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Transcript of an interview with

Margaret Seares

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INTERVIEWER: Criena Fitzgerald

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TRACK 01

TIME 0:00

CF: This is an interview with Margaret Seares who'll be speaking with Criena Fitzgerald for the Oral History and Folklore Collection at the National Library of Australia. On behalf of the Director General of the National Library I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this program. Do you understand that the library owns copyright in the interview material and that access to this interview will only be given in accordance with the instructions you give us in the rights agreement?

MS: I do.

CF: We hope you'll speak as frankly as possible knowing that the interview material will not be released without your authority. This interview is taking place on the ninth of June 2015 in Margaret's home.

MS: Right.

CF: Okay, Margaret. I just want you to give me first your full name and date of birth.

TIME 1:00

MS: Margaret Seares. Second of the 12th 1948.

CF: And before we sort of start fully, what's your earliest memory?

MS: I think my earliest memory is when I went up to the hills in Perth, which were not heavily populated then as they are now, to stay with my grandparents. Stay overnight, it was the first time I'd been away, and my grandfather used to love playing music, and he used to play the piano, but I went to bed, and he was playing the Brahms and Dvorak Slavonic dances, I subsequently discovered, and the Hungarian dances, and they are such beautiful music, whatever it was, it triggered off, I started crying, you know, there's something so very soulful. Anyway, I started to cry, and my poor grandparents,

TIME 2:00

thinking that they'd better ring my parents, and my father had to drive up from Claremont to Roleystone in the middle of the night to pick me up and take me home. I still remember that night, I remember fragments of events around my grandparents' farm up in the hills, you know, catching tadpoles in the spring in jars, and my grandfather's cement water tank, which I think he actually used for irrigating oranges that we used to swim in, and I think I remember a snake in the bamboo at the back of our house in Claremont, this old house had bamboo down the back, and I do remember my mother had the old style copper, I sort of had a vague memory of the laundry. I don't remember much about the house. I do remember the laundry and the smell of an old copper. So those are sort of my earliest memories.

TIME 3:00

I know they were before I was six, because when I was six, we moved to our Mosman Park.

CF: And Margaret, where were you born?

MS: I was born in England in Surrey. My parents were in England after the war. My father was working for Wesfarmers transport, and yes, so I was born there, and I think we came back to Australia when I was about 18 months old.

CF: So just going on to your parents, can you tell me a little bit about firstly your mum, her name and her occupation?

MS: My mother's name was Lillian Catherine Thomson originally. She has always gone by the name Catherine, although in her last - - she turned 100 two weeks ago, and in the last few years for some bizarre reason she started calling herself Lillian, but she hasn't got - - she hasn't got dementia or anything of that sort. She's - - so anyway, she was always known as Cath,

TIME 4:00

Thomson, as she proudly says without a P, which is the Scots version, her father was from Scotland so my grandfather - - she was one of five surviving children, six in total. Her older sister is 102, her younger sister is 90. The only one of the five of them who have died between the ages of 102 and 90 is my uncle who passed away I think last year, heart attack. You know, high cholesterol, love of eating chocolate, high blood pressure runs through the family, so sooner or later they'll go out with heart attacks probably.

CF: Well, 102 is not bad. What was her job?

MS: She didn't have a job. Before she used to be a bookkeeper, and then when they went off to England, she didn't work. She did sort of things like Royal Automobile mechanic's work or something like that in England after the war because you know, there was a lot of need for people to be doing stuff,

TIME 5:00

in the whole rehabilitation of England. So she did things, there's pictures of her you know, with tools around, old cars and so forth, but then she came back and she you know, was that classic of her generation, full-time mother and housewife.

CF: Yes. Although she seemed, from your father's book to have been crucial to him.

MS: She was. She's - - she's always been someone you know, she didn't sort of - - she's not the sort of person who would sit around and watch midday movies and you know, read sort of women's magazines and so on, she's still now, she still subscribes to Australian Science and Landscope and the sort of West Australian environment magazine. She's always been interested in ideas. So I think she's probably,

TIME 6:00

you know, in another generation she would have gone to university. And so she was

a very good sounding board for dad I think. But you know, she certainly - - she didn't work as such after that.

CF: Did she ever express a wish that she had studied? Gone ...(indistinct)...

MS: No, she didn't. Neither of my parents you know, there was - - University just wasn't in their families. Interestingly, though, my brother, not my brother, my uncle, you know, went to - - mum's brother went to university and it was sort of that classic thing of the boy in the family goes to university, the women all go off and do secretarial or domestic sort of training, or whatever. Mum went to secretarial college and she could do shorthand and things like that as well as you know, bookkeeping. So yes, she didn't ever express that, but she certainly - - you know, if you looked at the books that she reads, even now, she's reading a book that we gave her about the explosion of Krakatoa,

TIME 7:00

or the eruption, that happened in 1916, and she was born in 1915. A bizarre episode recently where I took her to the audiologist and he asked her there might be any reason why she was quite profoundly deaf now, she thought for a moment, and she said well, when I was one Krakatoa erupted. This young man sort of looked at me, I think he knew what Krakatoa was. So yes, so she is still interested in those sorts of things.

CF: Right. And sciencey things?

MS: Yes, science very much so.

CF: Yes. And your dad? Just tell me a little bit about him.

MS: Dad again he came from a pretty poor family. His family came out to Western Australia, on one of the first ships, I think around 1830. And found their way ultimately up to York, which is just out, 90 kilometres or so - - more than that, an hour and a half out of Perth.

TIME 8:00

And there were a lot of them. There were about nine brothers or something, so there was a lot of Edwards names around there, Edwards Crossing, and so forth, and he came down to Perth to go to high school, but he had to leave age 15, because the family couldn't afford to keep him at school, so again, he didn't go to university, he studied accounting at night school, and so I think, you know, accounting and finance were always his big thing, but he loved history. So a lot of what he read was history, going - - you know, whether it be about you know, the Tudors, or whether it be about the sort of the First World War or something of that sort.

CF: And was he proud of his free settler ancestry?

MS: I mean, I think he was proud of the fact that the family came early. Came here early. Probably because you know, he grew up in a time where the classic - - the first thing that everyone says is six degrees of separation in Perth,

TIME 9:00

It's probably not like that anymore, but it certainly was when I grew up, and it certainly was even when I was at university. And most definitely when my father was young, you know everybody knew everybody. And a lot of families came out on those early ships. I mean bizarrely it turns out that my daughter-in-law, her family and my family both came out the same time and both ended up in York, she's now horrified, she's probably a secret relative. So yes, so I think that the level the proud part was that they were here sort of early on.

CF: Yes. He, reading his book, he seemed to have spent time explaining what he was doing to his children, or that he took you along to meetings and that sort of thing.

MS: Yes. I do remember you know, dad would have sort of people for dinner who were business people.

TIME 10:00

My parents weren't overly social. Dad was a member of the local golf club. What used to be called Chidley Point golf club. He was one of the people who actually helped build it physically, you know, with a tractor and ploughs and so on. Because it was over the road from us, and you know, when we first went there was just nothing but bush down there in Mosman Park. So we did have people for dinner, and they were usually business people, and although there was the classic thing he does sit down afterwards and they would talk business, even at the table there would be interesting, you know, these people often they would be from England or when Wesfarmers was getting into liquid natural gas, we had the Air Liquide people from France and so forth, yes, so - - and you know dad used to take us to - - when we went to the Royal show, it was usually to the Wesfarmers Pavilion, because he was working with Wesfarmers, and when we went out to the country, he would always call in at the co-ops along the way and you know, say hello, and we'd be part of the retinue.

TIME 11:00

So yes, to that extent we were sort of part of it.

CF: Do you think that your exposure could - - you went into business if you like, later, do you think that exposure helped you? I mean did you know people through that?

MS: I don't think as such, but I think the association with Wesfarmers has obviously helped me, and people who knew my father, like people like Michael Chaney, you know, who came to dad's funeral, and so on, you know he was a major figure in West Australian - - or Australian business, so Michael and I sort of see each other quite regularly, and you know, now through the University of Western Australia, but that was our first connection.

TIME 12:00

Richard Goyder, who is now the CEO of Wesfarmers, I've got to know very well.

Richard was from Tambellup, one of the small wheat belt towns, and they used to go to Albany for their annual holidays like we did, and you know, there was - - so there was a sort of a connection to do with farming, Wesfarmers and the wheat belt, and all of those sort of things. So you know, you get those sorts of throw ups if you like.

CF: Perth connections?

MS: Yes, the Perth connections that came I suppose from those people dad knew.

CF: Do you have any early memories of England at all?

MS: None. Not at all.

CF: And the trip no?

MS: No, not at all.

CF: And describe the house for me in Mosman Park. You said that it was just like bush, and - -

MS: Yes, it's the very last - - or was the very last house in Wellington Street, which is a long street which runs from the highway right down to near Chidley Point and the river.

TIME 13:00

And at that stage, the whole of the bottom area of Wellington Street was just bush. And dad and Mum bought a block - - I think before they went to England, or maybe just after they got back, I'm not sure, for 250 pounds, and they were tempted to buy the one next door for another 250, but dad was always very cautious with money, and no good at real estate, or not - - just not switched on to real estate. Had he done that, he would have been a very wealthy man later on, because those blocks, you know, in 50 years time were going for over, you know, well over the million dollar mark each. Because they had lovely views across the river. Anyway, Mum pretty

much designed the house, you know, a lot of - - with an architect, she was very specific what she wanted, so you know, it was sort of designed to try and deal with the climate here,

TIME 14:00

with sort of brick downstairs and timber upstairs, to - - back to the breezes, and so on and so forth, pretty breezy sort of area place. She had a huge garden. It was something both my parents seems to enjoy was gardening. They were always out in the garden. I think for dad, you know, watering the garden and you know, was sort of a real therapy, you know, sort of relaxation after work. So a very big garden. Again, Mum's idea and you know, a lot of natives and so on, which was - - a beautiful rose garden, with lots of natives and so on, yes, so they put a lot of themselves into that place.

CF: And what was the particular style?

MS: Look, it would be hard for me to say. I think there were elements of Scandinavia floating around at the time, you know, but I think it was - - these were idiosyncratic.

CF: Because at the time they would have bought it, the housing would have been like getting bricks and mortar and that sort of thing ...(indistinct)...

TIME 15:00

MS: Yes, that's right. Because they were - - had been building - - yes, between - - yes, around 1954.

CF: Yes, yes. And your memories of Mosman Park?

MS: Well, we were very close to Chidley point, and in those days, as I say, the whole area was completely undeveloped. It's not - - it wasn't what - - excuse me, it is now. There was some houses nearby further down and around the corner, and so we made friends with people, you know, kids around the place. In those days, in those lovely days when the kids just - - we all just ran free. We spent most of our time

down at Chidley point in the summer swimming, you know, no adults in sight. And we had bush over the road till they made the golf club.

TIME 16:00

And then we used to run around the golf club. It was very, you know, sort of a life that I regret probably that my grandchildren won't live anymore. Although fortunately we've had a farm and they've had a bit of that there, but you know, kids these days, for whatever reason, good and bad I think, are very protected - -

CF: Yes,

MS: - - from that sort of life. There was a home for old inebriated women called Breen Place, yes, down the bottom of the hill. I think it's now been subsumed by some very wealthy magnate in their house, and these old ladies, whether - - they used to say inebriated. I suspect there was a lot people there who had dementia, you know, in retrospect, but these old ladies used to wander around the bush and we used to talk to them, found it amusing that they were completely off their trees. Terrible now that I am getting old yes, so we just had a very free life.

TIME 17:00

CF: And your dad, he talks fondly of Rottnest, because that's where he met your mum. Did you go to Rottnest?

MS: We went to Rottnest. Dad had access through being on the board of BP Australia, who owned the boat called the Manitoba, a big launch, that had, you know, cabins and so on, and we used to go once a year to Rottnest, and go crayfishing and swimming and so on and so forth. And you know, with all the old - - all the old-timers were over there. Dad knew them all, because he spent many years at Rotto, as a young man.

CF: Yes. And did you - - so you just went on the boat, you didn't actually stay on Rottnest itself?

MS: No. We didn't stay on the island. We stayed on the boat.

CF: And what about other holidays? Where did the family go?

MS: We always went to Albany.

CF: Why was that?

MS: I think dad liked to go down there. It was a major Wesfarmers branch,

TIME 18:00

but we used to rent a holiday place from some farmers up at Kojonup. And Mum's family had for some time lived in - - near Denmark. Mum always liked the south coast. So - - and they both liked the ocean, so I think you know, and there was probably getting away from the heat as well.

CF: Right.

MS: So we always went down there, and when I think of those car trips, you know, un-airconditioned cars in the middle of summer, three squabbling kids, and the road not being what it is now, it used to be a six-hour trip, maybe that was just because dad drove slowly. And the cars probably weren't up to it anyway. But I just sort of think the horrors of three kids in the car, you know, for six hours. Anyway, we used to go to Albany every year. So we used to get to know other people who would come down, so we got to know some families to come down from Broomehill, they lived not far from where we stayed,

TIME 19:00

they actually had a house in Albany, and they used to come down, so we used to play with the children all the time, and the parents, the fathers used to go down to the old Esplanade for a beer. I still remember the smell of hops, you know, what I now know being hops, from the old Esplanade. And there was the beer garden and

the women used to go down and that classic sort of Australian thing, and we kids would just rock up around the road between Middleton Beach - - Middleton Beach and the road sort of thing. Yes, so it was pretty carefree sort of time.

CF: How old were you when you began school?

MS: I must have been - - I don't know, I suppose I was six. It's hard to tell, because I went up a class. I started - - when I started, I was on a December birthday, so I was one of the oldest in the class, so on my - - yes, probably went when I was six.

TIME 20:00

And so I was older than most of the girls. Anyway, after a couple of years, they decided to put me up into the next - - another class, the higher year, so I was one of the youngest in the class. So I guess I would have been six.

CF: What school was that?

MS: Saint Hilda's.

CF: So you went there from primary school?

MS: Mm-hmm. Saint Hilda's was a different sort of school then too. Dad was quite a man of the church. The Anglican church. So he wanted - - I went to Saint Hilda's, my brothers went to Christchurch. My uncle was the minister at Christchurch at the time, when the boys first started. So it was a fairly strong Anglican thing running in our family.

CF: And did you go to church regularly?

MS: Yes, we went every Sunday to Saint Luke's in Cottesloe, and at school we had assembly every day, and sang hymns, you know.

TIME 21:00

CF: Was that important to you? Was it important?

MS: Not really. What was important was that when I got to be senior in the - - you know, in the last two years in school, I started - - I was one of the people who used to play the hymns, and that did - - that was good for my general keyboard - - sort of just getting around the keyboard easily. And the marches coming in and out of assembly, so a lot of sight reading, and I've always been reasonably good at sight reading, and probably that contributed to - - you only found out that morning which hymns you were playing, or which marches you were doing or whatever.

CF: And your early teachers, do you remember any of them?

MS: Don't remember too many of the - -

CF: Primary?

MS: Primary. The only thing I actually remember in primary school is that I think it was my very, very early times,

TIME 22:00

where we were asked to put our initials on the page of writing that we were handing in, so I put my initials - - I can still actually see it bizarrely, capital letters, ME, Margaret Edwards, and the teacher roundly ticked me off in front of the whole class for putting "me" on it. And I was so humiliated. And I still remember that.

CF: Did she realise?

MS: I don't know. I tried - - I can't remember if I tried to explain - - I think I did try and explain.

CF: And so was it pen and ink in those days?

MS: Oh, yes. Pen and ink. Yes. I used to love fountain pens. I still try and use fountain

pens, and that was the biggest thing in my life. Every year was buying, or before school, making sure my fountain pen worked, and if not, getting a new one. The old tortoiseshell one, you know, blue and red and so on.

TIME 23:00

I loved those. And you know, when we were - - we weren't allowed to use ...(i ndistinct)... coloured ink for a long time, but when we were, you know, it was sort of using different coloured inks was just the thing. And the other one was, in those days, I know they still have Derwent pencils, but they look very different these days, and that was a big thing. I'm sure these days, at school, you're not being competitive over what sort of pencils you've got, but in my day, it wasn't what - - how many megabytes of whatever data you're allowed to have, it was how many of these beautiful Derwent pencils you've got.

CF: In a tin?

MS: yes, well they came in a little stand, and you could stand them up on your desk. They were the big thing, the beautiful colours.

CF: And any particular subjects in primary school, that you preferred?

MS: I honestly don't remember. I can't remember much about the schooling at all.

CF: And games?

TIME 24:00

MS: We would regularly do phys-ed and so on. I know I enjoyed that. I don't remember anything specific.

CF: And these days, they do do phys-ed but back then, there was lots of skipping and knuckle bones.

MS: Yes, we used to do what they called gym. Yes.

CF: Gym. And did you play any sport?

MS: I probably did in primary school, I definitely did in secondary school. I played what - - netball. Softball. A bit of hockey. We had to more or less choose between netball and hockey, which was a shame, because I liked them both. So if I wasn't in the netball team, I used to play in the hockey team. And a bit of tennis.

