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OH 646/1

Full transcript of an interview with

PETER FRANCIS DONOVAN

on 3 May 2002

By Karen George

Recording available on CD

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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 646/1

Interview with Mr Peter Francis Donovan recorded by Karen George at Coromandel Valley on the 3rd May 2002 for the State Library of South Australia Professional Historians Association Oral History Project.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

This is an interview with Peter Donovan being recorded by Karen George for the Professional Historians Association Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 3rd May 2002 at Coromandel Valley in South Australia.

So first of all, I guess I'd like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, to share your memories of the foundations of the Association. So perhaps you could start by just giving me your full name?

Peter Francis Donovan.

Whereabouts were you born, Peter?

Born in Kapunda –

What's the date of – – –?

– in 1945. Seventh of September.

Can you tell me, perhaps, just to get a bit of background, about what your parents did, what your Dad did for a living?

Dad was a publican after his father before him. Indeed, one of the funny things is our association with Kapunda goes back to late last century, I guess. My grandfather on the paternal side was a miner at Broken Hill there for a time after he sort of migrated out from Ireland, and then went over to Coolgardie, and he obviously spent about six years there. We don't know quite how, because he was a labourer when he went there, but he came back with visions of becoming a publican so he set himself up in Kapunda, basically because lots of his wife's family were living in Kapunda, at Baker's Flat[1]. So my father was born there, then the whole family moved out in 1913. And then, when my grandfather retired – he'd been in the pub game by this stage – he sort of retired back to Adelaide and he set my father up in partnership with a couple of his aunts in a hotel back in Kapunda again. That's when I came along

[1] Later research has found this to be inaccurate, though his brother-in-law had become the licensee of the Railway Hotel in Kapunda in 1896.

because I was born in Kapunda, so we've got this thing – the father was born there and I was born there and the family lived there, but there was this hiatus there for many, many years. We remained there until about 19 – well, I was in grade four, so it must have been 1954 we moved down to the city.

So your early schooling was in Kapunda, then?

Yes. Yes. One of the things about that, there probably wouldn't be too many people in Kapunda now would remember it – I'm not all that old – but immediately behind our pub was the one-time sale yards of Sidney Kidman. I can remember playing in those when I was a little tacker. I just bring that up because one of our recent jobs was to photograph the bull ring out at Pooraka which was being threatened with demolition, and reading some of the features, some of the things written about it, it was said to be one of the only bull rings built in South Australia, and I knew that wasn't so because I'd played in one up in Kapunda. But that was demolished when I was still only a very little tacker.

So you came down to Adelaide. Where did you live then?

Semaphore. I guess the linkage there, Dad left the pub game – he was never a fellow in robust health – so we moved to Semaphore, the point being, I guess, that my mother had a sister who was living at Semaphore with her husband in a shop, so they sort of smoothed the way for us to move to Semaphore.

And your schooling continued there.

Continued at Semaphore.

Did you at that stage have any idea what you wanted to do when you left school?

Essentially no. Yes, nothing much to add on that other than just 'no'. We just sort of took life from day to day and, you know, given the nature of the upbringing I guess it wasn't a professional upbringing. So Dad didn't do too much. He had TB[2] after that so he was in hospital, he never had that much more after he came down from Kapunda. So didn't have a whole heap of mentors, I suppose, or anything like that, so we just took it day by day. But then, with a name like Donovan and

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[2] Tuberculosis.

whatever, we were – background was very strong Catholic without being overtly so. It was quietly, strongly Catholic. So I went to Catholic schools, Dominican convent up in Kapunda, which again has been in the news because this was the place called Shenandoah where one of our – you know, a convicted criminal or something had bought, anyway – and a paedophile lived in there a little while ago. But at one stage it was the Catholic convent when it was the convent associated with the school up there. So went there to school. Dominican nuns ran that and they also ran a convent down at Semaphore so I went there, almost naturally, and then finished up going to St Michael's College at Beverley, which was conducted by the De La Salle Brothers who were only new to South Australia at that stage. The whole point about emphasising the whole Catholicness of the whole thing, I guess there's no Catholic child in that stage, in the 1950s, wasn't rammed down their throat [the] thought of becoming a priest, a brother or a nun or something like that. So again, without knowing particularly what I wanted to do, at that stage I probably had visions of becoming a surveyor or an architect or something like that, but without really knowing what that implied or what it meant or what it would involve. So at one stage some particular brother said, 'Have you ever thought of becoming a brother,' and I said, 'Oh, not really, but I'm – – –.' 'Are you averse to it?' 'No.' And almost after that I was almost shunted off – shunted off? That's probably not the right word. But anyway, things were set in motion and before my feet hit the ground here I was over in New South Wales finishing off my higher secondary education with the notion of becoming a brother.

Can you describe to me how it occurred that you ended up doing history, because that wasn't your initial – I think you said to me the other day that your majors in your final year weren't in the history area at all.

Not at all. And, as I say, that's again basic is the notion of the fact that I was in the Brothers at that particular stage. As I said the other day, when I matriculated – this is in New South Wales matriculation in 1963 – you had to have a, had to do English so we did English, you had to have a language or something akin to that, so I did French, and then it was sciences. I was a science boy so I did Maths 1 and Maths 2 and Physics and Chemistry with an honours in Chemistry. Passed the lot, even the French, which was unusual – not unusual, but I can still read French but I couldn't speak it because the way we were taught it at that stage, the fellows who taught it,

the Brothers, didn't know much French. So it was translating this from French to English and something from English to French but very little speaking. And I have visions of my oral exam at the matriculation, and I was into a room and didn't have a clue what went on, didn't have a clue. I think a fellow said, 'Sit down,' – I *think* he said that. There were only about three seats, I didn't know which seat to go to so I sat down in one anyway. So I didn't pass my orals but that was no surprise. But the point about that was I was gearing up to become a brother, a teaching brother in the order of the De La Salle Brothers. So from thence we went to Sydney, Castle Hill, where their novitiate is – was – and of course we have infused in us all these good religious issues about, you know, one of which is blind obedience or obedience. You do what you're told and don't grizzle too much because there's obviously a higher will behind it and greater wisdom, you know, sort of directing what you're doing. So thence we moved into the scholasticate where we did our teacher training which was meant to be a two-year course, and part of the course at the time was that we teacher-trainees would do a few subjects by correspondence with the University of New England. So when I was due to start I was told I would be doing History and Psychology. I mention also, as I did the other week, that lots of the others, some of my other colleagues, who had majored in sciences had been told that they would go to Kensington to a Brothers' house there and they would study full-time at the University of New South Wales. Originally I thought I'd be amongst them but I wasn't, so having been told to do History I did History. And I thoroughly enjoyed it, and as it turned out I did very well in it.

Can you tell me what attracted you about it then, what did you enjoy about [it]?

I think it still motivates me now. I just like finding out about things, I think, and how things work, and try to explain things, why things are as they are. And if I can just come on a little pet hobby horse here, given my background and some of the, I guess, attitudes I had when I started or ignorance and whatever, it doesn't faze me that History is not being taught in schools or nothing much is happening in schools, and I look a bit askance at all our academics who say, 'History is losing out, that's now becoming Social Studies or a part of Living in the World or something like that.' I guess, being very simplistic – if you scratch me harder I'll backtrack and make all sorts of qualifications – but I'd be happy if history wasn't taught till about

year eleven or twelve. I'm convinced that people need to have a background in life, a background in geography, a whole heap of background, to make sense of history. History happens in place and in time – or place as well as time, I suppose. But if people aren't aware of things, studying the French Revolution without having a clue where France is is a little silly. Or what are the implications of the American Civil War, when you haven't got a clue what a slave is – you've seen a domestic servant perhaps – – –. So it didn't do me any harm, and I think – well, I know that's not a reason for saying things are terrific, but – – –.

So to take you back when you did that history, what happened from there once you'd done – you'd been attracted to it, obviously, at that point.

Well, in the very, very early days – this is the system that went through University of New England – depending on the results of one year you could set yourself up on a track to do honours, even after first year. You had to get, I think, a credit or a distinction or something. Having done so, second year offered several streams. I know there was a History 2A and a History 2B and a History 2H, the 'H' being those who were thinking about doing honours. So I'd set myself up for that so I did History honours with a select group of probably about a dozen of us, I think, and that followed through into third year where those who had done well in History 2H had an option of doing History 3H, which was just for those people who envisaged doing an honours degree. So I set myself up for all those. But at that stage I was due to go out teaching. Well, under the scheme, as I'd been led to believe two or three years earlier, I was meant to go out teaching. When the placements came out in about the September of that year – that's got to be '68 – I found that I was going to be back in Armidale, but I, after a few enquiries, found out I wasn't going to be able to do honours, so I felt a bit miffed about that. Exaggerated a little bit, because one of my colleagues – another one of those of us at Armidale, there were five of us had been sent up there – he'd also sort of set himself up to do honours in Classical Studies, but he was going to be given time off to do honours, so I felt a bit miffed about that. So I thought I'd sort of do honours anyway, which meant leaving the Brothers. Which was a hard thing at that stage. So that was end of 1968. And it caused quite a deal of, I guess, stress and emotional hang-ups and things like that, because it was pretty difficult at that stage. It became far more common – well fellows have been leaving

religious orders for generations, there's no problem with that – but most people went out with – under a cloud, to some extent. You were given this notion that you hadn't – you'd taken your eye off the ball, you hadn't persevered, you'd let the side down, you'd fallen by the wayside. You had all these pejorative attitudes associated with it. So it took me a while and I thought perhaps I was staying in there for the wrong reasons, you know, sort of frightened just because of all these negative vibes. And this other thing pushed me over the edge and I sort of left. And again that was a question – after just having found out what I wanted to do and then being denied it, I thought, 'Damn it all, we'll show the blighters.'

So can you briefly outline your career from there, once you'd moved into the field of History, and how you ended up in South Australia.

Oh, it's all more of the same. I find myself repeating myself all the time. So we finish up doing honours, wasn't as good as it could have been because here I was, the top student in terms of marks all the way through – and that might have been the fact that I was in a protected environment so could study very easily – but that year was a pretty difficult one, having to come to terms with a whole lot of socialising. I'm an only child so I didn't have any sisters or brothers, even, and having been brought up in this masculine environment in a religious order – a funny masculine environment too – so I took in a bit of socialising. So finished up with a '2-1' rather than a '1' or anything else. But I think, looking back on it, I did pretty well to even do that, given the issues. So then I looked around that year and thought, 'Oh, what can a bloke do?', because my attitude then was to get life back on track to try and catch up with all my colleagues, as I thought, my contemporaries who'd just gone straight from school, had a whale of a time through uni and knocked around with women and having a great time, so I thought, 'I've got to do a lot of that in a very short time.' A lot of funny stories associated with that, but that's another tape, perhaps.

Yes, sadly we have to move you along. (laughs)

So all I was doing was trained to be a teacher, I had a little certificate to say I was a trained teacher, so I put my hand up to do some teaching, got a teaching job at Daramalan College in Canberra. Being a graduate I was shunted in to teach Year Eleven Economics and Modern History. Modern History was all right, the

Economics was dreadful. I'd done Economics 1 at uni but that was my worst subject. So then one day I happened to be wandering into the National Library, or coming out of it, and who was wandering in but Professor Len Turner. Now, he'd been my – he'd been Associate Professor at the University of New England when I was doing my third year honours course. I did 3A too. So we'd got to know one another pretty well then. In the meantime he'd gone down to the Royal Military College as its inaugural Professor of History. So we just happened to chance on the steps of the National Library and he said, 'Ooh, we've just advertised for a tutor. Why don't you put in for it? You'd be well qualified.' So I thought, 'You beaut, there's a way out of teaching,' so I put in for it so I gave up teaching after eight weeks. I think I remember just about every minute of it. Anyway, so then we taught at RMC for that year. It was only a one-year job as a tutor, the only tutor they'd ever had at RMC which had – – –. It was an interesting year, because that was the first year that this bastardisation came up as a major issue, and the whistle was blown by another historian on the staff, a Gerry Walsh, and Gerry was a bachelor and I was a bachelor so we had lots to do with Gerry over that year because he was put in a pretty difficult position, living – well, he was actually living in the mess, the officers' mess, at the RMC. So that was interesting. But as the year ground to a halt or was heading towards an end, I thought, 'God, I'd better do something about next year,' so two jobs came up, a tutorship at Flinders and a tutorship at Macquarie. I put in for both of them. A bloke called Bob O'Neill acted as a referee there and probably few better in Australia at that stage. The one at Macquarie didn't come good. By this stage I'd sort of given myself away as being a South Australian, and my last ten years had been over there in the eastern states. But the job came up in Flinders with George Rudé as Professor, so I headed back to Adelaide.

So what year was that that you arrived back in Adelaide?

1970. Yes, '70 first year here in Flinders.

So how did you at that stage see your career in History progressing?

