked there each day, that's twelve kilometres back and forth, and that's where I did my first two years of high school, and then we went to The Hague, where my father got a position (because it was made impossible for him to regain his position), and we went to high school in The Hague, where I finished my high school. But that misery of that War period and the post-War period was very, very prominent in our family. And particularly, of course, for my mother and father, and my mother was – well, has never really recovered. Up to this very day – she's still alive – we can't really talk about it objectively, up to this very day.

I recall that when I first met with you you said that you really hated life in the city.

Yes, I did.

As well. (laughs)

Yes, that's another thing that was a big change, to say the least. So I was always busy to get out. So every holiday I went back to Friesland to some of the friends I still had there, or I went – I started to go a bit further afield, a bit outside the Netherlands as well, so I was always busy to get out of that city. (laughs) And, in the end, when the high school finished, my parents asked me what I wanted to do and I said I wanted to travel, and they said, 'Well, you first are going to take some kind of qualification.' So that's how I landed in the School of Social Work in Rotterdam, and I did my Social Work degree there. And then, of course, I did start to travel, but in the holidays already I had travelled and I'd had some experiences in international work with students and – but, so anyway – – –. Then I went to work *au pair* in France for a while, and then I came back to the Netherlands because I didn't have any money any more, and I worked as a social worker in the country, in Friesland – I went back there. And I don't really remember – – –.

In the country would have been sort of general social work, would it –

Yes –

– like community work and –

– yes, community work.

– a bit of medical and a bit of –

Yes, and a bit of domiciliary care.

– ...., I should say, yes, yes.

Yes, actually, because there were domiciliary helps or care workers, as you would call them now, and I was managing a few of those to help what you then called 'anti-social families'. (laughs) But not so much the ageing, but what we called 'anti-social families' – really horrible way to put it, but that's what it was called.

Am I right at some stage you worked in a refugee camp, or was that later –

(pause) No, I didn't –

– was it later, or was that as a student?

– I didn't – – –.

No, maybe I misremembered.

Yes.

Right, right. So you're working in general social work in Friesland.

Yes, in Holland. And then later on I worked in Amsterdam and I worked in what you would call here a settlement house-type situation. And in between times I went to the student work camps or from the World Council of Churches in Italy, where I went for about four or five summers. That was building a community centre for the Protestant youth of the world, but particularly of Italy, because it was a predominantly Catholic country. And then, in those settings, I met a lot of people from all over the world, which was fascinating, and you got to know other cultures and you learned to live with different people who, you know, live very differently, and I really enjoyed that. It wasn't always easy, but it certainly was excellent experience for me. And one winter, between those two summer camps, as it were, which were high in the Alps, in the corner where France and Switzerland and Italy

meet, I went to work in a hospital as a nurse's aid in Nyon, near Genève, and I also worked in a children's home near Tête de Rang near Lausanne in Switzerland, so –

They were very varied experiences.

– I worked there as well, and I experienced there some horrible things that were done to the children, who were still very institutionalised, and very authoritarian approaches which, to me, was –

Quite shocking –

– shocking –

– given your social work training.

– but also good learning of, you know, what not to do and how it affects children, and so on. And then, in the end, through my international contacts which I started to develop, I was working in Amsterdam but also an offer came for me to work in Winnipeg in Canada, and as I said, you know, I had an unhappy love affair at the time, it seemed to me a perfect way to learn English, because that was my worst language. (laughs) The other languages I spoke quite well. But English – oh, I knew it, but the speaking of it I needed to brush up on. So I thought, 'Oh, well, that's the answer to that one.' So I went to that job in Winnipeg.

And that involved emigrating.

And that involved – part of that job was working with teenagers, but part of that job was also working with newly-arrived immigrants, and those were, of course, the people – many of those people had been through the refugee camps in Germany and now were settling in Canada. And that was – well, in a way, a very interesting experience again, and of course I brought international experience at that time and that was expanding my horizons, and in a way I was part of that scene myself, having been through the War, although I'd never been a refugee and so on. But I then got that added dimension of what it meant to be a refugee, because these people brought all that into my daily experience, listening to their stories and realising why they had to leave their country and why they couldn't go back, and all these dramas that these people had gone through – – –. At least, they had survived, didn't they? So that was a very important experience for me again. And then after two years I decided to move away from there, from Winnipeg, and I got a job with the

International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto, which is a mouthful but it is like – it *was* like a community centre for newly-arrived immigrants, and again you got that same type of – well, you would call it consumers these days, I suppose, but at that time we called them members, or whatever. And I was in charge of the – I think it was the Group Work program, so I was in charge of lots of activities and making sure that you had your Saturday dance and that you had your chess club and your stamp club and your Sunday afternoon coffees, and, you know, it was to make sure that there was an opportunity for these people to come somewhere and to feel that they could *be* somewhere without having to perform, that they could feel comfortable just sitting in a corner somewhere. And of course you got all kinds of interesting characters, because, of course, people who come from those horrific backgrounds, they bring some traumas with them. So there were some – I also met some disturbed individuals who were affected by war trauma. Either they had been a German soldier or they had fled Germany – that was about '56, '58, that time – or they had a psychiatric illness as a result of –

We call it post-traumatic –

– the trauma. Yes –

– stress –

– the stress syndrome, yes –

– syndrome.

– that's what you call it now. And so you had these people among them. And of course you had Arabs coming from Palestine, and you had some Jews and you had that conflict. So you saw the little world stage acting itself out where I was working, in many ways, and the War sequence, if you like. And people trying to settle. And of course this is where I met my husband eventually, after a few years, and – – –.

And your husband's name is –

Theo.

– Theo. T-H-E-O.

Yes, from Theodorus. Right. And he was a Dutch migrant – or a 'newcomer', I think, as you called them then – and we met and married half a year or so later, and then – – –.

Which takes us to which year? Which year were you married?

'60.

1960.

Yes, 1960. That was early, and later that year my daughter was born. I took some time off for the birth and so on, and then I went back to work, which at that time was fairly unusual, and certainly not something that my background would have okayed or –

.... (sound of motor boat going by in background)

– that's right – so I went right against the grain of the expectations of the family. And anyway, I worked on. But then – it was pre-Pill, I was expecting my son fairly soon afterwards – which is just as well, otherwise we never would have had him, I'm sure (laughs) – and because of that we decided that I should stop working. And also there was a lot of unemployment in the building industry in which my husband has been working all his life, and so we decided probably it was a good move to go to Holland and have the second child be born there amid the families and so on. So that's what happened: we went back there and we lived there for about – that was '60, '61 – we lived there for about two years. My son was born there, and because of the family tensions, I should say, and our different backgrounds and our different educational backgrounds and lots of other things, there were so many tensions which were exacerbated by the rellies (laughs) that we decided that, because we're an emigrant marriage, it was better to emigrate if we wanted to keep the family together. So that was decided, and we decided to come to Australia because, at least, for somebody in the building trade, the weather would be better all year round.

Which it wasn't in Canada! (laughs)

No. That was another problem. And also – well, we had emigrated before so that was just another country, I suppose. It was a bit further away, but nevertheless – – –. I think my father was definitely very upset, because he remembered the time when the pogroms happened in Poland, and when the people from Poland went to America

and passed along his bedroom window, and, you know, went to the boats, on the trains to the boats, and on to America. So he had this pretty disastrous association with emigration. But anyway, we travelled and I was certainly used to living in different countries and speaking different languages and adjust, and so we came to Australia in 1963, September 1963.

September '63.

Yes.

I'll just stop that there.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

So that has you in Australia –

Yes.

– in 1963 –

Right.