CF: Because your dad was a big hockey player?

MS: Yes. He was very - - they were both - - both my parents were good hockey players.

CF: Your mother as well?

MS: Yes. Yes. She was in the school team, and I think in post school she played.

TIME 25:00

CF: And what sort of education do you think you got from Saint Hilda's?

MS: I think I got a very solid traditional education. You know, I did Latin, which I resented at the time, but came into being incredibly handy when I studied music at university, you know, just studying Bach's Mass in B Minor, if you can't work out the words are saying, you are missing half the subtleties of the music, you know, so Latin was very good for me. I did French, which you know, was a major thing for my Masters degree, I mean to be able to read - - you know read and write French, and not to mention you know, going there to do research and being able to get around through the language. So that was at school, and we had I think very early on, we had a teacher who believed in immersion, so our French lessons were totally in French, and no English. So that was very good. I loved history, and again, given that my area has been historical musicology, that was always very useful.

TIME 26:00

I think we were taught to write well. So all in all, I think it actually, in later life, I look back and I think it was a very valuable education. People today would probably be appalled, you know, by sort of the grammar and you know having to do grammar and syntax and so on, I actually think there's a great loss in the education system today if you're not doing such things. And the rote learning of you know, in maths and so forth. So yes.

CF: And what about music?

MS: Well, in those days, we did music, we went out of the class and had a piano lesson. And - - which is what I did, from about - - I think it was about 1958, might've been my first - -

TIME 27:00

my very first exam through the Australian music exams board, the examiner was a young - - a young new person in Perth called David Tundley, who became my PhD - - honours PhD supervisor and a really very close friend of mine. Yes, so - - so I did music, and we didn't - - we had a little bit of classroom music, but when I think about it, it was appalling. I still remember a particular music teacher who played the slow movement of the Moonlight Sonata, but she played it as fast as she could to try and show that she was a good pianist. At any rate, it was just - - I knew enough, I mean my mother used to occasionally take me to concerts and we had recordings of you know, Beethoven, Chopin and so forth, so I knew enough even then to know that she was absolutely desecrating the music. So classroom music was pretty non-existent.

TIME 28:00

CF: But did you enjoy music? Did you want to do it?

MS: I enjoyed playing the piano, yes.

CF: And did you want to do it yourself, or did your parents want you to do it?

MS: I think Mum and dad - - I am sure they got me started. I don't recall asking if I could, but that doesn't mean to say I didn't - - but once I got started, I enjoyed that.

CF: Yes. And tell me about the Beatles?

MS: Yes. Well, I mean as - - really got into the Beatles and you know, all the associated rock and roll, in - - in my - - well, senior years in high school I think. And I did want to go and go across the desert with a whole lot of other people to see the Beatles, didn't get to that, we went to the Kinks and the Byrds, and so on in Perth.

TIME 29:00

And they were great concerts. Yes, I was so much into all of that.

CF: Did you - - did you ask your parents if you could go, to the Beatles?

MS: I probably did. I probably did.

CF: In 1963, you made a trip to Kununurra.

MS: Oh, yes. That's right.

CF: With your mum.

MS: Yes.

CF: And your father writes that it was sort of, you know how - - that it was important that trip. Why was it important to you do you remember it?

MS: Yes, I do. We - - well, it was the first time I'd been up in the north of WA, and the road - - I mean just the logistics of the travel then was very different to now, you know, we were on the red dirt, you hit the red dirt very early, the red dirt roads, very early, you know was sort of risk of the cow - - I mean they're still risks, you drive up

there now, and you see dead cows and camels and God knows what.

TIME 30:00

But so it was just like first of all going to another country. But in going through to Kununurra, we went to Broome, and then we went to Halls Creek, and we got to Halls Creek, and I still remember this, we got to Halls Creek when the rodeo or the races were on, and it was a most eye-opening sort of experience. First of all, the hotel, such as it was, was, you know, really like something you know - - I'd never experienced.

CF: A dirt floor?

MS: No, it wasn't a dirt - - the blokes were all outside, all in sort of - - almost looked like cattle pens, and they were all sleeping in those, you know, then I mean the drunkenness, as you can imagine, unbelievable, and our hotel was - - our room was one of those little old-fashioned wobbling boards and sort of filthy windows covered in cobwebs and mosquitoes and all of that sort of thing.

TIME 31:00

But it was really the - - what was going on outside that was just extraordinary, all night, you know. Drunk - - I mean I'd never been in that environment with guys coming in after the rodeo drinking themselves into a stupor, you know, and then passing out all over the place sort of thing. It was just a real eye-opener for me, protected little girl from you know, from Perth, from a church school, to see something like that. So that was an eye-opener. And then of course Kununurra again was - - the Ord was just starting off and seeing the beginnings of all of that, and the great Lake Argyle and so on, and encountering indigenous people for the first time, outside of Perth. I mean I do remember when we used to drive to Albany, and be interesting for me now to try and sort of reflect where it might've been,

TIME 32:00

But there were obviously indigenous people living in the bush, you could see the

tents and so on in bushes, going along the highway. And - - but other than that, you know, there were not nearly as many indigenous people in Perth, and I didn't go to the city very much. Occasionally go to the city for a movie, but you know, so I didn't get to see a lot of indigenous people, so just being up in the north, it was just a whole different sort of ballgame.

CF: And how were they then?

MS: Well, it was - - in those days I think there was still- - they might have just been come off their - - you know, been turfed off the stations because of the whole equal pay decision coming through, so people - - they were coming more and more into the towns. I mean I reflect on that now. I didn't, you know - -

CF: I know ...(indistinct)...

TIME 33:00

MS: ...(indistinct)... when I was - - what the policy issue was. But I mean there was - - if I found anything threatening it was the white guys, you know, pissed as newts, sort of, in the stockades. I mean really, ...(indistinct)...

CF: What did your mum think?

MS: Well she'd probably seen - - seen this before you know. Because she'd - - she lived a lot in rural Western Australia. I don't recall talking to her about it. I just remember sort of - - so I guess what the whole thing was, it was like another - - it really was like another country, you know, in many ways, that people lived so differently. The environment was different, the nature of the people was different, it was a rough - - a rough and tough environment, that people had to live in there.

CF: Was it sort of like "Wake in Fright", that Australian film?

TIME 34:00

MS: It wasn't "Wake in Fright". Because if I think of it, I still think of the amazing colours,

you know, the thing that comes back to me most is the red road and the blue sky, and you know, the extraordinary colour of the vegetation gets there. So whilst that just contrasts to Perth, which looks very pallid in comparison, and this sort of larger-than-life way that people were living there, or very different way that people were living.

CF: What did you think of the country?

MS: I love it, I love that country. I just - - you know, the red, the blue, and that sort of - - the mixes of the olivey and the other sort of greens. We went up there when our kids were quite young. We hired a campervan type thing, you know, can't remember what you call them now. We used to live - - stay in tents, but went out to the - - Purnululu, or the Bungle Bungles, with the children, and just, you know, just such amazing country.

TIME 35:00

So it is so different and I think it's something very special.

CF: Yes. Why did you - - why was - - did your dad go on that trip?

MS: He went up because Wesfarmers was involved with the Ord River, and visiting the co-op's and so on.

CF: Could you - - I mean it must have given you a real understanding of not only the size of WA, but the whole - -

MS: Yes, absolutely. I mean you know, it was just - - when I think about that - - because I think we went to Onslow, we were certainly - - I don't know if we - - I think we must have driven the whole way. I don't recall, because I think we would have flown in those days. Yes, so yes that huge - - the dimensions of it all and - - which is probably why, when we go up now, I don't find it so taxing, you know, because it's a lot easier than it was then.

CF: Yes.

TIME 36:00

MS: Just the dust in the car and everything else was just so different.

CF: So you stayed at Halls Creek.

MS: We stayed - - we must have stayed somewhere in Kununurra, I can't remember the place. And I'm sure we stayed at a hotel in Onslow. And we probably stayed in Port Hedland and either Derby or Broome.

CF: Yes. Not to Carnarvon?

MS: I think we went to Carnarvon too, yes, there was a big tow up there. Yes.

CF: Yes. Now when you came back after that trip, that was '63, and then you won a Commonwealth scholarship in '65, why did you defer it?

MS: Mum and dad - - my parents decided they wanted to take me overseas before I went to university, and because I was again the younger - - you know, I hadn't quite - - I had only turned 17 at the very end of the school year, they probably thought I was too young to go to university.

TIME 37:00

And I suspect that in this respect I've often wondered, you know, in recent years, I've wondered, in talking with some of the girls who went to school, there was a trip of girls from our school who went off to France for six months, or it might have been a year, which is something very common now, but it was quite unusual in those days. They went off with our French teacher. Now I suspect she was - - because I did quite well in French, you know, for my leaving, I suspect she did invite me to go with them, what happened apparently all the parents got a letter, I subsequently discovered, and people who were much worse at French than me were asked to go,

invited to go, and I didn't ever hear anything about this. I just assumed this teacher thought - - this teacher had picked her favourites,

TIME 38:00

and in subsequent years, I discovered from the girls that she really liked me, but I think at the time I didn't really think so. So I just assumed that I wasn't one of the favourites. I suspect she might have approached my parents, and the thought of their little girl going off to Paris on her own for six months or 12 months was probably - - I don't know. And of course dad's gone and mum wouldn't remember. So it only occurred to me in recent years that I might have been invited to go on that trip. So this might have been a sort of a replacement for that. I don't know.

CF: And it wasn't a cost thing? They could have afforded it?

MS: Yes. I think they could have afforded it, yes. Because they could afford to take me - -

CF: Yes.

MS: I don't know. I mean they still - - the family never was overly flash with money, and my- - there were two brothers still at you know secondary - - at Christchurch.

TIME 39:00

The fees still had to be paid. I don't know. To this day. And it's only occurred to me in recent years when one of the girls said how much the French teacher had liked me, I thought oh. And they said to me why didn't you go? And I thought well, I assumed I wasn't invited.

CF: Did any of those teachers make an impression on you as teachers? People?

MS: I liked a number of them. Had a great maths teacher. I wasn't brilliant at maths. But I was okay. You know, she was very good. I think they had some good teachers. I think in retrospect, the French teacher was a very good teacher. I don't know. I actually enjoyed school, you know, but I did what - - you know, I did the history,

geography, the typical humanities type thing, biology and maths along side, dropped chemistry and physics very early.

TIME 40:00

Never got them, still don't. Which is a great regret of mine. But you know ...(indistinct)...

CF: So tell me about that trip on the Arcadia?

MS: Yes, that was a lovely trip up to - - we went on the - - because mum and dad had obviously loved sailing, trips on - - and flights even then were much more arduous than they are now. And you know, they had been to and from England on the P and O lines for a number of years, every time dad went to England - - in retrospect, I think he probably didn't like flying so much, because I know the flights, when I was very young, used to go through Bombay and stop off - - you know, they'd be sort of like a two-day enterprise. So anyway, we went off on the Arcadia, we got off in Athens.

CF: Where did you leave from? Fremantle?

MS: Yes. Yes.

CF: Do you remember that leaving?

TIME 41:00

MS: I don't remember the leaving. I do remember going to Colombo and the amazing smell of the spices and so on, and we went to - - we went to a hotel which is still there, I've seen - - I still have this hankering to go back. It is now - - something like Lavinia or Lavardia or something like that. So there was a guy there, Wesfarmers obviously must have been doing some business in Colombo, and some bloke met us and drove us down there, a Sri Lankan, and he ordered lunch, and it was the first time I'd ever had curry, because we had very traditional sort of you know, English

type fare at home, and although he ordered mild, it nearly blew me out of the water, and we had what I now know as poppadoms you know, so it was the whole smell, taste sensation I still absolutely vividly remember. I remember going through the Suez Canal, which was just fascinating, it was like going through pictures from the Bible, you know.

TIME 42:00

CF: Really?

MS: You know, the flat mud brick houses and the date palms and so forth and people walking along with oxen and water wheels and you know, it was just amazing. I remember going to Port Said in Aden, it's now - - and the hawkers coming out with their boats and trying to flog things to everybody. You know, all of those things were fascinating. And then we went to Athens and we were in Athens for a bit and went to Corfu and then went across to Italy. And I get a bit lost. We must have got the train up. We were in Rome, went to Rome, I remember going to another businessman's most beautiful apartment, in an old derelict building, and the most beautiful apartment inside it, that's a European thing.

TIME 43:00

And of course seeing the usual you know, things in Rome. You get into the Sistine Chapel then without you know, having to queue for hours and hours. Then we went to Paris. And I remember again going to people's place, having the most beautiful meal in Paris as well as, you know, seeing the usual things that one does in Paris. And then we went to England where Wesfarmers had an office, so we stayed in an apartment in Pimlico. And mum and I did a lot of sort of looking around and so on, and so I guess I got to see all the - - you know, the standard tourist things in at least Rome, Paris and London, well before you know, we started going as adults. And so it was good in a way to have done that and got familiar with the places.

TIME 44:00

CF: Do you have a favourite city?

MS: It sort of changes. I do love Paris I have to say. And I mean you know, part of it is my language - - my French is good enough to get around. I used to love London. I've gone off London. I just find too big and overwhelmed by itself now. It's sort of like it can't cope. I was there last year and it sort of you know, the rubbish everywhere and a lot of things not working, and so many people and you know, just doesn't feel a comfortable place as it used to. Paris I think it might be getting that way. Vienna is a wonderful city. I love Vienna. So yes - - and Berlin. I've been to Berlin in the old days, when I went to the East, East Berlin.

CF: Through which Checkpoint Charlie operated?

MS: Yes. I went through - - I went through Checkpoint Charlie from the east to the west, and I was doing my PhD at the time,

TIME 45:00

and I stupidly did some photocopying in the West Berlin library of music, and stuff I couldn't get in Australia, and it was easy - - you know, easy access there, and when I went back through the Checkpoint Charlie, of course, you know, you sort of read all these spy novels, they used to have micro dots on, you know, sort of little like music notes if it's hide - - anyway, they locked me in a room, they took away my passport, they took away my photocopy. This room had - - when you look at it, the door only opened from the outside, and the window was you know sort of a tiny window at the top. And I was sitting there thinking actually, no ones in the world knows I'm here, and they've got my passport. It was a very, very scary moment. I was there for about 20 minutes, and I was really fighting not to panic, and then they obviously checked it all out and came back, gave it to me. Yes. So that was a creepy experience.

TIME 46:00

CF: What year was that?

MS: That would have been 19 probably 86, something like that.

CF: So with the PhD then?

MS: Yes.

CF: Because you said photocopying in West Berlin, but you meant East Berlin?

MS: No, no, I was living in - - staying in East Berlin, because that's where most of the stuff I wanted was, in their old library, but I went into the West for a day, and that's where I did the photocopying.

CF: I see. So ...(indistinct)...

MS: Bringing it back in, there were East German guards thought there was something suspicious about the photocopying for some reason. The photocopies.

CF: So what was it like in East Berlin then?

MS: It was in the middle of winter, because you know, I always used to travel overseas to do research in February, or January, February. So yes, so snow everywhere, and it was - - it was - - I mean I suppose I'd been conditioned to think it was going to be grey and dour, and it was, but that's partly because of the season.

TIME 47:00

And as a Westerner, I was put up in this hotel Pallas? which is now subsequently demolished, right next to the people's palace, and so the whole area was probably demolished. And that was quite a niceish hotel, built apparently by the Swedes. Everything worked, plumbing worked, everything else. And there were a lot of people, there was bars and you know restaurant, a lot of Westerners there. But I know I was followed, because on my first day there I was walking around, was looking at the place, which is probably not what you are supposed to do, but I was on my own. And as I was walking along, I sort of noticed this little guy, and he struck

me, bizarrely because he looked so Jewish, he had a very Jewish sort of face and little cap like you know you would see in the movies.

TIME 48:00

And I know it's a stupid thought, but you know, and I was in - - you know, had an interest, and have been interested for a long time in the whole Holocaust thing, and how that could happen in Germany, so I did go down to the - - arriving in Berger Strasse which is where the big synagogue was which was all boarded up and there was just this little memorial garden there, where people were rounded up, and so I guess I had that in my head, and so I saw this little Jewish looking guy, ...(indistinct)... interesting, still a bit - - why would Jewish people want to come back here sort of thing. And then the next day, all that afternoon or evening or something, I went somewhere else, and there's the little Jewish guy again. How interesting. The penny hadn't dropped yet. But then the next morning which is when I was going down - - I walked down Friedrich Strasser to Checkpoint Charlie to go through,

TIME 49:00

to go to - - into West Berlin, so I'm walking along, uh-oh this little Jewish guy is behind me again and so this time, it's ridiculous, but you fall back on stupid things and I used to read a lot of you know, sort of - - I suppose it would have been early Le Carre's back then, and I did what they do in these movies, I went into the shops in the old East Berlin, were not like our sort of shops with big commercial fronts and so on, it was almost like just an entrance in the building, and you could - - you to go in, and I happened to be walking past one which was a milliner's, no, materials, materials, and so I went in to the shop's and looking at the materials there, to see if he would walk past, whether he was waiting for me, and he was waiting for me, so oh God. So then I just kept on walking and went through checkpoint Charlie.

