



BUSSELTON ORAL HISTORY GROUP (INC)

Clifford Edward (Cliff) DAWSON

FARMING AT KENWYN, VASSE

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Clifford E (Cliff) DAWSON



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TRACKING NOTES

File name: Clifford (Cliff) Dawson

Disc: One

Track No.	Title: Farming at Kenwyn, Vasse	Track Time
1	Summary Introduction	2.23
	Introduction read by interviewer, Margaret Dawson.	
2	Summary Hay-making. Growing potatoes	7.31
	Cliff born Busselton 1943. Describes early hay making and growing potatoes on the farm. Mentions working horses.	
3	Summary Father's family background	6.56
	Father Vernon Edgar (Gus) married Rebecca Jane Roberts. Names their 11 children and information on each one.	
4	Summary Great-grandfather, John Dawson, and family	10.07
	Gus attended Newtown School. Great-grandfather John Dawson arrived WA February 1830; went to Augusta. Married Mary Dooley. Information on John and Mary's backgrounds. Names their children and information about each. Youngest child, Ned Dawson, a co-discoverer of Yallingup (Ngilgi) Caves.	
5	Summary Mother's background. Parents moved to Kenwyn after marriage	7.47
	Mother, Elsie Margaret, nee Burge. Her background. Contact with aunts and uncles. Parents to Vasse to live after marriage. Difficult time in the Depression.	
6	Summary Improvements to house	8.32
	Origin of Kenwyn name. Father had a good eye for cattle. Leased land at Yallingup. Improvements made to the original Group house. Addition of modern facilities such as electricity, telephone and a refrigerator.	
7	Summary Brother and sisters	7.51
	Cliff names his brother and sisters, their occupations, who they married. Vern played the saxophone and played in bands. Mother from a musical family and she, Vern and Fay sang together at small functions.	
8	Summary Vern's yacht sailed on the Broadwater. Locke Estate	7.56
	Activities on the farm when young. Vern built a canoe, he and Cliff sailed it on the Broadwater behind McGregors' land (now Mary Craigie's). Duck shooting. Mentions the birdlife, wildflowers, drainage, and fires in the Locke Estate	
9	Summary May school holidays at Yallingup. Fishing	7.16
	The family enjoyed the May school holidays in Hammond's cottages at Yallingup. Describes the fish caught and how they met up with the same families each year.	
10	Summary Cars and tractors. Father on Busselton Shire Council	4.35
	First cars and tractor father owned. Father elected to Busselton Shire Council. Syndicate for a hay baler with others until Cliff and his father purchased their own new hay machinery.	
	Total	70.49

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 TRACKING NOTES

File name: Clifford (Cliff) Dawson
 Disc: Two

Track No.	Title: Farming at Kenwyn, Vasse	Track Time
1	<p>Summary Education: Vasse, Busselton, Wesley College. Parents and bowls</p> <p>Cliff started at Vasse Primary School, first year or two taught at Vasse Hall. Mentions his teachers, Rodger Jennings being one. Didn't enjoy boarding at Wesley but mentions the sport rowing, football and athletics. Parents' activities, both good at lawn bowls.</p>	12.04
2	<p>Summary Vasse Siding. Busselton-Flinders Bay railway line. Buayanup Drain</p> <p>Returned to farm, grew potatoes and milked cows. Vasse sale yards and railway siding. The Busselton-Flinders Bay railway line ran through Kenwyn; closed in 1957. Leased the railway reserve. Buayanup Drain ran through the property, some of the problems. Drainage rates.</p>	11.52
3	<p>Summary Vasse townsite. Old Locke house site</p> <p>Uncle Owen Dawson had a butcher shop in Vasse townsite early days. Cliff mentions the buildings and businesses and the owners he remembers in the townsite. Old Locke house site in Locke Estate; there was an old orchard and old well there. Limestone ridges and pools. An old track ran through there.</p>	6.52
4	<p>Summary Milked cows. AIS stud cattle sold. Total land 700 acres</p> <p>Milked cows for butterfat. Herd testers. Had an Australian Illawarra Shorthorn stud. Sold stud. Heavy work loading and unloading potatoes. Land acquired total of 700 acres. Sold 17 blocks of land for Vasse townsite.</p>	8.27
5	<p>Summary Marriage. Children and their activities</p> <p>Married Margaret Thomson 1964. To Kenwyn to live. Parents moved to Busselton. Names their three children, education and interests.</p>	7.30
6	<p>Summary Calf-rearing and mated heifers. Cattle trading</p> <p>Children's occupations, marriages and their children. Calf-rearing and raising mated heifers for sale. Parents' deaths. Cliff took over running of farm after his father's death. Downturn in cattle prices, traded in cattle until prices improved.</p>	11.04
7	<p>Summary Cattle dogs. Breeds of heifers reared</p> <p>Good cattle dogs, Rags, Ben and Sheila; their value on the farm. Breeds of calves purchased and bulls used for producing mated heifers.</p>	4.49
8	<p>Summary Heifer sales, Busselton and Boyanup. Problems moving cattle</p> <p>Over the years 27 heifer sales with Elders and Wesfarmers, Busselton, later Boyanup after Busselton sale yards were closed. Talks about the process of getting cattle presented for sale, moving cattle from home block to Kealys' and Dowells' blocks, difficulties with traffic. Felt sad when sold last cattle in 1999.</p>	7.39
9	<p>Summary Course Director, Busselton Golf Club</p> <p>Interest and sport – basketball, golf. Golf committee as Course Director. Problems with water and work done to improve this. Mentions some of the CEOs.</p>	7.07
	Total	77.24

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File name: Clifford (Cliff) Dawson
 Disc: Three

Track No.	Title: Farming at Kenwyn, Vasse	Track Time
1	Summary Apex Club. Cyclone <i>Alby</i> . Murray Armstrong; plane crash	8.18
	Joined Busselton Apex Club, left aged 35 as elected to Busselton Shire Council. 1978 built new house on farm. Effects of Cyclone <i>Alby</i> . Community activities: Vasse Hall and fire brigade. Murray Armstrong's plane crash; three people killed.	
2	Summary Busselton Shire Council. Early settlers film re-enactment	10.31
	Councillor 1979 – 84 for Central Rural Ward of Busselton Shire Council. Held position of Chairman of Works, Finance Committee and representative on Tourist Bureau. Issues at the time erosion, boat ramps and banning net fishing in Geographe Bay. Instigator for production of film re-enactment of Bussells and early settlers driving into Busselton.	
3	Summary Warroora Station fishing trips	10.00
	Warroora Station men's fishing trips; who organised, camp set-up, boats taken. Mentions fish caught and experiences in the boats.	
4	Summary Family trip to Warroora Station. Brought goat home	4.21
	Warroora family trip, children saw dugong and calf. Caught two little goats. Brought one home; called him Ozzie.	
5	Summary Fishing in boat at Busselton	8.22
	Mentions boats owned. Relates fishing stories in the boats. Varieties of fish caught. Went salmon fishing at Canal Rocks, sold salmon at Vasse School fete. Encounters with large sharks.	
6	Summary <i>On The Vasse</i> musical production	6.19
	1979 for WA's Sesquicentenary, Ian Lilly and Shirley Stanbury produced <i>On the Vasse</i> , to celebrate the history of the Vasse district. Cliff played the role of Frank de Lisle. Production was a huge success.	
7	Summary Vineyard, Kenwyn	3.58
	1992 planted eight acres of grapes. Mentions varieties planted and setting up vineyard. Contract with Amberley Estate Winery to buy grapes. Later pulled out and the vineyard; now forms part of the Vasse Newtown development.	
8	Summary Kenwyn sale to Vasse Newtown developers. Cundinup. Nannup	11.43
	Proposed Busselton Bypass road would affect farming operations. Developers purchased the farm. Purchased 900 acres at Cundinup. Sale of Kenwyn finalised May 2000. Cliff and Margaret purchased a house near Nannup. Rob planted vineyard and ran baby beef. Cliff and Margaret bought a caravan and travelled for about three months. Moved back to Busselton 2015.	
	Total	63.32

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 TRACKING NOTES

File name: Clifford (Cliff) Dawson
 Disc: Four

Track No.	Title: Farming at Kenwyn, Vasse	Track Time
1	Summary Nannup house. Development of new golf course, Nannup Improvements made to Nannup house. Enjoyed the social life. Cliff joined golf club. Involved in the development of new golf course near townsite. Started playing bowls. Sale of block of Cundinup farm. Farm leased and finally sold in 2016. Cliff's interests in Busselton.	9.44
2	Summary Overseas holidays. Canada. Hutterite community Overseas holidays. Visited farm in Sedgewick, Canada, in 1992 when Rob there on Rural Exchange. Cattle and farming in Canada. Attended a cattle sale. Second visit to Canada; visited a Hutterite community in Stettler.	9.30
3	Summary Whale rescue June (not April!) 2005, whales beached West Busselton. Cliff describes how he was involved.	3.09
4	Summary Stock agents Mentions stock agents while farming at Kenwyn. Buildings on old home block. Street names. Knee replacements. Conclusion.	5.25
		27.48
	Total	239.33

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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

DISC ONE TRACK ONE

Clifford Edward Dawson was born in Busselton in 1943; the youngest of four children. His father was Vernon Edgar Dawson (known as Gus), and his mother Elsie Margaret (nee Burge). Cliff grew up on the family farm Kenwyn, Vasse, a property purchased by the Dawson family in about 1920 from Richard Gale's estate.

Cliff was educated at Vasse and Busselton Schools and then at Wesley College in Perth. He mentions the Vasse township as he first remembers it. He also talks about the Locke Estate that adjoined Kenwyn.

In 1964 Cliff married Margaret Thomson and they have three children. Cliff farmed with his parents at Kenwyn until his father's death in 1973 when he took over running the business. He talks about his farming enterprises, milking cows, dealing in cattle, and raising mated heifers.

Cliff was involved in community affairs in Vasse through the hall committee and the fire brigade, and served on the Busselton Shire Council for five years.

He joined the Busselton Apex Club and while there formed a singing group with other members and friends. In 1979 he had a role in the musical *On the Vasse*, produced for Western Australia's Sesquicentenary Centenary.

In 2000 Cliff sold the Vasse property to developers and that now forms part of the Vasse Newtown Development residential, commercial and industrial precincts. He then purchased land at Cundinup where his son Rob farmed for about 15 years.

Cliff and Margaret lived in Nannup for four and a half years where Cliff was involved in the establishment of the new golf course within the Nannup townsite. In 2005, Cliff and Margaret relocated to Busselton where they now live.

Cliff's interests have included fishing, golf, travelling overseas, annual caravan trips to the north west, and bowls and he is still a keen member of the Busselton Bowling Club.

The interviewer is Margaret Dawson

DISC ONE TRACK TWO

MD Cliff could you tell me full name, the year of your birth and where you were born?

DAWSON Clifford Edward Dawson and I was born in 1943.

MD Whereabouts?

DAWSON In Busselton.

MD Have you got some early childhood memories growing up on the farm as the youngest of four children?

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- DAWSON [Pause] Oh ... from when?
- MD From any age, your first memoires.
- DAWSON Yes, we used to have horses and cows, and milk cows, and all that sort of thing. And I remember Dad cutting hay and he used to have an old hay baler that you had to put the wooden slats in and poke the wire through, and then he had a buck rake which used to put all the hay in heaps, and then they'd fork it into the hay baler. Then you'd get little piles of bales of hay around, and then they'd go and pick them up with a horse and cart.
- MD Were they using a horse then for their implements?
- DAWSON To cut the hay there used to be an old horse-drawn mower, you know, a finger tine mower, and they used to cut about two acres a day with it [chuckles], and then they'd let it dry and then they'd have this ... Ah, once the hay got caught up in the, once it got full, it would just lift up and it would leave a pile of hay there. Then the old [tractor] used to be driven by a ... it was run on kerosene, I think, and sometimes they used to have a bit of trouble with the motor, getting it started and all that sort of thing. It was quite interesting times, really.
- MD Did you have any favourites, or horses you remember particularly?
- DAWSON Well we had one, or two horses actually. One was a really good horse; Dad bought him from the Tuckers at Tutunup, I think it was. He used to call him Boxer and the other one was called Prince. Boxer was a HUGE horse; he was a beautiful horse actually, very quiet. And Dad, when they put the potatoes in, they used to use a mouldboard plough. And then you'd go and plant the potatoes, and you'd cut one furrow and then you'd plant potatoes, and then the horses would go around and fill that in. Then they'd do another furrow after that, and then they'd plant the potatoes in. It was hard work I can tell you, and I remember Dad, after he'd finished all day, he'd be just about exhausted, so it was hard work.
- MD As a young boy, did you get involved and help them?
- DAWSON Yeah, I had to plant the potatoes, and we used to have a koota bag and ...
- MD Could you explain what a koota bag was?
- DAWSON A koota bag was like a hessian potato bag and you'd cut the top part out and fold it over, and then you'd cut a bit for your neck to go through, and you'd put that on, and then you'd cut a belt from the bag and it hung round the back. Then you would fill it up with

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potatoes and you'd cut potatoes and then you'd plant after the horse had been through. Then there would be one person putting fertiliser on afterwards, just throwing it in by hand. That was pretty hard work in those days.

- MD You said they were doing about ... (the horses, when they were ploughing) was about two acres a day, when you got a tractor, about how many acres a day would you do then?
- DAWSON Oh probably a bit more, but you still had to plant them by hand, and all that sort of thing, which took a bit of time, but the tractor was probably a bit quicker. Then they had the [mechanical] potato planters came in and that was pretty quick, you know, because you didn't need the labour.
- MD As we're talking about potatoes now, you used to employ some Italian potato diggers at one stage.
- DAWSON Yes, the Italian potato diggers came in and I can remember them quite [chuckles] well because they used to camp near the dairy and I used to go over to the dairy and I used to talk to them, and they used to cook this spaghetti, and whatever it was it smelt pretty good. They used to have their little keg of wine which was I suppose, I don't know, probably a couple of gallons in it. It was wooden, and they used to have it transported; it used to come on the old Railway bus, I think, and they used to go and pick it up at the store. They used to give me a taste of it, but I didn't like it much because it was sour [laughs]; tasted sour. Anyway, getting back to the horses, old Boxer, I used to ride him bareback and your legs would be spread out because he was such a big horse; he used to work all day that horse. Unfortunately, we had a thunderstorm one night and we found him dead out in the paddock. I think he was struck by lightning, so that was a bit sad. The other horse wasn't so [good]. Boxer was the lead horse, see. With the plough, planting potatoes, you had the two horses and he'd walk in the furrow so that your mouldboard plough followed behind, and he was the lead horse and the other horse was a bit smaller than Boxer.
- MD Were they behind one another, or next to one another, the horses?
- DAWSON Next to one another, yeah.
- MD Getting back to the potato diggers, do you recall any of their names?
- DAWSON Oh, there used to be an old bloke, can't think of his name now. Peter Ferraro was an Italian one I remember, and there used to be an old chap. They wouldn't camp together, one would be down near the drain under the peppermint trees with his tent, and

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the Italians were close to the dairy. They used to have a bit of a competition, I think, to see who was the best potato digger. They were both good diggers. On a good day, or in a good crop, they'd dig 80 to 100 bags a day, and they'd start at 5 o'clock and knock off about 5 o'clock.

MD Were they digging with a fork?

DAWSON With a fork, yeah.

DISC ONE TRACK THREE

MD Cliff can you tell me your father's name and where and when he was born?

DAWSON Dad was Vernon Edgar Dawson, and his nickname was Gus, and he was born on the 28 January 1903 in Newtown; at home.

MD Saying Newtown, at home, what exactly, what was the name of that property?

DAWSON Well that was the old homestead and it was called Fernbrook.

MD Can you tell me your grandfather Dawson's name and who he married?

DAWSON Dad's father was John Joseph Dawson and he married a Rebecca Jane Roberts from Capel. They were married in Bunbury and after they were married they rode their horse [horses] back to Fernbrook, and they settled there; Newtown.

MD Did your father tell you anything about your grandfather; what type of character he was?

DAWSON Oh he was a fairly [chuckles] ... always had a bit of a twinkle in his eye, and he was a bit devilish and he used to play tricks on people, and all that sort of thing, but I can't remember any of those things that he did, but he was quite a character in his own right.