– and you came to Adelaide directly?

We came to Adelaide because we had read a bit about Australia, of course, and we had lived in Toronto which was such a *huge* metropolis, and we thought we wanted something smaller. We wanted a better climate, not too cold, we wanted – it was attractive to us that, you know, you had hills here and that you also were very near to the sea, so the location seemed good. The sub-tropical climate. And also – I don't know, I don't recall exactly any more – but Adelaide certainly took in people at that time, the migrant hostels were still there, very much so. So we arrived at the airport and we were taken to Glenelg Hostel, which was just a kilometre away, and that's where we started. And we stayed there for three weeks before we moved into a unit in Glenelg.

In Glenelg. And of course now we're looking out from your house over the sea –

Yes.

– with the sound of the boats in the background.

Yes.

And so you started out at the seaside.

Yes, yes. Yes, that's right. Alison Street, Glenelg.

What were your first impressions of Australia, do you remember?

That Australia was very backwards. And very English – much more so than Canada, of course, where we indirectly came from at that time. And that, as far as immigration policy and so on, that Australia was more backwards in 1963 than they were in Canada in 1960. And that (pause) – yes, it *looked* much more English here than Canada did. And of course proximity of America has an influence there. But nevertheless that was our first impression. And also that the foodstuffs were really limited in more ways than one, and we looked for things like yoghurt and brown bread and rye bread and that kind of tasty things you were used to, but it was very hard to get, and we had to get used to half a lamb and (laughs) – because that was cheap, and so we started on those kinds of things. And willy-nilly, of course, you got used to it. And of course the shops started to be much more versatile, and we went to the Market[1] and it was a bit more versatile there even then, and so on and so on.

At this stage, you were – let's look at your age and the children's age.

I was, in 1963, I was thirty-two, probably thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two. And the children were almost three and one-and-a-half when we came, yes.

So they were really small children when you arrived.

Yes, they were really small children.

You were in your early thirties then –

Yes, yes.

– and they were pre-schoolers.

Yes, and my husband is a year older than I am. So yes, the children still were very much home-based, not really quite kindergarten or around pre-school type stuff. So my husband found some work, but it always seemed to be irregular, so I started to look for work too, and that's how I came back to the YWCA[2], particularly because I

[1] Adelaide Central Market.

[2] Young Women's Christian Association.

got to know a lady in the Good Neighbour Council, as it was called then, Madge Forsyth was her name. She was the one that was running the Good Neighbour Council. And she was interested in me because of my particular background with immigrants, of course, and she suggested I go back to the YWCA to perhaps find a job there, which I did.

You had quite unusual skills at that time, didn't you –

Yes.

– amongst the South Australian social work group.

Yes. And I don't think that – my international experience was so odd that nobody really asked. I was just some immigrant social worker. Nobody was really interested, you know. I've never felt really at home with the average Australian social worker, because their world perspective is so completely different from what I had been through, even at that time. And I couldn't use my language skills and I couldn't use my skills with migrants and so on, but nevertheless I needed to work so I went to the YWCA and I worked with women's groups, to some extent, and with teenagers again. And that's the time when – after a while, after a year or so, my husband found his job in Whyalla where he started to earn ninety pounds a week, which was massive at that time. And he worked twelve hour shifts, of course, in the refractory works in the BHP, and so I decided, because the children were still very small and because my job was not exactly absorbing me, that financially we could afford it and at least we could have some family time with the children. So housing was very short in Whyalla at that time, so we bought a caravan and we lived in a caravan for nine months on the Whyalla foreshore. Well, it was another experience, another camping experience, I suppose – I've had many of those. And that was interesting in itself.

And again, on the coast.

On the coast, yes. And the crabs there, and the tides were going out very far, and the heat there was very difficult to escape. But anyway, we lived in a caravan for nine months, and that's when the job finished, my husband's job. And at that time I actually had started to look at some work in Whyalla, but because his job changed we decided that we wouldn't pursue that any further. So we decided to come back to

Adelaide and perhaps go to Western Australia or stay here, depending on how the cookie would crumble. And at that time – I don't know how the contact came about, but somehow or other there was a contact between the University of Adelaide at that time and myself and my group work skills. I had studied a bit more group work in Canada, incidentally, at the University of Manitoba, and that perhaps would be useful to incorporate in the course. So I was drawn into that, and I was very surprised that my skills were recognized or wanted, and I thought, 'I can't do that.' (laughs)

At last!

I can't do that!

It would have been unusual experience. And the Adelaide department[3] was keen to incorporate group work, wasn't it –

Yes, yes.

– and community work.

That's right. So I brought that angle in, and then from then we went to the Flinders Social Administration course, of course, and that's where I stayed till 1980.

So that was '65, is that right, that you went to – – –.

Yes, it must have been '65.

It was the last year when the old Diploma of Social Studies –

Yes.

– was at University of Adelaide, and then the course was – well, I suppose you could say that course was, in effect, transferred to Flinders University –

Yes.

– where it becomes a post-graduate –

Social Administration degree.

– Social Administration degree.

Yes.

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[3] Department of Social Studies, The University of Adelaide.

And am I right that, at that time, also the other course was begun at what is now the University of South Australia? Do you recall?

I don't know if that is exactly that time, but it certainly started –

It's in that –

– to happen. It's in that –

– general period, isn't it?

– oh yes, yes.

So we have this division – – –.

Yes, with Marie Mune was very much heading that up at that time, as you might remember.

Yes, I do. So you go to Flinders with a brand new course, in fact?

Yes, yes. And we had a very –

And looking over the sea! (laughs)

– yes – and we had a very small student group. I think there were only about fourteen in the first course.

Fourteen?

Fourteen. I think that's how small it was. But that grew, of course, and – – –.

Yes. And it was Professor Ray Brown –

Ray Brown.

– as Professor, and Peg Norton –

Yes, Peg Norton –

– as the Senior Lecturer.

– as Senior Lecturer, yes.

And was Elaine Martin working there then?

I don't know if she was there at that time, but she came very soon after, for sure, yes. So that's what I did, and in a way that was a fascinating time because I did a bit more study and I also, of course, because you teach you learn a lot, as you know,

because you keep reading and expanding your mind and learning from the students and from the books and from integrating it all into your own mind, and what have you. So that was – yes, that was good, it was an enriching experience in that way, although it never used my language skills or my international skills, because also what was the pattern here in Australia was very much American, you know, follow America.

Yes, it was very strong.

With Hollis and Perlman and even in Community, it was all the, you know, what in America happens is *good,* you know, and that's where you have to go to learn. And of course we had people visiting from America, and one lecturer came, Anita Lightburn, who stayed in the Department for a number of years and she and I worked very closely together and I still am in touch with her.

Who was that?

Anita Lightburn, and I'm still in touch with her. She was here just last year and we saw each other again – that was lovely. So I had some very good times there, and of course part of my job was much of – in many of the years I was part of the field work placement set-up, and so because of that I could move around in the community a lot, become acquainted with many agencies, many people who worked in these agencies.

You would build up a huge network –

Yes.

– because the students had to do field work as part of their –

Yes.

– course, didn't they, and therefore – and they had to be supervised –

Yes.

– so someone from the University had to be in touch with the supervisors.

Yes, very much so. And there was a substantial amount of field work. I think twice during the two years' graduate course there were quite substantial amounts of time to be spent in field work under supervision. So you also were mostly in touch with the

supervisors or potential supervisors all the time who needed support, and actually Anita Lightburn and myself became quite active in setting up courses for supervisors, which was a bit of a novelty at the time, and that went very well because that was very much needed, and Anita and I had a big commitment to that.

