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DISK 1

This is an interview with Dr E. Harry Medlin on 31st August 2007 at Crafers West for the University of Adelaide Oral History, interviewer Rob Linn.

Well, Harry, you were born in 1920 in Orroroo to John and Myra Medlin?

Yes.

So tell me a little bit about those early years at Orroroo, please, Harry.

Well, it's a fascinating place and it's marvellous to be brought up by a country woman in a country town. I went to school early – I was supposed to be a bit of a smart-arse, I think, and I got put up two grades, like my wife, and in those days that was a little bit unfunny because bullying has always been, within my experience, the name of the game and being able to come top of the class and being smaller than them I was in terrible trouble. So I had to learn how to fight – like a shearers' cook, you know? – and my father taught me how to fight: you put your thumb inside a clenched fist so that you don't break it off and you hit straight, and you imagine that – this is good physics – you imagine that you're going to hit the back of the head but you hit the nose, and just as you hit the nose you turn your fist. And even though I was a little kid I won every fight and finally they left me alone.

But I got a beautiful education in Orroroo, especially in the English language. We had to do, and perhaps you did too, parsing and analysis. We had books, we did grammar, we learnt syntax, we learnt punctuation, we learnt to know what a gerund was, we knew the moods of the English language, we learnt the proper use of prepositions; and if I ever said or wrote 'different *to*' I don't think I would have survived.

Yes, I know what you mean, Harry, exactly.

It was 'different *from*'. So that was Orroroo. We learned how to survive in the bush; we learned how to scrounge; we learned how to avoid those deadly scorpions; we learned how to catch snakes, especially if they were hiding in rabbit burrows. We had those animals that go – I've forgotten what they're called – those animals that go down the burrows and drive the rabbits –

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Ferrets.

– yes, the ferrets. Had to be very careful because the ferrets, you had to plot the rabbit warren before you put the ferret in, otherwise you might lose it because it'd come up somewhere else. We did learn to survive in the bush and we learned where every quandong tree was around Orroroo, we could find all the quandongs. And when our kids were young Didi and I used to take our kids up there and let them loose in the bush and they'd have been lost within a nanosecond. I'm reminded of the stories – in fact, a distant relative of mine wrote a book about early settlement in South Australia and the Bay Road; it's always been 'the Bay Road' as far as I'm concerned, and when they called it 'Anzac Highway' in 1936 – – –. But the Bay Road. Now, if they wanted to wee or something they'd go into the Black Forest – and it *was* a black forest, and they'd get lost, of course, because the moss was on the wrong side of the stump and a lot of people died off the Bay Road. So as a country boy, as I say, we learned how to survive in the bush.

What was your father's occupation up there, Harry?

He was a plumber and tinsmith. Yes, he served his trade there and he was a tradesman but he was also a bandsman, because every country boy was in the band and Dad played the bugle and the cornet and the trumpet and, when he joined the 43rd Battalion in the band he became a stretcher-bearer, which is one of the most dangerous – probably *the* most dangerous – occupation. But after the [First World] War he went back, he went back to his trade and became a plumber.

He was wounded during the War, wasn't he, gassed, is that right?

Yes, he was. He was wounded several times. He went to England once on – they called it a 'Blighty' – after a stunt. I'm not too sure what happened in the stunt; but he was certainly wounded in August of 1918, which is that famous day described in *The myriad faces of war*¹, that famous day when the Canadians and the Australians broke through the German lines and set it up for armistice. So yes, he was seriously wounded and he had sciatica for the rest of his life, and so that's why we came to Adelaide, so that he could get treatment. I think that was about 1930.

¹ Trevor Wilson, *The myriad faces of war: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986.

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So you spent the first ten years at Orroroo.

Yes.

Where did you live when you came to Adelaide?

My mother came from an extended family at Mount Barker. There'd been thirteen siblings; one died; there were twelve, seven of them girls and five boys. So there were no telephones, of course, but there were cable contacts and one of my mother's sisters got a place for us at Henley Beach and we moved onto The Esplanade at Henley Beach, just along, couple of blocks from *Del Monte*.

Oh, right. Actually, that would have been beautiful there.

Yes, it was, it was glorious.

So did your children – even though you loved the bush, did you find you loved the seaside as well?

You quick and lively adapt to a different environment; and at one stage we actually went to Blackwood because one of my mother's brothers, who'd been in the 43rd Battalion with my father, had a house there and he became a driver for the Repatriation Department, and people lived at Belair and Blackwood, people who had tuberculosis – in fact, 'Belair' comes from the French '*le bel air*' – and they had a hostel at Angorichina, up round Parachilna, and he used to drive people up to the hostel. So they were away at times and we moved into their house at Blackwood, Brighton Parade, Blackwood. So my schooling, my primary schooling, was very disorganised.

How did you end up at Adelaide Technical High School, Harry?

We went back from Blackwood to Henley Beach and a cousin of mine, one of my mother's sisters' daughters, had done very well in what used to be called the Qualifying Certificate, the QC, which you did at the end of primary school, year seven – I think she got something like six hundred and seventy-nine out of seven hundred, which was quite remarkable – and because I'd done fairly well at school my mother was encouraged to aim me to get to Adelaide Tech, and I sat for the examination and I got in. Actually, I didn't do terribly well; in fact, I believe I got robbed because there were seven hundred marks and two hundred of them were for Arithmetic and I claim that I got the whole paper right but I only got a hundred and

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seventy out of two hundred from Henley Beach. But, nevertheless, I was the last admitted to Adelaide Tech but I came dux in my class so I beat all these kids from Rose Park and (laughter) The Grange, who'd beaten me in the QC. That's how I got in there. It was an incredible school.

That's what I wanted to ask you. What type of school was it?

It was run by Methodists. (laughter) I was brought up a Methodist, so I understand them. You were not allowed to talk to the girls. There were two divisions: the technical side was only for boys; the commercial side was essentially for girls, but there were a number of boys who were able to get into the commercial side. *They* could talk to the girls but we were not allowed to talk to the girls, even though we might be from the same Methodist church – which, after we moved to Kurralta Park, we attended the Methodist church at Keswick and there was a girl there called Yvonne Dunk[?] and I knew her quite well but I wasn't allowed to talk to her as a girl at Adelaide Tech.

The other thing – do you know the School of Mines?

Yes.

You know Brookman Hall?

Yes.

Okay. There was a woman who ran a class of the Eurythmics – her name eludes me at the moment – she ran this Eurythmics class and the girls would put on short dresses and we would get up and we would sneak into the balcony (laughs) and we were in terrible trouble if we were ever caught there. And Sid Emoy[?] was the head. He was a tyrant and he caught a fellow once who was about six feet tall and actually beat him up, and I was surprised that the fellow didn't murder Sid. But he was very respectful of authority and he expected you to be respectful of him. For example, after the [Second World] War and I was employed at the University I used to be involved with supervising public examinations and on one occasion, down at the Centennial Hall, I was in charge of the invigilators and who should be one of them but Sid? And he treated me very respectfully: 'Yes, Dr Medlin', 'No, Dr Medlin'. (laughs)

The education as such there, though, Harry, was that of a high quality?

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Yes, it was. Extremely high quality, and that's why I'm surprised that nobody went on to become Rhodes Scholars because part of our education – I think I did eleven subjects in the Intermediate. We had to do, for example, Woodwork, Fitting and Turning, Sheet Metalwork, all those extra things in addition to English, Arithmetic, Maths I, Maths II, Physics, Chemistry, Drawing. The standard was extremely high and we used to saturate the credits in the Public Examinations Board. But, in addition, we had a subject there called 'Civics'.

Yes.

Now, I talk to my grandchildren about this and ask if they're educated to know the political structure of the country and the organisation of the public services and facilities. We used to be taken to Parliament, to the Town Hall, to the law courts. I remember once we were taken to the law courts and there was a bloke charged with murder. There was no examination in Civics but we were taught other things like how to apply for a job, and – this gives the Methodist tone of the place – you had to finish: 'I beg to remain your humble servant'. Well, Harry Medlin never ever, ever wrote such a letter, I promise you.

So, Harry, that subject, Civics, which these days is a new subject, Legal Studies it's become – it's been reintroduced –

Oh!

– that was a mark of the breadth of education at Adelaide Tech, then. You weren't just an academic place.

Oh, no. No. The school had an enormous reputation. I matriculated when I was fifteen because I did Intermediate French and to matriculate you had to have a Leaving Certificate and a foreign language, at least at Intermediate level. So we were offered jobs. Now, you see, this is 1935, 1936. It was the tail-end of the Depression and there was a big unemployment problem, but these employers used to approach the school for recommendations and I was recommended for one job, I remember, which I declined to take and then I was recommended to be an apprentice at the then Adelaide Electric Supply Company and, just on the sheer recommendation of Adelaide Tech, three of us were appointed on the same day. Actually, we started work on the day that King George V died in 1936.

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So, Harry, were you working in the Kelvin Building, not that far across the road from the school?

Well, I wish I had; but no. I was one of those who were sent to the Service Branch at Hilton.

Hilton.

Just opposite the Hilton Hotel. And the unfortunate part about that was that those of us who were there did not get time off during the day to go to the University or the School of Mines whereas those who worked in the Kelvin Building could because they'd just nick across the road, and it wasn't until my fourth year there – that's 1939 – that I got any time off at all and was therefore able to do Mathematics I which, although part of the Bachelor of Engineering/Fellowship of the South Australian School of Mines, the Mathematics was given in the University whereas all the subjects that I did for the FSASM were done at night and in the School of Mines. Now, the School of Mines essentially ran, as I say, this fellowship course which, if you had matriculated, also got you the BE; but some subjects, like Mathematics, were given at the University and were not night subjects or not evening subjects so I could not do Maths I until 1939.

I was called up on 3rd September 1939 so I had to do the rest of the Maths I course by correspondence, but I think I got either the fourth or the fifth credit against all these full-time rich kids from Saint Peter's College – including William Faulding Scammell. (laughter)

There's a name.

Yes.

So, Harry, tell me, although you said you couldn't take Maths until 1939, had you managed to do night classes at the School of Mines prior to that?

I certainly did because they expected we apprentices to work for the FSASM and some of the more senior people at Hilton had completed their degrees that way. In 1936 and '37 I went five nights a week to night school at the School of Mines, did subjects like Electrical Engineering I, Electrical Engineering II, Mechanical Engineering, Engineering Drawing and Design, Machine Design, Strength of Materials. I completed about twelve, I think, of the twenty-six subjects for the

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degree by going five nights a week, as I say, in '36 and '37; I joined the army in '38 so I kept one night for the army voluntary and compulsory parade, so I went four nights a week.

So when you say you joined the army, that is the militia?

Yes.

So you would have been based at Keswick for that?

Yes. The Engineers had a building and a parade ground right at the back – by the back I mean the furthest from the Bay Road, up against the railway line.

Yes.

You know? The railway line runs past Keswick and it diverges, so the Engineering establishment was right at the back and we met once a week. Once a month was a compulsory parade and you got two shillings. (laughs) So we got two shillings a month, because the voluntary parades were unpaid. I attended the voluntary parades, as I say, so I had one night for the army. I worked quite hard.

I don't see where you had any spare time to speak of, Harry, because you would have been working Saturday mornings at least as well as the weekdays.

We were because when I started it was the forty-four-hour week. We had eight hours on the first five days and four hours on Saturday morning. Then Sunday, of course, was for Methodism. But we did a lot on Saturday afternoons.

I've always disliked competitive sport. I didn't phrase that correctly. I dislike the people who *manage* competitive sport – people like Arthur Tunstall: the shocking way that he treated that Aboriginal girl.² And I looked at bike riding and I found that was pretty competitive and pretty dirty, so we used to ride our bikes down to, well, even Victor Harbor – and that was that old road, you know, nothing like that fancy road that kills people now – ride our bikes down there, chasing girls. But I might have said to you before in my day you couldn't catch any girls; you might be able to catch them now, I don't know, but you couldn't catch them then. But it was good fun trying.

² In 1994 champion runner Cathy Freeman was publicly reprimanded by Australian Commonwealth Games administrator, Arthur Tunstall, for flying the Aboriginal flag during a victory lap in Victoria after winning the 400-metre gold medal.

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That life from your early years and teenage years, Harry, the way you're describing it's almost idyllic, or at least as a time of great enjoyment for you.

Well, it certainly was, and there was a complex of activities that – I got involved in other things, too. The Methodists in those days had two youth activities: the Methodist Order of Knights for the boys and the Methodist Girls' Comrades for the girls. Well, as a staunch Methodist I joined the Methodist Order of Knights and in 1939 I was a Knight Commander of the Keswick Methodist Order of Knights and we actually won the Arthur Wells[?] Shield for the best performed ritual group. I understand it was based on the Freemasons. The hall that we used to use was square and it had offices in different places, and people have told me that that was something like the way that Freemasons organised themselves – I wouldn't know. But I learned all the ritual by heart and, as I say, we won the Arthur Wells prize.

Harry, returning to the School of Mines and Industries and that University site, can you describe – especially the University part because you were involved there as a youth – can you describe for me what the University was like in the 1930s, in a physical form?

(laughs) Yes. Well, when it was established in 1874, of course, the Act of Parliament gave I think four acres and I think it was extended to five. I think by the time I went there it had been extended but not to the present extent of thirty or thirty-five acres or whatever it is, because the Exhibition was out the back and indeed the train to come to the Exhibition Building ran through what is now the Cloisters of the Adelaide University Union. You see, those cloisters were not built until, well, about the time that I went to the School of Mines; but when I was at school, as I say, the Exhibition Buildings were there. So it was pretty crummy.

Out the back of the – Worth's Circus, do you remember that?

Yes.

They used to come and work there. Now, they were in this – I'm not too sure, it's probably where the Engineering Building is on the lower level. I know that we used to be able to crawl under the – (laughs) crawl under the tent and get in there for – oh, dear-oh-dear, the things that we used to do. We crawled under there once and were faced with one of those huge Irish wolfhounds. They're as big as ponies. (laughter) So whether they knew that we were doing this and put the dog there or not I wouldn't know.

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I take it when you say ‘describe it’ you mean the sociology of the place as much as the geography. The University was a place for the rich. Even about that time the population was only some two thousand or so, as I understand it. We did our Mathematics in what is now the Mitchell Building and in 1939, when I did Mathematics, I used to be able to get off from Fort Largs to come to the tutorials. And there was a tutor there called Klose[?], and I think he was a high-school teacher: I can still hear him saying to me, ‘Medlin, in mathematics we have to work quickly and accurately’. Well, I reckon I became a better mathematician than he ever did. But I never mixed, really, with the University students because I was essentially from the School of Mines; and I think I might have said to you earlier that the Union fee at School of Mines was half a guinea, ten-and-six, and the Union fee at the University was three guineas. Well, as an apprentice, in the first year I got ten-and-six a week; second year fifteen shillings; the third year I think a guinea; and the fourth year, final year, fifty shillings, two pounds ten. So three guineas, a lot of money and you needed to be rich like William Faulding Scammell and people like that. (laughs) So for ten-and-six we could play table tennis at the School of Mines out the back of what is now, I think, the Chemistry Building.

At the back of the Exhibition Building, Harry, were there sort of tiers running down to the level where the Jubilee Oval was?

There must have been. I can’t say that I recall that. I do recall that when we were at Adelaide Tech we’d go down Frome Road, we had a sports field almost down to the zoo and the river on the right-hand side, that’s on the eastern side, of Frome Road.

Yes.

So we were aware of the Exhibition Building and the Exhibition Oval there but were never really a part of it. That must have disappeared in the ’36s because the Lady Symon and George – Lady Symon Hall went up probably in the late ’20s.

Yes, that’s right; I think it was ’28 or ’9, I’ve got those dates elsewhere.

Yes. And the George Murray would have been after the Depression –

Correct, it was.

– about ’36, ’37. As I say, the open space between the Lady Symon and the George Murray used to be lawn, it’s now paved over, and you could see the field marks

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where the train track used to be. I can't describe the embankment. I don't know the date of the steps that go down from the upper to the lower level. Mrs Waite, I think donated them.

Yes.

Well, that probably was – that could well have been post-Depression. There might have been a mound.

The footbridge was 1919, from memory, and I think the stairs were late '30s, yes, pretty much.

Yes. There's a photo – I'll just chip in on you, Rob – there's a photograph of those stairs on the front cover, the dust cover, of Margaret Finniss's *The lower level*; and Jim Hyde, who was there then.

Oh, Jim, yes – all hair.

(laughter) Your typical Hyde. He probably came down those steps about two or three at a time. He was posed – – –. Yes, Jim Hyde. I knew Jim quite well. When we attended the first Adelaide Week in Penang there was Eric Barnes, Harry Wesley-Smith, Jim Hyde and Harry Medlin were University delegates. So Hyde I knew. Is he still around?

Haven't seen him for years, Harry.

No.

I remember him very well, but that's thirty years ago – no, thirty-five years ago.

He was a rebel, wasn't he? (laughter)

He was – as many were. Harry, though, there was a strong connection between the Brookman Building and the University, as I've learned, that the two places, while they were for different purposes, there was a connection between them. Were you aware of that?

Yes and no. There was a connection and there was also, I think, an envy and a jealousy. For people like Brookman, who'd been involved in both institutions – so had, of course, Langdon Parsons –

Bonython?

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– yes, Langdon Bonython. Langdon *Parsons* Bonython, isn't it? Or whatever, yes, Bonython. In fact, the story as I remember it is that – because that's on parklands. The story as I remember it is that Bonython put that there, started it – the School of Mines – without any permission from the Government or the City Council or anybody and the purpose, as I understood it, was to block Pulteney Street running straight through (laughs) to the Torrens. So to get through to the Torrens you had to turn right from Pulteney Street and go down the extension of Frome Street to Frome Road, past the zoo. Anyway, whether that's true or false I don't know, but it seems to make a bit of sense.

I have an idea I read – perhaps it's in *The lower level*, perhaps Margaret Finniss unearthed that story – that the Premier at the time that the building was opened congratulated Bonython or somebody on his initiative and lack of integrity.

So, Harry, your war years have been recorded elsewhere but I'm wondering, prior to going to war, you'd started Mathematics I and you were well on the way with your qualifications for engineering. What did the War do within you to change the direction you were going in pre-war, please?

It did a number of things. I enjoyed my experience in the militia, even before the War. I enjoyed the comradeship, the camaraderie, between people of different classes. I enjoyed learning. I think I always suspected that leaders are born, they're not made. I certainly learned that out of my even *pre-war* experiences. I had it confirmed, among other things, from my experiences during the War, especially as a prisoner of war, where rank (laughs) matters to some people – mattered to Black Jack Callaghan, I think – but it didn't matter to me. As I say, the quality is in the person and I have quoted in addresses I've given some of the words I learned at Adelaide Tech from Henley's 'Invictus' poem:

I thank whatever gods –

And it's a little 'g', it's not a capital –

I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul
I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.

It's the inner strength that comes out of leadership, the awareness that certain people have obligations to care for others. Is that the sort of thing you're asking me about?

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That's exactly what I'm asking, Harry. What did the War do within you to change your direction pre-war? I mean, anybody I've ever spoken to who has been a POW had their view of humanity changed overnight, for good or bad – mostly for the latter.

Yes. Well, that's true. I got shot of my Methodism, for a start. I remember the day in Van Tung[?] when I walked outside our densely-packed accommodation, looked up and said, 'I do not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God and you can do what you bloody well like about it'. Now, if he'd been Zeus he'd have hit me with a thunderbolt, but nothing did happen. My awareness came out of not just that Henley 'Invictus' stuff but the realisation that ultimately you're on your own and if you – I'm probably getting a bit arrogant here, but if you are aware that you have the qualities that allow you to provide a service you must do so. Ever since the War I've tried to contribute in other activities, especially where I perceive that there are non-leaders providing fraudulent examples. We see a lot of that right now with the programming that's going on for the coming election. And bullshit does not baffle brains, but – – –.

Does a good job of it.

(laughs)

So, Harry, come 1946 and – yes, you would have been repatriated in '46, I reckon, would that be right?

Yes.

Were you greatly physically weakened by your three and a half years?

Ooh, yes, yes. It staggers me that any of us lived. As you know, eight thousand of the twenty-four thousand had died. I myself was about six and a half stone, forty kilos I think, at the end of the War: about half my weight. None of us would have lived if the War had gone another year. In spite of my misgivings about the use of the atomic bomb, nevertheless it has to be said that I and those of us who did survive as prisoners only did so because of the atomic bomb, and not just the first atomic bomb; I was very fortunate in prison camp to come across a Dutchman, Engineer Lieutenant Felix van Wijk – and I can pronounce the Dutch phoneme, W-I-J-K, Wijk – he was brilliant. He became Professor of Metallography at the University of Delft in Holland after the War, died at the early age of about fifty from a heart attack, it

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was a familial problem. I have a book over there that you might like to see: I stole ten foolscap leaves and out of that, out of each leaf, I made four pages, so that booklet which I still have is forty pages of closely-written pencil. We would work in the dust and I would commit this to paper afterwards – had to be very careful because you weren't allowed to do anything like this and punishment could be death if diaries and things like that were found. Behind you there, there are two books: one and, *Table of functions*; the other's Sir James Jeans' *Electricity and magnetism*. They're heavy books. I was able to show these to the Japanese and they franked them, so I took them everywhere we went and they used to shift us about every three to four months for reasons that I'm not too clear about, I'd carry these wherever I went and I hid in those books those notes and I got them home. I got credit at the University when I showed that stuff to Professor Kerr Grant.

You say was I affected. I was far too weak to take advantage of the credit that would have been given to me for having done that work. For example, they allowed me to go straight through to third-year Maths and I just couldn't do it. It took me about two years, I think, to recover; but after about two years I was all right and could get pretty active again.

I never had any post-traumatic stress disorder. That's an invention out of the Korean War and it's been promoted further out of Vietnam. Did you ever know Les Poidevin?

Very well.

Okay. You've read *Samurais and circumcisions*?

