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OH 657/4

Full transcript of an interview with

ALEX BONE

on 10 December 2002

By Karen George

Recording available on CD

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 657/4

Interview with Mr Alex Bone recorded by Karen George at Salisbury East, South Australia, on 10th December 2002 for the Adelaide City Council Balfour's Oral History Project.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

This is an interview with Alex Bone being recorded by Karen George for the Adelaide City Council's Balfour's Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on 10th December 2002 at Salisbury East in South Australia. First of all I'd like to thank you for taking part in this project and agreeing to an interview, and I understand that you've had an extra hour's work today (laughs) in order to do it –

Yes.

– so we appreciate it greatly.

No problem.

Can we start by perhaps you giving me your full name and your date and place of birth?

My name's Alexander James Bone. I was born in Canberra in the ACT when both my parents were in the Air Force. And moved to South Australian when I was about four, and (pause) my parents then went and lived with – oh, actually, before that in an Air Force house down at Elizabeth when we first moved back to Adelaide. And when my father got out the Air Force we actually moved into my grandparents' house on my mother's side of the family because she was originally an Adelaide girl. My father was a Queenslander who actually come off the land. And to get off the land he apparently joined the Air Force. (laughs)

What did he do in the Air Force? What was his role?

Flew – what do you call it? – I can't remember what the 'planes were called, but like during Vietnam he flew air reconnaissance and those sort of things. Also did a lot of clerical work because when my dad also got out the Air Force he also started to re-study and went to university, where he got an Honours degree in Law, which helped him when he got into insurance investigation and all that sort of thing, and that's

actually what he did – he became a claims officer with VACC[1], SGIC[2] where he finished working, JM Insurance, all those sort of things.

So where did you mostly grow up? You wouldn't remember much about Canberra, I suspect.

No, no. I remember Elizabeth a little bit – I remember how barren it was like all those years ago. But what I can remember about my grandmother was she lived at Stepney, and I remember that place right up until she sold it, and she sold that when I was about – ooh, about '89. So she lived in the same place, I remember that, all the time. I remember all the times I had to stop over there as well when my dad had to go away, and my parents actually got divorced when I was fifteen. And when they got the house at Campbelltown I lived right up to, there, till I was about fifteen, and that was at Campbelltown.

So where did you go to school?

I went to Campbelltown Primary, and I did my secondary at Urrbrae Agricultural High School.

Did you have any plans at school what you wanted to do when you grew up, when you left school?

I actually – you'll probably be surprised at this how I wound up – I actually wanted to go to Duntroon. But my school work fell away when my parents got divorced because we never saw an unhappy side of the marriage, they just both drifted, and when they got divorced it kind of, 'What? What are you talking about?' (laughs) And so my school work really fell away and then I lost interest. But that's what I ever wanted to do; I always wanted to be in the military but never went that way.

Was that because of your father?

Yes, well, both my parents were in it.

That's right, yes, your mother as well.

And my grandparents were both in it as well, both sides of the family. My great-grandfather on my dad's side of the family was in the Navy in World War I, and

[1] Name in full; alternatively a note to describe the type of business, e.g. insurance company...

joined the Air Force in World War II. And my grandfather on my mother's side, he was in the Army during World War II and he was a motor mechanic and came out of it a sergeant, whereas both my parents' side of the family were both officers.

So what – was it a bit of a disappointment, I suppose, you couldn't get into Duntroon?

I really just lost interest. But I must admit I've regretted it ever since, but as they say you've got to move on.

So how did it come about that you became a baker, of all things?

Kim Zadder – I don't know if you're doing him?

No, who's he? Can you explain who he is?

He's a boss at Balfour's. Been at Balfour's longer than – be maybe ten years longer than me, maybe bit shorter than that. I met him through my grandfather. His father and my grandfather both worked together. And I was actually thinking about becoming a chef or a pastry cook, actually looking at hotel work, and my grandfather said, 'Oh, well, I know a guy, his son works at Balfour's – you might want to do that,' you know, 'do an apprenticeship so you see how that goes.' And applying for a few jobs I actually got two jobs at the same time. One was at Ansett – I think they used to call it the Gateway Inn – and Balfour's, and I took the Balfour's one.

Why was that? Was there a reason that you took Balfour's?

I actually thought I'd learn more, but in the other end I found out I would have learnt more the other way, but I didn't mind because when I first went into Balfour's, and there was a boss there called Dean Evans, and he wound up getting a job in the offices, and then I thought, 'There's more to baking here.' I thought I could – there were – actually, and a lot of bosses used to say it – endless opportunities. And it was a lot of people moved on from other areas, getting into quality control. There was another guy there called John – I can't remember his last name – but he became a trade school teacher, so I saw a lot of opportunities.

What did you know about Balfour's before you started there?

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[2] (South Australian) State Government Insurance Commission.

They did wedding cakes, pies, pasties, sausage rolls, and you used to remember them on the footy shows, the 'Balfour's High Mark of the Day' and (laughs) all those sort of things, and I mean the advertising was – you always saw Balfour's. I mean, you're a South Australian, you knew what Balfour's was. Even if you went interstate you still asked for a Balfour's pie, even though they said, 'What?' 'You know Balfour's!' Everyone ate Balfour's.

What sort of reputation did they have when you started there?

Well, I remember a guy going into a home made shop, and I remember this from years ago, and he got crook. And I always remember my gran – this is when I was at primary school – my grandmother said, 'Why would you buy that when you had the deli there that sold Balfour's?' (laughter) They had got a good name, I mean, and that's how – and you remember the frogs from years ago. I remember going into – there was a little basement part in Myer's, and they also used to have their own bakery in Myer's – I don't know if you remember that? – well, it was very popular. A lot of people used to go there, a little cafeteria, and they had their own bakers in there. And when they closed down a lot of those workers all wound up working at Balfour's. There was a lot of them there. And I remember them when I was real little, because it used to be very popular, go down there, and you'd watch the girls rolling the sausage rolls, doing the pies, and they used – what they used to be basically famous for was hot cookies. You could buy them hot and they were really nice. But they also used to sell Balfour's down there, and that's where they used to display all the frogs and all those little things, wedding cakes, because they even said 'The cakes here all come from Balfour's', and I still remember that. Like a lot of other places still used to sell Balfour's even in their own bakeries.

So what was the – I've got the date, I think, the 17th of the first of '77, is that correct?

That's right, yes.

That's the date you started? Yes. So did you have an interview? How did the process work of getting an apprenticeship there?

Right. Well, after speaking to Kim Zadder and that I wound up meeting him and all of that, and they gave me a form to fill in saying that I'm interested in a job and all of that, and they handed in to the guy in personnel called John Corbett. And he was

a great bloke. He wound up working there, I reckon, a lot of – through my apprenticeship before he died. Apparently he died from a heart attack. And he also used to come up to you and remember your birthday and everything. 'Holy –', you know, '– you're kidding!' And he was a great bloke. It might be – his son actually worked at Balfour's for a while as well, you might want to catch up with him because there would be a lot of memories from him. He was a really good bloke. And then of course I got the 'phone call saying that I'd been accepted for an interview, and then I got the interview and he told me all about Balfour's. Then of course I handed my – we didn't call them resumés back then, you just called them references – and you brought references from school and your report cards and all that sort of thing. The interview probably went for about an hour because I also asked a lot of questions as well.

What sorts of things – do you remember it at all, what – – –?

Oh yes, I told him how I was interested in going to Duntroon and this has actually been an interest of mine for the last couple of years. I also told him that I'd got offered the job at the Gateway Inn, and he thought, 'Oh,' you know, 'that's – – –.' And I said, 'I'm not really interested in hotel work, but if this falls through probably I'll go for that.' Because I'd actually been told that I'd been given the job at the Gateway Inn to do an apprenticeship. And then after the interview we shook hands, did everything, and then I got the letter that I'd been accepted for the job. And then I – that was about September, just before school finished, to start on January 17th.

So how old were you then? You would have been – – –?

Seventeen.

So how did the apprenticeship training work in those days? What did you do?

Well, of course it's not like it is now. There was a lot of things you learnt by hand. And all of us started, all of us guys actually started together in the one section, and this was something they tried for the first time. And I think it was twelve of us. And I thought, 'Twelve apprentices? God, how *big's* this place? They're going to put on *twelve*?' And it might have actually been fifteen, but I kind of remember that one – I know one dropped off. I can't remember all their names, but it was Russell Paglia, me, Robert Jenkins, Tim Burton, Gary Eitrich, Robert Hocking, Karl Sweetman, and

there was one guy, he dropped off. But anyway, I remember all of us and we all came to work so clean. I remember – because of course you had to dress right and – – –.

What did you wear then?