Were you full-time or part-time?

Full-time.

You were full-time.

Full-time. And then –

It gave you – – –.

– in the beginning I was part-time, when the children were small, but that became full-time, very much so. Yes, sorry?

And it was full-time from about what year, very roughly?

Yes, probably –

1970, maybe?

– '68, yes.

As early as that?

Yes, yes, because of the money was important, because my –

Yes, I was thinking, that then gave you a reliable income.

– yes, yes – my husband's employment has been – well, an irregular pattern.

In the building industry –

Yes.

– and from a migrant background.

Yes, yes. And his English is not so good, and I think he has definitely experienced discrimination in a negative fashion. It's always the English people who – – –. (break in recording)

– steady breadwinner –

Yes.

– with a professional salary –

Yes.

– and a full-time job –

Yes.

– and the children by then were in the primary school, I suppose.

Yes, yes, very much so.

And you were – where were you living?

We lived in Para Hills – not when I went to university, but before – – –. We lived in Para Hills for about six years. Where does that fit in? We started to live here in '74 – '73, '74.

Came here in '74?

Yes.

So – but you had a period where you weren't living in a beachside environment?

Yes, yes, in Para Hills we lived, because that's where we could afford to buy something. We had a second mortgage and we had a boarder so that we could pay the second mortgate.

And then this house was built by your husband?

Yes. We sold the house in Para Hills and we found this block of land which had just a slopy bit towards the sea and this is where we started to build a house, yes.

With this amazing view.

And then my husband didn't work for a year – he worked here, obviously – and I kept working, of course. That's how we could do it. And then – yes. And there certainly was discrimination against my husband because of his immigrant background, and also what was very painful at times is that he was always the first got the sack and the last one who got on, and that was very often on the basis of, 'Oh, you have a woman who works, so it doesn't matter so much for you.' And also I think there was some jealousy because we were putting money in a house, and we didn't socialise, we couldn't afford that kind of thing. But, you know, those are the kind of – – –.

He probably didn't go to the pubs – – –.

No, he didn't, no.

So you're working full-time at Flinders –

Yes.

– and when did you get the connection with the Woodville office of the Department for Community Welfare?

Well, in Flinders I resigned –

Or are we jumping too far ahead?

– there's a little interim there. There is – I left Flinders in 1980 and I worked in the Queen Victoria Hospital for a little while in the –

In the medical social work field.

– yes, in medical social work, and I worked mainly with what is called euphemistically –

Terminations? Or what was it called?

– no, that was not in – well, that's what it was, but it had a more euphemistic name at that time, but I counselled girls who considered termination. And that was very interesting again. One thing that struck me there that you didn't get any women from non-English-speaking backgrounds, which I thought was funny because there were a lot of them. We got very, very few.

So this might have been one of the first times –

Yes.

– that you were conscious –

Yes.

– of people from ethnic backgrounds –

Yes.

– not making –

Yes.

– good use of –

Yes.

– services available to them.

And I thought, 'There's something not right.' And then I was asked by the Anglican Church to work in Westbourne House, the hostel, so I did that for a while.

What was the name of it?

Westbourne House.

Westbourne House, yes.

And so that's how I got into aged care.

Because that was an aged care hostel.

Yes.

And this is the 1980s, *early* 1980s.

Early 1980s. And there were certain things happening there which I thought were very – yes, a bit authoritarian and a bit backwards, and that could improve, and so I was perhaps pretty cocky myself because I did work on those kinds of improvements by training staff and asking if the staff could have time paid to get training, and then told that they couldn't be, and even if I brought some food for them that was a bit of a problem even though they came there in their own time. But never mind, that's how it was.

Was this in their lunchtimes, or afterwards?

Well, afterwards, yes.

Even so, this was not accepted by those in charge?

No, that was – yes, and that is quite amazing if you compare that with what the situation is now, isn't it, when you come to the accreditation procedures and so on. And the games people played between the funding department and the organization, the private welfare organization, and I looked at that and I was pretty worried about some of those things. Anyway, it is quite obvious that my stance was not conventional. That's why they wanted me. But in the end the convention was stronger than me, so I left, and I found a job in – that's when I found a job in the Woodville what then was DCW, Department for Community Welfare.

Department for Community Welfare.

Welfare, DCW, yes. And I worked – the person who employed me was a young District Officer, he was a young man called John Barrett –

B-A-double-R-E-double-T?

– yes, who himself was a progressive guy and in a way ahead of his own age, because he was still very young, but he also had very farsighted ideas. And he and I picked up on, well, our mutual visions or whatever we had, and that kind of was the spark that was between us. And at that time in the Department you had what you called Health Social Workers – it was a peculiarly-created position in certain areas – and he offered me that position and asked me what I wanted to do. And again – because in the Church home for ageing people I hadn't seen anybody from non-English-speaking backgrounds and again I thought this was strange, and knowing that in the Western District there must be a lot of immigrants and people who were now ageing, and so on – I said to him, 'Well, I would like to look into that because I'm sure these people are not accessing services as they should.' That's as simple as it was. And he said, 'Go ahead and do it.' Now, that was the ticket to a lot of freedom and a lot of creativity, and a place where I could at last put a lot of my combined experiences together. So I really felt as if, you know, my – almost my childhood, my War experiences, particularly through my father's career upsets and so on, and my international work and working with refugees in Canada and so on, it kind of all seemed to come together. And of course at that time I had a good view of the map, of the layout of the land of the social welfare system in South Australia because my Flinders experience –

.... and the field work experience.

– yes.

And also, I guess, a research orientation.

Yes, yes. So I started to write.

Excellent, yes.

Yes. And these are some of the things I've given you. So I started to tentatively write a few things down, what I found, and started to look in some research, and did

a little bit myself, of course, in a very basic fashion, because – – –. But what actually happened, I think, we did a lot of action research – that's how I like to call it – and people became very excited about what I was doing. I just did what I thought I had to do, but I got a lot of people kind of joining the crowd, so to say, because they thought there was something in it. And one of the things that I did was go to ethnic communities and say, you know, 'You must be ageing, and do you have any problems or any issues? Well, I'm here. Perhaps I can help you a little bit in this way or that.' And one thing that we *could* offer at that time was a little bit of petrol money for volunteers. That was a big incentive in itself. And also, you know, 'You can perhaps – we can do some training and learn a little bit about how the system works here, and perhaps as a group we can get some money out of the system,' and so people came. And that was one of the tacks I took. The other tack was that I approached various agencies to get them on the bandwagon, of course, and funding bodies. So the response from the ethnic communities was unexpectedly large, and the response from the various organizations like the Woodville Council, the Ethnic Affairs – as you call Ethnic Affairs, and what you call – anyway, they change their name all the time.

Yes.

The State Department of Ethnic Affairs.

Department of Social Security.

The various private agencies, Social Security, also the Department of what is now Health and Ageing, which is the department, of course, which gets the funding for HACC[4] and for Residential Care. All these people came around and sat around the table, and we decided what had to happen. (laughs)

Am I right that they *hadn't* been getting round the table before, the people who – – –?

No, no, somehow or other not. This issue had not been highlighted or uncovered. It was written about: Graeme Hugo had written a research –

Yes, Graeme Hugo from Flinders.

[4] Home and Community Care program.

– yes – a research study about this. And it started – there was something you could hang your hat on.

We should explain too, shouldn't we, that Graeme Hugo is a geographer, and it's interesting –

Yes.

– that it was the input from that discipline as well.