MD How many children did they have?

DAWSON They had 11 children, there were six boys and five girls. The first one was Mary Eliza Dawson [born 1890 Newtown] and we always used to call her Aunty Molly. I can't remember her ... she might have come back to Western Australia, but she married a Reverend Jack Grogan, and she died in 1974. She was a nurse and went to South Australia to live. The next one was John Mervyn Thomas Dawson. He was born in 1891 at Newtown; he didn't marry and he died in 1914 from typhoid fever.

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Edward Donald Dawson, Don, was born in 1893 at Fernbrook in Newtown; he was unmarried. He went to Cairo in Egypt and died of dysentery in 1924. He went over there to the First World War and I'm sure he didn't see ... fired a shot, but he got dysentery on the ship going over and apparently the water was pretty ordinary, and that's how he caught dysentery.

The next one was Bertha Mena Lucille Dawson, Aunty Mena we used to call her. She was born at Fernbrook in 1895 at Newtown. She married Victor Wells, her first marriage, and then her second marriage was Harold Collett, and she died in 1981. Aunty Mena was a bit of a character herself, and she used to come over here and she used to be really good fun, and we saw her on a number of occasions. I remember when I was at Wesley [College] she came with Mum and Dad to see me run in the inters [interschool athletic carnival], so that was interesting.

The next one was Anthony Glen Dawson, Casey, was born in 1899 at Fernbrook, Newtown. He was unmarried, died in 1927. Ethel Maude Dawson was the next one born [1900] she was born at Fernbrook, Newtown. Married to William Clarence Donovan, and she died in 1986. Uncle Clarrie went to the First World War and, as far as I know, he was in the Charge of the Light Brigade in Beersheba, and he took his own horse over there and it was a pretty sad ending. They were both wounded at one time and they both recovered and then, when the war ended, and they weren't allowed to bring their horses home, Uncle Clarrie had to have a good mate shoot horse which was pretty sad at the time. He used to go gold prospecting at Ennuin Station, which is north of Southern Cross, and he apparently did fairly well out of his gold prospecting, but I didn't have a lot to do with Uncle Clarrie but, apparently, he was an interesting sort of a guy.

Vernon Edgar Dawson, Gus as he was known, was born 28 January 1903 in Newtown and died 1973 in Perth.

Owen Wilfred Dawson was born 25 June 1905 in Newtown and married Betty McCann, his first wife, and then his second wife was Evelyn Otter. He died in 1969. He lived on the corner, or [now] part of the Cambridge Estate at Abbey and owned land along the beach, now Abbey Beach, and had a shop on the corner there which used to be Dawson's corner there at one stage.

Kenneth Charles Dawson was the next one and he was born 31 October 1907. He married Doris Burge, sister of Margaret Dawson, my mother, and died in 1989.

Olga Jean Dawson was born 17 January 1910 at Newtown, married Thomas Fitzgerald and died in 1999. She was the youngest of them.

DISC ONE TRACK FOUR

MD Do you know where your father attended school?

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- DAWSON Dad attended the Newtown School, I just can't remember, I think it was about 1909 and that's where he did most of his education there, or I think it was his only education at school.
- MD Did he tell you anything about any episodes that happened at school?
- DAWSON Ohh. Some of the teachers I don't think he was all that impressed with, but no, he didn't actually say a lot about it, no.
- MD That school previously was named Westbrook and Newtown, so as well as your father and his brothers and sisters, your grandfather and his siblings also attended that school. That building where your father attended school, is that still standing today?
- DAWSON Yes it is. They've done a great job on it, actually, it's still in a pretty good state and still stands there out the front of the existing buildings.
- MD Did your father tell you anything about his early life growing up, or things they did?
- DAWSON I think, you know, they had a pretty interesting life. I think everything's relevant at the time and they used to do their fishing, and they used to play their cricket and their tennis, and all that sort of thing so ... The thing in those days everyone was the same ... no one had much money or anything like that, so they were all in the same boat. And there used to be more communication between neighbours, so everyone knew one another.
- MD The Dawsons have all been keen fishermen, haven't they?
- DAWSON Oh yes, I think we've carried on the tradition.
- MD Your great-grandfather, John Dawson, arrived in Western Australia in February 1830 which was very soon after the State was settled in 1829, what do you know about his background?
- DAWSON He landed at Augusta ... he came out on the ship the *Egyptian* to Fremantle, and they had a State ship called the *Emily Taylor*, which was a 70-ft schooner, I think you'd call it. And they landed at Augusta in 1830 and I think there were 60-odd people landed there, and you can imagine what it would have been like in those days. I guess they knew there was water there, but there was all bush, and no roads or anything, so all they had were tents and it would have been a pretty hard life I would imagine.
- MD There was an Elijah Dawson also there, but as far as we know, we haven't been able to establish any relationship.

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- DAWSON No, well we've tried to find the background of John Dawson, and there were two other Dawsons came down on the same ship: Elijah Dawson and a Richard Dawson. But we don't know ... we've looked into the background of John Dawson and we can't find anything. Well we've tried to source information from England, and all that, but it leads to a dead end, virtually.
- MD When he went to Augusta on the *Emily Taylor*, this is the ship that the Molloy's and the Bussells and the Chapmans were on?
- DAWSON Mmm, that's right.
- MD Do you know anything else about his background?
- DAWSON He was at Wonnerup House when George Layman was speared and carried him inside, from the information we've got. He helped build St Mary's Church, and I think he was a carpenter by trade, and I think he actually just worked around some of the farms, helping farmers and did farm work, and things like that. We don't know really a lot about him, but he has been written up in a few history books. He married a Mary Dooley who came out from Ireland during the Potato Famine and she was an orphan and we know a fair bit about her. My wife and I went back to Ireland to see where she was born at Castleblakeney [from nearby Clonbrock, Caltra, Ballinasloe, County Galway]. We didn't find a lot about her there, but it was interesting to go over there and see where she lived, and how they lived; it was quite interesting. Oh, we went to the hotel, my wife had to give a speech about Mary Dooley, how she arrived in Australia and all that sort of thing, and that went over quite well. Instead of having it in a hall they had it at a hotel, or pub as they call it over there. I had a few Guinness' which was quite good [chuckles]. It was a very interesting trip but getting there was a bit hard, but it was worthwhile. We've established that a lot of her relations went to America. Further on, John purchased land at Newtown which was called Newbury and it is now owned by Mary Craigie.
- MD Could you tell me your great-grandparents' (John and Mary Dawson's) children's names?
- DAWSON The first one was Mary Jane Dawson. She was born in Newtown in 1854 and married William Glindon Curtis. The next one was Catherine Dawson born [1857] in Newtown married John Brennan. Elizabeth Magdalene Dawson was the next one and she was married [born] 1859 and married Thomas Higgins. The next one is John Joseph Dawson; I've mentioned John before. The next one was Susan Dawson born 1886 [1866] at Newbury, Newtown and she married a James Rodgers. Rose Ann Dawson was born in 1888 [1868] at Newtown, married Frederick Seymour. And the other one was Edward, Ned, Dawson born at Newtown in 1870; married Bell Cross

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- MD You had a bit of contact with Uncle Ned.
- DAWSON Uncle Ned was a nice old bloke. He'd still ride his horse when he was 86 and I used to go and borrow his horse and ride it just to give it a bit of exercise. It was a bit of a hard horse to ride because it had a (what do you call it?) ... a hard mouth, and once he headed for home he was hard to stop [laughs]. Yeah, I had plenty of narrow scrapes with that horse, he was a nice old horse, but he was a bit hard to ride [chuckles].
Uncle Ned had a farm at Newtown, I think it was, or could have been part of Newbury, or he would have been neighbour to Newbury anyway. I think he used to milk cows and those sorts of things, grow a few vegetables, and may have had pigs as well.
- MD His brother in law, Fred Seymour, and Bill Curtis, his nephew, discovered the caves at Yallingup.
- DAWSON Yes that's right. The rumour goes that they were chasing brumbies through there and they came across this cave and there's a bit of conjecture about who actually found the caves. But he was the guide at the caves for a long time there, and knew all about Caves House, and all that sort of thing. Uncle Ned also got a bravery award for trying to rescue three men that got washed off Torpedo Rocks. I think one of the men was an Armstrong, and a Conduit, and someone else, I can't remember the third one [Gillow]. But it was a dangerous ... I think a wave came up and washed them off the rocks and I think they threw a life buoy in or something, I can't remember exactly what it was but there is a plaque at Torpedo Rocks telling you about the rescue and it's quite interesting. Actually, I think that was in 1927 [November 2].

DISC ONE TRACK FIVE

- MD What was your mother's name, and her maiden name, and a little bit about her background?
- DAWSON Mum's name was Elsie Margaret and her surname [maiden] was Burge, and she came out in ... I think it was ... she was 11 when she came out from England. She came out about the 1920s, I suppose, after the First World War. She came by ship, one of the 'ten-pound Poms' that came out here on a Soldier Settlement farm at Ambergate, Group Settlement was it, not Soldier Settlement? Mum's Dad was used to farming in England and he knew a bit about farming. They milked cows and did a lot of clearing the hard way, ring-barking trees.
- MD We won't go into a lot of detail about your mother because all of that is in her interview which she's previously done for the Busselton Oral History Group. Did you have much contact with your aunties and uncles?

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- DAWSON We did in those days, especially Uncle Ken and Aunty Doris 'cause they only lived probably three 'ks' away, three kilometres away. Christmas time I remember we used to all get together and that used to be quite good fun.
- MD Tell me about riding your horse over to [see] Graham with your Christmas present.
- DAWSON Oh yes. I got a cowboy suit for Christmas and I had a gun and a holster and so I decided to ride over to see Graham; I was only about 10 at the time, may have been 11. So I rode over there on my horse and my six gun strapped to the ... [chuckles], and with a lasso down the side, or on the saddle. Anyway, I can't remember the response I go when I got over there but I think there might have been a few laughs [laughs].
- MD What was the age difference between you and Graham?
- DAWSON Graham would have been two or three years older than me.
- MD Gampy, or your mother's father, he lived with you for short periods of time once his wife was deceased didn't he?
- DAWSON He used to do the rounds of the family. He used to stay over at Uncle Ken's and his other daughters. He didn't stay with his sons I don't think, I can't remember if he did or not. I don't think he did stay with his sons. Yes, he used to come and stay about three months and upset everyone [laughs].
- MD How did your parents meet?
- DAWSON Umm, I'm not quite sure actually. I think it might have been at a dance. They used to have quite a few dances in the old days, especially the Vasse Hall and, I think, the Ambergate Hall, and some of the other halls around the place. I think most of them had cars in those days. In the older days I remember Dad telling me a story ... because the men used to go outside and have a few drinks and there used to be a sort of a railing at this particular hall, so they got one of the carts and poked it through the railing and then put the horse on the other side [chuckling]. And the chap, a bit inebriated and I think he went to go and couldn't go anywhere 'cause the cart was stuck in the fence. Anyway, that's one of the stories I heard, I don't know how true it was.
- MD Where were your parents married?
- DAWSON They were married in the Congregational Church in Busselton, and the reception they had out at the Ambergate Hall and that wasn't far from where Mum, where the [Burge] farm was.
- MD And after they were married, where did they go to live?

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- DAWSON I think Dad's father bought a farm at Vasse, it was 277 acres [about 112 hectares], it was uncleared at the time (or it might have been partially cleared) and that's the farm I was brought up on. Over the years we gradually bought more property, we ended up with 700 acres there.
- MD What's the location of that property where your parents went to live?
- DAWSON It was Location five, Lot 159.
- MD Now that was part of Richard Gale's, originally Captain Molloy's property, and your mother and father were still paying that money off to Gale's widow at the time they were married and, as it was the Depression, it must have been a very hard time for them.
- DAWSON It was pretty hard and I know they used to have a few Jersey cows and Mum used to have to go out to the dairy and milk; they had no roof or anything like that. Later on they got someone to come and work for them who was Harry Wells, he was an old chap, he came out from England and he was very good with horses and he worked for Dad for quite a number of years. Well Mum and Dad they bought an old Group house and that was transported and it was added on over the years and they built Harry Wells what we called the humpy.
- MD They actually built the humpy for Harry?
- DAWSON Yeah. It was just out of face cuts of timber, and it had a fireplace in it. It was comfortable, and it had a wooden floor, and that's where he used to live.
- MD Did your mother have any help at that time?
- DAWSON Well Harry Wells had a daughter called Dot and she used to help Mum with the kids, she used to look after the kids while Mum went out and milked, hand-milked; milked by hand. I don't know how they would have got on when it was raining but, it was pretty hard in those days.
- MD Your Mum was a bit devilish, wasn't she, because she used to play a few tricks?
- DAWSON Oh yes; she used dress up. Well she used to go out to milk the cows in long pants and a funny old hat and she used to play tricks on Dot a fair bit, but there was quite a funny story there but I can't actually relate it at the moment, but I know it scared Dot a fair bit.

DISC ONE TRACK SIX

- MD What did they name the property?
- DAWSON Well they named the property Kenwyn, and we believe it came from the name of a place called Kenwyn in Cornwall [Roberts family had land there], but there is a bit of a story. Because they had to clear it, and it was hard work and they battled a fair bit, they thought, 'We CAN win, we CAN win,' and that's how the name originated from, we think.
- MD I just want to go back to your grandparents' children. The three eldest boys died and the three eldest [older] girls all became nurses and went to South Australia. So six of the children weren't here, or moved out of the State, and your father actually became the eldest boy in the family.
- DAWSON Yeah that's right! Dad was a fairly successful farmer, he worked hard, and he had a good way with cattle, and he used to go to sales and buy cattle and then sell them again. He had a coast run at Yallingup, he had a horse, the horse's name was Red Eye and he used to be one of the horses that would go all day because he ambled. Dad used to ride him, well he'd get up early in the morning and ride down to Yallingup and bring cattle back
- MD Do you know where the lease was at Yallingup?
- DAWSON The lease was behind the Caves.
- MD Did you ever go there?
- DAWSON No, no. I was too young to go, it's only what I've been told; Vern might have.
- MD Those cattle, why did they take them to the coast?
- DAWSON Well they used to take them down ... there used to be good roughage. Sometimes they'd come back and they'd got on to the zamia palm and they used to come home with rickets and things like that and that would take a long time because they used to hobble home, some of them probably didn't make it. But Dad used to take them down because they'd been on rough tucker, he'd bring them home and fatten them up and then they'd fatten up quickly during the springtime, and then he'd sell them.
- MD So he had a good eye for cattle?
- DAWSON Yes, he did, yeah.
- MD We'll go back to the house, what were some of the improvements you can remember your Mum and Dad making to the original Group house?

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DAWSON Well, the original Group house was a typical Group house. It had a front veranda on it and the odd window around the back, and then Dad built a wash house which wasn't added on to the house, but you had to go out [to it]. It had a copper and cement troughs and having the copper there you'd boil up the clothes 'cause the work clothes were pretty dirty. And then they had a long clothesline with two wires and you'd tip one end up so you could put the clothes on and lift it up, and so they used to make do with a lot of things. They had outdoor toilet, you know, the old tin toilet.

MD So gradually added a veranda, right round the house?

DAWSON Yes. They built an office on one side, and a sleepout on the other side, and the veranda went right round, nearly right round the whole house which was good. But it was still an old house that had been added on to and it deteriorated over the years and that's why we ended up having to build a new house.

MD What was the soil type and the original vegetation on that property?

DAWSON It would have been jarrah and red gum, mainly, and the soil was a sort of a sandy soil, it was a good loam sand, but fair bit of sandy soil. And the lower part, which was part of the Locke Estate, was like a clay, it went very soft in winter and hard in summer. So you couldn't ... it was just, more or less, grazing land there but Dad grew potatoes on some of the best parts of the soils that we had there.

MD Were they good crops?

DAWSON Well it was a bit touch and go because we used to plant in August, and it depended on how much rain we got. We never had irrigation, well we did eventually get irrigation but the water quality wasn't all that good, it was ... I forgotten how many grains of salt it had in it, but it was touch and go as to whether it was good for potatoes. I remember one year, without irrigation, they grew about 17 ton to the acre so that was pretty outstanding really.

MD Do you know how much of the land was cleared when your Mum and Dad first went there?

