

STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
J. D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY
COLLECTION

OH 692/61

Full transcript of an interview with

RICHARD HASELGROVE

on 24 April 2003

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

Access for research: Unrestricted

Right to photocopy: Copies may be made for research and study

Right to quote or publish: Publication only with written permission from the
State Library

OH 692/61

RICHARD HASELGROVE

NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

This transcript was donated to the State Library. It was not created by the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection and does not necessarily conform to the Somerville Collection's policies for transcription.

Readers of this oral history transcript should bear in mind that it is a record of the spoken word and reflects the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The State Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview, nor for the views expressed therein. As with any historical source, these are for the reader to judge.

This transcript had not been proofread prior to donation to the State Library and has not yet been proofread since. Researchers are cautioned not to accept the spelling of proper names and unusual words and can expect to find typographical errors as well.

OH 692/61 TAPE 1 - SIDE A

AUSTRALIAN WINE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Interview with Richard Haselgrove at Torrens Park, South Australia, on 24th April, 2003.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Richard, where and when were you born?

RH: I was born at Renmark in South Australia on 15th October, 1936.

And who were your parents?

RH: My father was Harry Ronald Haselgrove, and my mother was Elsie Janet Haselgrove, nee Wigan, but not related to the winemaker Wigan in the Barossa. Different family.

My mother's father was a merchant sea captain who eventually settled at Largs. My father's grandfather, Richard Haselgrove, arrived at Port Adelaide in 1854 on board the *Hyderabad(?)* and settled at Port Adelaide. He was a builder, an immigrant. Immigrant? Emigrant? I'm not sure which.

Both.

RH: He left England and came here, so he was both. Yes, indeed.

Your father, Ronald, of course was very important in the wine industry. Do you have any idea about how he became involved in it himself?

RH: Yes, I do.

If I go back to my great grandfather, he moved from Port Adelaide up into the copper triangle—Kadina, Moonta area—when that was the El Dorado of South Australia. He built hotels, and ended up owning three hotels in the area, and ended up the Mayor of Kadina, and then retired to Crystal Brook. My father used to speak of his grandfather going hunting the plains'

turkeys. The old man suffered from gout, and every jolt in the buggy would bring out a cry of anguish, and then a shot from a shot-gun.

(Laughs)

Anyway, one of my great grandfather's sons, Charles Frederick, came to Adelaide and founded what is now the Haselgrove hardware business. It was located in Gouger Street. You may recall that there's still a building there that has Haselgrove in the brickwork.

Yes.

RH: And from there the family went on with the hardware firm and went into the shopping centres around Adelaide. The family's still involved in the hardware business, but no longer in Gouger Street.

Dad was the fifth of six brothers, and by the time he was a teenager his elder brothers had all been committed to the hardware firm, and there was no room there for young Ron.

By then the family were living out this sort of way. He went to Unley High School, and when he left high school he went to Roseworthy on the basis that Roseworthy gave a good, all-round education for somebody who didn't know what they wanted to do. He actually came through with a Roseworthy diploma and majored in wool classing. And so he came out of Roseworthy just towards the end of the First World War, qualified as a wool classer, but expecting to enlist, but he wasn't old enough. He was born in 1900, so he was waiting for his eighteenth birthday to actually go and enlist.

In the meantime, he got a temporary job at Roseworthy, stayed on at the college and became the Deputy Assistant State Analyst, which was something to do I think. Kept him off the street.

While he was there—it was for nearly twelve months—he was working for Reg Mowett who was the State Analyst as well as, of course, being a lecturer and the expert in wine. Because he had charge of the wine strand, but didn't actually have a diploma in oenology then (it was just part of the general diploma) Dad got interested and did the notes of the wine course.

Well, again, I don't think he had very much analysing to do as a State Government analyst. *(Laughs)* So he filled it in that way. He never did get into the Forces because the war ended, and he came out of there as an analytical chemist with a fair knowledge of what wine was all about. His first job was to do a vintage at Renmano back in—I think it was maybe 1921. He was a twenty-one year old. '21 vintage, I think it was. '21 or '22. His task was to make 300,000 gallons of what was known as Sweet White *(couldn't decipher word)* 27, which was destined for export to the UK under Empire preference. And if it didn't exceed 27 degrees on the old scale, then it came in under an Empire preference. But if it was under 27 degrees, it was highly subject to bacterial spoilage—sweet wine. In fact, the problem of shipping that to London became the reason for John Fornachon's first book that we were discussing before, *The Bacterial Spoilage of Fortified Wine*.

Anyway, Dad made this 300,000 gallons, he said virtually by himself. He had no cooling, no means of fermentation control except to add spirit to knock some of the yeast on the head to slow down the fermentation. *(Laughs)* And then he had this unstable product.

So when he got there, before vintage, here are all these dirty, old concrete vats with wax and tartar and bugs. Every container was contaminated, and he had to try and get this cleaned up before vintage started. Anyway, he did it. It was quite a remarkable feat. But the people he had to help him were cellar-hands who were prepared to follow orders but didn't really know what was going on.

So that was his introduction to the wine industry. A fiery introduction. *(Laughs)*

He, from that, caught the eye of Henry Martin, and also Sobels of Buring and Sobels fame. There was a group in Adelaide of these very dedicated, senior wine men, and he got into this group as a young man. He worked for Sobels in *(couldn't decipher word)*. He reckoned that this would be his life, that the wine was really attractive. *(Laughs)*

He went to his father and said, 'Well, look, Dad, you couldn't get me into the hardware business, would you be prepared to back me—send me to Europe? Pay for my fare', which his father did, very generously. He bought him a steerage class fare—*(Laughs)*—and off Dad went with a few introductions from the Adelaide wine group, but very much on his own. He was there for nearly two years and spent a lot of time in Cognac where he had a very good friend in Monsieur Larsen—Larsen Cognac. He was actually a Scandinavian who had come down to Cognac and settled there. He married a French girl and became quite an important Cognac house. And he and Dad were very good friends. There was a group of them there and Dad learnt a lot about brandy, of course, during that period.

In Bordeaux he met up with the Cruse family, who were famous for their chateaux in the Bordeaux region, Pontet-Canet I guess being the most famous of them. And he went to Montpellier.

Now by that stage he had spoken French but he had never studied French and had no written French. What he did was he sat in on the wine lectures—Montpellier—as a student, but without any ability to write down what he was hearing. He couldn't sit exams because he couldn't actually provide papers in French. His French, as he said, was somewhat colloquial. He understood and he spoke quite well, but he had no idea of grammar or tense or whatever. *(Laughs)*

It must've been that time, too, that one of his friends was John Guinand. John was of Swiss origin. John of course became well known in the political circles of the wine industry later, and was a good fishing mate of my father's all his life, and so on. John had relatives in Switzerland, and they went to Switzerland and probably out-stayed their welcome there eventually. I mean, they were young men. Dad was twenty-three when he arrived in Europe, thirsting for knowledge. They must've had a pretty good time actually.

I reckon.

RH: After he finished the Montpellier year—and he was also travelling. He did vintages in Bordeaux. He went down to Spain. Didn't go to Portugal, but in Spain he met the (*sounds like, Gonzales Deos*) family.

He got a job in London at the Exhibition and, again, carried on his wine knowledge. He was what later on became the Australia House wine tasting team. Jumping forward, my wife worked on that team when we went to Europe in '59. She got a job at Australia House, going around England serving out sweet fortifieds. Tastings and shops and so on. Great fun.

Yes.

RH: Well, Dad did it at the -

Well, it was the Crystal Palace actually.

RH: Yes, it was.

I can't remember exactly what year but I know of it.

RH: I reckon it was '24.

That would be around the mark.

RH: Or '25. Over that period because he then came back to Australia in '25.

On the way over, as I said, he was in steerage and it was pretty rough. It was a cabin for six and he said that four of the six were unwashed heathens who, as far as he knew, never took their socks off. And the cabin smelt like it. So he and the other person, who was Len Wigan, if the weather was alright they'd sleep out on the deck to get away from the stink. (*Laughs*) It must've been fine. Fun, too.

Anyway, Len was an engineer and was still in England, and he said to Ron, 'Well, when you get home, go and call on my family down at Largs and make yourself known', and so on. Len eventually came back and worked with ETSA as an engineer.

Yes, I know about that.

RH: Do you know about that?

I do.

RH: How do you know about that one?

(Tape restarted)

So Richard, you're talking about Mr Wigan.

RH: Well, Len said, 'When you get back to Adelaide, go and call on my family'. Well, he did, and he's recorded that he opened the front door to fall into these marvellous brown eyes that were looking at him. *(Laughter)* That was my mother. Len had talked about his little sister with pigtails and so on, and Dad was bowled over. So over the next few weeks he was a regular visitor there. He says that Mrs Wigan was very tolerant of him. And they got married. Dad had been offered a job by 'Skipper' Angove in Renmark, and so they moved up there.

Tom's father was Skipper, wasn't he? Is that right?

RH: I'm just trying to think.

I'm pretty sure it is.

RH: Yes, that's right.

Anyway, he went in there as a young winemaker. He bought horticultural property in Renmark. Lived on a block out in Twenty-first Street and had two other properties within horse distance. So he ran those properties and he worked at Angoves. Sort of a pattern that I ended up following. I didn't mean to but it happened that way.

His skill that he'd picked up in Cognac on brandy distilling was put to use at Angoves, and I think that he would claim that Angoves success in the brandy field was mostly due to him. And he also claims that it was his script that became the St Agnes on the label. *(Laughs)* He had a fine writing hand—my father.

He didn't have the paper qualifications but was probably as knowledgeable as a chemist and a scientist in wine as anyone in Australia. There were

very few qualified people. Most of the winemaking fraternity were qualified in medicine or another field. Very few had actually studied oenology as such.

The two that I know of were French, and they were very, very elderly by the time your father came into the industry. F..... was one. He was just over the road here.

RH: Yes. And have run across F..... Cousclant?

Yes, but I don't know a lot about him.

RH: I've got some written stuff on him. He was important in the early days of Mildara, too. He was actually, I think, working at Tahbilk then -

Yes.

RH: - but came and did some winemaking at Merbein in the early days. Anyway, Cousclant was important.

Anyway, Dad worked at Angoves. Started a family. Then the next part of the story is 1934 when he first became involved with the Mildura Winery Pty Ltd. Now that came about because of the connections I talked about before with the Adelaide establishment wine people—Henry Martin, Mick Auld, the Sobels, the Seppelts. They all knew each other very well, and they all used each other—advice.

In Mildura the company that had been founded by the Chaffey brothers—1927, WB Chaffey died. I'll go back on the history of Mildara. But on his death, Hurtle Pegler, who established himself in Mildura as a butcher in the original founding days, and then became one of the landed gentry, purchasing land up on the Darling and the anabranch for holding his cattle that came in for butchering, by the end of the 20's was a man of substance in Mildura. He was invited to become the Chairman of the company.

Unfortunately he died suddenly only four years later, and his son, Gus Pegler, then became the Chairman of the company. And Gus, again—he was a grazier by then—had no knowledge of the wine industry and said, 'Well, I'm landed with this, what am I going to do?' He had friends in the

Adelaide group, and another one of them was 'Boo' (?) Anderson, who originally was the Ford agency in Mildura, who then moved to Adelaide and founded Adelaide Motors. And 'Boo' was also (*sounds like, a group*). He wasn't in wine but -

The merchant group.

RH: Yes. Well, he lived down at Fishers Street. He had the lovely Anderson old house there.

Anyway, Gus Pegler knew 'Boo' Anderson from the earlier Mildura days, so he said to 'Boo', 'You know everyone in Adelaide now, what am I going to do?' So out of that there was a recommendation that young Haselgrove, who was in Renmark, might be interested in coming up and giving some advice. So in 1934 he did, and for the next two years he acted as a consultant to them. And it was a fairly ramshackle operation.

Going back then to the founding of the Mildura winery, it was founded by the Chaffey brothers—WB and George. The original grape plantings were at Irymple on the southern side of Mildura, and the original winemaking operation was there—as they say, a bow(?) shed—in 1891. It was a partnership that went on as a partnership until 1911, I think.

I've got to tell you again a bit—you probably know most of it but I'll go through it again.

Mildura and Renmark, which were established by the Chaffeys, were established as dry areas.

Yes.

RH: Not exactly prohibition, but it was on the Canadian model. They were Canadians, as you know -

Yes.

RH: - so when they established these places hard liquor was banned. They approved of beer, and they approved more of wine, and so the

original vineyards there were actually planted for winemaking. The varieties in them were all wine varieties.

Now, most people think of Mildura as dried fruit vines. That didn't come until actually the original winemaking failed. By about 1912 they had surplus stocks of wine, they had no market, they had no transport—it was still only river transport from Mildura—and, well, the Chaffey's got into trouble. George Chaffey went back to California, WB stayed on, and the winery at Irymple sort of staggered on.

Then in 1912 they formed a company with assistance from a number of the Mildura people. There were five major families that got involved in it.

Merbein had just been opened up as mainly a dairy pasture irrigated area, but they were going on to plant vines there. And in 1912 the headquarters of the Mildura winery shifted to Merbein, to the cliffs there. It was a company by then. WB was the chairman. Herbert Chaffey was the manager—I think he was called. Herbert stayed with the company as the manager, the accountant, the company secretary, the treasurer, the dog's body, the everything, until his retirement about 1966.

Incredible, isn't it?

RH: An amazing man. Herbert was from the second family of WB Chaffey. He was born in Mildura but then went to Canada to be educated, and then came back as a young man and went into the company in about 1917.

One of his first major tasks was to put that company into receivership, and it was re-formed, I think '21, as the Mildura Winery Pty Ltd. The re-formed company brought in money from clients of the company who bought spirit from the north east, and retailer/wholesaler people in Melbourne who put money into it. Now that was the company that WB was still the Chairman of, and it developed during the 20's as a maker and exporter of fortified wines to England in that great boom period of the Empire preference.

In the early 30's, when Gus Pegler had succeeded to the chairmanship, the place was in pretty dire straits. The storage was mostly infected with lactobacillus. They had moulds, and they had old storage, and they had

broken down stills. This is what my father faced when he was invited to go in there as a consultant. That started his association with Mildara. In 1936 he and Mother went back to England. They were away for nearly twelve months, and he was sort of renewing his acquaintanceships from his earlier student days. When he came back from that he was walking up North Terrace and came face to face with 'Skipper' Angove. It was the first time he'd seen 'Skipper' for nearly twelve months, and 'Skipper' said, 'Now young Ron, you're going to have to make your mind. Are you working for me, or what are you going to do with yourself?' And Dad said that he'd thought about it and he thought that he should go full time to this place up in Mildura—Merbein—which he did.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

So Richard, I've heard this story from the Angoves, too, about the meeting.

RH: Have you now?