Yes. And I think he had written a book for the Ethnic Affairs department at that time, and that's the one I started with, from memory. That was on a certain study he had done. And I think also the Ethnic Affairs people at that time, they realised that something had to be done, but nobody really knew where to start or what to do. And at that time, too, the government, in its wisdom – and that was – I don't know which government it was, that was 1982 or something or other – decided to have a Commissioner for the Ageing, to get ageing policy really properly off the ground here in South Australia. And there was even a specific Act for the Commissioner for the Ageing.

And this was a South Australian appointment.

Yes, yes.

Was that Adam Graycar?

Yes, that became Adam Graycar. But anyway, before that, in Woodville I started to write and knock on doors and things like that, and in the end we had a group of volunteers who started to be active in the communities, and people started to know us and started to 'phone me and say, 'Do you have somebody who speaks Latvian, because I have somebody in hospital who blah, blah, blah,' right?

Right. So this is people from the agencies ringing, from the churches?

Yes, yes, or from hospitals. And they kind of started because we offered our services as volunteers who spoke languages, because, as you might have seen in the literature, we had about – you know, a list of languages we spoke among us. So we had a resource there which could be tapped.

And the problem so often in hospitals, as I recall, was that people on the staff might be brought in, like a cleaning lady –

Yes.

– would be brought in to translate –

Yes.

– and there were all sorts of problems with – partly that they would answer for the client –

Yes.

– or the patient, or that they would think that what was being said wasn't quite appropriate and didn't reflect well on the ethnic community –

Yes.

– so they would perhaps – – –.

Or confidentiality could easily be breached, so the people who were translated for in situations could become very – well, aggressive – or not aggressive, but certainly resent that type of approach. Of course, you had interpreters, and people said, 'Oh, we have interpreters,' but interpreter services are under-funded under the best of circumstances, and also interpreters are not necessarily people who understand or who can stay with the person. And my argument all the way through was that if all the people who have needs and don't speak English – not at all or very poorly – that they need somebody they can confide in and who is not only there to interpret, because you have the doctor that needs to be translated, but also the person who leads you through the process as a confidante, if you like, and that is very different from an interpreter. An interpreter can never be that, right?

No. And in fact the interpreters rather pride themselves that they come in and they do an exact –

Yes.

– an exact bit of interpreting.

That's their job.

Whereas we're looking for somebody in this case who has a different kind of approach, who will stay with them –

Yes.

– and who will have an interest, but who will be acting almost as an advocate, in effect, at times.

Yes, yes. I called it 'confidante' and a constant confidante, so that if you don't have some – – –. What you have so often, even to this very day, in aged care where you have somebody who comes in for this and somebody comes up for a meal and somebody comes in for a shower and somebody else – you have this little parade of people coming through the house, and my argument was always that if you have someone who speaks the language and who has the skill to respect confidentiality, who can communicate, who knows the system to some extent and who has appropriate support, then that person is the kind of person you need all the way through. Yes, you will need an interpreter at times, too, because if you have a doctor who has fancy language, then this volunteer who speaks the language and who is the confidante is not equipped to translate that properly. So there is a place for both people in those two categories, but there is definitely a difference. So on that level I set up this – or that volunteer system evolved, really, by itself, because it was there, it was at the fingertip. It was just a matter of organising it.

What do we call it? What was it called at the time? Was this called the Ethnic Link?

Ethnic Aged Care.

Ethnic Aged Care. And covering the Western Districts in general?

Yes. But interesting was that of course I started to write and to see that, although there's a concentration of these people in the western region, you're just as likely to find somebody who speaks Ukrainian in Elizabeth or in Noarlunga. (laughs) So that's another argument which I had, and I said, 'These people need – have extra transport needs, because they could be anywhere. It is not as if you're confined to a local council or a district or region; you have to look at the' – how did I call it? Gave that a certain name – 'the community of interest is metropolitan.' (laughs)

And with some of the groups, I suppose there's not a large pool of volunteers –

No, no, no.

– from which you can pull people.

No, that's right.

So you may well need to use someone from quite some distance if they're appropriate.

Yes. And sometimes these people don't drive – – –.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

So starting again, after a break, let's pick up from where you left off.

Yes. I think I was just starting to tell that little story about a case. A social worker from the Modbury Hospital rang me one day and said, 'We have somebody here who speaks a language we do not know, we do not recognize, we think it is a Baltic language. But, you know, he came in with' – something, I don't even know what it was, anyway, say a broken leg. 'Okay, the leg is fixed, but our worry is that he's not getting any better because he doesn't want to eat or drink. And can you help? Can you bring somebody in who perhaps can uncover what is going on?' And so I had a Lithuanian lady on my list at that time who was training and who was very involved and willing to do things, and for an example she lived here in Panorama somewhere, the hospital was Modbury. She didn't drive, but nevertheless I asked her if she wanted to go to perhaps uncover what this man really was on about, because he didn't want to communicate with anyone – he *couldn't* communicate with anybody – and he was getting worse instead of better while he should – medically he was okay. And then she said, 'Okay.' So her husband drove her down to Modbury (laughs) and she went in there, and she started to talk with the man and he *was* Lithuanian, that happened to be a lucky stroke, and – a stroke of luck, I should say – and she then gained his confidence after a while and he said to her that he didn't want to eat or drink because they were offering him juice. And you and I would say, 'Well, what's wrong with juice,' but the way he heard it, it was 'Jews' – J-E-W-S. So he heard that word, and whatever happened in his mind it must have had some horrific associations – I don't know, you can only speculate – but they were so strong for him that he didn't want to eat or drink. So this lady was able to communicate with the staff then, with his permission, about what was really going on, and subsequently he could start to eat and drink again. So this is a very clear example of the gaps which there were – and I bet there still *are* in the service in many ways – but anyway, we started to fill such gaps in the service. And in fact it became quite sophisticated work, so I also started to worry a bit about, you know, what can you

expect and who is going to pay, and you can't expect these people to depend on their husbands, and who is paying the petrol – all these things came into it, of course. But anyway, we were demonstrating things, so it became really a demonstration project, and we were very action research orientated, because what we did, we kept the statistics and we wrote it up, but in the meantime we were not sitting down and saying to the government, 'This is the problem and that has to happen.' We did it as we wrote it up.

And I do remember that once I was invited to speak to the Health Commissioners, I suppose they were, all important people around a big table, and I was asked to talk about these issues. And I presented my statistics, which were fairly rough and ready, and I said, 'Well, this is the way you get it because we're busy responding to needs, thank you very much.' Anyway, wherever I went I got a positive response, and in the end – because of all our advocating and support, and support of the ethnic communities as well as the support of the voluntary organizations, the statutory organizations and the network which was established, we believed in what we were doing – we did get HACC funding, the first round of HACC funding, which was, I think, 1984. That was the first ethnic project that was ever funded in South Australia.

HACC stands for?

Home And Community Care, which is –

Home And Community Care.

– care for people out in the community who can't quite look after themselves completely.

And state or federal?

It's state *and* federal.

State and federal.

Yes, state and federal. That's the eternal battle, but we won't go into that.

And it was the first project with HACC, wasn't it?

Yes, yes.

First *ethnic* project.

Yes, yes. And then typically, of course, the DCW didn't want it because they could see that this was going to grow. (laughs) That's what I think it meant.

It was too big a responsibility?

Yes. And it was of course ageing, so it was not quite in their field. So that was interesting. But John Barrett and I said, 'Well, not to be daunted, we knock on other doors.' We got money. (laughs) And so we went – one of the organizations which was on that steering committee of the statutory and voluntary bodies was the Port Adelaide Central Mission, and as it happened George Martin had been a student of mine at Flinders, the very first little group of fourteen.

That little group of fourteen!