I have.

Well, he says there that there were no psychiatric problems arising from the War with us. From the time of the first beheading – and beheadings are a bit unfunny, I can tell you – from the time of the first beheading you know – well, in Henley's terms – that you are the master of your fate, you're the captain of your soul. You know that, you know that you have to survive. Now, if you don't have those qualities you'll die. And it's strange: we would never look at someone and say, 'They're going to die', but when they did you knew that that had to happen, and this compulsive hand-washing and other signs are indicative of an existing mental perhaps disorder, even, that won't allow you to get through. It's impossible to

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describe the conditions. I have that Veterans' Affairs booklet there about lifelong captives, but if you sit down and lament it – as I say, you've got to get onto something. I got onto that and I applied myself independent of – – –. In fact, most of us – I'm one of them, anyway – when we got home we were quickly given a twenty per cent pension without asking for it, without asking for anything, and it was raised subsequently to forty per cent. Well, I was about sixty-seven, I think, when these things started to revisit me.

This is your leg?

Yes. It's a post-beriberi neuropathy. Same with my hands a bit. Anyway, there was then a little bit of trouble with Veterans' Affairs because we left them alone and I think they just wished we'd go away, but that wasn't to be.

I spent a lot of my life back in South-East Asia because I estimate that it took Asians about six months to realise that the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere of the Japanese was just a neo-colonialism – Asian and not European, but worse than the Dutch, I mean they treated the Indonesian much worse than the Dutch – and at the end of the War when they had – I was one of those they had working on the docks at Tanjong Priok in Batavia being bombed by the Royal Australian Air Force. I'd been bombed a lot by the Royal Australian Air Force; I tell you, they're pretty rotten shots! (laughter) Which is just as well. But at that stage there were people just dying in the streets as we'd walk through to the docks, dying with malnutrition, and I felt an obligation to Indonesians who, whatever ethnicity, would give us succour – S-U-double-C-O-U-R, not the other 'sucker' – give us succour and I set up physics departments there. So I've had things to do. I've been lucky, Rob, I think: I've had things to do.

And I just return to that post-traumatic stress disorder. On the ship coming home from Singapore, it was a hospital ship and there were those Sumatran nurses including Vivian Bullwinkel –

Yes.

– sole survivor of the Banka Island Massacre. All of a sudden, we hear over the Tannoy or whatever they call that loudspeaker thing that 'You prisoners of war should not feel ashamed or guilty for having capitulated'. And you think, 'Hell! I'm the one who's being betrayed. Why are you – – –?' So I just return to Poidevin:

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Poidevin in writing has agreed with what I have said, that if you have that inner strength you can survive those things. You *have* to survive them or, as I say, if you don't survive them you'll die.

So, Harry, 1946, under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, you may have been offered a whole range of things. How did you decide on what you wanted to do then in further education?

Well, I knew what I wanted to do because of the stimulation I'd had from Felix.

Of course.

So I wanted to switch from electrical engineering to mathematics and physics. And I was reasonably good at it, too, I thought, (laughs) so why not have a go? So that's how I changed to mathematics and physics and I either came top or second of every subject I did – and there's a little bit of arrogance, I suppose, about satisfaction. I know when I did my honours, did honours in 1950–51, I felt so confident of getting first-class honours – and I'd be married then – my wife and I just went to Kangaroo Island and just forgot all about it until the results came out. In those days, of course, the results used to be published in *The Advertiser*.

The 'Tiser, yes.

We had doubled – as I said earlier, the University was the home of the perhaps idle rich before the War and when the ex-service students came in in 1946 we doubled the student population to about four thousand, seven hundred. So everybody knew everybody. Diana Wauchope, who became my wife, was the lead comic in the 1948 revue, I was the stage manager, and we got married. She married *me*, actually.

I'll digress again a bit. I'm one of those who – I read Darwin and Huxley and those people during the War – I'm one of those who supported Darwin's thesis that, in the gender race, it's the female that does the selecting. Alfred Russel Wallace had been to South America and he wrote the Santubong paper, in Santubong in Sarawak in 1854, five years before Darwin's *Origin of species* in 1859, and it was Russel who first proposed the evolution of the species, and he coined the phrase 'the survival of the fittest'. But, as a result of his work in South America and in New Guinea, where he watched bowerbirds and birds of paradise displaying themselves, he thought that it was the males that did the selecting; Darwin argued the other, that it's the dowdy female who actually calls the shots. In my own personal – I don't expect you to

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write this up – but in my own personal case I was the Vice-President of the SRC³ – after a couple of years I got fit and so I started to get active – became the Vice-President of the Student Representative Council; Diana Wauchope was the President of the Women’s Union. She was the first non-college girl ever to be president of an Adelaide Women’s Union. We met at the first meeting of the SRC in October of 1948. They used to live at Albert Park; she had a sister, Babs, who worked in the State Library; and in those days, if you took a girl home, you had to take her all the way home, not stick her on a bus. Anyway, they lived at Albert Park so they went down there in the train; he lived at Unley Park, so the lights go out, all the traffic stops and the lights go out at quarter to one, you’d have to walk home. Anyway, he’s in their house with Babs and in comes Didi and she announced, ‘I’ve just met the most gorgeous man, Harry Medlin, and I’m going to marry him’. Now, this is October 1948. January ’49 we get engaged, (laughs) June ’49 we get married. And I’ve told this to Didi’s friends – women – and they all confess that they did the selecting, so I don’t know where you stand but you might think about it. (laughter)

I was selected, Harry. Harry, can you tell me a bit about the University place – and I don’t just mean the geography – in 1946? You were talking about Professor Kerr Grant earlier. Well, he to me seems to have been a larger-than-life character. Barbara Kidman’s told me that not all his experiments worked very well, but she said he was definitely a character. Is that correct?

Oh, yes. He was hopeless. (laughter) He was a fascinating fellow. When Bragg went back to England in 1909 Kerr Grant became acting head and I think it was 1911 before he was made head. He’d done some work in Melbourne – some very, very demanding work on balances. Now, in the Bragg Centenary I set up a museum there and we had Kerr Grant’s actual torsion balance in there; I don’t know where it is now, they shifted it. But that’s probably the only real research work that he ever did. He wrote, however, some fascinating articles. University professors had an article each Saturday in *The Advertiser* and I’ve got copies here of some of them. One of them is Kerr Grant’s ‘Things not attempted yet’. Have you ever seen it?

Yes, I have. Yes, I have.

³ SRC – Student Representative Council.

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That's fascinating. So he was a thoughtful person, without being an experimental physicist. He had a reader there, Roy Burdon, Dr Roy Burdon, who *was* an experimental physicist and did very high-quality research work on surface tension, particularly of mercury. Gordon Aitchison was a younger experimentalist, radio atmospheric stuff; George Fuller, who was I think opening bat for South Australia and played State baseball. But Kerr Grant with his cleft palate –

Cleft palate, yes.

– was something else. When I did my honours there we used to have Scientific German with Kerr Grant and we'd read in German scientific stuff. I did a bit of German in prison camp but I didn't like the language, but I can read scientific German because the words – essentially, anyway – in physics are not all that different. But he was loved by his students. He always gave the Physics I lectures and the last Physics I lecture was always attended by everybody, and he used to drop weights and he had a pot you could catch them in, they'd shift it and he'd know they'd shift it so he'd shift it to the wrong place (laughter) and the damn thing would crash into the floor.

Didi did honours Organic Chemistry with McBeth. McBeth had a son and twin daughters – the twin daughters might still be around, I'm not too sure. Anyway, one day the phone rang at home and Didi tells me that (laughs) Kerr Grant said, (mimics cleft palate) 'This is Kerr Grant, I bet you wouldn't know who it was otherwise'. And he said, 'I have to propose the toast at the marriage of one of the McBeths and', he said, 'I'd like some background', so she provided him with his background.

I was Patron of the Science Association and we always used to get him to come to the meetings and he'd recite 'If'.

Yes.

Have you got the last verse of 'If'?

I have at home, yes. This is Rudyard Kipling's poem.

Yes: 'You'll be a man, my son.' Yes.

So, despite his 'inadeptness' – if that's the word – at experimentation, Harry, he was a much-loved character, was he?

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Oh, yes. He was adored. So many stories. A bloke like you ought to collect the Kerr Grant stories, or have you done it?

No, I haven't even started that yet, Harry.

Oh.

I have a few from Barbara and other people.

Well, it's the famous one where – you know he had a Stanley steam car?

No, I didn't know that. I know what a Stanley steam car is.

I think he had the only Stanley steam car in South Australia. And he rang the police one day and said, 'Look, it's been stolen,' he said, 'my car's been stolen'. 'Oh.' They said, 'Well, what's its number, Kerr Grant, Professor?' He said, 'Oh, oh,' he said, 'I'll go outside and have a look'. (laughter) That's one of them.

I noticed in a very famous book of cartoons that Kerwin McGraith[?], the *Advertiser* cartoonist, did in the '30s, Kerr Grant features on nearly every page as a fireman and as a policeman and a something else.

I've got that book down below.

Oh, okay.

Yes.

So he was obviously one of those people much-revered, but – could he actually teach, Harry?

No. He took us – (laughs) oh, god – he took us for third-year Electromagnetism. Have you done any electromagnetism?

No, I have not.

Okay. I gave my honours seminar on the electromagnetic field tensor. Gee, it's beautiful: it's a four-by-four tensor and it describes the whole of electromagnetism and gives all the Maxwell laws of radiation. Now, there are two parts to an electromagnetic field: the electric field and the magnetic field. Now, the electric field is controlled by a free vector, right? It's just a free vector. And I won't go into the mathematics of it but the magnetic field is *not* a free vector; it's a revolving vector. So the electromagnetic field that goes along a wire is rotating, so these people who worry about what might be the effect on schoolchildren of these

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high-tension lines, they're pretty sensible to be concerned about this, and if you look at – when I was an apprentice I worked as the technical assistant to the Country Lines Superintendent, Arthur Fielding, who was a captain in the artillery and got killed in Tobruk, and if you look at the high-tension lines you'll find that they rotate and reverse, and they call it 'halting, reversing, barrelling' and they do that to break up the magnetic field. Well, anyway, Kerr Grant was lecturing it and he was absolutely hopeless.

Now, there's a relationship in electromagnetism, it's gamma-squared mu-nought epsilon C-squared is equal to one [$\gamma^2 \mu_0 \epsilon C^2 = 1$][?]. Now, that's a dimensionless number. Mu-nought [μ_0] is the permeability constant of the magnetic field; epsilon-nought [ϵ_0] is the permittivity constant of the electric field. You cannot take an arbitrary system of units in this universe in which we live and do with it as you like. So, gamma [γ] is given different values. In electrostatic units, gamma [γ] is one over epsilon nought [$1 / \epsilon_0$] so mu-nought C-squared is equal to one [$\mu_0 C^2 = 1$]. In the MKS system of units, gamma [γ] is arbitrarily taken to be one [1], right? So mu-nought epsilon-nought C-squared [$\mu_0 \epsilon_0 C^2$] is ---. And there's nothing you can do about it. The permittivity constant is going to be the square of the velocity of light divided by the permeability of ---. (laughs) It's weird; we're stuck with it. Well, do you think Kerr Grant understood that? He had no idea. And he gives, for example, B equals mu-H [$B = \mu H$]. H is the field strength and B is the induction. B is mu-H. Now, sometimes it'll be B equals mu-H [$B = \mu H$] and sometimes it will be B equals mu-H divided by four-pi [$B = \mu H / 4\pi$]. Now, how can you ---? Oh, god.

Did Barbara tell you about ---. Oh, my parrots – aren't they beautiful?

Mm.

Did Barbara tell you about his first-year Physics exam in 1945?

Yes, I think she did, but I'm just trying to recall what it was. She told me a number of things. Now, what was that one?

I could tell you, I could tell. I wasn't here but she has told me and so has a friend of mine, Ren Keats[?]. He became Professor of Mathematics in Newcastle, Ren Keats. He said in a grading[?] equation – this is a grading rule and you've got of a certain wavelength: 'What is the angle of the third order of diffraction?' Now, it comes out to be two-D sine theta but he gave the wavelength and the grading

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spacing and all that stuff. Turned out that the angle, arc sine theta was one point three. Now, sine can never be greater than one, you know, sine goes from nought to one. The better students worried. They thought, 'I must have this ---.' Anyway, those who didn't know what they were talking about just said, 'Arc sine one point three.' Now, there's no angle the sine of which is one point three. So anyway, that's one of the Kerr Grant ---.

Harry, at the University at that time, were there other people like Kerr Grant who had the same type of mystique in the eyes of the students?

I don't think. No, I think he was unique. There were people like Mawson, of course, surrounding whom there was certainly a mystique. But I think that, apart from Reg Sprigg, I doubt if anybody loved Mawson, (laughter) even Paquita.

I don't think we'll go down *that* road, Harry! Yes, Reg Sprigg was very fond of him, there was no doubt about that.

Yes.

But was Mawson quite austere?

Well, to me he was. Have you interviewed Ronald Twydale[?]?

No, I have not.

Oh. In writing about Mawson I think you'd probably have to, because Twydale and a couple of others – I've got his paper down below somewhere – in the Royal Society of South Australia wrote about Madigan.

Yes.

Now, I knew Madigan because when we lived at Blackwood, you know, the Madigans lived at Blackwood. Even though I knew Madigan I was unaware of the existence, even, of Russell Tully Madigan[?]. I became aware of him when I was a corporal in the Royal Australian Engineers and he joined up as a sapper and he was in my platoon – and he subsequently became 'Sir Russell Madigan', of course – and was a bit irritated that Adelaide University wouldn't give him a doctor of science. I think Reg Sprigg failed to get a doctor of science in Adelaide, too.

Oh, dear.

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He got an honorary doctor of science at ANU.⁴ But I had Reg Sprigg as a sapper. I think he was the second-worst or perhaps even the worst sapper soldier I ever had. He was one of those blokes who could walk along swinging the wrong hand. They're funny.

So were you ever taught by C.T. Madigan yourself?

No.

Was he still in the Department when you were a student or had he left by then?

I think he was still there at the end of the War, I think both he and Mawson, yes. There was a relationship between Mawson and Madigan like the relationship between Kerr Grant and Burdon. But anyway, if you're writing any more about Mawson, I think you ought to see Ronald Twydale.

That's a very good idea, Harry. I understood that the relation between Madigan and Mawson may have been very stretched indeed and that they did not get on well at all. I'm not sure if that's correct.

Well, it's certainly what Twydale says in this ---. I think there were a couple of other authors, Twydale and a few others, perhaps – I'm not too sure where they'd be. Anyway, they decided to coexist at arm's length, I think. Their personalities were so different.

There's a story about Madigan you might not have heard. We adored him as kids at Blackwood, and he'd come along and he'd talk to the kids in the Methodist Church about his expeditions into the Simpson Desert or whatever. Anyway, he was away on one of these expeditions and when he came back – now, what were they called? They owned Wittunga.

Ashbys.

Yes, Ashby. Eric Ashby?

Eric, yes.

Sir?

No, I don't think so.

⁴ ANU – Australian National University.

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Eric Ashby. He had a sort of Mellors – you know Mellors, the gardener in *Lady Chatterley's lover*?

Yes.

He had this fellow. Now Ashbys were supposed to be Quakers, as I understand it. Now, as kids, we used to hunt in their orchard – Brighton Parade, you know, you'd come across the railway line, get in the back of the orchard. You had to be very careful because this Mellors – we didn't call him 'Mellors' at the time; as kids we didn't know about Lady Chatterley, but anyway – they had saltpetre guns. Now, you'd get shot with saltpetre – god! – if he could catch you. But we used to hunt in packs of three: there was my brother and me and one other fellow, and one'd keep nit and the other two'd raid the orchard. Anyway, so this fellow is probably the bloke who shot Madigan's dog. Madigan was on an expedition, came back and his dog had been shot. So the house in Cliff Street or whatever that street it was just about opposite Wittunga and he went over and knocked on Ashby's door and said, 'Did you shoot my dog?' And Ashby said, 'Yes', and Madigan king-hit him. (laughter) Well, I mean stories like that among kids, you never forget.

So before you even went to university, Harry, you had stories about these people that you'd picked up in your youth.

Sure.

And I guess Adelaide was small enough then, in population terms, that you knew the stories about Mawson or Madigan that you'd picked up – and I'm not saying they were necessarily heroes, but they had some status in your life?

Oh, absolutely. Yes. Yes.

So how did you fare at university yourself, though, Harry, in terms of the course you took up?

Well, I had to be careful. As I say, I'd been given some credit. I did finish my pass course in three years but in 1946 and '47 I had reduced load, probably about two-thirds. I've got all the results downstairs, I could find out the actual things. But I had to take it easy for the first two years. But by the third year I was doing a full load and I wanted to acquit myself as I thought I was acquittable so I didn't over-stretch. In fact that's not quite true because in my third year I wanted to overload. Yes, I did. There were two third-year physics subjects: Physics IIIA and

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Physics IIIB. Now, I did IIIA in 1947 but I still had Chemistry and Statistical Methods and third-year Mathematics to catch up, so I had a full year's load. But there was this Physics IIIB, which was an experimental thing – I think there were twenty-three experiments – and I wanted to do it. In those days, if you overloaded you had to get permission. You have to now; it's a lot more difficult. Anyway, I went to see Harry Wesley-Smith, who was our guidance officer, and said I'd like to overload and he said, 'Go down and see Joe'. Now, Joe was Professor Joe Wood, who was Dean of the Faculty of Science at the time, Professor of Botany. So I went down to the Botany Department and there's Joe in the lab with his sleeves rolled up and said, 'I'm Harry Medlin and I've been sent by Harry Wesley-Smith to get your permission to overload by doing an extra half-year's work'. So I did a year and a half's work in 1948 by overloading. I didn't need it to get the degree. Anyway. And he said, 'How have you been going?' and I said, 'Oh, I've been going all right. I wasn't too fit for a couple of years but I'm all right now and been getting either first or second in all my subjects', and he said, 'If you don't hear anything, it's all right'. Now, when I think of what you'd have to go through now – all the humbug and bruhaha. Anyway, I heard nothing so I did it and came second in that.

There were twenty-three experiments and we did them all in the first two terms. Do you know how?

No.

(laughs) We used to break into the Physics Building at night and, if you look at the Physics Building, the windows have got those flaps on them –

Yes, yes.

– and we used to make sure the flaps were not locked, right? And so we (laughs) – oh, god – we'd get in there and work until midnight or something, ride home on a bike and got it all finished by the end of the second term. Michael Iliffe – you ever heard of him?

No.

He was in charge of this course. He had a daughter – in fact, I presided, gave her her degree and had to come down from the stage because she was in a wheelchair. She was a severe spastic or something and he worried terribly about this, and his wife

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was a nurse. And there were terrible stories about him after he retired: he started beating up his wife. I think he felt a bit guilty with us ex-service students because he was old enough to have been involved and just didn't get involved. Yes, Mick Iliffe. He wondered how we'd been able to finish (laughs) these experiments. Because there were no caretakers in those days and we'd get in there, put the lights on and – dear, oh dear.

Fantastic.

END OF DISK 1: DISK 2

This is the second session of an interview with Harry Medlin on 31st August 2007, interviewer Rob Linn. Harry, so you get through your course and I guess you've got a very fixed mind on what you want to achieve by then that came out of your war experiences and all that. What led you to go to Cambridge to carry on your work?

In Timor – I need to go back a little.

Yes.

In Timor there was an air force flight lieutenant called Brian Rofe. He's the father of Paul Rofe – you know, the former DPP.⁵

Yes.

After we got to Timor we found that our communications – there was an airfield at Penfui[?], there was fixed defence at Klapalima[?]. These were about seven miles apart, I suppose. But the forward base was up at Jablon[?]. There was a big ring road round Timor and Jablon was on the up-country side of the junction of the ring road. There was one road then only up from Dutch Timor into Portuguese Timor and to Dili. Penfui was bombed on Australia Day 1942, 26th January. Brian Rofe and I were in the command post because after we'd been there a little while all our communications were either cut, probably by Japanese agents who were in Timor, or the radios grew fungus and stuff. The rate at which stuff grows in the tropics is incredible.

Is fantastic.

⁵ DPP – Director of Public Prosecutions.

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And none of our gear had been properly tropicalised to prevent this happening so the radios wouldn't work, so we set up on the air force at Penfui a combined defence centre; and I had been acting adjutant to the Chief Royal Engineer in Darwin immediately up until we left and I'd got some sort of reputation for, I don't know, being able to do things, I suppose, so I was the army officer who was put in this combined defence headquarters. In there also was the wing commander in charge of 2 Squadron and Kym Bonython was a pilot there in 2 Squadron.

Yes.

He's just given the Brack painting to ---.

Yes.

I've got a Brack painting. There it is, the little girl there, *The season of Sarsaparilla*. That's John Brack – it's a copy of it. Anyway, Rofey, Wing Commander H....., and so I got to know Brian Rofe fairly well – in fact, when we were shot up he had won the – getting a bit long-winded, but he had won the hundred yards athletics race in Adelaide University in 1939; but after we looked out from this combined thing and saw it was safe to take off, we took off for the slit trenches and I raced him easily. In fact, I met his widow the other day and reminded her of this. So I knew Rofey fairly well, and after they evacuated he was in charge of the party that was left there and evacuated and got up the North Coast and got taken off. All right, we come back.

So I finish my pass degree; I started honours. I was approached by Rofey, who was a recruiting officer at the Long Range Weapons Establishment, LRWE. He's taken a mate of mine the year before. They were setting up the second batch of recruits for LRWE. They sent the first lot in about 1947 or '8, it was a small group of about six, I think, one of whom was a friend of mine, that Ren Keats who'd been in the 2/48 Battalion – I mentioned him before. His nickname was 'Spira'. (laughter) Anyway, Rofey approached me and I agreed to be one of their cadets. So Didi and I got married, we went off to England, we were told that because it had been – now, I've got to be a bit careful here because this stuff's got a red 'Secret' stamp on it that's all down below. We'd been told that Australians in England were not being trusted by American security. Something had happened with somebody in

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the CSIRO,⁶ I don't know what it was. Anyway, so I agreed to go on this thing because we were told by Brian Rofe that because Australians were not trusted they would not work in the secret establishments –, I've forgotten what they're called in England – but they'd be sent to universities and able to PhDs. So I was on the understanding that I would be able to get to Cambridge and get a PhD, short-circuit the – because you didn't have to have an honours degree to start research degrees at Cambridge.

