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an interview with

EMERITUS PROFESSOR WILLIAM ALLAN EDWARDS

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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EDWARDS, Professor William Allan

NOTE TO READER

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Tape 1
Side 1

This is an interview with Emeritus Professor William Allan Edwards that took place at his home Unit 3, 10 Hensman Street, South Perth, on Friday March 16th 1984. The interviewer is Anne Reid.

AR Professor Edwards do you give the University Archives and the Battye Library permission to use the information you give me today?

WE Yes indeed.

AR Well Professor Edwards you spent 34 years as Head of the English Department at the University of Western Australia. But before we talk about those years I'd like you to go back and tell us a little about your background. Where were you born?

WE I was born in Bolton, which is ten miles north of Manchester, and my people were very earnest, lower middle class, chapel going provincials. My father was trained as a printer, worked in the printing press of the local newspaper, was what I think you'd call an autodidact, shall we say stemming from Samuel Smiles and John Ruskin. He taught himself to play the flute, he taught himself shorthand, he taught himself to be a cabinet maker, not a very good one. In short, he was energetic, enterprising and determined to make his mark. His life was centred on the chapel, he was a Wesleyan; on the Sunday School; he was a local preacher for about 60 or 70 years. In fact until his death at 95, until perhaps 90 he was still preaching and he was preaching to us from 90 to 95.

AR So you were always surrounded in books?

WE Yes, my father collected books, he read widely, he was highly intelligent in all kinds of ways. Around about the age of 40 he entered a competition to write an advertisement and won it, and the judge was a very smart Jew from Manchester who offered him a job at once and he went off to Manchester and within five or six months he was really a star writer of copy and remained extremely good right through his working life. He didn't stop going to the office until he was 85. But he became, fairly rapidly, rather affluent, it was in some ways very disturbing, my mother didn't like it. After he'd been about a year in this new job in Manchester his employer went off to London, founded his firm there and asked my dad to go with him. My mother couldn't bear the idea of going to London - she'd never been to London, but it was a long way off, it was very big and it was a city of vice - Babylon in fact. So he stayed in Manchester where he did extremely well for himself. By temperament he was what I'd call a chronic minority man, always in the minority and always right, very, very articulate about it. He was what one might describe, I suppose, as an old fashioned radical, not a socialist because he had all kinds of objections to that, but our bible was the 'Manchester Guardian' and I still read the 'Guardian', I think it is a very good paper. Perhaps it's because of that that I was preserved from becoming a Communist in Cambridge and entering into the spy system. Almost all my friends became Communists, especially the intelligent ones. But I went up in 1928 the year the big depression overcame England and various other places. I might say Lancashire had been depressed for five or six years before 1928, but it was a very terrible time for people after graduation trying to get jobs, they seemed to have disappeared altogether these jobs.

AR Now you won a scholarship to Cambridge.

WE I got scholarships to my local school and from there my local County Borough offered three scholarships of £100 a year each for university studies and I won one of these and how on earth we got to Cambridge I can't really imagine. It would have been more natural to have pushed me off to Manchester, which is quite a good university. But perhaps the maths master at the school, who came from King's College, Cambridge, told me I'd be wasted on Manchester. My dad could just afford to keep me in Cambridge. Off I went to Cambridge and three or four years later my younger brother went to Cambridge too.

In Cambridge I did well in my first year exams and my college gave me an exhibition and at the end of the second year in the Tripos I got a first and the college was very pleased with me, gave me a senior scholarship and then when I got another first they gave me a research studentship, which I held for a couple of years. They treated me very well.

AR In that time you did spend a little sojourn in Edinburgh?

WE Oh yes, this was after I graduated and I became an enrolled PhD student and luckily during my first year or so called research all my good ideas on the topic were exhausted in writing a prize essay which earned me the princely sum of £250, which was a lot in those days. Junior lecturers to universities were appointed at £250, sometime even at £220, so it was enough almost to keep me for a year. After that I got another studentship. That was worth £300. And I went off to Germany, to Munich, on what turned out to be a really wild goose chase. It's too complicated to say why it was a wild goose chase. But I spent only about seven or eight weeks in Munich and came back acknowledging complete defeat, which was in the end very sensible of me, but a little humiliating.

Meantime I'd been in Edinburgh for about eight or nine months where a very distinguished Scot, Professor Grierson, was a real expert in my period of literary history, and I'd gone there on the off chance that I could talk to him and found when I got to Edinburgh, a very cold Easter Monday, that he was away in America on a lecture tour. "Back in a fortnight," they told me. But then he had married daughters in America so he didn't come back until July. And I was more or less kicking my heels in Edinburgh in the worst part of the depression. I got thoroughly tired of hearing unemployed Scotsmen traipsing the streets playing on the bagpipes 'The Road to the Isles'.

However by this time I'd got married and my first child, Hugh, was born in Edinburgh, up on the windy heights of Carlton Hill. He spent his first months of life on the edge of Loch Goil, a long, narrow piece of water about 40 miles north of Glasgow, with a sprinkling of stock brokers' summer houses alongside and we hired a house. It had rats under the floor boards, which gradually made their presence smelt. It rained about 25 days out of the month of August and we had lonely seagulls flying over the fiord, an admiral next door, and I used to climb the local hills whether it was foggy or not. I once met a red deer to my great surprise, just near the summit of one of these mountains.

That was my Scottish excursion . . .

AR You did have a bit of time with Grierson though?

WE I saw him, I think on about three occasions. He was very charming to me, he liked the essays I submitted to him, he introduced me to two or three of his bright boys, one of whom, Professor Gordon, I encountered some 30 or 40 years later in Wellington, he was Professor of English there. We disagreed. However Grierson wrote me a very nice testimonial which was very largely responsible for my getting my first job as Senior Lecturer in Cape Town.

AR Before we get to Cape Town, you also knew Leavis and Richards?

WE Yes, I should say that when I got up to Cambridge I was very well read for a boy of my age. We had an excellent public library in Bolton, the first one in England to have open access, and I am often reminded of a quip by Osbert Sitwell, who in one year book of "Who's Who" put under the heading Education, "Public Libraries". I don't know what Eton thought about it, but clearly it was a nice back hander. I was educated mainly at Bolton Municipal Library. But I was a very gauche boy and decidedly a loner. I didn't really like being solitary, but I was so for a very long time, and it was my good fortune, bad fortune, both I suppose, to be assigned as tutor to George Rylands, who in that time was a Fellow of King's, newly appointed and he'd just spent three years as private secretary to Leonard and Virginia Woolf. He was an old Etonian and very handsome in his platinum blonde way, very attractive to both sexes and had a very lively social life. He was in the swim, in short. His rooms had been decorated and furnished by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant and there was a table in the corner of the room with about 60 enormous photographs signed with affection Edith Sitwell, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey - and all the greats.

AR So he really was part of the Bloomsbury set.

WE Oh yes, he was enthusiastic about the theatre, was a very great actress (I use the word advisedly) in fact in the Cambridge ADC, which didn't allow somen to join them. I remember a stunning Cleopatra that he acted - Con Amore. Later he became quite a noted producer. He produced 'The Duchess of Malfi' for instance in New York and London with Gielgud as his leading actor. And after the foundation of the Cambridge Theatre, this was one of Keynes' cultural contributions to Cambridge, he became the Director of this theatre. So some of my interest in theatre was undoubtedly fostered by Rylands.

At the time we had an eccentric millionaire in Cambridge called Terence Grey who'd revamped an old Salvation Army Revival Hall into a small and very modern centre where he put on the most extraordinary plays, the most extraordinary productions, and we saw all kinds of people who became very famous like Peggy Ashcroft, Tyrone Guthrie, Flora Robson and Robert Donat and so on. And it was really quite a good education at the Festival. If you liked the play you could go and see it again for nothing, and again and again as often as you wanted.

AR You lucky person.

WE Yes, yes it was a great thing. Well I don't know who was a greater trial, me to 'Dadie' Rylands or he to me, but shall we say we didn't exactly hit it off all the time - though in retrospect I think he

treated me very handsomely and was a very good tutor. But I much preferred Leavis, who had a great attraction for grammar school boys of my intellect and low social standing who became enthusiastic disciples of his and I joined this group of great admirers, always with some reservations, being like my dad of course, a minority even in the minority. And my great admiration of Leavis never quite extended to his wife, Queenie. However we'll leave that one.

After I became a research student I had to have a formal supervisor, and in my day in Cambridge a supervisor was somebody you shook hands with at the beginning of term and if you were polite shook hands with as you left at the end of term and he left you to find your own way. And my supervisor was Dr Richards, who was already very eminent and hand'nt much time for research students unless they were contributing good ideas to his particular concerns.

AR Was this I A Richards?

WE Yes, but unluckily for me after about six months he went off as a visiting professor to Peking. Then, when he'd finished a year in China he went off to Harvard as a visiting professor, so I had to find a substitute supervisor and went to Leavis, who was intellectually very stimulating and a very great teacher I think. He wasn't much good to me in a career sense, not as much as Rylands would have been if I'd been an Old Etonian. But still we had very good times together and especially when I got married and had my child, Hugh. We were living in a cottage outside Cambridge for the time. Hugh was about four or five months older than her first child Ralph. Now Ralph was a very peculiar baby, he must have had a very difficult birth to start with and for six months or so he didn't want to eat, he had to be fed by subterfuge on honey and mashed bananas or something like that and Queenie, however admirable her intellect didn't know one end of a baby from another, when she started at any rate. I did. I gave her a lot of personal instruction.

AR You had a five months' start?

WE Of course. But I should say that my wife was a trained kindergarten teacher and a great enthusiast for Montessori and then the New Education Fellowship and I was equally intense about the New Education Fellowship approach to child rearing and schooling and so on. I was a very dedicated Freudian at this time, so I knew quite a lot about infant psychology. Most of which I have forgotten, happily.

So Leavis was a very great influence. He still is, especially through 'Scrutiny' the journal he began to edit in I think 1932. Well I was one of the original contributors and certainly our copies of 'Scrutiny' were worn out very rapidly in Western Australia. We have a set now which looks as though it's been battered to death. He is certainly very important to me, and there were quite a number of people associating with him at the time of course, friends of mine: I didn't get much chance of using him when I got to South Africa, though.

AR So you went off as Senior Lecturer to the University of Cape Town?

WE I did, it was a University of 3,000 students and virtually new buildings half way up the mountain side, or at least it seemed half way up the mountain side; I suppose it was on the 600ft contour level. But the road runs straight as an arrow up there, we should have had a funicular in my opinion. There was a peak of 3,000ft or more just behind with crags on it. It was very picturesque, and of course the Mediterranean climate of Cape Town is really splendid. You had a magnificent mountain just in your back yard, 30 miles of crags, and beautiful beaches and lovely fruit and 'cheap' labour, which wasn't very cheap. In fact it was very inefficient. But still it felt like luxury, and my wife settled in to a very swish prep school where the children were very happy and so we had ma terially a very good life.

AR How many on the staff of the English Department?

WE Well when I arrived there were about six. We had two Professors, one was a Professor of Language, English Language, a very canny Scot and he had a full-time Lecturer, a Senior Lecturer in the end, helping him and a graduate assistant. On the literature side we had a man from Oxford, (we didn't get on, which was difficult because I was his Senior Lecturer) and sometimes we had a junior lecturer assisting us, sometimes we had to draft an assistant lecturer. But the numbers were comparatively small, we had about 150 first year students, about 40 second year, about 20 third year and then an honours group reading an MA. I learnt a lot of things. I learnt how to give lectures to 120 students. I used to send my wife to hear my lectures to find out whether I could be heard and whether I was dull or not, because I had a theory which I still hold, that English ought to be fun and the lecturer ought to be a good performer, a good actor. I learnt how to be that, at least I think I did. But I didn't like the way the courses were run and on the whole cultural life in South Africa struck me as being very dull too after Cambridge. What you'd expect, of course.

AR After Cambridge, yes.

WE The students were in general, what we got, we got everybody from Cape Province. There was no suggestion of a provincial university and people going away somewhere else. And I would say the South Africans as a whole were often very keen minded, very sharp wits, but it was a bit like the desert. Keen and sharp and empty. Nothing in their heads and because of the coloured labour, negro labour and so on, the superior race didn't do any physical work normally and they didn't see why they should do much work for me. Well that was my impression at any rate. They were not earnest scholarship winners. Good conformers, yes.

AR You went there in 1935?

WE Four, 1934, yes, yes. And then we saw war coming. Yes, and South Africa was in some ways for a 'Manchester Guardian' reader was a very unhappy place to live, just too full of race and political conflict and we got more and more agitated about the children becoming good South Africans.

AR You had two children at this stage?

WE I had two children, yes. They were eight and seven when we came to Western Australia. We were very thankful for their sakes that we got into a community where some of these conflicts were notably absent. The colour question bothered me a great deal and indeed sometimes it still does.

I remember, for instance, that we had two Scots terriers, both of them completely black. If people came down from the main road, down our road these Scots terriers stopped every coloured person at the gate. If the person coming down was white they let him come up onto the stoep. They had colour prejudice too. But if it got to your dogs it must get to your children, and you too perhaps, in the end.

AR Racist dogs.

WE Indeed. So we came here after the war had started and there didn't seem much place for me. The war seemed as though it might go on for a very long time, at least that was my impression of it. And the only advertisement we ever saw for a post in English was the one that we saw advertising the vacant Chair of English in Western Australia. We'd have gone to Tahiti or Antarctica, once we made up our minds.

AR This was what? In 1940 were they advertising?

WE Yes. I knew nothing about Western Australia. Like most Englishmen I knew nothing about Australia, except that it sent us some remarkable cricketers from time to time who helped Lancashire very much in the county championships. A fast bowler called McDonald was one of the presents Australia gave.

So I knew nothing about Western Australia except that it was . . . Well some of my friends greeted the news that I was going there with "Oh good God, that's the loneliest city in the world." "Oh well," i said "but it doesn't contain my Professor of English."

AR You followed Professor Murdoch, in the Chair at UWA?

WE Yes, I did.

AR But he had been gone for a year. Did you find it . . .

WE Oh nearer two years I'd say . . . During the inter-regnum the bulk of the work had been carried by Harry Thompson (Associate Professor) and Alec King, with some assistance from tutors - Brian Elliott for a time and Laurie Thomas briefly who became a noted art critic later.