Yes! (laughs) Or eleven – it was a very low number. And I knew that he was innovative and adventurous and had a good vision about things. And I went to him, and with Eve Reppin who was the [Regional Manager] – she was in charge of the whole of the western region – and we went there and we said, 'This is what it's all about,' and he said, 'Yes,' and he just, you know, tuned in straight away and he said, 'This is what we are going to take on.' And then of course he had a bit of a battle because of course it was ethnic communities and the Port Adelaide Mission, and they didn't necessarily know each other very well, so there was quite a process of sitting around a table and compromising and negotiating, which George Martin was – or still is, I'm sure – very good at. And in the end a steering committee was formed which included what was called the Ethnic Communities Council then.

So it's Ethnic Communities – plural – Council?

Yes. And at that time, of course, the argument which I very strongly brought forward is – in a tactful fashion – that, if you want to set up something like this, it needs to be done professionally by an organization which has the skills at its fingertips because, you know, being from an ethnic community is not sufficient to be able to do this. It doesn't mean that you can do this fairly sophisticated work of setting up a project and managing it and drawing in people and training and what have you.

Not to mention things like auditors and –

Oh, exactly.

– quite sophisticated accounting, and workers' compensation issues, all these sorts of things.

Oh! Industrial issues, yes.

Some of the smaller groups would eventually see there was an advantage in having another groups take on those sort of headaches.

Yes. But politically speaking, of course, we had to do it correctly, and I think that happened in the end. Also in some ethnic communities it was difficult to understand what we were all about, to the point where I went to the Ethnic Communities Council talking about some of the things I was up to, and the Old Guard in there, who had been there forever, they said, 'Oh, you can't do that.' I don't know whether this comes on the records, but they were – some of them were a bit dismissive about, you know, how could – this was impossible. But, of course, things *did* come about and we started to work closely with the Mission and the Ethnic Communities Council, which is now the Multicultural Communities Council. And, well, the program got off the ground and grew and grew and grew.

And maybe some of those people were quite pleased, in the end, to see the results.

Of course.

Having been doubtful at the beginning they really were pleased.

Yes. It is now part of the scene and it keeps being funded, and it keeps expanding to some extent. It has a lot of potential. Also it's state-wide – that was one of the visions of George Martin and myself. You can't confine it to one area. So that is there. In the meantime, we had been agitating – or maybe that was later. But because of my linkages into the ethnic communities and the network and the steering committee I had been setting up and so on, and knocking on doors, basically, and making sure that people saw us (laughs) and the needs, because what I have found too is that, to my amazement – not on reflection, but at that time I was amazed how little people knew about history. People did not realise the kinds of things that I was trying to write about and say, and I went to conferences and things like that, and I said, 'Well, do you realise that these people were refugees? Do you know what it means to be a refugee? Do you know what a refugee *is*? Not only by definition, but by life experience? Do you know what it means to be forcibly taken out of your

country or having to leave your country [because you are persecuted – MH]? What it means not to be able to return to your country and not be able to speak your own language any more? To lose the educational background because of non-recognition? To be despised because you don't speak English? To be looked down upon? Do you realise why the ethnic communities are so important for these people, because that's where you *do* have your identity, that's where you *are* appreciated for your language and for your background, because some of the people share that same history, the same good things, the same bad things, so the identity is appropriately recognized there? And that, you know, the more the Australian community as such can understand and accept this difference and appreciate it, you can also see that we have a gap to fill, because when these people came here they were not welcome. Yes, they were welcome as labour, yes, because they went into labour contract. You had to work manually for two years and then you might move on, so people worked on the railways or in the mines or on the Snowy Mountains[5]. And what they did get was freedom, here, and work, so that in itself is extremely valuable to rebuild your lives. But in the meantime that ethnic identity was almost reinforced because of the barrier which there was between the fairly limited outlook on the world of the Australian population at that time and these people who came from these horrendous circumstances.

You said, in one of your papers, that people had not only limited mobility, sort of social mobility –

Yes.

– but also many of them had, because of their early – the hard times in the early days in Australia, that they actually had particular health problems. You know, when people were working –

Yes.

– two shifts –

Yes, yes.

[5] Snowy Mountains Scheme hydro-electric construction project in New South Wales.

– and carrying two jobs in order to pay off the house, that they weren't getting proper medical treatment, or they couldn't find a doctor who spoke their language –

That's right.

– so many of them had health problems –

Yes.

– that dated back to that time.

Or perhaps they were suspicious of the system, because I think that has come with a lot of refugees, too. I'm not saying – I'm generalising, of course, but if you are persecuted in your country of origin and you don't feel safe and blah, blah, blah, then of course you're suspicious of the system. So if somebody knocks on your door, even if it was me – which happened, in fact, when I knocked on the door and said, 'I want to help you', 'What do *you* want?' – suspicion, what's the hidden agenda? (laughs) So you had to break through that as well.

Yes. I remember one of your examples, too, from a conference paper was the person who came – you were making the point that people might seem to have adjusted, but that they had this longing for the old place and the old life, and your example of the men from – was it Vietnam? –

I think so.

– who missed his buffalo –

Yes, yes.

– who really would have loved to have gone back to the buffalo and the rice paddy –

Yes.

– but the buffalo had been killed in a bombing raid, I think –

Yes, yes.

– and the wife and family, so that although he seemed to have adjusted to life in Australia he was saying, 'I really would just like to go back to the paddy fields.'

Yes, he said, 'If I had a chance I still would like to go back there,' yes, yes, 'even though I know it wouldn't be the same.' Yes. Yes, so that's the type of thing I tried to point out.

You were using these examples –

Yes.

– to educate people about what some of the issues were.

Yes. And I was astounded about the lack of knowledge about that, because it seemed to me that these people had lived in Australia for so many years, like myself, and yet there was this ignorance about what it meant to people. And I think also among educated people America was the answer to everything, but you know (laughs) – that was in Flinders, of course. They had the answer from the American literature – while we had some very specific issues here to meet, which needed a very specific approach. Yes, so that's where we are now pulling, we are – – –.

So we've got the – the Port Adelaide Central Mission has taken on the HACC-funded project –

Yes, that is – – –.

– and what was the next adventure for you, then?

Well, my next adventure was very simply that – then Adam Graycar became the Commissioner for the Ageing, and he felt very strongly that he needed to – I think he was almost also asked by the government to do something specifically about the ethnic aged, because I suppose people had become a little bit aware of these things – again, Hugo's report and my little endeavours out in the community – and so in order to meet those needs in the policy domain, (laughs) if you like, he asked me to join him and it was for three months, but that became a permanent position then.

This was about – – –?

'86, probably, yes.

'86. And you – or thereabouts, but you, of course, had worked with Adam at Flinders – – –.

Yes, so I knew him, and –

And he was very bright, wasn't he?

– very, very nice, very – because again I had a boss who let me do what I wanted to do. (laughs) 'Oh,' he says, 'You're good at it, just do it.' (laughs)

But he knew you could.

Well, yes.

He trusted you.

He trusted me, obviously, yes. And so that was a – – –.

You were then – what was your title then?

Title was Ethnic Consultant, and that became Multicultural Adviser or something.

'Ethnic' became 'Multicultural' in terminology, did it, right, right.

Yes, yes, yes. Because also because of my agitating on the national front for money and so on, I became a bit involved with people in Canberra, who started to listen to me because I wouldn't stop, and I had the support of the community, you see. I could say, 'Well, you know, there you are.' (laughs)

With the groups that you were involved with, you could almost say that you were speaking on behalf of –

Yes.

– quite large numbers of people.