At this stage it still just (sighs) no great urgent desire on my part. I was still trying to develop my social life and things like that. So I was just sort of going with the path of least resistance, I suppose. I'd been good at History so I managed to get a tutoring job so I ended up in Flinders. At that stage I figured I'd probably become an

academic because I enjoyed History – didn't mind the teaching at university level. And you've got to think at that stage – here we are late '60s, early '70s – there are jobs opening up everywhere with all the new universities [such as] the Flinders, and the Macquaries and probably the Woollongongs later on and Monashes and La Trobes, lots of – and people were getting jobs very, very easily. So I, as I say, envisaged just being an academic.

Were you aware at that stage, say in the '70s, before the Professional Historians idea, of historians working outside of universities?

In terms of as we are now, no. But in terms of people working outside universities, yes. I suppose one of the ideas, one of the little goads along that, or one of the little issues there was when I was at the University of – Royal Military College, which at that stage was a college of the University of New South Wales, and I used to go up there – I started a master's degree while I was up there under Heather Radi, but again that was just because it was expected, didn't cost me anything so I thought, 'Well, I'd better be doing something.' But the point about that was I had to trundle up to Kensington on a few occasions and I just got to realise that the scientists had a research arm associated with the university, and I thought, 'Well, why can't historians do that?' Nothing eventuated from there at all. But it surfaced again [during] my second year down at Flinders when Robin Moore succeeded George Rudé. I can remember one of his staff seminars, he was sort of saying, 'What can we do to make this place tick? What initiatives can we take as a department?' And me being a fresh, inexperienced historian said, 'Why don't we set up a consulting arm? We had a few good history films and they needed historical consultants. And there are a few other little historical issues out there.' But that sort of went down like a lead balloon, that the university should go into a consulting role.

Why do you think that was?

I think it's just the nature of academics at that stage. All of them had tenure, so they had a sufficient income, they had their own research interests. There was no need to go and attract extra funds for the Department, they were reasonably flush. It was just a whole product of the university system at that time of – certainly Arts academics also, who tend to be a little bit further removed. Now, we had – I mean, a recent Anzac Day we had old Bill Gammage there broadcasting on the radio the march.

That's one of the sorts of things I thought that perhaps we could have done. Anyway, that wasn't the appropriate time at that particular stage.

Had we been used to – you also asked had there been public historians before, and up to a sense there had been. You think of someone like Geoffrey Blainey in 1954 when he was a graduate, did his work *The peaks of Lyall.* You had Grenfell Price here in South Australia doing commissioned work and now he did a history of Elders. So you had people had done work outside the university on a commission basis, but they didn't see it as a career and they didn't see it as something for the future, something like a Geoffrey Blainey, and that's one of the criticisms I'd make of lots of my colleagues in the public history game. Lots of them and lots of the early people still see themselves as academics, they always see the notion of working on commission outside the universities as just a stop-gap measure until they can get a job back in the university. And I think that's one of the problems with the way public history has been. It's still on shaky ground to some extent because lots of the early people have only been in it so they could get back to the university.

Did that distinction at all exist in that period, that idea of public history and academic history, or was that something that was still to come?

No, still to come. People would suggest that America has pushed this notion of public history. But even in America this distinction didn't come about until really the 1980s. Perhaps the late 1970s – we're talking Bob Kelly at Santa Barbara University round about '78, '79, '80. The National Council of Public History only started in about 1980, I think. Round about there. Not too much before our Association of Professional Historians. So yes, the distinction just wasn't an important one there.

So what other seeds were there to inspire this idea of the Professional Historians' Association?

Oh, just having to live. Just to personalise it a bit, as I say, again my time in Canberra was sort of defined, it was only a one year period so I had to get out. Working as a tutor one was always conscious of the constraints on that and the fact that one man had it only for a certain amount of time and that there was a barrier above that. You might get to be senior tutor, but only old fellows were senior tutors.

And then there was this barrier, there was no automatic progression to lecturer. So we always had this notion that we'd have to sort of do something. And again we got on and we started a Master's degree here at Adelaide, ditched the one that we were doing with the University of New England – that didn't really matter because I hadn't done a great deal there, although it was a good topic – and as I started this and thinking, 'We're going to have to – – –.' But did it part-time while tutoring at the University, then social life started catching up and we managed to – we were married by that stage. So then we started to take a firmer control on where we wanted to go and why we wanted to do it. So at one stage where June agreed to keep working for a bit and I'd sort of throw in the tutorship and try and get a scholarship and complete the degree full-time, that's in effect what happened. So here I was, we'd sort of cut from the University – except as a student – and then had to start looking about. When the notion of finishing off the thesis was becoming more and more prominent we had to think about what we were going to do when we finished that, and by this stage June was pregnant and so she wasn't going to be able to keep working. So just in the latter stages of that I got a job at the South Australian Museum, so I think in about 1974 here. Graeme Pretty, who was a Senior Curator of Archaeology there had got some funds from the National Estate Grants Program to do a heritage survey over a big part of South Australia, so he got me in there as, in effect, the first one on the project. We ultimately grew to about – oh, five or six or seven people. They included an architect, a surveyor, a couple of office people, a conservator. So it was quite a good little unit. I was the first one on and the last one off, as it turned out. So we got this sort of contract there – again, initially only for one year but then it went on for a second year and then a third year, but we were sort of living by the seat of our pants there for a while. In that time the thesis went in as a PhD but it came out as a Master's, which again was very crucial to our first few years, because it's that same response – as I said, history keeps repeating itself – the same response I gave when I left the Brothers. 'Well, I'll show the blighters.' So it was a question of – you know, I thought I hadn't been all that well done by as far as my supervisor and whatnot was concerned, so at this stage I'm probably getting to be about twenty-eight or so, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, so it's a bit late to put my hand up and try to get into the Department of Foreign Affairs or something like that, the public service job. So to some extent I was constrained, but I also had this burning ambition to

show the blighters that we could survive. And I can remember with another mate of mine who was doing a PhD at Adelaide, one of my colleagues from the Honours degree in New England – on several occasions we just bandied around this notion of working as a consultant out there. And by this stage – we're talking now the mid-'70s – you had the whole heritage game had broadened out. And as my job at the museum had indicated there were jobs for historians there. And it's interesting in South Australia, as far as historians are concerned, we led the rest of Australia in terms of professionalising – providing work for professional historians – – –. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

– – – in the heritage game. You know, Donovan and Associates has been the prime consultants for heaps of very, very significant jobs. Even now we're doing a conservation management plan out at DSTO[3] at Salisbury. We're the prime consultants and we're the ones who got a planner on tap, somebody else on tap and a whole heap of other things.

Now, I'll just have to stop you there because we're about to run out of tape. (break in recording) You can continue.

Keep going. So I was just sort of praising we South Australians, and the fact that we sort of led Australia at that stage. Even now – well, even – now we're probably getting closer to what it's like in the eastern states, but in the eastern states invariably the heritage jobs [have gone to] architects [as] the prime consultants and historians have been there as sub-consultants and got a pretty miserable recompense as a consequence.

So that development of the heritage area, do you think that was integral to that idea becoming more of a –

Yes.

– possibility?

Definitely so. So in '76, for instance, one of our – well, in '74 when we started off with the South Australian Museum, I guess one of my colleagues was an architect.

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[3] Defence Science and Technology Organisation, part of Australia's Department of Defence.

We got on very well, very, very close friends, families are very, very close, we've done a lot of work with Barry Rowney. So just working with somebody from another profession I managed to pick up lots of attitudes, I suppose, ways of going about things, ways of organising things from perhaps a managerial point of view. And it just developed from there. We were out of work there for – oh, six months. Funding ultimately ran out after the Whitlam period. We were basically out of work there for a little while. So there was another instance when I could have gone elsewhere because there didn't seem to be much for historians and we hadn't done enough to have our name out there. But then more funding became available and we managed to – because of our previous experience, were sort of one of the first cabs off the rank, I suppose. We were asked by the City of Unley to look after their heritage survey – this was in 1978 – and, looking back on it now, it's quite interesting. We had a very, very go-ahead Town Clerk – City Manager, he called him[self] – because he'd done a bit of heritage work in Fremantle and had come over to Unley, so he was very, very go-ahead and he was pushing Unley for all it was worth at that stage. So the notion was that Unley had had this heritage person on board, and we conducted seminars around the place, and here was me talking about heritage and how you do things and how you assess buildings and all sorts of things. And that was, again, got me into other professions. I particularly learned a lot about planning and planners' attitudes to things there, because I was working directly to the City Planner who is now the City Manager out at Salisbury. And then we had – and then that went for about nine months or so, and we had a chance to do a heap of other things. So I developed my skills, I suppose, by going from one job to another and picking up other bits here and there.

One job was to help set up the Heritage Branch. Heritage legislation came in in South Australia, they set up a Heritage Branch, they didn't have any people to man it – to staff it, I'm sorry – so they had to get a lot of expertise in a hurry. So they put on about half a dozen of us there under short-term contracts, me being one, Sue Marsden being another, John Dallwitz another, a couple of architects, Mark Butcher and Barry Rowney both finished up getting a job there, so [I was] working with Barry again.

I also did some work for the National Trust of the Northern Territory at that particular stage. It's amazing how history works in just little linkages. Whilst

working at Unley in 1978 I'd joined Australia ICOMOS. They had a meeting down at Robe and I met a lot of the heavies in Australia ICOMOS, one of whom was a Peter Forrest who'd come down from Queensland who was Director of the National Trust up there. He finished up going to Darwin as the Director of the National Trust there, my thesis had been on the history of Northern Territory, so come 1979 he got me to do a whole heap of work up in the Northern Territory, just documenting sites, looking at sites and providing sort of a historical documentation there. And that's what led me to meet Eleanor Crosby, who was one of these consulting archaeologists, and that again furthered this notion that there might be a place for consulting historians.

So I guess – – –.

There was another little element there, if I can just throw it in, because all these things –

Link up.

– link up ultimately. One of the things when I was working at the South Australian Museum was the fact that I'd learnt of this place called ICCROM[4] – International Centre for Conservation. It was in Rome but at that stage I couldn't do anything about it. And again I had a couple of little instances where people were preferred for me for various things, and that was again, 'I'll show the blighters, and rah-rah-rah.' Come 1979 when I was working at Unley, I thought, 'Well, we didn't have the wherewithal then to make approaches about studying at ICCROM, to develop my professional skills in terms of heritage conservation.' And we put in to go to Rome to undertake this course, got a letter back saying, 'Yes.' We thought, 'Fantastic, we've been accepted.' We thought we were pretty good. It's only when we got over there we realised that Australia was a nation that, through its UNESCO responsibilities, supported ICCROM and generally those nationals from countries that support ICCROM get first go at going to go to these places. And if ICCROM had been going since about 1970, here we were about 1979, there'd only ever been one Australian go. So just by putting my hand up I was sort of virtually guaranteed a spot at ICCROM. And that was an excellent – again, developing, [a] proving

ground, I suppose, meeting professionals from all around the world. Different attitudes to conservation. And I guess that sort of linked me into the development of public history in the States.

How did that – through who you met, or – – –?

People whom I met. There was one fellow there, Richard [O'Byrne] – Richard, Richard, from – anyway, he was from Canada, or an American who'd lived in Canada. He was a great apostle of this outfit called the Association for Preservation Technology, so he was always saying, 'You should join.' So when we came back we put the hand up to join APT. They used to put out a good journal, an excellent journal. When we got one of the first journals there was a little piece in there from a Carol Purcell from [the University of California at] Santa Barbara saying about – just talking about the public history course at Santa Barbara. So I thought, 'Hmm, that's interesting, that's sort of the bent we're going.' So I wrote off to Carol Purcell, said, 'This is me in South Australia, I've been working in this field of public history now for six or seven years and I didn't know what it was all about. So could you give me details about the course?' So that was in 1980 – late 1980 or early – yes, late 1980, because we were in Rome from early, most of 1980, came back in September. So that linked me into the public history over there. And, just by chance, soon after that I got a letter back from a bloke called French, Maurice French. He said, 'Ooh, I'm pleased to make your acquaintance.' He was a lecturer at Darling Downs CAE[5] at that stage. He'd heard about public history, and he happened to be over there at Santa Barbara undertaking the course when my letter landed on Carol Purcell's desk, so Carol obviously said, 'Do you know this bloke? Who is he, what's he on about?' So he didn't know me from a bar of soap but that didn't really matter. And he came back all enthused with this notion of public history and was hoping to get things moving and develop. We corresponded for a little bit, but again he was sort of an academic and it didn't really go anywhere, and I've never heard of him as a proponent of public history since those early exchanges of letters. So where were we? So there was a whole heap of things there just sort of – again, I've had – taking

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[4] ICCROM – International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

[5] College of Advanced Education.

much more control of my life at this stage, but was still being led, if you like, in a particular way.

So how did the idea – I mean, this is your career as a public historian – how did you come to the idea of getting them all together, because they're two different things slightly, I guess?