Professor Murdoch continued to play an active part in the Senate, of course, and in time was made Chancellor. When I arrived he spent most of his time I fancy writing his weekly column in The West which later developed into Any Questions which he did very entertainingly, and which was very well received on a national basis, in Sydney and Melbourne.

So we had a staff of three - Harry Thompson, Alec King, and myself, with some part-time help with Externals from a Mrs Child who was on the staff of the University Library.

Of course when I arrived in May 1941 the war had been going on for quite a time. We left Cape Town just about the time of the retreat from Greece and the disaster in Crete, Japan had just come in. So besides the possibility of meeting a German raider in the Indian Ocean there was a very real prospect of Japanese submarines, which led to our ship going far south into the Roaring Forties, making only 8 knots an hour and three zig-zags a mile

AR What a long trip!

WE It was a very long voyage and when we finally made it nobody knew we were due. We berthed one Saturday morning, a beautiful day, and it took so long getting off the boat that I couldn't get through to the University until about half past eleven. When I finally got through there was nobody there on a Saturday morning until at last they rooted out Professor Ross from the Physics Department. He whizzed out in his car and just got in before the gates closed at twelve. Yes, he was very good to us on that day. I'm still grateful.

When I arrived, because of the war, the numbers of students were very depleted. I think the last year before the war, say '38 or '39, the total number was 990 or something like that and by the time I'd arrived, except for those who were manpowered, there were virtually no students in the Arts Faculty, no students left except those who were incompetent or of no use. We had one or two manpowered people coming in from other Faculties, the Law Faculty for instance, and of course we had a very large first year class enrolment of people under military age, particularly these numbers were swollen by people entering Teachers' College, who did one year in Teachers' College before going on with their Education courses and they all read English I. So my first year class was about 220. Of those 220 only 30 or less than 30 perhaps, perhaps 20, something like 20 survived for English II and there were about 10 English III students, so we combined the lot into one big group. We had two men. How they survived? Why they were not in the military? I can't remember now. They were nice chaps, both of them, but it was a bit formidable for them I guess, especially as we very rapidly changed from a system of lecturing to a system of issuing fairly detailed notes and instructions, exercises in interpretation and turning all our meetings into class discussions, which I thought was a very much better way of handling English than . . . I'd learnt lecturing and I thought it was just too easy for students to sit, take it in and make more or less good or bad precis of it.

AR Yes.

WE My basic idea, you see, was that what we should be trying to do was to get people to learn how to read for themselves and arrive at their own impressions and their own verdicts. To know why they'd arrived at these verdicts and be prepared to talk about them and discuss with other students how they'd arrived at the conclusions. If the other students were persuasive enough to change their minds that could be important too. So that in the end group discussion, especially with new poetry for instance or contemporary writing, the group verdict could be rather different experiences from that of any individual members of the group.

AR So really it was tutorials?

WE Yes tutorials all the way.

Tape 1
Side 2

AR So tutorials were something quite new really?

WE Well on our scale they were absolutely new. The more or less standard procedure in a standard Arts Faculty school would be to give two formal lectures a week, ask the students to write one formal essay a term and perhaps have a small group meeting about once a fortnight. My objection would be that these are not genuine group discussion tutorials at all and it tended to turn people into more or less learned parrots. That was my feeling about it and the whole basis of my approach was that of Leavis and Richards, which was to develop techniques of what you might call very close reading, and our test of a good student was what he did with a poem that was quite new to him. So frequently, our exam paper started off with an "unseen". There'd be a poem, possibly a couple of poems, there'd be a passage of prose, possibly several passages again, they'd be asked to comment in detail on the character of the writing of these things. Sometimes we might ask them to express an opinion, whether it was a good poem or not and why, whether they liked it or not. Sometimes we might ask them to make a comparison between a couple of poems. But the essential thing was that they had not been primed up with the right answers, they had to find the answers themselves and they were judged on their ability to find and present intelligibly reasonably persuasive answers.

A very good class, which was my first experience in '42 when we started this, it was really a supremely good class, they enjoyed it immensely. Later classes were not quite so happy about it, but that's another story again.

Something of this was forced on us by the very nature of war conditions The very first year I had a run to myself. We set a brief course on Shakespeare, three or four plays, and then a brief course How to Read a Novel, which consisted of reading about six novels, and then a course The Control of Language which was based mainly on Alec King's book, but also on Richards' 'Practical Criticism'. When we started the year none of our text books had arrived, so we did The Control of Language and polished that off, and then we did the Shakespeare and polished that off. By the time we got to mid-June the books had still not arrived and the bookshop thought they might have been sunk at sea and others thought they had never been despatched at all. And there we were with about 14 weeks to cover and nothing to say and we thought we'd do a course in the short story, over two or three weeks we scrabbled desperately around trying to find a collection of short stories that was good enough to read and also there in quantity, because we needed 250 copies of it. But of course we couldn't find that. In the end in desperation I said "Oh well it's simple enough. Every week I will put onto the stencil two short stories which shall be jolly good short stories and issue these to the students a week before I lecture on them and tell them to get ahead and write their own impressions, what they think about it and why, and so on and then they can listen to my lecture and disagree with me." We printed a most marvelous anthology because there was no copyright. Oh wonderful stories! I think probably the best anthology in the world! It would have cost the earth! And this was a tremendous challenge to the students. It was also a great challenge to me because I had to think up detailed criticism of two short stories a week and write them out. Oh yes very good for me in many ways. But that's the kind of thing that happens during a war and when I said we'd do this I was almost

stymied because there were no typists available to type my scripts and so on. All the typists had been commandeered by the Americans in town we were told and Administration couldn't bear to pay the running rate for typists. Oh dear, dear.

AR Well that must have been quite a challenge. But you also found when you got here that you had, apart from being Head of the Department, you . . .

WE Yes. Ah yes, my first shock was to discover that under the terms of my contract - which I saw for the first time after I arrived - I was Head of the Modern Languages Department, responsible for French, German and Italian.

Well I knew quite a bit of French, I knew enough German to get my breakfast in Munich, I'd learned a bit of Italian as part of my Tripos in Cambridge, but I couldn't claim to be an expert in modern languages. And then the chaps I had to deal with. French was dealt with by Dr Leon Taumann and Miss Randell. Leon Taumann had arrived in Melbourne the year before, a refugee from France, actually he was a Polish Jew and he got out of France because he saw things coming, very wise of him too, and in some ways he was very learned and a very sensitive critic. He wrote an excellent book on Proust, but he was very dreamy and he used to monologue in his lectures and not notice whether the audience was following him or not, in any case he was speaking excellent French and it would be good for their French. So it was a great puzzlement. He was even worse in tutorials because he had very strange views about the nature of love in Proust which 18 year old girls found incredibly funny and two or three of his pupils were pupils of mine and often came and asked me what he was talking about and what to read next in French and so on. Otherwise he was a great friend of mine, we used to walk in the park where he'd take great lungs full of fresh air. "Oh delightful, the scent of the pines and so on." He would stop and think and contemplate and I'd stop in mid-stride too. We talked mainly about Proust.

Then German was in charge of Hans Pollak who'd arrived just before Taumann. He also was Jewish, he came from Vienna though and he had some time in Sweden and he was a genuine philologist who'd read all Richards books in semantics and thought I had, which caused quite a lot of confusion. His wife was quite delightful, she was a Lindsay from Melbourne, who read Philosophy in Melbourne, an early example of a feminist I guess, went abroad to study and remained abroad until Hans brought her back with him. She was great fun in many ways. But Hans was a very difficult character: he was very excitable, when he was excited he stuttered and he was very conscious of anti-Semitism and he kept seeing yellow rags waving before his eyes. Oh dear, he wanted to go around and label all the books that the German State had given us in the last ten years with a yellow label and star. I've no doubt there was some point in this but he could be quite difficult, yes. He was also a friend of mine.

We got on reasonably well because I let them alone except formally. I listened carefully to their views on the syllabus and examination techniques and so on, and I did my best year after year to suggest that it was time that we had Professors of French and German. It took, I think, until 1952 to get a Professor of French, 1954 I think to get a Professor of German, but we finally got them.

Taumann and Pollak of course were refugees and there were a number of refugees around the place, some of them were subsidised from an international fund. We had Dr Kaulla from Munich, he was a psychologist working in the Psychology Department. We had, later on . . . I think Taumann, Pollak and Kaulla were the main ones. Oh Dr Gentilli from Geography came to us from Italy. Most of them of course these refugees were Jewish in origin and perhaps I should say one of the things I missed most from South Africa when I came here was the presence of lots of intellectual Jews. They were very prominent in the University in Cape Town despite some of the very severely prejudiced Afrikaners and most of my friends in Cape Town were Jewish, I found them livelier than South Africans when it came to an interest in music and the theatre and painting and literature. My best students in fact were generally Jewish, so I rather missed them when I came to Western Australia where they were not very noticeable, not in those days. But later I met a number of other refugees through a discussion group which was founded by Joseph Kripps or was it Henry Kripps? I can't remember which of them now and Salek Minc. I became very friendly with the architect van Mens for instance there.

Later on, still later on after the Hungarian affair in 1956 we got quite a number of Hungarians amongst our students and the one I remember best of course Paul Kovesi, who read English with us, then went on to Cambridge and finally came back on the staff, a very good lecturer indeed and very remarkable his command of English.

I don't know that we benefit quite so much from new Australians as perhaps we could have hoped, but there were quite a significant lot particularly after the war.

AR At this stage where were you housed?

WE Ah yes, when I arrived the University buildings, apart from the Winthrop Hall complex and the complex which housed Physics and Chemistry which now houses Geology, consisted of Shenton House for Engineering, the School of Engineering, down the wrong end of the campus as we used to think of it, and a miscellany of relics from Irwin Street. And the next extension we got was an extension of the Administrative Building. English moved into five or six rooms which are now occupied by the Bursar and then when CRTS came to our assistance we got those temporary buildings which now house Architecture. So at one time we were housed in three different buildings, which made staff unity not awfully easy - staff unity meaning of course having morning tea together. The rest of us were on the corridor above the Vice-Chancellor. I was in the room immediately above the Vice-Chancellor formerly occupied by Professor Murdoch, who left behind a very ancient carpet and a very ancient desk and a very ancient swivel chair which was rather rocky. Handsome rooms because of course when you build in the style of Winthrop Hall you allow plenty of space. Then it got more difficult, much more difficult after that. Around about '56 or '57 we were granted the privilege of designing our own set of rooms over on Fairway. They were to be temporary buildings, but at least they were solid structure and we had an architect to help us and I got David Foulkes-Taylor to design our furniture for us, which was really quite a change, quite a change. Not everybody liked the furniture I got put in but it was distinctively different and modern.

AR And that was on Fairway, in a building on Fairway?

WE Yes, yes. It's been demolished I think now. Well the new Psychology - no, not the new Psychology, but it is a new three storey building. I can't think what it is.

AR Well the Vice-Chancellor at the time was Professor Currie.

WE Yes, yes Professor Currie appointed me. I took to him immediately, we became very friendly. We used to walk every Saturday afternoon, sometimes every Sunday afternoon in the park, walking fast to keep our weight down, to keep my dogs exercised. And of course for a time, for three or four years, I lived in Crawley Avenue just opposite the Vice-Chancellor's house, which is now occupied by Music. He was a very good talker, very rapid and very responsive to new ideas, even sometimes cranky and crazy ideas. He was ready to give everything a go. And he hadn't spent most of his time in academic life, which was possibly to his great advantage; he was a CSIRO man and at the School of Agriculture as Professor, but only very briefly, then he became Vice-Chancellor. And his great strength was his ability to listen and the rapidity with which he picked up your ideas and his readiness to give you a go. He said to me once in my early stage when I rather tentatively suggested making these tremendous changes in syllabus and tutorial methods, he said "Well you give it a go. You know here in Australia you're always given a go. In fact if you make a mess of it you're given a second go. But be very careful don't make a third mess." I was tremendously impressed by this because in Cambridge, like most English universities it takes about 40 years to make a major change of the kind I was suggesting. In fact I was probably one of the very first academic people to put Richards' and Leavis' ideas into practice. It took 10, 15, 20 years before Leavis' pupils got good jobs and were in a position to really move and make a move.

AR He obviously was good for you at that time too because you must have been . . . You were following a long period of traditionals.

WE Yes, yes indeed. Yes, in fact, the interregnum where things had rather - I won't say ground to a halt, but they were not at their liveliest, I think tha interregnum was probably very good. Also of course it was during the war period and when people are engaged in winning the war nobody noticed what was going on and in any case all of us had to make all kinds of surprising improvisations and changes, move from place to place and alter courses, alter regulations, alter examinations, alter dozens of things. For instance I became an ARP Warden. I never dreamt of such a thing in my life but I got a tin hat and I supervised the building of slit trenches and the painting of staircases white and rang alarm bells and had people rushing in and out of lecture rooms at these alarms and I was given the task of guarding the whole of Winthrop Hall complex and one of my more daunting tasks was to get rid of fire bombs in case they had dropped on the roof of Winthrop Hall. I intended never to get up there actually because I built an air raid shelter in the tennis court alongside my house in Crawley Avenue and thought my first duty was to get into that air raid shelter.

AR Oh yes you would.

WE Oh it reminds me of one little moment of our house in Crawley Avenue. It had been bought and furnished by a famous French violinist Jeanne Gautier whose funds had got tied up in Australia because of war

regulations and she was persuaded by Mrs Redvers-Bates and Miss Cummings who owned a big brewery in Kalgoorlie (to settle next door to them for the duration). A tennis court separated her house from the Redvers-Bates' house and these two girls decided that a troika would be marvelous and persuaded Jeanne Gautier to take this house which she furnished in the most lavish Parisian style. She knocked two rooms together to make a long music room, furnished it with settees in brilliant burgundy red, white leather piping, one settee held seven, the other held five, and installed two grand pianos.

AR A real salon.

WE And nobody, nobody could be found to rent this magnificent establishment except me and I was very dubious as my small boy was a football playing, apple eating youth of eight and quite protested about these blue silk coverings and curtains and so on. And I said "Two pianos. Oh dear!" "Oh we'll take the pianos out if you don't want them." So we took the pianos out. It formed a perfectly wonderful room for play readings. We got on splendidly in it. I was very sorry to leave it eventually.