So we get there and I get told by the people in Australia House, 'Dear Medlin' – you know, 'Dear Medlin' – 'This is to tell you what you will do in England. You will work at' – oh, I've forgotten what the place was called – 'on the computer at' – – –. What's the place in England, the home of the Rugby?

Do you mean Rugby School, Arnold School?

No. Where the Oxford–Cambridge rugby is – – –.

No, I don't know, Harry, I'm sorry.

Anyway, down in this suburb, anyway, there was this crowd. They were working on the ACE[?] computer. Now, they picked me because the work that I did here was to write what I said to you earlier, write the first comparative study between and digital computing and I did it all in the research centre in the State Library, (laughs) public documents. I take it out and I didn't even keep a copy of the damn thing and the bloke grabbed it and put 'Top Secret' on it, red thing, and I've never seen it from that day to this, so I guess that's why they picked me to work on ACE. So I did do them the courtesy of going down there and, oh, it would have been terrible. It was *shocking*. It was about as big as this room, you know, wires and every – – –. You see, we're talking about 1949 – this is before the transistor, none of this lairy business like you've got here.

So I went up to Cambridge and I saw a fellow called Philip Bowden – and he was an Australian, he'd been a Rhodes Scholar from Tasmania – and he had vacancies in his lab, and I'd taken references from Kerr Grant, from Joe Wood, Doc Burdon, still got them, and they said about this ex-prisoner of war who'd done so well. Anyway,

⁶ CSIRO – Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

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two of us went up there, fellow called Neil Jones and Harry Medlin. Neil Jones finished his tour, actually, at the LWRE and it was his wife who set up that theatre down at Brighton. Anyway, I was selected. I got on very well with Philip Bowden. I had trouble with them, with Australia House. I can't go into the details of the trouble. There was a Royal Commission here some years later, some years ago, on intelligence and security and I gave evidence. The Royal Commissioner was the Chancellor – I knew him quite well – the Chancellor of – which university was it? Not Macquarie. One of them, anyway. He subsequently became Governor of New South Wales. It was all very unpleasant.

We came back to Australia. My sister, who was three years younger than me, had a baby in January – January 5, one day after my birthday of 1949 – had an ovarian cancer. I was given MA⁷ status in Cambridge at Gonville and Caius College. I saw the Master, Chadwick –

Oh, yes?

– you know, discoverer of the neutron –

Yes.

– and Philip Bowden, intermitted my course because my sister had to be looked after. Anyway, when we got back here it was just hopeless. Didi and I stayed with them. They had a house down at Brighton. My mother was there; there were now two kids, one who was two and a baby that had just been born. My sister then died in June and, as I say, I intermitted my Cambridge course, enrolled in a PhD here and finished my PhD here in Adelaide.

I've been back to Caius since. I am a life member of the Caius College Club. They're trying to get money out of me. (laughter) What's new?

So, anyway, I saw quite a bit of Brian Roth but he then left LWRE and took a job, I think, over in Kangaroo Island doing something. He died very early with some sort of cancer. Pat, his widow, is Paul's mother – do you know Pat Rofe?

No.

⁷ MA – master of arts.

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She's a war widow. They're Catholics. There was a daughter, Deirdre. She became a mother superior and she and Didi got on well together. I think she was a mother superior somewhere in Victoria. Anyway, *she* died early. The family is predisposed to early deaths and yet Paul Rofe's smoking like a chimney still. God.

Harry, I'm afraid I've been remiss in not asking you about your time in the Adelaide Union and SRC, I should have done that earlier. But I wonder, even though it's a step out of chronology, would you mind stepping back and talking about that?

That's all right.

How did you become involved?

(laughs) I'm sillier than you might think. The first couple of years I had to recover; in fact, I had terrible problems with my heart because I had dry beriberi in prison camp and had tachycardia and a thing called myocarditis, whatever the hell it is. But it used to beat irregularly and I was outside the Physics Department one day, there's a water faucet there: and it stopped, and I reckon it stopped for about ten seconds and all of a sudden it went – wham! – and just about blew my head off, the blood came. And I've been interviewed by the Australians At War Film Archive – and, I think I told you, they did thirteen hours, god! – and I said to the girl, 'I hope it doesn't happen again' and she said, 'Well, I hope it doesn't happen tonight'. So it never has happened again but it'll happen one day, of course; it comes to all of us. So I had to be careful.

But I was doing quite well and I remember when we had the first meeting of Physics III in it would have been February/March of 1947, Doc Burdon called out names – because what you do, you go in there: we never enrolled on time, you'd just go in there and put your name on the roll card – and Burdon would come in and say, 'Keats, Medlin' and get answered. Anyway, Barbara Potts and David Sutton, who often beat me – I always beat her but he often beat me in Physics – they were sitting up the back and this fellow, Keats, and I were down the front, and he called out 'Medlin' and I said, 'Yeah', and I heard Barbara Kidman say, '*That's* Medlin', because they didn't know who the hell I was because they hadn't seen me in 1946 because I'd just go to the lectures and go home, go to sleep. So anyway, that's how she got to know me. Anyway, I cleaned her up in Physics III.

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In 1948, when I was better, I started to be active, and she came to me and said, ‘Would you be the Science Association nominee to the SRC?’ And in that address that I gave to the Women’s Club – I mention it there, so any culpability for any subsequent political misbehaviour is –

Barbara’s fault.

– (laughter) is hers. So anyway, yes, I agreed to get onto the SRC. Then, as I say, I met Diana Wauchope, who was the President of the Women’s Union, as I said earlier, and I started to get quite active. And, I don’t know, they put me up to be Vice-President. John Roder – do you know him?

I know of him, yes.

John Roder was President and there was an election for Vice-President and there were two of us: Bill Bray, John Bray’s brother, and Harry Medlin, and I won it.

There were several responsibilities for the Vice-President. You had to run any elections for officers, you had to adjudicate at the SRC debates – that was a pretty tricky job, I tell you, in those days – and you had to be the censor for *On Dit*. In fact, I got a letter in there from Gil Wahlquist, who saw that article in *The Weekend Australian* magazine, and I must – well, I refused to censor *On Dit*. I mean, Gil Wahlquist was the editor, he could put in what he liked as far as I was concerned. And A.P. Rowe had become Vice-Chancellor.

Yes.

God! He used to come down and talk to us and I can still see him in the George Murray Library – that’s the upstairs room; I think it’s been divided now, the upstairs room in the George Murray Building; we used to have our meetings in there – and Rowe would come, and he was a little fellow. And there were seats along the side and I remember saying, ‘Here we are’, and he’d get up on this bloody seat and he’d harangue us about, you know, bad language and disrespect for the Chapel and – – –. We had all sorts of – there were getting to be Muslims there and we used to have prayer things for them and it was open season on – atheists had a right to be there as well as other people. But he was something else, A.P. Rowe. So I got quite active in the SRC.

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I became the Patron of the Science Association and Rex Jory's brother was President of the thing, I think, one of the years: Rod Jory, who went off and worked with Bob Crompton in the ANU.

Yes.

Yes, I used to give the Patron's Address at these things, they made me a life member. I used to tell a lot of lies. And then I was doing a lot of research work and used to work at night so I'd have tea in the refectory, and Frank Borland, I got to know Frank Borland. He was the first Warden of the Union. I got to know him quite well, and he used to have tea there, too; and of course we're talking now about the Colombo Plan –

Yes.

– and because I'd been in Asia I got to know a lot of those Colombo Plan people. There was one in particular, Iskanto[?] – Iskanto subsequently became a major-general in the Indonesian Air Force. He'd got a kampong, he bought up a whole lot of houses in Jakarta, he's got this beautiful kampong; the trouble, if you go there, you have to eat jurayam[?] which – oh, Jesus. Anyway, when he came to enrol he goes to the office and they say, 'What's your name?' He said, 'Iskanto'. They said, 'What's your other name?' He said, 'I haven't got another name'. 'What's your Christian name?' And he said, 'I'm a Muslim'. They said, 'Oh, you have to have another name'. He said, 'Call me Radan[?]'. Do you speak any Indonesian?

No, none.

Radan is 'Prince'. And we supported the revolution, independence, Anyway, when they got their independence and through the United Nations, which Australia supported, all those titles were abolished except the Sultan of Jogjakarta. Now, there's still a Sultan of Jogjakarta, it's the only one in Indonesia, and he was allowed to keep it because he supported the revolution, he supported – and I've been there, I've met him, I've met the father of the present one. So, as I say, Radan, there was no such thing as 'Radan'. So the other Indonesians say, 'Ay, this clown's calling himself Radan'. Now, if you look in the list of graduates you'll see 'Iskanto Radan'. (laughs) 'B.E.', whatever it was. So, anyway, we started the Colombo Plan.

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I know the present heads of our Alumni Association in Kuala Lumpur, in Kuching, in Kota Kinabalu, in Singapore. I knew them all. The Chief Minister of Sarawak – (shows picture) I'm giving him his doctorate degree there and Didi taught his wife. So there were a lot of connections.

Anyway, they wanted somebody to chair – the Union Hall was set up in 1958, was opened finally in 1958 by A.P. Rowe and, to be fair to Rowe, Rowe was very supportive of student activities. In his book, *If the gown fits*, he talks about all sorts of student and union activities, and indeed he encouraged the public appeal for the Union Hall. The Union Hall was built, a third – I used to know the figures – a third from the public appeal, third from the Union and a third from the Adelaide University provided by A.P. Rowe. The first Chair of the Hall Committee was Henry Baston –

Oh, right.

– but he only did it for a short time. I made a list in 1968 of the first ten years, I don't know if you've ever seen it.

No, I haven't, Harry.

I can give you a copy if you remind me. Yes, he was the first Chairman. Then there was a fellow called Smythe, and I think Smythe had been a Rhodes Scholar, and he came back and took over from Henry Baston; then he got that skin cancer – what was it called?

Melanoma?

Yes. Oh, god, and it knocked him out in about six months. So then they conned me into doing it, and I got conned because I'd been stage manager of *The seat of your pants* and other things, stage-managed the revue that we did at the National Union Council, National Union Council in the end of 1948 in New England, and previous to that was a congress in Tallebudgera. You know Tallebudgera, almost on the border of New South Wales and Queensland?

Yes, Queensland, yes.

Nobody seems to know where the bloody border *is*. New South Wales says it's the other side of whatever the river is and Queensland says it's this side and somebody says it's in the middle. Anyway, I'd never seen anything like it. Seen some rough

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stuff in the army but as for kids getting drunk and stupid and ---. Anyway, I was older than them and was getting pretty fit so I stage-managed the revue. I got this revue together, so they thought I'd be a good bloke to make Chair of the Union Hall Committee, so I became chair of that and stayed there for about sixteen years, I think, ran the Union Hall. Ran it at a profit. Even the Theatre Guild doesn't put on anything there. You know, it seats four hundred and ninety-nine?

Yes.

And all they do is play in the Little Theatre. And I got support from the Elizabethan Theatre Trust to get people like John Tasker to do those world premieres.

Yes.

God! Because there was no professional theatre here and White wanted Tasker and they were both homosexuals but with different partners and they had a big falling out, of course. Then I was one of those responsible for setting up the South Australian Theatre Company with the then General Manager of the Commonwealth Bank, who signed all the pound notes, whatever his name was: little fellow.

What, Nugget?

Yes, Coombes. He wanted me to go on the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust and I said, 'Not with you, mate!' Yes, Nugget Coombes. Glen McBride was the local manager. Glen McBride – do you remember the York Theatre?

Yes – well, I know where it was, I know where it was.

Yes, they knocked it down. Well, we used to go there every Friday night, and Glen McBride used to sell his own tickets. The Waterman brothers would have killed him if they'd known what he was up to. You could go and get a ticket in the box office or, if you saw McBride, you could get it ---. Oh, gawd. Anyway, he and Tasker. Now, the first two productions they did were in Theatre 62, with John Edmund. John got caught soliciting in Elder Park and got put in jail. He was to have produced *Noah's flood* but he was in jail so someone else produced it; and I got him to do *Fisher's gwhost* in the 1962, the second Festival, did *Fisher's ghost*. And Max Lamshed, you probably know the Lamshed family; Max Lamshed was the Secretary of the Festival. I got on quite well with him but didn't get on well with the

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Governors at all, although finally I got on quite well with Jim Irwin. I met his son's widow the other day. So I became Chair of the Hall Committee.

So the Theatre Guild was having trouble. Had Alec Symons[?].

Yes.

He was probably a fairly useful deputy of the Housing Trust but he knew nothing about the theatre. Anyway, they got rid of him and they thought – Beryl Pearce[?] in particular, she was the Vice-Chancellor's secretary – and she thought, well, if they could con me into becoming the President of the Theatre Guild they might get special access to the Union Hall, which is exactly what happened. So I then became Chairman of the Hall Committee and President of the University Theatre Guild and our first production was that: *The Lysistrata of Aristophanes*. The love war?

Yes.

And that drawing of *The Lysistrata* is copied from Norman Lindsay's – what was his son's name?

Hal?

Yes. I got his book down there. Lindsay illustrated *Lysistrata* – it was banned, of course – but it's not signed. There's no acknowledgement who did the [illustration], but you can tell, I mean anyone who knows Norman Lindsay knows that that's him. Anyway, with the woman holding up her hand and stopping the men with their – their spears are great phalluses, you can see the phallic symbolism there. But the big drawing is a copy and, if you look carefully at it, you'll see that I made Stan.... Kokoski[?] write 'After N.L.' on the toe of – – –. (laughs) That's straight Norman Lindsay.

Now, we used that as the ad. We filled the Union Hall with the thing, of course. And when they first published it they took that shading off and I hit the roof and said, 'Why? Why have you done that?' And they said, 'It's pubic hair'. I said, 'Haven't you ever seen pubic hair? It's a shadow'. So I made them put it back on. We got John Bray – John Bray was not then the Chief Justice; he was a friend of my brothers and Charles Jury and I got John to come to the dress rehearsals, the last two dress rehearsals. The first dress rehearsal he said, 'Well, you'd better take that out and take that out and take that out', so we took them out on the last dress rehearsal and on

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the first night. And it's just as well we did, because the Chief Secretary then was a fellow called Lyell McEwin.

Oh, yes.

Do you know his nickname?

No, not him.

'Lyell McRuin'. (laughs) Oh, gawd. Anyway, he had the place full of cops. And I was backstage and I tell you what, the seduction scene in the cave – oh, gawd. Ed Pegg[?], you know Ed Pegg?

No.

You don't?

No.

Oh. He's a well-known Adelaide actor, and he goes overseas directing now for the Royal Shakespeare and he gives the poetry prize at Saint Peter's College. Ed Pegg. The parties we used to have at Eden Hills! After one of them he took Joan Bruce on a very sloping block and they fell down. (laughter) Anyway, Ed Pegg
Young fellows, it's a bit hard for them being seduced by seductresses, very embarrassing. I'll tell you another bloke, Herodius[?], what's the play? Not *Exit the king*. The daughter of Herod, anyway. Had terrible trouble with the bloke there being seduced by her, gets quite embarrassing.

So this happened in Union Hall full of police, did it, Harry?

Yes.

Did you get away with it?

This?

Yes.

Oh, yes. We put it all back after the police went off. No, we revolutionised Adelaide theatre because, previous to that, there'd been the Rep and they were all very well presented, very appropriate, no swearing. I think the first swearing I ever heard in the Union Hall was done by Footlights. Anne Dibden, you know Anne?

I know of her, yes, I've heard of her.

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They had one of these sketches – you know the Union Hall had a big curtain, and they had a telephone booth set up there and about forty people crashed into the telephone booth, and of course they get out the back of it. She went in there first and they get out the back and then the lights come up and she walks out, goes right down the front of the open stage: ‘*Shit!*’ Nobody had ever said that.

So it changed things around.

Yes.

END OF DISK 2: DISK 3

This is interview three with Harry Medlin for the University of Adelaide Oral History on 21st September 2007, interviewer Rob Linn.

Harry, in the last interview we covered a lot of your personal background and your coming eventually to university after the War; and we talked a little, too, about your time in England at university and how that came to be; and we returned very briefly to look at the origins of the theatre work at the Union and how you came to be involved in that. I thought it might be good today if we went over that again. So, Harry, how did you first of all get involved with the theatre?

Very interesting. As I might have said last time, I was pretty crook for a couple of years after I got home, but I started to get better in 1948. That was the third year back and I finished my pass degree, and for some reason or other I was conned into joining the Adelaide University Science Association, the committee. It’s the oldest student body in the University, interestingly; it’s older than the Union, it’s older than the Sports Association. Anyway, Barbara Kidman persuaded me to become a member of the committee and so I started to move into student politics and student activity.

I got involved with the SRC – I think it was the third SRC that I became a member of. I was Deputy Chairman to John Roder, the late John Roder, lawyer. And I started to spend a lot more time as I then became involved in doing my PhD, a lot more time at night at the University and used to have an evening meal in the refectory and the late Reverend Frank Boyland was appointed by A.P. Rowe, the then Vice-Chancellor, as the first Warden of the Adelaide University Union. It was interesting, that. I mean Rowe was a very, very funny man: he did a lot of enormously good work for the University, anyway, and the Union. He promoted the fundraising for the building of the Union Hall, which was opened in 1958 I think –

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yes, because I gave you a list of the productions in the Union Hall in the first ten years. Anyway, Boyland used to have his evening meal there and he persuaded me to take over the chairmanship of the Union Hall Committee, which I did. There'd been two former chairmen: Vice-Chancellor and a young staff member who died very early with skin cancer. So I became the Chair of the Hall Committee and we had a Union Hall Advisory Committee. As the Chair of the Hall Committee, I became a member of the University Union Council and started to get quite active. I was also the Patron of the Science Association and so it went on, and in the address – I think I gave you a copy of the address I gave to the Women's Club in 1996 or '8 or something, where I accused Barbara Phyllis Kidman of being responsible for all my (laughter) nefarious activities in different bodies round the University.

Well, the Theatre Guild was created first in 1938. It's had a continuous existence since then. It was a bit low-profile during the War. Interestingly, I became President of the Theatre Guild after becoming the Chairman of the Union Hall Committee and was politically around the theatre in a pretty powerful position, so much so that we were able to defy the autocratic Adelaide Club governors of the Festival of Arts and do the world premieres of the plays of Patrick White: *The ham funeral*, *The season at Sarsaparilla*, *Night on Bald Mountain*.

Did they not have a liking for Patrick White, Harry?

No, they didn't, and I can tell you why. People like Sir Lloyd Dumas and Rowley Jacobs, they couldn't see what is called 'the play on the page'. Now, in every one of Patrick's plays there's a soliloquy and the soliloquy in *The ham funeral* comes at an interval, the dead landlord – poster up there – played by Hedley Cullen[?] in our production; Joan Bruce was the widow there, in that poster; the soliloquy in *The ham funeral* is the young man played by a young fellow, John Adams, who did very well in the theatre subsequently in England, John Adams comes downstage, rummages in a rubbish bin, pulls out a bit of newspaper, opens it up and it says, 'Tender loving foetus' and there's an aborted foetus wrapped up in newspaper and thrown in the rubbish bin. Well, they thought this was absolutely disgusting. Now, you need, when you read a play, to see the play on the page – it's the jargon that they use around the theatre. It became the dramatic highlight of the play. It was a superb, superbly emotional, scene.

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Well, there's a soliloquy like that in each of the plays that we premiered, *The ham funeral*, *The season at Sarsaparilla* and *Night on Bald Mountain*. In *The season at Sarsaparilla* was Zoe Calwell[?], the actress Zoe Calwell, and I've got correspondence here from Zoe who became very famous as an actress finally in New York. I think she's back living in Victoria. But she had a beautiful soliloquy about roses: goes down to the garden in this house and ---. Yes. So, anyway, I did become quite active and actually perhaps immodestly say that I revolutionised South Australian theatre.

The first play we did was Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, the love war, where, in an attempt to stop the Greeks in the Peloponnesian Wars – you know, Athens fighting Sparta – the women go on strike, have a love war, and that work of art there is by Norman Lindsay. He didn't sign it.

This is the poster for the play, Harry?

This was the poster, yes. We pinched it from the book. I made Stanistoya[?] put 'After N.L.' on the toe of *Lysistrata* that (laughs) to draw those who might need to have their attention drawn to the fact that the work was done by Norman Lindsay. It was quite interesting: I've got a lot of correspondence with Norman Lindsay, we used him a number of times, and I said to him, 'How much do you want?' 'I don't want anything', he said. 'If you give me any money I've got to give it to Rose.' Now, Rose (laughter) was the woman who was the model of all these things. So he was superb. Quite an enormous – well, the two of them, Norman and Lionel, were both first-class artists. Well, that was the first play that we did.

How did that revolutionise Adelaide theatre, Harry?

Well, (laughs) I'll tell you. The theatre groups at the time were the Adelaide Theatre Group, run by Colin Ballantyne. They didn't have a theatre of their own whereas we had the Union Hall, we had access to the Union Hall; the Arts Theatre Group, run by the ladies from the Queen Adelaide Club; and the Catholics had a Therry Society. Now, the Catholic Church was pretty strict in those days so the morality of Adelaide theatre was pretty high-class, and for a crowd to come along and put on the love war of Aristophanes, well, it was revolutionary.