I just wore jeans and a shirt, but we all looked neat. Like we were told not to wear a suit or anything because – quite obvious. Short-sleeved shirt, preferably T-shirt, but be neat and tidy because we were all put on three month probation, so we were told not to buy a uniform yet, but we had to be clean and I remember that. And everyone had their hair done. And we didn't wear hair nets or anything then, but we were told not to have our hair too long because you remember that '70s era, everyone – as my dad said, 'Hair down to your arsehole.' (laughter)

And I remember us all rocking there, and none of us knew nothing. And of course Bob Jared, who was the supervisor then, he was getting quite angry because, he said, 'You've given me twelve guys and you're taking twelve from me and these guys know nothing,' because this was the first time, as I said, they tried this. So we sat there like this, hands folded, watching, and we just couldn't believe it – these racks of pies, racks of pasties. And most of us were hungry. (laughter) And I remember it took us actually a couple of months before we all settled in, because they were trying to teach us quickly. Because what they wanted to do was put you training in the decorating then you'll move to the cake bakery, then you'll all move to the – it quickly went on the wayside. They actually started splitting us up so they could put some experienced people back in. But I'll never forget that because it looked like absolute turmoil. I remember one stage one guy (whispers) saying, he said, 'God, what have we got ourselves into?'

So what time did you rock up on that first day?

Four a.m. Mondays was four; Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, five; Friday, three. And that first week – oh, I couldn't believe it.

Can you tell me a bit about what you were doing in that first week? What did they get you to do on the first day?

Basically stand there. There was one guy, Robert – apparently because he worked in – this was Robert Jenkins – he went with Gary Eitrich who actually started a couple of months earlier because he'd already left school and he did an apprenticeship in woodwork and that didn't work out so he wanted to do this, and so he had a bit of experience – and Robert, who worked as a chef or a chef's hand, whatever it was, so they put him in what they used to call then the 'scullery', making the creams, icings and fondants, a lot of things that they used to make then. Now – and he couldn't believe this, because the hours – what we couldn't believe: (in awe) people actually worked twelve hours a day! And it was, it was like that. You got in at – we were all – I remember one guy, he started taking me to work because I didn't have a car, and he said, 'We get in when it's dark and we go home when it's dark.' (laughs) And it was so busy, I'll never forget it.

The first job I wound up doing was working on the belt catching the cake or putting the cake on. Now, I'll start with what I first started doing, say calypso. It used to be a chocolate sponge with butter cream in the middle, sponge on top, chocolate icing on the top. Now, the person who put them down put the bottom sponge on, weighed the cream off, put that cream on, and a lady was there putting the top sponge on, then there was a guy spreading the icing and then I'd be at the end putting the coconut on and put the cake in the rack. And I just couldn't believe this. You did this, and you watched thirty, forty, fifty cakes go by with this one. Naps, which I couldn't believe now – like they only do about twenty trays a day now. This time – – –.

What's a Nap?

Napoleon sponges. We used to do two hundred and ten to two hundred and thirty a day. Fridays – Wednesdays, Thursdays, like an extra fifty, sixty. Because they used to be the real busy day, Wednesdays, Thursdays. Fridays you basically did shortages, catching up on all the orders and getting out. Monday was also a catch-up day, so you had pretty much the same on. Because if you remember those old days, housewives – and I remember my mum and all of this how things used to be – you always packed your own lunch on a Monday because there'll be nothing in the shops that was fresh; you could only buy fresh from those days onwards.

So can you describe how – this conveyor belt just was a continuous running thing and you just had to – – –?

Yes. Remember how I showed you in that booklet? It showed me on the – when you got up the line then you started spreading. (sound of rustling paper)

This is referring to a little booklet called *About Balfour's*, a little promotional booklet.

Yes. We used to (pause) – that was the cappuccino. That was the person putting on, spreading the cream, I was spreading the icing, and actually there'd be a person there putting those chocolate sprinkles on and then put that in the rack. So there'd be another person after that.

So did the cakes go on there automatically, or was someone there putting cakes onto the .....?

Oh, no – that person there was putting them on, she was putting them on –

The person at the end.

– and she would also put that cream on. Because they'll weigh that cream.

How did they weigh it back then?

Oh, there were scales – I don't know where they are, they probably put them out because they were doing this photo. But that's how it was. And it was (in dreary voice) one after the other, after the other, after the other. That was a job, and you'd do that all day.

With the same cakes, or would it be different stuff coming through?

No, no –

All day on the same cake?

– the same cakes all day. We used to do Naps first, then Brazilian, because they were the same sort of sponge and you'd also be using – – –.

What's a Brazilian? Is that still around or not?

No, they don't do any of them any more.

What's a Brazilian, then?

The only one they do now is Naps. Brazilian was white sponge, butter cream, pastry, jam on top of the pastry and the sponge on top, white highlight icing and brazil nuts sprinkled on the top. Calypso was a chocolate sponge, butter cream, top sponge, chocolate icing and coconut on the top. Cappuccino was pretty as it says: coffee sponge, butter cream in the middle, sponge on top, cappuccino highlight icing, chocolate sprinkles on the top and put in the rack. And that one is the only one we do there now. Naps is sheet of pastry, jam on the pastry, sponge in the middle, jam on top of that sponge, butter cream on top of the jam and then a sheet of pastry on the top, and then it has pink fondant icing on the top with coconut. That's the only one they do now. But those days were good. I mean – – –.

In what ways were they?

Well, work was – when you look at how it's turned out, you never saw that coming. It's unbelievable.

What do you mean, how it's turned out now?

Oh, a lot less work. They've shipped a lot of work out that a lot of people don't even know. I mean (pause) – what's the word? – outsourced, they've outsourced a lot of work that a lot of people wouldn't even know. A lot of the yeast lines and all of that have all been outsourced. But I guess, as they say, we'll wait and see what happens.

So you started on those cakes, that would be the first thing you were learning to do. Now, what were you saying this process – they were moving you around. Did you begin doing that, did you move about a bit?

Oh yes, then all of us, the whole twelve of us in that first year, we did start moving around. I eventually got onto the boilers, and the boilers was making custards, jellies, an American fudge icing, heating down fondants for the frogs.

Can you perhaps describe each of those processes, what you'd be doing?

First thing you did when you came in when you were on that job was you started making the vanilla custard, and that was basically just an instant custard. But this one surprised me because there's big boilers – it's about as big as you are! (laughter, telephone rings)

I'll just stop that – – –. (break in recording) Okay, we're back again. You were just talking about the vanilla custard, the boiler being really big.

Yes. And you put in – what was it? Eighty litres of water – now, this is just estimates – eighty litres of water, twelve litres in this big brown tub which was about as – because I was pretty skinny back then (laughs) – and it was about as wide as I was. And you put it on this table. The twelve litres – then you mixed in one bag, twenty-five kilos of custard powder. And I remember the first time I tried to stir it, I just could not believe it, I thought, 'How do people do this?'

What did you stir it with?

A whisk, which was as tall as you were. (laughs) And of course you did all this by hand. You just couldn't imagine it. And then it took – I remember the first time I said, 'I need a couple of people to give me a lift to put it in the boiler.' And the boss told me, (in croaky voice) 'Don't be weak, go on, what are you talking about?' And then of course there was no such thing as WorkCover and compensation in those days. But it's amazing how you did it. I mean, as I think my dad said to me, 'You start to get muscles in your eyebrows.' (laughter) And it was actually two people lifted it, one on each handle, and it went in. And then the best part: while the custard's there bubbling away you've got to stir it. And you had this big stick which was as big as a broom, but my hands couldn't even fit in the stick. I was there trying to work out how you used it to stir it up. It was huge, and it made one big round bowl full of custard. And then I thought, 'Oh, that's that.' And the boss said, 'Oh, don't be stupid, you've got seven to go.' (laughter) Used to make eight of those a day, first thing, and that usually took you up to about lunch.

What was that used for, that custard?

Vanilla slices.

Vanilla slice, right.

They were one of the biggest sellers. I think they still are one of the biggest sellers. But they were huge, I mean I just couldn't believe it. And then, after you did that, you cleaned up a bit and then you started melting the icings down for the frogs. And this is something that absolutely surprised me, you had this big, thick icing, and it was put into what they called 'fondant tubs'. And I'm there trying to put a fingerprint in it and I thought, 'How do you get this into there to stir up?' 'You dig it out, stupid.' (laughter) And I thought, 'How?' And then I saw this guy come up

– we used to call him 'Big Al' – and he had these hands which were just so tough, they looked like he's been around the traps quite a bit, and he just picked it up without hardly any effort at all. And I remember it took me the first week, I thought I was going to die, but you got it done. You worked out your way that you could do it.

So what was the icing in, where was it that you put them in?

Big metal tub. Yes, it was stuck to everything.

So that was made up previously by somebody, or – – –?