One of – two things there: just observing the fact that there were lots more historians – when I say 'lots more' there weren't a *great* deal many more, but there were more historians out working outside the university. So we're thinking of 1981 – say 1980, because that's when the idea was put forward. We had the development of the History Trust in South Australia, or the Constitutional Museum as it was then, in South Australia. There was a little body of historians working there.

Who do you remember?

Peter Cahalan, of course, was the boss. It was Penny Cahalan, anyway. And there was Pam Carlton, Angela Woollacott – she wouldn't like to say, but Mrs Carol Purcell ultimately. They were ones, key ones, at the Constitutional Museum. You had sort of someone like a Brian Samuels who was acting as an adviser there, and you had a fellow, Mark Blencoe from the – well, both Mark and Brian had come from the Education Department but saw themselves as quasi-historians. You had John Tregenza out there who was working at – who had resigned from the History Department at Adelaide[6] and was working at this stage at the Art Gallery. You had Sue Marsden who had been with us there at the embryonic Heritage Branch. There might have been one or two others, but as I say not too many. So there was a little group of people out there. But one of the things was – well, this is my impression – it was a pretty lonely existence. We did our own little bit of work and sometimes met somewhere, but we didn't have occasions to meet. You've got to see me as an apostle of public history by this stage, or starting to become a real apostle. I don't want to emphasise this overly much about this ….. the academics, because that's gradually worn away as the time has gone by and I've realised it doesn't really matter one iota, you can't change their attitudes anyway, so I haven't really tried over the latter years. But there was still this element of making sure that this public

[6] The University of Adelaide (later Adelaide University).

history works. And I suppose an element of that is just providing collegial support for others. And then, with this – as I say, this example of what the consulting archaeologists had done, we suggested – I think when we came back from Rome we'd been asked to give a little seminar down at Flinders. They had the usual weekly work-in-progress seminar and Brian [Dickey] had asked me to go down and chat about what the Rome experience had meant to me. And I mentioned this notion that what we ought to do was have this association of historians and here's a model, and Brian was the only one to really express any interest in it and the issue sort of started to run off from there.

So it was a question of why get into set up this organisation? I knew there was at this stage an outfit in America, and it struck me as the way this had to go. One of my throwaway lines is, 'Oh, well, look, if we look fifty years in the future this thing is going to exist – why don't we get it going now?' And I thought, 'Well, if the archaeologists can do it we historians can do it. If not, why not now?' And that attitude also flows over to the ACPHA[7], the national body. I think it was obvious we had to have a national body at some particular stage. It was just a question of keeping the idea going and pushing at opportunities we had until its time came. This was all about the appropriate time and the time happening and things like that.

So once you had that idea, what did you to do establish it? What practical things did you – – –?

Well, in the first instance – – –. I'll reiterate a point I mentioned earlier, the last time we met, the fact that if I claim lots of things for myself it's not trying to bignote myself, nor sort of claim undue attention, because it's easy for some people to have ideas, but it's up to other people to take them up and run with them and implement them, and I'm possibly not the right person to implement lots of things. I'm an ideas person, I still have lots of ideas. Some get up, some don't. So Brian was probably the main catalyst for getting it running. He's an utter blighter in some stages, but he bulldozes through and often it's a question of trotting along saying, 'Yes, Brian, no, Brian, yep, right, right, yes, let's do that.' So Brian was enthusiastic, and it was a

[7] Australian Council of Professional Historians' Associations.

question of getting someone like a Sue Marsden onside. And I think it was probably Sue and I went to Peter Cahalan and said, 'Look, we've got this idea for doing something, can you facilitate it?' And Peter did. He provided the Kingston Room[8] for us for many, many occasions where we had meetings all through the latter part of 1980. Everyone was supportive of the idea, nobody was opposed to it.

Do you remember the first meeting? I came across, in the minutes, that the 12th November 1980 was the first meeting where the historians came together. And I think you mentioned in an article you wrote for the recent newsletter[9], that you had a note in there about a historians' meeting. Do you remember that particular gathering?

Other than the fact – vaguely, but – I can probably still remember, picture myself in the Kingston Room, where I was sitting and how things were going. But there was no sense of 'We're creating history here,' or anything like that. It was just 'Let's do it.'

What sort of atmosphere was there in terms of the idea, what sort of response there was to – – –?

I'd say everyone was enthusiastic. As I say in the little article I mentioned, the only discussion really was what we were going to call ourselves, and it was just typical of dear John Tregenza that he wanted to be the South Australian Association of Professional Historians. Whereas me, being more gung-ho than that, said, 'No.' He suggested calling ourselves the Association of Professional Historians was too grandiose or it was just not what historians did. And I was for the bigger picture and going for let's call ourselves 'The Association'. And that won out – or it might have been the Professional Historians' Association, but then Brian Samuels came up with the great idea of putting the Association first, so that we'd look first in any list of associations, and that was a brilliant little – – –.

Did the term 'professional historian' exist already?

Yes. Yes and no. Because I guess that question prompts me to make a little bit of a distinction between 'professional' and 'public', and that did cause some discussion,

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[8] At Institute Building, Kintore Avenue.

[9] Peter Donovan, 'Early years of the Association of Professional Historians', *Professional Historians Association (SA) Inc. Newsletter*, no. 73, March 2002.

what we should call ourselves. Because in America – we weren't overly influenced by America at this stage, other than the fact that this area of profession is available for us and we can develop, turn this into a profession. In America the concept is public history, and that has all sorts of connotations. The smart-alec historians, academics, say, 'Isn't the stuff I do public, isn't it *for* the public, what is the difference between public and private history?' And so on, a whole heap of things like that. So it was largely to get over that I think we settled on the notion of 'professional history'. Because one of the instances at the beginning was we wanted to be all-inclusive. At that stage we had historians in the heritage game, we had historians in the museum game, we had consulting historians, but we didn't want to exclude academics. So as far as we were concerned, all those who were making their living out of being historians were professional historians, so I think we latched onto the notion of calling ourselves professionals rather than public historians.

Taking you back a little bit, I came across this circular that you'd responded to – it may not trigger something, but it may – something written by Geoffrey Searle of Monash University who was writing about the changing history scene, and there was something raised at the Historical Association Conference. And you did quite a long response. And one of the things you raised was that there was no distinction in other professional fields between public and professional and public and private or whatever. Do you want to talk a bit about that and how it was different in history?

Yes. That was good, that was – as I said, that sort of nailed our colours to the mast a little bit. But that's been a big bug of mine all along the line. And I just sort of paraphrase that by saying that the chip on my shoulder against academics is not as big as it used to be, and even while I said earlier, 'I'll show the blighters,' individually I get on well with them. So it's only as a bloc, I suppose, that I'm sort of critical of historians and their attitudes. Individually, great people. We still count many of them amongst our friends. But it just struck me – this is after my experience now, you've got to realise I'd been working with architects and engineers and planners and lawyers and all sorts of people, and it just sort of struck me that the typical architect was a fellow in private practice. You had – and I'd had a lot to do with architects by this stage. We'd done some work for the Professor of Architecture at the uni [of Adelaide] and we knew architects at the University of

Technology or whatever it was called at that stage[10]. So we knew a lot about the profession. But there was this collegiality about these other professions. The academics knew they were academics, but they also deferred to those in private enterprise who were brilliant architects, many of them, with great designs and a whole heap of other things. Plus you had government architects – we'd done a lot of work for PBD, the Public Buildings Department, at this stage so we'd worked with architects in public enterprise. And we thought, 'Why should history be any different? We need the academics, we need them to give us the basic skills of research, but then that shouldn't define what we do, that shouldn't act as constraints and we shouldn't just be confined to academic history, *i.e.* repeating theses *ad infinitum*. We've got a right to other audiences. Fellows doing the Honours in Architecture have to do a project, a practical project, and they're all weird and wonderful projects, but rarely do they get to implement them because you need funds and you need a whole heap of other things. You've got to work to a client's constraints. There's so much money available, it's got to be done in a certain amount of time, give us the best thing you can do. I mean, you're not doing – an architect who does that is not doing just what the client wants. But we keep getting this criticism from the academics, 'Oh, when you work on commission you're just a sycophant doing what the client wants, doctoring history to their demands.' And I just kept on trying to push the notion that this is not so, or it needn't be so. Other professions live quite happily with the academics, seeing their place and working with those in private enterprise and those in government and a whole heap of things. Why shouldn't historians?

Why do you think history was different? Is there a reason?

Oh, it's just the way it's – just the way the academic model, I suppose – – –. You've had this distinction between academic historians and anyone else is just an amateur, so there's been [a dismissive attitude] of 'That's just local history.' It wasn't until someone like a Bill Gammage does a history of Narrandera that people say, 'Ohh,' you know, 'we can have professional local histories.'

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[10] South Australian Institute of Technology.

I guess that's another thing to discuss as well, because one of the issues was membership and what would be the minimum standards, and there were, I guess, the amateur local historians around. So what distinction – was there a distinction made between those kinds of people and the professionals and the academics. Were there sort of three – – –?

In one sense, I suppose, we're trying to have it both ways. And this is a much larger issue because there's also background to the whole development of ACPHA and professional qualifications and standards. We wanted to be professional, we wanted to be seen as distinct from amateurs, local historians, using it in a dismissive way which I was throwing off about a moment or two ago. So we, I think, insisted in the first instance people should have at least a major sequence in History – Honours preferably, but major sequence. But there were some people out there like the Elizabeth Warburtons and Ian Auhls who'd written, you know, pretty good histories, and you thought, 'We shouldn't – we're still starting off, we can tighten things later, we've got to be all-inclusive if we can. We'll give some people the option of coming in if they've got work to the standard of an Honours degree, an Honours thesis.' In effect, I don't think that had any effect on anything. We never picked up any of those as members. I knew Ian Auhl went – I used to often meet him at different stages and he said, 'Oh, I should become a member,' but he never did. He was always supportive of our cause but it didn't worry him. In latter years we've had someone like a Geoff Manning become a member and he was on our executive. Geoff joined just for his own particular reasons. But again, we haven't had many people that have come in who we wouldn't like to have in.

If I can just leap several years, this was an issue that I guess acted as a brake on the development of ACPHA. We in South Australia didn't have a great pool of historians to draw upon. New South Wales had a larger pool, and it was set up very, very professionally, and I think their minimum standard was probably an Honours degree to start with and they weren't going to broach any change to that. So they looked askance at possibly us to some extent, certainly someone like a Queensland, where you had probably a little more lax than we, particularly – even more so – Western Australia, where I think they were originally set up as something like a research and – professional and research historians or something, so there were quite a deal of people in their association that weren't of a university standard. So it wasn't until there'd been a lot of – we had outfits

established in each of the mainland states and we'd managed to push up the entry standards that New South Wales became a little more amenable to having a national association. But in the early days it was a question of trying to be all-inclusive, to be inclusive rather than be too exclusive. As it turned out it hasn't really mattered much. The academics haven't joined. We got a few members but they haven't joined a great deal. The Museum people have gone off and become museologists rather than historians, so they haven't really done much. The people in the heritage game, in the government, haven't really joined. Someone like a Brian Samuels is a member, but I don't think we get a great deal out of Brian in that way. He hasn't done much. So we tend to be an association of consulting historians, even though in the very early days we tried to prevent that.

So perhaps we could talk a bit about the initial objectives that you had for the Association. In one of the notes from some of the first meetings there were four different things perhaps you could comment and talk about. And one of them was the promotion of professional standards and conditions of employment. Do you want to talk about that as one of the main objectives?

Yes. Certainly one of the things was to ensure that we received a proper recompense for what we're doing. And I guess this was opposed to the attitude that, 'Oh, historians just love writing history, they'll do it for a very minimal fee if they want a fee at all.' So we were constantly trying just to establish professional credibility, I suppose, and getting across the idea that if you wanted good work you've got to pay for it.

How did you go about doing that?

Oh, just trying to work on people to make sure they charged reasonable fees. Pointing out to them that – and this is, in the early days we had lots of workshops and things like that to try and push these sorts of things – we came up with a sort of fees brochure, I suppose, saying, 'These are the things you ought to aim at,' and setting it down in the various grades so that if you're a recent starter you could expect to get this much, and if you'd been around for a few years you should try for this much. Now, I think most of those figures that were given were probably a bit pie-in-the-sky, but at least it got us raising our sights rather than lowering them. People still get caught out even recently. But at least people are thinking now. And I think also clients are starting to think, 'Well, we have to pay for these – we want to

go for these people that belong to this Association rather than just Jim or Bill or Joe Bloggs because he's a local historian, he now knows more than anybody else in the area.' I think we've probably helped overcome that. You know, we personally have done a few local histories, and it's always handy if you can go in there saying, 'The Association recommends fees in this order,' rather than say, 'Oh yes, I think you're worth about this much.' So that was one element, just to try and get people to value their own labour, I guess, and have clients also value what they have to offer.