I can tell you that John Bray, the late Dr John Bray, Chief Justice, Chancellor of the University, great friend of my late brothers, good theatre man, I got John to come

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to our – you have four dress rehearsals at the end, and the third and the fourth, the first and the second, it's numbered the other way round, are pretty well productions with the cast and crew. And John came along and he said, 'Well, I'd take that out on the first night and I'd take that out', and so we cut out the rough bits – you know, the great phallic things. Well, you can see the role that the phallus plays (laughs) in that drawing by Lindsay. And it's just as well we did because the Chief Secretary at the time was a fellow called Lyell McEwin, Sir Lyell McEwin. He was known locally as 'Lie-all McRuin', and he was the great moraliser; and we had police there. I was backstage, working backstage, and we had police in there; and I'd probably still be in the Adelaide Gaol if we hadn't taken out the stuff that Bray suggested. Anyway, the police disappeared after a couple of nights and so we put it all back. We filled the Union Hall for the whole of the fortnight that we had available to us and, as I say, it turned the South Australian theatre on its head.

So was this a part of the Festival of Arts, Harry?

That was not, no. No, that was before the Festival; that would have been done in 1952 or something. The first Festival was 1960.

Correct, yes.

And the false morality was still going then because the Board of Governors in 1960 banned Ray Lawlor's *The one day of the year*.

Yes, that's correct, I knew that.

Yes. It was a hit at Anzac Day. So when the Drama Committee advised that *The ham funeral* should be selected for the 1962 Festival they banned *that*. Now, I got hold of the copy of the script, Didi and I read it over the breakfast straight off and again we could see the play on the page, as I said; it was banned for the Festival so we put it on in the Union Hall in about September of 1961 and, again, it was chock-a-block. I have a beautiful photograph of my late wife, Didi, and Patrick on the opening night and he was very pleased – so much so that he went home and he wrote then *The season at Sarsaparilla*, which we did again in defiance of the Festival. And again in 1964: I was on the Drama Advisory Committee for the Festival at that stage; John Bishop, the late John Bishop, was the Chairman of it; and we selected and recommended *Night on Bald Mountain*. They knocked that back

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and, as I say, I was both President of the Union Hall Committee and Chairman of the Theatre Guild, and the Theatre Guild therefore got the booking for the Adelaide Festival of Arts 1964, *Night on Bald Mountain*. I was called to the Lord Mayor's office and they pleaded – all the Lord Mayors were there, the whole lot of them, some of whom I had, and Sir Lloyd Dumas, and he actually said to me, 'Look, let us have the Union Hall for the Festival and you can do *Night on Bald Mountain* afterwards and stick our noses in it'. And I said, 'Look, Sir Lloyd, we've done that twice already. It seems as if you'll never learn'. And I don't know if I said this last time you interviewed me, but he burst into tears.

No, I didn't know that.

Yes, he burst into tears. And I've often thought how stupid we were not to cast him as an actor. (laughter) He was great. He also used to come to the productions and I always checked the audience because we had trouble with booking officers. I won't name them, but there were two booking officers which I was sure were robbing us. I used to count the people in the hall, so I was aware that Sir Lloyd had turned up and I said, 'How did you like it, Sir Lloyd?' (mimics non-verbal response) He was a funny man. Actually, my late mother was in the same class at Mount Barker Primary School as Sir Lloyd. But they were contaminated by that Adelaide Club mentality. I think he was a very, very interesting fellow.

I couldn't agree more. There's a lot more to him than appeared on the surface. A great admirer of the arts –

Yes.

– much broader than he's been given credit for, I think.

Well, there was one other thing about those governors: if they went to any of those functions they had to pay for their own tickets.

They did, they did.

Well, they quick and lively got rid of *that*. (laughs) Yes, Sir Lloyd Dumas.

So, Harry, you saw the Theatre Guild very much as an extension of the university life?

Yes, I did, and I've recently been reading some of the stuff I'd written about it, because the Theatre Guild acted essentially as a drama department. There was no

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drama taught in Adelaide. Tim Ayers[?] and people like Tim in the English Department, Alan Brissenden, were active round the local theatre. Alan's still alive; poor old Tim died in that car crash over on the Peninsula. But they lacked the skills to make it work and I had written that, certainly during my time, the people who were active round the Union Hall and the Theatre Guild were all scientists: George Mayo, John Smith, Harry Medlin, the whole lot of them.

Was Charles Jury involved at all?

Yes, he was, he was interested, but he was – well, Charles and John – and my brother, for that matter –

This is Brian?

– Brian, yes – they put on a trilogy of plays uptown somewhere. Brian's was about the mutiny on the *Bounty*. I've forgotten what Charles's was. But Charles, he used me as one of the (laughs) snooty scientists. But we made it work because, as I say, there was no professional theatre.

You remind me that in that book on the theatre that I have there by –

Kerry, was it?

– no, I've got her book. What's his name, McCracken? From Elder Conservatorium.

Oh, yes.

He's interviewed Colin Ballantyne – Colin was still alive – and he quotes Colin Ballantyne criticising Harry Medlin for involving the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. See, I got friendly with Stefan Haag and I got the Trust to back us up and give us people like John Tasker and professionals in three of our plays. The Adelaide Theatre Group, run by Colin Ballantyne, was wholly-amateur. We were wholly-amateur, too, with our own people; but where we got the Elizabethan Theatre Trust to provide us with professionals they dealt with the Trust, like Zoe Calwell, John Tasker and three of the people who were in *Night on Bald Mountain*. And Ballantyne says that it was very 'crafty' of Harry Medlin to do this, but whether or not it was legitimate in legitimate theatre is another story. That's a funny thing for him to say. I believe he was envious. He was very proud of his own theatre activities, I believe he *was* envious, and it's curious that we got the Trust, the

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University Theatre Guild got the Trust to create the South Australian Theatre Company. Glen McBride was the general factotum, John Tasker was the Director, the Stage Manager was a woman called Mac-Something, and we actually mounted their first two productions down at Theatre 62, down Hilton Road, Hilton, with John Edmund. Then it got going. Subsequently, Colin Ballantyne, of course, became the Chairman of the South Australian Theatre Company Committee, so how he could have been so critical of Harry Medlin in introducing professional theatre amuses me a little bit.

Harry, you would have had then a bit to do with the actual creation of the Union Hall as a theatre?

Yes and no. As I say, the initiative was taken by the then Vice-Chancellor, A.P. Rowe – you know, *If the gown fits* –

Yes.

– and, as I said earlier, he did a lot of good work round Adelaide University. Certainly promoted the Union activity. As I say, he had Frank Borland appointed as the first Warden of the Union, the University appointment but an appointment made available on a professional basis to the Union. He organised the appeal. I used to know: I think it was something like sixty thousand – now, this was '58; it was something like sixty thousand dollars each. It was funded one-third by the University, one-third by the Union and one-third from public subscriptions, but it became the property – under the care of the Adelaide University Union. I think it was 1958 – I think I might have said '48 earlier, but it's 1958 it started, was opened.

Just for a tick, where were your productions held before that was built?

In the Hut.

Oh, really?

Yes. The Hut.

I didn't know that.

Didn't you ?

No.

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Oh. Well, next time you come I'll pull out some photographs of the Hut. It was a timber hut at the back of the Elder Conservatorium where the Staff Club now is, and that place, the Wills Plaza, was just an open car parking area. The Hut was used by – the Theatre Guild was created in 1938 and that was its home, in the Hut, and its productions were in the Hut. It seated, I think, a hundred and fifty or something like that.

Now, Harry, that hut had originally had some laboratories in it and I think been used for Anatomy, too, if I remember.

Had been, yes. Yes, it was used for Chemistry laboratories. And I was not familiar with the early days of it; I used to go to the productions that the Theatre Guild had in the Hut.

What was the feel of the place for those productions, Harry? Could you sort of re-create what the place was like to go into, please?

If I'd been forewarned of that I could have brought some photographs along and show you what the Hut [was like]. They were just ordinary, collapsible chairs that were there. Stage was built with raised platforms. There was a wonky old curtain across (laughs) the back of the thing. There were some rooms out the back, they must have been used as dressing rooms. I was never myself engaged in productions in the Hut, but my experience with it is I was aware of its existence and, as I say, I attended plays that they did there.

Were there revues held there as well?

There were, yes. I can't tell you off the top of my head when the Footlights Club was actually created, but that became very active with the revues of Bergen[?] and Geoff Ward[?], the Bergen–Ward revues. Indeed, the Footlights Club has had a sort of resurgence recently. Wayne Anthony?

Oh, yes.

You know? Wayne's the father of the Director of the Fringe, Christie Anthony. And they've put on a few productions down in the theatre down at Hindmarsh, Bob Lott's – the old church he's got down there.

Yes.

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In fact, I was made their first honorary life member. Harry Medlin and Geoff Scott were made honorary life members at a function down there.

Was this Geoff Scott of Politics formerly? Was that that Scott or a different one?

The Politics Department?

Yes.

No, that's the one. Yes, Geoff Scott. Yes, funny man. I digress a bit: I stage managed the first University revue, *The seat of your pants*. It was a skit on *The skin of your teeth*. The Oliviers were out here and so this was called — — —. It was done in December of 1948 and I was supposed to be assistant stage manager; a fellow called Walton I think was supposed to be stage manager but he never turned up and I stage managed the thing. And I've got a program over there, I've got my time running sheet. In one of these Footlights occasions recently – not the one where I was made a life member but the thing they held in the Museum, seventy-fifth anniversary – I turned up there and I met Geoff Scott at the door and he said, 'You have to propose the first toast'. Nobody told *me*. So I just ad-libbed.

In fact, I'll tell you a story, thing that came up there: Diana Wauchope – subsequently Didi and I got married – she was the lead comic and she was an incredible comic. There's one scene, lights out, blackout, there's an apron stage, set a table, reception table and a chair, and Didi's there and up comes Owen Evans. He was the lead male comic – you might have come across his name, too. Owen Evans. 'Room for the night.' So she hands over a key, blackout. Lights up, he comes back to hand in his key and pay for his room and he says, 'Nice room, room 69'. Well, I had to explain all this to my wife after we got [married]. She had no idea what it was, never heard of *soixante-neuf*. 'Nice room, room 69.' 'No, no, no, I gave you room 68.' 'No, no, no, room 69.' So Didi says, 'But there's a woman in there'. And he said, 'Yes, I know'. And Didi says, 'But she's dead'. He said, 'My God, I thought she was English'. (laughter) It brought the house [down]. She had no idea what it was [about], but her timing was superb. So, as I say, I had to explain the whole lot to her after we got married. Well, that was just one of the things that — — —. And I can still see Albert Percival Rowe in the guest seat right down the front and Scotty, Geoff Scott, did another skit. He could play very well, and he did another skit, 'The Chancellor of Vice'. (laughs) Any rate, he was called up to

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the Vice-Chancellor's office the next day and told they had to cut it. And they did. You can imagine what would not happen now. Yes, they cut it. 'The Chancellor of Vice'. (laughs)

So, Harry, just reading a bit about some of those revues, even a decade before you knew them, they'd had some of the great comics of Adelaide involved with it like Wacker Dawel[?] and John Duncan and those people.

Yes.

And I'd never thought that the life of the University extended well beyond the lecture theatre and it really did mean that people could have a very strong attachment to the place other than just through their academic learning.

Sure. It was a very different Adelaide population in those days. I couldn't tell you what the population of the city and the State was, but I do know that we ex-service students doubled the number of student places, it went up from two thousand three hundred to about four thousand seven hundred, so we revolutionised it. But I was far too busy as an apprentice, in those years before the War when Wacker and those people had the revues going. Well, those revues would have been done in the Hut.

That's what I was just going to ask you. Yes, okay.

Yes, they were done in the Hut. But we were, the ex-servicemen, so aggressive we hired the Tivoli.

Did you really?

Yes, filled it for four nights, filled the Tivoli for four nights, especially after the first night, and made six hundred pounds. Now, that was a lot of money in those days. We kept Footlights going for quite a while.

Well, that's the equivalent to two-thirds of a professional salary at the time.

Yes.

It's a lot of money. So that went back into Footlights, did it?

Yes, it did, yes. David Barnes was the Chairman, the medico. Poor old David's dead, but he went from here to Melbourne. He became a skin specialist, I think.

I think he did.

Barney, yes. (laughs)

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Was he the David Barnes who went to New Guinea for a while, too, with tropical skin diseases?

Might well have, yes.

Yes, that name rings a bell. I didn't realise there was that Adelaide connection with him, Harry.

Yes.

Well, that's interesting, too. You said that A.P. Rowe asked for this skit with Geoff Scott to be cut.

Yes.

Would he have done that type of thing often, Rowe?

Oh, yes. (laughs) When I got on the Union Council, Rowe was still – he was Vice-Chancellor from, what, '48 to about '58, I think, about ten years. He came to us from Long Range Weapons Establishment. He'd been involved in that secret research work in England during the War and he came out to LRWE and then was Vice-Chancellor. Yes, he used to call people up and my wife, as I say, she was the President of the Women's Union – Didi was the first non-college girl to be President of the Women's Union. She went to Woodville High School and then did honours at Adelaide Girls' High School, actually matriculated at thirteen first and you couldn't get to the University until you were sixteen so she matriculated again, then she worked for Robin Millhouse's lawyer father for a year and then matriculated again, came to the University when she was sixteen. Well, she was pretty well-known around the University. Rowe had a house. The end of the old Medical School, which was where the Barr Smith Library now is, on the upper level, and the end of it was a two- or three-bedroom house, and Rowe lived there. So we could look down from the Physics Department down into his garden behind the ---. And he used to call leaders up. He called Didi up there, he'd call Didi up there and try and get information out of her about what was going on, who was in love with who, who was abusing the privileges in the Union. He was a very strange fellow.

I said earlier he did a lot of enormously good work round the University. He revolutionised the research. Previous to that, professors or – well, Mawson did research in the Antarctic, but Kerr Grant was a very interesting person, Professor of Physics but doing no research at all. The research often in those departments was

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done by the second-in-command, the Reader; in fact, in the Physics Department it was Doc Burdon who did very extensive work on surface tension, surface tension of mercury, and in the Physics Museum that I had set up there for the Bragg Centenary in 1996 we got Burdon's original equipment, and indeed I got Mark Oliphant to come along on the closing day of the thing and John Prescott was the then head of Physics and I'd taken Oliphant to lunch in the Union and told him the sort of things I would like him to have said because I made this video of the Bragg Centenary. And he looks at this equipment and says, 'Yes, I know that very well because I had something to do with the design of it and I had it made, but it was used by Dr Burdon'. And he went on to say, 'Isn't it marvellous that we can collect all this equipment from the past and used for the education not only of students of physics but all students of all the sciences, and I hope good use will be made of it and wasn't it marvellous that we had here the grandson of Sir William Bragg, Stephen Bragg'. I got Stephen Bragg out here as one of the foundation professors; we had five of them. God, it was a different place. You could get money. And wasn't it marvellous that we had the grandson of Sir William Bragg here 'to open it today'. (laughs) This is three weeks after the [opening]. He was a good actor, Sir Mark.

But Rowe. Yes. A.P. Rowe. He used to, as I say, get people like Didi up and try and give them a cup of tea and a scone or something and try and get stories from them. He'd turn up at the Union Council. Union Council then used to have its meetings in the Barr Smith Library – not the Barr Smith Library; the –

Lady Symon Library?

– no, the other one. George Murray. The George Murray upstairs, you could go upstairs on the eastern side. That whole eastern side was a library and we used to have our Union Council meetings there, and there used to be benches around the side and Rowe – he wasn't very tall – he'd stand up on this bench up in the corner and he'd scream at us about the homosexuality that was going on in the place and – – –. He probably was an undiscovered homosexual himself, his preoccupation with it.

He does sound like an interesting man, Harry, in many ways. I was just reflecting on what you said about Kerr Grant. He had done research in his earlier years, though, I believe –

He did.

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– particularly in the Second World War, and I can't remember just clearly what it was but he was heavily involved, both in Australian and internationally by correspondence, with quite pivotal research into military stuff. I'm not quite sure what it all was.

Spirit levels. They actually made spirit levels for guns.

Oh, is that what it was?

Yes. I've got one here somewhere, I'm not too sure where it is.

Harry, I wonder if we could just branch off from the theatre side. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the theatre side of things? Because it went on a long time beyond where we've got to.

Perhaps that things would go in circles and the fact that it was the Theatre Guild that led to creating here the South Australian Theatre Company as an offshoot of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. As the theatre then became professional, and with the building of the Festival Centre – I was quite actively involved in that, both with the State Government – Baden Pattinson was the Minister at the time –

Oh, yes?

– and I've got correspondence here and I went and gave evidence to the parliamentary committee. And the Town Hall, Sir James Irwin had been Lord Mayor – you know the architect, Sir James Irwin?

Yes, I know him, yes.

He wanted the festival hall to be built out on Montefiore Hill.

Quite correct. They had plans done.

Yes. And I opposed this. And the Government brought out a person called Thomas Durgataney[?] –

An American.

– an American, and I've got his report in the house here somewhere. I saw a lot of Durgataney. We had been back in England in '55–56 and spent a lot of time at the youth hostel, we were back at Cambridge, used to come down, stay in the youth hostel and go to the theatres. And they built the new theatre with Sir Laurence Olivier on the South Bank and it was a complex, and I gave evidence to Baden Pattinson that what we needed in a festival hall is not just a thing out on Montefiore

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Hill but a thing with plenty of room and space for three different activities with a central service area. Now, the architect was – who were the architects?

This is for the final ones or the initial ones?

Final ones.

Was it Hassells?

Yes. Hassell McConnell. Both Didi and I knew them; they were also the architects for the Bragg Laboratories.

They were.

That's them. Well, anyway, I was able to talk to them about this complex. You need a festival hall, you need a drama theatre that can accommodate up to, I don't know, seven or eight hundred with a balcony, and you also need a space. Now, that's actually what they've done: there's a central service area, there's The Space, there's the Ballantyne or – what's it called? –

The Playhouse.

– the Dunstan Playhouse and the Festival [Theatre]. I taught acoustics, not to physicists but to students at the Elder Conservatorium. They know nothing about sound, they don't know what a bel is or a decibel or what the reverberation time – reverberation time is the time that it takes a pulse to fall to one over E of its original amplitude – and Didi and I had hitchhiked around Europe, been to the festivals at Bayreuth and other places and I took account of their reverberation time, both empty and full. Now, the reverberation time, if you're going to hear something, if it's grand opera it doesn't matter what it is, it can be several seconds, you don't have to understand the words, but if it's a play then you have to be able to cope with the reverberation. And there are things in cathedrals: in cathedrals they hang battle honours and big flags and things to stop the stuff bouncing around. I digress a bit and say that I gave a eulogy last year to Tony Barker in the Saint Peter's Cathedral, and I have learned as a physicist that you can make the sound, you can feel the sound – our foreheads are very sensitive and you're in a big theatre you speak in such a way that the sound will come back and you know that it's got to the back of the theatre. The problem is with that cathedral that, on the wings, the apses or naves or whatever they're called, the acoustics are not too good there but I believe they've now fixed

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that. Anyway, there was a fellow called Price, Bettison and Price, I taught second-year Physics to, and Price is a sound engineer and I think he fixed up finally the acoustics of the Festival [Theatre]. I'm not too sure how they did it, but you have to have non-reflecting surfaces here and there.

Yes.

I digress a bit to say that I had some extracurricular involvement outside the University and the Theatre Guild and the Union Hall with the Festival Hall. I have – in fact, I've just given them to the Archives – scrapbooks that show that it was not Dunstan who put that Festival Theatre there. Do you know who it was?

Well, I know it was the Steele Hall Government.

Yes, Steele Hall. Steele Hall did it.

I found in the book I wrote on the City of Adelaide that I mentioned the same fact, that in fact Dunstan originally opposed the site and had preferred the rear of Government House.

Yes, that's right.

But I was also amazed, Harry, as you said, that it was the City Council who were the instigators of the idea originally –

Yes.

– and that's not commonly known, I don't think. Well, Harry, that digression just shows that the University was spilling over into the community in ways unknown to some.

(laughter) It was, yes.

But I wonder if we could come back to the University as such. We've not yet talked at any length about the Physics Department and the people there and I think that's worthy of quite a bit of talk from you.

Yes. I was appointed Lecturer in Biophysics, actually, in 1951. Huxley succeeded Kerr Grant in I think it was probably 1948 and, with A.P. Rowe there as Vice-Chancellor encouraging research and international scholars, he stimulated right through the whole University research activity. They advertised the Chair of Physics and, as Rowe says in his book, *If the gown fits* – I think it was offered to several people prior to that and finally it was offered to Sir Leonard Huxley. Now, he had worked at one of those radio research places in England during the War. He was a

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Tasmanian Rhodes Scholar, Len Huxley, L.G.H. Huxley, Tasmanian Rhodes Scholar, and he was really an electrical engineer, an acoustics engineer. He was not a physicist. But, nevertheless, he and Rowe stirred up the Department and they got out Stan Tomlin, Dr Stanley Gordon Tomlin. He was a brilliant student from King's College, London. He did his honours degree in, I think, three years; he topped honours; he won a design prize – I'm not sure what it was he designed – during the War and he came out and set up a Department of Biophysics in Adelaide. I was the second academic in the Department, junior to him. He set up an electron microscopy unit, the first in the University of Adelaide, and I set up an X-ray unit.

I met the former Professor of Biochemistry, Bill Elliott, up at Woolworths the other day and he told me how critical he was of me for not continuing (laughter) the excellent work that we started in Adelaide in biophysics. I had two absolutely brilliant students: Brian Matthews, who became head of Physics at the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon; and Peter Coleman, who is now at the Walter and Eliza Hall Museum and who computer-designed the drug, Relenza, that fits in the active site of the glycoprotein on the outside of the influenza virus, caps it. They found that – neuraminidase, it's called, it's like a toadstool, they found that the active site is unaltered right back to the Asian flu people in the tundra. They've been getting these cadavers. Anyway, he designed Relenza. I think he'd be a close candidate for a Nobel Prize for that because it's the first computer-designed antiviral drug anywhere, it's a world first. It's a bit like the fellows in Western Australia with their gastro thing. So we were quite active and, as I say, I became interested in a lot of things other than physics and was more prepared to stimulate able students than I was to do it myself. I've got, I don't know, thirty papers or something but that's nothing when you compare it – these fellows have got four hundred.