Between your father and 'Skipper' Angove. I gathered from the Angove mythology, if that's the way of putting it, that 'Skipper' was very, very sorry to lose your father.

RH: That could well be. I mean, Dad was a pretty highly qualified technician in wine. And making wine in the hot river districts wasn't all that easy. He did a lot of stuff like the introduction of cooling to fermentations. He understood the microbiology of fermentations, and so it was I guess pretty valuable.

He'd also by then, interestingly, got involved in industry politics.

(Tape restarted)

So your father attended this 1925 viticultural congress in Rutherglen.

RH: Yes. He obviously had got involved in viticultural politics. I don't quite know the history of why, or how. And 'Skipper' I guess must've promoted him to get involved in these things.

Well, given that period, they would have had to because of the threat of prohibition and all that sort of thing.

RH: Oh, yes. Well, this is the whole story of the Australian wine industry. I mean, you can go through that. That's a whole different story. By then of course Colin, Dad's young brother, four years younger, had also followed Dad to Roseworthy, and he then went to France. Also he had French when he went because of his brother's example, and whereas Dad was the Cognac/Bordeaux man, Colin became the Burgundy king. Colin came back. John Guinand was another one, you see, who was also qualified in that field. And these people became the new movement in the Australian wine industry, but qualified not as doctors or chemists, or whatever, but actually had studied wine. Very interesting times. Anyway, Dad then became a full time employee of the Mildura Winery.

This is '35 by now?

RH: '36. The year I was born. It's reputed that I was conceived on the voyage back from England. (*Laughs*) I probably still had a bit of wine in my blood at that stage.

He still lived in Renmark and actually had the fruit property there until—gosh! now I've got to think—about 1954 I suppose. He lived in Renmark and his children were all at primary school and then the high school. Every second week he went to Merbein and worked there, and then in between he was away somewhere else, with all these viticultural conventions and so on. And then later, of course, he was away marketing the product that was coming out of Merbein.

The family didn't see a great deal of him. He'd come home to give the instructions on what was to happen next in the pruning or the picking or

the whatever, and say hello to his wife, and then he was off to Merbein. The children sort of knew him as this distant figure.

You've got to imagine this, that the road from Renmark to Merbein was pretty horrendous, and in a dry year there were sand dunes over a lot of it. He had a Rio and a Fiat and various other cars that became famous in their time, and he would drive up to Merbein every second week and spend the week in the office there, and then come back again. And drive off to Adelaide. He was reputed to hold the road record between Renmark and Adelaide via Morgan at two hours twenty-five minutes. I don't believe it because—anyway, that's what they used to say in Renmark days, that if you wanted to know where Ron was, he was that blur of dust on the road. *(Laughs)*

At Merbein he set about a programme of throwing out all the old vats, renovating, putting in new wood. That desk there was actually made from one of the oak vats that was remanded(?) back in the late 30's. The timber was put to good use in furniture and so on, but it was no good as wine or brandy storage. He also had two new brandy stills made, which were essentially his design. They were more like a malt whisky still than a Cognac still. Mildara doesn't distil any more now—sadly—but in its time it was one of the major brandy makers of Australia.

He also put in place the start of the flor sherry making. This was work that he and Colin in particular—and John Guinand—were doing in conjunction with John Fornachon. Fornachon had done his remarkable work on spoilage, and then went on and eventually published in '54, I think it was, the book on sherry, which was probably the most erudite publication on sherry that's—even now I don't think there's been any work done to surpass it.

No.

RH: One of the fascinating things, Rob, to think about the microbiology of wine is that it's only a bit more than 100 years ago that Pasteur -

Exactly.

RH: - actually discovered what was causing it all, which is pretty remarkable. Pasteur's work was still only sort of being accepted in some circles by the early 1900's, and here were these boys applying it to the Australian wine industry. The Australian wine industry took huge leaps in its technical ability during that period, and these were the people who were responsible for it. It's fascinating stuff when you look at it.

It is. There was a group of probably only half a dozen people heavily involved at the time, from the late 1930's on.

RH: Yes. There were more than that who were in the industry who were—what do you call it? Cottage winemakers, I suppose. North east Victoria. Families—and you can name them all—that were established by people who went after the gold rush and settled there, and their families stayed and got into wine, and they became sort of, well, the European peasant winemakers I suppose.

No doubt you've spoken to Bill Chambers about the early days of his family there.

I have, yes.

RH: Anyway, the Australian wine industry was rudely interrupted by World War 2. Well, interrupted in that the trade, which by then was very important, of wine to UK. A lot of it was still fortified wine going into the Midlands, but it was the thing that the Australian wine industry survived on. Australians were not particularly wine drinkers. It got to the stage then, when the shipping was disrupted to England, that the wine industry here went through an extraordinarily difficult time. It benefited from some of the problems of war time because beer was restricted, spirits were no longer being imported, particularly Scotch, and so wine became the alcoholic beverage of many who would otherwise have never been introduced to wine I guess. So the war was a mixed blessing from the wine industry's point of view.

And the American R & R people here actually loved the sweet wines.

RH: Yes. Well, they certainly weren't wine drinkers.

No.

RH: But I mean the Australian population were essentially Anglo Saxon and, again, not wine drinkers.

Just as an aside, Richard, on your own home table, did you have wine in those days?

RH: At home?

Yes.

RH: Yes, but only special occasions. And Dad had a very fine cellar. He regularly brought wines in from Bordeaux, and anybody that visited Bordeaux from the company had an instruction to go and look out what the latest vintage was like, and get some. Get a cask of it, and he'd have that bottled and it would be shipped out in due course. The same with Portugal, too. The company had some very fine bottlings of the Vintage Ports that had been selected over there, and then when they were eventually bottled were sent out. *(Couldn't decipher word/s)* of it was bottled and we'd get the proceeds.

Wine at home was for visitors. All the wine industry people and so on. Yes, wine would be on the table. But for the family, no. We had water—jugs of water. Wine was a pretty special occasion. By the time I was married, and with my young family, it had changed quite dramatically. From the age of sort of eighteen or nineteen onwards, wine was just part of life.

This is the 60's on?

RH: Yes. And it's gone on like that. Yes, I mean, you've got to have wine. You can't live without wine. *(Laughs)*

So you were a witness to your father's—well, it was really your father's brainchild, the creation of the Mildura/Mildara set up.

RH: Yes. I'm told that I was taken up there as a three and four year old on some of his visits, but my earliest memory is that I was about eight or nine I think. I'd go up with him for the week. I'm told I plagued the girls in the office to allow me to play on the typewriter. *(Laughs)* You know, the young Richard visiting.

So I knew about the winery, and during school holidays, from about the age of thirteen onwards, well, we'd get a job wherever we liked. All through my years to the end of university, all my holidays I'd be off working somewhere. I mean, you had holidays too, but you needed money so you went and got a job somewhere. I worked on vineyard properties in Renmark. Before I could go and work in a winery I had to be eighteen—I think it was. But I worked at Reynella.

With the uncle?

RH: Yes. And Australian Sparkling Wines in Norm Walker's early days when Hurtle was the boss.

With the extraordinary Friday group.

RH: Yes. Well, Dad was one of those, of course.

Exactly.

So you grew up surrounded by it, Richard.

RH: Yes, I was intrigued by it from an early stage. Dad would have these meetings—a bit like you and me sitting here—talking about knotty problems in the wine industry, and the political side of it. No, I met very important people though. From when I got my driving licence, at the age of sixteen of course, I became his driver whenever I could. My first visit to Coonawarra was probably that year when he was going down there to buy wine from Bill Redman, and I drove him down.

I'm actually very interested in this. I was going to ask you, how did your father come to buy in down there?

RH: Well, this actually goes back another step to the Reynella days. I've got to go back to Colin.

I know what you're going to say.

RH: Colin followed much the same pathway, and had also these connections on the sherry side of it with Fornachon. And John Guinand was at Emu, so down at Morphett Vale. So the three of them—John, Colin and Ron—became the flor sherry experts of Australia. And they did a lot of stuff together.

Oh, golly, where do you go?

The Reynell family lost their hope of taking over the company business in the war and, as you know, there's a Roseworthy scholarship that's founded because of that. Colin was working with John Guinand, and Colin was at Morphett Vale with Emu. Reynella needed someone and Colin was invited to go there as the winemaker/manager.

It developed further than that because the Reynell family really wanted out and didn't know what to do, and that's when—golly, names now! Come on! Barrett. Sir Arthur first got involved with Reynella on the Board and became chairman of the new Board. They wanted to bring in shareholders—new people—and that's actually when Mildara, or interests of Mildara, became the controlling interest of Reynella. And Colin then became the Managing Director of that company.

I don't know quite what was intended at the time. I think it probably would've been in the end a complete takeover, but the remaining shares in the Reynell family would've gone to Mildara. That didn't ever happen. I'm not sure what happened. Anyway, brothers don't always work together perfectly. And Colin and Ron, who were both very strong people, had some row over something, and so it was decided that they would go their separate ways and that Ron would continue with the Mildara side and Colin with the Reynella side. The shares that were owned by Mildara were then actually sold on to members of Dad's family and people like Bill Fesq, who was the distributor for Reynella in Sydney. I actually became a

shareholder in Reynella at that stage. I think I was about sixteen at the time. I could never understand why all my money had to go into—I didn't have very much. *(Laughs)* I had to buy these shares because they had to be distributed because they required the number of shareholders to be built up and so on.

I actually became a director of Reynella at one stage. The other one was Bill Chaffey. Now Bill of course—known as Ben in South Australia and Bill in Mildura -

I know who you mean. *(Laughs)*

RH: - was a director at Mildara for very many years. He was a director of Reynella and of course he was running his own thing, the Edwards and Chaffey Seaview operation. Bill and I were both directors of Reynella, sort of looking after the Mildara interests, and that's when Reynella was first sold on to Hungerford Hill. Bill and I worked very closely on that because what we did was that we sold the business, not the shares. So he and I had the job of deciding what the stock was worth and all that sort of stuff so that we could get a proper price for the business.

Now I got diverted somewhere.

This is coming back to origins of the Coonawarra connection, which is -

RH: Oh, Coonawarra. Yes, well, it was Reynella.

Mildara in 1953 bottled the first dry red that they'd ever had, and that was a straight Reynella wine. The '53 vintage was the first.

Now Reynella didn't have enough red to provide for their own needs and the Mildara bottling, so Dad started buying parcels of wine. He bought McLaren Vale and he went to Coonawarra to see what he could get there. That was in 1954—the first parcel of wine he bought down there.

And that was from the Redmans?

RH: Yes. My first visit there as a sixteen year old when I was driving for him, yes, we called on the Redmans. We had lunch with them, and big tastings around the gutter between the open ferment vats.

What I've heard—this is maybe apocryphal—is that your father right from the first time he tasted those reds had a sense that there was something special about them.

RH: He had very much a Bordeaux palate. That's what he'd been trained on, and that was his standard. I think at Coonawarra he could see that that was nearest Australia was ever going to come to a Bordeaux wine. Tony Nelson lived up the street from us in St George's, and Tony was promoting the Coonawarra story very strongly then. He had a marvellous collection of old Coonawarra wines. I went up there to dinner one night to be impressed by Tony. *(Laughs)* I think that was his job.

Anyway, Dad had been exposed to Coonawarra reds, and the Redmans had had a champagne made by Australia Sparkling Wines—a small parcel of wine—and it was made from Doradillo grown at Coonawarra. The old man said, 'If you can make a wine like this out of Coonawarra Doradillo, think what you must be able to do with some good red grapes'. He was hooked on the place.

Well, the company bought the first vineyards there in '55, and the Redmans continued to make the wine from those grapes until, in 1963 or '62, we built the winemaking operation for Mildara. That handled the first vintage in '63. That was one of my tasks when I was in Europe, was to look at all the latest in plant and equipment and winemaking techniques and so on for red wine because we didn't know a great deal about red wine at all at Merbein.

Better get back to you now. Richard, how did you come to be in France? Had you studied oenology here at all?

RH: I guess all during my secondary school days I believed that I was going to get involved in the wine industry, and all the subjects I did were angled towards that. I did all the science subjects, and matriculated, and

then I did French—I don't know—until Leaving Honours level I think because I reckoned that I was going to need French. You know, you just think that you're going to do these things. And when I matriculated I had a Commonwealth scholarship.

I left school in '54. Because I had the scholarship I could go to the University of Adelaide, and because Roseworthy had fallen on hard times in that mid 50's period—it was during the time of all the bastardisation stuff at Roseworthy. It didn't have a very good name at all. I wasn't keen to go to Roseworthy. In fact, about that time was the only year they had no intake into the oenology group at all. So I did ag science at Adelaide. Two years North Terrace and two years at the Waite. And during my time at the Waite I spent quite a lot of time, particularly in my last year, with John Fornachon. I actually did my biochemistry project with John, which was a bit unusual. I was the first undergraduate that had ever gone into the Wine Research Institute. That was two years after it was built. In '55, I think, the building went up there.

How did you find Fornachon?

RH: Oh, he was a lovely man.

Tall?

RH: Yes, he was tall, and he had a bearing that often goes with tall men, where they stoop a bit because of their height. It gives the impression of being deferential. Well, apart from the university, he was also a parishioner of St Xavier's where we'd worshipped as children.

This is at Glen Osmond?

RH: Yes. I'd known him, you know being very young, and he was much admired, but he was a very modest man. I don't know, you'd look at him, and say, 'That's the famous Mr Fornachon', and yet he was very approachable. A very interesting guy. It's such a shame that he died prematurely. He had a burst aortic aneurism, which he didn't know he

had. It was there and he was gone. It was a great shock to everyone. John was much admired, right through the wine industry.

OH 692/61 TAPE 2 - SIDE A

AUSTRALIAN WINE ORAL HISTORY.

Interview with Richard Haselgrove on 24th April, 2003.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

So Richard, you did your study at the Waite in those final two years, and you worked with Fornachon. What did you do then? You said you went overseas at some point.

RH: *(Laughs)* It was expected that I would go and join Mildara. I suppose I expected it, and my father certainly expected it. But in the end it came as a bit of a shock. I mean, at the end of every year for nine years there were major exams that you had to sit and pass, and when you come to the last one you think that never again will I subject myself to examinations like that. I'm free. I'm a graduate. I'm famous. Yes, I can do anything. And then reality hits. I was told to report for duty at Mildara about a week after my last exam. *(Laughs)*

As usual as a student I had booked into be a 'postie' during that pre Christmas period. That's how you earned your money. I was due to do my rounds and I was told, 'Hang on! You're expected at Merbein next week'. 'Oh!' *(Laughs)* I mean, logically, that's what was going to happen. There were no such things as a job offer or an application or any of that, you started work.

At the end of 1958 I'd just finished my final year exam, and started work as the assistant to the manager. I don't know what I was to do, but I was going to learn it.

When I first went up there I actually lived in the pub for the first six weeks until I could find myself -

Which pub? Not the Grand?