Another one was marketing the skills of the professional historian. So how did you – I mean, what was the response of I suppose the potential clients to these things, then?

Not a great deal. But again, we also had workshops on these. You know, we had someone like a Averil Holt's husband talked to us a little bit about marketing, and I know we had another – we had a workshop on display craft, I think, just telling us how to do things. Just – and again – yes. It's interesting. A lot of these ideas came from me, to some extent. Again, that's not bignoting myself, but if you look at where I'd come from and a lot of the other people, I was sort of thinking about lots of these things where other people weren't, and even Brian Dickey wouldn't have been thinking about lots of these sorts of issues. So it was just things like having a card and letterhead and having proper presentation, that you need that if you're going to be taken seriously, you needed to – – –. (break in recording) We set up, we came up with a brochure to try and give everyone a brochure, and we had a little vacant rectangle on the back of that where people were meant to put their own stamp so you give it to your client and it has your name on the bottom so they would get back to you if they wanted something. That was – – –. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

This is the second tape of an interview with Peter Donovan being recorded by Karen George for the Professional Historians Association Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 3rd May 2002 at Coromandel Valley in South Australia.

So we were running through those four points. The other two were particularly about one, a provision for a forum for critical discussion and the provision of mechanisms for disseminating information among members. So I thought they were perhaps a bit connected in a way. Do you want to talk about that aspect?

Yes, they're allied to some of these others, I suppose. Well, this particular forum – we needed not quite work-in-progress seminars, but just sort of a structure whereby people could come and talk about projects if they wished, get information that they wished. So we used to have some of these seminars as information-giving things. I can remember here in this room one stage we had a lawyer come and talk to us about contracts, then ultimately we went up and we came up with what was a standard contract, I suppose, or a contract with sorts of issues that we as historians should insist upon. We had Peter Holt talk to us about accounting, basic accounting procedures and what ought to happen. There was a lot of this basic work, I suppose, putting in to people about how they could run a business as a consulting historian, be professional about it. You know, like billing people as soon as you've done the job rather than just letting it waft away for quite a while. And we had set up this informal method of just having a day for a luncheon, where we might just sort of sit round and discuss issues, and that was meant to be a little bit like a university common room or something where they can get round and just a little informally discuss issues that are of interest, make contacts and things like that, and that sort of finished up as the lunch day on the first Tuesday of every month, which is terrific.

Do you know whose idea that was, was it a joint thing?

Well, again I'm going to claim credit for that. I claim credit for most of them, but again, not trying to bignote myself, but as I say I was out there thinking about these things and lots of other people came in and went out. We had lots of people that came in. One of the things – if I can just go back, and it's pertinent – one of the things we did in the early days was did a lot of lobbying through universities. I was often down to Flinders once a year talking to Honours students saying, 'This outfit exists, you ought to join. It exists for these reasons and it does this.' Other people did the same thing out at Adelaide. So we were getting lots of young recruits through I suppose. Lots of people had just finished Honours and they had come out and wanting to get a job, thinking this was a bit of a union. So they found it not to be so, that they had to do their own work to some extent, so they'd sort of wander off. So when you look at the numbers of people there was quite a flow-through. You had this little core of people that sort of remained, and I suppose it's only if you're remaining there for a while you think how you can change this or what you

can do for a new initiative. And as I said, Sue had probably dropped off the pace a bit as being a consultant is concerned, there probably weren't too many more like me. Bernie[11] was still learning his spurs at that particular stage, so I was probably, with experience from all these professionals, coming out with all sorts of ideas all the time.

Do you want to talk a little bit, as we're on people, about that first original committee that was elected? I can give you the names if you want them.

Perhaps go through them one at a time, and – – –.

Yes. So you've got the Secretary, Brian Dickey initially.

Yes. Brian. As I say, couldn't have got off the ground without Brian. And Brian was terrific as Secretary because he'd put things down. And there's an issue I've raised. If we got any – as I say, I keep touting the fact that we're the first in Australia, and only a year or two after the National Council of Public History in the States, so in world terms we are fantastic. Now, you're going to say that was done with a smile on my face, but I think it's worth pointing out that we were right up there at the beginning. If we in South Australia had any influence nationally, it was probably due to Brian Dickey. He notes in his little piece that he mentioned to his colleagues at the university that the day after we had our first meeting that he'd gone to this meeting and this was going on. And he was also writing in things like the *AHA Bulletin* saying this was happening. Now, whether there's a direct connection between that and New South Wales taking up the idea is for others to work out. So Brian was very good with the publicity and things like that, and just making sure things were down in black and white.

Okay. The Assistant Secretary then was Pam Carlton, initially.

Pam Carlton? Yes, she was doing a PhD at Adelaide University at that stage. Again, helpful in getting things up but she wasn't committed to the job. She got her PhD and then I think moved over to Canberra, I think, or certainly moved out of Adelaide. So she probably came on board there because she was a great mate of Penny Baker's – that's who I was trying to think of earlier, now known as Penny

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[11] Bernie O'Neil, later President.

Cahalan – they were close mates at university. Penny was one of their first people put on at the Constitutional Museum and I think she dragged Pam Carlton along.

She was the Membership Secretary at that time.

Yes.

Publicity was Sue Marsden then, on the first committee.

Yes. Sue was there, we had to have Sue on the committee, I guess. I don't know what – this is not trying to be disparaging – I don't know what Sue did as far as publicity was concerned other than just writing around to people, because I think I was involved with the very first little brochure, this little blue one. I have very fond – well, sharp memories of that because we got the damn thing printed, and me being me had sort of overseen the printing of it. It's interesting if you look at the little logo we had there at that stage it was a little Greek temple with – outline of a Greek temple with the two upright columns being 'H's' or the uprights of an 'H', *i.e.* the History House type thing. I suppose that was mine too. But the issue there is it's very close to the ICOMOS[12] type of logo for the ICOMOS, which is a Greek temple. Problem with that is we got the thing printed, and there was a spelling error in there or some error in there, so we got the thing reprinted and Donovan and Associates paid for that because we figured, well, it was our blue, we let it go through, we should rectify that. But Averil Holt helped me in that, I believe. Was Averil on that list?

Not on the initial one, no. Treasurer Paul Stark was the last.

Yes, Paul's an oddball. Well, he is, too. But he's a good bloke, is Paul. Now, Paul is there, but he's oddball insofar as he was an architect. Now, Paul was there because he had worked with Sue and I – Sue and I, yes – when we were doing the City of Adelaide Heritage Survey. SEM – no, what was it? DMS, DMS, Donovan, Marsden and Stark, and we'd got pretty close while we were doing that with all sorts of issues that happened with Adelaide City Council. And this was just at the time we were getting up the Association, and Paul by this stage – he was a graduate architect, he'd never got any articles so he wasn't a registered architect, and he had visions of

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[12] ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites.

becoming almost an academic. He'd started a Master's degree but then he got tied up with trying to make a living and he never completed that at that stage. So he saw himself more as a historian. So he joined up as the Treasurer. He I think only probably lasted twelve or eighteen months or so. Obviously wasn't for him, he realised that and I suppose we realised it too, so Paul wandered off and not a problem.

Was it hard or easy to get people to take on those executive positions and actually do something about the Association?

It's always been a little difficult. I suppose it was easy in the first instance, because everyone was enthusiastic and wanted to help out and were dead keen. It's become a little harder as things have settled down and – yes, I don't know where else to go [from] there, but ask another question.

Okay. In the break we were talking a little bit about that issue of conflict of interest, being that you were the sort of point of call for the Association and you also had a private practice of your own, so do you want to talk a little bit about that issue?

Yes, yes, certainly. Because that was – we thought hard and long about that. And again it was just, I guess, we happened to be the first point of call on all the stationery and in terms of the number in the 'phone book and a whole heap of things like that. Nothing sinister there, just that people – and we didn't push it – it's just that people seemed to say, 'Well, you're about the only ones who are going to hang around for a while where there can be consistency. We don't want to be changing our 'phone number on our stationery every two or three years because there's a change in Secretary. Would you be happy to continue in that vein?' I said yes.

Just to interrupt there, why were you considered to be someone that would hang around?

Probably because of my enthusiasm, I suppose, and I was always on the executive. I was a member of the executive for about the first fifteen years, I think, so I went from President to possibly Secretary, possibly Treasurer – I don't know – I had *all* those sorts of jobs, a second stint as President. So I was always there, whereas we had this big flow-through of other people. You know, Peter Bell was President for a bit, he didn't do anything before he was President and he didn't do anything after he was President. Brian Crozier came onto the committee, served a term as President

and then moved interstate. Bernie had a stint as President – well, Brian had it, did I mention Brian? – anyway, he had a stint as President, Secretary then President, then probably sort of wandered off. Always been very supportive, but – – –. So Donovan was still there. Everything was sort of changing around him to some extent. But that did create lots of issues. And I think because we were in that position we were dead certain, very, very careful to be whiter than white.

But there were instances when people would ring up with job offers saying, you know, 'We want this job done; who could do it?' And there are probably a couple of instances where there were jobs that we perhaps would have liked to have done but we didn't, we had to push them elsewhere and not consider ourselves available for them, because we'd had prior knowledge of them. We tried to get around that at one stage by having Beth Robertson as 'the person', so if a request for a job came in we'd sort of shoot it through to Beth, or if somebody wanted advice, some potential client wanted advice, we'd try and go out to Beth and say, 'Could you deal with this client?' Because Beth, being in the State Library there, had no great pretensions to being a consultant elsewhere, and we figured she was a very moral person anyway so she wouldn't favour anyone over anyone else. But it was an issue, and you mentioned there, Karen, that someone wrote in at one stage grizzling that people in the executive were keeping all the good jobs to themselves.

Yes, that was in the newsletter at some point – I can't give you the exact date, but yes.

I just have to deny that. We bent over backwards that that was not the case. But it might have seemed the case, because Donovan's been in pretty constant work ever since the Association – been frantic in many instances. But it wasn't a product of his getting all the jobs that were coming into the Association. Very few jobs came in anyway – very few jobs come in now, I believe. But it's just that we were active out there, we'd established a name and a measure of credibility, I suppose, and we were getting lots of jobs.

There's another element to it also, though. As one element of our support for the Association, when lots of instances we had more work than we could handle and we sort of had to employ people, we always insisted – ensured, rather than

insisted – we always ensured that we had somebody from the Association. Or if the skill we wanted wasn't in the Association we would try and – not insist, but try and encourage the person to become a member of the Association. For instance, one time we were doing jobs on museums, so we got Pamela Runge to come on board, and we got Pamela to join up the Association. Another time we wanted a skill in sports history, so we got Leonie Randall to come on board. She joined up the Association, no problems, but then when the job finished she sort of wandered off. There are a few people like that that have come in. But there are also others – you know, we used Bernie there for some overflow jobs, we've used Alison Painter for jobs, we've used Pat Sumerling for jobs. And recently we were doing stuff for Native Title. We had Mary Geyer, Bernie, Alison and me sort of all – we had almost the whole of the – – –. And we had Pauline Payne doing something for us, too, so we had almost the whole of the executive working for Donovan and Associates. Now, that's something that's very, very recent, though, that last instance. But yes, so it might have been the fact that lots of them seemed to be working, but they were probably working for us rather than jobs that had come through the Association.

Did you want to talk a bit about that creating employment, because in the early days it seemed that the idea of a register was raised and that you would be letting people know about job opportunities. How much was that part of the Association's job, then?

That was considered to be very, very important. But, as I say, there weren't a great deal of many jobs that would have come in. It wouldn't have kept one person alive, I don't believe, the jobs – if we were dependent upon jobs that came in *via* the register. Now, we need the register and I think it serves a very useful purpose.

How did that work, then, in the beginning?

There was always a bit of difficulty there. To get over this notion, the fact about people favouring some other than others – Alison Paynter would probably be the one to talk more about that, because I think Alison was Secretary or in one particular position was given the role of looking after that or acting as a triage – if people came in she'd sort of farm things out – and at one stage we gave her the responsibility of a job potential of two thousand dollars or less she did not have to circulate members. Now, we figured anything under – there wasn't much, but anything under two

thousand didn't warrant a lot of work. Two thousand and over, she was meant to circulate information to everybody who was on the so-called register. Now, we didn't have a register for public consultation, as we do at the moment. At that stage, members just sort of wrote in and said, 'I would like to be on the register,' and Alison or that person was – I never had that job – but that person was bound to, as I say, circulate everybody on the register. Again, I don't think a great deal came of that. We had to have it. In the first instance we thought it was probably better to keep the names of our people on the register private rather than just sending them out, but now we send them out. I don't think it's made a great deal – I think we've had about two jobs out of the register, I think, and neither of them have been what I'd call significant jobs. But we need it.

So the other thing that you were very concerned with in the beginning was actually establishing the code of ethics and the constitution, so perhaps you could tell me a little bit about that – mainly the code of ethics, particularly.