Yes. How fondant's made is sugar and water and boiled to a temperature just before caramelising, and it will run through this machine like a big worm and come out – and it's very hot, and it goes into this tub so when it sets – and then it cools down and then it sets and it goes quite hard. And the saying with fondant is, 'The harder it is the better it is, better quality.' Apparently fondant, when it cooled down, if it didn't go hard it was no good, had to be thrown out, because it would just turn to syrup when it's heated up. Because the fondant icing, besides frogs, was also used for weddings – not weddings; birthday sponges had fondant icing on the top. Because when it sets hard after being re-melted, it's got to be heated up to blood heat, then it has that nice shine on it. And then you could put stencils and all of that over it or write on it or whatever, like 'Happy birthday', 'Congratulations' and all those like we used to do.

So initially you were just melting that ready for someone else to –

Just for frogs.

– do something with it.

Just for frogs. Weddings and birthdays side, they used to get their own little fondant, they had their own little pots, their own little stove where they'd just heat it up as they needed it. Because one thing about fondant is you can't heat it up for someone and just take it over to them; it's got to be used straight away or it just starts setting up again. Then of course you had heaps of – – –. (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

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So are the frogs made the same way now as they used to then?

Yes, but different machine.

Right. Can you describe how they were made in those days?

Well, we used to do so many that after lamingtons frogs were done. Now, the lamington chocolate was a bit different because it was more of a dip, had a lot of scrap icing which all went in just to be remixed into lamingtons. So that had to be washed out and then they'd put in the pure fondant for the frogs. Now, you'd do green, pink then chocolate.

Was there a reason for that order?

Yes, just so because you used to have these little things called iced-overs, so you did a little bit of white first, just a couple, like for almond fancies – no, not almond fancies, garden parties. And you had a few of these little iced-overs. So that's why they put then the green first, because it was easier to turn white into green, and then it's easier to turn – when you washed out again, because you didn't do like a big wash-out, you just scraped it out – then it was easy to turn that into pink. And then, of course, chocolate last. But you used to have girls that did that for about six hours a day. Sometimes they had to go, sent to lunch because they weren't finished, especially the Wednesdays, Thursdays. You used to have so many on, just tray after tray after tray. And then those old days you always used to be short of frogs as well, because they never used to be available on Monday. So on the Mondays for Tuesday you had heaps on, like you used to have that many on.

So you were describing that machine, how it operated.

Right. It used to be called a 'chocolate enrover'. The machine had a heater on it, so when you put the fondant in it used to turn over in the machine while the heater's on, and the heater had a couple of settings on so when it first went in it was up to its hottest, then you'd cool it down to get it right. Girls also used to add syrup to the fondant to thin it down a little bit, but you can't put too much syrup into fondant. Then the enrover, as the chocolate rose to the top, the machine had a funnel to it so it sucked down like a trough, then rose to the head of the machine, then came out both sides and spread the fondant over the cakes. That's the best I can describe – it's quite a hard machine to explain, but if you think of enrover, that's what it's doing, it's enroving icing over the cakes. Then there was two girls on the end of that machine which put the mouths on the frogs. You get your knife hot so you've got to have hot water, as hot as you can get it just out of the tap – no need to be boiling – they'd have two jugs there where they kept dipping the knives into the top of the frog to make it look like a mouth. As they dried on the tray, you would have four, five, maybe a few girls even when they finish other jobs, would start putting the eyes on the frogs.

How was that different to – that machine was deleted from the line, was it, and something else put in?

Oh, it just wore out. What they did was they got a new one, same principle, has a trough in it, but it has a belt on it which they could just put the tray on top of it and it would go through automatically. In the old days there was a girl like this, going –

Pushing it through, oh, okay.

– pushing it through, rolling it back. So it's just a bit different, more modern.

You say girls – was it mostly women working in that area then?

On the frogs, yes.

Why was that, was that just coincidence?

Oh, just the way it happened. Boys learnt to do the icings and girls did most of the just basic decorating. Weddings, birthdays, you had more blokes than girls but you had a few girls, but mostly blokes.

We'll get onto that. I'll take you back, you were talking about these various things you were doing with the boilers, the custard, and that's how we got to the frogs with the fondant. What else was happening in that area?

Then you'd make a stuff called 'pectin jelly', which put pectin into sugar. When the jelly got to a certain temperature you put the pectin and sugar in and also add glucose, then you added raspberry colour and raspberry fruit juice flavour. Quite complicated to make because they're – especially when you first looked at this recipe, 'add here at seventy-six point something-or-other temperature,' then you couldn't put the – then you had to boil it up to a hundred and three, or was it hotter than that? Could have been up to a hundred – I think it was a hundred and three. Course, as you know, when water's got sugar into it you can get it quite hot. And then you put it into these tubs, and then you had to watch that you didn't burn yourself. And then you wheeled it over, and of course everything – you just couldn't work out with Balfour's, specially in the old days, you made something in one section then you had to wheel it miles away (laughs) and of course the jelly was quite hot. And I remember even how hot it was, even when you put the lid and everything on it. And in the barrel the heat just seemed to go right through this tub, and it was unbelievable. Of course, you could never get that to run out, either, and even if you had a little bit left, because the jelly couldn't be used hot, when the girls needed it in the morning to do the jelly tarts it had to be cold, so you always had to make sure and if it ever ran out the boss – as they did in the old days – kicked you up the butt and he lost his foot. (laughter) Yes.

And also in those days, like if you ever finished early, you had this machine to wash, and it was an icing machine and it was called the 'Frost-o-fast', and I couldn't believe this machine. I thought I was a mechanic. You had to strip it and fill it full up with hot water and let the water circle around, then you would drain that water out, and of course you'd always be in trouble for spilling water on the floor. But the way the pump was, and the way the water went through it, you were trying to hold this hose and this bucket. And of course the buckets they used to use like back then, they were these big metal things and I couldn't even lift them. And as the water (laughs) filled up with it – – –. And I remember asking my boss, who was Bob Jarrett, and I said, 'Could I have a hand?' And he said, (in croaky voice) 'Look what they give me. I mean, oh my God, when I

was your age I could lift that with my –' what's-the-name. (laughter) And I won't – I can't quite mention what he said. Of course, I went as red as a beetroot. I mean, these days you would be able to sue, but not back then.

What was he like as a –

Very good.

– he was the trainer or the boss?

No, he was the supervisor, and he was one of the best bosses I've ever had.

In what ways?

Oh, just the way he was. I just automatically respected him, he used to have a great saying, like 'There's three ways to do things around here: your way, my way and the right way,' and God help you if you said the wrong answer. Because everyone would jump up and down and go, 'Yes, the right way.' 'Pig's arse! It's *my* way, and it's *only* my way!' And he used to have some other great sayings, like 'I want you to turn around' – and of course there'd always be a smart-arse that would turn around, but he got his ears boxed! (laughs) And I remember one of the first things he ever said to me I couldn't believe it – of course, being a young seventeen year-old, when he was seventeen he lied about his age to get into the War. That's the way *I* heard it. But I'll never forget one day he came up to me and he was really mad, he was cross, I messed up, and he said, 'When I was your age I was killing Japanese.' (laughter) And I remember the cold chill running down the back (laughs) because he looked like he could still kill people. And I'll never forget how fit he was. I mean, right up to the day he retired he was still running around – like not walking up the stairs, running up the stairs, and he had all his hair so he looked quite distinguished right up until the day. My wife saw him not that long ago because she used to work at Balfour's as well and said he still looks good for his age. And he retired right up – I think he was sixty-six when he retired, and he'd been at Balfour's for forty years. But he'll never be forgotten. I mean, people who worked with him never forgotten him.

So tell me a bit about that discipline. You're saying it was actually a clip round the ears, it was literally – – –?

Oh yes, yes, it was. I mean, you were kicked up the Khyber and you were hit and apprentices did fight each other. And I mean you didn't stop it. Everyone went around in a circle and watched the fight. (laughs)

Can you give me an example, do you remember an example?

It died out – as WorkCover and all of that, so like the discipline, you were – like if you were even away you got your ears boxed. But then I remember how it all died out. We had one apprentice who actually complained that he was hit, and it wasn't a boss but it was just another worker, because even the workers there, there used to be a guy – I remember him – he used to like hitting you on your funny bone with his plastic spoon to get the plastic icing out, and I mean it hurt. And you didn't do it right. And I can't quite remember the apprentice's name, because he wound up getting that much of a hard time afterwards that he wound up leaving. But he complained about someone hitting him, and then he got the sack and things just changed overnight. But it was amazing – it's like you hear some people at school say, 'I got the cane at school, it never did me any harm', and you hear a lot of people that worked back in those days, even like my grandfather and that, it didn't hurt them, it did put you in line, you knew your pecking order and all of that. But I must admit I was never hurt, and I never got in any fights.

What would the fights be about if there were fights?