RH: No, no, no. The Merbein Hotel.

Oh, the Merbein Hotel. (Laughs)

RH: Famous! It was a bit of a (*couldn't decipher word*) house.

Well, during that period they had the hottest two weeks that had ever been recorded in Mildura. There was no cooling of any kind in the Merbein Hotel. They were good to me. I used to go down and get my own breakfast in the morning. Take what I wanted from the cool room because I had to go to work before anyone was really awake around the pub.

Anyway, then I got lodgings in Merbein with Mrs Treen in the boarding house. She had three boys that she had boarding. And Mrs Treen was a widow and a very funny lady. She didn't mean to be but she was.

So during 1959 that's what I was doing. I was learning the ropes at Mildara and so on. The plan was that I was to follow the custom of the qualified staff, if you like, at Mildara, that early in their employ they would get sent to Europe. Now, Sid Wells had done this, and Sid's story is another one. Unfortunately he died not long ago. You won't get it from Sid. Les Eckert who was the winemaker had done this—gone to Europe—and so young Richard was expected to go to Europe.

Well, I had a fairly strong romantic attachment—my wife-to-be at that stage, as you do. I was living in Merbein. I had a little Austin A40 that had a maximum speed of—I don't know. It wasn't very much. I'd drive down to Adelaide for the weekend, and I'd leave Adelaide at two o'clock on Monday morning to go back to work. Anyway, it was fun.

Anyway, Dad sat me down one day in the Board Room and said, 'The Board have decided that you should go to Europe'. And I said, 'Yes, Dad'.

(Laughs) Well, you did say, 'Yes, Dad'. And then, 'Well, we think you should be there for probably two vintages to find what you need and to be able to cover the ground'. Anyway, I said yes, and went and thought about

it. So I made an appointment to see him later. I sat down and I said, 'Well, I think I want to get married before I go to Europe, and take my wife with me'.

In a way it wouldn't have come as a surprise to him I suppose because Suzanna and I started going out together when we were fifteen. She'd stayed with us down at the beach house, and she was sort of part of the family, but I don't think the old man had thought about that bit of it at all. He said, 'Well, how are you going to be able to afford to do that?' And I said, 'Oh, well, I've got a bit of money set aside. I can pay for her fare and living'. 'What are you going to do with a wife when you have to go off and do all these vintages and working in places?' 'Oh, well, I don't know. It'll work somehow'.

(Laughs) Actually he said. 'Well, when I approached my father and wanted to go to Europe he very generously gave me £500 for my fare and for some spending money. I suppose really I've got to do the same again this time, don't I? So I'll pay for your wife's passage to Europe, and you'll be retained on the company payroll so that your expenses will be paid. You won't actually be paid a salary but you're still a staff member and so your expenses will be paid, but you'll have to meet your wife's expenses'. And I said, 'Well, I think, yes'. *(Laughs)* You know, young and enthusiastic, you think you can do anything. And we did actually.

We got married in August of '59, went up to the Bridgewater Mill for two days as our official honeymoon, came back to Adelaide, packed, got the Overlander to Melbourne, got on board *Oronsay* and steamed off to the northern hemisphere. We came back to Australia in November of 1960. We had an extended honeymoon, I suppose you'd call it.

And it was fascinating. I had introductions from all sorts of people. From Dad and his friends and contacts, from John Fornachon who very kindly gave me some marvellous introductions to the research institutions around France. Oh, and Switzerland. Switzerland, Wädenswil(?)—the first time I'd ever been greeted as, 'Oh, yes, Herr Dr Haselgrove'. As a young graduate,

Herr Dr didn't sound quite right. But they looked after me. I think it's the first and only time I've had a doctorate attached to me.

So was that a fulfilling time from your wine position?

RH: Oh, yes, it was grand. I believed strongly then, and I think I still do—I'm not a Francophile as such—that if you're going to be in wine, then at an early age you have to get a set of standards that you measure everything against for ever after. I believe for red wine, like my father, that Bordeaux was the standard that you tried to attain. Probably never would but that was the style and the class and so on.

Similarly I've spent time with M..... (*sounds like, Gonzales Deos*) in Jerez. I mean, these people freely would show you everything they did and so on, and you'd just tag along. In Bordeaux it was Edward Cruse—Christian Cruse was my father's mentor. Edward would say, 'What are you doing today?' 'Oh, whatever you say'. So I'd climb aboard his car and we'd go off buying wine in the Entre-Deux-Mers(?), or go down to the (*couldn't decipher word*) where the Cruse storage facility and bottling was, or out to Pontet-Canet(?) to entertain some English or American visitors. I just tagged along. I did this with all my introductions. In Burgundy with the Bichot family, in Germany with Deinhard. Again, there was a London lad who was working there, and he just took me under the wing.

I had an introduction to the Mayor of (*sounds like, Bernkastel*). Actually it was from Les Eckert who had met him purely by chance on his visit. And the Mayor of Bernkastel Kues(?) entertained us. I had my wife with me all this time. She was marvellous because she got me into places that otherwise I wouldn't have been. As a young male wandering around Europe you were expected to stay in hotels, and you had business dealings. But with Suzanna with me, we'd immediately get invited into the families.

Yes.

RH: In Bordeaux, the (*sounds like, Demtoss*) family, the famous oak people. I mean, we were just taken into the family any time.

I always said that actually having a wife with you was one of the important bits about that European experience, and from then on whenever we had the opportunity of someone else from the company going, I insisted that if they were married their wife would go. That's in the days of course you could actually claim your wife's expenses at company expense. You can't any more.

That's one of the great tragedies of Australian (*couldn't decipher word*), Richard. (*Laughs*)

RH: Yes, I know, but it made life so much easier for all of you—this sort of travel.

Yes, it did.

RH: In London Jimmy Chaplin, who was the supremo of the Emu Wine company, again looked after us in this way. We spent the first Christmas with them down at Haslemere(?).

I had introductions into Scotland. I went up there by myself and spent a couple of weeks in a distillery finding out what it was all about. It was intriguing times. Fascinating times.

I did two Bordeaux vintages, and spent two distilling periods in Cognac. And I went to Jerez, to Porto, and up the Douro to Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France. I've got my record—my diaries, my business expenses record and my notes—still there in a couple of notebooks. I look at them occasionally and say, 'Well, that was great'. It was great times and it was an experience I guess that's lasted us all the rest of our lives. To have done that together is a great bonding experience.

In the latter part of 1960 my father and mother came over. It was the first time they'd flown to Europe. They flew over in a three-tailed Constellation. While they were there we actually did one trip—the Porto trip—where we flew in a Viscount from London to Gibraltar, and then went up to Portugal in a hire car. And we also flew in a Caravelle from Paris to London, which again was a first experience. Anyway, I'm wandering a bit.

When you come back to Australia, Richard, what position is the wine industry in here? It's about the time that the drinking of particularly red wine has begun to be of interest to a whole new group of Australians.

RH: We had to go back to London at last every three months because visas for France and so on only lasted for three months. So I had to go back to London, and we'd become residents in London again and do all that stuff. Now we had so many friends in London from Adelaide, and other acquaintances from around Australia, who were in their way doing what we were doing—the working holiday, the great experience. All those people were being exposed to the finer things of life, and when they came back to Australia—I mean, there was a core of well travelled people, and wine became part of their life. And adventurous foods.

You're not talking fortifieds necessarily, are you?

RH: No, no, no. They'd found out what wine was in Europe, and it wasn't fortified wines, no.

And that's an enormous change from what had been only twenty years before in Australia.

RH: Oh, huge change, yes.

In my second year at the university I busted up a knee playing football, and so I was the Adelaide Black's social secretary as well as being a goal umpire. I used to travel with the team to Melbourne and to Hobart as a sort of supernumerary dogsbody and all that. One of my functions that year was to organise a footy dinner at the end of the season, and we had it at the Botanical. It was a black tie. Anyway, I thought it was about time these guys were introduced to a few of the better things of life. So I'd organised a supply of wine from (*sounds like, Gollans*). I'd gone down there and selected wines to go with the dinner. Also had the keg there obviously.

Well, did I get it in the neck! 'You bloody poofter, Haselgrove. What are you serving wine at this dinner for?' I was a bit taken aback. You know,

the footy dinner didn't have wine. There were enough there to drink it and appreciate it, but ten years later, for all those functions, it was just the norm. Sure, you had the beer too, but wine became just part of the formality.

So what had been the change in fortunes at Mildara by this time? My knowledge of Mildara's product, say of the mid to late 60's, was that it began to excel even more in those superb sherries and the dry reds. Magnificent wines began coming through the company.

RH: Yes. When Dad went up there pre war, there was really no product. Well, they had a cellar door trade to the local growers of gallon jars of wine, and it had a very rudimentary label on it. Dad had, by then, registered Mildara to differentiate—because you could trade mark that. You couldn't trademark Mildura. You wouldn't be able to trademark Mildara either these days because it's a corruption of a place name, but it was done and the Mildara label came into existence in the late 30's. During the war it all went into sort of abeyance. In fact, Dad was manpowered and the distillation plant at Merbein was put over to producing power alcohol from molasses. Trainloads of tankers of molasses came down from Queensland to the Merbein railway station, and it was then taken off to the winery. It was fermented and then it was distilled and made into power alcohol. That was his war time job, of providing fuel to the Forces.

He was also of course living in Renmark, and we were only about a mile from the landing strip. One of his jobs was that if there was an emergency at night, he had to organise all the locals with cars to go out there and shine them on the runway. He had stashed above the kitchen cupboard all these red and green glassed hurricane lanterns. They had to be set out along the strip and so on.

Because Mildura was the Air Force training base and they'd do navigational exercises, one night we actually did have guys who'd lost their way. There was great excitement. They went out and brought them down, and these

two pilots from Mildura spent the night with us. Great excitement indeed! That's beside the point in a way.

Les Eckert was trained in Mildura in the Air Force then, and he fell in love with the Pegler daughter and married her when he was demobbed. He went off to Roseworthy with Nanette and so kept the connection that had started just because he was there as a trainee pilot.

So really it wasn't until after the Second World War that there was an opportunity to start developing the brand.

I don't know how it started originally but Dad became a good friend of George Caro. George Caro was the Managing Director of (*couldn't decipher name*) & company, and also the Chairman of the *Herald and Weekly Times*.

He was one of the movers in Melbourne circles. He was a lovely man.

Again, in due course, was very kind to me. Actually in 1956 during the Games, he and Mrs Caro very kindly invited me to live with them during the period of the Games. Wow! You couldn't get accommodation. They were in Fairley(?) Court, just across the river from the Games, and I'd walk down there. Anyway, they were very kind to me.

So (*sounds like, Gollans*) became the distributors for Mildara, and two Gollan directors came on the Mildara Board. That became a very strong connection. And in fact, in time, Gollans became our national and international distributors and marketers. It was a very close relationship. We were a winemaking company and had the responsibility of getting product into the bottle, and it was then taken on by Gollans. We had no marketing sales part at Mildara at all in the first fifteen years of my time with Mildara.

I thought your father oversaw a lot of the packaging.

RH: Oh, yes, he did. Certainly. It was his job to get the product that was going to be presented to the public. Dad used to work very closely with Wytt Morro on all the label designing and so on. All the labels were Dad's inspirations, translated by Wytt into useable form.

They became instantly recognisable, didn't they?

RH: Yes, they're curious labels, looking at them now.

Very beautiful labels.

RH: Yes, in a funny sort of way.

So Dad was the contact between the company and Gollans, and with their directors on the Board of course, they had a very close relationship with us. It became my job, I suppose by the early 70's, to become the liaison back with Gollans, the days when John Butler was their wine and spirit director. I'd spend time in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane.

So how quickly, Richard, did this interest in wine grow for the Australian public? I guess I viewed Mildara as one of the leaders, and you were involved there. Did you see a very rapid interest after you returned from Europe?

RH: Yes, I suppose. When it's so much part of your life, you don't think it's unusual. But when I joined the company in '58, we made no table wine ourselves. We had wines on the market, Golden Bower(?), which was a Hunter Semillon. It became my job from 1961 onwards to go up to the Hunter each year and buy the wine from Doug Elliot or from the Tulloch family.

I first went up to the Hunter in '59 with Les Eckert. We used to drive to Sydney and then drive on to the Hunter. From thereon it became my responsibility to buy the Golden Bower(?) material each year. I'd go up there and we'd have the official tasting about six weeks after the fermentations had stopped. Roger Warren from Hardys would've been up there the week before, or the week after, I went. Doug, of course, had the wine shop in Cessnock where most of what he sold of course was the sweet fortified wines that we provided him, so we swapped sweet fortified for white Hunter. *(Laughs)*

One of the early times with Doug—he was a quite keen Rotarian—was when he took me to a Rotary meeting. I was in Rotary in Merbein then. It wasn't Cessnock, it was one of the other towns. Anyway, I was sitting next to the local chemist, and he said, 'What are you doing here?' And I said

that I was with Doug and we were in wine together. And he said, 'Oh, Mildura! You make that beautiful wine down there, that lovely, lovely—oh, great stuff. Not like that vinegary stuff around here. You wouldn't drink that'. (*Laughs*) And here am I there to buy, you know, like 30,000 gallons of this vinegary stuff and send tanker loads of sweet white up there for them.

So our first white wine was the Hunter, the Golden Bower(?). And the first red was Reynella. I think actually the first bottling was '49 vintage, but I think we drank that ourselves.

Good!

RH: '51 was probably the first commercial—certainly, the '53, I was working at Reynella when that was bottled in '55 I suppose.

What would your biggest selling brands have been in the 60's? Chestnut Teal and those sort of things?

RH: No, Supreme Sherry, without a doubt. Well, brandy was very big.

Of course.

RH: Of our total production I suppose about 85% was sold in bulk to other winemakers, and that was my responsibility. I used to do deals after vintage. That was big trade. Well, I don't know, probably of our whole production about 85% would've been sold in bulk. And that included brandy. We provided brandy to Nathan & Wyeth for the Remy, to Clelands in Adelaide for Cleland Brandy.

Cleland's Hospital Brandy.

RH: Yes. Well, that was Mildara. And we used to sell parcels to all sorts of people. Seppelts and Penfolds and so on.

TAPE 2 - SIDE B

Richard, we were talking about -

RH: It was really the development of the table wine market I guess, but from Mildara's point of view the most important brand we had was Supreme Sherry. And it was, without doubt, the biggest selling dry sherry in Australia. It was exported to London and very favourably received there.

Was it exported in bulk or by bottle?