But my story is about the arrival of the American admiral. They'd established this Catalina base in a kind of huddled village of prefabs next door to St George's and of course the whole University precincts were behind barbed wire and shut off to the general public and you had to have permits to move around in it and we had 1200 Americans with all their attendant butlers and sutlers and cooks, and after a time the Admiral of the South Pacific Fleet established his headquarters in Mrs Redvers-Bates' house. We were patrolled and oh dear security was very tight. However one afternoon my wife gave a desperate ring and I rushed over from the University and she opened the door very white in the face. She said "They're here!" I said "They're here. Who are here?" "The Japanese of course." I said "Where?" She pointed across the tennis lawn. A little oriental figure was peering out through the gate and he emerged onto the tennis lawn and then he gave a little signal to another little oriental figure who came out behind him and he tip-toed around the edge of the tennis court, had a good look at our air raid shelter and then a look at the house. I said "O God, the Japanese are here." But it was merely the advance guard for the Admiral. They were his cooks - good Filipinos both. My children became very friendly with them after a time.

AR Oh dear what a fright for your wife though.

WE Well it was a fright for me too. I didn't really welcome the idea of the Japanese.

AR Yes, they really made their impact on the campus didn't they?

WE Yes, yes.

AR The Catalinas would come in there.

WE Yes, yes, we had about 60 or 70 of them and they used to start off every morning, refuelling at four o'clock in the morning just at the end of our street, Crawley Avenue. The refuelling went on until about six o'clock and then they decamped up the coast up towards Ceylon. [Some actually went as far as Colombo.] They had a long coastal mission and came back again, I suppose, some time in the evening. In the meantime

a number of them were practising landing on the Swan River and their route brought them, as they came down, in very close proximity to the University Tower. Indeed sometimes we thought they were going to take the top of it off. They swooped down and for 20 seconds you couldn't hear anything in my room, in my tutorials. For another 20 seconds as they went further away you couldn't hear anything. So my tutorials consisted of a series of hiccups. I don't know how we ever got anywhere when I think back to this, this learning to sit still and keep your wonderful remark to yourself until the Catalina had passed.

Later on of course we began to get some CRTS men, even before the end of the war and we picked up quite a bit of momentum because of that. After the war we were deluged with CRTS men and this was the most marvellous period, the next four or five years. They were desperately anxious to work and get their degree in the shortest possible time. They used to come to me, rather pathetically I thought, "Sir you give us the drill, we'll do the work." Well of course I didn't want to give any drills and they got the wrong end of the stick. But they made an immense difference to tutorial classes. Instead of having two men to 28 women we now had, perhaps if you think in terms of 30, we had 18 men to 12 women, and it was terribly good for the women. It was something terribly appreciated by the tutors. I've nothing against women, but it made for much livelier tutorials - even two or three years away from home in the army alters a boy's mind very considerably and indeed his seriousness. They really did work, they worked tremendously hard and I was very sorry when we got back to normal undergraduates.

AR Well of course this great CRTS influx must have brought with it problems in staffing.

WE Ah yes, yes.

AR What did you do?

WE CRTS did two things for us: first was about staffing; second was about temporary accommodation. The temporary accommodation which is still there, which is now used by Architecture was the CRTS Lecture Hall for instance. On the staffing they were very helpful in many ways, but all the temporary staffing was very temporary, on a year-to-year basis. We had a succession of graduate assistants and were scratching around at the end of the year. It was sometimes quite desperate to find another graduate assistant because many of the graduate assistants we appointed in this period were people who'd got Hacketts or were going off to Oxford or Cambridge and were really killing time for about nine months before the term in England began. We had excellent people in fact as graduate assistants under this scheme, but it was very, very mind wearying never to know quite what staff you could expect or how long you could keep them, and even when you got somebody at lecturer level he or she was still a temporary lecturer and you could sometimes keep them for two years, but you'd be lucky in the extreme to keep them for three.

AR Can you remember any of these people?

WE Oh yes, yes the one who came back to us in 1949 I think, after two years at Oxford, was Helen Watson-Williams, who came back as a temporary lecturer, stayed on for a year, stayed on for another year, finally was appointed a permanent lecturer. This was always our hope that if they

were good we should hang onto them, but it was chancy, it was very hand-to-mouth, this, and we were certainly understaffed with the numbers of people we had and the methods we were using to teach.

Of the graduate assistants. Well, before Helen went away to Oxford she stayed with us for nearly 18 months as a graduate assistant. Maxine Edmondson stayed for about two years, Kitty Robertson stayed for about a year. We got hold of Peter Cowan very early and he stayed on and on and on as a kind of part-time tutor, very useful to us especially when 'Westerly' became a really fully fledged journal. He'd been editor of course with Bruce Bennett for a very long time and a very useful man to have around in the Department.

Let me think who else of those people.

AR You did mention Stanley Lowe?

WE Oh yes, he was with us for just a year. He was a CRTS one year appointment. He'd been in the navy, he had a degree from Melbourne, he was a wonderful mimic and in many ways a quite talented character actor and he had a lot of stage experience. He was absolutely bewildered by the courses we were giving and fell by the wayside eight or nine months through the year, disappeared as it were in mysterious circumstances. Poor fellow, his wife who lived in Melbourne didn't want to come to Perth. In fact she didn't want to come to him. Still we'll pass that one over.

After that we got Jean Tweedie as a temporary lecturer. She later became Jeanna Bradley and permanent. And thinking of graduate assistants who were honours students and then became assistants. We had Phillip Parsons and Monseigneur Bourke, though he was Father Bourke in those days; Phillip went on to Cambridge. We also had Harry Heseltine for a brief period. We had Bob Rogers who stayed on for four, five or six years as a tutor, a temporary tutor.

AR Len Burrows was another?

WE Ah yes! Len Burrows.

Len came to us in 1951 or 1952 I think. He'd come from Sheffield where he'd read English with my old friend L C Knights, one of the first editors of Scrutiny, later Professor of English in Cambridge. Len was very solid, very sober, very scholarly, with a sardonic deflating wit, incredibly hard working, the soul of reliability - a true Yorkshireman and an admirable foil to Alec and myself. A great collector of books his favourite reading was Wisden. Otherwise there was nothing romantic about Len. At first, not surprisingly, he was stunned by our circus cavortings, our ballad singing, our poetry readings, our play readings, our readiness to dash off lecture notes at a moment's warning - all most unacademic. Before long, however, - dare I say it - we'd re-educated him. He ending up singing Northern versions of the old ballads and American cowboy-songs - he was our Burl Ives - and he rapidly became a star-performer with Neville Teede and Faith Clayton. As time went on he quietly assumed the role of wise old counsellor to the youngest members of staff, trusted and appreciated by everyone. I grew very fond of him - what a comfort to have authentic Yorkshire at one's shoulder!

But I've been forgetting all this time to tell you about Alec King - who was on the spot when I arrived.

Alec King (1904-1970) my offsider for over 25 years, had come out to WA about 1936 after marrying Professor Murdoch's daughter, Catherine. He was an Oxford man, but during his year of postgraduate training (as a teacher) at the London Institute, he had come under the influence of M Gurrey, an enthusiastic admirer of Leavis. He was very versatile - a folk dancer and a singer of ballads, and, through his cousin Cecil Day-Lewis, one of Auden's inner circle. His wife, Catherine was at that time an active campaigner for the Kindergarten Union. Moreover, Alec's book, The Control of Language, was, I thought, wholly admirable. From the start he was an enthusiastic collaborator. Without his talented support I should have got nowhere. I was extremely lucky and I'm very grateful to him for his unfailing support and for his friendship. I missed him sadly when he left us for the Chair of Education in Melbourne University.

Tape 2
Side 1

AR Professor Edwards you were 32 in 1941 when you came to the University.

WE Yes, I was.

AR You brought a lot of new innovations to the English Department, one of which of course was drama, a different approach to drama?

WE Yes, yes indeed. I thought drama was terribly important as an aspect of literature. Somebody called Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays. And I thought from considerable experience in Cambridge that the best way of studying a play was to actually see a very good performance of the play, even better to take part in the production of a play because esentially plays are meant to be performed in theatres. Or rather better say that the words of the play, the script, are not the play, they become the play only when they are presented by actors with the proper action and movement on a properly equipped stage and in front of an audience. So this is rather a difficult matter in a formally organised university course to provide enough opportunities to see plays and particularly to see the kind of plays we think of as dramatic masterpieces. In the end you may be forced to produce enough of these plays within the University itself with the ideal that you have a theatre or several theatres in which the masterpiece's dramatic literature could be presented effectively and whether that means in the end that you have to have a team of professional actors and producers and stage designers, of course it leads one into expenses of absolutely unimaginable size. This was the comment of a Royal Commissioner, Mr Justice Wolfe in I think 1941, the year I arrived, in which he said the proposal to establish a University theatre might lead to unimaginable expenses! So on the grounds of the expense he didn't recommend the establishment of a University theatre. As our total budget at that time was £40,000 a year it's not very surprising. But it was a bit daunting to somebody who had my views about the importance of drama. So what we did at first during the war, when of course our resources were terribly limited, was to put our effort into play readings. Sometimes we made them into active play readings, which means that your actors though they have a book in their hand make elementary efforts to suggest their major

movements in the play. That was really very entertaining. We had sometimes a play a week, sometimes a play a fortnight and that normally produced very lively discussion tutorials after the performances. We went on with that kind of effort until about 1949. We did try several productions, but this was with the Student Dramatic Society and of course we had to gently persuade the committee of the Student Dramatic Society to put on plays that we thought were worth putting on. We weren't always successful in gently moving them in our direction and they put on their own selection of plays normally in the Assembly Hall, which was really poorly equipped as a theatre. The students used to take over East once a year a play, a production, in a kind of general meeting of university dramatic societies, so we could move gently through them in that way.

Mind you we tried a number of informal playing places. The steps of the foyer of Winthrop Hall were one chill location. We tried one or two productions in the Winthrop Hall itself which was about the worst theatre I have ever encountered in my life. We discovered, or rather Jeanna Bradley, discovered the Sunken Garden. She saw a sandpit and talking to the gardener thought they might put on a Greek play in that sandpit, and so we did. This occurred, regretably from my standpoint, whilst I was away on my first study leave. But they produced 'Oedipus the King'. I suppose the most noteworthy feature of the production was simply that we used a translation by Yeats which included in the end papers some specially composed music by a chap called Hopkins on ancient Greek modes, terribly simple in notation and apparently devlishly difficult to sing. But after a great deal of drilling we got a chorus of nine young women who did dumb eurhythmics whilst a chorus of nine men did the singing. It seemed a very satisfactory division of labour. There was one aspect of it which tickled me. The first performance occurred whilst Laurence Olivier was here in Perth on a visit with his company and of course he'd acted Oedipus himself the year before in London, to the very same text and whether he was greatly impressed or not I've had a number of reports on this. But at any rate he was a distinguished member of the audience.

After that of course there were increasing numbers of productions in the Sunken Garden and as the Festival of Perth got under way more and more seats were made in the amphitheatre and more and more efforts were made to assist with the lighting. The lighting was a very great problem because with virtually no scenery of course you have to use lights and with no stage house as it were for the lights you have to have enormous voltages to produce your effects, which by the way were always ruined when moonlight was sufficiently strong, so you had to look at the calendar very carefully. We also asked dear of Professor Ross not to use his study whilst performances were going on because his study was in the northern end of the physics lab and his light on was a terribly distracting feature. That took a bit of doing I believe.

After that came the Somerville Auditorium. I think it was just after the war that suddenly from nowhere that dreadful stage was erected in no time under cover of darkness and with rationed materials that had been got rather illegally as far as I can make out. It was put up rapidly by the engineers just to show what they could do, under the direction of McDonald, the Accountant, who was a man of great enterprise. But they took no advice from anybody about what a stage ought to be. And everything in those improvised days had to serve at

least 32 different purposes. So it was supposed to be a stage for an orchestra giving open air concerts and of course it just simply wasn't big enough for drama when they tried to use it. But nobody had worked this out. It was done, as I say, over night. Inspired amateurs, not always inspired? We hated it as a place to produce a play. It was incredibly difficult unless you were putting on a very spectacular production as the Festival did in its performance of 'Richard III', which again I missed because I was overseas at the time. But I gather it really was quite an occasion. It was produced rather like grand opera, as far as I can make out, with immense crowds and pageantry and the rest of it. Otherwise a most unsatisfactory theatre I would say. Hmm.

After that, our next point of real progress was when we took over some redundant engineering laboratories, tin sheds. The Engineering School, having got itself a new building on a different part of the campus, these sheds were offered around to anybody who'd make use of them and remained idle for quite a long time. But luckily for us David Bradley, who had been appointed I think in 1950, had made a hobby of turning unlikely places into likely theatres - he was a great conversions man - descended on the sheds and produced the first Dolphin Theatre.

David was very interesting. He and I spent a lot of our time looking around the University for playing places and you know sizing up lecture halls, Winthrop Hall and the Guild Buildings and so on and so on. He had designs on the great wooden construction that CRTS provided for us as a lecture theatre, now occupied by Architecture. He had designs on any number of what he thought were redundant churches and chapels and warehouses. We had designs on the round tower in Fremantle. We thought we'd shut off the end of the street and put the audience in the street and use the tower for a performance of 'Richard III' and start a Festival of Fremantle in rivalry to Birman's Festival of Perth and so on. So he was very accustomed to sizing up places, railway stations, bus stations, cathedrals as playing places. We got into the Cathedral once only. It was in some ways very impressive, a performance of a Mediaeval play - I've forgotten the title now - but the acoustics were abominable and it was terribly difficult, the floor was too flat as it were and we couldn't raise the audience. However it was a noble experiment. You might say that about a lot of things that we were doing during this period. Noble experiments doomed to failure. However it kept us on our toes.

The Dolphin was in many ways highly successful. Nobody could have thought you could turn those sheds into a theatre. The Senate, rather reluctantly, said 'Yes' to David's plans. The understanding was they would look after everything on the audience side of the stage. They built up a raked hall seating I think 199 people and the Students Dramatic Society and the Graduate Dramatic Society made themselves responsible for everything behind the curtain. At the time they had a very considerable amount of lighting equipment which they cheerfully donated to the Dolphin. They donated whatever properties they'd accumulated. We built on bit by bit extra space at the wings. We had a little dressing room in which there was a very antique settee, which I always introduced to distinguished visitors as the original settee on which Freud's patients lay. How many of them believed this I don't know.