'That was my cup, get lost.' (laughs) But it was unbelievable.

So what – are you saying you'd get told if you made mistakes? What kind of – do you remember making – any of your mistakes you made in those early days when you were learning? What sorts of things you'd be disciplined for, I suppose?

Oh, like if you got the fondant too hot you didn't get the shine on the frogs because then they'd be rejected, and also when you don't get the shine on frogs the icing cracks so big stuff up. Running short of things. Because one of the big things that people used to get mad about, see we used to do that many hours. It was always at least a nine hour day, even in the summer. Winter, you're talking about your ten to twelve. Sleeping in or having days off was in those days a big no-no. I also remember about Balfour's, it didn't matter – you had to be really something wrong with you not to get a job because they were always looking for people. It was

always short-staffed, you'd never get enough people, and that's what surprises you about now. I mean, they can virtually pick and choose, like years ago they couldn't.

Okay, so we're finished talking about the boilers, you're up to the jelly.

Yes, that was the last thing you did.

One thing, you say 'wheeling them around' – did these things have wheels, or were you using some kind of trolley or something?

If you could find wheels, yes. (laughter) Because they always used to run off somewhere. I remember the cream, you'd put it in the tub, people that made the cream, you often dragged the tub. And I mean the tub was like up to there.

Waist height, yes.

And you'd – (growling with effort) grrrr – and you used to drag everything across the floor. Like these days you could never do it, you just wouldn't be allowed. But back then it was any way you can.

Tell me a little bit about – you say this factory layout has changed, that things were all over the place. I think when we first met you said something about your first impressions of the place, of not knowing how the hell you were going to get in or out or something. Was it you who said that?

Yes. I just couldn't believe it. Like when we got in we all went to the decorating room. We all had to go downstairs on the ground floor to what was called the icing machine. Whoever ran it, that's what the machine was called, like 'Dennis's machine' or 'Tony's machine' or whatever. I mean this icing machine never really had a name, (laughs) not like the Frost-o-fast and all that. (aside) The turtles are fighting. (returns) And we couldn't work this out: 'Gee, imagine a machine called "Tony's machine".' You just couldn't – it's just so hard to believe. And people always got lost in there. Like that was a thing that really got me as well – it takes you a good week to know where the hell you're going. And I just couldn't work this out. So 'Why are we in decorating?' And we've got to go back downstairs: 'I thought they said that was packing and the cake bakery.' Things were just trying to – you're trying to work it out. And then we saw all these racks going – (rhythmic chant) choong, choong – you know, there's pies, pasties, pallet loads and looks like no-one's got five seconds to live. And that really just freaked me out, I just couldn't

believe it. And then we watched the jubilee get iced and then the finger buns afterwards, and it was just racks and racks and (laughs) racks and racks.

And also back then, when you wanted a smoke, you smoked in the toilets and summer days some people used to just go outside and have a smoke. Now you've got a smoking area and all that and you're not allowed to smoke in toilets. But I couldn't believe that – what the hell do you want to smoke in the toilet for? (laughs) Yes.

So that was where you were supposed to smoke, you mean, if you wanted to, the toilets?

No, you were allowed to outside or in the toilets.

So how was the layout changed from – say from now to how it was when you first started?

Well, in the decorating room now you don't do weddings and birthdays, they've outsourced all of those. I don't know who does them, I think they've got a few people that do them at home. And Swiss roll used to be done in the cake bakery. That went to decorating, and now they've outsourced that. And, as I told you like in those first jobs I did, all those sponge lines, they're all gone. Lamingtons aren't the same, lamingtons we used to do back then. I mean, we used to do *heaps* of lamingtons, it was unbelievable how many we did, but they've all been outsourced as well.

How are they different from – – –?

They do the finger-food ones, and I don't know who they're for but they're not under Balfour's brand, but just these little ones and they do jam ones as well. Cake bakery, birthday rounds – they only do fudge rounds now, that's the chocolate sponge. And when I first went to the cake bakery and did sponges that was an all-day job.

Tell me a bit about – would that have been the next place you went from this boiler room?

Yes. I went from decorating room, did my twelve months there, then I went to the cake bakery.

Have we finished talking about the decorating? Have you done all the things that you learned there?

Yes, I've probably done the – – –.

Would you have started on the birthday and wedding, or was something that was left till later?

No, I went on the jubilee and granary bread. We used to do granary bread there. And I used to go behind the table to mould it, they used to have this big moulding machine. And when I'd got in the doughs were ready because the doughmen already made the doughs and they used to have to ferment for a while, let them rise before you'd get ready to use them. And we used to do granary rolls, which were done on the Mould-e-mat machine.

What's the Mould-e-mat machine?

Bun moulding machine. And the loaves used to be done on this moulder, they just used to call it the moulder, and it went on this conveyor which moulded it out a bit more and then you had two people on the end that got the bread ready to put into the baking tins so they could go in the provers. That was the first job I did. It was quite easy; all you did was wait for one to go round then you'd put the next one in. It was quite boring but it wasn't too bad. One guy cut it and then it – cut to the right size, then I picked them up and put them through the moulder. Did that for about, oh, I reckon three to four months, and I went onto the sponge section. And sponge section I thought was quite interesting. You had three people doing the rounds and you had about four people doing the Swiss roll and the ribbon and – what they'd call ribbon: two kilos which were for lamingtons, and ribbon was white, pink and chocolate – even though you did your calypso and all – but it was all called ribbon, that's what they used to call it in the cake bakery. And I basically did all the rounds, and as I was saying, because fudge rounds back then – which were one of our biggest sellers – you used to do nine hundred on a Wednesday, Thursday, which was unbelievable. And then of course you had splits, which wasn't that quite many, but that was basically a cream sponge. And you also used to do splits – can't remember all the flavours, but you had plain and chocolate, can't remember the others – and they were also a big seller as well.

So what's a 'split'? What was it?

Splits, it had curls, creamed – piped cream curls on top of the sponge. Now, the rounds down there you used to call 'sandwich' back then because they were cut in half and filled, so they would be called sandwiches. And birthdays used to be separated from those rounds and then taken upstairs where, depending on what they ordered, you either put two together or you had some cut in half and filled and creamed. But doing those rounds, or the sandwich, used to be there nine to ten hours a day and sometimes longer on a Wednesday, Thursday. It was unbelievable.

So what were you doing to them, what was your job?

Your egg was pre-weighed, because you used to do that at the end of the day, get ready for tomorrow, as they used to call it. So your egg was pre-weighed. Then you came in and you weighed – oh, and your powders were also pre-weighed. So what you did, you put the egg in the bowl –

So it was fresh eggs that had been cracked, or what were you using?

We buy – Balfour's use egg pulp, which comes in – it's just all the eggs been smashed and the egg's in a big container. And you used to have these scales that looked like – a bit bigger than the ones you saw in the chemist, (laughs) you know, you used to weigh yourself. I just couldn't believe these scales. I still remember them. You'd zero off your bucket and you used to be able to do it by hand, you'd put it onto zero. Nothing digital. I mean, they were all the old – you weigh it, as I said, just visualise those old chemist scales, but twice as big. And your egg would – you'd get these churns which they'd call them, like milk churns, if you can think like that, they were a bit – they were like a gold colour, not quite like the milk ones – they were actually called egg churns – and all your egg was in there. And you'd weigh your egg off. Usually you'd guess how many you'd got on that following day so you'd pre-weigh your egg and the egg would go in the 'fridge. And so you'd put your egg in the machine bowl and your sugar, flour, powders, and put them on the machine and you'd just mix them up to the time it says. It was like six minutes per mix. Then we used to lift it into this – used to be called the 'sandwich machine' – and the sponge would come out the correct weight into the sponge tins. And you used to do that all day, I mean, one mix and then you go and get the next mix, and it just went on and on and on and on.

How many would one mix make? Would it be a large quantity?

One mix did around between ten and eleven trays, and you're thinking you're doing at least a thousand chocolate and more than that again of white. So it was just mix after mix after mix. So you'd get ten trays, which is, say, your eighty sponges. So you can just work that out.

So the mixer, is that the same mixers they use now, or has that changed?

Oh, they've changed, they're more modern now. I mean, they have automatic clutch and all on them now, not like back then. (laughs)

How did they work then?

Like a car. (laughter) Except you had a big handle which was your clutch, then you'd put the machines into gear then you'd let the clutch out to drive them – for the machine to drive. And I'm talking about these machines which were as tall as me, the mixing bowl half my size. And you had a hand thing where you had like an up-and-down handle, and you lifted the bowl up by hand and it was using your full body weight to get the bowl up there. So it was quite unbelievable.

How is it done now, to compare?

To compare? You just have a lever and the machine goes up by elevation. They still have some of the old machines there, but they're not as old as these other ones were.