DAWSON No I don't. I think a lot of it was sort of ringbarked and with the potatoes I know they had to dig out all of the stumps and then when they ploughed it I remember Dad used to growl a fair bit when he hit a stump with the mouldboard plough and poor old horse would be pulled up very quickly [chuckles].

MD Do you remember when you got electricity to your house?

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DAWSON Yes I do, in 1956. Before we just had [lamps], the main lamp was a lantern with the Tilley lamp, the other lamps were just kerosene lamps with the wick in them and the glass you used to put in. But getting the electricity on just made life much easier. I remember when we got our first fridge, I can't remember what it was now but it was a kerosene fridge and it used to smoke and, oh, it was terrible. And then when we got the power on, they bought a fridge off Joe Tomcala, he had one for sale, that was a Kelvinator or something like that but made a big difference and it didn't smoke.

MD Did you make ice cream?

DAWSON Actually we did. Because we used to have Peters ice cream in little buckets and I remember when Mum made it and it wasn't the same. I didn't like it all that much [laughs] because they had gelatine, gelatine they used to make it, oh, it used to be awful [chuckles].

MD What about a telephone, do you remember getting that?

DAWSON Yes, I do. They had to bring the line ... I remember Dad had to buy the poles and they put the line on and they brought it from the Vasse Yallingup Road, it was a fair way to bring it across actually. I just can't remember ... I remember Dad sometimes going crook at Mum because she was on the telephone for too long [laughs].

MD To Aunty Doris?

DAWSON Yeah [laughs].

MD Where was the exchange?

DAWSON I think the Vasse Store, because Vern, my brother, used to go down there and he ... we used to be, I can't remember what they call it, everyone was on the same line: party line. So Vern knew what was going on around the district [laughs].

DISC ONE TRACK SEVEN

MD How many brothers and sisters do you have? Could you name them and tell me their dates of birth?

DAWSON I have one brother and two sisters. Vern is the oldest he was born in 1932, Fay was born in 1934, and Glen was born in 1939.

MD Could you tell me what their occupations were before they married?

DAWSON Well Dad already had a farm about five kilometres from Vasse on the Boallia Road, he had 400 acres there and Dad bought it for him from people called Barretts, and it was partially cleared and

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had a lot of ironstone on it, I remember. I remember Dad used to take the spring cart out there with the horse and used to have super on the spring cart and he had a horse-drawn super spreader with iron wheels. And he used to go over the ironstone and oh, gosh, you just about got thrown off sometimes [chuckles].

- MD Before Vern moved there when he was married, was he working at home on the farm with your father?
- DAWSON Yeah and, when he got married, he went over there to live, built a house there and milked cows and grew potatoes as well.
- MD Who did he marry?
- DAWSON He married Yvonne Pickering.
- MD Vern was very keen on his music. Can you tell me a little bit about that?
- DAWSON Uncle Henry, Mum's brother, had a saxophone, anyway he lent the saxophone to Vernon and Vernon taught himself how to play it. Anyway, he ended up playing in a band called the Rhythm Stars and they used to play every Saturday night in the Agricultural Hall in Busselton.
- MD Didn't he play in another band before that with Doug Feutrill and others?
- DAWSON Billie Carter [also Fred Chapman], yeah. I think it was called the Melody Aces then. Vern had a good singing voice, and he used to sing as well, and that really helped him develop the farm, because things were pretty tough those days and he had to build a house, and had to buy a tractor. So that, I suppose, put the food on the table for him so he could spend money on other things from his cows and potatoes. Yeah, so that's how Vernon got started, but it was pretty hard work because it used to be late at night, and then he'd have to get up in the morning and milk cows and do all that sort of thing. I think sometimes it put Yvonne off, because he was never home, you know, so it was pretty tough really.
- MD I believe when he was learning the saxophone he had to go in the humpy to practise?
- DAWSON Yes. Well at home Mum wouldn't let him practise in the room because there were all these noises coming out of the room so he had to go over to the humpy and practise [chuckles].
- MD Your mother was from quite a musical family and you all sang and they had a little group that used to sing at functions.

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- DAWSON Yes, Mum and Vernon and Fay used to sing at different places like the bowling clubs. And I was in a group, in two groups, we were called the Soakers because we used to sing a lot of the Seekers songs, so we called ourselves the Soakers because we used to have a bit of drink at practices and things. Then we had another group [Harmony Road], because we always found it hard to keep a guitarist they were always a bit hard, you know, because they were the only ones that told us what we could do or couldn't do [chuckles].
- MD When you first started, you were in Apex, can you remember the first people that were in the group?
- DAWSON Yes, there was Vern my brother, Bob Mooney, Alan Hart and a chap called Basil Gilson (who was our lead singer) and myself and we used to sing at the Apex shows and, yeah, it used to be good fun really.
- MD So the guitarist's names were ...?
- DAWSON Alec Smith, Jim McKechnie and Rob Cherry.
- MD You went down to Augusta and performed at a few ...
- DAWSON Well we did, a couple of times. We just went down there, we weren't paid anything but this person asked us to go down there, they owned the hotel, and they used to put us up, we used to take our wives and they used to put us up for the night. Yeah, it was good fun.
- MD Getting back to your brothers and sisters, the next one was Fay, what was her occupation before marriage?
- DAWSON Fay worked as a telephonist in Busselton before she married Dave ... Hannay. Glen married Peter Knight and she was a schoolteacher and she taught at Dwellingup and that's when they had the big fire there [1961].
- MD She lost some of her possessions in that I believe.
- DAWSON Yes she did, yes.
- MD Where did Fay go to live when she got married?
- DAWSON She went out to Jindong. Dave Hannay had a nice farm out there and they had about 400 acres and they milked cows for a certain time and then Dave grew potatoes, 'cause it was really good potato soil. Then, as Dave got older and retired, he had baby beef and yeah, they did well out there.
- MD Now Glen went to Canada.

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DAWSON Yes, she went to Canada and she married Peter Knight. He was an engineer, constructional engineer, and he went over there to learn how they did things over there and they got married over there. And Mum ... (Dad didn't go) but Mum and Aunty Mena went there and went to the wedding. Then they came back to Australia and Peter got a job at the brickworks for a while, and then he went to work for Clough Engineering and then he became the CEO of Clough Engineering and he did very well. They now live at Dunsborough.

DISC ONE TRACK EIGHT

MD Although Vern was 11 and a half years older than you, when you were young did you still do things with him, like kangaroo shooting, duck shooting?

DAWSON Oh yes, we used to go duck shooting. I remember Vern built a canoe, out of ... I think he bought a sheet of flat iron and he made this canoe and it used to leak a bit, I know that much. He put a sail on it, and he took it across to the Broadwater and sailed across the Broadwater.

MD What behind Mary Craigie's place?

DAWSON Yeah [chuckles], and that was in wintertime. I don't know how deep it was because we never had any life jackets or anything like that. Anyway, he put a rudder on the back of it so you could steer it. Oh, we had a couple of short paddles and then we chased a few swans over there and did things like that [chuckles]. Just as well Mary didn't know or she might have been a bit cross.

MD When you and Vern took the canoe down to the Broadwater how did you get it there?

DAWSON Oh, Vern had an old three-ton Austin truck and we put it on the back of that, and we went past the railway siding and down the railway line down to the old bridge, down probably a kilometre and a half from the railway siding, and we launched it in the creek there, and paddled out, and then we put the sail up. But it was a bit scary because there were a few waves on the Broadwater; it's a big expanse of water. We sailed across and then we had to paddle back because we couldn't sail back because of the wind [chuckles].

MD You didn't try and catch anything you just were trying out the boat, were you?

DAWSON Yeah, yeah, we just went over there and it was quite exciting!

MD So you did go duck shooting down the back in the Locke Estate?

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DAWSON Yes we did, yeah, at a place called Dwalganup it was. Dad had an old single shot Stevens shotgun, it never had any trigger guard on it and it was a bit dangerous, really, and it used to kick like a mule every time you had a shot out of it. And I remember going over there one night and I got six ducks in one shot [chuckles] which I was pretty pleased about.

MD Did you eat them?

DAWSON I didn't like them much because they were a bit ... I don't know, What's the word?

MD Gamey?

DAWSON Gamey, yeah. Dad used to like them 'cause in the old days just before Christmas, they used to have a big duck hunt along the swamps. Because in the old days, I think, a lot of the people were brought up on them and all these sorts of things. Anyway, I never liked rabbit, or 'roo, because of the gaminess of it. I remember going over to the swamp but the mosquitos were that bad they'd just about eat you alive so you didn't stay there that long [laughs].

MD Snakes?

DAWSON Oh yes tiger snakes they were bad yeah.

MD With the duck shooting at that time, and eventually it got banned, but was there a season when you were young?

DAWSON Yeah, there was a season it used to last about six weeks I think. Yes, the poor old ducks used to get a bit of a hiding, it was a sport for some people. I never used to like it much.

MD There were a lot of swans down there in the Locke Estate, weren't there, and they nested?

DAWSON Yeah, well when they put the drainage system in they over drained it and the poor old swans ... well actually what happened was when they drained it, they let the salt water in from the sea and it covered a lot of the swamp and, of course, they lost the food source, you know. Anyway, they did correct it after, they did put lock gates there to stop the sea water coming in, but it still came in and it just didn't work. Because they used to grow potatoes in the swamp there.

MD Who did?

DAWSON The Locke brothers used to, I think, because you could still see the old fence; some of the old fence posts still there. They put these little lock gates in so the water just used to drain out and a lot of the swans had young ones and they couldn't ... the foxes

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used to get them, I think, because they didn't grow old enough to learn to fly. So I went down there [chuckles], I got in (it was a like a big long tunnel thing), they were cement pipes with a thing on the end so when the water went down in the drain the water would all run out. So what I did, I built it halfway up so the water stayed at a certain level for a long time so the swans could ...

MD And it improved it?

DAWSON I think it did, yeah.

MD Talking about the Locke Estate, were there any wildflowers on the Locke Estate?

DAWSON There used to be a lot of wildflowers; donkey orchids, spider orchids and things like that, enamel orchids, cowslips.

MD Murray Armstrong gradually got a lease of that at one stage, didn't he?

DAWSON Yes he did. Well actually Kealys did, originally, because they had property down one end and then Murray got the lease of it because he bought the land off Kealys and he had sheep in there, which got rid of all the wildflowers. Then Jim Bell had it for a while, had cattle in there but it's now full of arum lilies.

MD Which you eradicated on our place.

DAWSON Well on our place, our property I did, but in the Locke Estate they just went mad; spread all over it.

MD One year you and Murray had a fire in the Locke Estate that got away, didn't you?

DAWSON [Chuckles] Well twice, I think, it got away. What happened was it got into a paperbark tree and it flared up and the wind changed and it just went right through and it was like an atom bomb had gone off, 'cause it hadn't been burnt for years.

MD As far as Caves Road?

DAWSON Well it could only go so far because of the swamp, it could only burn to the swamp but I think at one place it did. At that particular time, I think, when Jim Bell had it, and a willy-willy went through it and it just jumped over the road and into the 'holy mile' and there were people going to sue everyone and, ah, it was ... anyway it all died down after a while [laughs]. Yes, it was a bit frightening at one stage.

DISC ONE TRACK NINE

- MD You've just mentioned some of the things that you did to keep yourself amused on the farm, what about other things you did?
- DAWSON Darts, we used to play darts at lunchtime and Mum used to play, Mum was a pretty good dart player and Dad was pretty good too and Vern, I was alright, yeah. And Dad was always keen on bowls and he built a bowling green out the front of the house and we used to play bowls every now and again, so that was good fun.
- MD Your parents had some parties out there on the front lawn.
- DAWSON They did, a couple of parties I remember. Yeah, we had some good times out on the old farm.
- MD Now your father and you would go fishing, but he never owned a boat, did he?
- DAWSON No Dad didn't like boats, he reckoned we were mad going out in a boat, but he was always there when we used to catch some of the what we call the 'rubbish' fish, and he liked rock cod and all that sort of stuff because Dad would eat just about anything. Which you know ...
- MD Hard times when he was young!
- DAWSON Yeah, that's right. And we used to catch herring, we used to go down to Yallingup in school holidays, in May, 'cause I was only, I don't know, about 13, I suppose, maybe 14 the last time we went down there. We used to go and play up in the sandhills and have a great time, and we used to go fishing at Torpedo Rocks. Dad used to have these flick rods, it was like a big long bamboo rod with about, probably, about three metres of line on the end of it, and we would just have a hook on the line. Dad would set the line for a gummy shark, or a carpet shark, down in the pool at Yallingup which is a big no-no now; you're not allowed to fish in there.
- MD Is that the one they call Ned's Pool after Uncle Ned?
- DAWSON No no no. No, Dawson's Siding was named after [him]; that was at one end of it where the carpark is there. We used to go down and fish and get these black yalyarks they used to call them, little black fish, they were like a bream type of thing we used to catch them on a line, and we used to throw them back. At night, the men used to go out to what we called Octopus Rock and The Lake, and then there was another place called Bathoes Pool which was at the end of the reef. I remember one night (this was long after we'd been going for the May holidays down there) Dad

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and I went down there we used to stand out in the water (some nights it would be up to your waist because the waves would be coming over the reef) and I was on Octopus Rock and Dad went to The Lake. Dad always used to take a bottle of Muscat with him, because it used to get that darn cold. And we'd sit out there with a like a koota bag around our neck (like we used for potatoes) and we'd have a bucket of burley, and there use to be a pipe and we used to hang the bucket on a pipe. We'd burley up with pollard, and potato, and whatever, and I caught 18 skippy one night, about two pound each, and trying to lift them out of the water with these flick rods. It was quite good fishing really.

- MD How did you manage with that many in your koota bag?
- DAWSON Well, I had to go and empty it because it was too heavy, you see, then I'd walk back out again. And Dad came around and he hadn't got ANY at The Lake, I caught them all [chuckles]. We had to go home and clean all these fish, but that was good fun.
- MD When you say you played in the sandhills I believe you saw this big bale of rubber there at one stage.
- DAWSON Yes, I don't know how it got here, must have been big seas or something.
- MD Off a ship?
- DAWSON Yeah, it could have been off a ship.
- MD When you went down these are the May school holidays you went to Yallingup? The time of the year you went was May?
- DAWSON May yeah.
- MD How old do you think you probably were when you started going down there?
- DAWSON Oh, well, I probably would have been seven or eight I suppose, might have been even younger.
- MD Where did you stay?
- DAWSON Well Hammond's cottages they were called, and there used to be a family down there [that] had about a dozen or 14 cottages. Then they had a shop down by the beach and that's where the shops are now. When we were there it hadn't been subdivided, or anything, it was just the cottages and the same people used to go every year: the Readings, the Cowdens, the Hoads, and a couple of other people, it doesn't matter there used to other people there, anyway. At the end of the holidays (used to be school holidays), of course Dad and Vern couldn't be there all the time 'cause the cows were calving at that time, and Dad would

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come down one week and Vernon would come down the next. At the end of the school holidays we'd have a big concert. Mum and the ladies would all get together and cook up all this fish, herring and salmon, and all that sort of thing, and we'd have a big feast. Some of the people would get up and sing a song and I think Vern used to play his saxophone, and I think I had to get up and do something. I can't remember what it was. Yeah, it was good fun, everyone joined in and you met a lot of people.

MD You've got a lot of fond memories of Yallingup, haven't you?

DAWSON Yeah, I have actually.

MD Talking of the flick rods you also taught our children to use the flick rods.

DAWSON Yes, I took them down to what they call the Soda Pot at Torpedo Rocks, it's a pretty safe place, and we burleyed up and the kids caught all these herring and the kids really enjoyed it they had a good time, didn't they?

DISC ONE TRACK TEN

MD What's the first car you can remember your father owning?

DAWSON Dad had an old Morris. I remember it was green with black mudguards, and there was a thing on the back to put the pram on, I remember that. It was quite a quaint old car, actually, I can remember. And then I remember Dad going to Perth and he traded that in on a Vauxhall, a blue Vauxhall, and that wasn't much of a car because it broke down a few times [chuckles]. Anyway, he ended up getting rid of that and he bought an Austin A30, I remember going down to Yallingup in it. Vernon used to drive that around because he didn't have a car and then Vern bought a Morris Minor then. I remember going down the hill, Vernon got it up to 65 kms per hour going down the hill.

MD Kilometres or miles?