After a time we expanded ourselves into the adjoining empty shed and built up a wardrobe there and then a big empty space for painting scenery flats and things of this kind. The Dolphin turned out to have excellent acoustics and it was a very big stage and the thing which was perhaps most important about it, because the lighting equipment belonged to the students they were free to use it. Once you provide a properly equipped theatre the equipment is too valuable to let students muck around with and so you have to get a professional lights man, then a professional manager and carpenter, then a professional this, that and t'other. But it was all self-help and this was amazing training for students in the realities of theatre work. I think the more important work was always as it were behind the scenes. There'd be five or six people behind the scenes for everyone acting on the stage and a number of them learnt the various arts of production there which are terribly important. More than that the only way to mount a play is to get genuine co-operation and hard work, intelligent hard work from your team of people. And despite everything said by headmasters about games building character and teamwork, I don't believe it. You've only to watch some of our cricketers or footballers for that matter, whereas in the theatre it is absolutely essential and anybody who is not co-operative gets kicked out jolly fast and learns a lot about himself in life. So I thought this was educationally tremendously important, that is it fitted my views that the education of our students was more than a matter of listening to lectures and taking notes, it was part of the business of growing up and learning how to do things for themselves.

It was tolerated rather than encouraged, the Dolphin Theatre. I think in the three or four years it ran I never remember once the Vice-Chancellor coming to a production. That seems quite interesting.

Later of course when we got the Arts Faculty Building about 1964 we managed to build into it the Elizabethan theatre, the New Fortune, which provided a quite different kind of playing place, though terribly restricted in its use. It was difficult to imagine people rehearsing or performing in that theatre during term time and in vacations; one vacation you can't do anything under umbrellas, it's raining all the time, and the other, the long vacation, the theatre is just too jolly hot to act in, it burns your feet. That of course was never a problem in the Fortune Theatre or the Globe in London. It was certainly a problem for our people. However I won't talk about the defects of that particular theatre. I'll get round to how we managed to get it.

Because I'd been interested in buildings, the extension of the Administration Building, the building of a small temporary building to accommodate the English Department in about 1957, the principal feature of which was that I got David Foulkes-Taylor to design all our furniture for us. I thought it was very good furniture but very few other people did. But anyway it was a move away in getting a real designer to do some work for us. So after that when we formed our committee to draw up a brief of what the Arts Faculty thought it wanted I became chairman of the committee and at a certain point in all these affairs the architects want to deal with only one person, the client, so I became the client and I spent a couple of years of my time in very close association with Professor Stephenson and his chief assistant, Roger Johnson, and less frequently with the architect, Marshall Clifton. The arrangement was a standard arrangement under the Stephenson Plan. Stephenson's office would draw up a brief in terms of what the users thought they required

and put it into a form that they thought was intelligible to the architect and the architect was always to be a local architect chosen from a variety of people, so that it gave opportunities for local architects to build perhaps on a bigger scale than they're normally accustomed to. So I don't quite know who chose Marshall Clifton for us, certainly it wasn't the client or the Arts Faculty. I suppose the Senate Buildings Committee must have done it. A very charming man in many ways but not quite in my view Mies van der Rohe or Marcel Breuer or Le Corbusier. He would never have claimed to be in that class himself, but still why not think high.

Well in the process we'd agreed that the building should be three storeys high and of a rather domesticated character, a happy place to live and work in. And I carried in my head the dimensions of the Fortune Theatre from a date about 1599. It was roughly 60 feet by 60 feet. So it seemed to me that if we were going to have a large interior court, 120 by 60 would be a nice size. I persuaded Marshall that you could divide 60 by any number of figures, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10, so you could have, you know, extreme flexibility in combining the size of windows and things like this. But actually after we had been going for some considerable time and got AUC used to what we were trying to do, I said "Well in this rather long courtyard it would improve things I think if we could have a bridge across at a point 60 feet from either end. Say a bridge about 10 feet wide, just a communication of the bridge." They said "Whatever for? In a small building why do you need a communication with a bridge?" It took us several months of arguing to persuade AUC, who are a very reluctant crowd, to let us have our bridge - you know fire escapes and all that. So we got a bridge and after that of course we had to put up a shrubbery behind it and we thought by manipulating curtains we could produce an Elizabethan Theatre almost by pulling a couple of curtains across and using the centre part as the inner stage of an Elizabethan stage.

Then came a great moment of crisis. Everything was going sweetly until I said to Marshall "You know 10 feet (which was the height of the bridge because all our rooms were 10 feet high) is an awfully long way to jump up to, even if you're a brillian athlete, even if you are Olivier you are going to have a job trying to climb up onto that balcony with a dagger in your teeth and so on." He said "And what do you want to climb up onto a balcony with a dagger in your teeth for?" I said "Or even Romeo coming up to kiss Juliet." I said "More important still jumping down from there with a dagger in your teeth is going to be jolly dangerous." He said "Is it?" I said "Well I wish you'd go home
20 Marshall and stand at the top of a 10 foot wall and jump down into your yard and report to us of what happens. You'd come with a couple of broken ankles the next day." So we had to put a little 3 foot step down in order to accommodate these needs for the inner stage, and that of course raised a number of queries in the AUC's tender mind. Still we got away with that and then some months later we had to disclose the awful fact that we were having a permanent platform built out. Whatever for? And then the chicken was out or the cat was out. Yes. Oh dear! Oh dear!

AR What was the first production that you did there?

WE It was 'Hamlet'. Ian Tweedie was our Hamlet. He was very good at jumping up at places, very athletic. With Neville Teede as the King and Faith Clayton as Hamlet's mother. Ah yes. It was quite a good

performance in many ways. Jeana Bradley of course had insisted that we have three marvellous trapdoors as part of our equipment but that again was a surprise to the AUC. The game was up when we had to tell them we wanted trapdoors.

AR Involvement in the drama is a big part of your life.

WE Oh yes, yes, yes, and I'd better admit at once that I have never acted myself and probably couldn't and that most plays bore me to tears in production. I've been known for walking out when I am bored. Mind you when I say 'acted' I should admit to taking the part of Caliban in a school production of "The Tempest".

AR You started the box scheme for the Adult . . . You didn't start it but you were involved in it.

WE Oh no, it was still in existence when I arrived but in a rather depressed condition. It had been started by the Director of Education, Adult Education, who had gone to Melbourne to a similar job there about a year before I arrived and here were all these boxes. I used them first because amongst the boxes of books were several collections of plays, which were invaluable to us in our play reading. It's a terrible business if you decide to read "Hedda Gabler", for instance, and you rush around a depleted University trying to find ten copies of "Hedda Gabler". Dear me what troubles we sometimes had getting these copies. So I used the box scheme very considerably in this way and later when I was going to America in 1952 I took with me on the boat across the Atlantic a copy of 20 Great American Plays and wrote an introduction, reader's notes and discussion notes on each play. We were on a rather tiny ship, about 13,000 tons, and it was a very stormy passage. It was supposed to take ten days to New York and it took us about, I think we were about four days overdue. It was a memorable experience: writing the introductions to the plays in half gale kept my mind off other things. I thought the initial box scheme was a quite excellent one. It was terribly like, in some ways, what I was doing in my tutorial classes - you know writing notes which gave you sufficient background information to ask the right questions or you asked the right questions and suggested leads for people to think and talk about it, and it seemed to me to encourage self-help and activity instead of passive acceptance of a lecturer's views.

AR Well in 1949 you went off on your first study leave.

WE Oh yes. Yes I was very anxious to get back to Europe. I'd not been there for 14 years, I wanted to see what things were going on - obviously whether I was going to find another job over there. We had very little money to spend and though it was 1949 when we got to England and rationing I think probably had officially stopped, but so many things were in terribly short supply, clothes, food and so on, and I found . . . Oh I travelled around quite a bit in Europe. On the way out I spent about six or seven weeks in Ceylon with an old friend of mine and then went to Aix-en-Provence. I had the illusion it might be cold in January and February and that in the deep south of France it might be warmer. In fact it was a very cold winter there. I remember having my first view of the amphitheatre at Nimes in a blizzard and walking around the walls of Carcassonne in a similar blizzard with the guide staying comfortably down below. "You'll excuse me sir," he said "I have seen this before and I don't like blizzards." So it altered my views altogether about sunny Provence.

But I thought Europe was terribly depressing just after the war. I really thought it was washed up and it cured me of my wish to go back home again actually. This is partially, I suspect now, the fact that I had too little money to spend. But still one has one's impressions and I thought in comparison Australia was not only the land of sun and blue sky and good beaches, but it was overflowing with milk and honey and had a very cheerful view of a wonderful future just coming around the corner, which is much happier to live with than the opposite one, everybody being on the shrink, the country absolutely over-equipped with magnificent institutions to administer a great empire and losing an empire and having no further use for these great institutions.

AR Was that a full year or did you . . .

WE No I couldn't afford a full year. I came back after nine months of this. Yes, that was as long as I could manage.

Tape 2
Side 2

WE Whilst I was in England one of my preoccupations was finding places for my very bright students who had completed their degree courses and wanted to go on to English or American or foreign universities for further degrees. There was of course a vast accumulation of similar students in every dominion and every former colony, the pressure in fact of foreign or overseas students crowding back into English universities was very great and provided a lot of difficulties and of course in ancient establishments like Oxford and Cambridge there was certain shall we say reluctance to believe bright students from far flung places like Melbourne and Sydney and Perth would be worth taking any trouble over. They were very doubtful about this and especially at the level of research or so-called research, PhD's. Nothing in those days was more lonely than the life of a PhD student. In Cambridge certainly and I think in Oxford too you were assigned a supervisor, you saw him at the beginning of each term and shook hands with him, generally saw him once again at the end of term and shook hands with him, and for the great part of the time this was what the supervisor did for you. You were supposed to be grown up and you could paddle your own canoe and so on. You had to be very, very persistent and very thick skinned to compel many of these formal tutors to do any work for you, if any.

So my feeling about my best students was that they'd had a pretty good grounding in a kind of general BA degree and they could certainly hold their own with the best undergraduates in Cambridge and I would get them into college and let them read the second part of the English Tripos over a couple of years and get another BA degree. In college they were looked after like lords by their tutors and got regular supervision and guidance and because of their extra confidence because of the work they'd already done they would feel equipped to be on more than equal terms with the undergraduates. The college I chose for my people was Pembroke. Pembroke was just across the road from Peterhouse, but it endeared itself to me for two reasons, one is that it was twice as big as Peterhouse and it had three or four open scholarships in English, therefore it had two or three Fellows in English. And it just happened that one of my former supervisors, Basil Willey, had just been appointed to the Chair in English in Cambridge and he also became a Fellow of Pembroke. In consequence that meant we had a man at high

table who could talk up for my choices.

AR Of course you were at Peterhouse.

WE I was. The first student I sent under these terms was Tomlinson, who'd started life in Perth as a Law student and then abandoned the Law for English. He did very well in Cambridge, he was an excellent first choice. He went on to Melbourne eventually, where he is now a Reader. And he kind of set up my bridgehead for me and after that we had a fair number of people went to Pembroke and the more we sent the more confident they got that there were good people coming, naturally. We sent them for instance John Hay, Tony Miller, Bruce Williams and John Barnes, who was a Melbourne graduate who had been a temporary lecturer with us and when he went to Cambridge went to Pembroke, and Paul Kovesi, Bob Hodges, Bill Dunstone. These are all Pembroke men in consequence. The earliest one to get abroad went abroad under her own steam as it were. This was Helen Watson-Williams, who went off to Oxford I think in 1946, yes 1946 and 1947, and did extremely well there.

Amongst other people I was interested in when I went abroad in '49 was Phillip Parsons, who just coming up, and I had a notion, for a few weeks only that's true, that if our people couldn't get into Cambridge we might send them to the Sorbonne. When I got to Paris though I found that there were 60,000 enrolled students at the Sorbonne. About 20,000 were so called research students and there were 800 tutors. So that was going to be difficult. I also found that 60% of the students seemed to be suffering from TB due to malnutrition and poor housing. So that went out of the window.

Let me think. We rather neglected Oxford, but when Bruce Bennett got a Rhodes Scholarship naturally he went to Oxford. I think he was the only one apart from Helen who went to Oxford.

AR Well in 1952 you went to America.

WE Oh yes, this was a new fellowship, one of five a year that was instituted by an American millionaire, John Hay Whitney, who had vast interests in sulphur in the Gulf of Mexico and he'd been to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and he he had a feeling that the arts were not really getting very good showing at many American universities. So he then brought year by year five lively arts chaps from the rest of the world. There were virtually no instructions to us except to see as much of America as possible, naturally. But he did specify that he hoped we would avoid the eight or ten first league universities and do some good to universities that might need us more. So I was terribly interested in many of the schemes that had been developed in America for what they called 'general education', that's really the first two years after school. There was a famous college in St Johns, Anapolis, where they taught the hundred great books through reading and discussion around a table. There was a similar scheme at the University of Chicago and we'd used some of the texts and the anthologies of Chicago very, very happily here, especially in the drama. So I thought this had many possibilities for Western Australia. At the time I was very worried, as most of us have to be, not only by external students but by part-time students. For a time the bulk of our students were part-time, gradually we evened things

up until about half of them were full-time. But what we meant by university could be best achieved by full-time study. I don't think there is any doubt of that. I don't say that we haven't some very brilliant part-time students and even some very wonderful extension students like Nugget Coombs. But in general it seemed to me it was better to work in a full-time environment. It was certainly better for the staff. I thought instead of having a three year degree course it would be preferable to have a two year course in general education finishing up with an intermediate degree, which could be taken by part-timers and would be less exhausting than spreading it over five years for a three year course. After that I thought courses would be reserved for full-time students reading at honours level for an honours degree. There were of course a number of objections to this. Nobody else did it. That was the major objection. But the second objection was of course quite simple, this was going to create three different kinds of BA, an intermediate BA, an old-fashioned BA and a new-fashioned BA, and they thought it would complicate the minds of the public to know which BA you were talking about. That didn't seem to me to be terribly difficult in a country that grades wool in many different kinds of grade, but still that came later.