Do they still use them these days, those machines?

Not many, no.

So the recipes, did you have to learn these recipes, or how did that operate?

Well, now you've got a computer printout which gives you the recipe. Back then you had to remember all the recipes because you didn't – as they used to say in the old days, if you didn't you used to get behind if you had to keep looking up, so you learnt them quickly and they were virtually the same recipe every day. You just went by mixes.

Where would you look them up? Were they in a – how were they stored?

In a folder in the office. And the recipes weren't allowed to leave the office so you used to go in there pen and paper, work out how many you got on or what you got on

and write them down, then of course you'd remember them after making them every day.

Were there new recipes coming in that you'd have to keep up with, or was it generally that these recipes had been longstanding ones – – –? (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

[Were there new recipes coming in that you'd have to keep up with, or was it generally that these recipes had been longstanding ones], or how did that – – –?

Back then they were, they were longstanding.

Were there new recipes coming in at all for new products during the time that you were beginning?

Like how recent?

Well, I guess in those early years when you were starting, were there new products coming in and out, or were you tending to do – – –?

No, not back then you had very new products; they went by their old proven ones. They may have changed a few designs, but not basically what they made. If they came with a thing that would need sponge, it's like to try and keep the sponges going they brought in a banana one, so you only added banana flavour, then the banana cream went on the top, things like that. But basically the recipes didn't change.

Okay, I'll just stop you there and change the tape before we – – –. (break in recording) This is the second tape of an interview with Alex Bone being recorded by Karen George for the Adelaide City Council's Balfour's Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 10th December 2002 at Salisbury East in South Australia. So you're talking about the things you were doing in the cake bakery. Was there anything else that you were involved with in those early days there?

Yes, well, when I did sponge, I eventually went back onto nights, and I experienced my first Easter. (laughs)

Tell me about that.

I couldn't believe it. I mean, you probably heard me talking about we used to do ten and eleven days, but here we go: I was actually asked if I could go on the dough room. And I thought, 'Oh, yeah, yeah, no problem.' I remember the first couple of days when they start doing the trials on hot cross buns, I thought, 'Oh, yeah, this isn't too bad.' But then let's start talking about fourteen, fifteen hours a day – I just

couldn't believe it. I worked in there with an old guy called Kenny Wilson, and I can't remember his off-sider – they'd both worked at Balfour's for quite a few years – Jimmy Gorton, I think his name was. And I was the apprentice to go in there and help them out. And that was like pre-weighing fats, getting fruit ready and a few things like that. And it was very interesting, I must admit I quite enjoyed it.

How did you get fruit ready in those days? What did you – – –?

I'd just weigh it up, it was already washed. You had a guy there that washed the fruit. What I'd be meaning by that is like say it's eight point something kilos, I'd get them there because, as I said to you before, all the recipes were the same so it just depended on how many doughs there were. And you had another thing there where to ....., you'd have to cut it up into small little bits, and you get a big tub of it and you just get the boxes and you'd cut it up with like a cheese slicer and do things like that. And then – because if you didn't cut them up and you put it in straight in the dough you'd get a big lump of it and so it wouldn't mix in properly. So I was there a little rouseabout boy, and you would also relieve them for lunch and of course you would mix as well and you would learn. But they were very good tradesmen, both of them were, and I learned a lot. But I must admit I was very surprised. (laughs)

So fourteen, fifteen hours – when did you start and when did you finish?

Well, back then you basically just started like – most of the time those guys started about eight, nine at night, and then, as Easter came along, then you started six, seven. I remember coming in on a Sunday about eight o'clock, eight p.m., and being there still eight in the morning. It was quite hectic. And Easter never ever seemed to end. I mean, right up until Easter Thursday it was always very busy. Eighty, ninety doughs every day, and there'd be your odd one where you'd have to come in on a Saturday as well. But I'll never forget that.

So when you say eighty, ninety doughs, what do you mean by 'dough'? What is that, an amount, or how does that – – –?

Yes. One dough does about thirty trays of hot cross buns, could be a bit more than that but it's normally that – might be even forty trays.

What was the process of making the buns?

What they used was – – –. The first year I got there you did doughs the old way. They were called the old 'arm machines', as they were called. And then a couple of years later, or as they were going on, they built a dough room and it was out of the old man's – it was the old personnel office which was actually Old Man Balfour's office, and so they revamped it and made a new dough room. And they got what they called Kemper bowls – Kemper machines and Kemper bowls which mixed the doughs up quite a bit better, had automatic cold water and you could put things to the right temperatures and all this sort of thing. And that's actually when I got my shot in the dough room. And then they had automatic flour silos, you didn't have to lift the bags and do the flour and everything, so everything was basically written out like on a map for you. And the doughs were called a 'no-time' dough, like we still used to use the old fermentation doughs as well for a lot of the products there back then, so it was quite simple to do hot cross buns. It was just virtually you put everything in the mixing bowl, let it go on the Kemper, the Kemper mixer, mix it, add your fruit when you had to and add your fat, and powders. That was basically it. Yes, it was quite good.

How was it, did you hand put it into bun shapes, or how did it become buns?

No, then you put them in the moulding mat. We used to have two moulding mats then: one was a four, did four rows, buns come out of the machine four, and the big one was six. They've got a different one now, they've got what they call a Konig machine.

How does that – – –?

Oh, it just automatically sits on the trays then you put it on the rack – sits on the tray, goes on the rack, has it like a big table. When they go to the right end of the belt there's a sensor on the end, then the table moves. Bang, straight onto the tray. On the old moulding mat the buns would come up to the end and you've got to be there and you have four people to pick them up, put them in the trays. And that is a job you don't want to get on. (laughs) That's quite boring.

So the dough room – has that moved from the area that you were working in when you had your first stint there?

No, it's still there.

It's still in the same place.

Still there.

You mentioned the old man, Mr Balfour. Did you ever meet him, have you met him at all, or has he already passed away by then, I think, by your time?

Yes. Yes.

Yes, he had.

Yes.

Yes. So David Wauchope would have been – – –?

Yes, David Wauchope was in charge.

What do you remember of him, then? Did you ever see him on the factory floor?

Yes. Yes, he was a good bloke. Yes. He helped me out quite a few times. He used to talk to us, come out on the floor, he used to do quite a few things.

Can you give us some examples of how he helped you?

I remember when I first got married I needed a loan and I didn't want to go through a bank because I didn't want to go through those hassles – he lent me the money.

Wow.

Yes. And it came out of my pay, which was quite – then I could keep the money I wanted in the bank, and didn't have to go through all that rooting around. He only like said, 'I can afford to pay it back?' That's all he said. 'Yeah.' (laughs) 'All right, how much do you need? Are you sure you don't need more?' So things like that. Now, things like that you never forget – I mean, this mob now wouldn't even think of doing it. (pause) Christmas and Easter was always good at the end of the time, the Wauchopes always gave their – because I suppose, as you know, they were very Christian-orientated, virtually used to pray for us all. Always walked around and wished everyone a merry Christmas and Easter, always. They always did that. Gave everyone a packet of hot cross buns, thanked everyone and spoke to us like, 'I want to see you back after the break,' and all of that. Christmas was always a bit more longer but same principle, and they would hand out a Christmas package. When the company was going well they also handed out bonuses for everybody, which I thought was quite good.

How would that work? They would just – – –?

Depending on how they went.

So what was in the Christmas hamper, the Christmas – – –?

Pudding, mince pies and whatever, whatever they could put in there.

Well, you mentioned Easter. Perhaps as it is Christmas now how was Christmas in those days when you first started in the late '70s?

Very busy. Christmas cake. We also used to do these – oh, what were they? – see, you just didn't do your Christmas cake, puddings and all of that; you also used to get orders for Christmas – how people want their own cakes designed – so the decorating side was quite busy. Of course they would want the traditional – they didn't want Christmas cake, they wanted the traditional dark rich cake and they'd put on what design they wanted. So the decorating room was also quite busy. And of course you had to put as many people as you could over on that side to ice up the Christmas cakes, because it was always very busy. But the decorators would be normally busy as well. Then you would also get companies – I remember one year we had 5AD[3] that wanted all these Christmas cakes, they wanted 'Merry Christmas' and 5AD logo on the cakes. And you used to get quite a few of those as well, Holden's I remember doing one, and things like that. And in those early years you still had your normal – work didn't drop off, so you still had your normal, say, your nine, ten hours –

I'll just get you to not bang the table because it'll come through the mic[rophone].

– your nine, ten hours, and then you'd do that work afterwards. And sometimes it was usually two, three or four hours, whatever, afterwards.

So from the cake bakery did you move into the decorating area?