RH: Bottle. No, Supreme was always bottled under our supervision. It had to be, it was a very delicate fino sherry. And of course, Chestnut Teal was developed. Well, Supreme was first marketed in 1946, and that was the first product that Gollans put on to their list. Gollans had spirits then. They had Beefeater Gin, and they had a full range of liqueurs and spirits, but had no wine in their portfolio. And so Supreme became the first of the wines. Really we went into the table wines because they needed them. We then developed Chestnut Teal as the sort of medium sweet/medium dry Oloroso. Then the George sherry. Of course George was the George Caro of Gollans, and George was a bit diabetic. He loved his wines, but his medical advice was that he shouldn't be drinking any wine. 'But if you can find one that doesn't have any sugar in it, it's probably alright, George'. So we marked a cask in the maturation warehouse, 'George's sherry', and we'd bottle that off for him. Then George would introduce his friends to it, and they'd say, 'Wow! How do you get this?' And so George became, I suppose, the first premium dry sherry in Australia. It had a huge—pounds, shillings and pence of course—premium on it compared with other wines. George was very important to us as an image thing.

One of the things that's occurred to me—and this is just an overview, Richard—is that unlike other river wineries, if you like, which downstream in South Australia were concerned with large bulk sweet wines, Mildara became very much synonymous as a name with fine wine, very quickly.

RH: The river bulk supply story really came out of the cooperatives, whose job was to move grapes for the growers. A lot of that went into the bulk export field. But Angoves, right from the beginning, had a fine wine approach to winemaking. I don't know, Dad might've had some responsibility then, but it was carried on by Tom, and very much by John in his time.

Very much.

RH: Up in the MIA there was some fine wines being made there. It wasn't all bulk stuff. And other places on the river. Really the bulk story from the river areas all relates to the cooperatives.

I agree.

RH: And the cooperatives had a job of moving grapes, not of making and selling wine. I say this, even my father's philosophy was that you don't have to market any of your products, you make good products and people will buy them. And he said that in your winemaking, when you're planning your vintage, you plan the vintage for what you want to make. Don't worry about your customers. If the wine's good enough, it'll sell. And that philosophy guided the company for a long, long time.

I went off to the Australian Ministry of Staff College, Mount Elisa, in '71 as one of the junior intake there, and in my syndicate they couldn't believe that Mildara had no sales or marketing part of the company at all. And I'm saying, 'What's wrong with that?' And the whole of the staff college was on about consumer demand and what your clients must have, what your customers must have, and translating that back to what you people would do. I'd never heard of that approach before. Fascinating! I came out of that staff college course believing that my principal aim with the company in my working lifetime was to make sure that every grape we crushed got to the consumer with our label. And as I said, when I first joined about 85% of our product had no relationship with Mildara at all. So there we were.

Coonawarra became a very important investment for the company. There's no doubt that the river is difficult for making table wines. The development of techniques and refrigeration and stainless steel and machine harvesters, and all of these things, mean that you can make very good table wines on the river. The warmer climate. But if you want to make superlative ones you have to go to an area like Coonawarra, or the other cooler climates. Well, Coonawarra's not all that cool, come to think of it, but you can make some very good wines there. And that was the move to Coonawarra.

As I said before, one of my main tasks while I was in Europe—I went down to see the Coq wine machinery people. Coq crushers and presses and all that. And in Switzerland I was looking at presses. In Germany they were developing air-bag presses and all of that sort of stuff. I came back and *(couldn't decipher word)* and myself really put together the new winery at Coonawarra. We used to go down there. In fact, we used to use the local charter plane out at Mildura. Just pop down for the day to see how the building programme was going and all of that sort of stuff. Very way out sort of stuff for those days.

OH 692/61 TAPE 1 - SIDE A

**AUSTRALIAN WINE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.
Interview with Richard Haselgrove on 8th May, 2003.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.**

Well, Richard, last time we talked a great deal about your memories of the industry and really important people who were pivotal to the industry. We began talking about the time when you and Suzanna were married and you went to Europe and you saw all that. We'd really got to the point, roughly speaking, where you'd arrived back from Europe. So we're talking mid to late 50's. Is that right?

RH: Well, we went over in '59 and came back in '60.

You arrive back to an industry pretty much in flux. Can you remember that time pretty well—when you arrived back, Richard?

RH: Yes. (*Laughs*) It's not very long ago.

It's not either.

RH: It's all perspective I suppose.

I was one of the very few university graduates actually in the wine industry in 1960. Tom Hardy was, but he was Bachelor of Engineering. Bruce Tyson may well have been another one, but there were very, very few so-called university trained men. And I then had another eighteen months of European knowledge under my belt. So I came back rearing to go. Mildara was just starting into table wines. We'd got into the original table wines through the Reynella connection, and the early Cabernet Shiraz Yellow Labels were in fact bottled at Reynella, but by 1960 when I came back we were bottling the first of the Cabernet Shiraz wines at Merbein. So one of the first jobs when I came back here was, in late summer, putting the 1959 vintage into bottle in sort of April 1960.

Now that was one of the original blends—the Hunter/Coonawarra/McLaren Vale/Reynella—and essentially that's what those Yellow Labels continued with for a long time. It became my responsibility to find the wines and to put them together, and I suppose for the next twenty years those wines were my particular responsibility. And the Golden Bower(?). It was my job to go up the Hunter soon after vintage and visit Doug Elliot, in particular, spend time with him and taste his wines. We used to buy around 25 to 30,000 gallons from Doug. Buy? We used to barter a lot of it because he needed sweet white for his local bottle shop trade for the locals who didn't like this vinegary stuff they made up in the Hunter but they loved the South Australian good, sweet wines. So that was one of my jobs.

We had a tanker service that ran fortified wines up there and brought these Semillons back again. That was the Golden Bower. The first vintage in fact was '57, the year before I started with the company, and I think the last

vintage was 1978, after which Hunter wines were really no longer available to us. By then the boom in the Hunter meant that a lot of it was being used locally.

What were you looking for in that red style that you were blending, Richard?

RH: I suppose, in broad terms, a Bordeaux style. The '59 that we were bottling when I first came back, I recognised as Bordeaux style. It was so like the wines I'd been tasting as one year olds during my tour around with Edward Cruse. We'd go out on buying sprees for wine—parcels that he'd buy—and take back to (*couldn't decipher name*) where Cruse had their bottling hall. And he was doing the same sort of stuff. He was putting together what was then the Cruse (*sounds like, Monopole*), which was probably the biggest selling red wine in the world I think.

Really?

RH: I mean, it was like on British rail.

Okay.

RH: And it was a very, very good Bordeaux red. Not classified in any way, but Edward used to buy these parcels and put them together. It was a huge selling wine.

Now, the wine that I then put into bottle when I got back here, I recognised as being that style. It was different because obviously the principal variety we had was Shiraz, but the combination of the areas—the basis being McLaren Vale/Reynella, and then Coonawarra, and then maybe 5% of the Hunter. Basically Shiraz. A little bit of Cabernet, mainly from McLaren Vale and Reynella. This was the style I guess we were looking for—a Bordeaux red—and blending to get what we wanted by using different proportions of the wines available to us. And by then of course we had the first production from our Coonawarra vineyard.

One of my first jobs when I came back was to—Sid Wells, the ultimate engineer, and Fred Liardet who was the builder. Have you come across Fred's name at all?

No.

RH: Fred's grandfather was an architect and an artist. I have somewhere here the reproductions of his original drawings of a number of the famous buildings in Melbourne.

Anyway, Fred—these days I suppose you'd look out at the Italian community and you'd say, 'There he is. He's the guy that goes around with a concrete mixer and the ute. Well, Fred built up this business and became expert in concrete, and during wartime he was responsible for establishing a lot of the tunnels in Darwin.

The other person involved in Darwin and the road was Joe Johansen, who was the Shire engineer for the Mildura Shire. During the wartime he took all the Shire equipment up to Darwin and was responsible for great stretches of the famous bitumen road from Alice Springs to Darwin. He and Fred got to know each other then and became good friends.

Fred was responsible for—I don't know how many, but you go through country Victoria—all the water towers. Big concrete water towers.

Yes, the massive ones.

RH: These lovely structures. The Mildura water tower. You know that beautiful—it's almost a wine glass looking structure.

Yes, I know the one. Beautiful.

RH: That's Fred. Sid Wells got to know Fred and talked him into—he became the construction engineer for the Coonawarra winery, and he did a tremendous amount of work for us at Merbein. He also worked for McWilliams at Robinvale. That's essentially his building. He'd build concrete tanks that could hold wine. Wouldn't leak. That was really something.

Yes. So he's quite a character.

RH: Yes, Fred was. Sid and I used to go down regularly to Coonawarra. We'd often get the local air taxi service from Mildura—Alan Matthews. Alan's another character. (*Laughs*) Alan used to do survey work for the government, and his job was to fly the meridians across the desert. You know, the little desert and so on.

Yes.

RH: And drop little bags of flour along the meridian so the surveyors on the ground could save themselves a lot. Well, once you got into the mallee scrub you couldn't see where you were going. So Alan used to mark the meridians for them for their survey work.

He was also then the tracker pilot. The Americans were doing that stratospheric balloon data collection, and Alan had the job of tracking the balloons. They were launched at Mildura, then he'd follow them—all over. Depending what the upper atmosphere winds were, he might end up in Alice Springs when the balloon came down again. So Alan's another one of those famous people.

Alan used to fly us down to Coonawarra. There was a very rough landing strip at Glenroy Station about ten miles away from Coonawarra, and every now and again the farmer would mow the grass off it and you could actually see the ground. Oh, they were exciting times. And that was built in '62 for the '63 vintage.

There was a lot of interesting stuff. We tried to use I guess what we saw as the best table winemaking equipment and methods. We didn't go the way of what I guess I call the German wine making, which up to that stage had predominated in white in the Barossa. You know, the stainless steel tanks, or the glass lined tanks, and pressure tanks and trying to make wines very German like in style. We were more interested in what we knew I suppose—the Golden Bower, which was a Semillon, clearly a Hunter

wine. The white wines we were making at Coonawarra we were making in the same style. More again, Bordeaux white.

Dad originally did put in open vats there because that's how all the Coonawarra reds were made. Redmans and so on, they had open vats and they used to plunge them. So he said that this is the way Coonawarra reds have been made. So originally we put in open vats overhead, so that we could drain them into the presses, but they were open and were plunged. It was I think for about the first three vintages and then we went off into closed tanks. We actually put closed stainless steel tanks in for fermentation. And keep the vinegar flies out of them, which was a good idea.

Some interesting times at Coonawarra in those years. It was only a small vineyard area and it was still very subject to frost. These days it's such a big area that even in a bad frost year it's really only the fringes that get nipped.

Yes.

RH: In '69, for instance, the spring frosts were very late. Actually the first week in December was the hardest of them. We didn't bottle any red from '69, except one little parcel of 200 gallons of Cabernet. It became quite famous in the end because it really was hand reared. It became a famous wine, but it was never commercial. I think we drank it all ourselves in the end. *(Laughter)*

In '67 we had frost, and in '71 we had frost. Frost was the hardest thing at Coonawarra. Once you got through the frost period, from thereon it was easy. The trouble was that the frost could be so late. As I said, to have a frost in November was not unknown. In fact, when it was coming, it came. And they'd roll in at night. They'd roll in from the north.

One of the things that the old man decided to do was to copy some of the French vineyards and plant poplar trees all around the boundary. He said that was to protect against the rolling frosts coming in from the north, that

they'd meet the barrier of poplars and they wouldn't go over them. To a certain extent he was probably right.

So Richard, in the wider industry, outside Mildara, this is the time that Len I think—we were talking about Len Evans earlier—is coming into Sydney in the Chevron Hilton and before long is hired by the Wine Board to promote wine. Was it a pretty exciting time?

RH: Yes, mind you, I wasn't much involved in any of that. I mean, I was a young man. Later when looking back at those years, I reckon for the first ten years of my working life I decided that if I became the best winemaker, according to my definitions anyway of what that might be—that was my aim in life, was to become the best winemaker. Each vintage was to be better than the last. This was your whole objective in life. Ten years of that. Wasn't just table wines of course. I became the sort of technical man at Mildara.

Les Eckert, who had been our senior winemaker, resigned because of health. Les married one of the Pegler girls, and the Peglers were big into station property, and Les went up to Ivanhoe. Les was our winemaker, and he was also our principal bon vivant(?), and was known all over Australia. He used to deal with the agents and distributors and, quite frankly, he was killing himself. I mean, he'd come back from one of these trips and go to bed for three days because he used to sock himself about—in the end. I don't know the details of the story, but what I do know is that suddenly Les resigned and went 500 miles from anywhere—*(Laughs)*—which for someone of Les' character must've been bloody hard.

He survived a while after that though.

RH: Yes. Well, it saved his life I suspect. He would've killed himself. Not literally suicide, but I think he probably had incipient cirrhosis of the liver. Really he'd come back and he'd be a mess. So he got out of it. I was left there then and called the Technical Manager. Then in '63 I went on to the Board and became the Technical Director.

Thinking back, it's curious. We didn't have any winemakers in the company. There was no-one called a winemaker in Australia that I was aware of. The first winemaker, to the best of my knowledge, was Wolf. He came here with his Kellermeister diploma and translated Kellermeister to winemaker. I don't know that anyone ever used the term winemaker before Wolf started using it, which is intriguing.

That is intriguing. Vigneron was used, wasn't it?

RH: Yes, but that's somebody who grew grapes and made wine from them.

Yes.

RH: If you look at all the bigger companies, they had people who were called their technical manager, or their laboratory chemist, the chemist, the general manager, or whatever, but the term winemaker I don't recall it at all.

Was oenologist ever used?

RH: Well, yes. If you had the Roseworthy diploma, you had a Diploma of Oenology and, yes, that was recognised. And there were a lot of those. But within their own companies, I don't know that they were ever called winemakers. And certainly there wasn't any of the cult of the winemaker that's grown up since. *(Laughs)*

Oh, no. I think you're right, that Wolf was probably the person who started that actually.

RH: I always believed it was because he translated what his diploma said, and said, 'Well, that's what I am'.

But I had responsibility for all the flor sherry making, and flor sherry was a very technically difficult job. You know, the control of alcohol, acid, sulphur and bacterial spoilage that could occur if you let any of those get away from you, as well as growing the flor film and keeping it clean. I mean, it was fascinating stuff. We were pretty famous for our sherries.

You were.

RH: And we were very proud of them.

And brandy, of course. That was the other thing. I'd spent time in Cognac. I don't think I learnt very much about brandy making there but it was fascinating again to see what was done. When I came back again, Sid Wells was generally responsible for brandy making. Then I went in because it's a 24 hour a day job, so I always got the midnight shift.

(Laughs) At that stage we had three stills that actually made brandy, and another five that handled the wine, so you double distilled. They were all pot stills, and there was one pot rectifier that we made our fortifying spirit for the sherry through. Later we put in one of the newer of the designed continuous stills. The old ones that were through the Barossa were actually made of wood, some of them -

Yes, actually they were.

RH: - that you've probably seen.

Yes.