TIME 50:00

So the whole thing was a bit bizarre. Now I had to go down to Halle, to the Martin Luther University there, to speak with one of these world specialists on Handel and

that period with music.

CF: And could you speak German?

MS: Only a little. But his English I knew was quite good, because he was one of the people who was allowed out to conferences and so on. So you know, all the arrangement was made. It was interesting, I'd telephoned you know to confirm it all, there was a clicking on the line from the hotel, so you know, you sort of assumed that that was all going through somewhere. Anyway, I go on the train and it just didn't occur to me that I still have this association with Germany and terrible things about trains running on time, and anyway, this train was horrendously late into - -

TIME 51:00

and going down there was just snow everywhere, and on the train were a bunch of Russian soldiers, and the other thing I didn't know is that you know, it's still the case in Germany, you buy your ticket, but then you've got to get sure platzkart which is your actual allocated seat. So I bought my ticket, but I haven't bought the platzkart, so I didn't have - - so I went in, and got my ticket, went and sat in the seat, and this person came and said to me, no, that's my seat. So I went out and stood in the corridor, and there were a whole lot of Russian soldiers up in that sort of gap between the trains so standing in the corridors, and someone came - - some person obviously took pity on me or something, some German and told me that basically I shouldn't be seen near the Russians. It was all this stuff about who could talk to whom in those days,

TIME 52:00

And so just had to move, so I stood up in the - - in the sort of alley - - you know the galley so to speak of this train all the way to Halle, and then we stopped somewhere for no good reason, for ages, long and short of it, by the time I got there, I was totally late, you know, hour and a half, and totally missed the appointment. It was most abortive. And you know, that was an eye-opener in itself, the whole train trip. So the whole thing was quite bizarre, when I look back it was quite bizarre, but I read a very

interesting book very recently, it was something about - - what was it called? Or it was about 1989, and the truth behind the fall of the Berlin Wall, and you know, some of what seemed to me to have been quite bizarre, seems to have been quite commonplace.

CF: Right. Did you feel sort of naive?

MS: Yes, yes I did, because I realised that everything I had - - everything I had gleaned about East Berlin was probably I'm reading a little bit, was probably gleaned from you know watching too many spy movies.

TIME 53:00

CF: Right. Now back to the Arcadia. The journey itself, your dad said that you were very successful on board, that you made lots of friends on that boat.

MS: I probably did, yes. I think there was some young people there.

CF: Did your brothers go?

MS: No.

CF: What happened to them?

MS: Some housekeeper came and looked after them.

CF: And did they go on the trip with you up to Kununurra?

MS: No, just me. It's interesting you know, because I mean my parents never as I said, there is no thought of University, and my father was seemingly very patriarchal type, used to talk about my brother, who is younger than me, Mike is the eldest of the two brothers, as the son and heir. And certainly my husband's perception my father was very you know, traditional in his views of what women could do.

TIME 54:00

And yet they obviously made a big effort to broaden me and educate me.

CF: Yes.

MS: Which they didn't do with my brothers. No, they did, they did. They did take both of them overseas, yes.

CF: As well?

MS: Yes.

CF: Later.

MS: Yes.

CF: What did you want to do? You got the scholarship, to university, what did you want to do?

MS: Look, you know, because there had been never any talk of University in my household, I really didn't have any idea, clear idea. I mean I didn't go like they do nowadays and say I'm going to get a bachelor of you know law, or something like that. So I simply enrolled in the subjects - - in some of the subjects that I loved at school, so I enrolled in history and French, because the French looked as though it was going to be very different than it was, you know, reading Andre Gide, and so on. I enrolled in politics, which is now political science, because I was always interested in politics.

TIME 55:00

And then I thought I would do music, because I liked - - you know, enjoy music, and really that was the sum of my decision-making.

CF: So no influence from your dad or mum?

MS: No influence from anyone as to what I should do. No.

CF: And just on politics. I mean you - - you are young in a particularly turbulent time. Were your parents political?

MS: They weren't political, but there was always political sort of discussion at the table at home, and dad you know, used to get the Times, you could get it airfreighted out from England then, in the old days, when it was a quality newspaper. Hopeless that Murdoch's got it since. But - - and the Economist. I mean dad would have been - - ...(indistinct)...

CF: So sorry.

TIME 56:00

MS: My father wasn't - - I don't think he was overly political. I don't know. I don't think he was - - he was a Liberal voter, Liberal party voter.

CF: All his life?

MS: I think so. I think he would be absolutely turning in his grave if he could see what's happening with the Liberal party today. This is not the party he voted. He used to vote for the old Menzies you know, Gorton, type party. So I guess that was his bias. Mum was - - she was not one of these women who voted as her husband told her. I suspect Mum voted - - you know, she would have been an early green voter. Just as she was not even baptised, she had no religious feeling - - inklings whatsoever. So there was that sort of discussion around the house. So politics had been of interest to me.

TIME 57:00

CF: And the University at that stage, was it - - were politics - - I mean how political were students then?

MS: Well - -

CF: And were you aware?

MS: Yes. Well you know, it was the time of Vietnam, you know, you had very - - a very strong political society, called Washpot. The WA Society for history and politics, something like that. I was a member of that, and we used to go to their sort of parties and so on, and so in those days you know, you had people like the Kim Beazley's of this world and you know, all people who featured in federal and state Labor governments in the last 10 years, were all students then. So yes, as a member of that society, increasingly - - and yes, you know, was one of the people who laid out on the highway to you know, force the issue about putting a tunnel, you know, I think the student got killed or injured, playing chicken, running across the road.

TIME 58:00

CF: Tell me about lying down on the road?

MS: Well to get the - - you know, the tunnel, that unfortunately not all the students use, under the road, it's in front of the bus stop to the main campus in those days, people used to sort of either go by traffic lights or just run across the road, and somebody got injured doing that. So we - - we all laid down on the road and stopped the traffic, and forced the issue, and you know, ultimately the tunnel was put in. So there were things like that, was Vietnam, you know, I vaguely remember rocking up to I think Bob Menzies came to campus and you know, there was a big protest and so forth.

CF: Were you involved in that protest?

MS: I was in the crowd. I wasn't throwing anything that I recall, but I remember you know, it all going on but the old music department,

TIME 59:00

because once we got in the second year, and I was doing more music units, and then third and fourth was doing honours, music department was on this - - on the

north side of the highway, and the far eastern north-east corner of the campus, separated by the highway, and the sports centre and everything else, and we used to pretty much live their own little life as we got more senior, so we used to - - we had our own little group of people that we sort of tended to associate with more, and we probably got less political the more we got you know - - well I probably got less political the more I got involved with it in the School of Music.

CF: So how old were you when that happened?

MS: Well, probably second year I was doing - - would have been doing two music units, and not just the - - you know, in those days, you did four first years, one of which for me was music. You did three second years, two - - I did two music - -

TIME 60:00

I think did two history. I think I was able to do two histories, because I couldn't decide whether I was going to do honours - - ultimately I was invited to do honours in both music and history. I couldn't quite decide, so I was keeping my options open, by the end of second year. But anyway, I opted for music, so after that - - after second year I was doing more music units.

CF: Why music?

MS: Well, I was enjoying it, because it was a very different - - I wasn't playing - - I wasn't doing performance anymore. It was academic units of music. I was enjoying it enormously, particularly the analysis and so on, and I was quite good at it, so you know, just sort of really appealed.

CF: And were you involved in other music at university?

MS: Yes, I was in the - - the undergraduate choral society. Heavily involved with that. I used to be the accompaniment - - accompanist for some time with that choir - - excuse me - -

TIME 61:00

and that was another - - you know, we had parties and God knows what in associations and we used to go singing in various places.

CF: Where did you sing?

MS: The one I remember most, which was horrendous, was singing Christmas carols, we used to do a lot of that. We sang at the old Claremont Hospital, for the - - what did they call it? Institutionally insane or whatever they used to call it. And these poor people, and they were - - it was like something out of Dickens, I've never seen anything like it. Lying in these long beds on those rolled hospital beds, you know, all these people just institutionalised, completely - - I don't know if they drugged them in those days, but you know, I don't know what their situation was in retrospect,

TIME 62:00

but all I know is that they lived - - it was evening, they were probably all falling asleep and it was fairly dull and dark, and then we'll come in with these lighted tapers, you know, candles, singing, and for some of them it was just horrendous. It was really, really - - you know, - - and there were probably people in there, you know, in retrospect I think there are probably people there who were incarcerated because they were autistic, and for some autistic people, different sorts of noises, you know, set off tremendous reactions. And some people were really, really seemed frightened or completely traumatised by this. So you know, I look back on it, just appalling, really appalling, you know, it was appalling that we were there and it was appalling to see the way people were treated then. I just you know - - and to think that the people who were locked up there probably, you know, had all sorts of conditions that today would have been diagnosed and treated quite differently. Like, you know, autism.

TIME 63:00

CF: Yes.

MS: And there were probably various forms of dementia that might have been treated differently you know, with sort of vascular dementia might have been treated with medications and all that sort of stuff, you know. It's just - - it was just very confronting.

CF: Was that going out and singing with the choral society part of the University outreach - - you know - - like our brief is different now, but you know what I mean.

MS: What it was, but it wasn't - - I mean I don't think anyone in the administration of the University knew or cared You know, there were a whole lot student societies and we sort of did our own thing, with the choral society - - undergraduate choral society we used to go to what they called inter-varsity so you - - the first - - when I was in first year actually we went to Canberra, National inter-varsity choral festival and - -

CF: A sing-off then?

MS: Yes. And it was actually very good, because we had to learn two - - three works, that we were all going to sing together.

TIME 64:00

One was the Mozart Requiem, which I can probably still sing the alto part of today, I know backwards, which helped when I actually had to start teaching it. Another was the Bach Magnificat ditto. And the third was Carmina Burana of Carl Orff, which was fun to sing, but I've never bothered going to hear it in concert performance today. Yes, so we did that sort of - - it was actually very good for you know just getting to know a whole lot of work.

CF: And was it quite professional in a way?

MS: I think so, yes. And those big ones were conducted by you know, quite eminent conductor. And then we used to sing also with the University choral Society for some of their big annual concerts like the St Matthew Passion of Bach so again, I know that work backwards, and sung it every year for four years or something.

TIME 65:00

And Handel's Messiah. Verdi Requiem. So a lot of the big staple choral works we got - - or I got to know in that way.

CF: You also sang in a pop group though did you?

MS: I was filling in in a group. They lost their singer and they were looking for a new one. I wasn't going to be the long-term one, but - -

CF: Who were they?

MS: Where?

CF: Who were they?

MS: They were called the Timepiece. And we used to go and sing in pubs and yes, so we used to do things like Beach Boy covers and Age of Aquarius and all that sort of stuff. Yes.

CF: And who was in that group?

MS: We had - - we had two - - three guitarists and the vocalists, two guys, John and - -

TIME 66:00

no, that's right, it was John McPherson, Des Lukey, Eddie Roberts, yes.

CF: So you were the only girl?

MS: I was the only girl.

CF: The singer?

MS: Yes.

CF: Did you enjoy it?

MS: I did, in a way. Yes.

CF: What do you mean in a way?

MS: I never overly enjoyed performing in public, I got better at it over the years, but never was my number one great thing.

CF: Were you paid?

MS: I don't - - no. No we weren't. Or I don't recall being paid, no.

CF: Right. So you moved sort of across to the music school as you say, sort of like the med students really, separate.

MS: Yes that's right.

CF: From - - What was that like, that department then?

MS: Well the facilities were nothing. Was a converted house, with sort of fibro add-ons for the library, and for the lecture room, the main lecture room,

TIME 67:00

which therefore got incredibly hot in summer and cold in winter. Perth summer. And the other lecture rooms, being an old house, were just not - - you know, normal thin doors or walls between them, so you know, you could - - and I still remember one person giving a lecture on Wagner, Sally Kester, in one room, and being in a room where someone else was trying to talk to us about the works of William Byrd, the English 16th century composer. So you know, wasn't ideal at all, but we used to have great lot of fun there. We used to go down to Greasy's hamburger joint down

in Hampden Road and by our hamburgers and come back and sit in the music library, and at night, with the headphones on and listen to you know, whatever we needed to listen to. Listen to the recordings.

CF: And Sir Frank Calloway was head of department?

MS: Yes.

CF: What was he like as head?

TIME 68:00

MS: Frank was a real disciplinarian in his way. He was - - you know, he was a good administrator, yes. The department ran very smoothly.

CF: Was he a good teacher?

MS: He was a good teacher. He was a - - he was - - primarily he was a teacher of harmony. He wasn't - - he wasn't a teacher in the musicology stream or anything of that sort. I think I needed - - therefore had him in first year for harmony. He used to look at our home work, and he used to take a roll, was like being back in school, he used to talk about us as class and take a roll, if we didn't attend, or anything like that. So it was a little bit school like-ish, a schoolmarm-ish. Yes, so I just had him in the first year.

CF: And were music students - - you said you became less political when you moved across, were they more conservative?

TIME 69:00

MS: I don't think more conservative, I just think we got more bound up in what we were doing really, because by the time you are either you know, we had choral - - choir at least two nights or something a week, after hours. You know, you do have to spend a lot of time listening to music outside of your lectures.

CF: How often?

MS: Well, as I say, you know, we'd either go across to the ref and get a meal, call it a meal, ...(indistinct)... Talking about the music.

CF: Yes.

MS: Yes. So yes, look, talking about - - so we would be - - had a lot of music that we had to listen to for our - - you know, so if you sort of say to someone okay, well today we're doing Beethoven symphonies.

TIME 70:00

Well, if you listen to all of those, that's you know, a few hours of work. And no point listening once, you've really got to listen to things - - you'd get the musical score the way the - - what the composer has written, and then you would sit down with that and the music, so you know, that takes quite a lot of time. So we would you know, you'd often grab a meal at the ref, or at the - - get a hamburger and then be there at night. So by the time you had quite an intensive lecture schedule, and then you had - - then you had all the listening to do, and then some nights you had your choir, a choral rehearsal, and then I used to also, until the end of second year, keep going to the Washpot parties. So it was really quite intensive when I look back.

TIME 71:00

CF: Did David Tundley remember you from Saint Hilda's?

MS: No, no. I would have been just one of many, many you know, young kids he'd examined for piano.

CF: Tell me about him. How - - because you - - you said he became a close friend.

MS: Yes, well David was one of our main lecturers, and his - - he - - when I went into

honours, he was my honours supervisor, and he was the one who encouraged me to start working in the Baroque era of music, which I did under him, so I did my honours thesis with David's supervision.

CF: Did you travel with honours? With your honours thesis or was just - -

MS: No, I did it all from the music - - from the scores here.

CF: Yes. And what - - was the music department involved in Perth musical life?

TIME 72:00

MS: Well, yes it was, because Frank Calloway conducted the University choral Society, which did its regular concerts. David Tundley conducted the a cappella choir which I subsequently joined, which was an unaccompanied - - is unaccompanied singing, and we used to do regular concerts. And you know, one of the lecturers was an organist, and used to give organ recitals and so on and so forth, so people were very involved.

CF: What about with the ABC orchestra? Or with the WA orchestra?

MS: Well, when - - with the things like Messiah and Saint Matthew's passions and Verdi Requiem, they would be the accompanying orchestra, so Frank would conduct both.

CF: Okay. Did you ever want to conduct?

MS: No, no. Never interested me. No.

CF: That - - do you think there was a spirit of giving back to the community during that time?

MS: I think so, yes. I think that was very much part and parcel of what the whole music department was about.

CF: And what - - do you think that's the same now?

MS: I think so. You know, they are still doing a lot of programs. I mean we used to run - - we used to have the free lunchtime concerts. They are still going on Thursdays. University Music Society would have special concerts in the evenings, Frank founded that. And the School of Music would be very heavily involved with those. And there's a - - I think the Music Society is no longer as it was, but is in a different format now but you know, the School of Music is still very involved in the community.

CF: And the university itself then, because you've been involved in it over such a long period, what was it like then?

TIME 74:00

MS: Well, it's hard to think, because you know, I was a student then and students see University from very different eyes to when you're on the staff, and when you're on the staff, you see it with very different eyes than when you might be in the management. So I think then it was just - - it was a great campus to be on. The library felt as though it was good. You know, everything seemed open and available for students. There was no pressure for students in those days. They were getting their degrees through or knowing what they were going to do at the end, there seemed to be an endless supply of jobs for graduates. And you know, if you had to repeat, you had to repeat sort of thing. So there wasn't anything like the pressure on students, and therefore students weren't working part-time, to make ends meet, so there was much more activity on campus, students on campus all the time, so I think it was a very strong community on the campus, simply because of you know, the freedom that people had to be there.

TIME 75:00

CF: Was it still a small select group? I mean by then were there people starting to come in from state schools? I don't mean elite schools, like Claremont.