DAWSON No, miles per hour, going downhill, which was quite exhilarating [laughs], and that was a good little car, and then he bought a FJ Holden after that. That was white with red seats, gee, that was a good car.

MD Was that your father?

DAWSON Yeah yeah, he was very proud of that car, Dad.

MD Your father was elected to represent the local Ward on the Busselton Roads Board, what was the name of that Ward and how many years was he on the Shire [Road Board]?

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- DAWSON That was the Central Rural Ward. Dad would have been on it probably, I don't know, seven years probably.
- MD Can you remember getting your first tractor?
- DAWSON Yes I do. That was a bit of a sad time because we had no uses for the horses, you know (the draught horses) because they just ended up their days in the paddock. It was an old grey Ferguson we got.
- MD Brand new?
- DAWSON Yeah brand new. That was quite exciting and we had that for years and years and it was a good little tractor. It was a petrol tractor it wasn't diesel like they have now and we used it for potato planting. And Vernon, because he was just getting started on the farm where he was, he used to borrow it. And Dave, my brother-in-law Dave Hannay, he had an International, and that was about the same horsepower and that was a diesel, yeah but I didn't like that much. The Fergie was better [chuckles].
- MD We talked about hay making early now later on when you were married you had a bit of ... you shared ...
- DAWSON We had a syndicate.
- MD With Vernon and Dave?
- DAWSON Yes with Vern and Dave, that was just for the baler but it was Ken Babb and Vernon and Dave, and Dad and myself. But it was too big because you'd have your ... you know ... cut your hay and then you'd get a bit of rain and everyone wanted the baler at the same time because you had to wait until it dried. It didn't work out anyway, so Dad and I thought, 'Well we'll pull out, and it will make it easier on the other three if they have the syndicate.' We ended up buying a 165 [Massey Ferguson] with a bucket on it like ...
- MD This is a tractor?
- DAWSON Tractor, a hay baler, a hay rake, and a rotary hoe and for the whole lot we paid \$4 600 for it and that was in 1970, I think it was, or '69. Anyway, that's what we paid for it. So you wouldn't get that today [laughs].
- MD Made life easier, though, with a tractor.
- DAWSON Oh it did yeah, and we could cut our hay, and do our own thing, and we weren't reliant on anyone then.

DISC TWO TRACK ONE

MD You attended Vasse School for your primary education. How did you get to school?

DAWSON Oh, we used to walk mainly and sometimes we used to ride the horse because we weren't that far away from the school. Use to leave the horse there tied up behind the toilets there, and sometimes we used to give the kids a ride at school. The teachers didn't seem to mind [chuckles].

MD Bareback?

DAWSON No, I had a saddle, no I had a saddle. Well I used to walk, well some mornings because we never had shoes or anything in those days we used to walk across the paddock and it used to be a frosty morning and your toes would be all red and [chuckles] you'd try to find a dry spot to stand on and rest your feet. Stamp your feet up and down.

MD Fresh cow pad?

DAWSON Oh yeah? [chuckles]

MD To warm your feet [chuckles]?

DAWSON Yeah that's right, I wasn't going to mention that I thought I wouldn't put that in.

MD Who do you remember as your teachers at the school?

DAWSON Well the first one was ... because certain times of the year, or that particular year, there were too many kids enrolled so I remember going to the Vasse Hall, they had a classroom in the Vasse Hall; in the old part of the Hall.

MD The original section?

DAWSON Yes and May Mardon was the teacher and that is how we all ...

MD How long were you in that? One year?

DAWSON Maybe two years, I can't remember now.

MD At that stage how many buildings were on the school site?

DAWSON Just the one, and the schoolhouse of course (the teacher's house) and they had a school shed where you had your lunch and all that sort of thing. The toilets were right at the back, they were like old ...

MD Wooden?

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- DAWSON No they were corrugated iron, you had around the sides, but they were just the old pan type toilets nothing special.
- MD Who was the principal, the headmaster then?
- DAWSON [Pause] ... Who was the headmaster? ... [Pause] Mr Bonham, we had Mr Bonham, he was a nice chap. Mr Hoad, I don't know whether he was still there when I was there. He used to go down to Yallingup, he had, I think, five girls and a boy. He taught Vernon and Fay, I know that much, and probably Glen. Who else did we have? Oh, there were quite a few teachers. We had Mr Jennings.
- MD This is the Rodger Jennings that wrote "...outstation on The Vasse" and ...?
- DAWSON Yeah, that's right. He was very interested in history and he used to take us to different historical places like Cattle Chosen and the Old Mill and, oh, what was the other place? It might have been Fairlawn, yeah. He was very interested in history and that's probably why he wrote the book. "...outstation on The Vasse", wasn't it?
- MD Yes and *Busselton 'A Place to Remember'*. He also took you down to the beach for swimming lessons.
- DAWSON He did and he was a fair headed, he was a redhead and I think we used to call him Roaring Redhead at times, he used to get a bit cross with us at times. But he was a good teacher. I was there, and then I went to Busselton Primary School for about a year and two terms.
- MD That was the high school section of the primary school was it? [Busselton Senior High School opened 1958].
- DAWSON Yes. And then I think Mum wanted me to ... I don't know she might have thought I was getting a bit bushy or something, so she thought, 'We'll send him off to boarding school.' [Chuckles]. And I went to Wesley [College] for a year and a term. I wasn't much of a scholar really, I was pretty dumb [laughs]. Anyway, I enjoyed the sports there and I was in the rowing team, not in the first eight, in the second eight and we didn't do very well because we had a virus go through the school and half the team couldn't row so we had fill in people. I think we came fifth out of six, but it was a good experience. And then played football in the first 18, there were only about three in third year that played in the first 18, and I did pretty well there. And then I got in the inters athletic team, the first year, and we won the relay race in our age race by about 50 yards [chuckles] because we had a couple of good ... Murray Schultz was a very good runner. I thought I was reasonably good

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until I got up there and there's always someone better than you, you know [laughs].

MD How did you enjoy the boarding part of the school?

DAWSON Oh I didn't like the school much it was too disciplined, too much discipline, and the headmaster wasn't the easiest chap to get on with and he used to upset quite a few people I think [chuckles].

MD A lot of caning?

DAWSON Well it wasn't so much a caning it was a belt, he used to use a belt and I never experienced that but I was gated for a while, a couple of times. Well it really wasn't my fault. I got back in time from ... Uncle Bob and Aunty Kath took me out with Ted Wright to Fremantle, just for a drive. We got back in time and we had to report in, and I reported in. Anyway, I had to go to the toilet and the last of the smaller school were just going in to have our tea, and I just came in behind them, 'cause the headmaster was there. He said, 'You're late!' I explained I had to go to the toilet. He said, 'I don't care, you're late, you're gated. You won't get any special permission to go out again for the rest of the year.

MD Very tough!

DAWSON It was, and I was there on time. Anyway, that's another story but I was never late again [laughs].

MD Who were your friends at Wesley?

DAWSON I got on well with John Scott and Graham Bennett, and we sort of hung around together a fair bit. Mum wanted me to go to dancing classes, that's the worst thing I've ever had to do. Anyway, they used to have a big pool place where you could go and play pool in Perth.

MD Not at the school?

DAWSON No, no. So we used to go in there instead of going to dancing classes and things like that, so it was a bit of a waste of money Mum having me go there [laughs].

MD Now John Scott, your friend, he unfortunately got very sick, didn't he?

DAWSON Yes, he had like an arthritic thing, spondylosis I think and it affected him as far as getting about, he couldn't walk properly, and he got worse as he got older. It's like your bones go all brittle. Yes, it's an awful thing to have. Anyway, John went to the doctor one day, fell over, hit his skull and he died, so that was pretty sad.

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- MD He had a lot of go in him didn't he?
- DAWSON Yeah, he did. He was an accountant, a qualified accountant and he never let anything stop him. He went over to England on a trip and rolled his car over, over there but he was a good bloke, he was a really good bloke.
- MD How often did you come home when you were at Wesley?
- DAWSON We used to have boarders' weekends but we didn't always come home because it was only two days and then you had to go back by train and come back by train. Sometimes I used to just stay at the school because it wasn't worthwhile going home for that long. But, no, it was an interesting ... I enjoyed the sport there but you know, it was a bit like a gaol [laughs].
- MD Just going back to Vasse again, did you have any special friends at the primary school at Vasse?
- DAWSON Um yes, I had Dennis Anderson, he was one, he was a good bloke, and Ted Wright, I think, was another one and Kent Machar was another one I used to ...
- MD That was in Busselton was it?
- DAWSON That was in Busselton, yeah.
- MD Did the teachers mix in socially in the district when they were there?
- DAWSON Oh yes Rodger Jennings was very good like that. We used to have school concerts, and at Christmas time we used to have Father Christmas come, and all that sort of thing, yeah it was good. In the earlier days on November the fifth they used to have a bonfire night. Usually they had it at Bob Reading's place because it was more central and he had plenty of parking there, and he'd have a big pile of logs and they'd make up this Guy Fawkes with a big cracker in his nose, and all that sort of thing. We used to save up our money to buy crackers for this big night. Anyway, that all went by the board when they stopped having bonfires because it was a bit dangerous, I think.
- MD Did they have a P&C at school, and if they did, were your parents involved?
- DAWSON Yes, they were actually. Dad was pretty involved in the whole ... we had a Hall committee and a fire brigade and Dad was always involved in that. He was made, I think, a Life Member of the [Busselton] Agricultural Society. And he used to play bowls, he was mixed up in bowls. He was a good bowler they won quite a few ... nowadays if you win [you get] money you don't have trophies, 'cause Mum and Dad used to have this big cabinet full of

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crystal stuff that they'd won [laughs]. Mum was a good bowler. She came runner-up in the State Pairs with someone I've forgotten who it was.

MD Mabs Bell?

DAWSON It might have been Mabs Bell, yeah Mum was a good bowler.

DISC TWO TRACK TWO

MD When you finished at Wesley you returned to the farm, was it always your intention to return to the farm, or was there anything else you would have liked to have tried?

DAWSON Well who knows, I mean in hindsight maybe, but I was always ... Dad always wanted me to go back on the farm. Because he was 40 when I was born, so by the time I left school Dad had bad arthritis, and Mum had bad arthritis so they wanted me to come back and help, you see, so that's what I did. Dad was still growing potatoes at that the time, and milking cows, I suppose they had to do that to send me away to school. So, you know, the most I could do was go back and help them.

MD Digging potatoes was how you managed to buy your first vehicle.

DAWSON It was, and the Moylans had a property at Jindong and it was wet sort of ground; it was good for a summer crop. [We] put a crop in there and I bought an old FE [Holden] ute, and that was my first car from that crop actually. We also used it for the farm as well, because I used to go and buy calves.

MD Did you also, occasionally, work over at Dave and Vern's?

DAWSON Well, when Vern first got started I went and helped him dig a well and used to help him with the hay, and those sort of things, but we had to work on our own place as well so, you know. Anyway, by the time I got back from school Vernon would have been married for quite a few years, probably six or seven years by the time I came back.

MD The Busselton-Flinders Bay railway line ran through Kenwyn - did that affect your family in anyway?

DAWSON Well it did, in the way of fires, and it was a bit inconvenient if your stock got out on the railway line, because there used to be a like a big laneway run through, about two chain wide in the old scale, which is probably 40 metres wide I suppose. The train used to come through probably about every second day, I suppose, it was quite a busy line, because they had stations all the way along right through to Augusta. And then you used to have the rail workers that used to come and put new sleepers in, and all that sort of thing. When we grew potatoes, there was a station at

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Vasse and we used to take our potatoes in and load them in truck. There used to be a little slip line where they used to leave all the trucks, then they'd shunt; shunt them back and forwards. They used to have cattle sales at Vasse as well and a lot of the cattle went by rail to wherever, to the butchers, and things like that. Yeah, they used to have pig sales there; they had pig yards.

MD Where were the sale yards?

DAWSON The saleyards were on Kealys' property.

MD Which now would be part of the Vasse Newtown Development.

DAWSON That's right, yes. About where MacDonald's [Vasse Store] is now. They used to drive the cattle over to the ... [siding], because there wasn't a lot of traffic in those days. There used to be a road over there and [there was] like a big holding yard and there was like a ... where you drove the cattle on to the train, used to be like a big ... it was on wheels 'cause they used to push it back so that the train could bypass it. I remember Dad sold a couple of horses there at one time. And when Glen hurt her leg, and they went on the train. And the other thing is they used to sell like poddy calves, they were vealers (what you'd call vealers), and they used to kill them and hang them up in bags in the little railway station there. You wouldn't be allowed to do it now.

MD So there was a little building there?

DAWSON Yes, a little building, and you used to hang them up in this little building and anything that was small or was brought by train used to go in there.

MD Would the guards then load that on to the trains?

DAWSON Yeah yeah. So, that was interesting.

MD Once the railway line ... well the railway line closed in 1957, what was the railway reserve used for then?

DAWSON Well, they came and ripped all the line up; they had a big bulldozer thing and they just ripped it up. They sold it to Krassensteins in Perth ... the iron [mongers]; well Krassensteins probably ripped it up.

MD Were the sleepers left?

DAWSON The sleepers were left, yeah. So, anyway, a few years later we could lease it and then the Shire wanted to ... I mean we used to look after it, it was all sort of blackboys and it was all built up. Anyway, we leased it and I graded it all down on our section and burnt all the sleepers because the sleepers were all rotten anyway and they had all the bridges and things were wooden,

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culverts and things for the drainage. In the younger days, in the wintertime we used to go and catch jilgies down there, there used to be a lot of jilgies. Then what happened with that, the South African black beetle came along and all the growers used to spray with dieldrin to get rid of the beetles and, of course, it killed all of the jilgies and that sort of thing, so that was a bit of a shame.

MD Did you have to pay for the lease of the property?

DAWSON Ah, yes we did, it wasn't very much but the Shire wanted to rate us. Anyway, I said, 'Well, I'm not going to lease it.' It was no good to anyone else; it was stupid really. Then they were going to put a walkway right through it, and we didn't want a walkway right through it because it went right through the middle of the farm and we didn't want people coming in there and dropping their cigarettes and whatever.

MD That's now what is planned for it, a walk trail.

DAWSON Yes, it's planned for it [now constructed].

MD Now the PMG [Post Masters General] had a line [chuckles] through there, can you tell me about that?

DAWSON Yes, the PMG put a line, it was a major line from Marybrook through to Busselton, I think it was (might have been Dunsborough). Anyway, I ripped it up a couple of times with the tractor which didn't please them all that much [chuckles]. Anyway, I did it twice and they said, 'If you do it again we'll have to charge you for it.' So, I never did it again [laughs]. But it was never sign-posted properly. I didn't know where it was, you know, and in some places it was very shallow because there was limestone there and they couldn't get down deep enough. Anyway, that's another story [chuckles].

MD Once you had it flattened and were using it, I think Murray Armstrong used it at one stage for a landing strip for his plane.

DAWSON Air strip that's right yeah.

MD The Buayanup Drain ran through the property, how did that affect your farm?

DAWSON Well, it didn't affect it much until they decided they were going to deepen it, it would have been alright if they'd widened it. What happened they got a big D9 bulldozer in and they ripped all the little rocky areas out because it let all the seawater right back to the Vasse Hall, virtually, and of course it drained our place significantly, probably we lost a 100 acres of hay paddocks out of it because it just used to dry out that quick, but if they'd widened it, it wouldn't have been so bad. We offered them land to widen it

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but they didn't see that was the right way to go. But, terrible letting the sea water right back there.

MD There were a lot of rabbit burrows in some of the banks, weren't there?

DAWSON Oh yes, one year, I think it was 1965, or somewhere around there, we had a big flood and, of course, the drain couldn't take all the water and of course all of the drain banks burst because the rabbits had burrowed in and the water went out through the rabbit holes, you see, and just burst the banks and flooded all our place. Just about the whole farm was under water but it was one of the best years we ending up having. The water got away very quickly, probably about three days and the water was gone but once the water had gone down in the drain, they sandbagged it and filled it up with dirt again [chuckles]. But it was a bit of a worry at once stage, yeah.

MD Tell me about the drainage rates.