RH: Bert Jennings of Adelaide, the coppersmith, who had no really engineering or scientific knowledge, but understood how to build a still. He built the still, and he and I between us learnt how to run the thing. He had no instructions. I actually wrote the instruction manual for our three column continuous still. *(Laughs)* And it was by guess and by God. Bert could tell you the temperatures at certain parts in the column. If you wanted to get it to work they had to be like that. Yes, I got to know a lot about distillation.

His pot stills were a work of art, weren't they?

RH: Yes. The first of the new pots that we put in at Merbein were modelled, my father said, on the original Berkstrom(?) still, which was at Horndale. Our brandy stills were not like the Cognac stills, and they were not like the malt whisky stills. They were, I think, designed here. Guy

Berkstrom designed it. Have you ever come across my little exposé on brandy making?

I've heard of it, but not seen it.

RH: Well, I haven't seen it either for a long time. Let me divert. The Wine Board used to put out all sorts of publications on enjoying wine and so on, and they put one out that was the story of brandy. My father was horrified. When it came up for approval, he looked at this and he said, 'This is not a book on brandy, this is a book on making fortified spirit. And the only illustrations that you've got are actually of pot rectifiers making high proof spirit. We'll have to do something'. So I was instructed to write a book on brandy. Well, it wasn't a very big one but I did a considerable amount of research and wrote this little thing. It actually had my name on the back. It was a Wine Board publication. But somewhere along the line they decided that that wasn't right because I might claim some copyright on it, so they took my name off it and thereafter it just became a Wine Board publication. I don't know, there must be something in the archives somewhere. I've looked and looked and I've got no copy of it, and I'm very sad at that. If you ever come across one -

I think Valmai has one. I'll have to ask her.

RH: Oh, I didn't think to ask her.

I think she has. And if she hasn't, I think I might know where there would be one.

RH: It's one of the originals that's got my name on the back of it. Anyway, I knew a fair bit about distilling by the time I finished all that.

I bet you did.

RH: Of course then Graham Anderson and I became very good friends, too. He had a far greater technical knowledge of distillation than I ever had. He was very good and became our foremost distiller. The sad thing was that with Tarac he never had any good material to use. He was always

trying to recover stuff from marc and stinking stuff that had gone off. But Graham, later in his life, when he had access to fresh, good grape material—good wine—he started to make some marvellous brandies. And Tarac should've gone on I suppose to be the brandy maker. His premature death was a very sad blow to us all I think.

I think the Tarac people felt that very strongly.

RH: Yes, it was sad. There's a suspicion that his mesothelioma was because of his handling of the insulation of distillation columns. We used to use (*couldn't decipher word*) things to insulate columns, and nobody knew about asbestos and those problems. I think that's what probably happened to Graham.

Anyway, that was brandy. Brandy was one of my responsibilities.

So you had the flor, the brandy, the red blends.

RH: Well, it's all winemaking. The red winemaking, Dad was very involved at Coonawarra still. He'd go down there for the vintage and potter around. I mean, it wasn't big stuff. The 1963 famous Cabernet and Cabernet Shiraz blends, there were 1250 dozen of each. It wasn't big. Those were the straight Coonawarra. Of course, we used a lot of Coonawarra in the Yellow Label. The Yellow Label Cabernet Shiraz became one of the biggest selling reds in Australia.

This is at a time, Richard, when table wines are really beginning to sell, aren't they?

RH: Yes.

Relatively.

RH: Wine had been so much in my younger life that it seems strange to me that—I mean, my friends very rarely drank wine. The early Mildura days, socially, we got to know a lot of people of our own age, and if you were at a party somewhere and got talking about what you did in life, the one thing you never told anyone was that you were in wine. 'Oh, not a

bloody plonky'. And really it was about the lowest you could go in the professional hierarchy. I used to call myself a vigneron, yes. Most of them didn't know what that was.

No, exactly. (Laughter)

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

RH: I was going on to say that the use of the word winemaker and vigneron and so on, I guess we really all considered ourselves as primary producers, first and foremost. We were very closely related to the land. Not very closely related to our customers. Well, my father's philosophy in life, going back to him again, was that you made the best wine that you could, you grew the best grapes in the best places, made the best wine, and somebody would drink it. It would sell. You didn't have to go out there and actually find customers for that. If you had the best wine, of course the people would drink it. I think the whole approach—the philosophy of the winemaking industry too—was that we were there to convert grapes into wine, make it as well as we could, and that was our task. The actual job of marketing, distribution and so on, that wasn't really the winemaker's province at all.

Richard, in those years of the 60's, did you at Mildura, and around the industry, hear of people like Wolf who'd arrived and were seeing wine somehow differently? I guess he didn't come into prominence until the late 60's, did he?

RH: No. Well, I knew Wolf from when he first arrived. We had dealings with the Barossa Co-op and Wolf was there. I met this young man whose heavily accented—whatever. (Laughs) But Wolf's job was to make Pineapple Pearl. That's why he was retained. Pearl wines were the big volume wine. And flavoured pearl wines. Wolf's whole life was aimed at

making the best possible Pineapple Pearl. I mean, now you think, 'Good grief! What a waste'. In the meantime, of course, Wolf was still keeping his eye in. He'd pick up little parcels of wine, not for Nurivin or the Co-op, but for Wolf. Well, the early years after he arrived he had little parcels of red wine in barrels in a number of places around the Barossa. The people that employed him knew nothing about this. This was the start of Wolf's—but good on him. He did very well for himself.

Was he one of a new generation, if you like, though of the European
-

RH: Yes, I suppose. Rudi Kronberger and Guenter Prass. We had a few of what I would call the German style winemakers who were brought out. People like Colin Gramp decided to get the best expertise he could. I think Colin was a very forward thinking man.

He was indeed.

RH: Yes. He introduced essentially what the German winemakers were developing. The Germans at that stage were going very big into glass lined tanks, pressure tanks, making Sekt(?) sparkling wine, making sweet wines, conserving grape juice so that they could ferment it all year around. They didn't have to be bound to the vintage. And then of course because the grapes wouldn't ripen, they started using vast amounts of sugar. In a way, in Germany, it all went wrong because it then developed into essentially a winemaking business to compete with the beer. It was a sparkling alcoholic beverage and lost it's way in relation to being a geographically exact wine. The great German wines of the pre World War 2 period, after the war, almost disappeared, and the world market for German wines became pretty ordinary. The German reputation just went down so quickly. It was these people that came here and used the same techniques because this seemed to be the future of the wine industry in Australia—was sparkling alcoholic beverages.

Well, Barossa Pearl was certainly successful.

RH: Oh, hugely so.

Porphry Pearl and Sparkling Rhinegold.

RH: And we had one at one stage called Sapphire Pearl.

Now, there you go.

That was—what?—for about a decade and a half that those wines sold very strongly?

RH: Yes. And it was during the period too I suppose that in America there was the same upsurge in interest in wine, but it was different wine. In America, you know, the Cold Duck, the sweet sparkling red wine. Well, actually it wasn't too bloody bad.

Some wasn't.

RH: Alright. You probably couldn't afford the stuff that you could drink.

No. You're probably right. (Laughs)

RH: I guess the traditionalists saw this as a way of making a living, and making enough money to be able to do what you wanted to do as well, which was to make the classic vintage varietals for a very small but very knowledgeable market.

Those wines, no matter what I might have thought of them at the time, Richard, they certainly brought people to drinking wine.

RH: Oh, yes. Australians were not wine drinkers, as you well know.

No, they were not.

RH: In one generation the change has been fantastic to see.

Could you see it happening at the time?

RH: No, I don't think so.

You were so enmeshed in what you were doing.

RH: Yes. Well, as I say, for the first ten years of my life I was so busy, and so busy at being as good as I could be, I don't think I had time to

scratch myself. Oh, we started four children in that time, too. That took up a bit of time. (*Laughs*) I was doing a lot of travelling too because one of my other responsibilities was the sale of all the bulk wines that we had. We provided bulk wines to all sorts of people at different times—new vintage wines, fortifieds, sweet whites, dry sherry, bulk brandy. Most of the Remy Martin brandy was ours, and Clelands in South Australia, which was a very big selling brand, was all ours. And in the wines we sold sherry to Lindemans. Very few reds. Of the vintage at Merbein of about 15 to 18,000 tons, we had about 200 tons of Shiraz. So it was all white wine and it was all really dry sherry and sweet sherries and so on.

Richard, were people like Lindemans really very much the controlling forces in the eastern states?

RH: I don't know about Lindemans so much. Penfolds. Penfolds were always very strange. They had this great divide through the company between Adelaide and Sydney.

Yes.

RH: And Sydney was the big market for wine, or for alcoholic beverages in general. Sydney was dominated by Penfolds.

Somebody said they had about 40 or 40 plus percent of the market.

RH: Could well have been. They were very strong. Sydney was also a huge market for spirits. I mean, Scotch and gin. Well, imported too was champagne. French champagne in Sydney was a very, very big item. And most of the distribution of course was controlled by the brewers in one way or another.

Yes.

RH: Penfolds were big enough to be able to deal with the brewers, but you'd love to know of some of the stories of the dealings that went on at that time. I know my first couple of times going to Sydney with Les Eckert and sitting in on the discussions with the Tooths and the Toohey hierarchy,

the wheeling and dealing that went on to get yourself—essentially it was a listing because unless you had an in with the brewer, then you couldn't get in to any pub. The only outlets were a few licensed restaurants. There were no bottle shops. There were none.

No.

RH: And it was all controlled. All your margins were fixed by the brewers. The retail price was decided, and from that came your margins for the wholesaler, and from that became what you got as a winemaker.

Did you ever make any money?

RH: With a great deal of difficulty actually.

Yes, I would've thought so.

RH: It was also though a very simple life because once you'd done the original deal, then your job of actually going out marketing your product didn't really exist. What you did was a bit of entertaining in the top hotels, taking clients and people and friends out, and you'd always serve your wines. You would never ever serve a rival's wine.

Just as an aside, it horrified me later that when we gained a Chief Executive in our company when I was in my process of stepping aside, he'd drink anybody's wine when he took clients or took people out to dinner. I couldn't believe this. I'd say, 'Ray, for Christ's sake, why aren't you drinking your own product?' 'Well, why should I?' Anyway it was different. And maybe he was right and I was wrong.

But in those early days our distribution chain was through Gollan and company. We were specifically winemakers. I think I've said this before, that when I joined the company, in fact for the first ten years, we had no sales or marketing organisation. Now Les Eckert in his time was going out and promoting directly to the agents, and the principal agent was Gollan, and Gollan had the distribution rights to our product for Australia wide and then later internationally as well. We had some good people in Gollans.

John Butler, who was the Victorian manager, and later became a director of Mildara. Horrie Wood, who was in Melbourne. Bert Branson in Adelaide. Those were the days too, with Gollans, where each capital city office had a Gollan managing director.

Each one?

RH: Yes. So Bert Branson was Managing Director of Gollans South Australia. You probably know John Branson. You bump into John?

Yes. I have this vague memory of Bert, too.

RH: Sadly, Bert retired at sixty-five, and he was dead about six months later. He was one of those men—he stopped working and he died.

This is from my youthful bottle shop days. I just remember on one occasion that he came in with Mildara product. I'm pretty sure it was him and not John. This is for Cyril Short up here.

RH: Yes, it could well be. We had Rex Martin, of course, who was the man on the ground in South Australia. Rex was about six foot four. He didn't know much about wine but he was a great -

Hail-fellow-well-met.

RH: Oh, yes, lovely.

So Richard, in the years after that first decade where you had sort of head down and tail up at Mildara, were there some significant changes in Mildara as Les Eckert left? What was the next step for you?

RH: I went on to the Board in '63. I've got a photograph somewhere around. It's probably in the book of the Board in '67. There's this very young, spindly guy, standing at the back. And that's me. I look young, and green. And I was. My job on the Board was to learn and say nothing. *(Laughter)* I reckon it probably took me five years before I was game to actually say anything at the Board. I'd answer questions, but no contribution otherwise.

Was your father Chairman at the time?

RH: Yes. And the other members of the Board—George Caro who was the chief of Gollans, Australia wide. He was one of the Gollan directors. We had two Gollan directors on the Board. Bill Chaffey was a director, representing the old Chaffey family. Yes, interesting times.

I don't know how I heard about it, but it probably was in 1970—oh, I was in New York. We were trying to do a deal with Austin Nickels(?), which we did. We shipped four container loads—this was again with Gollans help—of 1970 vintage Coonawarra to New York in '72, and coincided with Austin Nickels when they very nearly went broke. In fact they might've in the end, I think. They were committed to shipments of Bordeaux reds, and the prices sky-rocketed and they couldn't fund it.

Anyway our containers sat on the wharves in New York over a winter, and the wines were undrinkable. They froze and thawed, and in the end we shipped them all back here. Some of them actually went into the market unfortunately. It was very sad. Anyway, that's a whole new story.

Anyway, I'd found out about the staff college down at Mount Elisa, and I think what I did was that I talked the Gollan people into supporting me going down there to do one of the intermediate courses, and they talked the old man into it. I wasn't able to do things like that. So in '71 I went down to Mount Elisa. And I guess that changed my life quite dramatically because I found out that there was another world out there that I knew nothing about. (*Laughs*) I do recall very clearly that I came back from that believing that the first responsibility I had to the company was to build up some form of sales/marketing organisation because we couldn't rely on second-hand connection with our friends out there. They expected more. The other thing was that we would never be on a sound footing until we controlled what we made through to the end consumer. My objective in life was to change from being what was essentially a bulk wine maker and seller to controlling all our own label stuff. It took me fifteen years. 1984(?), every grape we crushed went on to the market under our label.

So that was the dramatic change. That coincided also with the big upswing.

We had a few hiccups on the way because Gollans got into bad hands in the mid 70's. In some ways it was an Austin Nickels—it wasn't alcohol though that did it to them, it was steel. Have you ever come across that book, 'The Gollan Years'? The history of Gollans.

No, I don't know that one. I know a little about Gollans. I knew they got into trouble.

RH: They got into the indent business of shipping North Korean steel to the east coast of the States. They had a team of young, green people—Australians wandering around the world, wet behind the ears—and the Yanks saw them coming. A boat load of steel would arrive at harbour, and the client would say, 'Look, I'm terribly sorry but I can't move it right now. I haven't got the warehouse space available and my client's a bit slow on—I'm going to take it, but you'll have to be a bit patient'. So here were these ships incurring huge demurrage on these shipments of steel that had very little margin in them anyway. Really it wiped out Gollan.

In the meantime, of course, they had two guys here, the Chief Executive and the Financial Director, both of whom ended up in goal after it all, who were milking the company for their own benefit, and in 1975 they went belly up. At the time it was the biggest corporate collapse in Australia's history.

We were certainly caught up in it. Gollans acted as our principals. They kept, on average, two months stock of all of our lines in their own warehouses. The first thing that happened when the receivers took over was that we made no sale for two months, apart from a bit out of the cellar door. I was aware that things were going wrong with Gollans, and in the end we were the only associated company with Gollans that survived the Gollan crash.