Yes. Perhaps I don't see that at one level quite as significant and we can probably dismiss it pretty quickly. But we had to have a constitution. Very early in the piece we decided we had to be incorporated so we needed a constitution, and we needed a code of ethics, I think, also, to act as a bit of a safeguard against all this implicit criticism and some of it explicit criticism from academics, the fact that we're only there to bastardise history. So this was just nailing our colours to the wall, the fact that yes, we were collegiate, we would support one another, we would not knowingly pilfer anything from anyone else, we would help people, we wouldn't criticise them unduly. It was just sort of belief – I think every profession has its implicit or explicit code of ethics, so we thought we'd make them pretty explicit. But just to again establish our professionalism and potentially obviate potential criticism from our academic colleagues, I guess.

Was that coming from specific quarters, or was it a general – – –?

No, no, it was just a general thing. A whole heap of things. You mentioned the letter I wrote to Geoffrey Searle. I think I got a reply back, but I thought it was a pretty significant letter but it sort of went nowhere. I can remember on one occasion, this was when Graham Davidson had just established his course in Public History at Monash, it was an AHA conference in Sydney, and I was wandering back to the

residential colleges and he was coming up from the residential colleges so I introduced myself and said who I am, 'G'day there, Graham,' and said, 'Look, if we can help you we'd love to.' You know, 'Obviously, you want to give – if you want us to come over and give a lecture or two we're happy to do that. We're even happy to have someone come and get work experience with us.' Never heard anything more from it. Whole instances like that. We put up, as I say, in the very early days – probably about 1981 – this letter to Flinders University suggesting that they should set up a course in Public History. By this stage we'd got information from the States about the course at Santa Barbara, perhaps said, 'You should be doing something like that. This is the way of the future, this is where the professionals are going to run this profession later on. You can do something, become the Australian centre for professional – for public history in South Australia.' That sort of went nowhere. So many instances we'd sort of put things up. And I kept on going to AHA conferences, just as a question of trying to keep up with what others in the profession were doing, and we were given very, very short shrift. Not sort of in a malicious sense, just people weren't interested, it just didn't register on their radar. So we constantly had to perhaps make noises to try and be heard.

Was that part of the way you ran the seminars, because it seemed because they were working, sort of practical, things, was that because of the lack of a public history course, that you were trying to –

Yes.

– create professional development?

Yes. Because lots of our people come out of an academic background, just writing essays, doing an Honours degree, possibly doing a PhD, but no practical things about how to run an account book, how to present themselves. So we felt there was just a lot to be done. You know, architects learnt pretty basic things, just how to draw properly and how to do little squares and how to do good circles, how to draw a little tree so they can put it on a thing. Our guys had no practical experience at all, effectively. You know, just basic things: if you're putting in a contract, get it – putting in a tender, get it typed rather than just handwrite it. It might say handwritten applications aren't important, but you've got to present it properly. At that stage we used to still talk about Letraset, you know, learn how to do Letrasetting

so that you can put headings on things. Pretty basic stuff. But that sort of stuff was never taught at uni. When I was tutoring at Flinders, I know the attitude was, 'Oh, it doesn't really matter how the thing is presented as long as the argument is good, as long as there's an argument there.' But it was always easier, better, to correct something that was nicely typed and nicely laid out than something scrawled on pretty grubby paper.

So how successful were those seminars that you held? Did many people come along in those days? I'm talking like the early '80s.

Yes. Being truthful, I suppose, not many. If I close my eyes and picture the people that we had here for one on copyright, it might have been about seven people, I suppose, and I suppose that's probably – that would have been considered to be a good roll-up to most of these seminars, I suppose. Then, when you think of it, there weren't all that many people interested in it. If you had a job in the Heritage Branch you didn't need to consider these sorts of issues so you didn't worry about them. If you were working in the History Trust by that stage, if you were working on the notion of displays, you could get your little teaching about display work from there. So again it was really only the consulting historians that were interested in these things, and we've only ever really been a pretty small group there, I guess.

I think it was Brian Dickey when I met him, was talking – one he remembers as being the most successful was one about turning a manuscript into a book.

Yes. That was brilliant.

Do you want to talk a little bit about that one?

We've done a lot about that, at various levels. I think one stage we had a visit to Lutheran Publishing House, as it was at that stage. Another time we had Ralph Clyma from Griffin Press talk to us, because a lot of us believed, 'We're involved in books and things like that, and we need to know about the process beyond just the writing.' So in this instance, we – and I think, again, I could remember dealing with Colin Lawton, I think it was, at Adelaide Further Education. We set up this program with Continuing Education, it was, at Adelaide University as a joint project at the Fullarton Community Centre – that's where the venue was. And it was brilliant. Continuing Education provided a bit of funding, and it was open to anybody. So they provided publicity through Continuing Education network. So we might have

had seventy or eighty people at that particular thing. We had a couple of prominent Adelaide editors there, Penny Matthews, who did the Civic Record and lots of other things, but that was one of her big things, so we're talking '80s, it was '86.

Yes, it was October 1983, I think.

Yes. And Jenny Walker, who had done quite a deal of work at that stage, since died. And they were terrific presenters. At that stage we had lots of people that had come through Rigby's, so we had lots of good editors that knew the industry, knew the book industry, pretty well. Currently you get lots of editors but possibly not associated with the industry the way those two were. So it was a brilliantly successful time and gave us a lot of credibility. We tried to replicate it later on when we had another workshop on heritage and conservation. We had that at the Glenside Community Centre. It was reasonably successful but not a great deal. I think one of the more amusing elements of that, we had an architect turn up. He was there probably for half the day, I suppose. At that particular stage there was a tender ….. for a major heritage project and he was there trying to suss out a historian that he might be able to use. He didn't get the tender, don't know who did, I don't know how the project went. But that was the only memorable thing about that particular seminar.

Taking you back a little bit, you mentioned the Heritage of Adelaide Survey. One of the things that came up in an early newsletter was that the Association had actually sent a letter to the Lord Mayor criticising something about that particular – – –. Do you recollect that at all?

I can't recollect what that was about.

Oh, okay. We can leave that one, then. How much was being a voice and lobbying part of the Association's role, do you think, in early days, in the early '80s?

I mentioned somewhere that we did a lot of that. And I get the impression we did, but I don't know how effective it was, because we didn't have all that many venues or many people that would listen to us. But one of the things that did happen, and I think I vaguely alluded to this earlier, how we in South Australia, the historians, were way ahead of the rest of Australia with promoting historians as historians, and I think that stood us in good stead with the Heritage Branch. So if we said something people in there would listen. At that stage, too, we had the History Trust, which was an Australian world-beater at that stage, too, and our historians had a lot of

credibility there. You know, I think we sort of wrote letters criticising – there were little issues that kept on cropping up like State Records and destruction of records and things like that, I think. Our voice was joined with others when public State Records was accused of burning or destroying plans from Public Buildings Department, I think. So we joined our voice to lots of those, but how effective we were or not I don't know, in our own right.

We're just about to run out so I'll turn over before I start a new subject. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

Just when we took a break, you were talking about one thing you were getting into with Sue Marsden. Do you want to talk about that?

Yes, I believe that's in one sense significant, although for the life of me I can't remember all the details, but it must have been very, very early in the piece, around about 1980 – '80? I was obviously doing some work for a government department because something landed on the desk where I was working, and it had come through basically from the government's employment agency, and it was coming up with a big thing about – oh, just a description of jobs and job opportunities and what is involved in particular jobs. And they had – one of them was the historian, and I believed it had a very outmoded description of what a historian was and what a historian did, and a little bit of academic material there, but just the notion of something like, you know, 'researching facts about the past' or something like that. It was very wishy-washy. So I brought this to Sue Marsden's attention, I think the two of us together nutted out a much more detailed description of a historian, and orienting it more to what we public historians were doing, and sort of shot it back to the department. And I think we used to get one of these every year saying, 'Is this adequate or is this still relevant?' What effect it had I wouldn't have a clue. Whether it had any impact – but it was just a little interesting development, a little aside that I'd almost forgotten about.

Do you think at that time – I suppose in the '80s – that the Professional Historians Association was reflecting things that were already changing in the history field, or was it influencing, or what sort of relationship was there between what was happening generally and the Association?

I'd almost have to put the question back on you, Karen, what is 'the history field' at that particular stage?

Yes, well, what was it, I guess, yes.

Because we were trying to revolutionise it, I suppose, and just try and promote the notion of history out in the community, and the fact that historians are more than just academics. So we were influencing things. I suppose one instance of that might be the notion that traditionally, I think, back at that stage if people wanted a history job done they generally rang up their local History department and said, 'We want this history done: do you know anybody who can help?' That might still happen, it probably still happens on some instances. But I think more and more now it's probably people come to our Association or they get we public historians who might be promoting themselves in their own way. Or they might go to a History Trust now. But I think there's probably less inclination to go to History departments.

So what's happening in the 1980s? Particularly with the growth of the heritage movement, I think there was much – and museums, because it wasn't just our museum in here with the History Trust; you've also got to think we had the Powerhouse Museum kicking off, and you had things like the National Maritime Museum in the later – getting ready for 1988. War history was becoming credible again so you had more and more people getting jobs at the War Memorial – historians, rather than just display people. So history outside the academy was taking on far more professionalism, I guess, and getting greater credibility, I guess.

Perhaps we could talk a little bit about the social aspects of the Association. You talked about the lunches. How important do you feel that side of the Association was?

Oh, immensely important. At two levels. We have difficulty recruiting people, and I think because naturally people are reluctant to join an organisation. They might want to join, but you become a little – any outsider sees the organisation as close-knit and tight, and if you want to get in you've got to break in, and it's emotionally stressful. I think that happens in any organisation. Similarly with ours. So I think it's important to just have this informal opportunity for people just to meet and chat and, you know, if Donovan is seen to be sort of dominating the profession in South

Australia getting lots of big jobs, he's a human sort of person, he barracks for a footy team and – yes, I think that was very, very important. So we've always had – well, haven't always, but long time had luncheons, so they've been terrific just for passing over a bit of gossip and things like that. We always had pretty successful winter dinners, that's been a pretty traditional thing, and that's been important too because it's a bit more of a formal situation so some people can think, 'Oh, well, I can go along to the dinner and perhaps I won't need to mix too much, but if I'm sitting next to someone I can get to know them.' Plus we've always had our Christmas barbecue, and all these have been basically social occasions pitched at different levels. And that's been pretty important, I think. One of the problems, I suppose, in all the executive and those who've been members for a long while are the ones that tend to go, but every now and again others turn up and – – –.

Are there any particularly memorable events that stand out for you?

No. I'd say we've had some good winter dinners. Oh, some of those have been excruciating, I suppose, yes.

In what way?

Just in terms of the choice of venue. For a while there, Pat Sumerling was on the committee, and Pat being a pub historian was always trying to get us to go to a pub. So at one stage she got us to go to the Kent Town Arms or something like that, and it was atrocious. What we had – and we always had a guest speaker at one of these, too. So the Kent Town, they didn't normally provide meals, so in this instance we were out in what was the (coughs) bottle shop, so the bottle shop had access for cars to go in one end and out the other, so in effect the gaps had just been closed up with sort of canvassy sort of thing, and we had an industrial heater in there to try and heat it up. So you had this big thing the size of a car engine, gas, it would pump out a lot of hot air for a while and then it was so noisy we'd have to turn it off, and then we'd get cold and we turned it on again. Utterly atrocious. We went to the Rising Sun Hotel on another occasion, and that's quite interesting. As an interesting aside there, we had Norm Etherington speaking, but again we didn't have a particular room to meet in, so we were just behind a curtain, so we had all the noise of the bar coming

through. So the idea of giving a talk was very, very difficult. It was interesting there, Norm Etherington was speaking, and he mentioned a fellow, Phil Cantelon[13], so this must have been about 1986 or something like that, and Norm had obviously read about Phil on some internet – might [not] have been internet, but in some journal or something like that – so afterwards he said, 'Here's a bloke you ought to meet.' I commented, 'Oh, Phil, yes, I know Phil, we've stayed with Phil and met him a few times,' which was interesting, having one up on Norm there. We went to the Colonial Inn on Glen Osmond Road on one occasion. All right, not a great success. We had one at the Union Hotel in Adelaide. Interesting – not particularly memorable, but – – –. Some of the better speakers: we had Jane Lomax-Smith there on one occasion, she was terrific. I enjoyed John Daly speaking in 1996, just on the eve of the Olympic Games. He spoke – he's a one-time athlete, been to many Olympic Games as manager of the Olympic team, so he provided a good – just counterbalanced a lot of the press that we were getting about the Games and what would happen, and things like that. Yes. So some good, some not so good.

Before we move on to some of the later developments, I just wanted to – in the newsletter in 1982 you had a President's column talking about the initial euphoria and expectations that had not been entirely fulfilled. Do you want to talk a little bit about, I guess, how the reality of how the Association started to develop differed or didn't differ from what your initial idea had been?