Yes. And I kept some of that group going, even in the Commissioner's office. That only folded, really, when I left. But anyway, there was – I took that steering committee with me to the office, yes, and that was very powerful, too, because it wasn't *me* talking; it was – I said, 'The Advisory Committee on Ethnic Ageing' – that's what it was called, I think – '*we* decided, *we* discussed.' We had monthly meetings, we developed, we had ideas about a bus for MCC which it still has, incidentally. We had ideas about tapping into money for residential care facilities and pushed that. We had ideas about regional ethnic community workers, which came about: each region you'd have an ethnic community worker. So we drew in an awful lot of money, when you think about it, really. Then we had a multicultural respite program, and then a multicultural dementia respite program.

And that was from – again, from the steering committee, in effect, with the backing of the steering committee?

Well, those ideas were all – yes, they were all seeds that grew from that thing which we had started in Woodville. Of course their composition changed and – – –.

Can you tell me some of the groups that would be – just examples of people who were represented or groups who were represented on the steering – – –.

The Multicultural Communities Council, which was in the beginning the Ethnic Communities Council, the Ethnic Affairs Commission, which later became the Multicultural something and which has a different name now again, the DCW, the Department, Commonwealth department, which was, I think, Health, Housing and –

Right, right.

– something.

So the steering committee represents these agencies –

Yes.

– not representing the particular national groups.

No, and we were careful about that –

Right.

– because you don't – so we had the – because you didn't want – because if you had one ethnic group you had to have them all, and we couldn't have a committee of eighty or more. So we decided the umbrella bodies would be part of it, so we had the Multicultural Communities Council and the Migrant Resource Centre, Multicultural Health – or Migrant Health, as it was called at that time, you know. So we had those types of organizations represented, rather than each – – –. But then I also had a group of ethnic communities which I kept going for quite some years yet, to keep – which was still a residue from Woodville. So that's how we kept the impact going, you see, through strong community and agency support.

This is through now to the '90s, we're into.

Late '80s and '90s, yes.

When did Adam Graycar leave that position, do you recall?

Probably about '90, '91, something like that, yes.

And was then when your involvement ceased, with Adam's resignation?

Well, then, Lang Powell became the Commissioner, and the ethnic issues became a little bit more on the back burner and I felt that I was so committed to this that I

wanted to continue on with this, and also it was the latter stages of my career, so I wanted to do what I wanted to do. (laughs) So when the funding came for the Multicultural Dementia Respite Project, which is another concept that came out of that group, I asked whether I could run it, and that's how I started to run that one. So actually I had the opportunity at that stage to – oh well, to initiate and practise a project.

Right. And that was in your early sixties, for you?

Yes, that's right. I was sixty, I think, when that started, yes, and I retired when I was sixty-three, from full-time work.

Yes. Was that your last full-time job?

Yes, yes. And I retired from that. I had a package which I took. And people said, 'You're never going to retire.' And I said, 'Oh, yes, I will.' And at that time it felt right to just withdraw from full-time work, at least, yes.

And the awards – we should refer also to the awards you had during this career. This is the '80s and the '90s.

Well, see, another thing that happened is that nationally people became interested in what we were doing in South Australia, because in a way, you know, we're demonstrating clearly what could be done, and some unique things were happening. So we could go round and say, 'Well, this is what is happening here,' and people were quite keen to hear about this. And that's why I became part of the national scene for some years and was a member of the Multicultural Advisory Council.

....?

No, no, no. No, that was – in the Prime Minister's Department, that was in Hawke's time, there was an Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, and that's what I was a member of. I was invited to be a member by Hawkie! (laughs) You know how it goes. And yes, I met the man. Anyway, that was interesting. I think Mick Young was the Minister for Immigration at that time. And that was an exciting time, because we were asked to develop under the chairmanship of James Gobbo an – what is it? – a national agenda for a multicultural Australia.

And that was 1985 to 1989.

Yes, that was developed. And we had many meetings and many papers and many discussions and many conferences, and I was involved in all of that, and you know, I spoke at seminars and – I don't know why, but it just kind of happened. (laughs)

That was what you did at that stage.

Yes! That's what I did – spouting my experience and knowledge, I suppose. And I think it usually had an impact from what you gather. But, you know, I became an idiosyncratic expert, as we all become in our old age, I think, and very limited, I suppose because – and this is a bit off the track – my son is into boats, and sometimes we think, 'Oh, get off it,' you know, because every expert can become very boring at a point, isn't it? (laughs) But anyway, I was listened to some of the time, at least, because otherwise we wouldn't have gotten the programs off the ground, which we have, of course. And I'm not saying by any means that I did it by myself, because if it wasn't for that strong network I had around me – which I say is still existing to some extent – then it wouldn't have happened, of course. And the political climate was right also. There was some money available, because it was recognized that there was a gap.

And that there was an ageing population –

Yes.

– with the particular group that was specially disadvantaged.

Yes. And things like 'why didn't they learn English', or 'well, they have been here for forty years, so why don't they adjust?' I kind of tackled those issues, you see, and I tried to explain why and there are reasons for these things, and that you might not feel that much at home in this country, especially when you have been denigrated when you first came here, that you might have certain resentments and these might become stronger when you're older again, right? So I tried to raise those issues in what I wrote and what I said at conferences, I suppose, and was pretty forthright about it. (laughs)

And you also, according to my notes, you were also an expert adviser to – was it called, F-E-double-C-A?

FECCA.

Which is the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia.

(in unison) Communities Councils of Australia, yes. I was the – I don't know what they called it.

In one of your citations it said you were an 'expert adviser' –

Oh, well, that is what Kate[6] probably said, but I certainly was the person who, in a voluntary capacity, was in charge of aged and community services, so that when conferences came I was responsible for that segment, for example, drew in speakers, participated myself, gave comments on papers forever after, looking at the non-English-speaking background diverse population aspect and give comments. So yes, that went on for quite some years until FECCA changed so much that – that's an organization that's really on its back. It really has had a lot of problems, that organization, at present.

And are you involved with it still?

I still am involved with it, because I represent them on the Consumers' Health Forum. I'm on the governing committee of the Consumers' Health Forum in Canberra, and I'm also, on behalf of FECCA, a member of the Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee.

I remembered that was one of your committees.

Yes, yes.

And you're a FECCA representative.

Yes, yes.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

So when – before we changed the tape we were talking about your involvement on these national committees.

Yes.

And I notice also that according to my notes for the last – in between 1995 and '99 you were a member of the South Australian Older Women's Advisory Group.

I still am.

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[6] Kate Barnett, colleague.

You still are, ah –

Still am.

– right, right.

Yes.

And also participating in the University of the Third Age.

Yes. I make some very valiant endeavours to participate, but last year I managed one session! (laughs) Because, as you know –

That's giving a session?

– no, no, I just participated in one session. And the thing is that I'm in the peculiar personal position that I still have a mother who's alive in Europe, and she is almost ninety-eight, and I almost have to go every year now for a while to see her and to do a bit of caring, and I also have my daughter and grandchildren interstate, so we – in between everything I tend to be away, and then also I'm away for those committees and so on a bit, and then I have commitments here. So between those different aspects of my life, the University of the Third Age, I can't give it a lot of time.

Incidentally, your son – you've got both a son and a daughter –

Yes.

– and they both have children?

No. My son does not, no.

It's the daughter who has children and you're the grandmother?

Who has the three children, and so you *do* want to see them. And because they live fifteen hundred kilometres away and they go to school and are part of that community, it's usually *us* that do the travelling and not they. And my daughter studies so you want to give her some support, that is part of it, too. (laughs) And what else?