MS: Yes. Well the thing is, although we keep on saying it's always been free education

at UWA, actually in that time, I went to university on a scholarship, with a scholarship. So scholarships were available. So I'm just trying to think. I mean, look, in our choir, we had - - we had a lot of people from eastern European backgrounds, you know, I was good friends with some Lithuanians and Poles. Now they came from high schools, you know like Rivervale. Mount Lawley or - - not Mount Lawley High School, but some further out,

TIME 76:00

so in other words, suburbs that weren't the golden western suburbs that everybody tends to associate with UWA. So I actually think that scholarship system worked really well in that sense.

CF: So these were - - these were postwar migrants?

MS: Postwar migrants, yes.

CF: Or probably displaced persons.

MS: Yes.

CF: Children. So you felt - - I mean it seems a much more optimistic time.

MS: Well, in retrospect I look at it that way, yes. An interesting time. I mean when I reflect back with the friends from the sort of the Baltic communities and the Poles and so on, you know, we would go to their 21st, their weddings, and so on. Yes, just a whole different cultural environment, which was not that common in Perth up until that time. So yes, I think it was a very open and optimistic time. I sort of - -

TIME 77:00

I'm sure you know, you're looking back with rose coloured glasses, but you know, I remember the sort of freedom on the campus and the hub around the library and the Great Court, where everybody used to sort of lie around in the sun and you know do whatever they wanted to do sort of thing, and all the clubs and the graduate society,

the dramatic society and so on. I mean it was just a hell of a lot happening.

CF: Yes. And did you remember UWA press at that time? Because Sally was involved in that.

MS: Sally was involved in it. I don't specifically remember it, no.

CF: Yes. With having a musical department in UWA, which is quite isolated, was there a recognition of that isolation, or an attempt to - -

MS: Yes, well that's why the new music school was built, and I think opened in around '76, on the campus. To try and sort of stop that - - you know that sort of breakdown, if you like,

TIME 78:00

of communication, or a lack of integration I should say.

CF: Yes. No, I meant in the sense of isolation from elsewhere. Did Frank Calloway try and bring performers - -

MS: Okay. Yes, well certainly we had a lot of visiting artists schemes, which he established, which were you know, fantastic, and brought people in from all over the world. And that still goes. And of course, the whole rationale of the festival was also to bring people in from - - and performing ensembles and so on from outside to try and reduce that sense of isolation that Perth has still.

CF: Were you involved in the festival as a student?

MS: Not really, no. No. I mean I recall going to things, but I wasn't a participant.

CF: Yes. And how many students were doing musicology honours?

TIME 79:00

MS: Honours? Only two of us did honours, and one of them was doing ethnomusicology. He was doing his work on Australian indigenous music.

CF: Do you remember who that was?

MS: Yes, a guy called Tony McArdle. He subsequently became an orange person, and I don't know his new name. I think he still has a new name.

CF: Oh.

MS: And actually I used to accompany - - he - - his sister was an oboist that's right, and I used to accompany her for her exams and so on. I'd forgotten that, so I used to go to his place, and you know, his mum was Russian, so that was interesting too. Yes. So - -

CF: Yes, I asked you how many people, and you said only two.

MS: That's right. Only two of us. Yes, I don't know - - there were other people doing composition, you know, as a major stream.

CF: Yes.

MS: But yes, only two of us doing honours.

TIME 80:00

CF: Why did you choose Baroque?

MS: Well probably David encouraged me to, because that was his area of expertise. And I don't know whether it's cause and effect or what, but I do - - I've had a long love of Baroque music, and so all my subsequent work has been in that period. So whether I had expressed today with my interest by then I don't know. I mean I certainly had loved the works of Bach and Handel that we had studied and sung, so I might have

said something like that. No, I never really asked him. He probably wouldn't remember either.

CF: And did you learn another instrument?

MS: I learnt another instrument in the 1980s, the harpsichord. Because I was interested in doing work on harpsichord suites for my PhD thesis, so I decided to learn how to play the harpsichord.

TIME 81:00

You know, I mean it's - - once you - - you know you can play the piano, so you've got the basics there, but you've got to learn different techniques, and so I did that.

CF: Where did you learn that?

MS: I went to England and learned with - - worked with a woman called Jane Clark, but I went also with people like Trevor Pinnock and so on, just to sort of get you know, tips if you like.

CF: And during your time at the University, what about the radio station? The university radio station?

MS: Oh, yes. Well that was established in the late '75-'76.

CF: Yes.

MS: And I was asked to be the inaugural music producer. You know, basically selecting the music for broadcast which I did, during that time, which was very, you know interesting job, so we - - we had access to the School of Music's recordings, we got sort of our own recordings. We had to, you know, other than - - well, the biggest challenge was doing the timings really,

TIME 82:00

you know, to sort of make all of that work, and the station sort of lined up with Deutsche Welle and some of the overseas radio stations and got some of their stuff sent over and so on, so we were able to use that.

CF: So were you involved in the actual production of the particular - -

MS: Not the physical production. No. I was - - I did the selection, basically the program - - I did the programming and selection of the works to be played, but I didn't do the actual physical you know, getting them on air.

CF: And did you speak on air?

MS: No. We had various people doing announcing. Usually actors and so on like that, who - - volunteers.

CF: Right. Did students enjoy that? I mean was it listened to?

MS: I think - - I actually - - more members of the community did, because when eventually the University decided to close it some - -

TIME 83:00

CF: Yes. '91?

MS: Yes, many years later, there was more members of the community who complained about it than the students so I don't think - - I don't really think it figured hugely for students, except for you know, things where they were - - they had the control of those segments.

CF: Yes. And was it mainly classical music?

MS: No, no. There was jazz, and as time went on it broadened out even further. I think that's where the students became more involved, with the - - you know, some of the

non-classical music and talks and so on.

CF: So it was actually not just music? It was also - -

MS: I think some talks and so on emerged somewhat later, and the inaugural - - the inaugural Director was keen to get some of that happening as well. So I think that's where the students would have felt the loss the most.

TIME 84:00

CF: Did father ever talk to you about his work on radio?

MS: No. Not at all.

CF: Because he'd given talks.

MS: Yes, yes. No, didn't ever register. No.

CF: I thought he might have sort of discussed it.
MS: No he didn't. I don't recall doing that, no.

CF: So what - - what were you doing - - once you've finished honours, then your masters, what was - -

MS: Well then we went over - - Roger - - I got married some time after that, and we went overseas.

CF: When did you get married?

MS: '71. Went overseas for a couple of years.

CF: How did you travel overseas?

MS: We got a boat to Singapore, the - - I think it was called the Patris, it was a Greek

ship. It was probably cheap as chips at the time. We went to Singapore and we got on - - it was all a package through Olympic Airways or airlines, which was the Greek carrier.

TIME 85:00

So it was a boat - - boat-plane package, and we got off in Athens and then we sort of basically went overland by bus and train from Athens to London.

CF: Right. And your husband's name?

MS: Roger. So when we got to England, Roger had an undergraduate degree in industrial relations, so he - - he started doing some study with the - - one of the institutions in - -

CF: The LAC or - -

MS: No, it was associated with the Taverstock institute. Its name has just escaped me, but the Thames something or other. And he met a couple of these Taverstock institute people out here during his final year and I decided I'd had enough of study, so I was just doing any old work, and we were spending a bit of time in Oxford and I was working in an orthopaedics packaging - - packaging up prosthetic limbs for people.

CF: In Oxford?

TIME 86:00

MS: In Oxford. Yes.

CF: Or Reading?

MS: Oxford. And I also worked for the Shire Council, or the town Council in Oxford, and then we went down to near Staines, which is near Heathrow, and - - because Roger had - - was working there, and I was - - I worked at the Slough secondary school, which was a nightmare.

CF: What were you teaching?

MS: Music. And we had a school there you know, of kids from very different backgrounds. We had some English kids, we had some - - a large cohort of Pakistani and Indian children, and then we had another cohort of West Indian children. And the headmaster in his wisdom decided he all wanted them all to know how to love a Bach fugue. And that wasn't going to happen.

TIME 87:00

Anyway, I had no formal teaching training - - and the other thing I forgot to mention in Oxford I also worked as a dental nurse with no formal training, so I shudder when I think of all the people wandering around England with amalgams that I had made.

CF: How did you get that job?

MS: I just applied for it. They clearly want - - they may - - having anyone highly trained. And we had two days in Harley Street where we - - where we treated the good and the great. Lord Ogilvy this and so on, yes. It's amazing to think of today. Even then Australia was known as the place - - as a much better place for dentists, you know, for dentistry.

CF: Teeth, yes.

TIME 88:00

MS: So Australian dentists in England were making a packet, because they had a much better reputation, deservedly so from what I saw. Anyway, I did these sort of jobs and then I got an email - - not an email, we didn't have email then, I got a telegram from Frank Calloway saying that David Tundley was going - - no, one of the other staff was going on study leave, and would I like to be a study leave replacement?

CF: So how long had you been away for?

MS: About two years. So I came back to be the study leave replacement for a year, which was, you know, a great ...(indistinct)...

CF: Was Roger happy to come back?

MS: No, he had spent a year over there finishing, he had to finish his postgraduate degree. And yes, when I look back you know, this was a great training ground for young academics, I am very sad that these days, you know, universities can't afford to replace people when they go on study leave, so I was thrown in at the deep end. I had to do a year's worth of you know, teaching,

TIME 89:00

and across a range of areas, not just what my comfort zone of Baroque. So that was - - it was probably just as well Roger didn't come back, because I was flat out trying to do all of that, and then the next year, David Tundley went - - might have been the other way round, might have been David that year - - excuse me, then another staff went away that's right, and so I got another year of doing filling in.

CF: So what was your appointment? Just senior lecturer or - -

MS: It was called - - no, it was just called lecturer, I think, yes. Just called lecturer. Or maybe senior tutor, I can't even remember. Yes, so I mean that was a good way to get right across, you know, one of the things that still annoys me with academics in some disciplines is an unwillingness or inability to teach outside you know, their area of specialism, because David Tundley and I,

TIME 90:00

we used to teach right across in the undergrad years, from Medieval music, right through to what was then 20th century music. And although our special research area was Baroque, we had to be well across all the rest. And you know, so you've got to be constantly sort of updating - - and admittedly I wasn't reading the research on Renaissance music and so on, because I was you know, spending as much time

as I could on some of the more basic texts, but on the music itself, working from the music itself. The only way to speak validly about that music, so anyway, I got well across all those periods, so today, you know, if someone asks me to go and do a general talk on the fundamentals of Renaissance music, I'd have to dust off a little bit, but basically it's all in here, you know, sort of I'll know sort of how things worked, and how they unfold and so on. So it was a fantastic training ground for me.

TIME 91:00

CF: Did you touch - - I mean now there's lots of help and mentors and that sort of thing, did you have any of that?

MS: Well, probably the people who would have mentored me, I was replacing, you see. So no, so you had to do it yourself.

CF: And did you have feedback from students?

MS: I always seemed to have - - I always - - we used not to have what they have today, you know, formalised feedback, but I over the years had good feedback from students, and sometimes from their parents, actually, strangely enough. Yes, I had a letter, you know, not so long ago - - it must have been in the media somewhere, I think it was when I retired from UWA, and anyway, I got a letter from a parent thanking me, you know, years ago, I can't - -

TIME 92:00

well, I remember their daughter, 20 years ago it would have been, 30 years ago maybe, saying how - - how much help it had been, you know, how much she'd enjoyed being in my classes and how much help I'd given her to get her onto a career, and this is what she is doing now and so on, and she's still, you know, credits those years with where she is today, and recently I had sort of lovely experience, I was with my youngest son, who tends to - - has a tendency to regard his parents as being cushy Western suburbs dwellers, for people who might ever listen to this, infers the Western suburbs, like the Eastern suburbs in the Eastern states, and he

and I were having a walk over in another part of of Perth, and this busload of special needs kids turned up with their teachers, it was at the river,

TIME 93:00

they were all kayaking or something. And this guy comes up to me and he says, Dr Seares, he says, and I knew his name was Michael, I couldn't remember his surname, but I'm reasonably good memory for names, especially his given name, Michael, and we're talking for a bit, and he turns to my son and he says your mother kept me on the straight and narrow, boy from the Eastern hills and no one of my group from university, you know I sort of - - I was pleased, and he spoke about another guy that apparently he - - the two of them still think I helped them in some way, and I was pleased that my son, you know, - -

CF: Witnessed it.

MS: - - witnessed this. So anyway, you know, so you get feedback like that from those days, because we just didn't have the sort of formal feedback they have today.

CF: Yes. Did you enjoy teaching?

MS: I did. Yes. I enjoyed it, although it's funny, I - - obviously it stressed me - -

CF: Why?

TIME 94:00

MS: Because I used to have this recurring dream at the beginning of every semester, where, you know, everything could go wrong, you'd go to get the recordings for the excerpts I need to play to illustrate my lecture, and I couldn't find the music library and so on. The usual - - the usual anxiety dream, and I - - at one time I was mentioning it to Sally Kester, who worked - - taught with me, for some - - for one year in particular, we shared a job and she said, being a psychoanalyst, she says well you obviously actually don't like teaching, or you know, you find it threatening or something, which I possibly did, but anyway, I thought I enjoyed it at the time.

CF: And were you studying then for your PhD?

MS: Yes, I was studying from about 1984 to '88, '89.

CF: Could you - - you published it, but not till quite late.

MS: I published a book based on it last year, yes.

CF: Yes. So that's that book that I've looked at?

MS: Yes. That's right.

TIME 95:00

CF: But you finished it - -

MS: Finished in '88 I think, '89 I think I submitted it.

CF: Yes, and why didn't you publish then?

MS: I was too busy. Very soon after that I became head of department, and I just was struggling to get any research done. I was still performing, harpsichord and so on. Yes. So I - - was just a time thing, and I sort of just got away from it.

CF: And when were your children born?

MS: One was born in '76, and the other in '79.

CF: So not long after you came back really?

MS: Yes. Well, in '76, the years when I was doing the radio station.

CF: Yes.

MS: And it was interesting that I think it might have been - - actually I think around one of those years, I was sharing a job-share, and this was the classic thing that went on in those days,

TIME 96:00

Sally Kester and I were sharing a position, a senior turorship or something, and Sally was a very, very good teacher. You know, she's older than me and she'd been a lecturer when I was a student. She was fabulous - - she inspired people tremendously. And I think I did reasonably, the feedback was good. You know informal feedback. And we did a good job, but the - - then Frank Calloway wanted to bring someone in from England, to a position in the university, Roger Smalley, very - - you know, Roger became a great colleague and friend, pianist - - composer-pianist of the first order, and I can see why Frank would want to get him, but he didn't have a position for him, so he basically said to Sally and me, well thank you very much, but you know, I'll give this job to someone else,

TIME 97:00

and in those - - I don't know why, we both sort of - - I think probably because I had kids or kids on the way, and I think she had a son too, I think we probably sort of said, oh, you know, God, what the heck sort of thing, too much pressure, anyway, I honestly don't now, because it's just appalling, it's appalling that we let it happen, and it's appalling that it happened, wouldn't happen today, you'd never say to two women, thanks very much, I'm bringing a bloke in.

CF: No. Do you think - - do you think he valued you less because you were women?

MS: I think he was very traditional, very old-fashioned, yes. Very patriarchal.

CF: Yes.

MS: I think he valued us, but he was patriarchal in his views.

CF: Did he see you as having a career though? I mean he'd invited you to come back. He clearly valued you as a person.

MS: Yes, you know, he asked me to do things like put - - you know, he found part-time things for me to do. I mean David Tundley took me on as a research assistant.

CF: After you lost that job?

MS: Yes, and then Frank some years later asked me to organise - - become a concert organiser for the school and so on. But yes, it was just that you know, sort of way of doing things that was you wouldn't get away with it today.

CF: No. What happened to Sally?

MS: Well, she - - she was - - again, we both had other things that we were sort of doing. I mean my kids were, you know, I was just starting a family, and she also was doing her degree in psychology, so she had that to get on with as well.

CF: Oh.

MS: We might at the time have thought oh, this is a blessed relief. I honestly don't remember feeling that, but I just sort of - - in retrospect, I think God what a disaster that we just let that happen.

CF: Because you've been a mentor for women in academia.

MS: Yes, that's right. Yes. And I - - I mean you know, when I became - - yes, as I say, a bit patriarchal, because - -

TIME 99:00

I mean Frank was the person who oversaw the, you know, the design brief if you like, for the new school of music, new building, and when I came in as head, I insisted that they build - - they establish a separate female staff toilet. Because

there was never a female staff toilet, so we always had the female staff, always had to share with the female students. The male staff all had their own toilets. So yes.

CF: And what year was that?

MS: Would have been 1990 or something, '91.

CF: It sort of seems shocking now.

MS: Yes, and I mean look, on the one hand, what's wrong with sharing with students? Well other than they're a bit grubby sometimes, nothing, on the other hand it was the principle of the thing, so I'd obviously sort of woken up in that time.

CF: Yes.

TIME 100:00

MS: And I'd been advocating for it for some time, because I'd been on the full-time staff since '88, and yes, yes, we'll have to get on to it, yes. Yes, we'll have to get onto it. So once I became head I said well this has to happen, you know.