Yes, I went back there – I went to the pastry section after the cake bakery. Basically worked on doughnuts. Doughnuts and a bit on the pie machine, bit on sausage rolls. Didn't really settle into anything over there, only the doughnuts, because every time they were someone short then they'd put me back on doughnuts. And doughnuts I did virtually every job. They also make icings as well. Pineapple icing they used to

make, a veg ice icing, which was basically sugar, water, veg ice, and the other one had pineapple.

What's veg ice?

It's like a fat substitute and a stabiliser all in the one, then you don't have to add much fat in the thing. As I say, most names they had for things come from what they used, like highlight icing because they had Highlight margarine in it. (laughs)

Oh. So is the process of doughnut making, is that the same now as it was then?

I haven't been over there for years, you see. See, when I became a boss I didn't move any more, and I was a boss on the decorating, I reckon, for at least ten years, so then I stopped moving around.

So tell me, the apprenticeship, how long did that last?

Four years.

Four years. And by that stage you'd been through all the steps of the – – –.

Yes, the whole factory.

What other aspects have we not mentioned that you would have learned about in that apprenticeship?

It's hard to say because you do learn quite a bit, but – – –.

I've got written here, 'makeup table' – have we talked about that? You said midget pies and pasties and Danish cakes – I think that was a note I made from our preliminary meeting.

Yes, yes. When you went on the makeup table back in the old days you had a lot done by hand, and you had what they used to call the 'eights', the Danish eights. You used to fold them like that, and then you twirled it round and you made it into an eight. And then pineapple went into those hollow bits. We used to do German coffee cake down there, where you put the dough into this tin, it was like a tray, then you also had a wood to make it like a – wood, and it was fastened in there with paper, and then you covered the dough with strusel, strusel topping. Those things you don't do any more. And continental apple slice, we don't do that any more

[3] Radio station based in Adelaide.

down there. That had sponge – not sponge, it was cake – in the middle of it, and then apple put inside the sponge. Now, that was quite good. Yes, I worked with the makeup table for quite a few years through my apprenticeship, going in and out of there.

So the makeup table was just a table, or what is a makeup table exactly?

Oh, it's a machine which is called a makeup table. But it's actually down in the cellar. I don't know how it got 'makeup table', I really don't know how, but the whole section's called the makeup table. But virtually a lot of that on the machine, used to have a lot of table work, and the only thing they do on tables there now is the sheets, fruit sheets. But they don't do chesters any more, they don't do continental apple, they don't do French coffee, so it's just basically all that stuff which is on the belt. That's actually where Paul Quigley works.

So just broadly, just as you're mentioning all these things that they don't make any more, what sort of – how's that been, to see these things being deleted and ending up with, I guess, a smaller – is it a smaller product range, or is it bigger?

Oh, it's a lot smaller product range now. Everything they do there now is so it can be fast and quick, and it's (pause) some ways you can call it they've left it so anyone can do it, you know, where it's like anyone, less training, and I suppose you can put your unqualified bosses in there and all that sort of thing.

Is that disappointing for you, having learned all those skills, that you don't use it?

Yes, it is disappointing. But what can you do?

So once you'd done your four years' apprenticeship, what happened at that point, once you'd learned – – –?

I went to decorating. They kept me in decorating. And they put me on the belt and I virtually became in charge of the belt.

So what's happening on the belt – is that what we talked about before – – –?

Yes, right back from where I started, yes. And that means I had to work out the sponges, had to work out what was over. And then computer – – –.

What do you mean, 'work out'?

Oh, say you got enough so when you got chocolate you know you've got this much ribbon to do so you've got to make sure there's enough, and if there's not enough there then you had to make sure you ordered some more. Or they would work out if there's enough there then reorder it tomorrow, you know, that sort of thing. And then I went onto nights, and night shift became that job for the sponge, that sponge to do. So the first job I did when I finished my apprenticeship was learn the jubilee and finger buns so I knew how to do that myself. Because they needed two crews because they started putting – a lot more jobs needed to be done on nights because new early runs and all that sort of thing, so they couldn't have kept to the same starting times. And back then they didn't want anything to go a day ahead, they wanted it to be as fresh as it could be. So back then they started putting a lot of things on earlier starts. And then what happened was someone had to learn my job and then people had to learn a bit more. So then I come in, I'd make the icings, jubilee, finger buns, Frost-o-fast icing, and you had about half an hour to do it all in – well, half an hour to an hour. Then you'd go downstairs and then I used to have to set up the finger bun icing machine. Jubilee you did first, and jubilee icing which was made to be fresh fondant and you'd put a few things in it – butter cream, some other things went in it – and it had to be half fresh, half cold. And you had to get it right on to the temperature, so you used to have to go round making everything else then make this one last – you'd make it last and use it first, and it used to be a real stress factor. (laughs) And you used to set up the Frost-o-fast machine and this had hoses – as I said to you I remember the first time I cleaned it, I couldn't believe this machine. So you'd set all that up, then you'd put the heater on and you'd get that going, running through the pipes, then you'd go downstairs, set up the jubilee and finger buns, get all the racks so the person that put them on, they didn't have to travel or stop the machine. Then you would ice all the jubilee, ice all the finger buns and then you usually went to lunch. Then you'd come back and you'd do all the Naps, Brazil, calypso and all of that. And then you'd – whatever sponge you had left over, then you had to put all them away, clean up, wash the belt and then go home.

So when did you start and when did you finish when you did that process?

Depending what was on. Like if you had torpedoes, scrolls or jubilee or finger buns on promotion you came in earlier, but basically we used to start around midnight –

midnight, one o'clock – then it gradually went to eleven o'clock, ten o'clock. (laughs) Then they started an afternoon shift, morning shift – actually, one stage Balfour's went twenty-four hours. And afternoons did – see, we also used to do choc-filled doughnuts, lamington splits, all these other things as well which all had to be cream fresh, so more and more people started going onto earlier starts.

So when you started that sort of ten, eleven, twelve, one area, when would you finish in the daytime?

Sometimes we used to start at twelve, finish at ten. I remember doing that quite regularly.

So when you say 'lunch', that would be like five in the morning.

Five in the morning. (creaking sound)

So that's the decorating area. When you became part of the decorating area did you become involved with the wedding and birthday cake side of things as well?

I went over there a couple of times and I only ever got to icing up but never wound up learning to decorate, because every time my opportunity came someone left or something, whatever, happened. And I remember going privately to learn there for a while but I didn't stick at it.

What do you mean, privately to learn?

Someone to teach me outside of Balfour's.

Oh, okay.

But, as I said, every time my opportunity came up someone threw a spanner in the works and I missed out.

So that decorating area in those days, what sort of numbers of staff were working in there, as compared to today, I suppose?

You had a good ten to twenty people just over that side.

How many would there be today?

None.

None, there's none?

They've outsourced it all. Yes.

Was that a gradual process that the numbers declined, or was it just a sudden – – –?

No, I think they got outpriced as well so they had to try and do everything to try and get the prices down.

So just talk a little bit about, I suppose, the atmosphere in the workplace. How did employers/staff get on in those days?

Oh, the old days it was unbelievable. It was always a challenge. As I said to you, endless opportunities – everyone saw that. Bosses always got promoted off the floor so people that wanted to head into that way – – –. A lot of people that I knew even wound up doing managers' courses and they used Balfour's as their streamline to get other places. Guy I did my apprenticeship with, when he finished his apprenticeship, he went and worked down the sponge section permanently, saw that he could work himself up to a boss and he wound up actually leaving and became a manager of all the Mobil service stations. And he reckons how he got through it and learnt quicker was his training at Balfour's. We had another guy, when Kentucky Fried Chicken started outsourcing, he wound up becoming a manager there and now he's a manager for so many – what they call a district, and he puts his training down to what he learnt at Balfour's. Another guy got into the insurance business and he's now a millionaire, and he puts his training down to what he learnt at Balfour's as well.

So what were you learning at Balfour's, I guess, that you – – –?

You did your apprenticeship and you learnt how to lead. And now they want us to go backwards but back then they wanted you to go forward, you know, they just did it for you.

How did they teach you to lead? Give me an example of how that process would work, I suppose.

It's hard to say, it's just hard to say, because you did it as well because you could see what happened to people – see, now the atmosphere is all reversed, because the way you look at it now, 'Well, *I* won't get anywhere,' you know what I mean? Back there they put you up, now they put you down. And – no, it was. And I remember when I was a boss there, they used to say things to me: 'Who can you see when he goes?' And you would just teach them.

So would you have expressed an interest in becoming a boss, or would you have been picked from the floor as that person?

Picked, you were picked. You were normally told this is what they were looking at, then it's your part to – – –. (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

[So would you have expressed an interest in becoming a boss, or would you have been picked from the floor as that person?

Picked, you were picked. You were normally told this is what they were looking at, then it's your part to] take the lead as well.

So when you were a boss how many people were you sort of in charge of?