So that this – I mean, there are really a lot of responsibilities for you to have.

Still, yes, yes.

Still. One thing we didn't mention was your involvement in the hostel, the St Anna's Hostel, if I have the name right.

Oh yes, yes, yes.

So going back you'd had quite innovative projects in the ethnic link services and the multicultural respite care and the multicultural dementia project.

And the different residential care facilities that came off the ground as well, yes.

Yes. And St Anna's was one of – – –.

Was one of them, yes. Now, when I retired, of course somebody told me, 'You'll be very busy on committees when you retire, you'd better be careful,' and so it came about. But in my retirement, yes, I've been on more committees than I like to think of. I try to trim it down a lot. I also have been involved in research with Kate Barnett and Associates to do some research work and some research assistant type of work, I should say, with her at times, and at some times I've actually contributed quite substantially, but that has – I've weaned myself off that largely. I've also done a little bit of work for the Dutch Consulate, actually, because in the Netherlands there is a system which recompenses people who have been through war trauma in Indonesia or in the Netherlands or in Germany, and they need interviewers for those cases to make them eligible or whatever to meet the criteria, so I do some interviews like that sometimes with these people who have been subjected to war atrocities, Dutch people, and I do those in Dutch. I write them up in Dutch, incidentally, so my Dutch skills are still (laughs) up to date. And I also sit on the Multicultural Communities Council's Aged Care Committee, so I'm still on that track. I still am on the Older Women's Advisory Committee, and yes, my main involvement over the last six years, something like that, has been on a voluntary level the Croatian-Ukrainian-Belarussion Aged Care Association, of which I am the Chairperson of the Board. And I don't know how that happened, but obviously I was asked to put in my *c.v.,* whether I would be interested one day because they needed people on the board and that's how I came into the Board, and before I knew it I was Chair – I think partly because I'm not of one of those communities – – –.

Indeed, quite different – very diverse.

Yes.

And they came together so that they could get funding in a way that, on their own, they couldn't.

I think that was part of what we did. When I was working in the office of the Commissioner for the Ageing, I tried to forge coalitions, because if you're on your own your chances are very limited, but if you can join forces with somebody you can at least have enough familiarity with to be able to work together, then your chances are improved, and that's how some of these coalitions come together. Like this one, at a Hungarian-Serbian one, it's a nursing home, that's how that came about. The Baltic Homes is three communities together, and there probably are a few others, but I can't think of them right now. But those were quite innovative things too. I think the Hungarian-Serbian Nursing Home was the first joined community venture, if I'm correct, I think in Australia. It was kind of celebrated as something special, I remember. (laughs) And then – yes, so those are my main voluntary commitments, other than, of course, those two national committees as well, and the Board of St Anna's is very interesting because, of course, we have moved through interesting political times with changing governments and this whole accreditation procedure. It has become very, very regulated in many ways, which has its good and its less good aspects.

Very demanding on the staff, isn't it?

Extremely demanding. The documentation is everything which sometimes we think is to the detriment of having time with people. The other problem is, of course, that it is extremely difficult to – it's not extremely difficult to find people to be in hostels and nursing homes, there's a dire shortage as you know. And the whole movement in hostels is now that, you know, the high cares are becoming hostel patients. There's just no opportunity to move any more, just about, so the whole scenario has to change. The staff in hostels has to upgrade because the higher demands, *et cetera*, equipment – you know, that whole thing. So we have been extremely busy to meet accreditation requirements. Of course it has its good points. We have very well-developed policies and extremely big books with everything, and you sometimes wonder what's the good of it, but nevertheless, if you have a problem at least you can say, 'Yes, we have something on – yes, we have something on –

Handling challenging behaviour.

– conflict of interest.' (laughs) 'We have something about the administrator-board relationship, yes, it's all there, big books of it.' Now we have to get involved with

the *Privacy Act*, which is in itself an interesting exercise, because you cannot divulge information, of course, unless it is within very strict guidelines. Now, if you have this in a situation where somebody is ill and, for example, dementing, some of the behaviour can be very odd and difficult, physically, mentally. They can be abusive, they can be people who don't know where the toilet is any more, those kinds of situations do occur. If you can't write that up, how can you treat these people? I mean, it is a conflict, it is in the – those are the kinds of things we're trying to cope with at present. (laughs)

And you're Chairperson of that – – –.

No, I'm Chairperson of the Board, but obviously we have a little sub-committee looking into that right now, yes. But the *Act* is already enforced, enforceable. (laughs)

Looking back, there's two things we could look at. Now, one is what seemed to you the sort of the highlights of what you've done –

Yes.

– and also the award itself, the Order of Australia award. Tell me first about the Order of Australia award.

Yes, well, that was a surprise, in fact. Yes, that was a surprise. I think –

It did come as a surprise.

– yes, and I thought it – of course, I thought it unnecessary, but then the nature of the award is that people who appreciate you bring you forward, and I thought, well, I have to accept, of course. And it sounds funny, but also because of my mother and of course what happened to my father. He would have been – if he would have had a full flight of his career he would have achieved things like that. And he was well on the way, but it was cut short because of the War, and her eternal sorrow about that. So in a way, I suppose I have done what – achieved what my father could not, because of the past. So she's very proud of it. And yes, I'm proud of it too, I suppose, and in fact I have bought a book in which I'm written up. I've never unpacked it yet, but it's somewhere on the shelves there and I'm written up in a book, so that's for the kids, for my whatever, for later on when I'm dead. (laughs)

Because I *do* think it's important, particularly because we're an immigrant family, and I think that the next generations need to know how this all came about.

Yes.

That to me is interesting, and it will be interesting to them, I'm sure, yes.

And they will have these tapes, too, which is good.

Yes, yes.

And for you, looking back now, what are the highlights, what are the things that you're most proud of?

Well, I – – –.

Not necessarily the things that got public recognition, the things you're proud of.

No, no, but I think the thing I'm proud of is the way I have been able – even when I was, you know, my international – well, in the – when I was still in Europe, the work camps which are the student kind of projects I was in, and you had this contact with all these people from all over the world, the craziest people and the most wonderful people, and I was able to work within that. And I think that has been an excellent experience – not always easy, sometimes very difficult, but it was a terrific learning experience. I think the other highlight is in Canada, when I started to work with immigrants – again, because in a way it tuned into that. I think my father has had a very strong influence on my social justice concepts, and (pause) because of that, because of what happened to him, I think I have been able to be more 'political', in inverted commas. I have been a bit 'wisened up', if you like, and have seen authority for what it often is, which can be extremely hollow, and I don't take much notice. Maybe I'm even a bit disrespectful at times because I know it doesn't mean much, and especially when it is assigned authority rather than authority from within, because basically I know that that is what is important. And sometimes it goes together, but sometimes it doesn't.

Do you think too that the war experience led you to be a bit more suspicious of people?

Oh yes, yes, I think so, yes.

In the way that you said perhaps your father was a bit naïve, but perhaps you became more suspicious or cautious about how people might behave?

Yes, yes. A bit more 'savvy', perhaps. Yes, yes. And don't forget that that was a different age altogether, pre-War, coming from a bit of an aristocratic type background, the benevolent – I was reading about Wittgenstein the other day: well, there is kind of that same element, I think, 'Oh, yes, I can see that in my father,' you know. But it is a completely different scenario to what it – it was the – yes, the magistrate, the ruling class, it's a little bit of that still, and my father was caught in that system and was in that system but was pushed out of it.

So the other element, apart from – in addition to this experience from your childhood and your teenage years, was the social work training –

Yes, yes.

– which would be an interesting one to bring up.