DAWSON There used to be a cut-off and 'general' rates. We were in general rates because we had to put all the water coming through. Our rates weren't as much as some of the others further back, like Jindong and all those areas, they had to pay a fair bit. And then a few years, I don't know, probably 30 or 40 years ago, they decided they would do away with the rates altogether. Then the Water Board took over the whole lot, I think it was the Water Board, the Water Authority took over the whole thing and nothing much happened after that. Because they used to do little bits of work on it, but not much though.

MD I remember, and it might have been after Cyclone *Alby*, was about the time we got lots of white snails.

DAWSON Oh yeah, yeah. Well the sea water went right ... I don't know how far back, it went a long way back, and it nearly went over the top of the drain there, too. Some of the salt water got into the Broadwater as well through some of the outlets there. It brought all those sorts of things in, the white snails were terrible, weren't they?

MD Up until then we hadn't had any.

DAWSON That's right.

DISC TWO TRACK THREE

MD The old slaughter yards on the farm, or the old building opposite the Armstrong property, do you know who built that and what it was used for?

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- DAWSON That was built by Uncle Owen who had a butcher shop and he used to slaughter his cattle there, I can only remember the part of the yards and it was a tall building, and it had a couple of big iron rings, I suppose; that's where they pulled the cattle up to skin them. Then it had a few little hooks there for sheep that they used to kill, I suppose, and there was a sort of a drain that ran out of the slaughter yard for the blood, I suppose, to run out. Yes, so that's all I can remember about it.
- MD Do you know where Owen had his butcher shop?
- DAWSON I think it was at Vasse, near the store [opposite side of the road], but I can't remember any of that, no, that was before my time.
- MD I would like to ask you a little bit about the Vasse townsite as YOU remember it. The store that is presently owned by Neil and Gloria MacDonald, what are the names of some of the other families who have owned the Vasse Store over the year?
- DAWSON The McInnes' were the first ones; that was only like a shed. Maddisons built the shop part of it, and then Kealys had it for the longest period of time and built the house next door. And then, after that, the Jeffreys (who I can vaguely remember); the Collards I remember quite well; then the Bishops, the Gilberts, and Harders who added a nursery and fuel outlet.
- MD What other buildings were in the Vasse townsite that you can remember from when you were young? Could you start on the store side of Bussell Highway first?
- DAWSON On that side of the road the railway line ran right past it, and there used to be a little shed there where the railway bus used to drop things off. Then there was the saleyards and then there was Bill and Maude Park's home, (and that was later owned by Cheryl Simpson), and then Hanson Real Estate had it for an office. On the other side of the road was Gordon Dawson's house, then Dowells' house that was set further back from the main area; the Vasse Garage, the owners were Eric Streatfield, and they had Vasse Transport there.
- MD Can you remember any other owners of that Vasse Garage?
- DAWSON Umm, I'd have to think about that one [Ryall and Thompson]. Then there was two houses built by the Sanders; Colin Bywater and Rodney Sutton owned those. And then there were the oval and the tennis courts which were all in with the hall. They had their centenary there in 1998. Of course there was the school and Readings' house.

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- MD The railway siding, which wasn't really that far away from you, you mentioned the potatoes and the livestock went there. Did you get superphosphate that way, from the train?
- DAWSON No, no, it may have been in the earlier days, I can't remember that, but I can always remember bringing it by truck.
- MD We've mentioned the Locke Estate at the back, do you know how big that was?
- DAWSON That was around about 500 acres, I think, and part of it is now a big wireless area in there.
- MD So that was named after the Locke family from Wonnerup who owned land there at one stage. Now that ran all the way to the beach originally, didn't it?
- DAWSON Yes, and now part of it is the 'Holy Mile' that runs along the church camps and scout camps and that sort of thing.
- MD In there, there were limestone ridges and pools. Do you know what that limestone had been used for?
- DAWSON Yeah, there were a lot of holes and things, and I always wondered what they were for but, apparently, they'd dug a lot of the limestone for the road, part of the main road [Caves Road] that was already there, and they there used to be a road [track] running from ... I can't remember the name of it. Was it Fox Road, or ...?
- MD Magpie Road?
- DAWSON Could have been Magpie Road. Because it used to get very wet during wintertime before the drains went in and so they used the limestone like cobblestones so that the horse-carts wouldn't sink. That's what I think they were for, and I found the head of an old pick there one day so that must have been used for that.
- MD Have you still got it?
- DAWSON No, no.
- MD Now the site of the old Locke house, where some of the Locke brothers lived at one time, can you describe when you lived at Kenwyn what were the signs that there'd been a house there?
- DAWSON Oh well I could never remember a house there, but there was a bit of an orchard there. There was a nectarine tree and a grape vine and fig trees. I think there was an old pear tree which I think has since died, and there used to be a well there, yeah, that's all I can remember about it.

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- MD There was a lot of grass growing around it.
- DAWSON A lot of buffalo grass, it was. Yeah, a lot of buffalo grass.
- MD Which must have been taken there.
- DAWSON Must have been.
- MD It's not a native.
- DAWSON No, no. Actually Murray Armstrong, when he leased it, dug a dam there so that wasn't actually part of it, but the water was only very [shallow] you could dig down about a metre or a metre and a half and there was plenty of water there.
- MD Suitable for cattle?
- DAWSON Yeah, yeah, it was good. You could drink it, actually.

DISC TWO TRACK FOUR

- MD We've mentioned the dairy earlier on, when you were milking it was butterfat?
- DAWSON It was butterfat, yeah. They used to have a cream truck come every, I think it was every second [day] or, yeah, twice a week, I think, or may have been three times a week, I can't remember now. And they used to pick up the cream and that went in to the Busselton Factory, of course, Sunnywest, yeah, yeah.
- MD You had herd testers?
- DAWSON Yes, we did, we had quite an interesting lot of herd testers. I won't name them but one that comes to mind was Dan Bastyan, who was the brother of the Governor of South Australia [Lieutenant General Sir Edric Bastyan] I can't remember his [name]. He was very nice, a real gentleman he was, and he used to come and stay the night and then we'd test the cows that night and morning.
- MD What were they actually testing for?
- DAWSON Well they were testing for butterfat to see what content; how much cream was in the milk and all that sort of thing. So what would happen, you'd have a test bucket and it would be attached to your machine and then you'd have the teat cups, it [milk] would go into the bucket so you got every cows individual milk and then they'd take a sample of that, and so on. And then when they tested the milk, I think it was hypochlorite they put in it and of course that would bring the, I think it was the butterfat, up to the top of the little bottle that they put it in and that's how they gauged what the butterfat was.

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- MD So that gave you an individual reading for each cow?
- DAWSON Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes, so that was how it was done. I remember Dan Bastyan coming one night and Mum and Dad were away so I had to cook him the meal. I've forgotten what we had, might have been steak and a few vegies, but I couldn't make gravy so I made this lumpy gravy and put on it but he didn't say anything [laughs]. I felt a bit embarrassed about that [laughs].
- MD What breed of cows did you have?
- DAWSON We had Australian Illawarra Shorthorn, and in those days it was mostly Illawarra Shorthorn before the Friesians came in.
- MD You had a stud?
- DAWSON Yeah, we had a stud and we used to sell the bulls.
- MD Where did you mostly buy your bulls?
- DAWSON Well we bought two or three from Dunkleys from Capel, and then Dad thought, because we'd been breeding pretty close to the line, so we thought we'd go away from that and Dad bought a bull in Victoria, I think it was either Victoria or New South Wales, I've forgotten now. Anyway, it was called Tabbagong Aristocrat and he was bad-tempered sort of a bull [chuckles] and, anyway, we got some reasonable progeny from him and then later on we bought ... the Wokalup Research Station had AI bulls.
- MD AI standing for?
- DAWSON Artificial insemination. So they were going out of that and they put the bulls up for sale and we bought ... oh, what was his name? I thought of it just while ago ... Nugent Sunray. He just clicked with our cows and we got some beautiful progeny from it. Anyway, in 1971 (I don't think Dad was all that well), we decided we'd sell the stud. So we did and Dunkleys bought I think two or three of our cows and one of the cows they took to the Perth Royal Show, they got the Supreme Champion Cow of all breeds, so that was a bit of a thrill, that was good and her name was Kenwyn Virtue.
- MD By the time you returned from school, and Wesley, the Vasse Siding would have been closed then, so after that your potatoes; how did you transport them?
- DAWSON Well they sent them to Busselton then the railway line still came to Busselton then.
- MD Did you have to load and unload them?

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- DAWSON Yeah, well we had to load them, oh, had to load them onto the truck, then onto the railway truck to send them to Perth.
- MD Approximately how heavy would a bag have been?
- DAWSON Ahh, in pounds it would have been about 150 lbs [68 kilos] yeah it was heavy, hard work and we used to send about eight to ten ton at a time and there were 16 bags to the ton. So, by the time you finished loading them and unloading them, you were pretty tired [chuckles]. And you might have to do that twice, you might have a 16-ton quota or something like that, especially if they were short. I remember one time Dad sent a truck load up and it got rejected because we had a heatwave and they were sent up during the heatwave and, being on a hot railway truck, they just sort of cooked. You never got paid for those so that was pretty unfortunate but that was the way it was so you had to put up with it.
- MD And this was all governed by the Potato Board as to how many you could send?
- DAWSON That's right yeah.
- MD Can you tell me about further land that your father purchased after the home block?
- DAWSON After the home block we were able to purchase part of the Locke Estate which was 120 acres and we had to clear it all. We had to parkland-clear it, virtually, and it really wasn't much good for potatoes, it was hard clay in summer and soft clay in winter it grew reasonable ... good grass but it was just a mediocre block it wasn't all that flash. Then, I think it was 1968, we bought Dowells which was 120 acres, which is where the Vasse townsite is now and then, I think it was 1970 or '69, we bought Kealys which came up for sale because Kealys sold their store and we bought the farm, so that's how we got that.
- MD What was that total acreage then?
- DAWSON That was 180 acres.
- MD Overall how [many acres]?
- DAWSON Seven hundred acres, well nearly 700 acres, or close to.
- MD At one time you found that you had the titles to some land blocks between the drain and the store which was an old Vasse townsite.
- DAWSON Yes that's right.
- MD So you sold those blocks?

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DAWSON Yes, we had 17 of those which came in pretty handy. We never got a lot for them but we got enough to build a house and a boat that I bought, and I bought a block of land down at Dunsborough, a quarter-acre block I think it was. I wish I still had the block of land at Dunsborough [chuckles].

DISC TWO TRACK FIVE

MD What's your wife's name and how did you meet?

DAWSON My wife's name is Margaret and we met at a dance in Busselton at Churchill Park Hall. She was teaching in Busselton and that's how a lot of farmers in the Vasse area met their wives through, not only being a teacher, but also the Churchill Park dances [chuckles].

MD And her background?

DAWSON Her background was, she was born in Pemberton and her father had a farm there, and also the butcher shop and he used to grow potatoes, too. Margaret went to the Pemberton school and then she went to Bunbury High, so she's more a Busselton girl now than she is a Pemberton girl.

MD Where and when were you married?

DAWSON We were married on the 29th February 1964, in the Wesley College Chapel in Perth and our reception was at the South Perth Civic Centre, and our honeymoon was in Albany.

MD Now, after you returned from your honeymoon where did you go to live?

DAWSON Well we came home, and we lived in our house at Vasse.

MD Well where were your parents then?

DAWSON My parents had bought a house in Busselton and so they always were going to do that and retire, well partly retire, Dad used to come out to the farm every day and help milk the cows when he wasn't playing bowls. Yes, that was a fairly good arrangement.

MD Your father when he came used to tell lots of stories, can you remember any of those old stories he told about his early life?

DAWSON Um, no actually I can't, I know he used to go fishing and all that sort of thing, and his bowls. He used to work pretty hard, Dad, and he wasn't ever a well man, I don't think. He sort of always had some sickness and when he was a child, I think, he had some sickness which was like pneumonia I think.

MD When you were married did Margaret continue teaching then?

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- DAWSON She did for a while, yes, because we never had much money to start with and I can remember when we bought our first television set and it was a black and white and we had a big long aerial up and every now and then when there was a bit of a storm on you might get a picture without snow [chuckles] And I think a lot of people would have gone through the same as we did with that.
- MD What are your children's names and the year they were born?
- DAWSON Jane is our eldest and she born in 1967, Anne was born in 1971 and Rob was born in 1972.
- MD Where were they educated?
- DAWSON Well they went to Vasse to start with, and then Jane went to Busselton High School, and then the last two years she went to Methodist Ladies College. Anne did the same thing, [for] her last two years she went to Methodist Ladies College, and Rob's last two years he went to Wesley College.
- MD Were you, as parents, involved with the school when your children were there?
- DAWSON Margaret was more involved than me, she was president one time, I didn't have much to do [with the school], I was involved with a lot of other things. We had busy bees and things and I went along and did my little bit there, but Margaret was more involved in P&Cs and other things.
- MD When your children were growing up and had interests, and they played sport, can you tell me what your children's interests were?
- DAWSON Jane liked horse riding and she played hockey and she went to pony club, shows and cross-country things, I never really liked her horse riding because it involved long days and Margaret, she took the brunt of that, she looked after that side of things, and she did a good job I probably could have done more. Anne was into netball and music and the Busselton High School Band; she played the cornet. At MLC she played the trumpet in the orchestra and bands. The school band accompanied singer Jackie Love when she performed at a ball in Perth. Rob was into fishing from a very young age, in the boat. He was in football, surfing, swimming, and later water polo which he's done very well at.
- MD He was going out in the boat with you at a very young age, wasn't he?
- DAWSON I had a box in the boat, and he used to be about three I think when I first took him out and he used to go to sleep in the box. He used to get a bit seasick so [chuckles] I used to give him a

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tablet which made him sleepy, I think, that's why he slept in the bait box.

MD And Jane, she rode in the Quindalup Races a couple of times.

DAWSON Yes, she did, and it was a bit scary. You know I liked horses, but they had to be ... it was no good having them in a paddock and just having them as pets, they had to be useful, or they had to be ridden, because they get too fat, and they founder, and all that sort of thing. We did have two of our horses founder, which was a bit sad. Anyway, Jane rode in the Quindalup Races one year and it was a bit scary; I didn't like it much. I don't even know where she came, I don't think she came anywhere, the horse [chuckles]. Anyway, that's another story so ...

MD When the children were young, they enjoyed picking mushrooms where on our farm did mushrooms grow?

DAWSON Oh they grew everywhere virtually on the farm, some years were better than others dependent on when the season opened, May was a good time for mushroom picking.

MD And like as you said the Locke Estate fertiliser has probably killed off the mushrooms?

DAWSON Yeah, they probably did but we used to get quite a few at Kealys, especially near the swampy land and yeah, it was good.

DISC TWO TRACK SIX

MD What are your children's occupations?

DAWSON Jane is an accountant, and Anne is into marketing, and Rob was into farming but now he drives excavators and trucks and heavy machinery.

MD Who did they marry and where do they now live?

DAWSON Jane lives in Busselton and she has three children and she is married to Simon Sparkes and they live in Broadwater [chuckles], very close to us now.

MD What are their children's names?

DAWSON Sophie, Sarah and Paris.

MD And Anne, what is her married name?

DAWSON Gribble, Anne Gribble and she's married to Andrew Gribble and their daughters are Neve, Abbey and a son, Harry. Rob our son was married to Liza Denman they're now divorced and he has two sons, Rielly and Jake.

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- MD Do you have very much contact with your grandchildren?
- DAWSON Yes, we do. Anne comes down from Perth during school holidays and other times, around Christmas. Well Jane is not far away we have a fair bit of contact with her. And Rob we have a fair bit of contact with Rob because he lives at Vasse on part of our old farm; purchased a house there.
- MD At present time it's [contact] all on hold because of the COVID-19 virus.
- DAWSON Yes.
- MD Once you sold the dairy, what was the main source of income from your farm?
- DAWSON Ah well what we did we use to just go and buy heifers, go round and buy heifers from different farmers and then we'd mate them and they'd have an annual sale in Busselton and we used to sell about 150 heifers a year in that so that was our main income, virtually. Then, later on when that source dried up, we went into calf rearing. They used to have calf sales at Brunswick and Cowaramup and we used to buy calves and then we'd have them coming up as two to three-year old heifers, mated heifers, and we'd sell them in the sales and we used to do quite well out of that.
- MD When you had them were you bringing cows into the dairy to feed the calves?
- DAWSON We had 10 cows and we did this over about a six month period. Those 10 cows would rear 150 calves so by the end of the six months the poor old cows had just about had enough of calves.
- MD You dried them off?
- DAWSON We used to rear them for about two months and they'd be on fresh milk straight off the cow, and we used to feed them a bit of grain. We used to feed the cows grain so they'd keep their milk production up, so that's how we used to make our living, so it was quite good.
- MD What year did your father pass away and what was his cause of death?
- DAWSON Dad died in 1973, end of January, nearly on his 70th birthday and he had Paget's Disease which is like a cancer of the bone and it's a heredity type of thing, he had a sister who had it and a brother, I think, had it as well. It's supposed to be a heredity thing but if you can catch it early enough you can take drugs that slow it down quite a bit; you're never cured of it. I have a blood test every year to make sure that I don't get it, or to see whether I've got it, and all

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my brother and sisters, they've never got it so it hasn't been passed down to us but it doesn't mean to say that our children ... they could get it.