Well, I suppose what we would have liked to have had by – this was 1982? That's very early in the piece, it had only been going about two years (laughs) by that stage. I suppose it was the fact that we didn't have a lot of support, a lot of recognition. Just as one little aside, as a public historian I believe Hugh Stretton has got to be a very significant public historian, yet he was very caustic about us and our chances, and thought we were sort of upstarts trying to put ourselves above the academics as the paradigm of historians. So that sort of stuff, feedback, was disappointing, that we weren't sort of given credibility, I suppose, and some sort of recognition.

I guess even at that stage we had lots of people coming in and going out. The fact that lots of people, lots – it might only be, I don't know, fifteen, twenty per

[13] Phil Cantelon – a leading light in the public history movement in the United States, a founder of the National Council of Public History and Managing Director of History Associates Incorporated (HAI) with offices in Maryland – PD.

cent of people that would come in for about a year, find it wasn't what they were on about and then wander off – the fact that a lot more people, perhaps, found it difficult to understand what being a public historian was all about. So we still had people getting into all sorts of strife and trouble with particular jobs. There was one job Annely Aeuckens had us to make representations about – I think it was Annely – she undertook a job, part of the contract that she signed was the fact she wouldn't be paid, or wouldn't receive the final payment until publication. As it turned out, the client decided not to publish, so she had all sorts of strife there. But again – this is one of the good things about the Association, I guess – the Association was able to come on board and say that 'We believe that she's certainly performed adequately. The fact that you're not going to publication is no reflection on her work. Really you should pay her out.' And she was. That's probably happened on about two or three occasions. Don't ask me about the other ones, but that was one that certainly springs to mind.

So what sort of – – –?

So just people, as I say, still being a little amateurish in their approach to things, rather than picking up on being professional about it.

What sort of successes do you feel you'd had in those early years? What did come up to expectations?

That we survived, that we're still going, and that we were a great – I believe we were the catalyst for the development of the national body. We were very fortunate in picking up Brian Crozier when he came over here as the President of Old Parliament House, because he'd been involved in the setting up of the History Institute in Victoria, so he was, you know, full bottle on all these sorts of issues. And he was a bit sceptical, too, quietly, I believe, about the PhD syndrome, about you finish the PhD and you think that's the pinnacle of your career, whereas really it should be seen as the first rung on what's a developing career. And the fact that so many people that came out having done a PhD, as I say, think they know it all, and so hung up on lots of minutiae, and there's only one way of doing something and it's got to be a replica of a PhD with another topic, rather than seeing that different clients have different projects, different demands, and different projects have different demands on a historian. We can validly write an A4 page history of something and a 600-

page history of something, but they're totally different projects and they've got to be tackled differently. And I mentioned the other day that it was, I think, Brian with me urging – I think he was President at this stage – urged the AHA to make sure we had public history little strands at some of the AHA conferences. And that really sort of fell into place at the AHA conference in Canberra, particularly when a lot of Victorians came on board at that particular stage. Yes. So yes, just the fact that we've survived and we've been the catalyst for this national body. Yes, and I think we've got credibility – it seems to be – – –. As I say, I was closely involved and I suppose I had a proprietorial interest in making sure the thing kicked on. That was probably good up to some point because it meant it did, and I think we provided a lot of expertise and a lot of resources to get the thing going, but then after a while it was probably not so good because people did say, 'Well, what do you think, Peter?' or 'Can we do that, Peter?' So it was probably acting as a bit of a brake on things. But to some extent, when I stepped in the second time, nobody was willing to take on the Presidency. We had that AGM, I think, at the Pasta Palace or something in Hindley Street. Just nobody was willing, and frankly I don't know that there were too many people that were really appropriate for it.

So that was in 1994, I think, I had down –

Could have been, could have been.

– yes, 1994-5, yes.

And that's late in the piece. And yet nobody was willing to take it on, which I found very disappointing. But I wasn't going to have this baby fall over.

Did you feel that way about it?

Yes. Yes. And you scratch me a bit and I still do. You know, we still take a great deal of interest in it, and I suppose if something was to happen we'd probably gird the loins again and kick it along a bit longer. But having said that, I'm not a really proactive person. I think you can do with a lot better people than me. I keep it alive, but as I say – and I'm an ideas person, but I need somebody else to take up the ideas and work with them.

Well, obviously we can't talk about everything the Association did over twenty-one years, so I've picked out a few things, but there may be things that you think

are important to talk about. Obviously one of them is *Shakespeare's Adelaide*, being the first publication. Do you want to talk a bit about that, where the inspiration came from and – – –?

Yes. I thought I'd go for the next couple of tapes on that one. But again, it's part of this whole notion of trying to help people, trying to give them professional development and experience in taking a publication through to completion. As I mentioned before this went on tape, I was looking through some old minutes there and I found out where I mentioned this to an AGM. So again I'll claim credit for that one. Again, nothing great about that, but we were in business for ourselves. I used to spend a lot of time in bookshops, particularly when we were interstate, just looking through Australiana sections, looking at new books that had come out, thinking, 'Could we do that?' or 'Is there an idea there that we can take up? What is there that we could use in this one?' Then in one instance we came across this book – might have been an AHA conference because it was Sydney – we came across this book on Sydney's suburbs by the Sydney History Group that Max Kelly had got going. This was primarily out of Macquarie University. So we thought, 'Mm, that's a beaut little topic. That's something' – when I saw it, I thought, 'That's something our Association could do.' We'd just get up this book, get a good topic and each of our members provide an inclusion, sort of an article. So we mentioned that at one particular stage, it was taken up and Brian Dickey said, 'That's a great idea, I'd love to edit that,' and it went on from there. But the rationale for that was to provide another publication for lots of our members, to provide an instance of lots of people working together, so it was a means of getting some people that might not be close to the centre of the Association but are members to bring them in and get them to meet other people, get them to be working towards the same end, and as I say give them a publication, help them see how a publication goes through from the need to write it, need to go to an editor, need to get the edited proofs back, push it forward, and then select photographs, make captions, and then go through to publication. And I think that worked a treat. It worked for a couple of reasons. We got some funds out of the History Trust, I think, Community Grants Program. We got some funding from Adelaide City Council because we structured it as an approach about the city that would come out in 1990 which was going to be the 150th anniversary of the city, so we got some funds out of there. And we effectively got funding out of Cooper's

Brewery because we had an annual dinner there that particular year, and I think it cost us in the order of 800 dollars, I think. They never billed us for it, so we didn't tell them about it until afterwards we had them roll it over into a subsidy for the book, so the 800 dollars that we didn't spend on the dinner sort of effectively helped publish the *Shakespeare's Adelaide*.

The other issue there, another idea I had – and this is one that never went anywhere – was this notion of a history prize. I found out where that came from, too, or where that – when that was noised abroad. Again, it was much about this time. But we suggested that we should have a history prize. I'm just reading from a minute here, and again this was – I have to say this was my idea – (sound of rustling paper) this is 14th September 1987. The notion was (reading) 'The Association of Professional Historians will award a biennial prize of 500 dollars. The competition, which is open to financial members, is for published or unpublished work in book or article form. The prize is to encourage novice scholars. All submissions shall be typed as if for publication. There shall be a 10,000 word limit for articles. There's no word limit on books or book manuscripts.' So again that issue there was to try and get people to write and to practise and to want to develop their skills. So, as I say, that book prize never went anywhere, but ultimately the money that had I suppose been vaguely earmarked went into the *Shakespeare's Adelaide* project, which in effect did the same thing.

Why didn't it go anywhere, the prize money?

We had all sorts of problems. Such a tiny little base upon which to draw, and there weren't too many people producing too much. And you had this problem how can you – who's going to adjudicate it. A lot of discussion went on like this, and how can you compare an article with a book or a book manuscript or something like that? So ultimately it became too hard – it was a good idea, ultimately too hard, and then the purpose of it, *i.e.* to encourage young scholars, effectively went into *Shakespeare's Adelaide*, so we quietly dropped the notion of the prize and just kept that money for *Shakespeare's Adelaide*.

So did *Shakespeare's Adelaide* do that, what you said, bring in new people that hadn't been involved previously to write and – – –?

Probably. I'd have to go through the names just to point out people that – you know, you had your people like the Donovans and the Alison Paynters and the Brian Dickeys that wrote things that were involved anyway, but there were probably a couple of others that were invited to come on board. So without looking at the names I couldn't sort of judge now. But of course that then rolled over into *Playford's South Australia*[14], which I think was another great project. Not possibly to the extent of the quality of all the work in it because that's a bit patchy, like most of these collections of articles, nor to the extent that we've still got a few hundred copies left over, but then we budgeted on that and we made the decision – I think we had book bounties then so we could get something like a thousand for the same price as about six hundred, so we went for that. But certainly for getting people together. We had a great workshop, I can remember, down at Goolwa on one occasion and it was terrific – just get all the people there, and that also came with various evenings where people would go to one another's homes and three people would provide a little report on their particular article, how it was coming, and this certainly brought in other people that weren't identified with the Association. I think we need another project like that because I think they have been very, very good. Because they're ongoing. They go for over twelve months or so and it is a chance to bring in somebody who's a bit sheepish about joining us, say, 'Oh, come on, Sue, you have this expertise, we'd like an article out of it,' and Sue comes in and gets to know people and then they go from there.

Were there any problems you encountered along the way, people getting things finished on time or anything like that?

Probably, yes. But I think nothing untoward, nothing that wasn't anticipated. I was not – as I say, with neither of those was I involved in an editorial capacity. I was just a writer, a contributor. This is where it's good that Brian Dickey put his hand up to do *Shakespeare's Adelaide*.

Do you want to talk a bit about his role in that?

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[14] Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery and Kerrie Round (eds), *Playford's South Australia: essays on the history of South Australia 1933-1968*, Association of Professional Historians, Adelaide, 1996.

Oh, it was vital. All I did was say, 'This is a great idea,' and he took it on board and hassled people to get things and organised seminars – well, we organised seminars in different people's homes. But, you know, Brian did all the editing and he chased up all the printing, because the printing was done at Flinders University so he managed all that, the layout and the printing. Absolutely vital. Bernie was probably the key person in *Playford's South Australia* in terms of the practicalities of the thing. I think he probably drove – who's the other? Judith Raftery was one, and who was the other one? – he probably drove them nuts, I suppose, Bernie with his penchant for crossing i's and dotting t's and being a bit late. But that wouldn't have got out there without Bernie in that instance. But the quality of it wouldn't be as good if it wasn't for the others, I don't believe.

I guess the other 'biggie' is the development of ACPHA, really. Do you want to talk a little bit about that? Have you had an idea of – I think you said in the beginning you toyed with the idea of becoming a national – – –.

I believed we had to be national right from the word 'go'.

Why?

Because historians – there might be – I'll let you decide this – there might even be a selfish thing here – but a lot of our work happens interstate, and I don't like the notion of – we're very provincial, even we historians. And I can remember doing a job in Melbourne and people sort of wondering 'Why is this South Australian doing this work in Melbourne?' We've done a lot of work in Sydney, we haven't really seen many of the people out there so I don't know how they felt about that. But the notion of – I believe, you know, our skills, in some particular projects our skills aren't limited by the boundaries of the state. For instance, if we're doing a history of an organisation, knowing how an organisation works, how it develops in a generic sense is readily transferable whether it's in Melbourne or whatever. So I thought there was a need to break down professionalism from a personal point of – this provincialism, rather. And I thought a national association works better than little local ones. I'd been closely involved with the National Trust, that glories in the odd title of 'The National Trust of South Australia', rather than 'National Trust, brackets, South Australia'. So it was largely independent. And you've got this other organisation called the Australian Council of National Trusts. It's almost like the

states in the National Trust came first, and then they had this national body. And I think the whole situation was a little worse than it could have been because of that issue. That's the way we've gone with our associations of professional historians, but I think we had to have a national body anyway because of lots of issues. Lots of issues are common to all, like copyright and ethics and trying to get our prices up and be professional. Yes, so I think it's again this issue – fifty years down the track I thought we had to have a national body, so why not start working for it immediately?

I mentioned there last time, the New South Welsh people were a little bit opposed to that. They started about 1985, I think, and they started with in one sense higher standards than us, and particularly after other organisations started, as I said earlier. So they were a bit reluctant to move nationally, so it was a question of just having to bide our time. And as I said, had a lot of support from Brian Crozier – well, he was the front man. You might see me as pushing people up as front men all the time: I'd accept that – you know, feeding Brian with ideas and trying to keep this notion of the national body alive. And we did. And this conference in Canberra was a bit of a catalyst for that, particularly when the Victorians with Mary Sheehan sort of came on board, lapped up the idea. I think Mary and some of her contemporaries were products of the Public History course at Monash, so that started – what? – about 1988 or something like that. So they were starting to come out by 1990 and were pretty zealous about pushing the notion of the profession. So they came on board, liked the idea and I think it went from there. I don't quite know how it was organised there, but I can remember going along to several meetings in Victoria, in Melbourne, in Mary's place. It was easy for me, to some extent, because we had jobs all round Australia. Lots of our national clients enabled me to go to all the states I visited, and I always made a point of visiting public historians in each state.