It depended what shift you were on. If you were on days, yes, you had more; if you were on nights you had less. But what we used to do in the decorating room was people rotated so everyone could know what everyone else has to put up with.

So you mean from day to night and that kind of thing?

No, you'd do two weeks on days, two weeks on midnights, two weeks on afternoons.

How were those different times different, I guess – was there much – – –?

Well, afternoons, when I first did it, was four till midnight, then you had midnight till eight and you had seven till three when you were on days.

Was the pace of work different in those different times?

No, it was always straight ahead – hurry up and get it done, or you run late.

Can you tell me just a little bit about the working conditions in those days? You were talking about the heavy manual labour and those kinds of things – and just a little bit, I guess, about what it was like working in there, the temperature, the noise, the smell – anything you cal recollect.

Well, back in '77 it was very demanding. But people I guess were built for it, (laughs) you know, if you can know what I mean. Back in '77 also you had hardly any Hungry Jack's and all of that, so I remember everywhere you went to eat back then, if it wasn't in a hotel, wasn't in a fish shop, it was in your deli, your local deli. And I mean delis were everywhere.

There was hardly any plastic around, that's one thing I remember – everything was in steel drums. Besides brown bags as you see now, the only thing that

really came in like that was sugar and the icing sugar. Flour and everything came in flour bags which was those hessian bags, yes, and they were sixty kilos each and we used to lift them. (laughs) The buckets I reckon were steel buckets, and the buckets they used to use in Balfour's, they had things that came in it like Ovalet which was a sponge emulsifier, Tex which was an emulsifier – they were all steel, and I reckon those buckets, they came up to my knee and I reckon they weighed between four to five kilos each, and you imagine what it was like carting water around in them. (laughs) So when you needed water to wash something out or we used to wash the machines, of course you'd fill these up with water and then you would try and carry the water to where you were going. But no, I never thought anything of it. Once you saw other people do it then you did it as well.

Another thing I describe different from then to now is you had people that would all work together. An example was when someone finished their job, unless the boss gave them a specific – I mean, you just didn't go home, you went and saw your mate and, 'What have you got left to do? Can I help?' And you did that unless you got moved to go somewhere else or you were told to go to another section or whatever. But you stayed there and you helped your mates. No-one ever snuck off home or did anything like it is now. If someone else finished early they helped each other clean up. You started at five and you went home with everyone else that started at five. The only exception was the part-time women because a lot of them worked around school hours. And as they used to say, 'everyone carried everyone else'. Another thing Bob Jarrett used to say was, 'Your strongest link has got to be your weakest link.' But it is different.

In what ways?

People – like if they've got to go they don't even say goodbye (laughs) any more, I mean especially the younger ones, they just go. 'No-one told *me* to stay back,' you know, things like that.

Balfour's has this reputation of being a family company, especially in those years. Was that like that for you, and what did that mean to be a family company?

Oh yes. Yes, it did. And one of those what made you see that was people off the floor getting promoted. And, as I said to you before, I couldn't believe it – here was

this guy Dean Evans who was a foreman and he wound up coming in charge of – not distribution, what do you call it? – when people order things –

Purchasing?

– purchasing, yes. He became boss of that. He was also – people off the floor like Arthur Jacobs, Karl Ziel, they all became production managers. There was a guy who started off as a driver, Max Bullpit, he became a department – not a department manager, a factory manager. You know, and you saw it. Every Easter, Christmas time David Wauchope I suppose gave his Easter message. David Wauchope saw these guys one day, I remember there was a whole group of them – I was actually starting a bit later and I wasn't on the Easter production – and these guys went out the front and had a barbecue. David Wauchope walked out there, said, 'G'day, g'day, oh, thanks' and all that, 'thanks,' – he only thanked you for the hours you put in. And one of the guys actually said to him, 'It would be great if you could do this for everybody.' The following year David Wauchope – then we had our first staff barbecue. And I think that happened every year onwards, and even the new management's done that. And David Wauchope, he didn't like the people actually – and he actually said this – didn't like the way they did it themselves, they thought someone else should be cooking it for them. And I've never forgotten that. Christmas, David Wauchope walked around with everybody, said 'G'day, merry Christmas,' and when he got a chance he actually brought Christmas hampers around for everybody, like mince pies and all of that, and just to say 'thank you'. When people did their twenty-five years David Wauchope was the first one there congratulating them and made sure they got the appropriate award. I think it was everyone that worked there over ten years, he did their – and they retired, he did the thing himself. That never happens any more, either. And I think they're the things you really notice between a corporate entity instead of a family business.

We didn't talk about the social side of Balfour's. Were you involved with the social club, the social functions that occurred?

No, but I remember years ago, when a lot of people worked there, of course you would have your decorating room *versus* the cake bakery in a footy match. Cricket matches, and when they were organised David Wauchope would usually arrange the hiring the oval or anything you needed. I was actually part of Balfour's soccer team.

We played I think for two seasons, two or three seasons, in the amateur league. We won our fair share of games but lost most, but it was great fun.

Did you tend to socialise outside of work with people from Balfour's?

Everyone did. Everyone did. And it was funny because even a lot of people used to go out with other people and they didn't like other people, but everyone seemed to get on. (laughs) Oh, there were a lot of things, I mean, twenty-firsts, people getting married. In those old days a lot of people used to come from work. Yes.

Speaking of some of the decorating, I noticed from the newsletters that you loaned me – and it's great that you managed to keep a complete set, that's fantastic – there were often specialty cakes made for different, you know, Westfield Shoppingtown or a Bicentennial cake, all those kinds of things.

Yes, yes.

Were you involved in the process of those?

Only organising them when I was in charge. The main person that did a lot of those celebration cakes, and we also did one when the yacht race came to Adelaide, Grand Prix, and we used to call them 'helmets' – they were the same design as frogs – the Bicentennial cake, they were most of the time done with Lucy Riddell and Brian Reynolds. Brian Reynolds made this yacht, *South Australia*, the one Hardings sponsored, and he made it out of icing. And he also made a Grand Prix car out of icing. He was a very clever man. And every year he updated that car to whatever won the race before, the year before, and it used to go in the seventy-two shop. That yacht, and it was exactly the same as – I can't remember what it was called, *South Australia* something; anyway, we used to call it the 'Hardings yacht' – and when the yacht race came here that was also in the seventy-two shop.

So would other employees be involved in helping to make those cakes or did he do it all on his own?

Usually Lucy and Brian –

Together.

– Gary Murphy, who was a supervisor in the decorating room as well – he was a very experienced decorator as well – they basically did that. I could only, because I didn't know how to decorate myself, could only say, 'This is what they want, this is

what they want it to look like,' or whatever. They would carry on. We also used to do at Grand Prix time Grand Prix lamingtons. The coconut didn't go on the top; it had a chequered flag made out of royal icing put on the top of those, and we used to call them Grand Prix lamingtons.

One thing you mentioned in passing, which probably makes me take you back a bit earlier, was the garden parties – you made a passing mention of some things that were made, and I know that Pam Cobbledick talked a bit about them. Do you want to tell me a bit about what you were doing for those functions?

Garden parties, specially Christmas time, you could never ever keep up with demand for them. They had an iced-over in it, had a what we used to call 'domes' – you had a chocolate dome and a pink dome in them, a little lamington with cream over it and you had a jelly dome, and they were a pack of twelve. And they just had quite a few different things in them. Very, very nice they were, but they outpriced themselves as well so they just became obsolete. But frogs, garden parties, almond fancies, fruit creams, all those sort of things all became out of fashion or overpriced. But when I first worked at Balfour's and the first time it came to a Christmas I couldn't believe the order for – – –.

So were those things done by hand, those garden party –

Yes, most of the time.

– bits and pieces. And they were known, they were called 'garden parties', were they, the little box with the twelve whatever you said?

Yes.

Okay. There are two other things you mentioned in the preliminary meeting – something about pavlovas –

Yes.

– and a drying room, or something?

They went into a prover to dry out. Yes, we used to do heaps of them on a Friday, I could not believe it. We used to do them before I went home when I was an apprentice, but by the time I became a baker they used to stop doing them.

So what's the prover or drying room? Is that just an area – – –?

A steam room. It actually makes yeast rise, but you used to put pavlovas in them to dry out so they would, you know, go like a pavlova.

Does that exist any more?

No, they're gone. (laughs) I think they tore them down and built offices there where that actually was.

Looking back, reflecting over the time you've been there, has there been a lot of changes to the layout and where things are in the factory, over time?

Yes, the sections are the same but – oh, how can you describe it? – see, doughnuts used to be in the decorating room. Now they're out in the pastry section and it's actually where they used to store a lot of things, that part up there where they are. Pastry section's basically the same, the principle's the same, except the machines have – they got new machines there. But the cake bakery and the decorating room have probably changed the most.

In what way?