CF: And when you became head, what other changes did you want to - -

MS: Well, I took over - - David Tundley was head for a short time, and then he retired, and I - - and David wasn't sort of patriarchal in that way, but he just - - it just wouldn't have registered on his radar, you know, the money side of things wasn't you know, a big thing for him. Whereas Frank watched the pennies very carefully, so putting money into a you know, getting a female toilet as opposed to something else was an issue with him. I don't - - look, you know, I don't recall consciously coming in and sort of saying yes, I've got to do this and do that, and do the other sort of thing, but I think - -

TIME 101:00

there were things around the employment of part-time staff, and the organisation of those, which needed tightening up, but at the time, the School of Music was feeling under incredible pressure from the conservatorium at WAPA, and so I think the things that I was more responsible for, to - - yes, so I guess we were very focussed on you know, trying to make staff appointments, in specialist performance areas, that would enable us to compete on equal terms with WAPA, which we did, and we got some really good performance staff in. So that was - - you know that was a big sort of driver in the time that I was head.

TIME 102:00

But as - - you know, I'd sort of - - during that time I must say I hardly got any research done. I got a few articles out, but any research done, I didn't develop the research further, put it that way. And being a head of school, you know, you end up being on various committees in university and so you're into that meetings, meetings bit all the time. And by this time I was also on the board of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, which was the sort of first external sort of arts organisation I'd become involved with.

CF: Were you asked to do that?

MS: Yes. Largely because I was head of the school. And then from that I was asked to chair an advisory committee for the minister for the arts, Peter Foss. He and I had had a little bit to do with each other over some stuff to do with the orchestra.

TIME 103:00

CF: In what way?

MS: He was doing a review of the orchestras, and - - he was doing a review of the - - something - - the - - what was it exactly? It was really about the future review - - future directions for the symphony orchestra, and I actually didn't think much of the review that had been done, I thought it didn't pick up on some of the major issues.

CF: Which were?

MS: Can't even remember at the time - - now. I remember - - well, look what I remember was - - and it's something that I still encounter in fact just this morning, I was responding to a government review about something that asked me for some feedback,

TIME 104:00

and I think what it was is that the pointy issues are addressed in such sort of nebulous terms that you could read the report and just sort of let it drop. So I think there were probably issues around the scheduling of rehearsals and so on, and issues in orchestras and scheduling of rehearsals and the time available to rehearse all of these things are quite, you know tricky issues, because they become highly industrial. So I think there was some issues there that I was aware of that hadn't been raised, I think there might have been some issues around quality and the ability to conduct - - get quality conductors and so on. So whatever, I said to the minister, I thought, you know, he had to come down to something at the university, and I said well, I thought it was important, I said, well, I think, you know, it's been very cautious, and not really calling for some of the major issues that need to be called.

TIME 105:00

So for whatever reason, he decided it probably wanted someone who was not going to be too bureaucratic, and so he asked me to chair this advisory committee for him. And that got me into this whole sort of arts area which really consumed the rest, you know - -

CF: The rest of your life?

MS: The rest of my career.

CF: Being involved in the university, which is really a big company - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - in some ways if you look at it, is that - - being on all those committees, being involved in staff associations and appointments and running a department, how did that benefit you later? I mean was it of benefit? I mean university is very different from public service.

MS: Yes. Well, look, I think you thought - - you saw some examples of very good managers and leaders, and some not so good ones, also learned that don't judge a book by its cover.

TIME 106:00

When I first encountered - - when I first had known the then dean of arts, John Joy, Professor John Joy, I was - - I thought oh gosh, you know John shows little interest in the music school, he's you know, totally into humanities, I think he's - - he must be a chauvinist et cetera, et cetera, he didn't seem - - it didn't - - you know, I just didn't get any sense of John being a supportive person for my department. Well, when I actually retired from UWA, I - - one the - - I was asked if I wanted to invite any special people, and I - - to a little morning tea, and I specially asked John Joy, because what I discovered was John was - - took an intelligent interest, if he was introduced to the issues, he was highly supportive of me,

TIME 107:00

he tried to bring more women into involvement in the faculty, despite the fact that many of the women thought he was the greatest chauvinist ...(indistinct)... chauvinist around. And you know, he used to sort of try to come to some of the school of music, the concerts and so forth, and I saw that you know, despite the fact that he had a reputation as being very belligerent, he also absolutely knew how to work a meeting. And how to work and manage meetings is one of the things I really picked up within the university environment.

CF: Because academia can be pretty brutal.

MS: Absolutely, yes. Academia was a very good training for going and working in the arts. Because academics are not dissimilar to artists. Your work is also very often your passion.

TIME 108:00

And sometimes as academics it's hard to separate them from their work, and just as when they don't get a grant, you know, from the Australian research council or something, it's like an insult to them, as much as it is to what they're doing. Not like applying for a grant to you know- - to a development corporation to sort of get money to build a new - - to put some more wheels on a truck or something, you know, it's sort of like it's an insult, and it's the same with an artist. You reject an artist, they put up proposals to do some visual art or for a book or something, and you reject that, and say it's not competitive, that is saying that you're not competitive, because it's so much a part of yourself. And so I found that with academics, going from that environment, that highly passionate and committed environment into the arts was probably easier than if I'd sort of not worked in academia.

TRACK 02

TIME 0:00

CF: This is Criena Fitzgerald interviewing Margaret Seares 3rd of August 2015, further interview. Margaret, just - - did you know Peter Foss before you began to work with him?

MS: Well, no, not really, no. Because I - - well I knew him before I went into the government, but that was because I was chairing his ministerial arts committee. I only met him one time before when he came down to the university for some function or other and I was head of the School of Music and he was coming to something in music so that's the - - when I first met him.

CF: And that was the arts advisory committee?

MS: I - - he subsequently asked me to chair an arts advisory committee for him, to basically provide the view about the arts and government arts policy from outside of government.

TIME 1:00

You know, so not from the bureaucracy itself.

CF: So this was before you worked for him or - -

MS: Yes. Before.

CF: And who was on that? Terri-Anne White?

MS: Terri-Anne White was on it. Lise Taylor, theatre area.

CF: Yes.

MS: Richard Walley, you probably know, Indigenous artist. Duncan Ord also theatre.

Bela Cocai? who's visual arts. And - - just trying to think. Who else was there? Probably dreadfully missev somebody out, but they were the key - - certainly the key players.

CF: And what - - what was the main aim of that committee?

MS: Really, the minister, and I must say he used to come to most of the meetings. He would throw really questions to us, and seek responses.

TIME 2:00

So wasn't you know, a policy or anything like that committee, it was to provide feedback to the minister on things he was thinking about.

CF: So he understood - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - what it was?

MS: Yes.

CF: It's quite hard to define the arts, did he ever ask you to do that?

MS: No. No. And I mean that issue goes on and on and on.

CF: Yes.

MS: And of course government only - - you know the government tends to think about the arts in the context of what it funds, but it's interesting in Western Australia today more funding comes from government to the arts from outside the arts portfolio than it does from inside. Because if you think about things like Lottery West, Healthways, regional development, you know royalties for regions, and all of those things plus money from in the health department, for health and arts programs and the justice

system. You know, there's a whole raft - - not to mention education.

TIME 3:00

So there's a whole raft of government agencies that actually put money into the arts for their own purposes.

CF: Yes.

MS: So whereas the arts portfolio's role there is really to put money into the arts, for the arts.

CF: Were you surprised - - I mean how did you feel when he approached you about leaving university and working for him?

MS: Well, the approach actually came from the bureaucracy, not from the minister, because technically the minister doesn't - - didn't make the appointments. And yes, I was surprised, but I thought a bit about it, because obviously chairing that committee I had a bit to do with the bureaucracy, so it wasn't as though I didn't know any of the people. And yes, look, my thinking went up and down on this one, you know, some days I thought yes, it would be great to have a change, and get new experiences,

TIME 4:00

a great chance to have something new, another day I'd say look, I love my job at the university, I know everybody, I love the situation, on the STEM? and I'm deputy chair of the academic board, you know, sort of things would go well for me there, but in the end I thought to myself, when the offer came, I thought to myself, if I don't take it, I could be looking back in 10 years time and never having branched out of the university and seeing anything different. So that - - I started to do it.

CF: And did you get support from the chancellor?

MS: ...(indistinct)... vice Chancellor, yes. Absolutely. Yes. Fay Gale.

CF: Yes.

MS: And from Alan Robson who was her deputy.

CF: Did they agree to a secondment initially?

MS: Yes. They agreed to a secondment, two years - - university had a policy of two year secondments, after which you had to make a determination whether you would come back.

CF: Yes. So it was like a safety clause?

MS: Yes.

CF: And Fay Gale, how supportive was she of women academics?

TIME 5:00

MS: Well, she was very - - very supportive. She set up a lot of programs. Mind you, I had to say strongly supported by Alan Robson, her deputy, so the leadership development for women came a little bit after my time. But programs such as that, looking at the promotions criteria to make sure that you know, women were not sort of in a sense biassed against. So that for example, you know, many women were known to be very, very good teachers, but they couldn't - - the promotion criteria did not take much account of teaching quality at all. And so things such as that, you know, were looked at.

CF: Do you think it does now?

MS: Oh, yes. I think it does now. I mean, I've have to say WA in particular didn't have a very good year with the teaching outcomes last year, but I think there's a lot more effort on teaching. However, having said that, the introduction of this - - the federal scheme called ERA, Excellence in Research Australia,

TIME 6:00

has refocused everybody on research outcomes, and I think there's been - - that's been to the detriment of teaching. I know the British government's looking at, you know, schemes of how you actually have similar reward schemes and rankings for high quality teaching, and that would be a very good thing here.

CF: So when you moved into the public service what was it like to begin with?

MS: Well, it was quite alien. I mean in some ways, you know universities - - universities are semi-public institutions and these days policies and criteria and so on between public service and universities are very, very similar. But in those days, it was just getting used to the whole ministerial thing, you know, my job as head of the department was to you know, vet all the ministerials,

TIME 7:00

to, you know, sort of check that we're doing what the - - we're providing the information that has been requested by the minister, or by someone in government, you know, all of that sort of information, I hadn't realised how much time was spent dealing with ministerials. And sort of - - with other agencies in government, like the treasury and the public sector, what used to be called the public sector management commission, or management office actually, you know, sort of other parts of government as well as your own department, and then I was supposed to weld together the agencies within the portfolio who had a history of non-cooperation at best, and antagonism at worst.

CF: And who were they?

MS: It was the library, the museum, the galleries, the Perth Theatre Trust and Screen West.

CF: Non-cooperation with - -

TIME 8:00

MS: With each other.

CF: Yes.

MS: And we made some headway there I had to say. So, you know, there was all of that sort of issue. It was, you know, getting to understand you know, what the - - where the priorities were, even down to things like annual reports in those days, was huge competition to win awards with your annual report and everybody used to pull all the stops out to try and do that sort of thing. You know that was completely alien to me, you know. Never had to deal with annual reports at all at the university. I mean I wasn't at that level. And the pressure of sort of from some people to you know, to see if we could win the awards and so on. That sort of stuff just didn't register with me at all. And I think also, this is something I also found when I went to the Australia Council, I don't like this - - and I still don't like this business of just thank you for your application, or thank you for your letter.

TIME 9:00

We found it very interesting, you know, goodbye sort of thing.

CF: Yes.

MS: Or thank you for your application. It's highly competitive and in this round we're sorry to tell you you didn't get up. And I'm, particularly at the Australia Council, requested that, you know we put more information for unsuccessful applicants.

CF: So feedback?

MS: Yes, to explain well why didn't they get up? And that was something that not all of the bureaucracy was that keen on. Because you know, it does leave you a bit more exposed. So rather than just doing all that by the book paperwork, that didn't suit me. My way of doing things. And probably ruffled a few people that I didn't like that. And you know, that's that sort of thing.

CF: Did you find any opposition to you as, you know, here's an academic ...(indistinct)...

MS: Look, there were a couple of people who were a bit offended that I should have been given position as a non-bureaucrat.

TIME 10:00

And I could understand that. You know, people who were potentially in the running themselves, and bit of a slap in the face for them.

CF: And did you set up a risk management plan?

MS: There wasn't a big deal seeing at the time. I mean, you know, occupational health and safety was starting to sort of come in, but you know, the plans were more your business plans and your human resource policies and all of those things. And within those, issues like risk and health and safety came in, but not to the extent that they are today.

CF: I thought it was to do with risk of given that grant to someone.

MS: No. No, not at all.

CF: No.

MS: No.

CF: Okay. And you did a certificate of marketing from Curtin - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - during that time. Why was that?

TIME 11:00

MS: Because the - - the government agencies were all looking at things like marketing what they did to their constituencies and how better to communicate with their constituencies and so on, and I thought it - - it could be useful.

CF: But your constituency was enormous.

MS: Well yes.

CF: And varied - - yes.

MS: But that's right. Well, you know, so were many you know, if think about say the health department, you know, they handled the education department to some extent so yes.

CF: Were you require to be on the board of like the library and - -

MS: Yes. The library was and still is different constitution, but the art gallery and the museum and Perth theatre trust, I was on the board of all of those, which is very interesting experience, you know I mean the art gallery I've always loved - - I was later on the National Portrait Gallery, always loved those, you go down to the vaults and look at the art works and so forth. But you know, the collecting policies and acquisition policies and things like that always interesting to try and work out,

TIME 12:00

you know, what should the limited resources, what should a gallery, and should not you know, a gallery support. The strong pressure to buy more Australian art from West Australian artists, and at the time it's probably fair to say that the director at the time probably wasn't that - - as keen as some. And that's always an issue. It's always an issue, for a regional - - what you might call a regional state gallery. Because the reality is the national galleries not going to collect every single worthwhile West Australian artist. So who's going to do it, if not the Art Gallery of Western Australia? And then in the museum, you have the issue of the challenge between being a public entity, a public display type entity, exhibition entity and all the

research scientists working there, like a quasi university. And who tended to think of themselves more like academics than public servants.

TIME 13:00

And the Perth Theatre Trust, when I came in they just suffered a huge loss in the previous couple of years, with a big show of South Pacific, so the minister was very concerned about you know, what would be the future of the trust, and it had a very strange board composition of members of the City of Perth and you know, some people on it who didn't necessarily have the expertise to really oversee the organisation, so all of them had their sort of - - their challenges, you know.

CF: Were you able to influence, or did the minister want you to influence acquisition policy?

MS: No. I mean the minister I think was - - the minister certainly was keen to see West Australian art bought but he also reduced the acquisition policy.

CF: Reduced it?

MS: There was a bit of tension between the minister and the gallery at the time,

TIME 14:00

so there wasn't enough money really to buy the works that needed to be bought. But I did not see my role - - I mean I was there ex officio and you've always got to be careful when you're ex officio that you don't try and you know, drive the thing the way you think - - that was the role for the legitimate if you like, board members. If things looked like they were going off the rails, if there was a proposal to buy only you know, international Florentine art or something like that, then I would have a role to say well actually, that's not really what the state government would be interested in doing, but that situation didn't arise.

CF: Was Peter Foss a hands on minister?

MS: Yes, pretty hands-on, yes, compared with some, you know, that I've seen over the years since, he had quite definite views on a number of things.

CF: In what way?

MS: Well, I mean I think he did have strong views about how the art gallery could run.

TIME 15:00

I think he had strong views about the Perth Theatre Trust taking too much risk, losing money and the way he saw the trust as a vehicle of government, not an impresario. The museum he probably didn't have as much of a drive on the museum I guess I could say. Probably because you know, the museum is - - museums are much more complex than people think of them, on the outside. There are many components. As I say, the sort of whole science and research side, the publications that museums put out, you know, the - - what the public sees is the tip of the iceberg really. I think the minister was sort of aware of that.

CF: Was the Perth Theatre Trust though - - you said he saw it differently. That not an impresario.

TIME 16:00

MS: Well, ...(indistinct)... had been producing shows in the theatre, they saw - - they saw they had all the theatres they needed to bring shows to them. The trouble was they brought one show in particular that blew the budget big time, and of course that cost the state money, and that always reflects badly on the minister. So that caused the minister some concern.

CF: And I guess WA Inc had sort of just - -

MS: Yes, well that's right. And he played quite a role with the whole as a lawyer, the whole WA Inc thing, so yes I think that was his concern.

CF: Yes. So he must have had that sort of concern about wasting taxpayers' money.

MS: Yes, that's right.

CF: And corruption.

MS: Yes. That's right. Not corruption, but the waste of taxpayers' money.

CF: Yes. And was a Liberal government seen as less supportive of the arts than Labor? Or has it been?

TIME 17:00

MS: I don't think so. The - - it's an interesting phenomenon that the arts sector has always seen as being a Labor thing, you know, the federal minister made comments like this recently. But if you actually look at what over the years, I'm referring more here nationally, federally, at the major contributions and the major funding commitments that have been made, they've actually been more by Liberal governments. So even the Australia Council, certainly was you know, sort of really set on its way by Gough Whitlam, but Gorton - - yes, Gorton was the one who got that going, and the film - - the original film council. The plans for the national gallery took forever to fulfil but they were - - I think it was Malcolm Fraser who finally signed off on it.