Gee!

RH: But it did terrible damage to our brand. Doug Crittenden boasts of the story of buying trailer loads of Mildara Yellow Label from the receivers in Sydney and selling it out of the back of a truck in front of his shop, and being very proud of the fact that he was selling this at some—I don't know—\$2 a bottle or whatever. And I said, 'Doug, you did a lot to almost destroying the Mildara name during that time'. 'Oh, oh, did I?', said Doug. *(Laughs)* Course he knew what he was doing. But we made no sales for two months.

I had been putting in place something of a sales organisation. John Dovey had joined us. John had been the Reynella marketing director—I guess. With Colin's help I talked John into coming to Mildara. When Gollans went bust, the thing I had to do, with John Dovey, was to get out there and try and put together a sales force. My chairman at the time was Jim Harrison from the Irymple packing company group. We took over, at a nominal figure, warehouse space in Melbourne that the Irymple group had and set up a sales office there. We took over five of the Gollan salesmen.

In Sydney we actually had a joint distributor. We had Burns Philp. Gollans were our major, but again knowing that things were not good with Gollans I'd negotiated another sort of joint distributor arrangement with Burns Philp, which Gollans didn't like at all. The hierarchy were very cross about that. In retaliation they actually bought a winery up in the Hunter. So we were going through difficult times.

We didn't get left with a bad debt, curiously enough. Well, not curiously enough, I worked bloody hard to make sure that we didn't. We took some stock back before the receivers went in, and in the end I think we were left being owed \$40,000. This is on a turnover that would've been of the order of 300,000 a month, so it wasn't too bad. But one of the rough things was that the wines that were held by the receivers by then were *(couldn't decipher word)*, and not only were we not making sales to any distributors, but we weren't making any to the public because they were being flooded by all this cheap Mildara. So it got pretty tough.

Anyway, we survived. I did a deal with our bankers, who were the ANZ. By then the ANZ had brought in the system of having a corporate banking office in Melbourne. Ray Jubb was the manager for Melbourne corporate banking, and I remember clearly Ray and I having long discussions on how we were going to get through it. This is probably not for the record, but I had helped him by warning him about some of the things that were happening with Gollans, and the ANZ was the only Bank that was not left with a debt with Gollans too. So he was always a little bit thankful for that. I increased the overdraft to three-quarters of a million dollars with Ray. I mean, we were used to working with an overdraft. It's sort of seasonal, as they were called. (*Sounds like, Debit for credit*). And what I did was negotiate three-quarters of a million dollars. I had no idea how we were ever going to pay it back or to service it, but we got through it.

How long did it take to recover from that, Richard? About a year and a half or so?

RH: Oh, no. Ten years.

Ten years. Gee!

RH: Oh, God, yes. That was '75. The reason that Gollans had a very successful wine and spirit business was not particularly the Mildara side of it, but they had Beefeater Gin, which was probably the most important gin in Australia. And they had Scotch. They had all sorts of liqueurs and imported wines. All sorts of things. So their salesmen had a good portfolio. We didn't. We really had very limited white wine. We had red wine. We had the fortifieds. We had brandy. So it was obvious that if we were going to survive we had to do something about—well, what we were going to do.

OH 692/61 TAPE 2 - SIDE A

AUSTRALIAN WINE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

Interview with Richard Haselgrove on 8th May, 2003.

Interviewer: Rob Linn.

So Richard, it was a long period of coming back again.

RH: Yes. The two or three years after we hung on by the skin of our teeth, and it became obvious to me that we had to do something very dramatic. The opportunity came through David Grant of William Grant & Sons fame. David had been coming to Australia for quite a number of years as the visiting fireman(?) from Grants. We had taken over Fesq and Company in Sydney, and Fesq's were the agents for Grants in Sydney. David actually commissioned a report on the Australian liquor market. There were big changes going on because of the changes in the Trade Practices Act. The dominance of the brewers was being eroded. The bottle shop licences were multiplying enormously, particularly in Melbourne, and Melbourne opened up to wine in a way that it had never been before. And in Sydney to a certain extent. Brisbane less so. Adelaide was already fairly open to wine because of the local winemakers I guess. But there were big changes going on.

So David commissioned this report on where Grants whisky, which had been in Australia for a hundred years. It was there but not doing very much. And David, of course, was the man who invented Glenfiddoch.

Yes, he did.

RH: What he wanted was not so much to worry about the standard Grants but was to continue the development of Glenfiddoch, which in other countries was becoming the number one malt whisky.

Yes, it was. I've heard of him quite a bit. He was a remarkable fellow, I gather.

RH: Yes. David, the big dynamo.

Anyway, the upshot of the report was that it was strongly recommended that he tie in with some form of winemaker/wine distribution in Australia because Glenfiddoch had far more in common with wine consumers than with the liquor consumers—the beer and spirits people—and the way to go was wine. And of course Glenfiddoch into the restaurants. This was to be the way. So David was in Australia looking around to see what sort of alliances he could make.

Unbeknown to me, I had one of his consultants doing us over, who told me afterwards that he'd been to Merbein and he'd seen me in the distance but he'd talked to all the people around the place. *(Laughs)* I didn't know.

Very strange.

Mind you, by that time we'd also had approaches from at least three people who were keen to take Mildara over. Two of them came and had very serious discussions with us at Merbein. I said that I thought I owed it to the staff to see if we could do it ourselves. I thought we could, with a little bit of help and a bit of luck. I'd prefer to keep independent until it was absolutely impossible.

Anyway, David had eyed off three wine companies. One was Nathan and Wyeth in Melbourne, who were at Quelltaler at that stage, but they also of course had Remy brandy. The other was Hamiltons because Hamilton Ewell Moselle was so strong, for very funny reasons, which I probably won't cover but Hamilton Ewell Moselle was a very big selling white wine. And Mildara was the other company.

Dave rang me up one day and said, 'Look, I'm David Grant. I'm here. I'd like to meet'. So I brought John Dovey down to Adelaide and we met down here, together with David's consultant who sat in the background, who eventually became a director of ours. *(Laughs)* And out of that we put together the basis of a deal.

The deal was that Grants were actually going to take 40% of Mildara Wines Limited. We were already listed. We'd been a public company since 1954, and we listed after the Gollan debacle. It was the only way that we could

get any funding from our bankers or any independent merchant bankers—if we listed. And we did. (*Laughs*) In hindsight, of course, it was a very distressed listing. I mean, listings are usually used as a capital raising, but there was absolutely no way we could get any further injection of capital. We had enough trouble coping with our loan funds.

The proposition was that Grants would take 40% of the company and we would take on the Australian distribution for all of Grant products, and David would use his contacts to get us other imported spirits and wines agencies. We would take over Fesq—I'm trying to think of the timing of that. But anyway, Fesq was part of the deal that would become the basis of our New South Wales operation. We had the basis of a Melbourne operation. Then the next part of the deal was that we would then take over Hamiltons, and Hamiltons would become our South Australian base and give us a strength in white table wine.

The rub was that the Grant company was fifth generation—family—and David was only a very minor shareholder because his father hadn't been in the company. He'd been the Lord Provost—is it?—of Scotland -

Yes, that's right. Yes, he had. That's quite right.

RH: - and so hadn't been involved with the company directly. Each generation of Grants has an arrangement with the family who are not in the company to be paid out in some way, and his father had taken that and so David inherited no shares. And the Gordon family dominated the shareholdings of Grants. Sandy Gordon and Charles Gordon and David were the three Executive Directors. Sandy was the Chairman.

David went back to tie up this deal with his cousins, and on Good Friday of 1979—must've been—I had a phone call from David in London saying, 'Richard, the deal's off'. I said, 'Oh, thank you, David. You've just set us up that we won't survive this. I mean, we can't'. So with my good friend Richard Green in Melbourne—I don't know whether you've ever met Richard.

No.

RH: Richard is a stockbroker, a wheeler dealer—sort of. (*Laughs*) He's a man of ideas. Before we listed we had a market in Mildara shares through (*sounds like, Cortison Carr*) in Melbourne, who were stockbrokers and would trade our shares. And Richard was a young stockbroker with (*Cortison Carr*), and I got to know him.

Anyway, I rang Richard and I said, 'Look, can we get out of this? What are we going to do?' So he set in motion his contacts—all sorts of institutions—and we got an undertaking from Grants that although they wouldn't take up 40%, they would put in 20%, and would support our approach to institutions in London to put up the other 20%, if we could also have a new share issue in Australia and the institutions here would underwrite it.

Richard and I spent one night—must've been by Easter, the Tuesday or the Wednesday—in his office in Melbourne on the phone to Europe. Anyway, out of it we did a deal. We salvaged something.

From that we put together a new company, which was 20% owned by Grants, and essentially they had taken over because Gollans had 20%. It wasn't that 20% that went to Grants. The Gollan shares were actually distributed amongst the whole (*couldn't decipher word*) institutions in Australia. I think the shares were trading at 85¢ on the market, and this deal was all done at 65¢. I took up as much as I could, and hocked all my assets to the absolute hilt. I don't know whether my family know how close we were to penury, but we worked through it with a lot of help from our friends. And we did, we got a lot of help from the institutions in Australia. The National Mutual was one in particular that was very good, and Perpetual in Melbourne. (*Sounds like, Darvel*) Hutchison—ever run into Darvel?

No.

RH: He's one of those Melbourne wheelers and dealers in the background. I made a lot of friends during that time, and we got a lot of support in the end. It was great.

Jim Harrison decided that, with the restructured company, it was far greater than he wanted to cope with, so he went back to running his own operation, which he still does. I don't know what Jim is now. He's eighty-five or so and still very active. He was a Beaufort (Beau-fighter) pilot with a DFC and all sorts. Good guy—Jim.

It started with Gollan when Gollans were still in Tokyo, the first year, but after Gollans had gone I went up to Tokyo every year for nine years, and often with Jim Harrison. The Australian Dried Fruits Industry had a joint venture with (*couldn't decipher name*) company in Japan for marketing of Australians (*couldn't decipher word*) raisins. (*Couldn't decipher name*) had a little bit of an import licence for alcohol because they had brought in the spirit to make liqueur chocolates with, or something. It was one of these marvellous things. (*Laughs*) (*Couldn't decipher name*) were a general import/export agency, and so they got some more licence and became our agents. I had some very interesting trips to Tokyo. Fascinating at the time.

I'm getting off the track somewhere. But anyway, we survived. That took us through to about 1982. Part of the deal had been with the restructuring that we would bring on board the person who would be the MD of the marketing company, which we had established and called Haselgroves, in honour of my old man. In due course, if the person was successful, then I would step aside, become the Chairman and he'd become the new Managing Director. Unfortunately the person that was chosen, and chosen and approved essentially without my say-so but by David Grant and Peter North, proved to be a disaster, but we had a three year contract with him. So we had a fairly difficult time for three years. He was in Sydney and was very Sydney-centric, as you can be, and it didn't work. It didn't work. He really didn't know what he was doing. We couldn't afford to pay him out. We just didn't have cash for that sort of thing, so we lived with it. And just before the three years were up I was on the prowl trying to find somebody, and I found Ray King, and Ray became the great success story.

What was Ray doing at that point? Was he still a 'chalky' then?

RH: No. He'd had—how many years?—ten years at Wynns with David Wynn. He left Wynns because he couldn't cope with the brewery control. He said that those bastards didn't understand what they were doing to the company. I went and talked to Frank Devine who I knew very well

I'm seeing Frank next week.

RH: Are you?

Yes.

RH: Ray was working for Frank, of course. I asked Frank his opinion of him, and he was very honest with me. He was very percipient in his assessment of Ray. I won't tell you what it was -

That's alright.

RH: - but he was right on the ball. Ray was a great person for us. Well, he'd actually left Wynns and he was with (*couldn't decipher name*) as a head-hunter. Have you talked to Ray at all?

Yes, in the past, I have.

RH: Well, I don't know whether I found Ray, or Ray found me. When I look back, it was a bit of each I suppose. Anyway, I invited him to come and spelt out what we were expecting, and he accepted that, so he came on as the MD of Haselgroves. And came on to the Board as the Marketing Director. About three years after that I became Chairman and he became the CEO. I stayed as Chairman for five years and then stepped aside. After Jim Harrison decided that he couldn't go on for this national company now—that's not what he'd taken on—we had to find ourselves a Chairman. That's when Oscar Meyer(?) was invited to come on as the Chairman. And Oscar was very much the old school. Froggatt(?) reminded me very much of Oscar when he took on the initial job of chairing the BRL Hardy operation. They're both that sort of school. And Oscar was famous—

infamous I suppose—as being the engineer responsible with the Westgate Bridge disaster. So he always had that mark against Oscar.

But Oscar had a hip replacement, and a week later flew to Bermuda for a Board meeting and didn't make it. An embolism broke loose and he died. So here I was with my Chairman—you know, 'Have a nice trip, Oscar', and that's the last we saw of him. Much against my wishes at the time, Peter North and David Grant said, 'Well, Peter North's going to be your Chairman, Richard'. And I said, 'Alright'. Anyway, Peter became Chairman for three years I guess, and that's during the period that Ray came to us. I don't know quite how you put this, but Peter's claim to fame was that he oversaw the demise of the Leyland company in Australia.

I knew the name.

RH: Peter was a (*couldn't decipher name*) man and a great theorist, but as soon as he had to deal with people it was disaster. He was a great consultant but he was an awful manager. So in the end I said to David Grant that I've got to be the Chairman or the whole thing's going to crash. So I went on for five years as Chairman. That was alright. And then the Board decided that they couldn't control Ray and they wanted a very strong Chairman who could control Ray. I said, 'You're bloody mad'.

Did he need control?

RH: I don't know. Ray was an interesting, very complex character. He's a great plagiarist. He can see something that's going to work and he'll copy it. Unashamedly. He had his successes. He had his run-ins. He virtually copied the Great Western Champagne label. All of a sudden we had these lawyers letters. And I said, 'What do they mean it's a copy of Great Western?' So we got the Great Western label in and said, 'Ray, it does look a bit like it, doesn't it?' 'Oh, I suppose'. (*Laughter*)

We actually provided Ray with a huge platform. We were good winemakers, we had good products, and we were old fashioned. We knew

very little about marketing. Ray had a feeling for this that was quite incredible.

Yes.

RH: He was the jeans man. He could see jeans were going to be before anybody had ever thought of jeans being a fashion item. Ray knew that they were. And has always been like this. He just knew. Brilliant.

I enjoyed my time with him because I was quite happy to—if I came up with good ideas I'd talk to Ray. The next thing I'd know is that my good ideas were coming out as Ray's good ideas. I didn't care because we were, you know, making progress. I didn't want the acknowledgement that it might've been my idea originally. Ray would never acknowledge it, but he'd use it, and that was great. He took ideas from all sorts of places and he made them work.