Tell me a bit more about Stan Tomlin, please, Harry.

His widow is still here, she lives down at Brighton, Avenue, Brighton. They came out in 1948 because they had two children – a boy, John, who's now working in the States, and a daughter. The daughter had cystic fibrosis and Stan used to bring her into the Department and as soon as she hit puberty, of course, she died. So that was terrible. But he was a – I don't know how to say this: well, he was English but he was a 'Pom'. He was from London, she was from Yorkshire. He was so modest.

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He was brilliant, he was a genius. He gave the first lectures in what you might call 'modern physics', quantum mechanics, and it was fascinating. Previous to that we'd had a lecture from (laughter) Kerr Grant and (mimics harelip speech).

And you've told us about those already.

Yes. Anyway, Stan was brilliant. There are interesting solid state properties. If you plot energy against momentum, there are – electrons half-intervals spin particles and so they obey the Fermi–Dirac exclusion principles, they're not like photons, you can't pour as many as you like into a bucket like you can with photons because they've got interval spin and are not subject to the Fermi-Dirac exclusion principles. Well, somehow or other, Stan got the diagram wrong, and if you get electrons down the bottom of the thing and in the top of this – now, where that slope changes direction they become like positrons, the negative charge appears to be different, they'll move in the other direction. Anyway, he wasn't explaining this properly and I'm a cheeky coot, I don't put up with – so we've often laughed afterwards about it, we wasted the whole lecture while I taught him how (laughter) to do this. It was a bit odd because, as a third-year student, we used to give seminars and I gave my seminar on the electromagnetic field tensor and that's a pretty sophisticated thing, and Huxley was already here at that stage. And I think Huxley and I were the only ones that understood what I was talking about. Anyway, having done that, I knew about the energy momentum things in the solid state of atomic systems.

But he was very modest. He was my PhD supervisor. I had to see him every Monday morning, nine o'clock, and you could be Stan Tomlin and I'm Harry Medlin and I'd just sit there, and often we'd sit there for the whole hour and nothing was said. Yet if I prompted him he really was great. He should have been given a personal chair.

There were two of those brilliant physicists brought out. The other was called Basil Briggs. His wife is still around. They were two of the best physicists that I've ever struck, although there was another one I worked with in Cambridge called Bill Cochrane[?]. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society. But they were brilliant, they revolutionised Physics in Adelaide, and the old staff there like Dr Burdon, George Fuller – – –. George was an interesting fellow. He used to give first-year Physics lectures and when I got on the staff he'd give them in the morning and I'd have to

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give them at night. I'd have to use his notes. Have to give it exactly ---. It nearly drove me mad, I tell you. 'Measurement of angle: 1. Protractor. 2. Compasses' and that sort of stuff. We're talking about universities. I mean, I knew that when I was in primary school at Orroroo, how to use a protractor.

So this would be Physics I we're talking about, Harry?

Yes, Physics I. I've still got the notes I had to make from his. You're welcome to them, if you want.

Yeah, thanks, Harry.

(laughter)

It's interesting, Harry, that talking to some of the people in the Maths Department they've said that even in the early 1960s Mathematics I also was almost puerile and that it wasn't until new blood came in that things were changed. So there was a bit of a hangover, was there?

Well, I think the hangover finished earlier than that because there were refugees from Europe -

Correct.

- like Zekeris[?] and Schaeftbaker[?]. But they took third year. And people like Joe Staten[?] took -

First year.

- yes. And that was pretty puerile. I did it in 1939 and got time off when I was an apprentice, and I might have told you about one of the supervisors used to lean over your shoulder with his smelly breath and say, 'Medlin, in mathematics we have to work accurately, quickly'. (laughs)

So can you tell me, Harry, how did the Physics Department change under the influence of people like Sir Leonard Huxley and Tomlin and Briggs?

Well, it started research work and it then attracted good students to do research. Huxley set up two research areas: one electron solid state research, and the transistor was discovered in 1954 in America so that revolutionised physics research; the other group that was set up were David Robertson, who's dead, Graham Elford ---.

I know Graham, yes.

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You do?

Yes, very well.

Yes. Well, I was talking to him the other day and he sent me one of his latest papers on meteor trails.

Is he still living at Maslin's Beach, Harry?

Yes. Is it Maslin's? It's down there somewhere.

Port Willunga or wherever, yes.

Yes. Yes, he's still down there. Now, they were a very active cosmic ray research group. My research group continued while I was there, but when I retired at the end of '85 they shut down the laboratory and converted it into a tearoom. (laughs)

So then, after Huxley went to the ANU, John Carver was head of Physics, and he did upper atmospheric research with Brian Horton – I think Horton lives down at Goolwa – but I think that stopped. They worked in unison with Long Range Weapons Research Establishment and I think some of our graduates were employed there. Actually, the people I see at OPSA⁸ down at Daws Road, the woman in charge of the office tells me that her husband said I was a very good lecturer in Physics and he's working at WRE, so he went through in Physics at Adelaide and is at WRE.

Now, Harry, you've mentioned in the paper that you gave to the Lyceum Club that, between ---.

The Women's Club.

Yes, the Women's Club.

Sorry, not Lyceum, no.

Sorry, not the Lyceum but the Women's Club. My apologies, I didn't read that properly – that Stan Tomlin was acting head in between Huxley leaving and Carver coming.

Yes.

And that that actually, in that time, a new view of departmental governance began, is that correct?

⁸ OPSA – Orthotics and Prosthetics South Australia.

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It did. We in the Physics Department first set up a departmental government. We were encouraged to do it by Stan Tomlin. I was the secretary of the thing. We took our own academic decisions. We governed the place. We started a movement that, when I was National President of FAUSA,⁹ became worldwide – it died, of course, because vice-chancellors and registrars don't like academics governing themselves and it's terrible what has continued to happen ever since that time and how universities are being run by politicians and bureaucrats. Anyway, yes, Stan was acting head. He was too quiet a person to be head of the Department. There were problems developed between our Department of Physics and the Department of Mathematical Physics. Professor Bert Green was head of Mathematical Physics – he's dead; Angus Hearst[?] – Angus is still alive, he's an interesting fellow; Otto Berman[?], who works now in the United States in the University of Washington; oh, Harold Messel[?], I think he's Chancellor now of the university up on the Gold Coast, whatever it's called.

Bond?

Bond. Yes – he was, anyway. Ren Potts – although Ren was in the Maths Department he did a lot of work with Messel and Green and Hearst in Mathematical Physics and he's supposed to have solved some problem. He's a Fellow of the Academy and he's a Fellow of the Technological Society; he's not a Fellow of the Royal Society. Anyway, Ren's dead now.

Now, there were arguments about space. There was that building was originally the first building given by the State Government to the University in 1927 to mark the Bicentenary and it was Physics on the eastern end and Engineering on the western end. Now, after the War, with all the ex-service students, they put the Engineering School down on the lower level and Physics expanded under Huxley through the whole of that building. Then Maths Physics was created and there was a scramble for space and there was some argument between Bert Green and Stan Tomlin, and it got pretty vicious and I think the University was unimpressed by

⁹ FAUSA – Federation of Australian University Staff Associations or Federated Australian University Staff Association.

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Stan's ineptitude at managerialism. So finally John Carver was appointed and (laughs) I can tell you something about that.

I'd been a demonstrator in second-year Physics up on the top floor, down the eastern end of the building, and I saw a fellow snooping around there one day. Now, we'd had trouble with people coming in and you'd just leave your purse on the – people coming in and pinching this stuff.

I thought you told me *you* broke in at night-times into the laboratories, Harry.

We did, yes. (laughter) But we didn't steal anything.

No, okay.

We broke in, all right. God! Anyway, I saw this fellow snooping around and I said, 'Look, I'm Harry Medlin, can I help you?' And he said, 'I'm John Carver, I'm just looking around, interested in the place'. Didn't tell me that he was an applicant for the chair. So when he was finally appointed he got sent down to the Department and I saw him and I said, 'Look, you're the bloke I caught snooping around the Physics II labs'. And I said, 'You know we've got departmental government here? We govern ourselves; we don't need people like you'. And he said, 'Where's the nearest hotel?' And I said, 'The Richmond'. So (laughter) we went up to the Richmond for about a couple of hours and talked, and he fitted in very well indeed with it; and so did Prescott.

This is John Prescott when he returned from Canada, was it?

Yes. And he still does research work there on something, I don't know what it is, not too sure. Yes, that Prescott.

END OF DISK 3: DISK 4

This is session number four of an interview with Harry Medlin for the University of Adelaide Oral History on 21st September 2007, interviewer Rob Linn. Harry, your time in Physics, as you said, wasn't limited by but your outside interests and greater interests meant that you were more interested in the teaching rather than just the research and that outside interest from the Department, in fact, in terms of University life meant that you were elected to the Senate Standing Committee in 1965. Now, how did you even come to be involved with the Senate yourself, what was your interest there?

I've always had an interest in politics and political activity, the process – that's probably it – the process of politics, rather than politics itself. So my increased

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activity in the Union and the theatre and as I saw the changing attitude to research, the changing attitude to funding, I was persuaded by somebody to run for election to the Standing Committee of the Senate. I'm not sure, actually, who did that. Anyway, I became a member of the Standing Committee of the Senate and was quite conscientious in my activities.

The Senate had an explicit governing function and indeed the University was described in its Act as the Council and the Senate, the Council *and* the Senate. It was a bicameral safety device. It could not initiate legislation but before any legislation like in Acts or statutes or regulations went to the Parliament for approval it had to have the approval of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee could not amend it; it could decline to approve it, in which case it would go back to the Council. It happened on quite a number of occasions, I don't remember in detail what they were, but it was a little bit different from that. The Warden of the Senate, the person in charge of the Senate Standing Committee was the Warden of the Senate, and the Warden would be in close contact with the Registrar and the Vice-Chancellor and have a pretty fair idea of whether or not legislation was acceptable or likely to be acceptable to the Senate.

It was as a result of that I got more interested in the core of the governing process itself, namely the Council, and I ran for election to the Council in the November 1967 elections. They were elections by the Senate to the Council. The meetings of the Senate were held in the Bonython Hall and there was no absentee voting, you had to be present in the hall at the time that the elections were held. If you wished, you could absent yourself from the electing process, they just moved to one side of the hall and not be part of the vote. The elections were secret ballot and I think in that election – it was dead easy to be elected to the Standing Committee of the Senate, it's a lot more difficult to be elected to the Council – I don't remember how many there were but I think there were about eight who stood for that Council election in 1967. The order in which we were elected finally and the votes were taken off and down into the basement and counted and reported back to the Warden, the order in which the election of five people – in those days, the whole of the Council was elected; it was a great body, I think – Henry Baston, Dr Winifred Wall, Harry Medlin, Jean Gilmore the lawyer, and the last one the name eludes me: he was Headmaster of Adelaide Boys' High School.

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No, I can't ---.

Arch something. Anyway, those five. Several were defeated, including the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, he was defeated, whatever his name was. He didn't like it, either. In fact, (laughs) I did a lot of campaigning and Didi and I went right through the roll of graduates, and I brought out a letter which we sent to them all. We got about six hundred, I think, in the Bonython Hall. The moment the election was over, most of them left. (laughs) We appealed to them to come. They came from all directions – people like Don Dunstan, John Bray, Max Harris ---. Anyway, I got elected then continuously and the Act was changed and finally there were components – academic staff, general staff, students and so on – so there were different electorates. I think the last time I was elected was a couple of years ago. The last Council I think that was wholly-elected was 1990 and I'd got it on my site there and I often send it round to show how the lot of them – the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, every single person – was elected. Now, there are about eight or nine who are elected and the remaining fourteen are either *ex officio*, selected or appointed. So if you try any reform now you won't get it through.

Harry, I'm wondering, before we go on to talk more about your time on Council, could we talk a little about the origins of the Senate Standing Committee, because you've mentioned that previously and I think it's quite important we actually mention it again?

Yes. There were three early-time revolutionaries: John Bray, Roma Mitchell and Harry Wesley Smith. They argued for the setting-up of the Senate ---.

Was it Sam Jacobs?

Sam Jacobs, yes.

Sam Jacobs, not John Bray.

Yes, that's right: Sam Jacobs, Roma Mitchell and Harry. I often used to pull Roma's leg about what she was like. Yes, which year was that?

'Sixty-one, 1961.

Yes. The core of their argument was that the Senate itself had become such an uncritical stamping device that the legislation needed more careful investigation for

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the Senate to be effective. The Warden was the chair – yes, you're causing me to dredge the bottom of my brain.

From what you said previously, Harry, I think Harry and Sam and Roma's concern was that the Council were acting in an autocratic way to how they believed the Senate should function and those three were looking for a more democratic approach to, I guess, University legislation you'd call it. Would that be correct?

Yes, that *is* correct. I think I became a member of a working party chaired by Warren Rogers.

Yes, that could well be right, I think.

There were five of us. Now, who were they?

Warren Rogers was Warden of the Senate?

Yes. He followed Frank Hambly. I think I'll have to take that on notice.

No, that's fine, Harry. Let's come back to Council, then, and can you tell me what Council was like when you were first elected to it? What was the structure of it and how was it run?

(laughs) They were nice fellows. The Council always started about twenty past two. They'd walk down, most of them, from the Adelaide Club, they'd all had lunch in the Adelaide Club. Sir Kenneth Wills, he was Chancellor. The head of the Engineering and Water Supply Department, Dryden I think was his name; the Master of Prince Alfred College. They were pretty much an Adelaide Club lot except for –

Was that Jack Dunning, was it?

– yes, Dunning, him. There were others there – Eric Barnes was a member. The year before, the Professor of Economics had been elected; he's dead. Frank Hambly was inclined to be liberal; I said almost nothing until I think it was the August meeting of '68 that I took a series of motions to Vic Edgelow was Registrar. I can still see him: walked into the room, he was sitting at his desk, he didn't invite me to be seated, I stood up to attention in front of the company commander (laughs) and handed him this series of five or six – I ought to dig them out – five or six notices of motion, one of which was that the student members of the University Council, we change the composition from – that's right, there were five people elected for four years and the Adelaide Club would put out a voting slip. Don Simmons stood the

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year before me and got defeated; Don Simmons subsequently became State Secretary; he's dead. He was a member of the general staff at the time. He stood. There were six. So he didn't have a hope in hell. They'd vote the ticket and – 'plumping', it's called – and they're in. So the year I ran we knew that we had to have some 'rabbits', (laughs) I can't tell you who the rabbits were, but to try and randomise their vote. I broke the ticket. The ticket did have the two women on it, Gwen Maude[?] and Jean Gilmore. The ticket had the Deputy Vice-Chancellor; well, we ran him out. As I say, I came third of the five to be elected and I wouldn't know who the rabbits were now, but I know I got a copy of the letter that I sent around and it invited people how to vote and then just to randomise – because you had to vote for five – randomise the rest of it, and that worked. It wouldn't have worked if there'd only been six. We needed rabbits.

What was it like? So I took this notice of these motions to Vic and I can still see him. And I told this story at his funeral – his funeral was held on Magill Road there. He looked up and he said, 'Harry, we live in a changing world'. (laughter)

Anyway, I didn't even get seconded. God! The changes came about when Ken Wills, he was interesting. During the War at Fort Largs I was the intelligence officer at Fort Largs; he was the Director of Intelligence, Brigadier – he wasn't 'Sir' then at the time, but Brigadier Kenneth Wills – and I got on very well with him. I had to put taps on telephones because on one occasion there were troops in Fort Largs on the Adelaide Railway Station who were talking about ship movements. Now, this came back and so I got onto Wills about it and it was a pretty important place, Fort Largs. I might have said to you before that it stood between the sea and Osborne, and at Osborne was the gas company and the electricity company: now, if they knocked them out, the city is gone. So it was quite an important place and it was vital to have security. Anyway, I got Wills – so he knew me – got him to authorise taps, I'm not too sure how it all happened, but I was the one, I was the *only* one, who could listen in. And I have written that it's quite important – in philosophy they distinguish between 'doing' words and 'winning' words; you might know more about that than I do; 'running' and 'winning', and 'listening' and 'hearing'.

Oh, yes.

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Right? They're very different, they're not synonyms, they describe different functions. And I found that I could listen to people, even when they were talking to their wives and girlfriends, and just not know and I've certainly written how important that is to listen but not hear. And it reminds me of that adviser to Kennedy who said that he'd been chased up by the American CIA¹⁰ because he'd used the word 'doctrinaire' and they interpreted it as 'Dr Ware' and they couldn't find this doctor. (laughs) It's a bit like Anif[?], isn't it? I'm digressing; now, what am I supposed to be ---?

You were talking about Ken Wills.

Yes. And he was a very good Chancellor, I thought, and when he retired he put in motion a series of reforms and they involved amending the Act to include students. There had been two students elected, even before there were student places, but it was pretty rare. I know Ren Potts ran against a student once in a by-election. They call him 'Tiger' Potts. The student got annihilated. So in a close fight like that they have no hope but, as I say, you needed rabbits to defeat the plumping system. So Ken Wills did a great job.

I was then involved with the selecting of a new chancellor and I actually convened meetings of members of the Council, not Council meetings, and reported back to them about my conversations with John Bray. It was very hard to convince him to allow his name to go forward because he was a known homosexual. He was discreet, however. He had an elephantine memory, I thought he had sufficient concern for the whole of the University. As it turned out, he was concerned more for the Law School and the Library, fascinated with the Library. It was very hard to get him interested in, say, Physics – oh, interested in the English Department, too. And when the Act was changed – I couldn't tell you the year in which the Act was changed to incorporate these reforms, but it would have been, let me see, '71, was it, '71 I think. I think it's still referred to as *The University Act, 1971*. Whatever is referred to, anyway, that was the year. And they were revolutionary changes.

There's a clause in there that allows Council members to be excluded. Bankruptcy is one, I think insanity's another, and it's something like improper

¹⁰ CIA – Central Intelligence Agency.

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behaviour. I remember Thene Battams[?] when she got on the Council – do you know Thene?

I know who you mean. From Woodlands?

Yes. Thene. And Thene got on the Council. She was imprudent enough to ask John Bray what this clause meant and he said, ‘Well, I can’t speak, Miss Battams, as the Chief Justice of South Australia but I give it as my personal opinion that conviction for the abominable crime of buggery might – –.’ Oh, god. That’s exactly what he said would fit you for this exclusion. I don’t think she ever asked another question.
(laughter)

How did Council function in those days of Wills and Bray, Harry? What was the format, for example?

We used to meet in what is now the Edgeloe Room. It’s a stuffy place. You know, it’s an oblong thing. And it followed the pattern of Saint Stephen’s Hall. You know, the House of Commons still meets like that –

Yes, indeed.

– with the two sides, and even parliaments here are inclined to follow the pattern, although it’s a little bit different with the rounded ends. So us rebels would sit to the left of the chair in the Edgeloe Room and you’d be confronted with all these Adelaide Club people – although I must say I got on quite well with Win Wall, to a lesser extent with Jean Gilmore. Jean was not nearly as smart as Win. Win was a beautiful woman.

Very community-minded, service-oriented person, wasn’t she?

Yes. Active in the Graduates’ Union, was strongly supportive of the Alumni Association when I started that and was very helpful to me. Became very, very deaf. I spoke at her funeral out at Saint Xavier’s Church, I think. Yes, I’ve got a whole of eulogies, twenty-seven of them I think. Yes, I certainly got Win Wall’s. So it was in a sense confrontational.

Now, when we had built the new extensions, the Wills Building, I was involved with Walter Crocker, and Thene and Roma were a bit involved in the décor but not in the geometry. Walter and I were strongly of the opinion that the Council Room should resemble the Peace Chamber in Paris where they negotiated the Vietnam

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thing and the Security Council in the United Nations, although we didn't have an entrance. But anyway, Walter and I designed that; the University architect, whose name I forget, was there taking notes all the time – and can you visualise the Council?

I can, I can see it easily, yes.

There were enough seats on the inner ring for the whole of the elected members of the Council at that time. Council got a big bigger and some of them used to have to sit in the visitors' wing; but it's now small enough for everybody to get – – –. And we had another attitude, and it was this: that the Chair of the Council, the Chancellor, and the chief executive officer – and I think I got this from the United Nations – were to be diametrically opposite each other, not peeing in each other's pocket which is what [happened] when Brown became Vice-Chancellor and if I chaired a meeting he'd come and sit next to me, and I'd shift the chair, I'd take it around the circle. But now, with Von Doussa, there's the Council Secretary. Here's Von Doussa, here is the Vice-Chancellor, here's the Council Secretary.

On either side of Von Doussa.

Yes. Now, that's just not on. In fact, talking about what's now the Edgeloe Room, when we first got on there a few of us – Russell and Barnes and Medlin – we used to go and sit between these people so that they couldn't talk to each other.

Oh, this is Prof Russell?

Yes.

Yes, I'm with you.

Eric Russell.

Eric, yes, I think so.

He dropped dead after playing badminton one day.

He did, that's right. Or squash, was it?

Squash, yes. Yes, Eric Russell, Eric Barnes, Harry Medlin, I think there was another, and we used to be able to break them up, so it was mischief-making but there was no

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need for that in the Security Council room. Anyway, so Thene and Roma did the décor.

Coming back to that earlier style of meeting, though, in what's now the Edgeloe Room, Harry, did you have a fixed agenda you worked from?

Oh, yes.

So it was set up in proper meeting procedures?