MD Although your Dad indirectly died from Paget's disease what was the actual cause of his death?

DAWSON Well he had a bit of a car accident and he eventually died of a cerebral haemorrhage.

MD After your father passed away in 1973 where did your mother live then and when did she pass away?

DAWSON Mum lived on the corner of Kent and Carey Streets in Busselton for some time after Dad died, and then she moved to Maryllia Street which is in Broadwater and after that she went to a little street, Taylor Close, not far from the Butter Factory, which was a flat. After that she found as she got older that it was too much work for her so we talked her in to going to William Carey Court [Baptist Aged Care facility] and she was there until she died in 1999.

MD When your father passed away what age were you and how did you feel with the responsibility of running the farm, especially with the challenges in the 1970s with the downturn in farming, and how did you manage?

DAWSON Um, well Dad died unexpectedly and it was pretty hard to get over that. I was only 29 at the time, and we had three children, and you don't know until it happens to you that ... although Dad had passed a lot on to me you've got no one to fall back on if you're not quite sure. So, it was a difficult time, and then that year, or it might have been the year after it might have been 1974, we had a really good year. I bought up a lot of heifers and we had a very good year and we had a very good season as well so we did pretty well out of that. Then usually after you have a really bumper year you have a real downturn and that's when the prices of beef dropped, it was just a catastrophe actually. What happened then, I know I had bought some really good heifers, a hundred of them and I think I paid \$120 for them. Anyway, I could see that by keeping them there wasn't much point because I would be battling to get my money back if I kept them 12 months. What I did, they were in pretty good condition when I bought them so I sold them to the butchers, Harvey Beef bought them. Murray Klump who was their cattle buyer I rang him up and he came and had a look and he said, 'Yeah, we'll give you \$110 for them.' I actually lost money on them. What I did, I used to go to Midland, get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and drive to Midland and then I turned around and I bought steers for \$50 that's how cheap they were, that's how the market dropped. I was virtually getting two to one of the heifers I

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bought, and I sold other cattle besides that. Anyway, I used to go up to Midland and a couple of times I bought 100 at a time and then I didn't pay very much for them. Then I'd bring them home by train to Busselton at \$3 a head we paid for the cartage [chuckles], it was pretty cheap at the time, just as well it was cheap because we wouldn't have made too much money. Then I'd bring them home, 'cause you always get some that aren't much good, I only kept the best ones and all the ones that weren't any good I used to send into the Busselton Store sale and I used to make money on them; it wasn't much but I just kept turning money over all the time. And that used to pay for the cartage of the cattle down from Perth by train. Sometimes if there was a truck up there coming down our way they'd bring a double decker truck down, they had double deckers then. So that's what happened I used to go to Perth.

MD How often?

DAWSON Sometimes once a week, just depended on the cattle numbers, or sometimes I'd go up there and I wouldn't buy any because they weren't the type that I wanted. I just kept turning cattle over all the time and eventually, when the prices started to come good, I made quite a bit of money out of them that way so that kept me going. Then I used to get a cattle buyer who'd buy for me, he used to charge me \$2 a head or \$1 a head or something to buy them and he'd put them on a truck and send them down but I could never buy what I wanted I had to put up with what they bought and some of the cattle were wild, oh they were terrible.

MD Are we talking about the Young River cattle?

DAWSON [Chuckles] Yeah and the Esperance Land Development cattle. Anyway, I learnt a lot doing that, you know, just by trading in cattle all the time and I got to know the butchers and I quite enjoyed doing that. Then the cattle prices started to go up and you never make money when cattle are at a dear price, so that's when I went into ... I thought I'd better change my ideas so that's when I went into buying calves and rearing them and that's how that started.

DISC TWO TRACK SEVEN

DAWSON So I had to build a place over in the old dairy like a herringbone thing. You'd put all the little calves on first and then you'd take them off, physically. Then the next lot would come in and you'd take them off physically (they were a bit big), then the last lot the bigger ones you'd just let them in and that would finish the cows off and you'd just let the cows off and leave the other ones in the yard.

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- MD When you were dealing with cattle, and cattle on the farm, how important was a good dog to you?
- DAWSON Pretty good yeah it was like having another man and I had a couple of good dogs. Rags was the first. Oh, I had three good dogs actually and she was a good little dog, she was Mike Bignell's little dog and he didn't know what to do with her when they sold the farm so he gave her to me. Yes, she was a good little dog a good little sheep dog she'd do anything and she'd have a lot of pups. Her pups were well sought after, too. Then I had Ben he was a border collie he was a beautiful dog and he was a one-man band! Oh, he'd work for the kids and Margaret probably, but no one else. Then there was Sheila she was a good little dog too, she was a bit timid, but she was good.
- MD Now Ben ... Tell us the story about when Dave came over to get a sheep?
- DAWSON This was Ben, he loved the sheep more than he did the cattle and we had a few killer sheep there that we used to get in and we used to breed a few lambs off them. And I said to Dave ... he used to come over and get a lamb every now and then. Anyway, he had a Mitsubishi yellow ute and one day Dave came and I said, 'Come in and have a cup of tea Dave.' He came in and, 'We'd better go out and get the sheep in.' Anyway, the dog had them all in the corner [of the paddock] he'd seen the yellow utility there and he had them all up to the gate ready to go into the yard, so that's how good he was, you know.
- MD He was your favourite dog.
- DAWSON He was, yeah. There's another story about Ben too. Vicky Smith had a good sheep dog and she knew about how good our dog was and she used him for stud duties. They had a bit of a field day over there, working sheep dogs, and they asked me if I'd like to bring Ben and I said, 'Oh, no he wouldn't be any good doing that sort of thing because he'd never been trained.'
- MD These were the sheep dog trials?
- DAWSON Sheep dog trials they were, type of thing. And she said, 'Oh no, you bring him over.' There were quite a few people there and anyway they said, 'Would you like to have a turn with Ben with the sheep?' They usually only have three sheep that they let out, but they let out 20; they thought he might be able to handle that better than just the three. Anyway, he rounded them all up and put them in the yard and he did a good job really, they were all impressed.
- MD He was a natural.

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- DAWSON He was, yeah, he just had it, you know; you didn't have to teach him much.
- MD Going back to raising day old calves and feeding them, what breeds of cattle were you using for that?
- DAWSON Well, mainly Angus-Friesian cross and Hereford-Friesian cross and sometimes I'd buy Simmentals which were good selling points. So yes, they were the main breed.
- MD What bulls were you using?
- DAWSON Well to start off with we used Hereford for quite a few years and then they weren't all that popular, because of too much fat in their meat, and then we went to Angus; Angus and Limousin which we tried for a couple of years because it was ease of calving with them. Then we used mainly Angus after that because they had small calves and they had less calving problems.

DISC TWO TRACK EIGHT

- MD Your timing when you put the bulls in had to coincide with the heifer sale so did you sometimes have heifers calve before the sale?
- DAWSON Ah, we used to have the odd one but not many. One year we did because the prices weren't very good and I brought them home and I think they all calved and I sent them to Bridgetown sale and I sold them over there.
- MD One year did you have one calve in the saleyards?
- DAWSON Oh yeah, well trucking them in there and sometimes they might get knocked around and it was usually a hot time of the month when we used to sell them. It used to be in February, which was probably the hottest month and then they brought the sale back to early December.
- MD How many sales did you send them to in Busselton and then Boyanup later?
- DAWSON [Pause] would have been ... I think I probably had 27 sales over the years and I think probably Busselton would have been 20 and Boyanup would have been about seven, seven years.
- MD Is that with the two agents or is that with ...?
- DAWSON With the two agents: Wesfarmers and Elders.
- MD When the heifers went to the sales, did they have to be guaranteed in calf?

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- DAWSON Yes, we guaranteed them in calf and, I think, later on people actually guaranteed a live calf 'cause sometimes when you sell them you don't know the practises of other farmers and how they look after them and all that sort of thing. I used to preg test my own heifers, pregnancy test my own heifers because I think I had better results than some of the vets did [chuckles]. And I had to go and do a course (that was an artificial insemination course), and you could tell whether cows were in calf so that's how I learnt to do it.
- MD Out of about a150 heifers approximately how many would you get rejected as not in calf?
- DAWSON It varied from year to year, sometimes you might get 10% some years you might only get 5%, but yes, between 5% and 10%n percent that didn't get in calf, some may never get in calf because they might be hermaphrodites or ... and I could usually tell heifers if they were hermaphrodites, just by looking at them.
- MD What did you do with those cattle?
- DAWSON I used to sell them for beef, for meat.
- MD Did you ever have anyone come back to say that a heifer was not in calf?
- DAWSON Oh yes yeah. Well there used to be a time limit on it you know we gave them three months and by that time you'd see whether they were still in season or not, you know, they'd come in season. You get the odd one but I mean it's easy to miss, very easy to miss. Towards the end I very rarely had that problem.
- MD You had a lot of success with because you topped the sales many times, didn't you?
- DAWSON Yes, yeah.
- MD Moving cattle from our home block down to Kealys' and Dowells' property, that became very difficult.
- DAWSON It was because over the years the traffic got more ... there were more people coming down this way and we had to drive them over a bridge on the main road and we had to have people standing end to end to stop the traffic and then turn the cattle down a certain area. No, it got a bit difficult. It used to be a bit of a stressful time for me; I was riding the horse there as well.
- MD And you had the dog of course.
- DAWSON Yes.
- MD Did you end up trucking cattle?

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- DAWSON What from ...?
- MD From block to block.
- DAWSON Yeah. I used to truck the bulls over to the heifers when it was time to mate, and I used to truck the heifers over to Kealys and Dowells towards the end because the traffic got that bad.
- MD You had one buyer who consistently bought your cattle. Can you tell me a little bit about him?
- DAWSON Oh, it was Ernie Young from Bridgetown he used to buy my cattle; he used to come over before the sale and have a look. He was a good old bloke, he was one of the old-timers who'd worked hard all his life, I think he still had the first dollar he ever made [chuckles], but he used to buy my cattle every year. Someone asked him why he bought my cattle all the time and he said, 'Well, they're the bloody best aren't they?' [Chuckles]
- MD Do you remember his funeral?
- DAWSON Yes, I do, that was a bit sad. On his casket they had his saddle, (he used to ride a horse until he was well into his seventies anyway; late seventies) and his old hat, and they played Slim Dusty's song, *The Pub With No Beer* or something like that. It was quite sad really. After the funeral, they took him around in the hearse, around his farm ... yeah ... so that was in the Palgarup Hall and that was very interesting.
- MD Once the Busselton saleyards closed you had to truck your cattle to Boyanup?
- DAWSON Yes.
- MD Who was your main carrier?
- DAWSON Keith Taylor he used to cart my cattle every year, so he was a good reliable sort of a bloke, always on time, and he used to look after the cattle pretty well when he unloaded them, so that was good.
- MD After the sales you'd have quite good get-togethers?
- DAWSON Yeah, all the breeders would get together in the pub, or they'd have a few cans after the sale and talk about the sale, yes it was quite interesting. But it was always good to have the sale over, because you were relying on an auction to get your income from.
- MD Very intense in the build-up.
- DAWSON Yes, a very intense build-up [laughs].

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- MD For everyone!
- DAWSON As my wife would know [chuckles].
- MD Now the last of the heifer sales for you was in 1999, how did you feel at that time?
- DAWSON Oh it was a bit sad, yeah. It was the end of an era, I guess, and to see the last of the cattle going into the truck was a bit sad.
- MD The write up in the *Farmers Weekly* by Wesfarmers thanked the Dawson family, and this is a quote from the article:

The Dawsons have been there from the start as vendors and have provided thousands of excellent quality heifers to many satisfied buyers over the years.

- DAWSON Mmm, that was nice, yes.

DISC TWO TRACK NINE

- MD What were some of your sporting and other interests at this time when you were young with your family?
- DAWSON Well, when I left school I would have liked to have played football but because of having to milk cows, and potatoes, for seven days a week I never had time to go to practise or anything like that so I had to give football away. But I did play basketball and I played for the Country side.
- MD Who were the men in your basketball team?
- DAWSON There was eight altogether. There was Ron Hunter, George Guthridge, Mike Adams, Phil Tickle, Harry Kravanis, Ev [Everett] Stucker, Dave Hannay, and Louis Colombera; actually there was nine of us and I was the youngest.
- MD Apart from basketball, what about golf?
- DAWSON Golf I started when I was about 21 and I played golf for about 40 years, the best I ever got down to was a 13 handicap. I used to enjoy my golf but then my knees started to give out, so I took up bowls and now I'm playing bowls.
- MD When you played golf, at one time you were on the committee, can you tell me something about that?
- DAWSON I was on the Course Committee and I thought, well, I'd do the right thing and do my bit and then I got the job of Course Director for two years [chuckles]. It was a difficult time because at the time we had a problem with our water, we had too much iron in the

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water and it builds up in the pipes and you could not put enough water on at one time. We used to put acid through it and try to get rid of it but it was just a problem, and it was going to be a problem for ever and a day unless you put a lot of money back into it. We did quite a few things, we started off we planted our own wintergreen couch to put on the course, and that was good, that worked out well. Then being Course Director I could ask anyone to go on my committee and I always had trouble with the women, a bit, because they reckoned they weren't getting enough recognition. So I ended up appointing one of the women on my committee and (I can't remember her name she was a lovely person. I think she's passed away now), anyway I never had any trouble after that, so that was a good thing. Then we did a lot of clean-up of the ... cut a lot of the trees down that were shading the greens and the greens weren't growing enough because they weren't getting enough sun. So we cut a lot of those trees down and tidied up the whole course and it was about all I could do, I couldn't see, (unless they put a lot of money back into it), that they were going to have a good grass course.

Anyway, we had a bit of trouble with the staff and they weren't being paid enough, anyway we had a new CEO who came in and we weren't able to pay the staff much. What they were doing, they were paying him, virtually, the basic wage because he had about five kids, and they had to subsidise him through Centrelink, you know, which was not good. And if we hadn't got a good course, you're not going to get the members, so we were lacking a bit of membership. So what we did we wrote out all these policies: what we were going to do, and like a five-year programme for the course. In the meantime, that CEO went and we got another one and then we had John Anderson came along, and he was good in some respects. He came from Manjimup and he was able to ... in the meantime the Water Authority wanted to get rid of all their overflow water from the sewerage thing.

MD This was the wastewater was it?

DAWSON The wastewater, yeah. So, they approached the Golf Club and they were going to upgrade the water system like we've got here and it would be automatic (come on automatically), with the wastewater you see. Anyway, that's what happened, and the Golf Club hasn't looked back ever since. But it was through a lot of work by John Anderson that they got that through.

MD Who followed John as the CEO?

DAWSON I can't remember, but Ian Stubbs was another one, he was the Mayor of Busselton. Not at the time, but after he left the Golf Club. Oh, they went through ... Graham Palmer was another one, he did a bit of work on it. When I got there they were going to put in this aerating system which was proposed by the Agriculture Department, and that didn't work. It was like sand fill

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filter and, because of the iron, they'd have to clean it out every two or three days and you didn't want that because it was a lot of work and it was a lot of sand that they had to put in for that. Anyway, that didn't work, but you learn by your mistakes but that was before I became Course Director but, anyway, we did a lot of good things.

MD And it is a beautiful golf course today.