The thing he taught me was an information system, and the information about your business was the most important thing that you could ever put together. He had the basis of a good information system, and it was a system that was based on reporting by product margin, which was new. The wine industry didn't work that way. The major companies either reported and controlled by volume, and volume related to vintage, or they controlled by gross income and were never able to control the wheeling and dealing that went on in the liquor industry. Ray brought in this, and the margin method of control went right through to every salesman. So the focus was always on achieving your margin. And in essence the volume didn't really matter. I mean, to a winemaker that was anathema. People like McWilliams were controlling it by volume reporting.

Yes, they were.

RH: And Lindemans were controlling it by turnover.

Yes.

RH: Our maximum vintage at Merbein was about 21,000 tons. We dropped to 9,000 tons during that period, but we controlled—I mean, the

whole point of the business was aimed at margin. We became extraordinarily successful. I mean, for a small company, we probably came to be about number two or three in profitability in the industry over Ray's period. Pretty good bloody achievement.

I suppose the thing that upset me in the end was that—and Ray could see further than I could because he understood that we had reached about as far as we could go. He of course supported the takeover by Fosters, very much against my wishes, but then with hindsight and distance, you understand that others probably were right.

Yes.

RH: So the great Mildara name has virtually disappeared now. A few products still hold it. Merbein has been reduced to an outpost to the empire that -

It's a huge change in your lifetime, isn't it, on one level.

RH: *(Laughs)* Yes. Huge.

On another level I can never imagine Australian wine without Mildara.

RH: You've got to be very careful in this life, that you don't get too attached to things, including the company. We were—I think—a remarkable company of people. One of the things that I learnt I think out of the Mount Elisa episode was that things—winemaking—are all very important, but in this life people in the end are the reason that you're here and the reason that you enjoy it or you don't. And we'd put together, I think, a great team at Mildara. When Ray came in he had an amazing system to work with. And he was very lucky. And he understands that. We were very lucky to get in to make use of what we had. But it really was just a big family. We had 250 employees and I was on first name terms with all of them I think. It was good. It was good.

Well, Richard, the tape's running out fast. What if we leave it there and I say thank you so very much for putting up with me over the last few weeks.

RH: Well, we might have to do this again because what we haven't touched on at all is the research and education part of the wine industry.

That is the one thing that we haven't done.

OH 692/61 TAPE 1 - SIDE A

**AUSTRALIAN WINE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.
Interview with Richard Haselgrove on 20th May, 2003.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.**

Richard, today could we talk about your part in research and education in the industry. I'm wondering where you'd like to start with that.

RH: I think previously I've mentioned that I graduated from Adelaide University with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science. In my last year my main subjects were biochemistry, horticulture and microbiology. Biochemistry, our professor was Bob Morton who later died tragically in North Terrace in a laboratory accident. Bob was a very bright man. He allowed me in my last year to do my project on wine because the Australian Wine Research Institute, which was established in its current building in 1955, had been going a couple of years and John Fornachon was in charge of it. Bryce Rankine was his off-sider. I went and did my project on biochemistry on malolactic fermentation with Bob Morton's say-so. I think I was the first, and maybe the only, undergraduate to go over to the AWRI until quite recent years. And even then they're probably not undergraduate, they're more like post graduates working there.

My association with the AWRI started then. My father and my Uncle Colin had both been founder members of the Council of the AWRI and had seen it through to the establishment on the Waite campus. And my interest there continued.

John Fornachon was a lovely man. He really was. He was brilliant in his field of microbiology. He was just a nice guy. He was generous to all, including insignificant undergraduates at the time. *(Laughs)* And even then, Bryce was Bryce. A very active brain—Bryce. He just wanted to be in everything and know anything about anything that he could. He was fascinating. But anyway, it was great. I used to go over there a couple of times a week and spend a bit of time. It was great.

Bob Morton actually asked me whether I wanted to go on and do an honours, and maybe go into some form of research. I said that I was already spoken for I thought. My father was waiting anxiously for me to graduate, and I didn't think it would be received very well if I'd said that I'm going to continue on into the university life. A couple of my mates did, and I kept in touch with them.

I went to Merbein and then, as I've mentioned before too, I did my one and a half years—two vintages—in Europe with, as I said before too, some very interesting introductions from John Fornachon in particular. It gave me an entrée into places that otherwise I couldn't have had. So again I had a look at the research stations in *(sounds like, Bone)*, and the University of Bordeaux, and Wädenswil(?) in Switzerland.

Actually I learnt that Frank—oh, there's one of those old timer's moments. I'll have to come back to that.

This is an Australian?

RH: No, German. Last I heard I think he might've even been—no, I'll have to come back to that, Rob.

Well, we know his Christian name was Frank, Richard. That's fine.

RH: Well, why I mentioned it is that when I got back to Merbein after my European thing, I found that he, in fact, was at the CSIRO station at Merbein. He'd got a research grant to come and look at the wax on dried fruit varieties of grapes because, as you know, the wax stops the berries from drying as quickly and if you remove the wax they dry much faster. And he was doing work there.

At that time—oh, this is damn stupid, isn't it? But it will come back to me I suppose sometime. He was the acknowledged expert on malolactic fermentations in the world as far as I knew.

Is that right?

RH: Radler. It comes eventually. Frank Radler. I was doing my project and I kept coming across this name, and John Fornachon said, 'If you get a chance go and see him. He's very good'. And as I say, seriously, by the time I got back he was actually at Merbein. I called in to see him and we spent a bit of time together over the next two years. He became quite an acclimatised Australian for that period.

It was interesting. Again it renewed my interest in research, and he was still doing some work for malolactic fermentations. At the time the malolactic wasn't understood at all in Australia, and we at Mildara had a particular problem. We built a new cellar at Coonawarra—a new winemaking facility—and it was so clean that for the first two or three vintages we had a devil's own problem of getting the malolactic fermentation to go. Nobody really understood why the malolactic wouldn't start up. You understand what this malolactic is all about I guess?

It's the second phase, isn't it?

RH: Yes. Well, until a red wine has undergone its malolactic fermentation, it is not biologically stable. So you bottle it at your peril.

Because it might do it in the bottle.

RH: Yes. And then it goes gassy and throws a deposit and is fairly ugly.

Most Australian reds, even though they're fairly low in acid, did undergo a malolactic. The reason that it was promoted was to establish biological stability rather than to reduce the acid, which is what most of the European reds are encouraged to do a malolactic for. Malolactic fermentation changes malic to lactic, which is half as acidic, if you like, as the original malic.

We had the problem that the malolactic would not go at Coonawarra. And we did all sorts of things. The only one that really worked was to go over and see old Bill Redman and get a few buckets of his stuff that was steaming away, and take it back and put it in. But the work I'd been doing had been to try and establish what the parameters were that encouraged the malolactic fermentation. This I suppose for the first four years of Coonawarra was absolutely vital for us.

While I'd been working with John Fornachon I developed a fairly simple chromatographic system of separating the organic acids—paper chromatography—but I did it in a plastic rubbish bin that you could get down the street for nothing. I set it up so that it was one of these things that you could do in any little country laboratory. It was very simple, but it worked. Some of the people that saw it said, 'You'll never do an organic acid separation in that'. (*Laughs*) And I said, 'Well, you do'. And that was the way that you actually followed the stages of the malolactic from full malic, low lactic, to the other end of it. And when it happened you knew that you could get busy then. For instance, you could start adding a little bit of sulphur to the red because up to that stage you didn't dare put sulphur in. You might put a bit in with the grape crusher but nothing after that because it was known if you did anything with sulphur that killed any chance of the leuconostoc bacteria, particularly, from getting started. Leuconostoc was at that stage, anyway, the one that we thought was the principal malolactic bacteria.

It was fascinating too because the conditions that were ripe for that, could also be ripe for the development of lactobacillus. Some of the lactobacillus were also lactic eaters, but some of them would gobble up the remaining

sugar instead and would actually produce more acid, usually acetic but sometimes lactic, and sometimes some very odd off-acids. And so again if you didn't control your malolactic you could end up with really bad wines as well. Stinky wines.

With controlled temperature (*sounds like, base*)?

RH: Partly. Under 15 degrees it was unlikely that the malolactic would start. It wasn't uncommon in Coonawarra anyway that once your primary fermentation was finished, come May/June, the temperature of the wine could've fallen down to 10 or 12 degrees. So this was a problem, too. If the malolactic hadn't occurred then, it was highly unlikely that it would start until after the following Spring. And so you had a biologically unstable product that you couldn't put into wood. Well, you could, but you ran the risk of bad lactic fermentations in the wood. Well, it was very interesting, but bloody baffling as well.

I don't know how many years it was before we decided that it wasn't a problem any more. It was probably ten years before we could actually say that, oh, yes, the malolactic will go.

Merbein, being principally a flor sherry cellar, was very, very aware of bacterial spoilage because in fortifieds and in flor wines one of the worst things that could happen would be an infection with the lactobacillus, one of the long chain ones that produce the off odours. Mousy-ness and things like that. And at Merbein we were terribly careful to keep everything as sterile as possible, and as clean as possible—always. We did micro checks of wines on flor every week to see that they hadn't become infected, and if they had, you had to take action rapidly. Like, fortifying them up a bit and adding sulphur and doing all these things. So when we went to Coonawarra we tended to follow the same practices of keeping everything clean. Of course that didn't help the malolactic either.

I remember Sid Wells saying, 'Oh, you're not encouraging bacterial spoilage in those red wines, are you?' All of his working life at Merbein,

Sid had been fighting these little buggers that you couldn't see—*(Laughs)*—so it didn't ruin what he was making.

I kept my contact with John Fornachon during that time too because he was the man in Australia that knew as much about malolactic as anyone. And consequently I kept in touch with the AWRI. I got to know the Waite campus well in my ag science days, and then afterwards, and I continued the contact with the AWRI for a long while.

In 1974, I was invited to join a committee of review, which Tom Hardy chaired. Tom Hardy, George Kolarovich, myself, and—oh, well, there we are. Bruce Tyson I think. Was that the first one?

Karl Seppelt was on one I think.

RH: Karl would've been Chairman of the Council I think. This was a so-called independent committee of review. Tom chaired that. We had a Department of Primary Industry secretary and we toured around and, you know, we did this review. It's worth reading actually. It's got a tremendous amount of the original history of AWRI, and the background, in it.

And then again in 1978, four years later I think, there was another committee of review formed to do a follow up to give some recommendations about the future direction of the Institute, and I chaired that committee. Had Phil Laffer, and Graham Anderson, and—there we are, the memory's gone again. *(Laughs)* It doesn't much matter. It's all there in the history books.

By then I was also on the Council of the Institute. One of the objectives of the second committee of review was to review the organisational structure of the Institute. There were many people in the industry who were unhappy with the way the Institute was structured. It was actually a not-for-profit company structure, which had been put in place for very good reasons. The shareholders were the members of the Council for the time being, and there was really no election of people to the Council. One of the things that we set about doing was to put in place a structure that had

representation on the Council in the same sort of way that I think shareholder representation should've been.

This is '78, is it?

RH: Yes. I don't know which year it was that we first used the new system, but we had representation from University of Adelaide and CSIRO, who were two shareholders in the Institute. The University provided the land, CSIRO provided some of the initial funding and a grant each year for quite a number of years towards the Institute, and the remainder was from wine industry funds, either from levy or from interest earned on previous levies, going back a long way.

Richard, was Bryce Rankine running it by '78? Would John have died by then?

RH: Bryce was never the Director of the AWRI.

No, that's right. He switched up to Roseworthy at some point.

RH: I've got to think. When John died, I'm pretty sure that's when Waldy(?) Forest came in.

Yes, you're quite right.

RH: Waldy was CSIRO, and was very much a research boffin and knew, as it turned out, very little about research management. One of the issues that the second committee of review had was to identify—Waldy must've had four years there I think. I'm not sure whether he had left or whether he had indicated that he would be leaving. We had the task of trying to identify who we would recommend be interviewed for the job of the Director of the Institute, if and when I suppose. I don't quite know. I do know that as a committee we interviewed Terry Lee in Sydney and identified Terry as the most likely person, if we could get him, to take on the directorship. He had all the qualifications and the personality and so on. As it turned out, I suppose he was one of the most successful Institute directors.

Was John's death a real tragedy for the industry?

RH: In many ways, yes. John had done some marvellous work for us. The industry had a dreadful problem in the late 20's and 30's with lactobacillus spoilage of sweet wines going to England, and his work there enabled the winemakers to solve a terrible problem. Then his work on the flor sherry, which must've been published in '48 I think—around that—was the guide book for the world wherever flor sherry was being made, including in Spain. It was their text book.

Amazing.

RH: John was not reclusive, but from a scientific point of view, unless it was published, he wouldn't acknowledge that he was working on something. When it published, then it could become public knowledge. He was much admired but he was reluctant to be seen to be interfering with the wine industry. You can see what I mean?

Yes, I know what you're saying.

RH: Waldy I think was just overpowered by it all, and then Terry Lee grabbed the whole thing. Terry also coincided with the revamped structure of the Council itself. The first election under the new system where there was a weighted vote amongst the winemakers—well, roughly speaking, the number of tons you crushed, you got a certain number of votes. And it was so worked that I managed to vote myself off the Council in that election. (*Laughs*) The co-operatives, who had a huge crush of grapes, and so very powerful voice on the council election, decided that they wanted a member from the co-ops on, and so I was the one that was defeated at the election that I'd managed to put in place. Irony, I think you call it. Anyway, I served my term there as a member of Council. It was until '82 I think. I'm never quite clear on dates. Doesn't matter. My association with the Institute was renewed when quite a number of years later the—well, a little bit of background.

When I first came into the industry there was some good research into viticulture and some limited work in logical research, or at least outside the AWRI. There was a little bit going on in the University of Sydney, and in Western Australia, but essentially all the oenological research was AWRI. The funding for AWRI was of such a limited nature that it was decided quite early in its career that it wouldn't get involved in viticultural research. In hindsight, a very strange decision. I know the committee of review, the second one in particular, said that this is ridiculous. Your raw material—the grapes—somehow or another you've got to be involved in that as well. And the way we did it was to in fact encourage the CSIRO to become the viticultural research arm of the wine industry, and AWRI to concentrate, but to cooperate, with CSIRO horticulture in the work that they were doing. In addition there was a lot of work on viticultural research going on all over Australia, piecemeal, and never on an acknowledged cooperative basis. CSIRO at Merbein and Adelaide, the departments of agriculture in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and later in Tasmania, and a little bit in Queensland—can I just hold for a minute?

Yes.