The social work training was post-War, early '50s when I did that. We did a lot of psychology, sociology – in a way, it was still very benevolent, still a benevolent type of flavour to it at that time which we've all moved away from very much.

Also was there, in your training period, a feeling of making the world a better place – – –?

Well, certainly a certain optimism. I aligned myself very strongly with – oh, the settlement house movement, for example, in America, and, you know, the people who were less well off, if you can give them a chance then there is terrific opportunity. That was very much part of my philosophy. And ..... group work, that was – I had a good – and community work, I had an affinity with that from the word 'go', because I had this optimistic attitude that people have enormous potential and they have a *right* to achieve their potential, whatever, right?

Now, that's a fundamental part of social work training –

Yes.

– from that period, isn't it –

Yes.

– which has influenced many people with that kind of background.

Yes, yes. And of course, if you just take the whole spectrum up to the end, when it became very managerial and very businesslike in some kind of way – – –.

That's a big change – – –.

That's a huge change. And also a lot was lost along the track, I think. A lot of the nature of the beast was, as it were, lost. When I taught at Flinders I was usually teaching in the social work practice and group work kind of area, and did, for example, communication workshops so that people get in touch with their feelings about certain situations and analysed, which, of course, was highly resented very often because it's not always comfortable to be faced with your own values which may not quite be the right ones in this particular setting, and – why did I say that? Yes, that wasn't always appreciated, but what *was* done, what *was* liked very much, was social policy. (laughs) That was the way to go if you wanted to be a sophisticated social worker, you went into social policy, you see, and social work was – oh, well, you've got to do it for the course, *but*, you know. And I remember Anita Lightburn and myself – Anita was very much a practice person – how we always were trying to make sure that social work practice got sufficient weight in the balance of things, because if you want to have good policies and good managers, if you don't know what it's all about, it's – and I think that's what we have seen a lot in the later years, unfortunately. And that's what I uncovered, too, when I was doing a lot of my conferencing and my talking about the needs of this particular diverse population in Australia, that how little nous or how little knowledge there is about how the other half lives, in many ways, and how insular and perhaps conceited social workers get, too, within their own little sphere of references, that Americanisation and so on, you know. Yes, so it has been interesting. I don't know if – certainly, if I wanted to do it again I wouldn't go in social work *now*, I think. But at that time it suited me, and also it seemed to suit my background, but it also suited the flexibility it gave at the other end, and I think I have also exploited that in my own peculiar fashion. (laughs)

And now you're looking at moving interstate so that there would be –

Yes.

– a cutting off from some –

Yes.

– of these groups, and that's – – –.

Well, that is not easy for me. First of all, leaving this house, which we love. But, you know, as we come – it is becoming a burden, that's a big thing. But I've also decided that during my career I have not had much time for my children. I have had time, obviously, but I often would have liked more time, and while I have the chance I want to be a little bit nearer to my grandchildren, at least for a while, and give – – – .

So there are some new challenges ahead.

Yes, and give that an opportunity, and, you know, I'm sure it is a challenge and it is, and we have to establish new – which will be difficult, to establish new contacts. But on the other hand I have those two national bodies I sit on, so I have already a little framework within my professional sphere in the eastern states. As my daughter says, who is in the nursing profession, 'Oh, Mum, if people know that you're here you'll be on too many committees.' I said, 'Yes, thank you.' (laughter) And so I can be as busy as I want to be, but I think that's how I want to keep it. I also want to be busy as much as I want to be, not as other people expect me to be. That is the change between working and being retired: you can exercise your choice. In the meantime, I will miss this multicultural network, for the sake of a better word, here. But we also have a unit in Glenelg, so if the crunch comes we can move back here, and so that makes it much easier.

That's a good feeling, a good feeling, yes.

That makes it much easier to make the move. And also this is the time to make a change, because if we don't do it now then it won't happen, so this is it for the next so many years.

Is there anything that we've not – in the few minutes remaining on this side of the tape – are there any things that we've not covered that you would like to have referred to?

I'll probably think about that tomorrow. (laughs) You know what I mean. Yes. No, I think I've said most of it. I've been really lucky to bring together such a wide experience towards the later part of my career, and to have left – what I feel happy about – to have left a lasting legacy, I think.

That's a great feeling.

I haven't made a big painting or anything which says something in a hundred years' time, but these services which are there now, they wouldn't be here without at least me having had a big input into that, and I've done it with lots and lots of other people who have been wonderful. So that is really summing up my view about my career, I think, and I now want to have the time for my family which perhaps I always was fighting for a bit when you're younger and have a career and a family and – – –. So that's where I am.

That's a happy note on which to end, I think.

Yes. (break in recording)

And we've got a little postscript here that – your comments about your mother.

Yes. Yes. Well, my mother, of course, like every mother, has a strong influence on their daughters – and sons, and that my mother has been very much a big influence. She's a good organizer, she's bright, up to this very day.

She's ninety-eight, still –

She's ninety-eight, yes, yes.

– very, very much 'with it'.

And has, of course, tried to regulate my life. She never took a career, she married when she was nineteen, and therefore – she wanted to study German, but at that time you didn't go and study when you married, so all her mental energy has been thrown on her daughters and her husband, and that is fine, and she has given me a lot of good skills and what have you, but also, you know, a sense of being regulated by Mum. And of course this is probably one reason why I'm far away and always have been a bit far away, and also because of the war experiences, I think, Holland always was a bit too small and too narrow, and too much associated with the war experiences which I didn't want to repeat in myself, and somehow or other that I escaped – maybe it is an escape, but then it was perhaps a good escape. (laughs)

And we didn't say where you came in the family. You were – – –.

I was the second of two daughters.

Second of two daughters.

Yes.

So that your sister is still in the Netherlands.

Yes, yes, yes.

So with a ninety-eight year-old mother with – very much 'with it', still –

Yes.

– this is a great thought for you, for your old age! (laughter)

As long as I keep mentally and physically fit I don't mind. (laughs)

You'll be an indomitable person in your nineties.

I don't mind. I'm certainly going to enjoy life if I can to the end. And there are still challenges ahead. Well, the move coming now is an enormous challenge, I think. And – – –.

If you find a place with as good a view as this, that's – – –.

We can't find that, we don't have that kind of money, not in New South Wales! (laughter) But we have been very lucky to live in this unique spot for twenty-eight years, for being so – that's what I say, we have been able – whatever you have in this life is borrowed, so we have borrowed this for twenty-eight years. We've worked for it, but nevertheless, yes.

It would be a different view if it's New South Wales, but it will be an interesting view.

Altogether, altogether, yes. And with these bushfires raging, you wonder. But we have had many challenges in our lives. I think, as an immigrant, anyway, or as somebody who's moved around a lot, you are – you probably have done it yourself – it is less daunting because you've been there, you've done that. Yes.

That's right. You've had the challenges and now this is a new one.

Yes.

On which note we'll end again. (break in recording) Now it's going again, yes.

Okay.

We're adding in a postscript, because we missed out one of the awards, and that was the – you were a senior citizen, one of a group of four or so –

I think, yes. South Australians.

– Senior Australian Achievers under the Commonwealth Government Senior Australian Citizen of the Year awards in 1999.

Yes, that's right. That was another surprise, yes. Apparently a friend of mine considered that it was important to do a little story about me, and she wrote in and next I knew was that somebody called from Canberra, from that office where the awards are distributed, and said, 'You're one of them.' I said, 'Oh! Well!' (laughs)

Well, it's good to get that on the record.

'Why me?' But that was nice, yes.

That's very good. It's great to have that on the tape as well.

Yes.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.