I'll have to stop you there. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B: TAPE 3 SIDE A

This is the third tape of an inteview with Peter Donovan being recorded by Karen George for the Professional Historians Association Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 3rd May 2002 at Coromandel Valley in South Australia. So when the tape ended we were talking about ACPHA and you were just starting to really get on to how it started to get going.

Yes. And I suppose – bigheaded, I suppose – I was talking from my perspective on how, if we had any impact on it, I suppose. Two levels, I think. And we're certainly, with Brian Crozier, pushing it at one level through AHA and making sure that we had a seminar or stand or a venue where we could talk about things at various AHA conferences. So there might have been one or two that probably happened before because now I think a very early one they did something on heritage, one in Adelaide. But then I think we got a bit more focused on public history, and I think I spoke at several of those just putting up my hand to give a paper. Not all that effectively, I don't think, in terms of we only got the people along who were members of the Public History Associations in other states. We didn't really convert anybody, I don't think. But I also think I had a – if there was any generation of interest I probably had a role just in terms of our own business, because a lot of our work enabled me to get around the various states and I always made a point of calling on other public historians. I can remember in Queensland when I happened to turn up in Brisbane there on one occasion, there happened to be – coincide during that period with a meeting of the executive out at Brisbane University. So I sort of went out there and met them and just discussed issues. And when we were working in Melbourne I met the people down there – this was the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital history, and I can remember going back a year or so later just to give a talk at one of their Wednesday night meetings, talking about the 'three p's of public history' which I developed into about, oh, fifteen p's. Things like, you know, product and price and prospectivity and a whole heap of p's, you can make a great little yarn about that. And I can remember going over to WA at one stage and meeting the people over there, particularly Kathy Clement, and she invited a whole heap of other people – that's been a great night. So we tried to promote that, saying, 'Look, I'm from the outblocks of South Australia,' you know, 'I'm one of the historians over there.' And try and just get this notion that there are historians elsewhere that are interested in public history as such. So it might have been at this AHA Conference in Brisbane or the one afterwards, but anyway we got this notion of 'let's start getting together and starting to iron out differences'. So there are several occasions – I can remember meeting in Mary Sheehan's home in Bourke [Road], as it was then, in Melbourne. And we gradually got the New South Welshmen around, I suppose. By this stage the History Institute in Victoria had –

say it another way: by this time the historians in Victoria had almost outgrown the History Institute. So you had – they were initially members of the History Institute, and the History Institute as such couldn't have qualified for members of ACPHA, but by that time you had a body of historians there that had their own little cell within the History Institute. So then Tasmania was still pretty light-on in terms of expertise and personnel, but anyway we managed to give the impression we were all pretty professional and the New South Welsh people were a little more amenable to joining up, so it was – again, like the early days – 'we all want it to happen, we'll make it happen, so let's set out a program to ensure that it does happen'. So one of the things was to – Mary Sheehan was run in as President, so that's quite all right. I took on the task of getting the outfit incorporated, because at this stage we were running a couple of projects in Canberra so we decided we'd incorporate in Canberra and we'd have our public officer in Canberra, just to provide this notion of a national reach, I suppose. And it looked a bit better, rather than having it in Sydney or Melbourne.

What year are we talking about now?

Probably about 1996 or something, by this stage. Might be 1994, but around about then – mid-'90s, anyway. So then we got that incorporated without any trouble, you know, we just came out with a constitution. Everybody agreed on that. And it was pretty uneventful. So at that stage I figured, well, I could bow out, so at this stage I was still a member in South Australia of the executive. But one of the issues about ACPHA, each state body is a member of ACPHA so individual members are not members of ACPHA, which was a strange way of establishing it. I'm not quite sure that I like it, but anyway – – –. (coughs) So you have ACPHA and it's probably only six constituent members, *i.e.* the state branches. So in effect, the way it happened, you had to be a member of the executive to represent that state on the executive of ACPHA. So at that stage I stepped down from an executive position here in South Australia so I was no longer a member of ACPHA. I was dragooned into representing our Association at one of the regional AHA conferences in Newcastle a year or two after, I think, because people figured I probably knew what ACPHA was about.

So what difference did having a national body make? Or did it make a difference?

No, it's still making it. It's got a way to go yet. One of the things it has certainly done is have a common national accreditation, so now you have – people must have at least an Honours degree to get in, and I don't think there are any other back-door ways of getting in, to be considered a public historian, so I think that's been good. It's meant that outlying places like WA, for instance, decided to do a lot of soul-searching and perhaps jettison lots of their members who didn't qualify under that score – or not jettison them completely; they can still be sort of associates. So at the moment it's primarily been responsible for that, I think just helping us upgrade qualifications. I think it's now 'the' body that deals with something like the AHA, rather than the various state associations putting their hands up and treating with the AHA, so that's good. They're coming up with common things like pay scales or recommended fees and things like that – that's good, particularly from a South Australian point of view because they tend to reflect the New South Wales fees, scale of fees, which have traditionally been far higher than ours. I don't think I've ever charged the recommended scale of fees, except for about one instance.

It would be rare, I think.

You've got to charge what you believe the client will bear. You try and push it up as high as you can, but some clients still have pretty low expectations.

That's something, I guess, now you've raised it, that you battled with as an association over the years, scales of fees and that kind of thing and what the market will take in South Australia particularly?

Yes. I say I don't think we're – yes, I think we're winning to some extent. I don't know what more I can say on that. It probably hadn't been too many instances where we haven't taken on a job because we don't believe the pay is appropriate. If you say 'we'll do a job', well, we'll do it, but we insist that this is a ten thousand dollar job and not a fifty thousand dollar job, so don't expect a fifty thousand dollar job if you're only going to pay ten thousand dollars. Yes. But I think most of our members probably insist on higher fees than they would have done otherwise, if they weren't conscious of the need to charge appropriate fees. You know, they're now conscious of the need to have insurance, professional indemnity insurance – whether

or not we can afford it after this year or not I don't know. And that's something that, heck, five years ago people just – most of our members just wouldn't have considered important. But then sometimes – I know one contract – some contracts we do they insist you have public liability insurance up to five million dollars and what not, and so you've just got to do that. But that's what we ought to be doing anyway. But as I say, it's taken a while to get some people. We only work out of our home office here, but we reckon we, you know, have had jobs all around Australia. We've always insisted on space in people's organisations so we haven't really felt the need to have an office in town. Still try to work very, very professionally, but some of the others tended to work – seemed to be a little bit sloppy, so it's been good that we've been able to increase these issues of professionalism, I believe.

One of the key issues we discussed during the break that you wanted to talk about was privacy, and that's one thing that came up in the early '90s, 1991, with the new Privacy Bill that came in. The PHA got involved with that. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Yes. And I think I'd have to say again we alerted people to that. Again, no great merit, just we happened to be out there sort of the sharp end, getting involved in lots of things before other people. And it was interesting: we were doing the history of a school, Payneham Primary School. It was closing up and the Principal wanted a little history done. We said we'd do it and we structured it so we could do it for the little price he was offering. And he was – since it was a final thing, he wanted to finish up also with a 'Back to Payneham Day' and he wanted to do a whole heap of things. One of the things he wanted to do was raise a little bit of money just to help fund the history, so he thought, 'Well, we're going to get lots of old people back. We've got the old registers there, possibly we can – if Karen George comes in and we've got her name down there, it's got her details here in 1945 – fantastic, she might like to keep that as a little memento since the outfit is folding. So we'll sell her one of those for a dollar.' So he wrote off to the Department saying, 'Could we do this? Oh, and by the way we're having some historians to write our history – can they have access to particular material?' And he quickly got a letter back saying, 'Oh no, you can't do that, it's not in accordance – you can't photocopy the stuff, it's not in accordance with the government's Privacy Principles.' The notion being that

there are a few personal details on some of these documents about mothers and fathers, one of which was very, very interesting because I believe in that particular – this is all an aside, but just to (laughs) show you the sort of documentation that's there – we believe, convinced of it, that Harold Holt went to school there. Harold Holt, in his biography or biographies has said very, very little about his very, very early days. But his father was a publican or something like that. And there's Harold Holt, only there for a year or so, came from New South Wales and then sort of went back to New South Wales in within about an eighteen month period. So you got this detail there: father, in came, where from and where to. The argument from this Privacy Principle thing is there's people's details there, so while you, Karen George, might want your – happy to have yours, the fact that Peter Donovan has got all his details only two removed from you could be seen to be an invasion of his privacy. Therefore you can't photocopy these things. So that came as a surprise to us; we'd never come across this before. So we then started just corresponding with the government: 'What are the Privacy Principles? What do they entail? How far can we go?' And it sort of took off from there. We just sort of brought this to the attention of the Association and I think we got somebody to come and explain them to us.

Yes, in one of the newsletters there was a meeting where you had someone come in and talk about it.

Yes. We haven't – and there were all sorts of implications there which, in the cold light of day, didn't impact on us one iota as it's turned out, although the issue is this new privacy legislation that's in the pipeline now – will that do so? Issues like can you put – if you're going to talk about, you know, Karen George having worked in this organisation, you've got all the material from the organisation as documentation, do you have to go to her to get authorisation to include that in the document? If you've got a photograph of Karen George working on a tyre making machine, do you have to get her permission to go and put it in the book? I don't know. From just the little bits I've heard there are all sorts of could be draconian implications in this privacy legislation for historians.

So in that early period did the PHA make a difference in anything by speaking up?

It had no impact on the Privacy Principles or the people implementing those. It certainly had the benefit of just alerting our own members to things like that, which they probably wouldn't have become aware of otherwise, and that's one of the things about the Association – acts as that dissemination of information, like the need to have professional indemnity insurance. And at one particular stage we went off, and I think we're still discussing that, trying to get an organisation to cover historians. I think we've still got an open letter, we are eligible there I think. We, Donovan and Associates, have our own private professional indemnity insurance, but I think there's an organisation that I think the Victorians got on board this and it's been opened up to other historians. That's probably another good thing about ACPHA and our associations.

Before we sort of, I guess, reflect on the twenty-one years of the Association, were there any other key issues or things that you'd like to discuss before we go into more broad view?

Probably pushing my own barrow a bit, but we'll do so since we won't get a chance again. Just harking back to this development of history out beyond just South Australia –

I'll just get you to be careful banging the table.

– one of the key issues – one of the highlights or milestones, I think, was getting this Phil Cantelon in to talk at a seminar in Melbourne, at Melbourne University, and again that was because of our knowledge of Phil. And we'd stayed with him once when we'd been in the States and he was coming over and was coming to stay with us, so he asked if we could organise a couple of lectures for him. So we'd known Andrew Lemon, a public historian – interesting, Andrew I considered to be a public historian, he'd done a few commissions in Melbourne, but he hasn't been a real active person in the Association there. Anyway, so at that stage Andrew was sort of the head of the pack in Victoria because I don't believe the Public History course at Monash had really hit its straps or hadn't had many graduates by that stage. So anyway, with Andrew we organised a conference there at Melbourne University. I think that's about the only time I'd spoken first at a seminar, at a conference. The previous one I'd spoken I was the last on the conference and that was dreadful, so I can remember making the comment, 'It's much easier to speak first at a seminar

when everybody's bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and willing to learn. But speaking last is pretty dreadful.' So that was pretty interesting, just getting Phil to talk. And he also spoke out at Flinders for South Australians when he was over here. And I think that was good, because that exposed people in the flesh to a very successful public historian out of America. By this stage a lot of us – a lot of material from the States was coming through us into the local Association. We'd been a member of the National Council of Public History since about 1990, I think, so we get their *Public Historian*, and for a while we talked our Association into subscribing to the *Public Historian*. I don't believe it does any longer but it did so for a while, and that was a way of getting information about the States into the Association. But here was a chance to see a real live public historian, whose outfit turned over a million or more dollars a year. So that was useful.

We were also involved when a fellow, David Lowenthal, was here in Adelaide. Don't know if – David Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country*? Pretty persuasive, ground-breaking book on just attitudes towards history and how historians make history or – you know, what is history, I suppose. We had a – we organised a meeting for him in the Pilgrim Church, the Pilgrim Meeting Hall there one night. We had him sitting round the table here one night, we had him up for dinner. But David, as I say, out of Britain. I'd sort of met him through the ICOMOS linkages at a conference overseas at one particular stage. So when he came to Australia I think Peter Cahalan said, 'We've got David Lowenthal coming over, what can you do?' So we entertained David and we set up this conference. So that was good, to see another historian.