DAWSON Yeah. I must make note that Trevor Espinos came on my committee, I asked him to come on it and he's a 'Jack of all trades', he's a good welder and he made things so that you could plant your wintergreen, and all that sort of thing. He really did a good job and, actually, he ended up Course Director after I left, so that was good I was pleased about that. I think it is probably one of the top golf courses in the State; or country golf courses, anyway, in the State.

DISC THREE TRACK ONE

MD Do you remember when you joined the Busselton Apex Club?

DAWSON I think it was about the same time that I joined to play golf, joined the golf club. Yeah, that was interesting.

MD This was a service club?

DAWSON Service club you had to do 40 service hours a year, and all that sort of thing, which was a bit archaic but still that's the way it goes, so.

MD When did you meet and how often did you meet?

DAWSON We used to meet every fortnight and in those days when I joined you had to go along dressed in a suit, or sports coat and tie, and all that sort of thing. And they had rules and regulations [chuckles].

MD And your meal was catered for?

DAWSON Yeah it was catered for ... you used to have to pay subs which were, I don't know \$15 a year or something. It was good, because it was a good way to meet people, and they had public speaking, and you learnt how to get up and speak at different things.

MD Did you hold any portfolios?

DAWSON Yes, I held about seven while I was there. My term in Apex was cut short because I was elected to go on to the Shire Council so I left when I was about 35, I think, about five years before I was retired [from Apex].

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- MD You built a new house on the farm; you wanted to build down by the beach.
- DAWSON I did, because the value of that would have gone up more than it would have on the farm. Anyway my wife and I had a bit of a disagreement over that and she won [chuckles].
- MD What year did you build it and who built it for you?
- DAWSON It was built in '78 I think and Mike Bignell had a building company and he built it and, yeah, it was probably not the house I would build again. And the builder was Bruce Leslie and he was a respected builder.
- MD Where was the new house in relation to your old house?
- DAWSON Well actually the back of the new house was[in] the front of the old house, and we used to have hibiscus growing along there and that was a good backdrop for the back of the house.
- MD How were you affected by Cyclone *Alby*?
- DAWSON Well that was a bit of a [disaster] because we lost a lot of trees and I spent days and days cleaning up. We lost part of the hayshed, and I thought we were going to lose the house at one stage [chuckles]; we were in the old house. Apart from the trees and the hayshed we didn't have a lot of damage although at the time I was ploughing up a paddock and putting oats in and I could see this light ... it was like a red or purply cloud come up. I thought, 'Gee we're going to get some rain tonight.' Then about lunchtime the wind started to come up and the clouds seemed to get closer and closer and then it was part of the cyclone. The paddock I ploughed up there was sand about a foot high against the fences and, oh, it was terrible. I thought I'd lost all the seed out of it, but the oats came up afterwards. Because of the dust you could hardly see the traffic on the road and, of course, people had fires that time of the year, I think it was in April wasn't it? They'd had burning off and of course that started a lot of fires and it was a pretty rough time actually [chuckles]. I was glad when it was over.
- MD Vasse was always very community-minded. What activities were you involved with in the community?
- DAWSON Well, we had the Hall Committee, and then we had the fire brigade, I was secretary of both of them for some years. Bob Reading was the main instigator, he took over from me and he did a lot for the district, old Rob.
- MD The fire brigade at that time was quite different from today because you would do roadside burning then.

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- DAWSON Yes, we did roadside burning but now you're not allowed to do it, which is a bit of a shame. Anyway, I was also captain of the fire brigade and my brother was the fire control officer so he used to ring me up if we had any fires down our end of the alarm and he used to tell me to go and check them out [chuckles], so I did.
- MD Tell me what you know about Murray Armstrong's plane crash which I think was 1973.
- DAWSON Mmm, that was the same year that Dad died. That was a big shock to the whole district; December the 12th I think it was, of the 10th; something like that [December 1]. Anyway, I was ploughing firebreaks at the time and I saw Murray flying around and he wanted ME to go up with him but I was a bit reluctant because Murray hadn't had a lot of experience, and I probably would have gone up with him. But, anyway, he had these two other boys with him and took them up and the next minute I saw all this black smoke go up and I thought, 'Surely Murray's not burning this time of the year,' 'cause it was in December; it was too late to be burning off. Then all of a sudden I thought, 'Oh no, he's crashed the plane!' So I wasn't that far away and I rushed over there and it started a fire because the plane had burst into flames and, yeah, it was a horrific part of my life that time when I saw it, and it still remains with me. I think of it quite often.
- MD Well Murray was a friend as well as a neighbour.
- DAWSON He was a friend, good friend and neighbour and it must have been particularly hard for May at the time; May was Murray's wife. And the children as well, because they would have been in their early teens, might have been younger, but anyway, yeah, that was horrific. So I went over there and I was probably the second one there and you couldn't do anything it was just [pause] ... well it was a mess, you know. Luckily I had the rotary hoe and I put the fire out and that was about all I could do. The worst part about that was the press afterwards, hounding us to get a story out of it, which was pretty ordinary I thought at the time.
- MD Who were the other two boys who were killed in the that?
- DAWSON One was Alan Sharp and Lindsay Albrey was the other one. Anyway, they were all deceased and that was pretty sad.
- MD It had a big effect on the district.
- DAWSON It did yeah it did.
- MD You were in shock.
- DAWSON I might have been in shock because you never had counselling or anything those days so you just had to wear it so ...

DISC THREE TRACK TWO

MD When were you elected to the Busselton Shire Council and what Ward did you represent?

DAWSON Actually I represented the same Ward that my father did which was Central Rural and Alec Patterson first approached me to go on it and he said, 'I'd like you to go on it, I think you'd do a good job or something [like that].' I ummed and ahed because it's a fairly time-consuming thing. Anyway, I decided I'd take it on and I did a bit of canvassing for votes, went around and had I thought I had a good chance of getting in at the time. Anyway I got in quite easily in the end. I was on the shire for five years and the longer you're on there you get more jobs and I was Chairman of Works for two years. I started off on the Finance Committee ... no I was on the Works committee for three years, and I was Chairman of the Works for two years. I had a good rapport with Norm Robertson who was the Works Supervisor; he wasn't an engineer, but he was probably better than an engineer I reckon. He had a lot of common sense and he and I got on very well. Yeah, we got quite a few things done. On the whole, the Council was a good Council because we all got on well, and the President was Jack Sheedy and he was a good President. Over-all it was a good council.

MD What years where they that you were on the Council?

DAWSON I got elected in 1979 and it was '84 I resigned.

MD What were some of the issues at the time?

DAWSON Well, boat ramps were always an issue [chuckles], 'cause anything they did they got washed away, on our coastline it was always hard to put a boat ramp in and my issue was net fishing in the Bay. All the professionals used to come down from Bunbury and we had a couple of professionals in Busselton and they used to net all the time. Phil Tickle was against it, because he had Siesta Park and they used to net in front of his park and he used to get quite irate about it [chuckles]. Then also they had set net lines and before the school holidays they used to put a set-net on the four mile and a lot of people used to go out there and catch the odd snapper, and skippy, and stuff like that. So I thought, 'We'll see if we can get it banned.' I knew we wouldn't get it banned completely because you had people's lives [livelihoods], fishermen's, and you couldn't take it off them all at once because they were still human beings like all of us. Alan Miles was on the Shire at the time and he and I had interesting discussions about it.

MD Alan being a professional fisherman.

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- DAWSON Alan Miles was a professional fisherman. Anyway, we had a big meeting and all the professional fishermen came down and Bernie Bowen was the Commissioner, I think he was, of Fisheries or something like that [Fisheries and Wildlife]. I had to get up and make a big speech and say why it should be banned and all that sort of thing. That was alright, we all went away. The Shire was on my side, Jack Sheedy was on my side anyway, and he was the President. They did close part of it, they closed from the Jetty for about 1 000 metres out or something like that, 500 metres out, because the professional fishermen would come along with their vehicles and see a school and they'd just run a net around it, and of course none of the amateurs were getting any fish. Then the crab fishermen would come down from Bunbury and put their ... they had big cages for crab nets. If you went out to get a crab all you got were the undersized ones because they'd take all the big ones you see. We did get a partial netting thing [ban]. Two years later we had another big meeting and I had to get up and make another spiel about net fishing. Anyway, they closed a bit more but after I left nothing happened so it was a bit of a shame. Now they have closed it all to net fishing and, apart from the amateurs allowed to fish with a net (which I don't think's right), so I did get some result from that, so that was good.
- MD Erosion has always been a problem. The erosion at the Vasse boat ramp and the church camps, they were eroded very badly weren't they?
- DAWSON Well they did ... in the early days they put in a big groyne at Siesta Park and I think they made it too long. I'm no expert on it so I can't really talk about it but after that we seemed to get a lot of erosion from the church camps right through to Busselton. Then they had to put all little groynes right along and we're still getting quite a bit of erosion now. They do put in sandfill, sand nourishment, but after the first storm it usually gets washed away anyway. It's going to be an ongoing problem. I reckon they'll end up putting up a stone wall right along Geographe Bay.
- MD What are your views on the Ward system for councillors compared to present day where all councillors just represent everyone?
- DAWSON Well, probably a lot of people will disagree with me, but I think the Ward system was the best system because you knew the person in that Ward that who was representing you. I used to have people even come out of town and see me and I'd always give them an answer one way or another whether they would agree with me or not, but at least I did give them an answer and if I didn't know I'd go and find out for them. The next election we had I got in. Actually, the first election was [when] they changed the boundaries so when you get a change of boundaries the whole Council has got to put up, and then depending on the vote

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numbers you got, whether you got a three-year term or a two-year term or a one year term. So the number of votes I got, I got a two-year term, so that's why I only had five years. At the time it's usually only a three-year term, now I think it's a four-year term so it's been changed it's all a bit different. I still think the Ward system is the best system because you know the people in the district, you know the councillor in the district. Now, I wouldn't know who to go to.

MD And you knew your area.

DAWSON I knew the area and I knew the problems that they had so that's about it on Council. I was the instigator on having a film made of Busselton and we had the big movie cameras come down and take different shots of different people. I had to handle the animal side of things because in the film they had a picture of the Bussells with a horse and cart and I had a horse lined up, but we couldn't get it on the truck to bring it in, so I had to find another source for a horse [chuckles] to drag the spring cart (they had an old spring cart and everything). It was quite funny. Anyway, we found another horse and it all went fairly well. I was also on the Tourist Committee, that's why we got the film done, I think the Shire had a budget of about \$15 000 for it.

MD This was filming the settlers coming into Busselton?

DAWSON Yes, it was done in black and white and then it gradually came into the colour. It was a video, it wasn't a CD [DVD] or anything, that was the time of the video. It was quite good.

MD What about the Tourist Bureau, who was running the Tourist Bureau?

DAWSON Well Joy Smith; she was a councillor as well she thought it was quite a good idea. But I would have liked to have done it as a bit ... more of an advertisement, well it was an advertisement of Busselton but done in a different way, but yeah, it was quite good, and it's a good record to have of that era.

MD The Busselton Council, at some stage, did do another video because you took it to Canada when you went, to show them about Busselton.

DAWSON That's right, yeah. Yes they did one earlier [later] on. One of the jetty and all that sort of thing.

DISC THREE TRACK THREE

MD Cliff, the men's fishing trips to Warroora Station, could you tell me about them; like where you camped, who organised them, the

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accommodation, the boats – who took them, and just a little bit about it?

DAWSON Well, we used to go about the middle of August, because in September the wind comes up a fair bit so we used to go about then and the weather used to be quite good although we did have some windy days. We used to go to Warroora Station and we used to have to notify the manager of the station, and he'd say it was okay, and we used to camp on the beach. We'd have our boats, so we could look after our boats; we used to moor them in the sea and we used to take our own moorings and set it all up. Vern was usually the main organiser of it because he'd been so many times. I didn't go every year, but Vern had an old caravan that he used to take up and it had a big annexe on it and we used to use that if it got too windy. Mainly we had a big campfire. We used to go and collect wood and we'd have a nice big bonfire and we'd all sit around there and probably have one or two wines or beer or whatever [chuckles]. It was good, it was very nice actually. We had some good fishing trips, of course, but one of the worst parts of the fishing side of it was we had to go out through the gap, which was a bit dicey at times if it was a big swell because it was a fair bit of reef we had to go through. You could get outside the reef but when you came back the wind had come up and it would be breaking right across and you just had to know where to go out and come back in again. So that was a bit challenging at times.

MD Did you have any frightening moments?

DAWSON I remember Vern had his boat and we came through a different ... we hadn't been used to coming through this particular spot. Anyway, Vern came out and he forgot to change his fuel tanks over in the boat and he ran out of fuel in the middle of the gap, so it was all a bit tense [chuckles]. And I know Bob Mooney was with Vern and Bob said, being a good Catholic, he said a few Hail Marys. Well it must have worked, because they got through alright [laughs]. Anyway, that was one of the bad times. And then another time, one of the first trips when went up there, one of the bigger boats went out and we were only in dinghies and we went through this particular spot and this wave just loomed up in front of us and we thought, 'Gee we're gone!' And Vern and Malcolm Bird were behind us and I was in Bob's boat and I had the motor going as flat out as I could. We just got over it alright and we thought Vern and Malcolm were going to cop it, anyway next minute we just saw them [chuckles] come over this wave. Tell you what, it was a relief actually. At night-time we used to go out inside the reef and we'd anchor and then burley up and we'd catch spangled emperor, we used to get quite a few that way. I remember one night one boat went out, there were two boys from Manjimup and myself, and the

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other boats didn't want to go because they thought it was a bit windy and rough. Anyway, we ended up catching 100 spangled emperor one night which now that I think back on it, it was a bit stupid really, probably why there are no spangled emperor there now. So that was interesting. Another time I went out with Rich Davies and Aub House, in my boat, and we went a long way and we couldn't pick up any sort of reef or anything, none of the other boats were doing any good. Anyway, on the way back I picked up a little pinnacle on the bottom and we threw over and we ended up catching nine red emperor. Then I called the other boats over to come but in the meantime the sharks had come in and just took our bait and bit off our lines so that was the end of that. We were the only boat that caught any fish that day.

MD Tell me about the time Vern took the wrong bait.

DAWSON Oh [chuckles], that was another time up at Norwegian Bay which is where the old whaling station used to be near Ningaloo Station. We were camped there on the beach, and Vern was in charge of the bait, so there's a gap there where the whaling boats used to go through and there are two marks; one on the bottom of the hill and one on the top and you line that up to go through. We get up [out] there and about to go fishing and I said to Vern, 'You'd better give us some bait.' And he looked down and he'd brought a leg of lamb instead of the bait so that was a bit annoying [laughs]. So I said, 'You'd better cut a bit off and we'll see if we can catch some small fish and then we'll be right; we'll have enough bait.' Anyway he did that, and I think I caught a leather jacket, and then we caught a trevally, but that day we had a really good day, I've forgotten how many fish we caught. It was an amazing day because we had all these pilot whales come by, about 100 of them, and you could hear them talking to themselves. And we had sailfish under the boat, you could see them and one jumped out of the water after a seagull (that's why you see a seagull with one leg sometimes). That was really one of the best days fishing we ever had, so it was good.

MD Back at Warroora, when you went out through the reef what were the main varieties of fish that you caught?

DAWSON Well we used to catch mainly spangled emperor and then you'd trawl for Spanish mackerel and stuff like that, and you caught red emperor and sometime a big cod or something like that.

MD I believe Phil Tickle caught a huge cod.

DAWSON Yes, he did he brought it in, it was about 150lb [68kgs] I suppose. He brought it in (I don't know why, that big they're too big to eat) just to take photos of it. They stay alive for a long time out of the water, anyway. I think they stuck a knife in it to let the air out of it so it could go down. They had it on the beach there for a while

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and took it out on the edge of the sea and swam him around for a while and he just took off. Would have been an hour out of the water, yes.

MD All these fish you were catching, how were you keeping them fresh?

DAWSON We used to take a freezer, and we just used to use plastic bags, which in those days was probably the best thing you could get. If we had a good fishing day we would all ... we had a big fishing table that we'd all line up and some would fillet them, and some would take the skin off, and then pack them away and freeze them and all that sort of thing.

MD You had a generator, did you?

DAWSON We had a generator, yeah, and a big freezer.

MD What were you living in?