Because things have gone obsolete then you don't need that any more so they just put something else there. It's like the decorating room, basically all they do now is ice cake and they do the jellies. They don't do BCs any more – BCs were blackcurrant tarts, they don't do them any more. And where all that decorating side is they've actually got where they do the finger food. So there's a lot of things different. But it's just hard to pinpoint it.

I notice there's almost a lingo, I suppose, or sort of slang shortage words for all these different products – was that something you had to learn or you gradually picked up, what all these things were called?

You called them first and then you found out after what it was. (laughs) Like the 'BC tart', I couldn't work out what it meant but I just called it a BC because everyone else did. Then I found out it stood for blackcurrant.

Are there any other unusual ones you can remember?

Like Naps, Napoleon. Nap sheets, that's the sponge, Nap paste is the paste. (laughs) Nap machine, that's the Napoleon paste, just rolls out the pastry, but they call it the Nap machine. What was another one? I can't remember any more, but I'm sure they'd come back.

So that purely would be a Balfour's thing because it's only Balfour's that made those?

Yes. Yes, that's right.

Okay. You mentioned promotions – you said something about if there was a finger bun promotion you'd be making heaps more finger buns. Would that be something that would be happening all the time, that there'd be different products?

Oh, it was. We even used to do Friday specials, and every Friday there was something different on. We used to have these charlottes which was a tart that had jam on the bottom of it, white sponge went in there and then you had sugar that went over the top of that sponge and then you baked it. And they were quite nice, they were called charlottes. Choc fiestas, which was just highlight cake put into a party pan, you baked it and they used to put chocolate icing on the top of it and make a little bit of a pattern on it or whatever, and they took them in turns which one would be the Friday special. Lemon meringues, and those you just used to have thousands – they couldn't keep up with them, because then they went out as a promotion thing. And something different, I mean people get it. It would be like – I remember, you went past seventy-two shop, 'This week's Friday special. Lemon meringues, get two for the price of one, won't get it till another five weeks,' or used to have something on it. 'Balfour's – buy one thing, get' – oh, 'Buy a lemon meringue, get four pies' or something, you know. It wasn't four pies but it was something like that. There was quite a few of them. I can't remember what they were all called.

How did the computers and the incoming of the computers and automation, that kind of thing, affect your work? This Computer Bake thing I've heard about that came in in the mid-'80s – how did that affect what you were doing in your areas?

Well, I remember when I first got promoted you had to fill in the computer sheets. It was all just starting to come in then. You had to rewrite it all. And I remember quite a few people, specially the older bosses, 'The paperwork's doubled because you've got a computer,' you know. 'This is ridiculous.' Didn't really change anything, I mean, instead of orders being written out – say you used to get a piece of paper, (rustling of paper) 'Right, yes, got them on, we got them on, we got them on,' it just came out on a computer sheet. And it's even different again now.

How is it now?

Oh, it's just more advanced. Comes out on paper like this, not like that old computer paper, and sometimes if the ink was fading you couldn't even read it. (laughs) It didn't really change much.

So what do you feel has been the greatest changes over the – now, how many years? What year are you in now?

Twenty-six –

Twenty-six, yes.

– this January, next month, twenty-six years. Oh, low morale, that'd be one of the biggest changes.

Where's that come from, the low morale?

Oh, management. I heard some people in the meeting just talking about – Phil Troth was telling me, who's actually a leading hand, actually said, 'What is the incentive of working here when you don't promote people from within the company any more?' They didn't really answer him. They spoke for five minutes but they gave a politician's answer. Talk for five minutes but they won't answer your question. (laughs) That sort of thing. I mean, it's – a lot of people feel it's going down the gurgler, so you know what that would do. It just causes low morale as well.

So what work do you do today? What are the jobs that you work on today, and how is that different from what you did in the past?

Well, I do the one-mixer rounds. Now, as I said to you, before I would do a hundred mixes a day. (laughs) I do one, and then I'd go on the ovens. I bake what they call the bakehouse pies. Now, they only do them Monday, Wednesday, Friday, those bakehouse pies. It's usually Tuesday and Thursday I work on baking off the cake or helping on Christmas.

So when you say 'on the ovens', what does that mean?

Baking cake.

So actually loading it in, or what sort of things are you doing then?

Yes, loading in, taking out, yes. And you take them – when the racks are full then I'll take what decorating need or the air-con room need, all that sort of thing.

What's the air-con room?

Air-conditioned room, that means it's set on the temperature. There's another abbreviation.

So what goes into there?

When the cake gets cut. When the cake gets iced, it goes in the air-con room where they cut it and wrap it.

So in terms of the pace of work – I mean obviously the amount of work that you were doing in the old days has changed; what about the pace of it these days? Is it still pretty full-on when you're in there for your shift, or what's it like?

Oh, it depends.

On what?

Oh, it just depends what's on. It's probably just as hectic, but a lot more boring.

In what ways? Why is it more boring?

Well, like I said before, everything's just so simple, it's just all appears to be like slapped together now. Like I remember a sign that went through – oh, when was it? – 'Do it right the first time'. So that means don't worry about how quick you are, whatever, do it right the first time. And now, instead of moving a lot of people around, there are – people basically stay in what they're doing, so that means you don't have to worry about teaching people anything. Whereas the old days you used to get told, 'You'll learn that; when you do that properly you're going to learn that; when you do that one properly you're going to learn that one. And if you don't learn, we'll beat it into you.' (laughs) Of course you learnt! Yes.

So are there apprentices still going through now, or does that not happen?

I don't think they put any on last year, I'm not quite sure. They might have, but I don't think so.

How many of those original twelve or so that you said actually continued on like yourself? Are there any of those left nowadays?

Only me.

Only you.

Yes. Yes.

So tell me a little bit how you feel about this move from the city, because you've worked in that factory for, well, twenty-six years in the city. How do you feel about the move out of the city?

I haven't really thought about it at all. Probably they should have done it years ago. But I must admit it's a lot handier working in town than it will be working out there, but it's going to be – I reckon that will be something that will hit me when it happens.

How will it affect what you do? Do you know how it will affect what you do?

No-one knows. Some people are even sceptical whether they will move. And I remember someone saying to someone else, 'Well, it's been signed, sealed and delivered so they have to move.' (in droning voice) 'Oh, I've heard it all before.' So I think it's going to be wait and see.

Is there equipment or machines that you use now that you know may be left behind or that might be outmoded?

No, I've got no idea. See, apparently – I heard today that Balfour's bought a place in Sydney, and we still haven't been told that. Now, I heard it from the union, so that's going to be – I don't know when they're going to tell us that, but apparently they've bought it.

So what do you think will be the reaction if – I suppose now 'if' – the doors close on that factory in the city?

Oh, I think that will just be something that will hit me when it happens.

Looking back over your twenty-six years what do you think you've gained, I guess, personally from working at Balfour's? What have been the highs and the lows, I suppose?

I was – when I got promoted. Of course the biggest downer I think was when I got demoted, deciding what I'll have to do.

Why did that happen, the demotion? Was that because – – –?

They amalgamated the – – –. (clacking sound)

The turtle's going wild (laughs) behind us.

They amalgamated the decorating room and the cake bakery together, so they only had – they said I didn't know enough about the cake bakery for me to be promoted,

then they wanted to keep Eleanor on days – that was the day shift manager – and so they thought it would be best if I'd – – –. (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE B: TAPE 3 SIDE A

[they said I didn't know enough about the cake bakery for me to be promoted, then they wanted to keep Eleanor on days – that was the day shift manager – and so they thought it would be best if I'd] got demoted and put in the cake bakery. That's when I went back to the makeup table, that's where I first went after I was demoted.

So do you feel – you talked about all these people that have gained that management experience and then left, do you feel that you have gained something in that process by working at Balfour's?

I did feel like that, but now I'm on the other end of it. See, it's like 'Shut up, stay in the corner.' (laughs) That's how it's like now. So I guess there's nothing you can do anything about, so – – –. And it's also like they don't want you to learn. Like before, as I said to you, you'd go here then you would move, when you were there you were moved here. Everything had a script to it. It doesn't do that any more. It's just 'hurry up, slap it together so it can get out'.

Well, I've covered most of the questions that I – – –. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your years at Balfour's? Anything that sticks in your mind?

I used to think – you'll probably think this is stupid – but I used to think if Balfour's ever went to war I'd go to war for Balfour's, but I wouldn't do that now. If Balfour's caught on fire I wouldn't even run back and piss on it. (laughs) But I would years ago. And it was always very enjoyable except the last ten years – probably the last ten years, maybe a bit longer. But it used to be the land of opportunity, I would say.

Well, I'm sorry that that's turned out that way for you, but it's been a fantastic interview. I'd really like to thank you for sharing your memories with us.

Yes, that's okay, no problem.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.