TIME 18:00

The Nation Library again I think it was a Menzies phenomenon. Then the National Museum - - yes the museum of Australia - - National Museum, has - - I'm not - - I think Labor kicked that off and then the Liberals opened it. I think if you sort of go through as I just remember doing some years ago - -

CF: ...(indistinct)... policy, yes ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes, so I was actually surprised to find how many of the initiatives did come from

Liberals, and when I look one of the things I'm very critical about the current funding issues around the Australia Council is that minister Brandis has taken money from the Australia Council to fund things that weren't getting funded by the council, which is now his desire to fund those things is perfectly legitimate,

TIME 19:00

but I'm not sure about robbing Peter to pay Paul, and I think back to his predecessor Liberal, Richard Alston, when the major companies were - - a lot of them were having real problems around the country, he commissioned a review, the major performing arts inquiry, and it was worked out that they needed an immediate boost of 43 million dollars, and so he didn't take that money from someone else, he went to Cabinet and fought a very hard fight and got the money. So that certainly was another thing from a Liberal government, you know, the previous Keating government hadn't - - the Keating government had increased the funding for, you know, some key projects of Paul Keating, like the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, but Alston went out and got money for the- - you know, for the major companies. So it can be done, and I don't buy the issue that you know, the budget is in such crisis at the moment.

TIME 20:00

We've seen plenty of money splashed around since the budget time. So you know, it could have been done.

CF: Yes, because you made the point about Australia - - Western Australia in particular being in a big economic mining boom, and the art gallery having to close on certain days ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes. Well that's been a real problem over here. Now where I would be critical here is that I'm - - Alan Carpenter in his last year as premier, really sort of had a Paul to Damascus type revelation around the arts, and he came up with a new package called Ignite, which was a 73 million dollars package over I think four and six years, four years, which was going to be - - be a really major boost into a range of the arts,

very exciting for everyone. You know, ranged from literature to the performing arts.

TIME 21:00

And when the Liberal government came in, the Barnett government came in they basically cut a lot of that funding out, and so that was a great disappointment for the arts. On the other side of ledger, the minister, the current minister John Day fought very hard and got this new 430 million dollars for the WA Museum, a new museum which we sorely need, because museums are supposed to represent what we are as a community, it's a pretty bad example we had. So that's a big - - that's a huge whack of money. But it has meant that treasury has this attitude you know, it's not overly supportive of it, and of course they see - - they've squeezed the rest of the arts' money because they see so much money going into this, in the forward estimates. So you know, with all governments you get swings and roundabouts. Alan Carpenter had that - - was really inspired and put in that great inspired program.

TIME 22:00

And when the museum was announced, the current leader of the opposition said we don't need another woolly mammoth, which to me reflected a complete misunderstanding of what a museum is in the community, but - - so you know, sometimes it comes down to the people.

CF: Yes.

MS: As much as the actual government themselves. Various - - occasionally you'd get a leader like Don Dunstan or Charlie Court, or Jeff Kennett, or Paul Keating, to some extent, who really get the arts and make you know, major injections. It's a shame Keating was so Sydney focussed, it didn't get over as far as over here.

CF: Yes, that is a problem. In - - when you went - - sorry, you said that it - - going from the university to the public sector you had a - -

TIME 23:00

I suppose in the Bronwyn Bishop days, now that you had a car, you had a mobile phone.

MS: Yes.

CF: You had a lot more resources.

MS: Yes.

CF: Was that a surprise?

MS: Yes. I had my own secretary, as opposed to, you know the departmental secretary. Yes. My own car, God. And a phone, and you know, Qantas club membership, that sort of stuff, which I'd never had as a lowly academic in those days, or even head of school. These days, head of school probably has all of those things, but not in my day.

CF: And was it necessary?

MS: And I had a diplomatic passport when I went overseas as well.

CF: Oh.

MS: Which was great.

CF: Luxury.

MS: Yes. Well, yes, well mobile phones probably were because you do get phone calls at all hours of the day and night, from - - whether it be that your press officer, your media officer, the minister or another part of government,

TIME 24:00

or the media itself, so I remember when I finished with the Australia Council, one of the things I really noticed in the first week is how little the mobile phone rang. So that was necessary. The car, I don't necessarily think that was overly necessary, they just seemed to be the standard thing.

CF: Yes. So were you sort of like the budget interface between the arts sector, between the government and the arts sector - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - and the arts program?

MS: Yes. We had to announce - - we would announce the grants. I mean we got the minister - - unlike this is - - and this is what the whole debate is about at the moment, is Australia nationally, but because we weren't a statutory authority, the minister had the final sign-off on the grants, but I don't recall him ever saying no, you can't fund this person.

CF: Yes. So how did that work here in the state then?

TIME 25:00

MS: Well, what would happen you had all these funding panels, and in those days we had our music panel, theatre panel, literature and so on. They would all do their assessments, and they would come up with their successfuls and unsuccessfuls, and that would come through to the head of the arts development area and she would check all of those through, and then they would come up to me for sign off to the minister. I would send them up to the minister, he'd send them back, when he'd checked them, and then they would be announced.

CF: And there wasn't any controversy about any of those that you remember?

MS: I don't recall - - I don't recall about any grants. I do recall a controversy around - - two controversies that caused a bit of pain. One was around literature, because the

Fremantle arts centre press used to get the bulk of the funding from the state and some other smaller presses went to see the minister to complain about it.

TIME 26:00

You know, some really quite - - quite tiny but you know, doing some good work and so on, and I think UWA press might even have been part of this. You know, I think they were. And anyway, so they all wrote - - they went to see the minister, and so I was asked to have a look into this and look at you know, what - - to speak to them all and you know, see what we could do about it. We did do a review of the whole of literature funding. It actually didn't end up with them getting any more money, but it did look at what the field of literature felt they needed. We had a lot of writers sent us all duplicating each other, whether we could save some money there, so there could be more for publication and so on. But the writers you know, really held very strongly to their views. And you know, years later I met one of them and he reminded me of all that.

TIME 27:00

CF: Was it acrimonious?

MS: Yes, it was a bit acrimonious, yes. Yes. Because - - well, what they really wanted us to do was just cut the funds to the Fremantle arts centre press. So there was then a review of the whole funding thing and I think - - I think the outcome of that review which might have come in just a bit after my - - after I'd left was to reduce somewhat and standardise the Fremantle funding. But there was that one, and there was another one where there was this - - an Aboriginal music centre, which had not acquitted their budget properly, because that was the other thing that the arts funding people had to do was always look at budget acquittals. And so - - and after repeated warnings they haven't done anything about it, so we had to defund them, and that didn't go down too well, as you can imagine.

TIME 28:00

So I had a few volatile people in my office about that. Yes. And - - yes, and one of the major companies, one of the major performing arts companies, looking like they were going to be - - looking as though they might have been insolvent, and we had to help deal with all of that.

CF: Isn't that a sort of perennial problem really, that?

MS: Oh, yes. It is, yes. You'll always get - - you'll get some - - you know, you don't get that many organisations where they're defunded for - - because they haven't acquitted grants and so on, but you get some. You'll always get some organisations who are on the edge financially who look as though, you know, and the state has to decide whether they can - - if they are prepared to support them, or whether they're just going to let them go under.

TIME 29:00

And then there's another batch of organisations where they might have been great once, but they are sort of living on you know, past glories and really are no longer working at a level that really inspires a lot of confidence, or is ever at a high level of artistic sort of quality, and you might need to defund them for that reason.

CF: Yes. But you - - they would see it as very subjective decisions ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes, well the people who make the decisions are funding panels, they're not the bureaucrats, and that's - - I think that's the important thing that you need to have - - you need some degree of specialism in the ...(indistinct)... I just don't think it's good enough to say well my bureaucrats will make these decisions.

CF: Which is sort of what Brandis is doing now.

MS: Brandis.

CF: Yes, because these days bureaucrats, particularly in the federal level, I was doing a bit of stuff in education and in arts, you know, every five minutes you get a new person, they're just coming from you know, agriculture, or they just come in from

Aboriginal affairs,

TIME 30:00

or they just come in from regional development or something. You know, they haven't spent a lifetime working in the arts, and yet you're expecting them to make decisions.

CF: Yes.

MS: They are making decisions on the qualities of applications, but not necessarily on the quality of the art being applied for, you know.

CF: I will ask you about the WA press later, because of your outreach work, but then, when UWA Press came in, was it getting any government funding?

MS: No.

CF: No, I didn't think so.

MS: No.

CF: No. And as part of your work of - - for Peter Foss, or with Peter Foss, you met federal ministers and the federal departments.

MS: Yes, there was something called the cultural minister's council, so you would - - it would meet - - the officials would meet a couple of times a year and the ministers would meet once a year. So I got to know you know, people - - my equivalents in the other states, and at the Commonwealth level.

TIME 31:00

And then once a year you'd have the ministerial council, occasionally twice, and you know, you go along with your minister to support them.

CF: So would you have considered a second term there?

MS: I was - - no, I was thinking - - I was not thinking of taking on a second term.

CF: Why?

MS: I just - - there were some things going on, I think we, you know, we'd submitted an arts policy to the government, they'd done nothing with that. There were a range of things, I just thought no, maybe I can put my energies elsewhere.

CF: And who approached you about the Australia Council?

MS: I think the first call I got - - I think the first call I got actually was Richard Alston.

TIME 32:00

It was either - - there was Richard Alston and there's the deputy secretary of the department who heads up the arts area was someone called Cathy - - was Cathy Santamaria BJ's daughter.

CF: ...(indistinct)...

MS: Lovely person Cathy, and I got to know her through the ministerial council. Yes, one of them rang me, Senator Alston certainly rang me up, because I remember being flummoxed as to why a federal minister would be ringing me. Yes, so he rang up and basically asked if I'd be interested, and I said I'd get back to him and gave it some thought and said yes.

CF: Was it to get away from a Sydney-centric - -

MS: Yes, I think there was a lot of that in it. They felt the council was too Sydney-centric, and you know, I'd been interested to see George Brandis criticising as being too Sydney-Melbourne - - tlo - - golden triangle-centric. So I was symbolically if you

like someone from not from Sydney or Melbourne.

TIME 33:00

CF: They - - you received a sort of lot of positive reviews about your chairing of that committee. They said despite the Liberal appointment. I mean you did very well. What - - were there any change - - I mean what were the changes that you wanted to make in the Australia Council?

MS: Well, one of them was the way we communicated with the field, and - -

CF: What was that?

MS: As I said, you know ...(indistinct)...

CF: ...(indistinct)...

MS: I felt it was very bureaucratic. I mean when I first got going Senator Alston said to me, look, there was this group called the Australia Council, a reform group or something, who wanted - - who were very disgruntled about the council and wanted it reformed, and he wanted me to get in and see what the problem was.

TIME 34:00

So I met with them all, and I also met with the people at the council, who dealt with them all, because their fundamental gripe was they weren't getting grants, and shades of what's going on now, but to some extent I think there was some legitimacy around that. I think, you know one of them sort of produced their art in a fairly - - not in a traditional manner, but in sort of what I'd say modernist rather than post-modernist if you like, and - -

CF: Do you remember who that was?

MS: Yes I do, but I ...(indistinct)...

CF: Okay, fine.

MS: And the panel that funded that person, or would have funded that person was very dominated if you like, by you know, sort of a particular way of thinking. So we talked to both of them, and both the panel or the panel chair and this individual, I got them to meet together, and I think they got a bit of a better understanding of each other,

TIME 35:00

in one - - in two of the cases I noticed they started getting grants, because I think they knew a bit more about the panel, thinking of the panel, you know was forced to sort of think well maybe they had - - and I think we had some changes on the panel, natural changes every so often, somebody goes off, someone comes on. Broadened - - we broadened the panel out a bit. On the other hand, another one was applying for grants for something that was the council would never fund, so, you know I had to make it clear to him that look, it's not the sort of thing the council does fund, but what about have you tried X, Y or Z for the thing. And although, you know, that didn't give him the money he wanted, I was able to show him how he might get a bit of money for a part of what he was doing, but not his whole project, so he got something for it. So the trouble was no one ever sat down with these people and actually talked with them.

CF: Yes.

TIME 36:00

MS: And so I did find that one of the really important things was to talk to some of the disgruntled people as well as the insiders, the happy people. So this is something - - I also found that there was now a lot of approaching the arts sector or the field for their views, so we did planning for the future project which was actually to go out and say well where did they see the arts going and where did they see themselves fitting in and how could the council best facilitate the - - you know, the development on the arts. So I thought it important to get that sort of input.

CF: So who did you meet with? Just - -

MS: Look, we did - - we had - - it was on-line by those days, that time, we had on-line surveys, we had group work and so forth. We had groups in each state talking, so we got a lot of feedback in about what people thought. We then we developed up a you know- - a paper of the way forward. So - -

TIME 37:00

CF: And at that time what was Senator Alston's relationship with the ABC?

MS: Not very good at all.

CF: Yes. So why - - how were you able to facilitate better? ...(indistinct)...

MS: His attitude to the ABC, I asked him about it one day, and it wasn't so much political, about politics, I think he felt - - well, look maybe it was. Maybe it's the same thing that they all seemed to come up against, which is they all seem to think as a minister they can say what they think that the ABC should be. It seems that the ABC you know, is almost a law unto itself, and I think that probably frustrated him. But there were a couple of people within the ABC I know that he thought he said purported to be Liberal people that he actually knew they had stood for Labor office and so forth.

TIME 38:00

So he thought there was a degree of duplicity, whether that was true or not I don't know. But I found, you know, he was very supportive of the Australia Council, as far as I could see he was very supportive of things like the national gallery, and the national museum project was going through at the time, so I think the ABC you know, SBS he seemed very supportive of. The national library, I don't think there was a drama with any of the others.

CF: Yes. Because the ABC always seems to be at loggerheads.

MS: Yes, that's right. It's - - in fact, you know, you can't penetrate, well, my thing about bureaucracy, try writing to the ABC with a view about something and you'll get the standard response, like I've been around long enough, I recognise the response. So I sent an email to them about something they were doing which is running credits - - running promos for new shows over credits, and which is always done on the commercial channels, and I didn't see the ABC adopting this because it was - -

TIME 39:00

it was demeaning to the artists and technicians listed on the credits. And we - - because we just had the latest national policy out under Labor produced which actually did two things. It talked about the ABC as a leading cultural institution in Australia, which it is, and it talked about how the people you see on credits of films and Australian television are all Australian artists and creators, which they are. So I was saying to the ABC as a cultural institution you are actually demeaning these people and my response was something like in today's modern broadcasting, modern broadcasting demands this or that or the other, which is just, you know, it was obviously the standard letter developed for people complaining about advertising on the ABC. So I sort of - - I rolled my eyes a bit, should I recognise the symptoms? And that's the sort of thing I really tried to stop us doing at the Australia Council.

TIME 40:00

CF: Yes.

MS: And so I can see why people get very frustrated.

CF: So you broke down or tried to break down, that whole bureaucratic response - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - because art is in itself all art if you embrace that whole thing, it's not bureaucratic.

MS: No, well that's right. And look, you know, artists - - I may have said this last - - last

time, but artists remind me of academics and vice-versa. If you criticise their work, you're criticising them much more - - you know, as I say to someone I don't like the policy on regional development you just produced, it's actually not - - okay, that'll be - - get offended, but it's not personally offended, whereas the art is so personal, it's so much a personal - - a part of the person, of the personality that when you say,

TIME 41:00

your art's not good enough for me to give you a grant, then you're actually - - it's very offensive to someone. So receiving a letter basically saying yes, we had a lot of applications, and basically yours wasn't good enough, so sorry, you know. That's not a very nice way of doing things.

CF: Well, it looks like you haven't really looked at it.

MS: Yes. So I just sort of thought we could take a bit more care over things like that.

CF: The guy that you met, who you spoke to personally to say look, this isn't something - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - that we would fund, what made it so?

MS: Well, the Australia Council has traditionally funded new - - new work or something that has - - is bringing something new. I mean you know, might be just in the symphony orchestra playing or whatever, but something - -

TIME 42:00

something new and to some extent challenging or interesting for audiences, but in this case it was something like a festival that just happened every year, and I mean you could have anything in that festival. It could be jam making, you know. And you wouldn't necessarily know there was anything creative that drove it. So it was that

sort of - - I mean that's a bit extreme, jam making, but it needed to be something new, else why is the state funding it? And equally, it needed to be something that wasn't going to stand on its own commercially, and in both instances, the project I'm thinking of could have probably stood on its own.

CF: The Australia Council has - - does it have regular - - or regular companies that it always funds? For example - -

TIME 43:00

MS: Well, since the major performing arts inquiry, it has standard 28 to 29 companies, the major performing arts companies that are routinely funded - - although there are reviews regularly and I think one or two might have dropped out of that group, based upon the review. And that's the group that the current minister has quarantined the funding, so he's removed money from the Australia Council, but he's said that money that's left you've got to keep enough to fund these companies, which is nearly 100 million a year, so it didn't leave the council with a lot. So those companies - - those ...(indistinct)... and then there are things like - - there's the Venice Biennale that had a component - - there was things of those - - that source, and there's a major festivals initiative and so on and so forth.