So I looked round American universities, colleges and so on. I knew a good deal about them from reading and my aim was to find a university roughly the size of Western Australia's and, I regret, roughly with the same finances, though in fact many of these American varsity league colleges had immense incomes by Western Australian standards. The really top class places like Dartmouth or Amherst had libraries of nearly a million volumes and had about ten times our income and likewise of course a much more favourable staff/student ratio. So I thought, well it would be delightful to go to Swarthmore or Amherst but, I must avoid such luxuries. I chose instead to go to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, which was very famous as the second oldest university college in America, and sited as it was in Williamsburg where so much of the early meetings and writings of the people who founded the American Republic, had taken place. It was a very great centre for history if nothing else and had really a very big library by the standards of small universities. I knew that it was also pretty conservative in outlook and I'd thought I'd go to one old and very conservative place and then for my second place I would choose a new and very experimental one and balance things up a bit in this way. Also because I had lived in South Africa for so many years I was still interested in finding how life felt below the Mason Dixon Line. Of course Williamsburg was two or three hundred miles south of Washington, so there were plenty of negroes in Virginia and I thought I'd see what happened on the spot, in the way of inter-reaction.

So I went to Williamsburg for one semester and found myself in a department of about 20, predominently staffed by Harvard men actually. The staff were very highly qualified and it certainly was very conservative. So was the rest of the University I might say. Very idyllic features of course about living in Williamsburg, which is a reconstructed, all reconstructed, the centre of it at any rate, to look the spitting image of what it was in 1783. Nothing was allowed to be planted in the gardens that wasn't available in 1783. And it was painted and spick and span as though the navy has been at work

that very morning cleaning everything up. There were some very delightful places there. They had hostesses showing you round dressed in the costume of 1783. When I wrote home I told my staff that people went to work in a sedan chair - I wasn't strictly untrue. The one who lived in our rooming house clattered down four flights of stairs very rapidly in the morning and rushed into an eight cylinder car. Oh it was very antique, very antique.

After that we had the summer in various places. We were in Boston. I went to a summer school in Harvard to see what Harvard was like. Very disappointing. Climate abominable and the place was absolutely cluttered up with students who had failed some of their courses during the year and were now coming to make up and wanted to do it in the least possible time. They were not goodcompany. The library was very nice, yes. It had about seven million volumes if you could find your way around it and if you had any time to read. And there were some wonderful art galleries in Boston. New York was the place thought for the art galleries. We had only three weeks there because it was very expensive, but we certainly enjoyed them.

I went overland to Portland, Oregon. Or at least I went most of the way to a place called Billings on the Canadian frontier in the Rocky Mountains. A graduate student from Harvard was taking an old car over for a friend of his and filled up the car with paying guests, so we called them, so we had a very crowded car, about eight of us in the car wanting to get over as fast as possible. That was rather a bore really because it would have been much better to go on a Greyhound bus in my opinion, but I didn't know that beforehand. So I slept a lot of the journey, fairly naturally, and I saw the vast spaces of America and they certainly are vast.

At Billings I had three weeks on my hands and saw a notice saying that the Yellowstone Park was going to close in a week's time for the winter. And oh, Yellowstone Park, I had heard of that, I'd go and have a look. So I went to have a look at Yellowstone Park, very impressive and looked all round it and stayed in an enormous hotel pretending to be a Swiss chateau or something of the kind. In the dining room I encountered a young American who was travelling with his aged mama - he apparently came from Minnesota and his mother ran an hotel and they were travelling by Greyhound bus through along the Rockies, through Colorado and Utah and all these places, down to the Grand Boulder Dam and the Grand Canyon and then they were going down almost to the Mexican border and turning up to Los Angeles and then ending up in San Francisco. They travelled about five or six hundred miles a day in these wonderful Greyhound buses and put up for the night in a Greyhound hotel as it were. And I said "Oh that's rather a nice idea. I think I'll get on the bus with you." So I did and I saw Salt Lake City and also various other places, Grand Boulder Dam, and we crossed deserts and mountains of stupendous character. We had about three days in Los Angeles and that was the first time I was ever frightened to death by a helicopter. It landed on the post office flat roof just opposite me when I was contemplating the scenery. I nearly jumped out of my skin. So we saw Hollywood and all the things that Los Angeles has to offer. Forest Glades and the Cemetery and the Palisades and various things of this kind celebrated by Evelyn Waugh. A wonderful place to get out of. Every place is a studio. I was tickled to death following in the bus a little van which called itself a furniture studio. Everything was a studio.

Then we went up the coast to San Francisco and had a magnificent meal, a parting farewell, and I should say here that my guide, the young man from Minnesota, was an opera singer. I said "Oh that's interesting." He said "But I read English for my degree at Minnesota." Oh yes? Well that was interesting too. "Well you are going to stay on in Los Angeles are you? When your mother has gone home again." He said "Oh yes." I said "Well what are you doing in Los Angeles?" He said "Well I'm an opera singer." I said "Yes." He said "We are rehearsing an opera, a new opera in Los Angeles." I said "Where are you going to put it on?" He said "Oh New York." This is very American, it seems to me. I never quite understood why they couldn't have rehearsed in New York, but still. There he was a very cultivated chap and he said he'd been in the American occupying forces in Japan. He'd been called in one day by the colonel of his regiment, who said "I see from your papers that you were bought up in the hotel trade." He said "Oh yes sir, oh yes." The colonel then went on "That's fine, I've just given compassionate leave of absence to all our 60 cooks. I need 60 cooks at once and you are going to train them." So my opera singer said he had the job of training 60 cooks at once and put on 40 pounds. But the immediate consequence of this that was of value to me was that he had a little book in his pocket which had all the besteating places on our route. So we were very well fed whilst I accompanied him on this bus route.

AR You mentioned Reed College.

WE That's where I got to eventually, which is in Portland, Oregon. It was definitely experimental, but it had much the same general course for all students as they'd produced in Columbia about 30 years earlier and this was an Introduction to European Civilization which concentrated on the major texts in literature, history and so on. It was a wonderful course if you could take it in and in Columbia they compelled all first year students to do this and nothing else. Reed was kinder to the poor student, it divided the course into two halves. The first year they did the first half and virtually nothing except maths and things of that kind and they left the second half to the fourth year students, who by this time knew a little, had been taught to think. Yes that's right and it struck me as being a marvellous course, especially for the lecturers who were suddenly pitched out of their little specialties and had to lecture on Goethe one morning and on Schiller the next and on Turner's paintings the next and on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and 'The Ancient Mariner' the next, backwards and forwards. It was terribly interesting. For instance I found myself giving lectures on 18th century painting, sentimental painters first, and then on Goya and Delacroix and especially on Turner, as part of the romantic movement. The College were in great trouble (they thought) because their expert on this matter had gone somewhere else as a visiting professor and they couldn't think who on earth was going to do the lectures for them. So they asked me "Had I got a Fine Arts degree?" "Oh well" I said "No but you've got some quite interesting books in the library, I think I could get on top of that." So we got on top of that and to their great surprise there was a lecture on Byron as part of the romantic movement. With the lecturer in charge I agreed that perhaps the best thing to do was just have a few introductory words and then we would read them selections from 'Don Juan'. I read for about ten minutes and then he would read for ten minutes. He was an admirable reader, but of course had a strong Canadian accent and the students were absolutely delighted at these different accents. It was very, very funny. But quite successful.

AR Well that interest in art extended to what was to be a great help to the University of Western Australia.

WE Well, it had been a permanent interest of mine or rather since I was a school boy. Cambridge of course has a magnificent gallery in the Fitzwilliam Museum. I read very, very widely and I saw galleries wherever I went of course and when I was first given this fellowship I mugged up on Australian art in so far as you can from books and I took with me about a hundred slides of reproductions of paintings and gave lectures on Australian paintings at any rate. It never occurred to me that I was ever going to buy paintings on a large scale and I think the very first painting I bought was in Howard Street, the Howard Street Gallery, which had been started by the Adult Education Board, and that cost me £10.

AR Well you bought or your were responsible for the Tom Collins Bequest? Tell us about that.

WE This was a lucky break for all of us when we were suddenly presented with £500 cash and the promise of about another £2,000 to come and a miscellaneous set of furniture made by the great Tom Collins himself in the house that he constructed himself in . . .

AR Servetus Street.

WE In Servetus Street, yes. That was a bit of an embarrasment, we had some difficulty in palming it off onto the Women's College. Very solid furniture designed under the inspiration of William Morris, beaten copper work and things of this kind.

The old boy was terribly interesting. He was very Irish, he was the son of Furphy.

AR This is Samuel? Furphy.

WE He wanted to comemorate his father he thought. Later on it turned out he wanted to spite his relatives I think. I shouldn't really say that perhaps, but I think that's the truth. And he came to us and said how would we spend the money? "Now for instance if I give you £500, what will you do with it?" And I looked when the Vice-Chancellor called me in for a consultation and I said "Well there's one standard way of always handling gifts of this kind, you set up a prize essay. You ask the students to write an essay on some aspect of Tom Collins every year and you use the money as capital. But I think it would be rather wasteful to give them too much money, so let's say we put half of it to that." He said "Ah good," he said "Ah good, good, good. What else would you like to do?" I said "Well I don't know whether it would suit everybody, but I think it would be a very good idea if this University had a really good contemporary Australian painting. Then people would get off the boat to have a look at it when they come through. Was your dad interested in art and so on?" And of course it all came out about William Morris and so he thought it was a wonderful idea and I said "Well we'll see whether we can land something by Russell Drysdale or Bill Dobell." And I at once set off to see Jimmy Cook at the Art Gallery, who was a very personal friend of Dobell. He said he'd root around and see whether he could lay hands on things and actually the painting I had in mind was a painting of a big middle aged farmer's wife in front of a toll gate and at that time £250 was a

very high price for an Australian painting. Oh yes, yes even for a Dobell or Drysdale. I doubt whether they got many except for portraits, commissioned portraits, I doubt whether they sold many paintings at that price. However Jimmy Cook didn't get very far over the next two years and this was the period when I was away in America. And then one day I got a ring from him "Come and have lunch with me in the park will you?" I said "Yes. Found something at last?" He said "No, I have not found anything concrete yet, but there's a very interesting painter." When I got to the park I was introduced to Sidney Nolan
25 and I think Cynthia Nolan, but there I am a little vague. Sid and I got on awfully well immediately. He's very charming and very entertaining and I said I'd never seen any of his paintings. All I'd seen was a full page in 'Life' reproducing his Ned Kelly series, which struck me as being very impressive. And I said "We've got a great barren hall where it would be wonderful to have a series of about 20 panels like that from scenes, anecdotes and the rest of it in 'Such is Life' and suddenly discovered that he was absolutely mad over Furphy. And he said "What a wonderful idea, you shall have it, you shall have it." I said "Oh do be careful, do be careful, I can't commission anything. I'm only one member fo a committee, and so on." And so he said "Oh don't worry, don't worry. You shall have the first refusal of them. If you don't want to take them I can easily sell them." So he said he would go away and the panels would be ready shortly. I don't know what 'shortly' meant, but I didn't hear from him for about two years and when I did hear from him he apologised for not having done any panels, he was busy about other things, but he was now desperately anxious to get to England again, was very short of money and he had oh a dozen or so of his paintings left over from an exhibition in Brisbane of scenes from the back country, which he'd been commissioned to do for a book by Sidney Ure Smith on the old timers of Queensland. He said he thought they were very much in the spirit of Tom Collins and he thought they were pretty good. He was getting about £80 a piece in Brisbane, we could have the job lot for about £500. So I said "Well what a wonderful idea." And wrote back, because I never buy a painting through the post, I'd like at any rate to see some transparencies. So he sent the transparencies and I said "Well I am terribly impressed, but I think I had better be cautious. Send us four of the paintings, then we can really look at them." I happened to pick the four that he himself thought were the best (between ourselves), the ones he was hoping to keep for himself. So we had these around in my room. It was August and the rainy season and we had them around there for about a matter of three or four weeks and the only person who liked them, besides myself, was Alec King. The rest would come in, gape a bit and very rapidly fall into conversation about something quite else. I thought they were good, but you know it is a bit risky buying a dozen paintings like that off hand.

Tape 3
Side 1

WE We had a new Vice-Chancellor who was away in England recruiting medical staff and the committee administering this Furphy Fund was the Vice-Chancellor, myself and whoever happened to be Chairman of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, which at that time I think was John K Ewers. So there was quite a problem. Should we put this all off until our Vice-Chancellor got home or should we put the case to our Acting Vice-Chancellor, who happened to be Noel Bayliss. Noel Bayliss said "Well I don't know anything whatever about paintings." And instead of saying "But I don't like them" he said "You go ahead. If you like

them, if you think they are good, you have perfect freedom to act. I suppose you've got to get this chap Ewers to approve of them as well." So I talked to John K Ewers who wasn't really quite sure whether he liked them or not, but they were Australian certainly and so on. He had in mind us buying those things in the foyer of the Winthrop Hall, Durack, Elizabeth Durack's set of Aboriginal paintings and he was going to do a bit of horse-trading. However he said yes to us, so we all said yes and the paintings arrived round about November, too late to put up in the University perhaps, so I offered them to Laurie Thomas, who was then directing the National Gallery* and they were on display over the summer and the storm of abuse that filled the columns of the "Daily News" and "West Australian" - you could hardly believe it. I wish I'd kept the letters all just to show what people said. I was accused of being a Communist, naturally. I was accused of abusing womanhood because . . . I don't quite know how they arrived at that, but still. It was an insult, etc, etc. My head should be examined. Wasting the University's funds. Yes. So that was a bit depressing.

So we had them reframed and then came the problem of where to put them in the University. And there were a number of very good prints of 19th century painters from the Carnegie Trust which had been lovingly arranged in various lecture rooms by Miss Wood, the Librarian, and she didn't want to spoil her arrangement of these things. She didn't think there was really any room for the Nolan paintings. So they were offered to anybody on the staff who'd like one in his room. Alec King gratefully accepted one, the Vice-Chancellor didn't, and a number of them were hung up in the new extension of the Administrative Building where our English Departmental studies were. The one at the end of the corridor caused a lot of comment. It's called "Huggard's Store" of course, the great name of Huggard is across the top of this outlying building, but it went familiarly as Buggard's Store from that moment onwards.