Oh, yes, it was. And you could give notices of motion. Like I say, I took that stuff to Vic and it got put on the agenda. Took us a while to get the thing fully reformed and now it's gone backwards. But I was successful in having it resolved by the Councillors all supporting papers used, had to be attached to the official copies of the minutes, because they were not when we got on the [Council]. You'd get an agenda, there'd be papers that people'd bring along and refer to and talk to and you wouldn't know what was in it. And the minutes were pretty sparse. Vic, as I say, was the Secretary. He'd circulate a draft copy of the minutes Monday morning. Councils were always Friday afternoon, twenty past two so they could walk from the Adelaide Club, and he'd go home and do the minutes. Well, they were pretty sparse but we got it altered. In fact, I had trouble with Von Doussa because they'd gone back to being sparse and I had trouble trying to get what I thought were essential arguments included in the debate, and he – bit surprised, Chairman of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

With Bray and Mitchell, essentially, if any member wanted something added to the minutes – and I can still hear John Bray saying – 'That's a fact and it will be added'. It's different now; they're edited. Sanitised.

Yes, that's a more modern, corporate way of approaching minute-taking.

Yes. And you remind me that Ross Adler was always in favour of that sort of stuff and I can remember him saying on one occasion that, 'The minutes are more thorough than those of any of the activities that I'm involved in. You ought to be ashamed of yourself'. (laughs) Bill Scammell was good, Bray was good, Mitchell was good. Bill was good. Did you know Bill?

Oh, very well. Very, very well, yes. He was a marvellous fellow – for me.

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I think I said last time you get in the lift with him and someone'd get in and he'd say, 'I'm Bill Scammell, this is Harry Medlin'.

Off he'd go, yes.

Yes.

He was a real tiger, too, Bill. So, Harry, the functioning of Council you said originally in the Edgeloe Room was very confrontational; but there would always have been, would there not, vigorous debate on issues?

No.

No?

Not initially. In fact, you might have seen that I've written the first meeting I attended started at twenty past two and finished at ten past three. (laughs) Oh, Bruce Macklin was one of them, I think I forgot to mention Bruce.

Yes.

Because 'Sir' Bruce, I think, didn't he?

He did. So, Harry, what were, to your memory, some of the big issues through the '60s and '70s that came up on Council? Can you recall any?

Well, the '60s and '70s, yes, I can. There were these attempts at reform. As I say, I started in August of '68 and got nowhere, and it wasn't really until Ken Wills retired and Bray took over. I think Hambly probably chaired us for a few meetings. Frank was pretty liberal-minded – Methodist, of course. But when Bray came along it really changed. Roma Mitchell was on it when I first got on, then she forgot to nominate one year and missed a year, and she forgot that she missed a year because in her *c.v.* she said she'd been a member continuously, but there was a big chop.

I think the biggest thing: by the early '70s, in 1972 I followed Don Stranks as President of the local staff association. It was affiliated with the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations. In my absence John Keeler and Alex Castles put me onto the Federal Executive. There was a meeting held at Flinders, down at Flinders University, of FAUSA, as it was called, and it was really a *confederation*. You would know better than I do the difference between those two. Although it was *called* the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations, it was a *confederation* of legally-independent activities. Well, I got put on the

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executive. Colin Wendell-Smith, he's probably still in Tasmania, he was an Englishman, very liberal-minded – I think Moral Rearmament almost, like the father Kim Beazley – he was President. They had a shocking constitution. John Niland was a central member of FAUSA – you know, he became Vice-Chancellor of New South Wales? Fine fellow. I must take you into my bedroom before you go and show you a painting that they gave me when I finished as National President of FAUSA. I was in the Nilands' house – his wife's pretty active, too, or was – I was in the Nilands' house looking at this thing, and you know *Zeus and the falling rain*, all these?

No, I don't know that one.

Leda and the swan and all these gods that fornicate with women in different guises? Yes, the falling rain; well, this is falling apples. It's a great vulva if ever I've seen one. (laughs) Anyway, so I'm standing alongside this thing in the Nilands' house and saw it and so, when I left, they presented me with a copy of it.

Now, they had a shocking constitution, and I'd been a bit involved with the Theatre Guild rewriting the constitution and the Union so I took it on myself to recast the constitution of FAUSA and, according to reports, I did it very well and got it through an annual general meeting – and I tell you what, annual general meetings of FAUSA were something that you had to be pretty (laughs) skilled to survive. They could go for the essentials. Anyway, as a result of that, I was then elected to be President and I became National President. I continued as a full-time physicist. I made arrangements with the Department to let me free on Fridays so that I could go somewhere on Friday, Saturday, Sunday; I would often come back Sunday night on the plane going through my lectures for the next – I tell you what, that was from '74 to '76.

I wrote a paper, 'A case for an association of Australian universities'. I was the co-editor of *Vestes* – you know, *Vestes* was the journal of FAUSA – and the paper was published in *Vestes*. It was a proper, I think, scholarly paper, properly referenced, footnoted, and I got it accepted as FAUSA policy that we needed a federation of Australian universities. They were supervised, the universities, by the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Now, one of the things A.P. Rowe did was to stir up the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and in Rowe's book, *If the gown fits*, he comments

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very critically on the then inactivity of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. The Vice-Chancellors' Committee was – and I don't know whether it still is – a private body, created with a deposit of two pounds, so they're individual members. They're not a confederation of vice-chancellors at all. They (laughs) could be bossed around by anybody.

In any case, FAUSA and the Council of Adelaide University approved this paper of mine. They then convened a seminar here. Professor Probins was one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Eric Barnes was the other, and Probins convened this working party to set up this symposium of Australian universities. Roma became Acting Chancellor – I've got the proceedings here somewhere of that function; I think some hundred and fifty people over one weekend – and it was put to them that the Council of the University of Adelaide had approved the proposal there should be a federation of Australian universities. We had vice-chancellors and chancellors from everywhere. John Bannon had just entered the Cabinet here and I chaired the meeting that Bannon spoke at. It was the head of – that had chemistry works in Victoria. A lot of people spoke in favour of it but there was no resolution, and Roma promised and Don Stranks was our Vice-Chancellor, they promised that there'd be no resolutions and no committal, but it just died. There's no universities [federation] and they are so vulnerable to the Federal Government and I'll go on, Rob, by telling you how that came about.

You talk about the Whitlam years. There were a number of good things that Whitlam did and a number of dangerous things that he did. You remember when he was elected, they had that two-person cabinet?

Yes.

He and Barnard, was it?

Yes, I think it was: Lance Barnard.

Lance Barnard. And they did all sorts of things, Whitlam and Barnard. Anyway, I was still the President of FAUSA and they persuaded me to get the states to agree that universities would be Commonwealth-funded, direct.

Yes.

And they would use s.96 –

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Of the Constitution?

– you know that section?

I do, yes, I do.

Yes. Stinks. It was clearly an enabling clause to allow the states to confederate into the federation and, as you know, we followed the North American act and not the United States. That section allows the Commonwealth to make grants to the states under such conditions as the parliament shall decide. Well, look what this Julie Bishop is up to! Anyway, I went around: I, Harry Medlin, negotiated with Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria – Thompson from Victoria, Thompson was Minister of Education, he subsequently became Premier; in South Australia with Hugh Hudson; and I've just forgotten the name of the Western Australian – and we got agreement, and other people on the executive negotiated with Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. The only trouble we had was with Joh Bjelke-Petersen and Joh said, 'You'll live to regret this, you.' And I've seen what Joh has said. Don Hopgood once, when he became a minister here – he's married to a cousin of mine, who's died recently, Raelene – anyway, he let me have what Joh had said; and Joh was right. So we negotiated it for universities. Now, ever since that time they've abused the power. They do all sorts of things. You might have read I said we made a mistake, *I* made a mistake, in allowing them to take control of the universities. I'm not going to tell you here what Hugh Hudson said to me when I saw Hugh Hudson, and I took Sam Jacobs with me; he didn't want anything to do with universities so he was prepared to – – –.

Previously, all universities at that time except the Australian National University were answerable direct to the state government.

Yes, that's right.

The funding came through the state government. Now, often they used to hang onto it and I'm the one who had them just use it as a post office to come through to us quickly. You hang onto it for a couple of days you can get a bit of interest. Well, anyway, the funding is now essentially direct. There are certain activities that are funded separately by the state, but essentially it's Commonwealth funding and Commonwealth directing.

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Now, the things they tell the universities – and universities, (laughs) a great fraction of their time is spent in making up reports to different areas of government, it's just ridiculous; whereas, previously, the annual report of the universities went to the state parliament and lay on the table for the days that Jesus was in the wilderness, (laughs) forty days or whatever, and they handled it.

We also at that time got set up – *I* got it set up – an Academic Salaries Tribunal. Now, there were two activities that had their own tribunal, apart from the remuneration tribunal, which still exists. There are two activities: the airline pilots and universities. I led the first case before the Academic Salaries Tribunal in 1975. It reported in 1976 and we won our case. The case was defined for the sole university run by the Commonwealth, that was the ANU, and there were recommendations, equal recommendations for professors, readers, lecturers, senior lecturers in each of the states. Every one of the states honoured the recommendation of the Academic Salaries Tribunal.

Another stupid thing that happened was, after I left, they affiliated with the ACTU.¹¹ I had argued against – there were always moves for that to happen. I'd argued against it because I'd seen what happened in England where the unions went into the general trade union and were buried in the millions; and that's what's happening now. The peak council is the ACTU and they're stuck with awards. The states don't necessarily – if you win an award, the states don't necessarily honour them and they're not obliged. So there were two things that went absolutely, horribly wrong with Whitlam. He abused s.96 and s.96 is now abused every single day of the week in the funding of universities with the control that they have. And I just say again look at all this stuff that this Julie Bishop comes out with from time to time. God!

But Whitlam did one good thing and I saw him interviewed fairly recently: 'What are you most proud of?' He said, 'I'm most proud of the fact that I got rid of the tuition fees at universities'. Now, they were brought back – I'll jump a bit to Hawke.

Yes.

¹¹ ACTU – Australian Council of Trade Unions.

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Firstly, it was Hawke's minister who then created all these – because what I negotiated applied to universities, did not apply to technical colleges, it did not apply to teacher training colleges. But they converted all of them into universities, so much so that this country has got twice the number of universities that it should have for the population of twenty million. The watershed, as I might have said before, is about a million for a decent university; we've got one too many in South Australia and now we're getting Carnegie Mellon and other private things. Anyway, as I say, Whitlam did get rid of fees.

Now, it was with Susan Ryan, I think was her name –

Yes, that's right.

– she's the one who introduced the administrative charge. I've recently looked at a Commemoration Address that I gave here in 1987, when I was given a doctorate of the University, and that day there was a notice – in fact, I read the notice out (laughs) from *The Advertiser* – about this administrative charge. Susan Ryan said, 'It's just an administrative charge, it's for administrative purposes'. Well, it's become HECS,¹² it's become tiered HECS, and it saddens me – – –. I said, and I got the Adelaide University Council to oppose fees of *any* sort, and Don Stranks was very, very good and so was Kevin Marjoribanks, but since then the Vice-Chancellors – Brown and O'Kane in particular and the one we've got now – they don't – – –. Anyway, they just don't seem to care about the essentials.

The other thing the Whitlam Government did – and just before they won that election the Minister – what's his name? – Dawkins: I was National President, got on a truck in Victoria Square, we had a big stop-work meeting there and I'm telling the plebs of the six academic freedoms and Dawkins gets up and says, 'Yes, I agree with everything Harry has said', (laughs) next thing he's created phoney universities and they're abolishing the academic freedoms. The first one abolished was done by Whitlam and that two-man government, they abolished the freedom to develop. That just went, and development now is very much politically-run.

So, Harry, through the '70s and that, particularly that Whitlam area – well, you'd have to say it was a time of ferment in Australian society –

¹² HECS – Higher Education Contribution Scheme.

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Yes.

– you had the bigger picture for the University, that’s what I’m hearing you saying, that while you were very much involved in Council at the University you also had that wider role where all Australia was in your mind.

Certainly. Certainly did, yes. Yes, it’s a pity we weren’t able to achieve it. I had seen in the [United] States – in particular at the University of Oregon, where that student of mine had the full chair of physics – seen the curious combination of central, of local and of county government and the town hall. There used to be noticed put up on the town hall: ‘The Vice-Chancellor will attend the meeting and answer – – –.’ Well, strangely, it seems to work without their involving constitutional authority. As I say, these county things, I used to know how the county round California and Oregon worked: they’d get groups of universities that belonged to the sort of fictional county but not necessarily state, and that sort of divisiveness allows – curiously, I think – much more freedom in a lot of universities than there is here. So, yes, I’ve been influenced by that and I gave papers to the American Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Association of University Teachers. They’re different. The Canadian one is a bit like the thing that I was trying to get going here. The American association has different chapters that cross state boundaries. I had a bigger picture; but it didn’t work.

END OF DISK 4: DISK 5

This is the fifth session of an interview with Harry Medlin on 28th September 2007, interviewer Rob Linn, for the University of Adelaide Oral History.

Harry, over the last two sessions we’ve covered a lot of ground. We were coming back today just to talk a little bit firstly about your own papers that go back to your origins at Adelaide Uni: where have they ended up, Harry?

When I retired from the Physics Department I stayed around the Alumni Association for a few years and finally, when I left Physics and moved into the Alumni Association at Alumni House on Kintore Avenue I assembled all of the historical stuff that I had and handed it over to Susan Woodburn, the Special Collections Librarian. The material, very little of it is embargoed; there’s some stuff that’s embargoed but very little, most of it is open and available, and especially the material about the origin of the Adelaide University Union Bookshop. And I’ve referred the bookshop people to that history of the bookshop.

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I actually convened the first Union Bookshop Committee in 1961, but we were not able to take it over from the WEA¹³ Bookroom until 1969 and I was then given the honour of naming the bookshop provided they called it the ‘Adelaide University Union Bookshop Proprietary Limited’. And it was a registered company, while the Adelaide University Union was still an informal body: that only became incorporated afterwards. It was in 1997 that the Executive Committee of the Adelaide University Union resolved that Unibooks, as they came to call it, was a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Adelaide University Union, and I think I might have referred to it last week: it’s just like my saying, ‘I think that I own your house’. (laughs) One company takes over another. All that material is in the Special Collections of the Barr Smith Library. There’s about twenty-plus boxes of it, I remember. Susan did catalogue it, a catalogue does exist; if anybody wanted to look at it they don’t have to go through the whole lot in order to find what they’re after.

Harry, I’d like to talk about the new Union and the bookshop as well when we get to the expansion of the buildings at the University in more detail. The other matter we were talking about earlier were the Festival performances with which you were involved in 1966 and ’68.

Yes.

Just wondered if you could talk about the programs that I have in front of me.

Yes. Well, I’d like you to have those programs. I spent study leave in ’64–65 at King’s College, London, in Drury Lane and we were able to go to Stratford and also to the Royal Shakespeare Company up south of the Thames, and I was fascinated by the way that they handled their program material. Their cast lists, for example, were cheaply-produced and were put on all the seats in the theatre free, so you weren’t obliged to buy a program in order to find the cast and the parts that they were playing. There were also programs and I was inspired by this on returning to Adelaide: I was still running the Theatre Guild and we produced a double-header in the 1966 Festival: ‘The Adelaide University Theatre Guild in association with the Adelaide University Union presents John Courtney’s *Off to the diggings* and James Tucker’s *Jemmy Green in Australia*’, two Australian plays, and we were helped by

¹³ WEA – Workers’ Educational Association.

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Brideson, Peter O'Shaughnessy did the directing, and I introduced Peter to Hedley Brideson, who was the Librarian at the time, and they were very, very helpful indeed. So there's historical material in the program about both *Jemmy Green* and *Off to the diggings*, and we have in the centrefold the original program of *Off to the diggings* or *London schemes in 1852*, as they were prepared to come out to Ballarat and Bendigo and to the goldfields. Fascinating. I have my little dunny on the back of the program, it's the dunny from the back of the Queen's Theatre in Adelaide.

This is the Harry Medlin brand.

(laughter) We repeated that Festival programming on several occasions, but the other one that I have here, Rob, is a special program for Farquhar's *The recruiting officer* prepared for the 1968 Festival. I think I spoke before about some of the troubles with the Board of Governors with that Festival.

At that Festival we were privileged in the Union to have been able to share with the University of Adelaide Art Fund Committee the buying of that series of twelve paintings by Arthur Boyd, and there's a little slip inserted in the program that those twelve paintings were displayed for the first time in the Cellar Bar in the Union Hall to coincide with the official opening of Farquhar's *The recruiting officer*. I was privileged to be the executive producer of that production and to work with Peter O'Shaughnessy and professional actors provided for us by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

Now, Harry, that Cellar Bar and Coffee Lounge, as it became too, had that only recently been completed when the play was put on?

It was completed expressly for the opening production of *The recruiting officer* in the Festival. Previously, there'd just been a basement which was used as a locker room. I was fortunate in being able to get an architect, Albert Gillison[?] – Dutchman – to help me with the design of the carrels. You probably remember there were a series of carrels there –

I do.

– [?discrete/discreet?] carrels – and the decorating of the columns. It staggers me what Albert was able to do: these hideous columns were decorated and really became most attractive. We also at that time had the first theatre liquor bar.

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Yes.

Chris Sumner and I appeared before the Royal Commission into the changing of the liquor laws, it was the Dunstan Government, I was interviewed at the Royal Commission by John Jefferson Bray: he had his back to the Commissioner so he was able to (laughs) communicate with me in a variety of ways that the Commissioner was unaware of. Anyway, the law was changed to allow bars in places like that. I then appeared before the magistrate who, after the law had been changed, was granting the licences and it was Roy Grubb –

G-R-U-double-B?

– yes, G-R-U-double-B – very active round the theatre with the Rep and I'd known his wife when we first came down from Orroroo, so it was a very familiar thing. Well, we got the licence for the liquor bar and that also opened for the first night, and if you look behind me you'll see a beer can which was the first can dispensed over the bar. (laughter)

It's a Southwark can of old design.

Exactly.

So, Harry, the Arthur Boyd paintings are probably worth talking about themselves, given that they're such a significant collection.

Yes. Well, there was a Philosophy professor, Peter Glow, and he at that time was the Chairman of the Works of Art Fund Committee, and they commissioned Arthur Boyd to do a painting to put in the foyer of the Napier Building. In those days, there was little if any vandalism and I think they thought that it might have been safe to have such a painting there. Well, Boyd, like other painters, have ideas of their own, and when the material turned up it turned out to be twelve much smaller paintings in the Judges series – the most outstanding one, I think, is Nebuchadnezzar, the one with his back on fire and I forget what actual colour his scrotum is; but one of the things that disturbed the so-called 'liberal'-minded Arts professors was the variety of scrota that appeared in the paintings of the Judges series and they declined to have them. So Peter Glow came to me – and I was active round the theatre and around the Union – came to me almost in tears. 'We've spent two and a half thousand dollars' or whatever – it cost *nothing* – 'two and a half thousand dollars, what are we going to

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do?’ So I actually persuaded the Adelaide University Union to share half the cost and we mounted them then, they were ramsetted to the wall in the Cellar behind the carrels and they were there at the opening of that Festival play, *The recruiting officer*, and the Cellar Bar and the Boyd paintings; and in the program that I’m giving you there’s a little note then inserted that gives a brief history. Those paintings now have been shifted to a more secure site, they’re over in the main Union Building, and there’s a little plaque there that briefly describes the history.

I would guess that *Nebuchadnezzar* might well be worth a million dollars, and he was just one of twelve that cost two thousand, four hundred dollars in 1968. (laughs)

I would say on the current values money well-spent, Harry.

Yes.

Well, thank you for talking about that, Harry. Just taking something completely different now and going back into the form of the interview from last week, in the first session we did, which is about a month ago, we did begin to talk about the impact of the postwar student intake from Asia into the University under the Colombo Plan and, Harry, you had significant dealings with people and the Plan itself.

Yes. The first Asian students I remember were *pre*-Colombo Plan students; they were actually UNESCO,¹⁴ they were on UNESCO scholarships. They came, curiously, from Palestine and I don’t think I know how that came to be. But those whom I knew came principally from Indonesia, and this was before Indonesia won its independence, and I think I’ve referred to the fact that, as a Japanese prisoner of war in Indonesia towards the end of the War, most of us Australian soldiers were on the side of the Indonesians, what was called *madeka*[], *madeka* in Bahasa, Indonesia, means ‘freedom’ and *tetap*[], which means ‘now’ – not tomorrow, but right now. So we were on their side, so I got to know the Indonesian students, UNESCO. One of them was called Iskanto and I can’t remember if I referred to Iskanto.

In the first interview you did, yes.

Okay. Well, we can cut then to the Colombo Plan. The then Australian Minister for I think External Affairs, Percy Spender, attended a meeting in Colombo, a meeting of

¹⁴ UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

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foreign ministers, in about January or February of 1951 and it was there that Australia promoted the Colombo Plan for the educating of our near Northern Asian students. That took some six months. I think preparatory work had been done before by the Labor Government – that was before Menzies won the election in December of – what was it, 1949? – 10th December 1949, I think. Well, then Percy Spender, Australia was very actively involved. I believe that we've had something like about forty thousand Colombo Plan students. They were incredible. In the tribute that I have written to our Asian friends and colleagues I have listed quite a number of the now well-known students from Indonesia, from Singapore, from West Malaysia and from Sarawak and, the present Chief Minister of Sarawak, Abdul bin, friend of mine, his wife was taught by my late wife in Adelaide Girls' High School, he's a Colombo Plan student; Dr Sam Abraham, former chief paediatrician to, Colombo Plan student;, who introduced renal dialysis and then renal transplants; Joseph, who's the Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, Colombo Plan student; and it goes some twenty per cent of the Malaysian Cabinet, Colombo Plan.