CF: Brandis says that you know, if he's funding excellence and if, you know, people aren't excellent, they're the ones who'll be disgruntled, but he seems to be making a decision himself about these.

TIME 44:00

MS: Well, yes. And I mean excellence is one of these words - -

CF: I know - -

MS: - - in the arts which gets bandied around, no one really knows what it means, or what it signifies. The point is the companies that are now under threat, because there's not enough money to merely sustain them all, are the what's called small to medium

companies, they're not the big you know, the 28 major performing arts companies, but the smaller ones. And some of those do - - you know, they can be theatre groups, they can be visual arts collectives, whatever, writers' centres. Some of them do quite cutting edge work, and I've seen criticisms from the minister's senior advisors about some of the work that's been funded that is not particularly popular.

TIME 45:00

And doesn't appeal to audiences. And with the information that probably there needs to more money going to things that audiences will be more receptive to. The trouble with that, if you don't fund all these other companies, is that you're not going to have a lot of that experimentation. It's not to say there's not a lot of experimentation and new work goes on in the major performing companies. There is, but their whole raison d'etre is not necessarily all totally new work, and for some of the smaller ones it is, some of the smaller ones it's not. And if you remove a lot of that cutting edge stuff, then where's our cultural capital for the future? And I know this advisor of the minister's who's made those comments is interested - - loves apparently classical music.

TIME 46:00

We've just to illustrate the point that late Beethoven's works were reviled in his time, and yet you know, they're seen as the peak of the - - pinnacle of the canon now. You think of the French Impressionists for example, ...(indistinct)... Bach, you know, was number three appointment in Leipzig when two others turned it down, one of whom I don't think anyone's heard of today, except, you know, arcane people like me who research that area. And you know, Bach wrote the Brandenburg Concertos hoping for money from the Marquis of Brandenburg, and didn't get it. Obviously he didn't highly enough of them, so - - and yet today, you know, we put these people absolutely on a pinnacle. So the risk is that we're going to be not having support that - - for those people who might produce those one-off outstanding works.

TIME 47:00

CF: Yes.

MS: And people will say well, yes, but why don't they do it anyway? Well Bach didn't do it anyway, he was employed, his whole performing life. Beethoven had patrons, and then, you know, okay some of the French Impressionists had collectives who really did go after their works, and some of them did suffer quite badly, as ditto Russian writers, and so on. Well, in a country that pays our sportsmen such outlandish salaries, do we really want to have artists back in the garrets starving? I don't think so. So you know, I just sort of think the whole approach is a very strange one.

CF: Yes. Were you always fighting? I mean, you've brought up sportsmen, and Australian I think are completely sports mad and insane. I mean you can - -

TIME 48:00

was your push to get art to become not mainstream, but really appreciated and understood?

MS: Well, we commissioned - - when I was chair we commissioned research and you know, this is something I drove because I thought it was important, find out what people's attitudes to the arts actually were. And there's a lot of that stuff happens now. But there hadn't been much - - anything done nationally at that time. And you know, if you say - - at that time if you said art to people, they thought you were talking opera, ballet, and symphonies or art, you know, the state art gallery, and yet they would be people who might be doing craft or writing poetry themselves or whatever, so they didn't see themselves as engaging in the arts. And I think this is the issue vis-a-vis sport that there's a lot of - - we still understand the chain that goes from kids playing footy or soccer or cricket, or netball on a weekend,

TIME 49:00

through to the people who we send off to the Olympics or we send off to the Ashes or whatever. But we don't see that chain from you know, the little girl - - the little girl - - yes. Pause it.

Track 03

TIME 0:00

MS: But we don't see that chain easily flowing through from say the you know, kids that are - - little kids doing dance festivals through to you know, the senior ballet companies in the country. People don't necessarily understand that chain, and unfortunately a lot of people, when they think of children and the arts, they think of some of these awful school, you know, school concerts that you got to where they're a mixture of - - people sit there with a mixture of pride and - -

CF: Horror.

MS: And horror.

CF: Well you said at a national press club speech that there was no green paper on the arts, that we don't have - - it suffers from benign neglect.

MS: Yes.

CF: Do you still see that?

MS: I do, yes. I mean, look you get - - for all the complaints at the moment, and I you know, agree with many of them about George Brandis.

TIME 1:00

At least he's a minister who's interested in the arts. He's interested the particular component of the arts, you know, the classical arts, but you know, that's better than not being interested at all. We've had ministers in the past on both side of government who've really just been given the portfolio because you know, they needed to round out the cabinet or something, you know, without administering, because they weren't even in the cabinet. And you know, that's like an afterthought. You'd never dream of you know, of forgetting to have an education minister, but

there was one cabinet, I can't remember whose it was, where - - I think it was one of the Howard ones, where the Prime Minister forgot to allocate the arts portfolio, and it was only done afterwards. So yes, there isn't that - - it just was so embedded.

TIME 2:00

And I don't know whether it's - - I don't know whether the politicians are out of kilter actually with the community in all of this. I have a growing suspicion that they are, because, you know, they're more - - as time's gone on, the more people do get engaged, the more arts companies worked right outside, you know, their confines. For example, the WA Symphony Orchestra is doing the music teaching down at the Kwinana schools. So the more that sort of thing goes on, I think the ballet was up in the north last week, was it two weeks ago? I saw Black Swan advertised in - - now, which was it - - Carnarvon or somewhere, when I was up there last week, one of the north-west towns. The more that those companies are out and about, the more people are engaging, and they all do workshops, and they all do special things. I actually think the politicians are increasingly based around their own prejudices.

TIME 3:00

You know, they all race along to the football, they get, you know, rides at the footy, they all go to the footy, but other than the arts ministers, you very rarely see them at the arts events. Arts companies do try to engage them.

CF: Well, you don't see them publicised with their arts scarf on ...(indistinct)...

MS: No. This is all ...(indistinct)...

CF: Because you said that - - that the sort of person who was arts minister could be middle-aged Anglo-Celtic men, whose background made them least inclined to save art.

MS: Yes.

CF: Was that your father too? Was he like - -

MS: Oh, yes. He didn't have much interest in the arts at all. No.

CF: Did he become more interested as you - -

MS: No. Well he died the year I went into the department.

CF: Right.

MS: So he wasn't around when I got involved in arts policy.

CF: And was one of your aims to encourage less of the golden triangle of funding?

TIME 4:00

MS: Yes. So we - - I certainly said to the council members and administration I felt we needed to meet in every state - - state and territory capital over a two year period, which, you know, caused alarm, some thought we'll have to have all the administration, you know, senior administration with us, well, you know maybe yes, maybe no. But - - and in each place we'd have a function and you know, meeting with the local communities et cetera, et cetera. Which we did. And I think they still do that. I'm pretty sure there's, you know, still a pattern of travelling. And I just think it's a good thing, because it sort of puts - - faces to names for the local arts community to meet people, the board members, the senior management and so on, and it just does make the people from there realise that there's a world outside of Sydney or Canberra or Melbourne.

TIME 5:00

CF: Yes. Had they ever done that before?

MS: Not systematically, like that, no. No. They've occasionally been, but not in the systematic way.

CF: And because of that, did WA get less arts funding from the council?

MS: No, we've always got less, and it's a complex issue. The two states that were receiving consistently less than their population base are Queensland and WA, and obviously for me, you know, it's difficult doing it in WA, conflict of interest and all that, but what we did decide to do, Queensland was actually worse relatively than WA, so we started to appoint someone into Queensland, to try and encourage more grants for a start, more applications, because part of the problem was the number of applications going in, certainly from WA today. So the idea was to try and get someone working with the arts community in Queensland to try and build up the number of applications,

TIME 6:00

and therefore the success rate, might stay the same, but the number of grants would be higher. That was started just probably in the last year I was there, and I gather that it didn't yield the sort of results that were hoped for. So that - - and yet all the panels - - we made sure all the funding panels that made the decisions had people from all states. So it's a difficult issue, it's somewhere about the actual visibility of the art that people are making, you know, like if you're a panel member from Sydney you can probably find your way to Melbourne or Canberra or even Brisbane, or get some support to do so, to see these companies, but no one's going to travel to Perth.

TIME 7:00

And there was a system to try and get say the panel members from South Australia in theatre to come to Perth to see theatre shows because the theatre person in Perth had a conflict of interest, you know, and that sort of thing. But look, it's a very hard one to crack. Or, you know, things have been tried and haven't worked, and people will go on trying to see if they can make something work.

CF: Because I - - I mean I just noticed the change in Brisbane having been there recently. Their art gallery - -

MS: Oh, tremendous.

CF: - - really, really popular.

MS: Yes, that's right.

CF: So has that been a shift since - -

MS: Yes, but that was Queensland the government. The feds put some money into it. They did. And - - but there's so much at stake, it was a Peter Beattie thing, and he was another one who was you know, relatively inspired.

CF: Because it seems incredibly accessible to all ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes.

CF: That gallery.

MS: Absolutely. No, I think they've done a fabulous job up there.

TIME 8:00

CF: And I looked - - I read a paper where you were interested in making - - there was a Twitter girl going to a play and writing about the concerts or the play on Twitter. Do you think that makes it more accessible?

MS: Look, I'm not the right person to ask. I don't engage in Twitter or Facebook or anything like that.

CF: ...(indistinct)...

MS: Or the new things, Instagrams, whatever they're called. But I believe it does. From my time with the festival we were getting very good feedback from people from on-

line media, yes. So I think that is - -

CF: And doing it during the performance?

MS: I'm not sure about during the performance, no. I'm absolutely down on that.

CF: Yes, well that's why I asked, because someone who was doing it during a performance, posting what was happening during, which would seem to take away from it.

TIME 9:00

MS: Yes. Yes. I know it happens, and it may have an impact. I find it difficult to come to terms with.

CF: Right. And your own - - your own music, were you able to keep that up?

MS: No. No. But I was doing a lot of travelling in those years with the Australia Council, you know. There was a time where we were nine months between CEO resigning, Michael Lynch went to head up the opera house. And the new appointment Jenny Bott, coming in, you know, going through the whole ministerial thing. And I became basically the executive chair, the government wanted me to be the executive chair. So I did that which meant really going to Sydney like every week, and sometimes just staying there. So I would do a lot of travelling, and I just didn't have time to practise.

CF: So how was that? I mean you were based here in WA.

MS: Yes. I got a lot of frequent flier points.

TIME 10:00

CF: And your children?

MS: Well, they were grown up by that time. I think they'd left - - yes, they'd left home

then, yes.

CF: When - - I mean talking about Brandis now. It's said that his - - it's the biggest assault on the council in 40 years. And what effect do you think that's going to have?

MS: Well, there are two scenarios. One scenario is that it's just the beginning, and that basically if he had another three years as minister, we might not - - he might decide his experiment with the department has been so successful he might just you know, move it all across, because really the issue is he's very supportive of the major performing arts companies, so he could easily have them moved over to his department, which leaves, you know, a real rump at the Australia Council.

TIME 11:00

CF: Yes.

MS: So that's one scenario. A second scenario is that he would come up - - he would accede to the pressure, though I'm not sure that that will happen. And come up with some new money for the council because a lot of the smaller companies are in touch with their local members over all of this. And if small companies start to go belly up, then I think that politically they might decide it's not worth their while. So it's about an additional 21 million a year, 24 million a year or something that would be needed to go back into the Australia Council, which is not a huge amount of money in the scale of things.

CF: But he's taken 103 million out.

MS: Yes, but that's over four years.

CF: Okay. Right.

TIME 12:00

MS: Yes. So yes, it's really - - yes, it's basically 25 million a year, and I worked out, you know, that's the equivalent of the 20 million they put over here in the last budget to start a new medical school that no one seems to want, the AMA and the hospitals certainly- - health department didn't seem to want, and the 4 million dollars consensus centre UWA, which was given back, so that - - those two amounts of money, 24 million, seemed to be no problem at all to raise, so I would have though an extra 25 million a year would be possible. So that's the second scenario. The third scenario is the government changes and the opposition gets back in and changes the whole thing - - boxing - - the whole shooting match again.

CF: Because as you've said before, there's been bipartisan support really since the '70s.

MS: Yes. So I would imagine, Mark Dreyfuss has been, you know, obviously very critical about this, and he's been quite an active shadow minister,

TIME 13:00

so he might well decide to reinstate, close the Brandis program and reinstate. And even if Labor doesn't get back this time, if they were to get back some time or other, the way things are going in this country, and every other country, all the other Western democracies Labor will be in sooner if not later, so I expect it will change back again.

CF: What he's created is even more conflict between - - within the arts community.

MS: Yes. Look, there are people in the arts community who - - during the previous Labor government, there were people who got to the then minister Peter Garrett, and were highly critical of the funding going to the major performing arts, because - - companies, because as I say that's around a 100 million a year. And they were saying, look, these are all what they called heritage companies, you know, they all just play heritage works and perform heritage plays,

TIME 14:00

you know, Tolstoys - - not Tolstoy, Chekovs and so on, dance Swan Lake et cetera. Some of the more vocal of these people I don't think had been to see any of these

companies, or hear any of these companies for ages, because it was the same year that I know WASO for example commissioned 15 five minute works from Australian composers so you know, new works, more than any other company - - any other musical organisation in the whole country I'd say. So that was a pretty erroneous view, but it got - - it got credibility. Now we've got the opposite, with Brandis and his more so chief of staff seeming to imply in an interview that these were the companies that - - the major ones were the companies that really were the, if you like, the torch carriers for Western classical civilisation. And neither view in my view, is correct.

TIME 15:00

CF: Yes.

MS: And neither is - - it's not as black and white as either party would like to make out. You'll have a small company will do you know, a sort of a Tom Stoppard play, and you'll have a major company do a new Australian work, you know, so it just doesn't flow in that way. And I think for the creative disposition is really, really counterproductive.

CF: Yes. Harmful.

MS: You know, some of the small companies get a lot of support from the bigger ones, and you know, but some of the smaller ones back up some of the bigger ones too. They provide artists and so forth. You know, you have to be very careful meddling with this sort of thing.

CF: What would he think he's doing it?

MS: Look, you know, I think it's - - well, what he said is you know, he talks about the Australia Council being a closed shop, not being able to, you know get - -

TIME 16:00

the same people getting grants, he talks about more audience - - you can see from

the criteria, audience appeal has got to be a more of a criterion in consideration for grants. He wants to push international marketing more and he wants to push philanthropy more, so he sees this as a better way of doing it.

CF: But you were also interested in philanthropy in the arts - -

MS: Yes.

CF: and in trying to encourage that yourself.

MS: I do. But it isn't the solution, and it won't be here, it's not - - we're not America and we wouldn't you know, have to change the tax laws and everything in this country, quite considerably.

CF: Yes.

MS: And it would take about a 50 year build up to get to you know, be able to fund an orchestra pure - - out of pure philanthropy.

CF: Has there been an increase in philanthropy do you know?

TIME 17:00

MS: Well, there has been in - - until - - philanthropy - - well there's two elements. There's corporate sponsorship I suppose you could say, which has taken off since the end of the boom, particularly in this state, but apparently everywhere. There's a steady increase in philanthropy, private giving, and all of the companies put a lot of work into that. But it's nowhere near at a level of being able to you know, keep the doors open. Nowhere near it.

CF: And would corporate philanthropy be for example like the Wesfarmers collection?

MS: Yes.

CF: Is that - -

MS: Yes.

CF: Would you include that?

MS: Well, yes, but most corporate philanthropy is - - or corporate sponsorship is given for specific things.

CF: Yes.

MS: You know, they don't just say look here, here's a wad of money, they'd say look, we'd like an education program or you know, we'd like to support Indigenous arts or something of that sort.

TIME 18:00

CF: Is the arts - - I mean is it an industry?

MS: Well, I don't know if it's an industry. It's a - - on one extreme it's a sort of a way of doing things. On another level it's - - it employs a number of people.

CF: Yes.

MS: To that extent it's an industry, but the arts goes on well outside the industry. So you might have a manufacturing industry for example and that confines them to find ...(indistinct)... to where that is happening, but the arts does not have that limitation around it.

CF: What about being sort of distinctively Australian in the sense of Aboriginal arts and culture? Was that encouraged during your term there?

MS: Well, I think it's a constant.

TIME 19:00

CF: Yes.

MS: Yes. Goes back to before my time.

CF: And does that have Aboriginal companies applied - - been able to apply for grants?

MS: Oh, yes. Yes. There's a specific Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander funding stream at the Australia Council.

CF: Right.

MS: And I think in the state too.

CF: What did you enjoy most about being on the Australia Council?

MS: Look, the people, I met so many interesting people, both here and overseas. So that you know, is a big one. The intellectual stimulation was huge, and I really enjoyed that. It was great to go to sort of - - you know, different places for things like regional art conferences and so forth. And see things happening in you know, places like Esperance and so on, which - -

TIME 20:00

Mt Gambier. So - - and feeling that you actually could make a bit of a difference to things. Yes, I enjoyed all of those.