One we offered to the students. They'd just had their coffee room decorated by David Foulkes-Taylor, who pasted, wallpapered, the room with pages from the great French encyclopaedia so that if you were lucky you could read a quite interesting piece about hydraulics, telescopes or something like that. I thought it rather nice. So we put into this room the painting called. "A Perish" with you know a lonely traveller lying with the lovely flowers in front of him and the great wastes behind him. Protests in the student newspaper about 'that brown thing' which made them ill, they couldn't drink their coffee! Interesting in view of the current adoration of all things Nolan. Now he can do no wrong. In those days nothing about his work seemed right. It was a lonely time.

AR Oh dear you really did come up against a lot of opposition.

WE I did indeed. Everybody kept asking me why I'd bought them. One chappy, a noted scientist, said "Well, Allan, I could understand buying one of them, but a dozen, it's lunacy, it's lunacy." It was the same chap who greatly disliked or had great contempt for Inga King's figure of the two headed king which we planted in front of the bullrushes on the lawn. And wickedly when the great Sir Fred Hoyle came to visit the University he took Sir Fred and said "What do you think of that thing?" And Sir Fred, very gallantly, said "Well I think you're a remarkable university. I'd be proud to belong to a place that had so much courage and so much taste." That was my one little moment of triumph.

* Western Australian Art Gallery, Director 1953-1957

AR You were very interested in sculpture too.

WE Ah yes, yes indeed, especially when the planning of the Arts Faculty Building was going on. By that time I was going over east every year as a member of the Humanities Research Council and when I went over I stayed over for about three weeks. We normally met in Canberra, sometimes in Sydney or sometimes in Melbourne, but I always had a dash to Sydney and occasionally to Brisbane and Melbourne. And I had some very, very good contacts, especially Laurie Thomas. When the possibility of the building came up I grew very friendly with a number of sculptors, Klippel Jomantis, a great friend of Leonard French, who carved in wood, Norma Redpath and especially with Clem Meadmore, who I thought was the very genius of the age and still think so. I had a piece of Clem's, just a little maquette, which I had on my desk and I thought it would form an admirable piece in the kind of open square between the domestic part and the lecture theatre part. It would have been about 25 feet high in beaten steel. Our Clerk of Property, (I don't think that was his correct title, but he was in charge of property and so on, an ex-colonel of engineers, otherwise a very good chap) complained. "No," he said "we couldn't possibly have that." I said "Why not?" He said "Well children will clamber on it and hurt themselves." I said "Not if you put a notice, surely." He said "Well pieces would fall off." I said "Not if they're welded by Clem Meadmore." He said "It will grow rusty." I said "Oh no he treats them chemically beforehand." But still Chris couldn't bear the idea of "a great piece of Clem Meadmore (which I am going to get, by the way). I think it's possibly £200." Of course nowdays you'd have to pay $50,000. But then he'd not heard of Clem Meadmore, and very few other people had either, so he was in good company about that. Inge King too, I quite liked, and saw a lot of her work in Victoria and was very pleased with the piece I bought. It cost I think about £375. She said afterwards about the labour involved in making it that it worked out at 6½d an hour, which was rather less than a washer woman was getting even in those days. This of course was the occasion of a famous brush with administration. Incautiously Professor Stephenson had suggested that the Committee in charge of the building of the Arts Faculty (that is myself as client, himself as advisory architect and Marshall Clifton as the architect) were empowered to buy these things off our own bat. As our brief for the building included a clause 1% for expenditure on works of art, it seemed to us we were in the clear. We did this (it is quite true) in the long vacation. And very incautiously we took the Inge King peice out of the workshop and planted it in front of a big group of very striking bulrushes which was immediately visible from the Senate Room. When the Senate met and saw there were cries of "What is that thing? Who got it? And why? What is their motive, etc for desecrating the campus? And what have they paid for it?" So the poor Vice-Chancellor, who'd not heard anything of this, was in a great 'tiz waz' of course, at being hauled over the coals. We pointed out to him that it was in our brief and the Senate, to its utter dismay, was told that it really was in the brief. They'd never read the brief, you see, they'd just passed it through. So they passed a famous resolution to the effect that any work of art bought in conjunction with a building must now be submitted for inspection to the Senate and everybody should see it and vote on whether it should be accepted or not. Any work of art costing over a thousand was to be subject to this inspection. So even on their own resolution we could have got by with that £375. After that it was a problem of where to place this dreadful piece of work. The Vice-Chancellor wrote me a letter and

I suggested a place which I thought highly suitable. No, he said, couldn't I find another place? So I suggested a second place. No, no, no, no that wouldn't do. In the end I simply had to ask our property man "What do you want us to do with it?" And in an unguarded moment he said "Well put it in a place where the Senate can't see it." So it's now residing behind the local power station at the northern end of the Arts Faculty in a little courtyard all of its own. Very sweet in a way, but not really the place for it.

The other caffufle we had over statuary was very early in the Tom Collins Fund. I bought a piece by Arthur Boyd which I had seen up in Brisbane. I'd suppose you'd call it a Mother and Child. It was in ceramic and was obviously a by-product of Picasso, but in its way I thought very impressive. A mother holding her child in a protective gesture and on the back of the piece in the various decorations - the colouring looks a bit like parsley on an omelet as there is a great hand spread, as though granny is looking after mother, which I find rather charming. This horrified almost everybody except the National Gallery of Victoria, which really wanted to borrow it from us - but still that was later in the piece. Oh there were all kinds of protests. At the time when we had a new staff house build it included a rather tiny internal foyer of, I should think, about ten feet with a palm or two in it and a kind of open skylight, and everybody going in and to the bars and the restaurant and so on passed by this. I thought, well this is absolutely admirable , for out of doors sculpture. Armour proof glass so that nobody smashes their nose or hers! The Committee had to meet to decide whether they wanted to accept this and they kept delaying and I had no answer. So I wrote several times and finally they wrote that the Committee had very earnestly thought over this and had decided that with a piece so valuable as this it was just too risky to have it in the staff house. So for many years it stayed in my own back garden.

AR And where is it now?

WE It's in the Nolan Room or in the Nolan Maze just behind the Nolan Room. Yes it must be very valuable by this time, but I think we paid £200 or something like that for it.

AR It sounds as though all your acquisitions are very valuable. What value now?

WE Well they are now, but they were very cheap when we bought them. I don't think we paid more than £60 or £70 for almost any of the things collected before 1963. In fact perhaps the most expensive one was a Len French painting which won the prize at the annual Perth Show and we paid him a hundred guineas for that in 1963. You know since then he's gone up to £15,000 or £20,000 for his paintings. I think it was a very good example of Len French. I suppose that's the most valuable one we have apart from the Nolans. There were a number of others that would . . . Well if you could sell them, if anybody were buying, they are worth a lot more. In fact it is quite a problem, the insurance premiums.

AR Yes. Well in 1954/55 you were Dean of the Faculty.

WE Oh yes, yes.

AR Now was that . . .

WE Somewhat reluctantly.

Yes there were a number of things that happened whilst I was Dean. I say happened rather than brought about. We had the Chair of French and the Chair of German were created for the first time, and the Chair of Classics was made a Chair. So those were three notable additions to the staff. I was pleased about them because I had been, as you know, their Chairman of the Modern Language Department and whilst poor Professor Wood was in sick retirement I expect I was Chairman of the Classics Department too. I don't remember that one.

Yes thinking of what I was trying to do different as Dean. Our major problem, or at least it seemed to most of us our major problem at that time, was simply lack of accommodation. The staff had been increasing very rapidly of course. The numbers of students had swollen tremendously with CRTS people and we were in real trouble. Two tutors a room was absolutely standard and sometimes three. And if you are trying to run a tutorial system in small groups it means that one chap has to go and kick his heels whilst a tutorial is being held. And it is difficult to have interviews with students that are anything like real interviews with somebody listening in, or trying not to. So we were offered the remnants of the American Catalina force's prefabricated wooden huts - deplorably sub-standard. They wouldn't have been passed by anybody except during war circumstances. They were thought to be a great offer and I had to be very firm about not wanting to go into what I called the 'Arab village'. Our next offer was even worse. It appeared that though we had no funds, you know for educational purposes etc, etc, there was an investment and property fund with money coming in from say the Collier Plantation, which could afford to buy and did buy a number of things along Fairway creating another 'Arab village', deplorable really, but we were offered the use of a block of flats, one of the first blocks of flats built in Perth, on the corner of Fairway. I think absolutely deplorable building. So we just managed to avoid going into the Fairway flats until finally they caved in and we had that extension from the Administration Building, which was, yes, not bad. Then we got the extension which was built off Fairway, housing about 22 I think with a seminar room and designed by an architect for our needs and I thought rather beautifully furnished by Foulkes-Taylor.

At that time I was very . . . The experience of the possibility of living in the 'Arab village' and so on stimulated this interest in what I call the aesthetics of a building. It seemed to me there was a difference between buildings and architecture. And if the buildings of a university were not going to be architecture where should we find it? It seemed to me that architecture might be extremely inspiring, or at any rate it could set the right mood for proper academic studies.
15 Oh I didn't expect it was going to look like Cambridge, but still it was going to look better than the University of New South Wales for instance, or even Melbourne. So I was very strong on this matter of having furniture, paintings on the wall if possible, buildings that were functional certainly, but were pleasing to work in and look at. And this ran through all our discussions of course about the Arts Faculty Building and this is where perhaps it's most difficult to deal with an architect with different tastes from one's self. As I say Marshall Clifton had his views naturally and I had to knuckle under to a number of things. I said I thought his building was rather bare at one time, we needed some frilly iron work, half our students are

girls. So we got some frilly iron work and he had to do all the details, or suggest all the details for the New Fortune Theatre as well which in the end turned out to be most attractive. We agreed to differ, amicably.

One or two things that were I thought very interesting. You'd think that in a time when several new universities were coming into being and where every university was simply expanding like wild fire, building new lecture theatres, you'd have thought that the AUC would have come up with a decent lecture theatre. Not so, I spend a lot of time going round other people's lecture theatres and I can think of virtually no exceptions: they're often very badly designed. So Roger Johnson particularly made a great effort to produce not only cheap, but aesthetically good looking and really functional Arts lecture theatres and I think he succeeded very well in the two big lecture theatres. One of the points we were anxious to establish was that we needed all kinds of help with visual aide, projectors and things like that, and we needed good mikes and we needed good loud speakers because we'd have poetry recitals and gramophone recitals and so on. And of course there is the problem of chairs and benches. We didn't want students walking on benches and carving their names on them and so on and so on, and our compromise was an interesting one having more or less a permanent bench but chairs that could be removed. I don't know, some people like them, some people don't. I spent a lot of my time sitting on sample chairs to see whether I could sit on them for an hour without complaining. I even had the help of the Professor of Anatomy. Yes, oh yes.

Then there was the dreadful problem of language laboratories. I just cottoned onto the idea that language laboratories might be very useful. I was thinking particularly of history and anthropological students and so on who had to learn eastern languages or Aboriginal languages in a great hurry, and it seemed to me the possibility of teaching yourself a language through a language laboratory was an excellent one we couldn't possibly keep - in the Arts Faculty - we couldn't keep appointing lecturers in Chinese, Malay and all these other things. You'd have about 150 of them. I thought the language laboratory self-instructing courses were a possible solution, but nobody knew anything about language laboratories except that they had some in Point Cook, so I went to Point Cook and I had talks with a number of people supplying the equipment.

As I expected Point Cook was marvellously equipped with machines incredibly expensive in terms of our grant and so on, so I had to find something cheaper than that. Then came the problem of how big do you want this language laboratory to be and how big will it be when we have 10,000 students? And I said "Oh can't we leave that?" And the architect said "Well you could leave it, but if you've not got space for it you are going to be in the soup." So I had to work out how many listening posts. So we worked out that being generous we might have 30, so we provided one room for 30 and of course storage space and all that, and then decided to be generous and provide another 30, which was in the end providential. I might say the language
20 laboratories didn't appeal to the modern language departments. They showed no enthusiasm whatever. So that's a gift to them, against their wishes I think. But it enabled us in the English Department to use our recordings of poetry and plays, put on concerts of music that had relation to literature and things like that. And we had very good equipment in the big lecture theatres. Our only difficulty

was of course that the lecture theatres could get rather warm, especially in the long vacation. AUC of course will strenuously oppose any air-conditioning. It wasn't necessary in Melbourne and Sydney, why should it be necessary in Western Australia, and in any case the students wouldn't be there during the long vacation. So the Summer School has to put up with it and that's the answer, yes.

We got air-conditioning for the first time only in an experimental laboratory for rats. This belonged to the Psychology Department and it was a tin shed next door to the tin shed Dolphin. I once asked the Vice-Chancellor what did the English Department have to do to qualify as rats. But sadly, the approach didn't work, despite the whisker-twitching.

AR You still haven't got it then?

WE Oh no. We finally got air-conditioning in the library. Not because it helps students to work more effectively, but because some books deteriorate unless the temperature is controlled. So ancient manuscripts won us an air-conditioned library. A great victory, but almost by accident again.

AUC was very, very sticky, very sticky. They wanted us to have corridors three feet wide and it took terrible arguments to persuade them that if you are holding meetings in your studies students will congregate before and after and you need more than five feet. They were appalled at Gordon Stephenson's view that we should have a twenty foot wide, long open space outside the lecture theatre where people could lounge and talk after or before the lecture, whichever you want. You know they thought three feet was enough again, you know the absolute minimal requirements for what they were after. On the other hand they were very surprised to find that our Arts Faculty Building cost £5,000 less than the £500,000 grant. I believe I am right in saying that this is the only building put up since I was there that cost less than the estimates. I feel that was a great triumph.

AR Now do you . . .

WE Well our next brush was with the Octagon Theatre. It became apparent when classes of Economics, first year classes, got to the size of about 1500. Economics suggested that we needed a rather bigger lecture hall and so there were plans afoot. The Administration wanted a bigger lecture hall, but so true to our training we thought, well a lecture hall must double up or triple up and be a multi-purpose building: a ballroom, a gymnasium, a speech-day room and whatever else you can think of under one roof. So they were interested in the idea that eventually it might have theatre in it and I was responsible for suggesting to the Vice-Chancellor that we should get a famous producer to come over and give us a little advice on the design of a general open stage which would serve as a good auditorium as well as a theatre and not cost the earth. So we got the famous producer . . .