Rob, it is not possible to do a cost benefit analysis on something of that sort. We couldn't possibly put a value. It is invaluable, the goodwill that has come to us out of the Colombo Plan. I was privileged to set up chapters of our Alumni Association in Kuala Lumpur in May of 1994 and in Singapore in May of 1995. I represented the Chancellor in 2001 when there was established the Sarawakian Chapter of our Alumni Association. Subsequently, there are further chapters in Singapore, in the United States and in England. It seems to me to be a tragedy that it was a Labor Government that stopped the Colombo Plan. There are still, in my personal view, there are still grounds for continuing the Colombo Plan – not for undergraduate students, because the thing to have done which has been done is to encourage those countries to have their own world-class universities, and the University of Singapore is as good a university as any Australian one; but there is still room for postgraduate education and research activity, in my opinion, encouraged and stimulated by the Colombo Plan. I was privileged to be guest speaker at the Golden Jubilee of the Colombo Plan in Kuala Lumpur. It was held in the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur on 1st July 2001, fifty years to the day to the start of the Colombo Plan, and

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it was a most auspicious occasion. The public space in that High Commission was full, was full; and we've stopped it.

Harry, am I right in thinking that the entertainer, Kamahl, was a Colombo Plan student at Adelaide University? Harry Wesley-Smith once told me that.

I know Kamahl. I tried to teach him Physics I (laughter) but he wasn't interested. He was much more interested in singing at a nightclub on Anzac Highway opposite what used to be Gibbs Pie Palace. I don't think he was a Colombo Plan student. I'm not sure how it was he came here, but Kamahl certainly went to King's College, which became part of Pembroke when my wife managed to fuse Girton Girls' School and King's College into Pembroke. Yes, I've seen Kamahl. I can't tell you his whole name; 'Kamahl' is just the first part of the Indian expanse. He's another one of those who used to call me 'Gregory Peck'. (laughter)

Well, I'm pleased to hear that, Harry – I think. But talking about the tremendous success of the Colombo Plan, both from Australia's point of view and from the country's point of view from which the people came, that leads me into asking you more about the Alumni Association in which there's a strong connection, as you just pointed out. How did you come to be involved with the alumni?

There was a move in Adelaide in 1920 to have an Alumni Association. It didn't take off but there was, in parallel with it, the old Graduates' Union. They have very complete records and they probably now are in the Special Collection in the Barr Smith Library. The person whom I dealt with was the late Dr Winifred Wall, 'Winnie' Wall, she was very active in the Graduates' Union, and it was suggested – and Don Stranks encouraged this – it was suggested that we create an Alumni Association. A review was held of graduate activity. It was chaired by a relative of yours, Dr Jennifer Linn, and Jenny Linn had this working party of about five – I think Warren Rogers, the then Warden of the Union, was a member of it – and they made a report to the University Council, a report on 'The University and its graduates', and they recommended – this would have been 1984 and, as I say, they recommended the creating of the Alumni Association.

I'd been very active in the Adelaide University Union, the Theatre Guild, the Staff Association both locally and I was National President, and I think they thought that I might have been able to do something to create this body. I was appointed by the University Council on the recommendation of the late Don Stranks, Vice-Chancellor,

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in February of 1985 and we planned for about six months based on the recommendations of Jenny Linn's working party. We planned the creation of the Alumni Association initially in parallel with the Graduates' Union but finally, after I think about two years, there was a merger and the Alumni Association took over the activities and the enthusiasm of those older graduates; and both Jenny Linn and Win Wall – well, Win was older than Jenny, but I think they were both getting a little bit tired at that time.

We were a vigorous body. We were given space, rent-free space, in the Mitchell Building. We outgrew that and I persuaded Don Stranks to let us have what became known as 'Alumni House', and if you look at it the name is still on the front, corner of Kintore Avenue and that Kintore Avenue Gate 13 I think entrance. It was two levels. It had previously been the home of the University Caretaker, Peter Turnbull. That activity was shut down and we took it over. My executive director was Geoffrey Sawyer[?]. Geoff had been involved with the generating and creating of a lot of the activities in the Mitchell Building for the University Centenary in 1974 so he was fairly familiar with that sort of communal activity, and he was the executive secretary; we had a staff of four, sometimes five. We rebuilt the database virtually from nothing to fifty-five thousand. There were annual fees, they were only something like thirty or forty dollars for twenty times you could take out life membership. I think I managed to become the first life member, paid-up life member, of the – and there's a Life Members' Board, an initial Members' Board, in the Alumni facilities presently over on North Terrace. So we had a number of honour boards created. There is a board of the first thousand founding members, a lot of whom sadly have now died. Peter Ballan[?], who subsequently became Acting Chair when I finished as the Chair in 1998, Peter Ballan was member number two and I think George Mayo, my old friend, was probably three or four or five and it's a very interesting collection of names. It showed that the University was extending itself beyond just its staff and its students to its alumni and to its friends.

We inaugurated golden jubilees, and I was a member of the Council at the time, University Council, in fact Deputy Chancellor. Kim Bonython was set up to organise the sesquicentenary celebrations and he appealed to the community to take some action. I persuaded the University that the golden jubilee in the Bonython Hall would be the golden jubilee of the Bonython Hall and would be the anniversary, the

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sesquicentenary anniversary, of the State of South Australia. Warren Bonython was actually the guest speaker and he had to confess that he was a great disappointment to his family because chasing girls so much – and he said this himself, publicly – chasing girls so much as he did he didn't graduate in 1936 (laughs) and didn't graduate until a year later, so he was not actually a golden jubilee graduate in 1986. But he spoke very engagingly. Well, that has become an annual custom now.

I think you're asking me principally about Colombo Plan students. I did mention the name of a number of them and, as I say, I was guest speaker at the golden jubilee in Kuala Lumpur on 1st July 2001.

How do they view the alumni, Harry? How do the Colombo Plan/Asian alumni view being alumni of the University of Adelaide?

Very favourably, and they still are. There are very active associations. David Goh[?] is President in Singapore; Robert Lowe[?] is President in Kuala Lumpur; Roger Chan is the Executive Secretary in Those students who were at the time either Colombo Plan students or were here as private students – some of them call themselves 'Father Plan' students, here as private students – are very fondly attached to the University. They do regard themselves as alumni, as part of the University.

There's a changing attitude, however. Those older ones are finding it more difficult to get the younger ones to join in the level of activity. Why? The younger ones say, 'We paid our way, we owe you nothing'. Furthermore, when they get back home, their life is pretty competitive. They're not as prepared to spend as much of their visionary activities as were those older ones. I would hesitate to predict what the long-term future would be. I know for sure that it is being said by many in Asia and South-East Asia that what used to be called 'the ugly Americans' – you know, Graham Greene's ugly Americans? –

Yes, I do.

– are coming to be called 'the greedy Australians'. And if you look at the development plan for our universities and the constraints put on us by, principally, the Federal Government to raise full fee-paying student places, it's – no, no, no: I say again, Rob, I would hesitate to predict what the future will be. It will not be as rosy as the past.

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Now, Harry, just contemplating that era of the Colombo Plan and into the '60s and '70s, it was a time of mass expansion of the University, and we mentioned this last week. You were very involved in not just the Union Hall but in the planning for the new Union and the Union Bookshop. Now, I wonder could we spend some time talking about that now, because that's become a pivot, not just for students, but for people using those facilities?

Yes. Credit has been paid to me and to others in that paper that I gave you that came out at the time of the naming of the Harry Medlin Rooms. The old North-South Dining Rooms –

Yes.

– in the Union were renamed a couple of years ago the 'Harry Medlin Rooms', and it was acknowledged then the effort and vision and imagination that a number of us – I'm not the only one; there's an emeritus professor of mathematical physics, Angus Hearst, who actually chaired the Union Planning Committee. I was active on that planning committee. Our architects were –

Robert Dixon, Bob Dixon.

– yes, Dixon and Platten[?].

Dixon and Platten.

Yes. And they also did Kathleen Lumley College.

We'll come to that.

(laughter) Yes. And it was marvellous to see and to experience the way that enthusiasm and imagination could be converted into bricks and mortar. We were very concerned to preserve as much as possible of the early history of the Union, in particular the Symon Building and the George Murray, and they have been preserved and they've been integrated; we were also concerned to preserve the cloisters. Now, those cloisters are World War I memorial cloisters and there is a plaque there now to that effect. On the southern side, we integrated the eastern and western and northern parts of the cloisters with the new extensions. Part of those new extensions – and we tried to preserve as much of the Helen Mayo Refectory – – –. In the book *The lower level* there's a beautiful photograph of the women in the Helen Mayo Refectory.

Yes.

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We tried to preserve as much of that as possible. But there were added on the activity rooms and a workplace, a little theatre and then the bookshop. Now, I might have said earlier that I chaired the first bookshop inquiry in 1961 for the Adelaide University Union. We made recommendations. They went through the Union Council to the University Council. The principal recommendation was that bookselling, like vittling, was a central responsibility. Reminds me a little bit of what used to be part of the platform of the Australian Labor Party: the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange; they've now slung it out, of course. But bookselling and vittling.

Now, when the refectory first started, it was just, well, a vittling and excreting device: refectory and lavatories. Early, with the Colombo Plan, we converted part of the basement of the George Murray to a prayer room for Muslims and then we had a further prayer room in the Union extensions upstairs just south of the first floor of the Lady Symon Library.

Yes.

I think it's now called the Helen Menz Room, or was called the Helen Menz Room. So there was a lot of imagination went into the conceiving and guessing, in some respects, what was likely to be the student population. Now, the ex-service students doubled the student population from I think it said two thousand, three hundred to four thousand, seven hundred. Well, at the time that the extensions were open the student population was up to about ten thousand; well, it's now up to about eighteen thousand so things get a bit congested.

When I went back to the University in 1946, there were hardly any lavatories. There were public lavatories for students at the back of what is now the Mitchell Building, there was an old lavatory there just where the WEA Bookroom used to be, and indeed one Tuesday after Easter they found a dead cadaver in there. There were other lavatories at the back of the old Psych Building, now replaced by the Prince of Wales Building. In the Barr Smith Library I believe that there were lavatories for the librarian but I think the rest of the staff had to nick through to the (laughs) Union. So vittling and the effects of vittling became a central responsibility.

As I say, we argued that bookselling should. I was one of those who argued that because in 1948 Kevin Magarey, my late wife who was then Diana d'Este Wauchope

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and I were members of the National Union of Australian University Students Council. The Chief Justice, Sir Gerald Brennan, was one of the Queensland members. We were a pretty active lot. We proposed that we should be allowed that the National Union should be allowed to become a book importer because there was quite a risk, quite a problem, with bookselling. Even Ethel Payne[?] strongly believed in one price for all. Now, that's not really the way to go about it, we felt, and when the Adelaide University Union took over the WEA Bookroom we actually took Ethel Payne as the manager and we had to re-educate Ethel that there were discounts for Union and student members that broke the principle of one price for all. So it's a tricky bit. And after the War the entrepreneurial activities – I remember one that was opposite the University, the bookshop itself has gone, the Argonaut, Argonaut Books.

Oh, yes, of course.

Remember that?

Yes.

Well, they were pretty entrepreneur. Harry Muir, Beck Book Company –

Yes, up in Pulteney Street.

– yes. It was closer than North Terrace originally and it shifted beyond –

Rundle Street, didn't it?

– yes, beyond Rundle Street or Rundle Mall. Yes, well, anyway, I think it was our view that the University itself should take over the activity but the University declined to do so but it allowed the Union to negotiate with the WEA Bookroom. Now, with the building extensions in was it the mid-'60s when the whole of the Wills Plaza was re-created, the Wills Building replaced the old Psych Building, Barr Smith Library, Staff Club, I discovered that the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Noel Flentje, was being approached by the executive secretary, Williams, of the WEA to allow the WEA Bookroom, which was going to be demolished – and that was the original Union room, you remember –

Yes.

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– to allow that bookroom to get new premises on the Wills Plaza. Well, I managed to get the Council to stop those negotiations and to give the Adelaide University Union the exclusive right of conducting bookselling activities on the North Terrace campus. We negotiated with the WEA. Chris Hurford was the then Chairman of the WEA Board. Now, I think I have to be honest enough to say that I'm not the best negotiator that there is, I'm a bit too blunt. But we had two superb negotiators: Oscar Jones, who was the Warden of the Union; and Jim Bettison.

Now, Oscar was before Ralph Middenway, is that right?

Yes. Oscar followed Frank Borland and then Oscar went from the Warden, Union to be Secretary of the Waite Institute and he was followed in the Union by Ralph Middenway. But they were superb negotiators, they were smoother characters than [me]. (laughs) Anyway, they succeeded in persuading the handover of the WEA Bookroom to the Adelaide University Union and the three of us negotiated with the National Bank to build us the building. Now, Rob, if you look carefully, it's part of the Union extensions, as it were, it was designed by Dixon and Platten to be consistent architecturally with the new Union extensions, also to be consistent with the then still-existing George Murray and Lady Symon, and if you look at it you can see the connection, I think; but also, if you look carefully, it's a standalone building. It is not connected, it is not part of the Union, and we had special permission from the University Council, which had delegated authority both from the State Government and the City Council – because that's parklands –

Yes.

– so we had special permission to build this standalone building. We negotiated it with the National Bank. We got a special arrangement with the National Bank, which was given banking facilities. We tried to do it with the State Bank; the old State Bank had the sole savings branch there in the original Union.

That's right.

We couldn't get anywhere with them, but we got it with the National Bank. And it saddened me: once I was presiding at a Council meeting as Deputy Chancellor when it came up that the University had transferred its banker from the National Bank to – what is it now?

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Bank SA.

Yes, Bank SA. I was in the chair, I expected to be informed of this. It came up in a Council meeting. It had been done by the then Bursar and immediately after the Council meeting I went to the Chancellor's room, sat down, I asked the Registrar's secretary to get the Registrar to come and see me, I made him stand up in front of me as an old army officer and I said – this is Frank O'Neil – 'Frank, what's going on?' And it's the only time I've ever heard him swear, and I'm going to say what he actually said to me. I said, 'What's happening, why wasn't I told?' And he said, 'I left it to David and he fucked it up'. Well, what could you do? We were committed because he was one of the statutory officers of the University: he'd committed the University to this transfer of banker from one to the other and it was a great shock and a disappointment to me that a bank which had so well helped us with the Bookshop should just have been discarded.

Harry, on the subject of the bookshop itself being a separate building, I've spoken with Bob Dixon and I've seldom heard an architect voice such delight at a project as the Union whole but the additional building of the bookshop, and obviously it was a very special building for many people.

Yes.

Yourself, the architect, Ralph Middenway, others involved at the time.

Yes.

A very, very special piece of University history.

Yes. And they've thrown it away. I don't even know where the bookshop is.

No, I can't tell you that, Harry. So just reverting to something you said, though, the WEA bookshop which was at the rear of the Mitchell Building, had that been the Union room which had been used as a Union library, had it? Is that what it was originally?

That was the original Union room for men.

For men. Is that where the library was too, Harry?

Which library?

They had a small library – – –.

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Yes, they did. Yes, they did. There's a photograph of it in Margaret Finnis's *Lower level*.

Yes, we've just been looking at some of the old press cuttings and there's a photo in there of people using the small library.

Yes. The terrible thing: the women weren't allowed, in spite of the fact that it was in 1881 that I think Queen Victoria gave the letters patent to Adelaide University to have degrees in science and to admit women – decades before even Oxford and almost – not quite a century, I think eighty years before Cambridge.

Were Melbourne the first Australian university with a woman graduate, I think, and beat Adelaide by a year?

Yes.

But the edict had come through earlier for Adelaide than Melbourne, I think. Something like that.

Eighteen eighty-one it was allowed and Edith Emily Dornwell took a bit longer to get her degree: she was the first woman to graduate in science in – in fact, my wife gave the first Commemoration Address at that – I've got it here somewhere. Yes, it was one year after Melbourne. But she was the first woman graduate in science.

Now, Harry, carrying on that theme of the expansion of the University, I wonder if we could come to talk a little about Kathleen Lumley because this follows on, in a sense, with the expansion of that era. Now, university colleges go back to the formation of St Mark's and then St Andrew's, which only lasted a decade, and eventually St Ann's for women; but how did Kathleen Lumley come about?

What was the second one you said?

St Andrew's.

Where's that?

It was where Mercedes College is now.

Oh.

At what was called *Strathspey*, the Duncan house.

Oh.

It was there for ten years, from about 1928–38.

And Aquinas?

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Yes, that comes in later again. Sorry, I missed that, yes. That's in the '40s.

Lincoln?

Yes.

Well, St Ann's and Kathleen Lumley are the two non-systemic University colleges. Kathleen Lumley is the only postgraduate and it was created – the initial movers were Sir Kenneth Wills, who was the then chair of the Finance Committee and subsequently for two years Chancellor of the University; he was the brother to Kathleen Lumley. She had been Kathleen Wills and married a Lumley. I believe the Lumley name itself has changed from another name. You might like to – – –.

One can only guess.

Yes. I'll tell you off the record what I think about the other name but I won't say any more now. Kathleen Lumley. And Henry Baston was Vice-Chancellor. Bob Fisher tells me that he wrote or was involved in the writing of the first draft of the constitution. It was created by a formal resolution of the Council of Adelaide University in 1965. I think I've given in that paper the date.

Eighth of November, 1965.

Yes. The original 1965 gift I've shown in that paper as sixty thousand dollars; it was actually thirty thousand pounds, of course. That was matched by the State Government, thirty thousand pounds, and the total of sixty thousand pounds was then matched by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Universities Commission at a hundred and twenty-five thousand. The University kindly donated land. They also demolished a number of the cottages to make room for the college. It was conceived initially that the college would be for a hundred and twenty residents; there was initially accommodation for sixty residents, but the common facilities were said to be sufficient for the hundred and twenty. We've never been able to get it up to a hundred and twenty.

Sir Kenneth Wills was involved, as I say, because he'd been chair of the Finance Committee and at the time he and the then Bursar, Wally Meiklejohn[?], was surreptitiously buying land there at Lower North Adelaide – and I say 'surreptitiously': they bought quite a lump of that land between Finnis Street and MacKinnon Parade and it ran right up to where Bob Dixon's house is at the present

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time – and it was hoped that it would be able to use that land for University purposes. But consistently the City Council has declined to allow it to be used for any educational purposes except one: the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music was allowed to be set up in Finniss Street. Now, I as a member of what was then the Faculty of Music, it became the Faculty of Performing Arts, was one of those involved in the original creating of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music. That was a very interesting – god! We used to have to get the instruments back from Trim's on Monday morning. (laughter) But it did a marvellous job. It produced a number of orchestras, a number of musicians, Indigenous orchestras; it got the young boys out of jail, it got them off alcohol and drugs. On our working party Clem Leske was Director of the Elder Conservatorium at the time and I think he chaired it. People like George Mayo and Harry Medlin were on it and we were all in favour of doing it; and Charlie Perkins, the late Charlie Perkins; we were all in favour of trying to do something to help them.

Also we had to – the police were pests. Police are not allowed to come onto the campus of Adelaide University except with permission of the management. We tried to get that authority extended to the original Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music. We were not able to, and they used to come in there and just harass these kids. Well, I think Ben Yengi – you know Ben?

No.

Sudanese. Ben was Secretary of CASM. I think he's now back in the Sudan trying to set up a hospital there. He's got his whole family here – he's Christian. He is Sudanese, he is African, he's not Arab, and that's what the troubles are around that part of the world. Anyway, I don't think I told you – if I did, excuse me – but when Aboriginalisation took over and Charlie Perkins and there was another fellow were keen that the whole centre would be run by Indigenous or Aboriginal people and they got rid of Ben, and the press came to see Ben in Finniss Street and he said, 'I didn't think I could be discriminated against because I was *too* black'. (laughter) Very black. He shifted from there, it's down at the Thebarton establishment now.

So, Harry, Kathleen Lumley was a great success for the University despite not being able to achieve the numbers originally planned for. It has been a most successful attribute: would you agree with that?

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Yes, I would. This year is the fortieth year of its intake of the first three students. We have a record of all of them. When the Chairman before me, the late Harold Rodda, died a scholarship fund was set up for funding students – funding them in the sense that fees, or part of the fees, would be demitted. I have a list here of those who contributed. I believe that the college will try a similar activity. The Harold J. Rodda Memorial Scholarships can contribute something like the demitting of a thousand dollars. That means that you need in a fund that it's going to be hedged against inflation twenty times that because you can get the tax free body four to five per cent so you can get a thousand. A friend of mine recently, or a year or so ago, was put on the Council of Kathleen Lumley College and he set up a working party to try and extend its activities into further scholarships, in other words the raising of a series of twenty-thousand-dollar scholarships for the demitting of the fees, and the college now being forty years old there are things that need to be done, and with the University of South Australia and indeed the University of Adelaide with student facilities up in town the college needs to keep things up to date. I personally think that a little too much is made of that because Dixon and Platten were pretty farsighted architects and the facilities are, I think, pretty satisfactory. I had here fairly recently the President of the Singapore Chapter and I put him in one of the rooms there and he was more than satisfied and he's likely to be back here again in November.

There's a general manager at one of the banks, might even be the National Bank, I don't know his name, but there are getting to be some influential people who have been residents at the college. Jane Lomax-Smith was one of them.

So it obviously has had good use, Harry, over the years –

Yes.

– by people who've made their mark.

Yes, it has.

Harry, could we move on from Kathleen Lumley, because you've also written a paper about that that's worth saying on the record that that should be seen in conjunction with this interview, I think.

Sorry?

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The paper you put together on Kathleen Lumley should be read in conjunction with what we're talking about, is what I'm suggesting.

Yes. Well, before you leave it entirely, you will notice that I got one section in that paper about a sexual harassment case that came before us, where the complainant who was just an honours student at Flinders University was allowed by *me* into the college, because as a postgraduate college we don't regard honours students as postgraduates, was allowed in the college because she was said to have said that her life was being threatened down at Flinders. So we let her in and she brought a case for sexual harassment and changed it during the lawsuit to sexual discrimination. Well, you've seen in the paper where I've abstracted Justice O'Loughlin's ---.

Yes.