CF: How important is it to promote it overseas? I mean you've worked with Alexander Downer, promoting Australia overseas.

MS: Look, there's too much giving with one hand and taking with the other on this whole overseas issue. I mean at the same time as we had the international cultural council, DFAT was sort of curtailing the - - some of the cultural attaches and cultural posts overseas, and the funding that was going to them. So if the government of the

day, any government, and the same thing was happening under Labor, it's not, you know - - if the government of the day wants Australia to be sort of you know, rather like sort of Britain and France, seen as a really important cultural - -

TIME 21:00

not destination so much, but a country where culture and civilisation is at a high level, they need to be a bit more consistent in approach.

CF: Right. And was Alexander Downer supportive?

MS: He was very supportive, yes. Yes.

CF: You were also director of the Australian business arts foundation. What did the entail?

MS: Well that was really set up to try to encourage business and private philanthropy for the arts, and - - but I was in there in the early days, the state - - it was an ex-officio role, and I was in there because it had - - actually when I was there it was called the foundation for culture and humanities. I think it was - - it was something that had a fairly flawed origins, in terms of its thinking, what it could actually achieve, what it would achieve, the likelihood of it achieving it.

TIME 22:00

I didn't find it a very satisfactory board to be on for that reason, sort of - - it was not - - it was not really conceived carefully, and realistically. But once it became more focussed on the business community, and the arts, you know, because culture and humanities could include history, it could include museums, it could include everything. No one knew where to stop sort of thing. So - - were universities part of it, because they were such major you know, holders of historical records and all these things? So once it became more focussed on business and the arts, I think it became more successful at getting, in each state, leading business figures involved in the arts.

CF: And how successful has that been here?

MS: I think it was pretty successful in Perth, yes. Most of the leading business figures, men mostly, were members of ABAF. That was after my time though.

TIME 23:00

CF: Yes. Would you have stayed on or could you have stayed on for another term?

MS: Yes, I could have. I was asked if I'd like to, but I felt I was starting to get a bit - - to be a bit of a bureaucrat.

CF: In what way?

MS: Well, people would, you know, say make criticisms of the council or not get funding or so on, I'd start being defensive, and I thought no, I don't want to get like that, so I didn't. I decided enough is enough.

CF: And so what did you - - what was your decision then? What did you want to do?

MS: Well I'd already been offered part-time work back at the university, so I decided I'd see if the uni - - I was at that time, I was no longer in the school of music, but in the management area looking after culture and fundraising and things like that. So I just negotiated with them to go back full-time, and I had a lot of boards I was on, as a - -

TIME 24:00

and things happened after finishing the council, cultural collections board and national portrait gallery and so on. So I had my hands pretty full.

CF: Yes.

MS: And went back on the board of the symphony orchestra.

CF: Tell me about the National Portrait Gallery. I mean was it a treat?

MS: Oh it was a great board to be on, because we were - - I finished unfortunately before the new gallery was built, but we were in the planning phase for the new gallery, which is a lovely building. And so that's always very exciting.

CF: You came back, you were working as a community relations on the pro vice-chancellor, and the office of development. Were you interested in sort of improving - - I hate this word, the brand of Perth, or the brand of UWA.

MS: I think - - well, it was more interesting getting the university more engaged with the community, and vice-versa ...(indistinct)...

CF: From outreach?

TIME 25:00

MS: Yes, outreach. Not too much of an ivory tower, because the reality is also if you're going to go fundraising, you can't fundraise if you're not really engaged with people. So it was very important I felt, and so did Alan Robson, that we, you know, bring the community back more into the institution.

CF: Because it had been very early on the university had done arguments really early days a lot of education.

MS: Yes.

CF: And university extension - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - arose out of that.

MS: And the festival, yes.

CF: Yes.

MS: Yes. The press, all of those things.

CF: And the university extension's now sort of defunct really.

MS: Yes. Although I'm not quite clear about it, because they still were advertising courses in the brochure I received recently about - - from the art gallery, you know, advertising an art course and I don't know - - I don't understand quite what's happened.

TIME 26:00

CF: Yes, because I was going to say why do you think it's - - it folded? Because it was hugely successful.

MS: Yes, I think - - look, I think times change. I think they depended quite a lot - - they had quite a lot of dependence on IT - - on-line courses, because of course now you can do that, anyone can do that themselves, through these - - you know, you can do a course at Stamford on-line if you want to. They also had a lot of courses in the lifestyle area, where - - which you can actually get them a bit cheaper in, you know, other - - other places. So languages and so on you can go to some of these community courses around the traps. So maybe their markets just fell off.

CF: Yes. And the Lawrence Wilson art gallery and the Burt museum, I mean they - - they're not as well known in the public eye either.

MS: No, I think - - no, Tim Small's done a great job there getting them out more. I think they're becoming more aware of the Burt museum, now you can at least see the tip of the iceberg more easily,

TIME 27:00

based at Lawrence Wilson's building. So yes. But they certainly could - - you know, could become sort of more figures on the - - you know, the tourism sort of circuit for

Perth.

CF: Yes. Yes. And how involved were you have been - - I mean you have been, in the Perth arts festival? How important's that been?

MS: Well, I was - - when I was in the management I was the line manager because it's part of the university, so the general manager reported to me, so I was ex-officio on the board then, and then when I retired, they invited me onto to the board, and then I was appointed chair, so I've had you know, 10 years or more, 15 years, on the - - on the festival board, which has been great. I've loved it, you know, seeing different - - you learn so much watching different artistic directors do their different approaches and of course you see some wonderful works coming through, and it's been good to see the community's support for the festival build too.

TIME 28:00

CF: Yes.

MS: So it used to be seen as a western suburbs thing. I don't think that's the case any more. And in fact the heat maps that our marketing people showed us, you know, which shows where people come from and so on, show that it's spread out to the eastern hills and the - -

CF: The heat map?

MS: Yes. Sort of like a heat map of where people are buying tickets.

CF: Right.

MS: Yes.

CF: Because one of the really successful things has been the open air theatre, which - -

MS: Yes.

CF: - - WA had ...(indistinct)...

MS: Summerville ...(indistinct)...Yes.

CF: Yes.

MS: Then last year we had the big - - the giants and that involved you know, millions - - on foot, four million people allegedly saw it, although it was possibly the same people two days, but that was a huge community event, and broke a whole lot of people into an arts event where they didn't even know they were part of the arts.

CF: Did you go to that?

MS: Yes. Sure.

CF: And what did you think?

MS: I thought it was fantastic. I was as much interested in watching the people as I was watching the giants.

TIME 29:00

CF: You mean the people manipulating them or - -

MS: No, no, the actual - -

CF: The audience.

MS: Yes.

CF: Yes. Do you think that that - - I mean it was such an enormous event, it was really, really expensive, but you think that that - - do you think it's of value, that was of value?

MS: I think it was of value because I think it showed members of the public, members of

the media, members of parliament, that how you know, people in WA will engage with something like that as much as they will engage with a you know- -

CF: Football.

MS: - - football. For example, if one of our teams happened to win the AFL this year, it's looking like a reasonable chance, there'll no doubt be some sort of ticker tape thing through the city, and it would be interesting how many people would go to that compared with the giants.

CF: Right. And within being on those particular boards, I mean that's part of education as well, it's not simply the arts, is it?

TIME 30:00

MS: No. No, no. That's - - you know you're trying to sort of engage the community in different ways of thinking about things and so on. You know, in all of those arts - - arts boards.

CF: When you came back, when you left the Australia Council, did you come back to teach as well?

MS: No.

CF: Do any teaching ...(indistinct)...

MS: ...(indistinct)... I did a bit of teaching and I found I just couldn't keep up with the literature, and I was just, you know, basically preparing lectures from textbooks, which isn't the way to do things, so I decided to give it a miss.

CF: Yes.

MS: And also people were moving to new modes of delivery, you know, on-line deliveries and you know, much more sophisticated approaches than I had had you know,

decade, 15 years previously. So I thought to myself no, my teaching days are numbered. I haven't got the time to put into you know, learning all these new things, so I gave it up.

TIME 31:00

CF: Yes. And are you able to - - do you still perform?

MS: No. No I'm just starting to play the piano again. Yes, that's all - - yes. Once you get away from it, you know, it's - - it takes a long time to build up and no time at all to go.

CF: Does it?

MS: Piano technique?

CF: So you didn't take any keyboards or - -

MS: No.

CF: - - ...(indistinct)... to practising?

MS: No, I don't think I've touched a piano for 15 years or something.

CF: God. Did you miss it?

MS: I often - - I play things on my fingers a lot, you know. In fact I'd doing it now as I think about it. I think about music, but I don't often play it, yes.

CF: Right. What - - how would you see - - I mean you were on a committee looking at the Lottery West grants, and that sort of - - is that - - I suppose it's part of philanthropy, why were you involved in that?

TIME 32:00

MS: Was this the - - which committee - - the philanthropy one?

CF: Yes.

MS: Funded by ...(indistinct)...

CF: Yes.

MS: Yes, well they were - - they - - there was a meeting at the university with, you know, leading lights from the community talking about the need to develop philanthropy more in WA, and the decision was to commission a report on the state of philanthropy. And they - - Lottery West were at that initial meeting and they said they would, you know, support an application, and then I was asked to be - - I think I was still at UWA at the time, to be the university person to sort of project manage it and the grant would come through the university, so a woman called Sally Edwards did most of the lion's share of the work, and so we did that and published that report.

CF: And what was your conclusion? What did you feel?

MS: Well, basically we, you know, we came to the conclusion that the boom and bust mentality in WA is a bit of an inhibitor on - -

TIME 33:00

on philanthropy in the sense that when things happen like the booms bust as has happened now - -

CF: Yes.

MS: - - obviously things dry up and in the boom times people are - - we always know it's going to end, and this is now the boom that was never going to end has ended, and so the whole new generation of people coming through now who know about this, and we got quite a bit of that sort of feedback when we were interviewing people, they sort of put money away for - - buy all the things they wanted or give it to their families or something, and they're a bit more loath to give it into general community

causes, because they know it will probably dry up.

CF: And these will be just general businesspeople.

MS: General community people, because a lot of finance really comes from your average people in the community.

TIME 34:00

What we found was the number of people who support - - do volunteer work in WA is the same - - for free, is the same as in other states, but in terms of dollars per head of population donated, we're lower than the other states. Or most of the other states, except for the territories.

CF: Right. And in 2007 you worked with Barry Strickland to build momentum in the arts.

MS: Yes.

CF: To I think you said to enhance Perth's cultural fabric.

MS: Yes.

CF: What did you do about that?

MS: Well, we produced a report for the committee to Perth, that had a whole lot of doles in it, you know, that was a lot of consultation in the arts community around that. The committee for Perth had a committee which has been working through that. I initially chaired that committee, but I resigned from that.

TIME 35:00

CF: Why?

MS: After some - - why? Because I felt I'd been on that committee for some time and I

was getting over-stretched. And so a number of the things that we had already achieved. Other things, particularly in the area of local government, we put on the back burner because of all the local government amalgamation talk, you couldn't get anyone in local government to think about it, but there was a lot that local government - - some local government do ...(indistinct)... around the arts and their communities, and a lot that others could be thinking about doing, and that was going to be a big trust as well.

CF: Did you want to limit the role of directors? Sort of limit their tenures as well?

MS: Well, I think it's a good idea. I've tried to show that by example, you know, I felt I'd been on the symphony orchestra board for too long, so I decided to step down,

TIME 36:00

on the basis that this job someone else could come in, I could have done another term as chair of the festival, but again, I'd been on that board one - - it was one hat or the other, ex-officio board member for too long, so I just - - I don't - - I think you've just got to get new ideas into these organisations.

CF: And what made you be on things like the Synergy. I know you've resigned from that.

MS: Well, I was invited by a colleague, Michael Smith, who I'd worked with, he chaired the festival board before me, we worked together - - excuse me, on that festival and Scotch College and he invited me on and I thought it would be a very interesting challenge, which it was, and something different, so decided to give it a go.

CF: In what way was this a challenge?

MS: Well, right outside my comfort zone. Not education or the arts, or philanthropy, so totally outside my comfort zone.

CF: And yet you've received businesswoman of the year, an award.

MS: Well, company director, yes. Yes, which was very nice.

TIME 37:00

Yes, I mean that was a great challenge, I really enjoyed that, like the Australia Council, a great intellectual challenge.

CF: Did you - - I mean understanding about Synergy and its sort of - -

MS: It took me about a year.

CF: Did it ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes, absolutely.

CF: How long were you on it?

MS: About four years.

CF: And why did you resign in the end?

MS: Because the minister decided he was going to appoint another chair, and we had a board of six, four of - - three of us decided we didn't support the minister's action, so we resigned.

CF: And what - - you're also involved in mentoring women in academia. What do you do with that? How do you do that?

TIME 38:00

MS: Look, just meet people, you know, when they ask we catch up, we have a chat, they talk about where they're wanting to go and just ask for feedback and so on. Really the talking - - chatting type relationship.

CF: Yes. What was the thing you've enjoyed most then, in your career?

MS: Gosh, be hard to say.

CF: Sorry.

MS: Yes. I think I really enjoyed the Australia Council time, and I - -

CF: Because?

MS: The reasons I gave earlier.

CF: Earlier, yes.

MS: Yes. I really enjoyed - - I enjoyed my earlier days as a lecturer, as I said, it's very hard to say - - there hasn't been much I haven't enjoyed really.

CF: Did you miss music and lecturing when - - or were you just too busy to - -

MS: Too busy, yes. I didn't really miss it, no.

CF: And have you retired from most things now?

TIME 39:00

MS: Yes. Yes, I - - finished with the festival, of course retired from Synergy, I'm still on the board of the Bond University council, which is, you know, keeps me active there. And yes, most things that I've retired from now.

CF: Why Bond university?

MS: Well, mostly because their chancellor invited me, an old friend, to join. They wanted people from all states, and also because at the time I was on the federal government's education investment fund, and we were funding universities and I felt I knew a lot about the public university system, but I knew nothing about the private,

you know, those few private universities we had in Australia, so I decided to join.

CF: Is there a huge difference?

MS: Quite a difference, yes, because they have to run as a business, much more so than a public university, because no one's going to bail them out if there's any problems. They can't apply for a lot of the things - - the funding, the feds, that public universities get.

TIME 40:00

On the other hand they can do things like Bond does, great student to staff ratio of around 10 to one, as a policy. Huge emphasis on the student experience. They're not all thick, rich kids, many of them are on scholarships, partial or full, and Bond's been, you know, in my time I've been pushing quite hard to build up their research profile, which is happening, so they do better than quite a number of the public universities. In the last ERA in fact they've jumped significantly up in the research ranking. I think they've passed Curtin last I saw, so you know, it's quite rewarding to sort of see, you know, to see something like that happening. So there's a different way of doing things.

CF: Yes.

MS: But students can still get fee help, which is federal government support.

TIME 41:00

The difference between them and the public university is the fee help requires the student has to pay I think it's 25 per cent administration fee up front, which is quite a whack. And that was supposed to disappear in all these federal government reforms, but that hasn't happened.

CF: No. And you in 2015 you were involved in the Wesfarmers collection.

MS: Yes.

CF: Was that a sort of like returning home in a way, remembering your dad?

MS: Yes. Yes, it was in a sense. There was - - we did a publication, it was called Sublime. I don't think it was 2015, I think it might have been 2005.

CF: Sorry, no it's my writing. Sorry.

MS: It was some time ago. And yes, a number of us were asked to talk about the sublime. It was going to be based around the artwork and I was asked to write about the sublime in music.

TIME 42:00

So, yes, that was very interesting to do. That was during Michael Chaney's time as CEO of Wesfarmers.

CF: And did you give any courses in - - at university extension?

MS: I don't think so. I - - I do regular talks for the symphony orchestra every year.

CF: On?

MS: On music - - on you know, pre-concert talks. I have - - maybe I have done public - - yes, of course, I have. Yes, I used to do - - I remember, they were nighttime courses, yes. I used to do UWA extension courses in music, yes.

CF: Music appreciation or - -

MS: Yes, that sort of thing, you know. The Mozart operas or something like that. Yes.

TIME 43:00

CF: And Margaret, to finish up, is there anything you wished you'd done differently?

MS: I've always wished that I'd played the academic game a bit better. I mean I was younger, you know doing the conferences and publications and things, you know, I published my second book once - - last year, once I'd retired.

CF: Yes.

MS: Because I just, again didn't have the time once I got into the administration side at the uni and then going outside the uni. So I'd always wished, you know, I never went to conferences and - - I did go overseas to do my research, my PhD.

CF: ...(indistinct)...

MS: Yes, Berlin and London. I loved the time I had in London researching, at the British library, and the Bibliotheque Nationale in France. But that's about the only thing really, yes. Yes.

CF: If you had got more into it, do you think you would have stayed on in academia?
TIME 44:00

MS: I don't know. Possibly the thought again I might still have been interested in the challenge, although there might have been enough challenge there, yes. Yes, hard to tell.

CF: Yes.

MS: I suspect I would have taken the option anyway.

CF: Okay, all right. Thanks.

MS: Thank you.