AR Guthrie?

WE Yes, yes, Tyrone Guthrie, who turned out to have almost magical gifts in getting eighteen cross people to unite together. It was very, very surprising. He worked very hard for about three days. He actually came to us for five days, he had a cold for the first two. But he

was very charming, very clever, and he certainly knew all about the design of theatres like the Chichester Theatre or the one that he designed in Minnesota. And we had a youngish architect Peter Parkinson, whose mania had been designing small experimental theatres and he came up with assistance and Roger Johnson also produced a number of very exciting things. We saved a lot of money by having no ceiling, for instance, and all the rafters exposed so we could say it was an experimental theatre. We also experimented with the seating. We hadn't enough money for the seating, we thought, until Nigel Prescott suddenly, with no authority, bought up a lot of surplus seats from the old Capitol Cinema when it was being destroyed and these were put in whether we liked them or not. I didn't like them, but still it solved a certain temporary difficulty shall we say.

The awful thing about it was that the ground was altogether too small to build a theatre. I mean a theatre is more than a stage and an auditorium. What you might call back-stage didn't exist. People made up or made furniture somewhere else and came rushing in from across the campus. So we had to make provision eventually for rehearsal space and things like that which would have doubled the cost right away. And the foyers were altogether too tiny. They still are. However, we made the best of a bad job there.

Tape 3
Side 2

WE In the plan for the campus in general we thought of extending from the foyer into a School of Music, which would provide a small concert hall, all the rehearsal rooms needed, a number of studies for the staff of course and seminar rooms, and this would come out from the foyer of the Octagon towards the Great Court, take a turn ot the right or North and join the Students' Guild Building, so completing the Great Court. I think it's disastrous to have had the Music School planted where it is and even worse to have that student theatre planted there. It just crowds the campus abominably and spoils the total effect of having the Great Court, but that's one of the things that happens when you make a good plan and then play around with it.

On the whole the Octagon I think has been a pretty good theatre for the kind of purposes we needed and we opened it with a great acclaim for the Annual Conference of the Modern Languages Association, which I was President of for that year. I decided we should talk about drama, which we did, but in colaboration with the Festival we had an imported professional Melbourne company under Frank Thring, which produced a very good production, I think, of 'Henry IV'. Our Annual Conference went off with quite a bang. Even better than that, I wrote to Dr Coombs, who of course is a graduate of ours, former President of the Guild and a great exponent of student self-help, and asked him whether he would open this show for us, or open the Modern Languages Conference and the Theatre at the same time. He came over for a couple of days and was really excellent. He is an extremely good speaker and he gave just the speech I would have ordered if I had known where to order it. Yes it was a very memorable visit and I had several very interesting conversations with him about early days: Irwin Street and the new buildings of Winthrop Hall and especially about digging that hole and filling it with water, which was all done under his personal supervision and direction, and the rest. And it was a singular memorial to the spirit of the earlier days of the University where it was normal for

students to muck in and do things and feelthat they owned the University and so on.

AR That feeling has gone, hasn't it?

WE I am not sure. I think it is tapable whenever you have anything worth doing. After all the Dolphin Theatre you see was run by a very ad hoc committee. It's quite true that after a time we had imposed on us somebody - I think it was the Dean of Medicine - who knew nothing about theatres, but knew about finance. And we also had Keith Benwell, then a young accountant in Administration, who was there to see that we didn't waste any money etc. He played along beautifully. I don't know whether he cooked the results, but certainly he got by and we got by and we got by over and over again. But it was very much a student affair. The trouble of course with students here is that they change year by year, and the newcomers never bother to read the minutes of what's been done in the previous, say, five years. They've no idea what's been done or why. They start completely from scratch: they are Adam and Eve and will do things their way. It's an awful business trying to keep any continuity with them. But entertaining.

It's quite interesting, for instance, that when the students built their own theatre they did take Peter Parkinson as architect, but apart from that they never bothered to ask anybody in the English Department about the design of theatres and so on. So they designed it according to their own sweet thoughts and the result is what we have at present. It's not by any means a perfect theatre. It's not even a good one. But still you can't always control the users.

AR Well you were on the Professorial Board for a long time, so you must have seen a lot of changes there.

WE Yes, yes indeed. When I arrived I think there were twelve of us and I think one of the great problems of the future was what was going to happen when we numbered thirteen. A group of twelve can come to decisions much faster, even if they all disagree amongst themselves, than a group of 112, and Professorial Board meetings in those early days were wonderfully brief, partly because the Chairman of the Board in those first two of three years was Professor Ross, who was very neat and clipped and rattled through things at a tremendous pace. Unlike later meetings of the Professorial Board which went on and on and on just like a meeting of town councillors.

5 As time went on the Board grew altogether unmanageable, too big. You couldn't get them all into one room and there were too many different interests involved. You know if you were in the Medical School it was hard to listen to what's going on in Agriculture and neither of them was vastly interested in what was happening in Arts, and so on and so on. And you had to sit through all this stuff and in short more and more business was being done in committees, some of which are official. It was the unofficial committees, the horse-trading that often determines what comes up for discussion and how voting is going. There are people everywhere, in any institution who delight in committee meetings and especially in horse-trading meetings and are prepared to devote a lot of their time to it. It's rather like politicians. I can't imagine why anybody should wish to be President of the United States, but apparently power is attractive. And in the same way power, even in this limited kind, in our University community,

is attractive for many people. They can't help it. But I find it very boring and I have never been very good at it, I have always been too busy about other things. But it's probably a professional weakness not to be a good horse-trader. The perfect all round professor must be a good horse-trader and I confess I failed in that. I've always disliked compromise.

Towards the time when Professor Currie left we started some very big changes. We decided to have a sub-committee of the Professorial Board concerned with long-range planning, say in terms of five years, ten years and so on. And of course it was in that committee that the first versions of the Stephenson Plan on the development of the University took place and were discussed up hill and down dale. And we were constantly getting requests from the Universities Grants Commission to give our estimate of how many office girls we were going to require next year, in two years'time, in five years'time, in twenty years' time. What staff we would require likewise. A perfect professor would have sat down and worked out all these cursed things. But really as you knew nothing was going to happen and you were going to get half a temporary lecturer, what was the point of setting out that you needed ten lecturers, three senior lecturers, a reader and two professors? I mean you could write it, but you might just as well send in last year's letter as be bothered about these things. I got very tired - I am not terribly good at figures and it gives me an awful headache working things out in this way. And when the Murray Commission finally came into being and the questions asked were real questions at last I quite forgot about that. I didn't make any . . . But a number of other people had been very busy about that one and good luck to them, they did a lot of very hard work. And in the course of all this they began to work out what was a reasonable load of work and what was work. Is sitting in a laboratory and seeing nobody blows up the place for two hours the same kind of work as giving a lecture to 1500 students? How do you rate these things? And some work is very mechanical, really. Some work is very much a matter of reciting a lecture you wrote twenty years ago. I don't say anybody ever does that, but it's clear that it's different from being in a lively tutorial on a play you've just seen. It demands different skills and a different kind of intellectual energy and emotional energy, and it is terribly hard to be correct. You know the work of kinds of . . . It is terribly hard to equate how many hours' work a week a student is supposed to be doing. If you look at some of the syllabuses in the handbook and you say "Well these seem to be first year students. They have say less . . ." Say they are working a 40 hour week like a good Australian (but no tea breaks) and that roughly ten hours of their time is wasted in lectures and in tutorials (that is a fair comment). So they have 30 hours left in which to read hard and write their essays. Thirty hours divided by four is 7½. They are asking these students of English to read Milton's 'Paradise Lose' and get some intelligent ideas about it in 7½ hours. It can't be done. I mean if you read it out aloud it would take you fifteen or sixteen hours. So something ought to be done. When we raised this problem in the Arts Faculty because some of us felt that some departments were making terrible demands on students, so they couldn't keep up with their work in anything else except this or that particular subject, we had people suggesting that 70 hours a week was a reasonable load on a student. I never worked more than 35 hours a week myself whilst I was a student. I kept a detailed draft of the things I did. It is quite true I read an awful lot and went to the theatres and talked to a lot of people besides my so called official

work, but that's precisely what being a student is about. You can't really, you know, set these things, except in very wide limits. But a lot of courses as drafted for the official handbook make what I regard as ridiculous, even impossible, demands on students. What happens of course is that a number of slightly lunatic students devoted to that particular subject and a number of extremely brilliant students can get through much of this, often by neglecting their other subjects. I never found a resolution to this particular problem where students are reading more than one subject at a time. Or even if they are reading one subject. This problem of adjustments and what is reasonably to be expected from students is always an open but relevant question.

So part of the work of this sub-committee on long distance planning turned its attention to how much work we could expect people to do. And of course it has a number of very ticklish applications. If, for instance, you appoint a junior assistant and call him a graduate-assistant and you tell him when you take him on that according to the conventions of this University a graduate-assistant spends half his time on his teaching work and teaching load and is supposed to devote half his time, whatever that happens to be, upon his own further studies for a further degree. But you know almost without exception the graduate-assistants of the University are working a 50 hour week or even longer some of them, because they are devoted to their professor and hope by devotion to get a permanent job. It is really frightful exploitation. What I would regard as semi-slave labour. It may be very unpopoular to say things like that, but somebody ought to be saying them is my feeling. I know my daughter was nearly driven crackers in her first five or six months as a tutor in Melbourne. She had one of these shall we say overactive senior lecturers in charge of her, an admirable woman in many ways, but just a workaholic you know, who could run people below her into the ground. There were always plenty of others to come. Like running cab horses . . .

But then when the Professorial Board, as a Board meeting, became almost a rubber stamp for what committees had suggested and so on and so on, I used to go because I thought it was just my duty, capital 'D', but I didn't see how I could take much part in it except to ask questions and make a snide remark or two. And I suspect that very many other people felt like this. One or our professors in the Arts Faculty who never went anywhere without a book so that he would have something to read if waiting for a bus or for a cricket match to get on, always took a book with him to the Professorial Board. Other people just doodled. I was always famous for my doodles. At least the Assistant Registrar at the time collected my doodles which should form part of the Tom Collins Bequest I think.

AR Well you retired in 1974.

WE Yes, reluctantly, but in other ways thankfully.

AR Do you miss it?

WE I miss being busy, yes. I also miss talking. I miss mainly talking to students. Undoubtedly that: any educator, retired, probably feels the same. I ought to say really, being <u>compelled</u> to talk, because if you've got classes to meet and so on there it is, the programme is in

front of you and you have to think a bit. Occasionally you have to devise new examination questions and things like that, and go to meetings. And it brought me in contact, of a rather shallow kind, with my various colleagues, though the students were most important. And when I left, whether it's mistaken or not, I kind of draw a red line. "You're through," I told myself, "You don't interfere with your successor and what they're up to and what they're doing. If they wanted to see me I thought they could always see me." So I was left with little to do after rather too much, and I had thought that I had a wide range of interests and it wouldn't be difficult to go on following them. But in fact without the pressure I did find it terribly hard at first. I still find it hard. Twiddling your thumbs is a very difficult art and as well I was very restless because my wife had died about twelve months before I retired and I was living on my own, a miserable bachelor.

AR Well you look as though you've found a very nice new wife.

WE Oh yes, yes indeed I have. But the time I have referred to was nonetheless extremely difficult.

AR Tell me, were there any things that you really look back on that you would have liked to have done?

WE Oh by human nature there were a number of mistakes I'd prefer not to have made. Things of that kind. Things I'd like to have accomplished that, for one reason and another, never came to fruition.

I think perhaps the major thing to say is that when I was appointed here it was a very small show and it was quite clear that for a long time to come nothing like work at a senior research level the level of severe scholarship, was likely to develop. There were very few students capable of it to start with and our library, had about 120,000 or 150,000 volumes, and wasn't a research worker's tool. Meaning by that, that if I had any very bright students the obvious thing to do was to get them away, overseas preferably. If not overseas, to some other bigger university in the eastern states. So my line was, you see, for twenty years to send them all away. I thought it was good for them to get out of Australia, you know, just to see what the rest of the world was like and why Australia was worth coming back to. And I still think this is perhaps the right way to treat most of my bright students. Nowadays of course the library is very much bigger and has built up all kinds of collections that a PhD student could use with profit if he gets the right topics and so on, and there is more to be said for work here after the first degree. What we did as a compromise of course was to institute MA's by coursework and these have proved I think very effective. It means that the tutors involved had to work pretty hard in a much more specialised way and you can afford to let them choose their specialties most of the time so that they are not compelled to work at the mill as slaves in first and second year classes etc. So that was a kind of interim solution. But I think I was probably a bit out in my estimates of when the library would be big enough etc, etc. I think possibly the period began about 1960. I thought it would, as it were, last my time, and certainly by that time I was no longer in a position to be a good leader of so-called research. That is assuming that I really thought the so-called research was worth doing. I have very grave doubts about this, in as much as the multiplicity of universities everywhere, especially

in America, have not been awfully good in this sense that they are constantly producing good students who look forward to academic life and so their qualifications for an academic life keep mounting. It used to be good enough to get a first in Oxford or Cambridge, and then you went away somewhere and you wrote a book and they gave you a junior fellowship, and you wrote another book and you moved into some mild province and became a professor and wrote another book and then you came back to Cambridge. This was a kind of programme. The books had to be worth publishing. A PhD thesis has got to be worth publishing . . . Well at least they always say, that is a definition of it, but often nobody reads them and indeed most of them are unreadable, from the point of view of real interest. A mountain of words for no purpose.

The other thing is something called 'research'. During the war it became more and more apparent that scientific and technological research of the highest quality, like atom bombs, meant a great deal in the war effort. So something called research, after the war, was going to be funded very heavily and was. And so you got the Association of Science and then you got the Social Sciences Council, History and Social Sciences Council. And coming a long way afterwards came the Council for the Humanities, which turned into the Australian Academy. Initially I think this was largely a financial expedient: instead of the Americans having to vet all the applicants for Fulbright Grants to America, they thought that we on the local scene should do that and thereafter they provided us some money to get the apparatus working, and so on. But candidly a great many of us feel that it's not, strictly speaking, an inevitable claim to consideration that you are a PhD, it merely shows you have spent about three, four, five or six years slogging away. And the other thing of course which is apparent in our field of studies is that with the development of research go all kinds of funds to publish the results of research and we get all kinds of journals. In fact every little university has a little journal of some kind or other. And journals have to be filled and PhD students are there to fill them, and it is crashingly boring to read most of these journals. I think perhaps once in fifty you meet an article that really matters to you and if you are following something up as a specialist you may have to read another twenty of them or even the other thirty, and it is an awfully boring waste of time. Articles just have been written in order to go on the chap's log in order to get promotion and so on. Publish or perish is the American system. It's also used, unfairly I believe, for job selection.