Oh, and we were advised by the Staff Association at the University and by the University's Equal Employment Officer to give in. Now, I don't give in [?in the mastering?], I really fought this out and it did cost us forty thousand dollars and we won it finally, and O'Loughlin was very – in fact, he said how rigorous I had been in the court. When you're accused of something you didn't do ---. We were said not to have a sexual [harassment] policy, but we did; and I had indeed, as a member of the Council, had it copied from the University's own sexual harassment policy and modified to suit and it was on the noticeboard, it was available. So anyway, I made a point of that and, in my view, the University was responsible. It should have been *financially* responsible. We won the case with costs, the student was bankrupt, we couldn't get anything from the student; that letter that I drafted that was sent to both the Chancellor, De Crespigny, and the Vice-Chancellor, McWha, was never even answered. They ignored the case. And it goes on in that letter to claim that the University has not honoured the original resolution in November of 1965 to provide an equal area of space for the further expansion of the college to a hundred and twenty. Now, that difficulty occurred while Mary O'Kane was Vice-Chancellor and I've quoted from the interchanges between the Master and me on the one hand and Mary O'Kane on the other – just that sort of cursory relation between familial members is to me unacceptable.

But I think that period, unsatisfactory relations with the college, led to a general deterioration in the collegiality in the University into managerialism and arrogance,

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central arrogance, which has further increased; and I'm sorry to report that Kathleen Lumley seem to have been one of the starting victims of this change in attitude.

I'll just stop this, Harry, I'll create a new [session].

END OF DISK 5: DISK 6

This is the sixth session of an interview with Harry Medlin for the University of Adelaide Oral History on 28th September 2007. Harry, on the session before last we did talk a little about the Whitlam years and the growth in student numbers and in the life of the University, if you like. I don't know if you want to talk some more about those years but I'm interested in moving beyond them into the Fraser and Hawke years and how they affected the life of the University.

Well, Whitlam abolished fees. I think I said last time, didn't I, Whitlam got – yes, I did – the Staff Association to negotiate the handing over of authority, and that was a mistake. It just turned out to be, I think, a mistake.

Fraser, from '75–83, what happened there – and I can't say whether the inquiry began during the Fraser years or not – but Peter Karmel was the head of the AUC¹⁵ and it was through him that we negotiated to get an Academic Salaries Tribunal. Now, I think I did mention that last time.

You did.

Okay, yes, I did; and we won the first case. Now, that's the most striking thing, I think, that happened. I think I did say last time that a mistake was made, in my opinion, to leave FAUSA and re-create the National Tertiary Education Union and to affiliate with the ACTU as the prime body. I think I did talk about that.

You did.

Rob, that's about all I would have to say about that period, I think.

What about coming into the Hawke Era, then, which is when the funding arrangements really begin to go askew?

Oh, that's different. Yes. I think I also mentioned last time, didn't I, about Susan Ryan as the Minister for Education –

Yes.

¹⁵ AUC – Australian Universities Commission.

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– and she brought in that administrative charge. I don't remember whether I said that I gave the address at a commemoration in (pauses) 1987 – yes, because I retired 1985 so I was Doctor of the University in 1987 and I gave the address, Kevin Marjoribanks was Vice-Chancellor, Roma Mitchell was Chancellor; Roma introduced me and I spoke and I think I might have said something last time about that, that I quoted from *The Advertiser* that day about the administrative charge. And I had persuaded the Council – these are a bit tricky, aren't they? – persuaded the Council that it was opposed to all fees. Yes, I think I did speak about that before. Anyway, the administrative charge became fees and they became HECS and they indexed HECS and so on. I think that's the worst thing that happened round that time. That practice has been continued by subsequent governments: Keating and Howard.

Did I talk, Rob, that it was during that time of the Hawke Government that the Colombo Plan was abolished?

No, you just mentioned that earlier today, you were saying that you thought it was a tragedy a Labor government should have allowed it to occur.

Yes. Well, it's been replaced by some sort of thing, I'm not sure that I know the name of it. The Colombo Plan as such has gone as far as Australia is concerned, but the Colombo Plan still operates. A few years ago I was talking to the executive officer in Colombo about it, and in that tribute that I've written to Asian graduates I have listed the countries that he told me were still involved in Colombo Plan activities. I believe Singapore to be one of them, and of course Singapore is now a very prosperous nation as a result of Lee Kwan Yew and now of course Lee Kwan Yew's son is the Prime Minister and they can afford to be generous. I think they have forgotten entirely the days of the Confrontation and the Dove of the Archipelago. (laughs)

So, Harry, was there a change to the ways in which universities were funded during that Hawke period, too, was that when the whole means of funding – this is where I'm a bit uncertain and can't recall.

No, that funding occurred earlier than that. Again, as I say, I was President of FAUSA when we negotiated that so we're talking about – yes, the Fraser Government. But it came into full swing with Hawke, I believe, and Susan Ryan, I repeat, in the introduction of the administrative charge and that – I just say again, that

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newspaper article in *The Advertiser* was about the danger of the introduction of any charges or fees, call them what you will, that they will aggravate and, as I say, I persuaded the University Council to oppose it. I think it was the fourth ceremony in 1987: I have a video of it but I don't have a transcript, but if you wanted to check it out accurately Kylie could probably pull off the address that I gave after I was introduced by Roma Mitchell.

Harry, as you said, you retired in 1985.

Yes.

From that time on you've just about done as much as you had in the previous time you'd been there anyway, by my reading. But it's fascinated me that you became heavily-involved just after your retirement in the Bragg Centenary and then, in due course, in the Mawson Collection and the Mawson Collection Appeal.

Yes.

I wonder before we get onto some of the more recent events whether we could talk about those two very significant parts of the University life, please?

The Bragg Centenary?

Yes, first.

I don't know how I was conned into being the director of the thing, but I was. It was 1986 and I've let you have the video that I made as the director of the Bragg Centenary. I was a member of the Council and also a member of the University Foundation Committee. Now, when Don Stranks was Vice-Chancellor he set up the University Foundation and it was funded annually in the Finance Committee and had other fundraising activities. I have a list that I got from Geoffrey Sawyer at the time of the Colombo Plan. The Foundation had put something like one million dollars of funding into projects of different sorts. Now, when Ross Adler took over as chair of the Finance Committee after Michael Abbott I spoke to Ross Adler about what I think is the wisdom of reintroducing the Foundation and I don't think anything has come of it. As I say, I think the preoccupation now is with getting money from others rather than using it for educational and cultural purposes. Well, I went to the Foundation and I got funding for visiting foundation professors: Paul Davies, Freeman Dyson, Frank Klose[?]. Now, there were two others, not directly funded by the Foundation, but Brian Matthew and Stephen Bragg. Now, Don Stranks somehow

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or other got Stephen Bragg as a grandson of Sir William Bragg funded; but I persuaded the Foundation to provide airfares and accommodation for these three.

In the video you will see that I have said that the ideas, that the central core of the whole activity was ideas and applications, and we had seminars given by the three foundation professors and we also had addresses given in the Bonython Hall, and you'll see from the video that they were very well-attended. One of them was on things unattempted yet. These are great ideas. Anyway, they joined in to the whole of the activities. We had an open session in the Bragg Lecture Theatre chaired by Tony Thomas – Tony Thomas is not with us at the moment; he's head of some high-energy thing in Pennsylvania, professor of physics, Elder Professor of Physics – chaired by him and with Frank Klose, Paul Davies Freeman Dyson. And some of the questions that came up were really quite remarkable.

Indeed, there's a woman called Anne-Marie Grisokono[?] and she said, 'We are told that the state one of us super position of all the possible states until it's observed by an observer who collapses the wave function, and I wonder if reality is not a bit like that?' So Freeman Dyson says, 'Oh, look, when you first start quantum mechanics you realise there are all these things you have to learn, so you learn them, you make certain applications; and then you start to worry about the theories behind all this. Then the third stage is you come to realise there's nothing there to be understood at all'. (laughs) Well, that just brought the house down. And he had a bit of an argument with Paul Davies – you know, Paul Davies writes about the mind of God and all that stuff – bit of an argument with Paul Davies about quantum mechanics and he said, 'Ninety per cent of what scientists do has got nothing to do with quantum mechanics', he said. 'You can't make a quantum mechanical statement about the past; it contradicts the Uncertainty Principle.' (laughs) It's good to see world leaders in close contact with students. And Baden Teague was there, I remember – he was Senator at the time – asking his questions. The Bragg Centenary.

I set up – well, I led the setting up of the Physics Museum and that was in the Physics Department. We collected all this stuff. Did I talk about that?

Yes, you did.

Okay.

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Yes, we've talked about that. It was particularly the public address side that we hadn't talked about and how you put that together, and I hadn't realised that you'd used the Foundation for that.

Yes.

Harry, I don't know if this goes directly from that, but how did the Mawson Collection begin, in a sense?

How did it begin?

Yes.

Well, after Mawson died there were two benefactors: Paquita and a lawyer and I give them their names there. Then the collection – (rearranges and refers to papers) now, what have I done with it, I wonder? Is it still running?

The Mawson Collection is still running. Hang on, I'll just pause it, Harry. (break in recording) So, Harry, we've found the piece of paper.

Yes, good. So the thing about this recalling stuff is that if you deposit records somewhere you're inclined to forget about it unless you can find them again. Anyway, it was in 1959 that the Council established that Mawson Institute for Antarctic Research as a permanent memorial for Sir Douglas Mawson, and they set up a committee of management: it was composed of Ligertwood, Baston, Alderman, Huxley, Grenfell Price, Cowan[?] and Ivan and Patricia Thomas. And the Institute was inaugurated by Prime Minister Menzies back in 1961 and gradually it assembled the material, those artefacts, out of his expeditions, and photographs and memorabilia. So there were two sort of different parts of it.

There was part of collection that Lady Mawson herself had, which she handed to the Barr Smith Library, and I'm unable to say – I've said in this paper that it's my opinion that that material should have remained there when the rest of it was transferred to the Museum; I think that part should have remained but I'm unable to say whether that was so or not.

There have been a whole lot of publications that have become part of the whole collection; but it was in 1991 that there was a deed of appointment agreed. Then then trustees of the collection would be the two life tenants together with a son from each of the two families: Andrew McEwan[?] and Alan Thomas[?]. Now, there was a deed of family arrangement, and I actually endorsed that with the authority of the

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Council in 1994, and I'll read from this paper where the founders authorise the trustees to enter into a deed of charitable trust with the University of Adelaide and:

... that, by entering into the deed of charitable trust with the University, the trustees will transfer to the University possession of the Mawson Collection to be held by the University as trustee in accordance with the deed of charitable trust.

So there were then working parties set up and Alan Thomas and Andrew McEwan were always, even though they were not actual Council members, always invited by me to attend those meetings, even though they had no explicit authority – they didn't own it any more; they'd handed it over. And in fact there was something like forty-two thousand, I think, pounds or dollars, that at one stage we recompensed the family on account of their expenditure.

Now, there's a deed of charitable trust and it's in several parts, and it's quite interesting. There are recitals in that deed. Now, once upon a time I could just about know those things by heart, but no. I'm so disappointed in what's happened to the Mawson Collection that I'm inclined to forget it. There were parts of it identified. There was a certain artefact: the valuation report by Bruce Rutherford in December, 1990 – certain valuation of maps, charts, stamp collection prepared by Ron Winch[?] dated April, 1992. Now, this Ron Winch, do you know him?

I know of him, yes.

Yes, he used to have a shop in Canberra.

Yes.

Yes, Ronald Winch. His brother, Ken Winch[?], was in the same class as me at Adelaide Tech and I had some dealings with Ron. The certain valuation reports of books, monographs, pamphlets and journals prepared again by Ron Winch in 1992; certain valuation report of manuscripts and documents prepared by Nancy Flannery and Ron Winch in February 1991; and a valuation report of pictorial material prepared by Nancy Flannery and dated 1993. Now, these are recitals, these are extracts from recital of the deed. The valuation report of medals awarded to Sir Douglas and Lady Mawson prepared by Spink Noble[?] in May of 1992. I have said that it is an absolute imperative, in my opinion, that these six manifests be produced for the management committee and the Council in order to identify what is and what

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is not contained in the Mawson Collection, now supposedly held by the University in trust in accordance with the deed of charitable trust. That was never done. Indeed, I think I did say last time that Alan Thomas actually handed the medals over to the Museum at a function that I attended and got the shock of my life. I remember the medals were held in the collection by Fred Jacka when Fred was still running the Mawson Antarctic –

Institute.

– yes, Institute. So I don't know if that answers your question.

Well, Harry, it gets close to coming to grips with two of the very important things you were involved in: the Bragg Centenary and the beginnings of the Mawson Collection Trust.

Yes.

Can I ask you something else, Harry, which deviates from all this but which is of a general nature? Through all your years at the University you've described some of the people you met along the way, and some were obviously very memorable characters and others not so memorable. Who are some of those who still, in your mind, epitomise Adelaide University, who were the people who had an influence?

John Jefferson Bray; Roma Flinders Mitchell. These were outsiders who dedicated their lives. I think I said before about Roma, Roma was able to restrict herself to a few things at any one time and I know that while she was Chancellor she was also involved in the South Australian Chapter of the Order of Australia. I think I told you that once she was blinking her eyes at me because I'd done something about the Order of Australia that she didn't approve of. Geoffrey Malcolm Badger, Vice-Chancellor; Don Stranks; and of course Bill Scammell.

I was privileged to be one of those to give an address on the occasion of the tribute to Don Stranks after he died. It records here that there was a thanksgiving service on Tuesday, 12th August, and a tribute paid in the House of Assembly on 19th August 1986, and that's recorded – – –. Mike Duigan, who was the Member for Adelaide at the time –

Yes.

– he spoke in the House of Assembly. My oration is described as Edwin Harry Medlin, member of the University Council since 1967, Senior Deputy Chancellor: 'This was a man'; and they were all there, Carolyn Stranks, Geoffrey, Stephen,

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Gillian, Eric, family. He did a remarkable thing – well, several remarkable things: he actually actually set up the Foundation and that did marvellous things round the University to the culture and the heritage of it. I actually was asked by Roma to write a proposal to the Order of Australia and I did write it and he was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia – not just for what he was paid for; and that’s one of the troubles with the Order of Australia, a lot of them, top ones, seem to go to people who do nothing except work in the jobs that they get paid for. And on one occasion the Alumni Association, was probably about 1990, they sought submissions on attitudes to the Order and I know the Alumni Association was very strong and actually gave examples of what they thought – what *we* thought, anyway – were misplaced awards. And I’m sure I said to you that when my wife was inducted we went to a function where they were all in order: the Companions, the Officers, the Members – oh, dear-oh-dear. Anyway, Don certainly earned his Officer of the Order of Australia.

But I have said here that:

‘No-one and no thing is perfect; it would be idle to assert otherwise. I know, however, it was Don Stranks’s heartfelt duty to serve our whole institution – its students, general and academic staff, friends and even enemies, graduates and alumni – and in so doing he gave his whole mind, heart and strength. In other words, he identified with his burden intellectually, emotionally and physically.

Now, I didn’t write those words because I couldn’t think of anything else. It was a heartfelt tribute to what I recognised were his qualities. It goes on a bit, but I concluded it with – as I have on few other occasions – ‘Don Stranks was, of course, not Brutus’. But you know what Mark Anthony had to say about Brutus?

I can’t recall, Harry.

It goes on:

Don Stranks was, of course, not Brutus. But, Shakespearean ironies aside –

Now, there would need to be some ironies.

– Shakespeare did have Mark Anthony to say ‘His life was gentle, and the elements/ So mix’d in him that Nature might stand up/ And say to all the world, “This was a man!”’ [*Julius Caesar*, Act V Scene V]

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You ask about people who made an impression on me and he was one.

I did mention last time about Sir Kenneth Wills.

You did.

But my contacts with him had been through the army, rather than – because he was only Chancellor for two years. But he did a marvellous thing, was when I first got on the Council I tried to get student membership because, as an ex-service student on the SRC in 1948, I had first proposed that we recommend there be student members of the University Council. We'd been in the army, we'd been fighting for our country but we were not supposed to be mature enough to be members of the governing body. I found that *grossly* offensive. Mind you, it was a very different university when Sir Mellis Napier – –.

You mentioned that before, too.

'Sir Malice'. (laughter)

So Kenneth Wills was obviously a great contributor in his own right, as you pointed out, even though you only had the two years on Council with him. You've mentioned Don Stranks. In past interviews you've mentioned Geoffrey Badger and did again, and Kevin Marjoribanks, too.

Yes.

But is Bill Scammell, if you like, the end of an era of those people with their involvement in the Uni? I don't want to put words in your mouth, Harry, but I knew him too and I could see what he was doing there.

Well, I think you *have* put words in my mouth: I think Bill probably was the – he was followed by Bruce Webb as Chancellor –

Oh, yes.

– but Bruce, of course, was sick at the time; and he'd done an enormous amount in the community but he was not long as Chancellor and he was not, in my opinion, as effective, and his was a very different personality from – –. I mean Scammell was unique. I respond to people who feel that they have a sense of duty and who are honest. I know I mentioned earlier about the Methodist Order of Knights.

Yes, you did.

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They had a motto that came from St Paul – I’ll give it all to you, but I prefer the early part of it: ‘Live pure, speak true, right wrong’ – it goes on – ‘follow the King—Else, wherefore born?’ But ‘Live pure, speak true, right wrong’ I think is superb and I think those people that I’ve known adhered to the St Paul adage. I was brought up a Methodist to respond to people who subscribe to and practise, I think – I forget where the phrase comes from – ‘the fitness of things’. Where does that come from?

You’ve got me scratching my head, Harry, and I know it, too.

Yes. I’ve used it a couple of times: in the eulogy for John Mayfield.

Was it from John Wesley’s sermons?

It could be.

I’m just trying to recall. I know a few of them but I can’t get that one. Harry, if I could just lead you on from this, one of the things that we talked about preliminary to even the recording was your view of not just the academic life of the University but the social life, the collegiate atmosphere, and you indicated that about the period that Bill and Bruce Webb finished their chancellorship that things began to change and you iterated that again today with Kathleen Lumley College. So perhaps if I could do that as a lead-in for you, for your thinking, but that change from academic collegiality as *you* perceive it?

Certainly, it certainly did. I think it’s a consequence of a general malaise in society. When I’ve spoken to other people about it I’m assured that the malaise is general and widespread. I think it comes probably from the top down: we’re increasingly over-government. I’ve said that I’m told that a fair fraction of the University administration is spent in writing reports to any Tom, Dick and Harry that seems to want information. If I read the paper I’m persuaded, I think, from the nuances in the language that managerialism is rampant. That’s certainly the experience in the University.

I feel a little bit of the victim of it at the moment, invited to this unveiling of the bust of Sir *Lawrence* Bragg – Sir William was the one who really did the stuff here; Sir Lawrence was not actually a graduate in physics, he graduated in mathematics after having gone to Saint Peter’s College – by the Duke of Kent next Wednesday, and I’m looking forward very much to the pre-launch of the – – –. (laughs) Are you going?

No, not on Wednesday.

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No, on Thursday.

On Thursday, yes.

The next day. Pre-launch of John's book, and I've been in contact with John about it. But on Wednesday – I'm rather immobilised anyway, as a consequence of being a Jap prisoner of war, and it's not easy for me to get to the Physics Department and there are stairs up to the seminar room where it's going to be held so I put it to them, put it to the administrator of the School of Chemistry and Physics and the Dean of the School and the head of the Physics Department and the Vice-Chancellor that I should be provided with a University car to get me there because, if the Duke of Kent's going to be there, there's likely to be a hell of a lot of coppers round the place and security and all that stuff and I'm not in a position where I want to go walking too much round the University. Anyway, I don't know how many cars the University has but I know they have cars; anyway, they've knocked it back so I told them that I'm unlikely to get there. But I've had another email this morning that tells me that I would be able to get a taxi to park in front of the – because I asked if I could have a reserved parking space because, now that I'm not on the Council, I don't have a blue parking permit; but I've got a handicapped permit, so can they reserve a space for me? No, they can't do that. But a taxi could get in. Now, I'll bet there'll be coppers at the gate. I mean, if the Duke of Kent's going to be there there'll be police everywhere, so I hope the taxi will be able to get me in. But this bureaucratic nonsense. It's just humbuggery.

And I said that I'd want to be introduced as the Emeritus Senior Deputy Chancellor, as a visiting associate professor in physics and as the Director of the Bragg Centenary and that I'd assembled a lot of valuable material and I'd got the pristine satchel that I had designed and made, I've got the video, I've got the paper, the booklet on Physics at the University of Adelaide edited by Harry Medlin, eighty-seven pages – interesting number, eighty-seven, it's the Devil's number – and I'd got a paperweight. I mean, I had the medallion, the Centenary medallion, designed and I had it made. The design I copied from pewter – and there's another one of our graduates, he was not Colombo Plan, just been made another Adelaide graduate, I always see him in KL. They did a beautiful medallion for the Methodist School in Kuala Lumpur and it's biconcave. Now, if

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you're going to have a paperweight it makes sense to have it biconcave because you don't rub all the stuff off. So I got Menzel Plastics to mount some of these to make a paperweight. Well, I thought I'd offer one of these to him. And I get told that the routine is being managed, if that's the word, by the Premier's Department and they can't guarantee that a clown like Medlin could intrude into this. So I need a bit more information about whether or not I would be able to let him have it.

I would have thought that, if he's the Patron of the Royal Institution and the 'Baroness Greensleeves', as I call her, she's to be out here on the Thursday, I would have thought that if you're going to be the Patron of the Royal Institution and both Sir William, the father, who was the Bragg Professor here, and the son, Sir Lawrence, have both been Directors of the Royal Institution, that they might have wanted to consolidate the contacts between the father, in particular, and the Adelaide Physics Department and the Bragg Centenary, which I just say again was the centenary appointment in 1886 of Sir William Bragg.

I don't know whether bureaucrats are muddle-headed or muddle-minded. There's a difference.

So you're saying, Harry, that this isn't just generic to the University, though; this is across society?

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, I am. And it is probably as dangerous a behavioural syndrome as global warming is physically. (laughs) I could put it in those terms.

END OF INTERVIEW.