Do you think that was part of what you wanted for the Association as well, that it was – as well as a national link that it would have international links as well, or at least – – –?

Hadn't gone that far quite yet, Karen.

Not yet?

You've given me an idea.

(laughs) Well, let's reflect back. You remained on the executive for some, I think – I added it up – seventeen years or something.

Something like that.

What kept you going on that – I mean, it's sort of a voluntary position, I guess as an adjunct to what you do professionally – so what kept you motivated to continue?

Well, we've sort of touched on that a couple of times. One is, you know, I thought it was my baby to some extent, while not totally, but I felt emotionally attached to the outfit. So, you know, I wasn't going to let it just fall over. And that's the reason why I sort of stepped in after Bernie left and there was no other, no-one willing to stick his hand up to be the President. So I felt, 'We've just got to keep this outfit going.' No other reason for that. And we also got a payback from that. As I mentioned earlier, we insisted on using people from the Association so we found that a good recruiting ground – that's a very selfish reason but being there you've got a chance to meet people and assess them and think, 'Oh yes, that person would be pretty good.' So you could ask them to help out with a particular project.

What place do you think the Association has in the life of a consulting historian? I mean, then I guess, looking over time, has it changed, or do you think it has a role?

It certainly has a role. You may make of it what you will. There are some consulting historians that are just members and nothing more, they're very successful so it doesn't necessarily help them, they sort of get by independently of the Association. I find that a pity. I'm a bit of a voluntarist to some extent. You've got to put a little bit back into society, you've got a community service obligation to some extent. That's just a whole product of lots of issues of me, I suppose, but – so people can get by without the Association. It's a bit like unionism to some extent, though, I suppose. Unions have been very, very responsible for making conditions as they are. Lots of people say they don't abide by unions, 'I wouldn't join a union', but possibly lots of the benefits they derive are derived because of the work of the unions in the past. And I like to think that the Association's probably made people more aware of the need for professional historians. It's probably made life easier for those who aren't closely identified with the Association. But no, life's long, they'll perhaps come round and put in.

Do you think that membership of the PHA has a meaning for clients and employers these days?

No.

I'll just stop. (break in recording) Okay, we're back again. Did you want to enlarge on that, on the meaning of membership of the PHA to employers?

Does it have – do clients give it credibility? No, I don't believe so. In a sense I still see lots of clients hiring all sorts of people who are not members of our Association and I believe where we could do better jobs. Without putting too fine a point on it, the history of Hill's Industries, I think lots of us would love to do a beaut history of Hill's Industries, but they got a writer to do that. But I guess the other side of that coin is, I think, we suffer because we have that aura about us that we might be good historians, might be good researchers, but in terms of writing we don't write in a lively fashion. So I think that's a little remiss and I think that's our own problem that we historians suffer from, and we've got to try and overcome that. You know, we ought to have the Geoffrey Blainey skills, I suppose – perhaps the research skills of a – oh, any academic historian, but the writing flair of a Geoffrey Blainey or a Thomas Keneally or someone like that. After all, we're in the business of telling stories – we are his- or her-storians, you know, so we tell stories. Story is fundamental to history. That's my belief anyway. So we've got to be good at storytelling. A lot of us are. But clients don't really worry about that. I think most of us are pretty good writers without being great literary people. Anyway – – –.

Is that something you'd like to see, that PHA membership did mean more to – – – ?

Yes. It probably will. But we've got to establish ourselves. As I say earlier, I would hope someone like a Hugh Stretton probably looks at us a little differently now that we've been around for twenty-odd years, and I hope we have established a measure of credibility. If you put us all together, we've written library shelves of books, and I think some of them are pretty good, yours included.

Thank you.

And I think we've established credibility. We've got to do that. We've *had* to do that, and I think that's probably been the task of the last – well, the first fifteen years or so, was to establish the credibility. The fact that we're here for the long haul and not just, you know, ranting and raving and saying, 'Look at us, we are terrific,' without there being any substance there. Now we've got to build on that, and I think it will come round, and this is one thing where ACPHA will help us if we can break

down still some of the provincialism of the state borders and things like that. At the moment we've got a thing on the net, so I think people in New South Wales would still probably tend to just push the New South Wales Professional Historian Association to get someone rather than go onto someone else. But that's – Australians think provincially so it's not just historians, I think.

So on that note, what would you like to see the Association do? What do you feel is its future, and what would you like to see it do, as your baby, as it's growing up (laughs) – it's had its twenty-first birthday?

I'd like to see us harking back to this other profession model. Ultimately I'd like to see a notion of, when someone says 'historian', the first thing that springs to mind is going to be someone in private enterprise. Tutored by the academics, sometimes called back to tutor other people. And we'll have historians in governments, we'll have – but, you know, private enterprise will be a big thing. We've got to establish ourselves – and this is beyond the notion of ACPHAs and PHAs and things like that – but we've got to establish ourselves in much more of a corporate sense. I don't think we're good at that, and I think this is a product of our training. I think a lot of our training is very, very insular. The training of an architect, again they expect to go out in private practice so that you know when you go out you're going to have to get a job as a draftsman or something in an architectural practice. And that's what you expect to do, to work in a practice for a while then become a partner and possibly have your business taken over and you become a partner in a bigger firm or something like that. If you're in the legal profession that's what you would expect to do. You might want to become a judge, but ultimately you believe you've got to get your articles then become a partner and then possibly wait until you can be invited to the Bench.

I'll just stop – – –. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE B

Okay.

So I think, and it's a question of establishing credibility, being there and so we've got to have a few more corporate historians, I believe. At the moment there's still a lot of this dog-in-the-manger type of attitude is probably going a bit too far, but –

What do you mean by that?

– well, I mentioned a certain conflict there earlier how Donovans have been reluctant to get out and say how we market our services and things like that. If somebody was to look closer they could see how it's done, but we're a bit protective of our own patch or our own potential clients and something like that. We've got to try and break that down. If we have a few more people competing out there, perhaps that might happen. We need a better corporate structure, I believe. We still look very amateurish working out of home, I think. You look at our products and I think they're very professional, if you judge us by our products, by our list of clients, by our publicity that we get round. You know, we look fantastic.

What role in that new vision of corporate history do you think the Association would play, then?

A mentor. Can't say much more than that, I don't suppose. Now, I don't think everything is good that comes out of America, but America's gone a little further down this track. It's a product of people are more interested in their history. People over there seem to think more of their history, be protective about their history, want to learn more about their history. So in one sense in Australia is a product of uplifting this interest in history, extending that. Now, as I say, I'm not as pessimistic as the academics who are decrying the decline – supposed decline – in the interest in history, of history not being taught in the schools as such and people coming through into university without much historical background. One of my heresies is the fact that I don't believe people should be taught that until they go to uni anyway, about history. But I keep saying that if history – there's burgeoning history out there and this is how we make our living. We've done some major corporations so corporations are keen on getting good history done rather than just getting Bill Bloggs the retired corporate secretary to do it. And interest in family and other history – there's a *great* deal of interest in it. So I keep saying that if academics were in the marketing game and running a business, they'd be trying to tap into that and sell their history skills that way. But we need the notion of – we have taken one person on as a work experience person and I thought that was very successful for us and the person. The person said after having worked with us for a week she wouldn't want to become a consulting historian. It was too hard, she thought. So we

want to do more of that. We've had a couple of school kids work for us from time to time, you know, they write and say, 'Susie wants to become a historian or thinking of becoming a historian, can she have some work experience for the week?' There's got to be more of that. Yes. There's a lot of ways we can go. But basically, I suppose, we can't go – I said earlier it's a question of there being a time for everything and everything in its time. Australia doesn't replicate America and we don't have civil wars and a whole heap of other things to generate a whole heap of history of the intensity that seems to be attractive to lots of people, but there's still a long way we can go, I think, and there's still a long way that it can be done by professional historians. If there's more of that they'll have more companies. This is more Donovan rather than [APH], but in one sense it's associated with the APH: we've invited two people to join us as partners. Both sort of reneged. Now, one hasn't quite reneged, but the way it happened it just wouldn't work. And again that's a product of the way we were brought up, I suppose, this insularity, and you don't – I just wandered off on that tangent: I said, you know, architects grow up and lawyers grow up expecting to go into private practice. Historians don't. Traditionally if they're any good they'd be in the universities, if they weren't any good they'd be teaching. Or they might have to go in the public service. There's no notion that they would go into a firm. So there needs to be a lot of, I think, of 'articling', if you like – somebody getting work experience in a firm, perhaps joining it as a partner. See, one of the things – couple of years ago we were making pretty good money, but it's not worth anything. It's not a business we can onsell. It's not like a real estate agent who can sell a whole list of renters, a rent roll. We're not a dentist who can onsell a whole heap of clients. We're not an optometrist that can onsell a (laughs) whole heap of list of clients. We go from project to project. So we've got a certain amount of goodwill, but we hang up the shingle tomorrow nobody's going to worry about it and it would be like a pool in a puddle, you know, soon it'll disappear. And I think that's disappointing. You put a lot of time and effort into something over twenty-five years or so, so it is a viable business, it can keep lots of people. But we need a stronger corporate structure.

Taking you back to the Association, can you reflect back –

Oh, must you?

– yes, (laughs) sorry. If you reflect back on the Association over that twenty-one years, do you feel its philosophies and its aims have changed over time, and in what ways? Or have they remained the same?

Oh, the philosophies are probably there. I probably think we need someone to articulate them a bit more at the moment. I guess the Association, like any organisation, starts off with a lot of zeal and zealotry saying, 'Yes, we've got something, we have to prove something.' Strikes reality, so a lot of the zeal is lost, makes solid achievements on the way, people become – you know, there's a change of personnel. So in one sense you've got to keep reinventing things. That's probably why it was good that I got out, because some things tried worked, some things tried didn't work, other people come in and say, 'Oh, we ought to do this,' and you just had to think, 'Oh, look, we tried that and it didn't work.' But nothing to say it couldn't work in the second instance. So at the moment I think we're probably freewheeling a bit. Bernie has done a lot of work to put it on a bit more of a professional basis, I suppose. He's got a good group of people with him, but I think we need something now to just energise us again. Another project possibly. For the moment we've still got to keep recruiting. Recruiting is a constant thing. We've got to keep recruiting and we've got to keep holding people. And I think if you can get people over that little hump, who join and then sort of take an active interest in it, they'll keep going. But it's when you can't hold people that you tend to have this constant dropping off. So I think we've got to generate – – –. And we've got to have our own projects, I believe. So that I would hope that almost always there's an ongoing project. Now, I know after we finished *Playford's South Australia* there was a lot of exhausted people, but I think it's time to reinvigorate something like that. I suppose some of us were involved in the *Wakefield's companion history*[15] that kept us going there perhaps. But I think the Association ought to do something.

Harking back to those, that just reminded me. One of the other reasons for getting those things out was to showcase the Association a bit so that the Association – not just the individuals so that they could add another book, another published material, to their name – but the Association had something.

[15] Wilfred Prest (ed), *The Wakefield companion to South Australian history*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2001.

And I think we should do something with the other *Playfords*. We've got to push our name around, possibly have another project up there that we could latch onto. And the Association's been around a while now, it's got a bit of credibility, there's no reason why we can't get a bit of money for this, that and the other. But I think we need something like that to appeal to more than just the executive.

We're having a meeting with the archivists soon. I wouldn't mind betting it's just going to be the executive and two or three others that are interested. So we need something like that, I think, at the moment.

Okay, well, if there's – is there anything else you'd like to say about the Association just in general before we finish up?

Utterly necessary. As I say, it's been a particular interest of mine. It might wither and die, lots of associations do. We've had SACAS[16] there at one stage that withered and died, History Alliance has been bumbling along – I don't know much about that. But now we've got ACPHA, to some extent it probably doesn't matter, I suppose, as long as ACPHA is maintained and we have a national association. In one sense it would probably be better if the state associations withered and we just had the national association. While I'm on a look around, the AMA has its state branches and that tends to work pretty well. One of the problems in Australia is national associations tend to be fairly remote, so I think in some extent you need to have a little state network anyway, even if – – –. So my – if I could keep planning, it might be to have ACPHA with, you know, sort of a state branch rather than as it is at the moment as an association that like the states devolve some power to the national body. So I could see the PHA dissolving and becoming ACPHA, SA Branch, or something like that. But whether that's just the PHA in another guise or not is another matter. But I could see that happening and it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing – might be a better thing, actually. I would like to see my membership transferable so I could trundle into Sydney and say, 'G'day,' you know, 'I'm just from the other part of the Association over there,' rather than sheepishly come in and thing, 'Oh, what are these guys thinking,' you know, 'this interloper here'. No, we've got to be bigger than just our provincial boundaries.

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[16] South Australian Centre for Australian Studies.

Okay. Well, I'd like to thank you very much for your time today and talking about the PHA. It's been really interesting, so thank you very much.

My pleasure. As is obvious, I can chat about it at any time. At length.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.