(Tape restarted)

RH: I was talking about the viticultural research in Australia, which was essentially in the Department of Ag hands at a State level, and CSIRO. And none of them ever talked to one another. And none of them ever compared notes on what they were doing, where they were going, or why. It was even worse than being State because viticultural research station at Rutherglen had been established, like, 100 and umpteen years before. De Castella founded it and it was huge—well, that photograph I showed you, that was the viticultural research station. There was a rival one at Merbein that was set up by the local growers, which eventually became CSIRO. Neither of them would ever talk to one another. John Possingham fairly recently became the director, or chief scientist, or whatever they called it, of CSIRO horticulture. He got that job as chief of

division—I think he was only twenty-eight. He and I, I think, are roughly the same age.

(Tape restarted)

John Possingham and you are around the same age.

RH: Yes. Anyway, John wanted to do something about this viticultural research. They were doing a lot of work for the dried fruits industry in Mildura. He believed that there was a need for some sort of coordination of all the rest of the work that was going on. So he put in place for CSIRO, the CSIRO Vine Improvement Research Committee, it was called. And what he did was that he had an annual meeting of this group, and he invited all the principal research scientists and the industry people who were interested in this field to meet, usually at the station at Merbein, and he invited people from the Departments of Ag to come in and have a look. They had an agenda that went through what was going on in Australia and what should be going on, who can cooperate with what, and so on.

I well remember the first year he did this. In South Australia the Department of Ag guys that he wanted to come to this meeting actually had to go to the Minister to get approval to cross a State boundary to go to a meeting at Merbein. I mean, it was weird stuff. There was this State jealousy and so on. It was absolutely ridiculous. The wine industry was partly parochial and State based, but it was losing that and becoming a national industry, and there was a lot of interchange going on at a State wine and brandy producer association level and so on. And we had the national Australian Wine and Brandy Producers' Association of Australia. And we had a technical committee that was looking at aspects of oenological research and viticultural research and so on.

So we were all in favour of what 'Poss' was doing in trying to get some degree of, if not coordination, at least cooperation between the work that was going on in the various stations. And I guess one of my objectives in the whole of my wine industry working life was to get the viticultural and the oenological researchers of Australia to work on a national basis. Partly

we've succeeded. There's still a little bit of parochialism, mainly at university level. The universities tend to be, as you well know, very jealous of their own skills. CSIRO gets a bit like that sometimes, too. They say, 'We're different'.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

So Richard, there was a parochialism in a couple of places.

RH: Yes. I think the CSIRO committee was probably set up thirty years ago now.

'73, was it? I'm just trying to think when John Possingham comes in the picture. It's in the 70's. I know that.

RH: Yes. Wait a minute. It must've been earlier than that. '60. Forty years. Bloody hell, it could be I suppose. Because the developments in machine harvesting -

That was late 70's. Mid to late 70's it was still coming through.

RH: I haven't started to say very often 'in those days' but I'm starting to feel like it. *(Laughter)* I should've prepared better and had a look at a few of these dates. I've got them and I should have another look at them. Anyway, the work that 'Poss' was doing coincided very much with what we were looking for. The wine industry people were trying to encourage this cooperation in the viticultural research, particularly because they wanted the AWRI to take the fruits of that research and then apply it in the winemaking side. I became the delegate from the Wine and Brandy Producers' Association to this committee, and Bob Hollick was from the Wine Grape Growers' Association, and we both used to go to those meetings. In the early days most of the discussion was about the dried

fruit research that was going on because CSIRO were very much involved in that and not very much involved in wine.

'Poss' actually said to me at one stage, 'Richard, our funds are limited and we're not getting any encouragement from the wine industry to do viticultural research, and if we don't, we will concentrate on other horticultural crops and dried vine fruits'. I said, 'Well, John, I believe it's very important that CSIRO continue work in this field of wine grapes'. I mean, we're still talking about very much a junior partner of the viticultural industry of Australia. Dried vine fruit and fresh grapes exceeded the total crush for wine, and the relativity between the industries was quite different from what it is today.

Anyway, one of the tasks I undertook was to go back to the industry association, and I actually made an impassioned speech at an annual meeting—the council meeting—and put a case for the wine industry to put up money to encourage CSIRO to continue work in vine research for winemaking. In the end what we managed to do was that the Wine and Brandy Association and the Australian Wine Board committed \$60,000 of wine industry funds in three years of \$20,000 a year, and that money was put towards building the pilot winery at CSIRO Merbein, and that then became a centre for viticultural research. John Possingham kept his side of the bargain and said that he would commit his funds in wine varieties. At the time I thought that was my greatest triumph, that I'd actually managed to get this very deep-pocketed industry, not keen to ever have money spent on anything that wasn't absolutely necessary, to put up the capital to establish the pilot winery there.

Now that ensured that CSIRO continued, and also the CSIRO's connection through—that the council of the AWRI meant that they were locked into the system. That was great.

Well, the parochialism between the State departments did start to break down a bit. The Ministers in each of the States came to realise that it was very important that they cooperate on this at a national level. And then by the mid 80's I suppose, it was decided to put together—well, the wine

industry had been funding the AWRI through a levy from about, roughly speaking, early 50's, and that essentially went to the new institute when it was built in '55, and wine industry funds that had come out of the 20's from the excise levies—the interest on that capital—also came to run the AWRI. So we had AWRI funded in that way, but the industry hadn't been supporting any viticultural research directly at all, except through taxes—State and national taxes. So principally through Bob Hollick's encouragement, the Wine Grape Growers' Council of Australia agreed to seek a statutory levy on tonnage of grapes made for wine to go into research. The winemakers had already decided to do that. The levy would go to the AWRI.

Then in the mid 80's it was agreed—I don't know how we got there. We decided to form a coordinating committee that became the Australian Council of Viticulture. I was the foundation chairman of it, and chaired it for the five years of its existence. We met all around Australia. We had representation from all the State departments, from CSIRO, and more importantly, for the first time ever, we had representatives from the two universities that were involved—Adelaide and Charles Sturt. So we were looking at where viticultural research should go in Australia. We also had representatives from the dried fruits industry and from the fresh grape people. It was a big table actually when we all got together.

I reckon.

RH: It was very good. We put in process the preparation of three papers that were to examine what was happening, what was needed, how we would go forward. Those papers are good reading still. They formed the sort of blueprint for what was hoped for from there.

Towards the end of the life of the Australian Council of Viticulture there was the move that came from the Federal Government to set up the cooperative research centres. Harold (*couldn't decipher name*), who was the Dean of Agriculture at Adelaide Uni, was a very strong promoter of that.

He was, wasn't he?

RH: He was, indeed. Do you know Harold's connection with the university?

Yes. He was a graduate research student out here in the early 50's.

RH: Yes. He was one of my demonstrators.

Was he? He once told me over lunch he returned to find the place in the same condition he left it in. (Laughter)

RH: Probably about right. I'd forgotten all about Harold.

When we started to talk about the cooperative research centres, Croser said, 'Oh, do you know the Dean? Why don't you go and talk to him'. I walked in—good grief! I was a young student and you were a post graduate.

He was a wonderful bloke—Harold.

RH: Yes. Harold was a great driver in the CRC development, and the Australian Council of Viticulture undertook to prepare the case for funding of the CRC. I was heavily involved in that. Then eventually when we did get the funding—we were I think the second round of the CRC's that we got our first funding in—I then became the Chairman of the Council of the CRC and continued that for the first seven years of its life. Originally it was thought that the CRC would only survive for seven years, that the Federal Government were going to keep rotating the funding for a new CRC. Well, as it turned out, we put together a committee—Viticulture 2000—to undertake the preparation of the new application. Much to my surprise, we actually got the extension for another seven years. Because at the beginning of the CRC it was understood that when we came to the end of the Federal funding, that the viticultural industry would pick up the responsibility of carrying on the funding—if it was successful. If this cooperative system worked. As it's turned out, it was fantastic. It worked alright. It's the first time many of those research institutions had actually worked directly with others. And more importantly, were working directly

with people from industry. It really was a fantastic experience. I'm delighted to see that it's still steaming along there.

We had our problems at the beginning. When we were first formed, the proto board, the acting director was Terry Lee. He took on that job as well as director of the institute until we were established, and then we sought a director and Terry went back to being a Board member. Unfortunately, the first director didn't work. There's a whole new story there, which I don't want to go into.

I think we might leave that one.

RH: We had to fire him and pay him out, which wasn't good. And when he left under acrimonious circumstances, Peter Hayes—Peter's been another great supporter of this research programme in Australia. He'd been Department of Agriculture in Victoria when I first knew Peter. He then came over, took on the job of the grape vine research development council, then corporation. I don't know what they called Peter. The Director? The Executive Officer? He took on Acting Director of the CRC for a period of about six months while we tried to mend bridges and keep the thing rolling. Then we sought a new director, and Jim Hardy came into the position. And Jim in his quiet, but forceful, way has proved to be an extraordinarily good director of the CRC, and is still in that position. Oh, the other thing about the CRC was that part of its responsibility was in undergraduate and post graduate education. Now apart from a very limited way through Roseworthy where industry representatives used to be on the advisory board of Roseworthy, and occasionally universities would grab someone for a period, you never had any formal connection between the education of undergraduates and post graduates in Australia with the industry at all, which is most extraordinary when you look back.

I think I was probably the first of the ag science graduates that went through to the wine industry. I think Bruce Tyson was a science graduate. I honestly don't know at that stage of anyone of my age who, other than Roseworthy diplomates, had come through the university system. Things

were different. These days of course the courses are packed for both viticulture and oenology, and the post graduate work that's going on, supervised through the CRC, is fantastic. They've got a great crop of potential doctors going through there.

So would this be one of the greatest changes that you witnessed in the industry, Richard?

RH: I don't know. It's hard to tell, Rob. Some of us had the vision of what we wanted to achieve. Someone I've always worked well with, and enjoyed, is Philip Laffer. Now Philip has a vision of the industry that he sees. He's been sidetracked a bit by ending up as the chief expert of Orlando, which I don't think he really expected to happen -

He did not.

RH: - but I'm delighted to see it. He deserves everything he gets—that guy. He really does.

The other one of course was McWilliam—Doug McWilliam. I first got to know Doug in 1980 when we were in California for the Davis centenary. Doug had been at Davis and he came back and we travelled together. Course Doug's term as Chairman of the AWRI is something of a record now.

This is Doug, not Don?

RH: This is Doug.

His cousin, isn't it?

RH: Yes. Don was the Sydney and Doug was the bush.

That's right.

RH: His appointment was very interesting, or election as Chairman of the AWRI, because it was considered that the chair would never come from outside South Australia. The travelling was too difficult. Well, people who lived where I did and where Doug did at Griffith, travelling wasn't any

problem. You just did it. Most of my working life was spent each week in either Melbourne or Adelaide or Sydney, and I lived in Merbein. I mean, you put a day in the office every now and again. Doug's been doing that most of his life, too.

Anyway, there were those who had tertiary experience and something of a vision. I think we got very close to a system that we wanted. It's not perfect. There are still jealousies sometimes between various bodies that are in there, but in the main the Australian wine industry has progressed very, very rapidly, technologically. We claim to be probably the foremost in the world in wine science, and close to the leaders in viticultural science. We overtook Davis years ago. Davis went into a bit of a decline, whereas thirty years ago Davis was the headquarters. Or Bordeaux. That's where all the text books came from. That's where it was happening. I think we tend to be leading from Australia now, which is rather nice.

It is.

RH: So that's about where we get to with the research. R & D, that's what it's all about. Plus the education facet that fits in there, and fits in so importantly.

Well, thank you very much, Richard, once again.

RH: Just as a sideline, towards the end. Since I reduced my active life in the wine industry—I'm still a bit involved, but not much. Well, we haven't talked about the show system, have we?

No.

RH: Well, I chair the wine committee of the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria, which runs the Melbourne Show, and we like to think we're the leaders of the shows in Australia. Of course nobody agrees with us from Adelaide or Sydney.

You noticed that, did you?

RH: Yes. That's been another one of my interests, I think you'd call it, in trying to get the Melbourne Show to be as good as it can be. I think we've succeeded to a certain degree.

The other one of my associated interests was the wine and food society. (*Sounds like, I was*) Wine and Food Society of Mildura and also a national delegate of Wine and Food Society of Australia, and kept involved in that for a long time until I became a diabetic, and that sort of faded to the background a bit, about ten years ago. And since I've moved back from the wine industry one of my dear loves has been, in Mildura, the organisation Mallee Family Care. I don't know if you know anything about Mallee Family Care.

I know a little about it.

RH: Do you?

Yes.

RH: It's now about twenty-three years old since it was established in Mildura. I was President of it for ten years, during which time, among other things, we got a Prime Minister's award for partnership excellence with one of our projects.

I was watching Andrew Denton last night actually with the Australian of the Year—the lass from Western Australia.

I can't remember her name.

RH: Anyway, he had a clip of her going up on stage and receiving this thing from the Prime Minister. I've been there, done that, with Vernon Knight my director. We went up on to the stage and received this lovely trophy from the Prime Minister. I'm moving back from that now, but just at the time when one of our projects, the Chances for Children organisation, is really booming. It's, again, one of my great loves I suppose.

Again, I was intrigued with Denton last night. They were going through the importance of raising our children, the most important asset we have in

this country. This organisation, Chances for Children, is a community organisation. It's very serious about that. I don't know whether you've come across that either, but you will because it's being franchised out into all sorts of places.

So there's definitely been life after wine?

RH: Oh, yes, there's life after wine. I've had a lovely life in the wine industry itself. It couldn't be a nicer industry. I mean, from time to time it's been bloody awful with the back-slapping followed by the back-stabbing that goes on at a political level, but that's just human nature.

I think so.

RH: But there are always men of integrity there. I guess the great success story of the Australian wine industry in my time has been the development there of cooperation and coordination.

(Laughs) Many years ago, I was guest speaker at something or other and, 'What did I think of my competitors in the Australian wine industry', or words to that effect. And I said, 'Our competitors are not part of the Australian wine industry. Our competitors are those Frenchmen over there, or those Americans, or the Spaniards, or the Italians'. They're the people that we compete against. We're not a very big industry in Australia and it behoves us—which is a lovely word—to coordinate and cooperate, and I think the Australian wine industry in general has done that remarkably well in the last 20/25 years anyway.

I worry a bit as the major companies become essentially foreign owned. As yet they've remained Australian managed. That's slipping a bit, too, with Beringer Blass. It's not as Australian as it ought to be, I don't think. The French with Pernod Rickard have tended to leave the management in Australian hands, and that's happened with most of them so far. I think, technically anyway, and at a managerial level, the Australians are better than anything that they can bring out to try and put into the asset they've purchased. So there we are.

I look forward to the future of the Australian wine industry. I know Len Evans has said this, and I wouldn't disagree with him, that we have the opportunity in fifty years time to be the greatest trader of wine in the world, and to take over from the old industries of Europe, and to outstrip the new world wine people. Anyway, we'll see.

Well, thank you once again, Richard.

RH: My pleasure.