As an example, administrators trained as accountants or in business administration or economics or something like that have no means of telling whether a lecturer in English is any good as a lecturer in English, except perhaps through gossip and rumour. They have no idea whether this lecturer is brilliant rather than just good or just satisfactory. They are disinclined to trust the recommendations of the head of the department. (I don't know why.) They are instead inclined to say "What has he published?" If he has published something there is a list. (They don't read them, themselves by the way.) They just send the works round to a referee, who probably doesn't read them fully either. Not always at any rate. As a sparkling contrast to this pedagogic approach we ourselves in the University of Western Australia have 'Westerly', which has been going now for about fifteen years, I think. It emerged out of another journal called 'The Critic',

ran about 1960 for about two or three years with O'Brien as the editor. It was quite a lively little journal and then 'Westerly' began. After a time it was evidently worth giving grants to. I think it is an admirably balanced journal. Not this awfully pedantic scholarship, but of general interest in the field of literature, history and so on, with of course a strong bias to Australian writing. Where Australian writing is concerned of course we have had on the staff almost ever since just after the war, Peter Cowan, who is a very considerable short story writer and had been a very successful teacher, or remained a highly successful teacher, let us say, at Scotch College. When 'Westerly' came along he was the principal editorial assistant with Bruce Bennett and is still on the ball, and very active. Both of them I think have done a very remarkable job. John Barnes also was very much concerned in this and they have kept the thing going at a very high level and I am really very, very proud of them.

Now I think I have said what I felt about the questionable value of so much so-called 'research'. I suppose my own weakness in the end was simply having too much teaching, carrying too heavy a load of teaching. This is only partly because you have to repeat everything for part-time students, which of course does double the time you spend in lecturing at any rate, and it has been a very heavy load because until . . . Well most of the time we were overburdened. We had to do too many courses in which we knew little of the subject and you know being a Jack of all trades, means being master of none. If I'd been a little more prudent I might have cut down my teaching load and spent more time on what I would call propaganda or putting a point of view. As you can see I had a number of schemes, some of which have come off, some of which haven't. Where they failed or hung fire it was largely because I hadn't enought time to keep telling people why they were so important. You have to do an awful lot of this to get ideas into people's heads, and even then they don't always stick. I think on reflection I perhaps didn't do quite enough in the way of public relations. I trusted too much in the ideas or the projects speaking for themselves. So if I were to do it again I'd get a good publicity agent on the staff.

On that basis I suppose I should say as a self-criticism what enemies might say, I have started a lot of hares and maybe I am not at my best in the follow up. This is partly because of time or money problems, and partly because, of course, the financial stringency of the day. It's an imperfect world, and we are all mortal.

Tape 4
Side 1

WE But in defiance of that what you have to say is that something started which seems to have run aground can suddenly revive and because of the work you have done in the earlier period you can make use of sudden opportunity as obviously I did over the paintings. I'd been preparing in a sense for that for about thirty years. The same thing happened about the New Fortune Theatre. If I had not had that in my head constantly, I would never have suddenly produced it (or shall I say produced it bit by bit in a very diplomatic manner). A lot of things you see which are like sleeping dogs which arise when the opportunity occurs. So being an opportunist is probably an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

Yes, I suppose the other thing that matters is that temperamentally

I'm sometimes a moody chap. Everybody, of course, has moods, but some of us swing up-and-down more violently than others. Which means we're sometimes difficult to live with or work with. Come to that I didn't always find it easy to live with myself.

AR Well what other lovely schemes did you have? It seems a most interesting scheme was the community centre project.

WE This emerged out of my interest in contemporary architecture. I was a very great admirer of Le Corbousier. I got this from a Cambridge student who was sharing sets of rooms and who was training to be an architect and I just wolfed all the functional architects and the painters associated with them - Ozenfant, Mondrian - Marcel Breur was a later god, Mies van der Rohe and people like that. So I used to read the architectural reviews with great assiduity, though of course it wasn't my job to know those things. For example, there was a very remarkable building by Sir Owen Williams. Sir Owen Williams was an engineer, not an architect, and his building was quite extraordinary in its way, a very brilliant solution to very complex problems. The problems centred on a new health centre in Peckham, one of the more dilapidated parts of London. A group of doctors in a clinic had the excellent idea that the taks of doctors ought to be to prevent disease as much as possible and see that circumstances made it easier to stay alive. They formed a scheme under which a family would be enrolled for an annual fee and the doctors would be there to keep them as healthy as possible. So besides having their clinic - they would have the usual antenatal clinics and child welfare clinics - they thought that other things being equal exercise was a good thing so they'd have a sports club with football, hockey, tennis and basketball and a running track, and because the weather is so abominable in England, especially in Peckham, they decided they ought to have a good gymnasium and a swimming bath. Because they wanted to keep the family together instead of breaking it up into different teams, and so on, they decided that the swimming baths and the gymnasium should be overlooked on a mezzanine floor with chairs, comfortable chairs, so that parents could delight in the performances of their offspring. And because parents can't sit for long in England without drinking something there ought to be a bar and a cafeteria. After that perhaps they might even, as they are there in a group, want to run the show along democratic principles and before long good democrats would want to inform themselves on important issues like population problems for instance, or education. So we'd need a library, for instance. Yes, that was a good idea. And if we had a library in charge of an education officer, well the education officer might form discussion groups, but not adult education classes. They had excellent ideas that the discussion group, seeing there was a problem, would consult with the education officer and ask him to send down a bunch of experts, one by one preferably, who would stand in the witness box and answer questions and so on. You see it was very democratic in this sense and also very active, and this struck me as being a marvellous instance of putting the principales of New Education into operation. And the thing sparked up in me because I happened to read in the paper that some Federal body interested in health was offering a grant of $10,000 to any local body, any local community, to set up sports fields and so on. I thought 'Gosh, this is it. If we start off with $10,000 we could start a community centre.' And Alec King and I worked together on this and we picked up an inspector of health education in the Education Department and a chappy called

Harry Giesiker a sportsman, and in the end one or two others and we went round on a kind of campaign. We wrote to each municipality and inspected what they had and they would like to have. One or two didn't reply, but one or two were quite enthusiastic. Bassendean in particular was enthusiastic and so was South Perth and for quite a time there was a kind of local association for community centres. But of course this was 1942, there wasn't much you could do about it during war time. I got across to Sydney as part of the Department of Social Reconstruction, taken on by 'Nugget' Coombs and talked my head off in Sydney and Canberra and Melbourne along these lines. Had a bit of an impact in their offices, but the fatal flaw we discovered when the war ended, or at least they'd discovered it long before I did, was that buildings being in short supply cinemas were more important than this kind of community centre and housing was certainly more important and new schools were still more important. In any case though I may be right in thinking that some 600 adult education officers had been trained in the army they would have had enough of it or at any rate their army pupils would have had enough, they wanted to go home and stay home. So it petered out in that sense. It might not have petered out if I had devoted myself wholeheartedly to the project and nothing else but the project, but I wasn't terribly good at following things up. Besides, I was teaching English and as the boss had to put in my hours out of need and example. I didn't have much spare time.

AR 1942, you were fairly busy at that stage.

WE I had too much on my plate, yes. I was unlike Florence Nightingale in this respect. I was never single minded enough.

For years when I wrote in my annual submissions for increases in staff status and funds and so on for the Department I used to head my submission 'Next Year in Jerusalem'. So it was of some considerable interest when one of my brightest students from Cape Town and then Cambridge, who'd become a Professor of English in Jerusalem, wrote to me and said could I please come to Jerusalem to the University and stand in for her for say six months. The poor girl, Hebrew undoubtedly, of Polish extraction I think, didn't know any Hebrew. When she became Dean of the Faculty and all the meetings were conducted in Hebrew she was absolutely ditched. So she wanted six months off to go into one of these teaching schools where they taught nothing but Hebrew until everyone can talk it. So I went to Jerusalem in around 1967, I think.

My colleagues all spoke English, naturally, many of my students spoke it very imperfectly and understood it very imperfectly. But some of them were very bright people. I'd never met such intense concentration, not even in the CRTS men. They were terrific from our stand point. But it causes some problems. For instance I used to go in to the Department about every third day, I'd look at my letterbox and take the bunch out and go over to the secretary and ask "What does that say?" and "What does that say?" And early in November she said "Oh this is something that is going to interest you Professor." And I said "Yes, read it out." It said "Owing to shortage of funds no salaries will be paid from November 10th until further notice." I said "Good God!" She said "Oh don't worry Professor, you're a visiting professor and they'll pay you." I said "But not the others?" I said "Does this happen often?" She said "Oh yes every time the Treasury is too empty." I said "Well when does that happen?" She said "Well it depends on the contributions from America. At the moment it's rather empty." And I said "When

will it be full again?" And she said "Well that's what we'd all like to know." "In the meantime," I said "have you been paid any salary or will your salary be docked off?" She said "I haven't been paid since last January." I said "And what about these chaps who are supposed to be working around the building shifting . . .?" She said "I don't know when they've been paid." I said "Well what do you do if you don't get any money?" She said "Oh well we kind of live on credit." And I said "Oh I suppose my credit wouldn't be very good. However, as you say, I am exempt from this." So I went home and told my wife, who was duly astonished; and within a week came another shock, the students had gone on strike. I'd never heard of students going on strike before. It was all over Israel, all the university students on strike, no lectures. So I said "Well are we all pleased at this or not? Why have they gone on strike?" And I discovered that practically all of them were on scholarships and the size of their scholarship had been fixed, oh I think in 1956 or something like that, and then they were indexed according to the cost of living. And over night, because of shortage of money in the Treasury, the Treasury had decided to cut their scholarships in half, just as simple as that. So they went on strike and had meetings and demonstrations of various kinds and nobody knew how long it would last; in fact it lasted nearly three weeks. When I was just idling, going in there expecting . . . Talk about making hay with your lecture schedule and all that, it was really astonishing. So it was . . .

AR What year was this?

WE This was 1966. I was lent to them of course by the University of Western Australia. Yes, yes. Jerusalem is a fascinating place in many ways. Of course there was a wall. You couldn't get across the wall, but fortunately I'd seen what was on the other side of the wall on my earlier trips in the Middle East, and we saw a number of things in Israel itself of course. My former pupil had been private secretary to the Minister for War. The Minister for War had been brought up on a kibutz and still lived in a kibutz when he could. Just went off for the weekend to the kibutz and so on. So I heard a lot about kibutzes from the inside. It is a hard topic of conversation anywhere. We saw most of the big sights. Of course you get very tired of archaeology. Every place you dig up in your back garden or the new road you are cutting uncovers the remains of centuries. In some of the remains - there is a kind of big square hole just outside Jericho they've got down to about 70 feet and I think at the moment they are discussing the ninth city. It must be perhaps the oldest city in the world or recorded city. It's quite impressive looking down a hole and seeing a kind of layer cake. But every time they cut a new road they have to hold up the work if anything of archaeological interest is sighted and then they unearth it fast and rush it to the museum and carry on with their work.

The other thing that of course is a matter of considerable interest is one of the chaps on the staff called Daleski had just written a very good book on the novel. I was anxious to talk to him. It took some time to find him because he was on his kind of study leave or a break of three or four moths, but I got to see him finally. A very, very interesting chap and we were talking about the menace of the Arabs and the wall and so on and he said "Well as you came out did you see towards the end of the road?" I said "Well I saw something that I thought was barbed wire. It was about a 300 yards stretch." He said

"The Arabs are just on the other side of that." I said "Who, who?" He said "That's all right we are trained to run fast." But then he told me that he'd just been doing a period of three months in the army again. Everybody there, able bodied that is, spends two years in the army and then he does a month a year until he is forty. And every now and then if you are an officer like him you have to do a three months' stretch. It's just too bad for your professor in the English Department, you have to go away again. It's just too bad for anybody if the milkman goes away. They are used to this. So it was quite exciting in its modest way. At least we made exciting discoveries. We could walk just two or three hundred yards to the top of a very rocky hill where we were situated and we couldn't exactly see Arabs, but we were told by gun fire and so on. So it was always a matter of interest.

AR You were there . . . You actually were there for . . .

WE For six months. It was different. It helped to give a new perspective on our own world. No one actually shot at us here, no matter what the frustrations or temptations.

AR Well, thank you for sharing these reminiscences.

WE It has been a pleasure to talk, to have someone listen to me. When you're working you seldom define basics. You're too busy. When you're finished - who wants to hear the rationale of yesteryear?

AR Well. Here's a new ear. Thank you very much Professor Edwards.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

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Reading through this transcript eighteen months after the interview I'd like to pay tribute to my interviewer - she got me going and kept me going, prodding me with the right questions and really listening. I can't remember anyone listening like that since my daughter was a little girl of seven. However, eighteen months later I feel that though incidental references to colleagues in the English Department are scattered throughout the interview with reference to the problems of finding and usefully employing graduate assistants and temporary staff, theatre work, work loads, and so on, I haven't stressed as I would now wish the special contribution of Alec King; the part played by Jeanna and David Bradley; and Neville Teede; and such activities as The Critic and, later, Westerly under the Editorship of Bruce Bennett and Peter Cowan; visiting lecturers like Vance Palmer and Miles Franklin; not to mention our own West Australian writers, Katherine Susanna Prichard, J K Ewers, Henrietta Drake-Brockman, and Dorothy Hewett. And I suppose a good deal might be said about our apparent neglect of pre-Chaucerian literature and of English language studies - now happily remedied. I could add more on the problems of administration, staff management, policy-making and direction, for which I must admit I'd had little or no training - it was "learning through doing" again, trial-and-error, made more hazardous, of course, because circumstances seemed to be changing with bewildering rapidity. We went from pillar-to-post on a shoe-string and learned, the hard way, how to make-do and even how to like it.