DAWSON We were living in tents and we used to take a little ... Graham Abbott had a big tent, he could sleep about half a dozen blokes in it, and some of us had two-man tents or four-man tents, yeah it was good.

MD Approximately what would the number [of men] be that went at a time?

DAWSON The biggest number we had was 16 one year, but it was too big, too many to cater for, and the amount of alcohol they had to take [laughs] and all that sort of thing, it was a bit hard going when there were that many. I reckon probably eight is all you need to have really.

MD And how many to a boat?

DAWSON Three a boat; depends on how big it is of course. I'm glad I'm not going up there now because the gap is too dangerous for me, I didn't like going through the gap much. I remember one fishing night we went out and I don't think we caught any fish at all because there were that many sharks out there. They were all in a frenzy, you could see them all on top of the water and if you caught a fish they'd just come and grab it anyway.

DISC THREE TRACK FOUR

MD They've also made sanctuary zones around that area now, haven't they?

DAWSON Yes where we were, that's all sanctuary zone; you can't fish there anymore. Then there used to be dolphins up there, and then there were other things such as dugongs there that came right in

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to shore. And a couple of times we saw a female dugong with a baby dugong; you could drive right up to them in the boat and have a look, take photos of them and everything. Our kids, I took them up one year in our old caravan and they saw them right in close to shore, actually, and it was interesting.

MD When you went there, sometimes you'd have social evenings where you went into the hotel at Coral Bay.

DAWSON Well we were there for nine days because there were two days up there travelling and two days back. After having fish every night we got a bit sick of fish so we used to go into the hotel in Coral Bay and have a steak or something like that. Of course we'd have a few drinks, yeah, it was quite a good night out actually. Yes, one of the chaps had a guitar and, with our little singing group, we used to sing a few songs and they were really good nights sometimes.

MD The family trip that we took up there can you tell me about when we brought a goat home?

DAWSON Oh do I have to tell you about that? Oh gosh! I made a big mistake, we were out having a bit of a walk around the station and we came across this herd of goats and there were two goats that were lame, and they were only little kids. Anyway, we actually caught the, and we shouldn't have done, really, because they were a bit of a nuisance. We brought them home, the kids wanted to bring them home. These goats, we tied them up under the caravan and all night their horns were banging underneath the caravan and we couldn't get any sleep. Anyway, we woke up next morning and all around the caravan were these fox tracks; [they] were trying to get the goats. They were quite cute, really, when I look back on it but, because I promised the kids I'd take them home, my brother took one home and I took the other one home. We used to call him Ozzie, they're all right when they are young but when they get old ... this goat thought he was a bull. He wouldn't go with the sheep or anything like that, he used to be with the heifers and he used to charge the bulls and do all these silly things and I thought he was going to injure one of the bulls so we ended up having to get rid of him, so that was a blessing in disguise. Well because he used to fight with the bulls, he had one broken horn that used to hang down and goats sexually to get their females, they usually wee on themselves and you could smell him 100 yards away and that's why we got rid of him. He used to follow the heifers down when we were driving them along the main road, and he'd be the last one behind and it looked pretty ordinary [laughs] with this goat. Because he was lame as well.

MD All the cars had to wait for him.

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DAWSON Yes, that's right; we finally got rid of him so that was the main thing.

DISC THREE TRACK FIVE

MD When you went fishing in your boat, whereabouts did you mainly fish and launch your boat, and what species of fish did you usually catch?

DAWSON Just before I get on to the fishing, I've had about five boats overall and they got a bit bigger every time, and we went out further and further. Mainly I did have a Westerberg which was a good sea boat with at 70-horsepower motor on the back and we used to go out off Canal Rocks and up north fishing. The main species were dhufish, snapper and [King George whiting] ... I remember one day I went out with my brother in law. Dave only had a small boat and it was a fairly windy day and I was a bit seasick and I'd given up fishing and Dave said, 'We'll have one more drift over this spot.' He dropped his line over and it no sooner hit the bottom than bang, and he said, 'I don't know what I've got on, and I can't pull it in.' And he pulled it halfway up and he said, 'Oh, I think I've lost it.' He pulled up a 30lb dhufish. Anyway, I said, Oh, look, Dave, I've just about had it.' He said, 'Well you'd better throw your line in,' because I hadn't wound my line up. He said, 'You'd better throw it in.' He had a 30lb dhufish on but his top hook was broken off, that's how he lost it. He said, 'Throw your line over.' So, I threw my line over reluctantly and it no sooner hit the bottom and bang, I had a fish on. After a bit of a struggle I pulled this dhufish up, it was 47lb and it had Dave's hook in its mouth as well [chuckles]. He said, 'Well I should claim that because I pulled it halfway up [laughs]. But it was strange that the fish would take the hook after ... you know.

MD That's not your only fishing story with a bit of luck in pulling things up, is it?

DAWSON On no, there's another ... we were off Moses Rock, probably about four kilometres out and I had Rob with me, he was probably only about five or six at the time. Anyway, it was a beautiful day and in the afternoon the sea breeze came in very strong so we decided to pull up. I tried to pull the anchor up and I couldn't get it off, and I tried pulling it off with the boat, still couldn't get it up so I had to cut the rope. About four years later I was out with Dave Hannay again and we hadn't caught any fish and I said, 'Look, Dave, I know a spot about a couple of kms away, I said, 'I think I've got the landmarks of it I think I can probably find it again.' He had an echo sounder and we go over to this spot and we anchor, and we caught a dhufish off it. We anchored on it and when we were about to go home we went to pull the anchor up and I said, 'Gee this anchor's heavy, Dave.' So I pulled it up, and on the end

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of it was my anchor I'd lost about four years ago! I certainly got on the right spot [laughs].

MD Tell me about salmon fishing.

DAWSON In the old days, this is going back a few years when we used to be able to sell them, I don't know if you were supposed to sell them but we used to sell them. Jack Peliccaan who ran the Siesta Park Store used to buy them. This was just before Easter because they could sell them pretty quickly then. Anyway, Vern and I we caught 89 salmon one day, we had to clean them and take them. We sold them and I think we got five shillings each for them (and that was before the decimal currency came in), and Jack took them and we made some pretty good money out of them that day but it was hard work. You get big schools of them come round, I've seen them probably 100 ton sometimes, they were just huge. Then you get the sharks that go with them, too. And then at Canal Rocks they used to go up the channel, this was in the evening, they'd come around the end of Canal Rocks and go up the channel. There'd be people fishing along them for salmon and there used to be a few swear words and things when people got tangled up, and all that sort of thing. After you caught the salmon you had to carry them back over the rocks, and across the bridge at Canal Rocks, which was pretty hard work. So they were good days, good fun days, but now you are only allowed to catch four per person per boat I think.

MD Another time you and Kevin Rainbird caught some and sold them at the Vasse School fete.

DAWSON Yes, Kevin Rainbird was the headmaster at the Vasse School, so they had the fete I think it was in April and so I said, 'I know a good money spinner if we could go down there [Canal Rocks] and catch some salmon we'll bring them back and sell them at the fete.' So we went down the night before and there was no one else there fishing and a school came right in close to the boat ramp, actually, and I think we caught 18. We bled them all and put them in the ... we had I think a fridge we put them in overnight, and we took them to the fete and sold them, and they went off like hot cakes. I think we sold them for \$2.50, I think it was \$2.50. That was quite interesting.

MD You mentioned earlier that you saw sharks and whales when you were at Warroora Station in your boat, did you ever encounter any in the boats out here?

DAWSON Oh yeah! I was out with Joe Tomcala one day and we were out from Moses Rock, I think it was. Anyway, Joe had a bait thing he used to tie to the end of a line and he used to put a few mullies in this little bait thing, little plastic burley holder. We saw this shark come up he would have been, probably, three or four metres

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[long], Joe went to pull his berley holder up and that was all gone [chuckles], it was just a bit of rope he pulled up, he was quite a big shark. It was a bit hard to tell how big they are, but I think it might have been a mako shark, so we left there we didn't stay around too long [chuckles]. It could even have been a white pointer. Then up at Warroora one day I could see this thing in the water, and it was in shallow water and it was chasing something, so I thought we'll just go and have a look, and it was a big hammerhead shark, and I reckon it was as long ... my boat was 17ft long and I reckon it was about the same length as the boat; it was about a metre and a half across the head. That's the biggest hammerhead shark I've ever seen; it was huge.

DISC THREE TRACK SIX

MD In 1979 for Western Australia's Sesquicentenary, Ian Lilly and Shirley Stanbury produced 'On the Vasse' to celebrate the history of the Vasse district, Ian wrote the script and Shirley composed the music. This was a great success and you had a role in this production, could you tell me about that.

DAWSON How I came to get the role was that I got a phone call one day and it was Ian Lilly and he said, 'Would you be interested in *On the Vasse*, playing a role in it? He said, 'I know you've sung in a group and all that sort of thing.' And I said, 'How big is it?' [Laughs]. And he told me, and I thought, 'Oh goodness me, I don't know whether I might be good enough to do that.' He said, 'How about doing an audition and we'll see how your voice is.' So, I went into Shirley Stanbury's place and I think I sang *Danny Boy* or something like that, I've forgotten what it was. They wanted someone who could reach the high notes and I used to do the high harmonies in some of the songs we used to sing. I sang and they said, 'Oh yes, that sounds pretty good.' I wasn't in a group at the time so I was a bit surprised that my voice was any good at the time. They said, 'You've got the part if you want it.' I said, 'Oh well, I'll have a look at it.' So I said, 'Well I'll give it a go, there's now harm in giving it a go.' At the time it was pretty busy because I'd put up for the Shire as well and I got elected for that so that was a pretty busy time. So I had to learn all these new songs, I think there were three big songs I had to sing, plus all the chorus songs I had to learn.

MD What was your role?

DAWSON My role was Frank de Lisle who was the aide-de-camp to Governor Weld and I was supposed to be a bit stuck up and aloof, and a bit of a ladies' man, and all that sort of thing which I'm not really [laughs] in real life. So I took that on and we had to do a lot of rehearsing and practising and learning all the words. *On The Vasse* went for nine nights which is a lot of nights for singing. Anyway, we got there, I think I made one mistake over

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the whole nine nights. It was a big success because it was Busselton's ...

MD It was Western Australia's sesquicentenary.

DAWSON Yes, that's right.

MD One hundred and fifty years.

DAWSON Yeah, that's right. Anyway we had the Governor [of WA] Sir Wallace Kyle came down with his wife, the Premier Charlie Court came down with his wife.

MD Was Ian a hard task master, a perfectionist?

DAWSON He was actually a perfectionist, everything had to be right, and his wife [Ruth] was Edie Bussell who I asked to marry me. So I asked her to marry me, but she wasn't all that keen on it. It's quite a long story but it was ... One of the things I remember I had to say in a song (I'm not going to sing the song, but I can read a section out) was, when I asked her to marry me, went a bit like this:

The wife that I seek must be modest
and meek
Her manner as mild as a lamb
My love and protection on her I'll
bestow
And she'll be behind me wherever I go
Albeit Bombay or Siam
And that is the way that I'm going to
stay
For that is the way that I am.

And it didn't happen to me in real life [laughter].

MD Mmm [laughs]. About how many people did they have in the cast?

DAWSON Well they had about 100 people in the cast and some of the people were actually from families, pioneer families, like the Bussells, John Bussell, and my brother was also in it, and Bob Mooney was also in it; they had easier parts than me [chuckles]. Overall it was ... all the backdrops and everything were done by Ian; he did a terrific job there.

MD It was actually staged by the Busselton Senior High School, wasn't it?

DAWSON Yeah it was, yes, and a lot of the students had parts in it and they did a very good job actually. The staff also did a great job, a lot of them with the clothes that had to be made, and all the backdrops and all the behind the stage, lighting and all that sort of thing. The

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lighting was fantastic, actually. It's about 30 years ago now, I can't remember it all [laughs].

MD How did you enjoy that experience, afterwards in looking back?

DAWSON Well it was something I'd never done before and I was a bit out of my range, but still it was a good experience and I never got asked to do another one so couldn't have been that good [laughs].

DISC THREE TRACK SEVEN

MD What was the reason for planting a vineyard on the farm in about 1993?

DAWSON Nineteen ninety-two it was actually. The main reason was our farm was only 700 acres, and Rob was coming home and there wouldn't have been enough income for two lots of people, so we decided we'd try something a bit different and vineyards were ... people were putting in a lot of vineyards. And Rob had worked on a vineyard with Ian Carter for quite a long time so we thought it would be a good income for him to start off with that. Anyway, we put in about eight acres just for a trial and some of them were pretty good. We got a contract with Amberley [Estate Winery] and they took all we had. It took a fair bit of finance to start it going, because you had to buy all the posts and the wire and the irrigation set up and all that sort of thing, so that was fairly expensive. Then we only had it for eight years and then it was all sold. I think we would have got our money back on it but it was something that we never thought that we would be selling but that's how life goes.

MD This was put in when Rob came back from Canada, wasn't it?

DAWSON Yes that's right.

MD Could you tell me about what you planted, the varieties?

DAWSON We planted sauvignon blanc, and chardonnay and cab sav – cabernet sauvignon. Sauvignon blanc, people were interested in buying that, we used to get up to \$1 400 a ton so that was quite good. It was all done by harvester.

MD What were some of the problems?

DAWSON Kangaroos were a big problem, we had to fence it off and we had to thin some of them out but, yeah, it was a problem but we got over that by fencing them off.

MD You used a harvester. Who had the harvester that used to come and harvest them and what time of the day did you used to start?

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- DAWSON We used to start at night time. It was a waiting time because the harvester was in full demand at the time and then you'd go all night, virtually, although we only had eight acres; it didn't take all that long. We used to supply the chaser tractor and then a frontend loader to load the bins onto the truck.
- MD I believe you made some wine yourself at home.
- DAWSON [Chuckles] Yes, I made cab sav which is a lot easier to make than white wine. Yeah, it didn't turn out too bad actually, I was quite pleased, but because it didn't have any preservatives in it, it only lasted probably two years and then you've got to get rid of it. Yeah, it wasn't too bad.
- MD Once the farm was sold they were ... someone else kept them going for a while?
- DAWSON Yes, someone, I think it was Louie Colombera's son, took it over.
- MD Eventually all pulled out.
- DAWSON It was all pulled out, it's all houses now.

DISC THREE TRACK EIGHT

- MD When were you first approached to consider selling the Vasse property?
- DAWSON Well that would have been round about '96, I suppose. We knew the bypass was going to come through and it was going to take off, I don't know, 40 or 50 acres of land off us, and so that made our land less viable. And then, later on, it was going to go right through the middle of the main farm as well and that is what has happened at the moment.
- MD Before we go on from there when did you first get an inkling that a bypass was going to come through?
- DAWSON Oh probably the middle of the '80s and the Shire was wanting it badly because they reckoned Caves Road [had] too much traffic on it.
- MD Were you on Council at that time?
- DAWSON Ah ... it did come up at Council but the Main Roads had like a long-term thing [plan], so it's 20 years before they even decide to build it. They approached me ... they were going to use the old railway line as the bypass. If they'd stayed with the railway line on one of our properties it wouldn't have mattered so much, but they were virtually going right through the middle of the place. What I did, I approached one of the real estate agents and they knew a developer who may be interested in doing something

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about it. In my time, the development was right along the coast, and they wanted to get away from the coastline because of the erosion and all that sort of thing and they nominated Vasse to be another township. And there was a small town there already, probably about 20 homes, around the store.

MD Who made the first approach to you?

DAWSON Well, I made the approach to a developer, actually it was Cliff Fraser, and he knew someone who was a developer; Kim Slatyer was the name of the developer. He was quite interested because they were talking about a new hospital and schools and the housing would have been to house 7 000 people so it was quite a big project. So he went on and it took him awhile to get ... he had to go to the Shire and show them plans he'd had done up, so it takes a while. It came to the asking price and I told him what I wanted for it and he thought it was a bit much, but I said, 'Well that's the price!' Anyway, he purchased the place and then we decided we'd look around for another farm for Rob and we went to Margaret River and we couldn't find anything suitable there. We did find a place at Margaret River but it had double gees on it and I decided, 'I'm not going to put up with double gees.' So we had a look at a place between Donnybrook and Nannup and that was at Cundinup, it was quite a nice farm. It was in three blocks and it was good soil, and Rob wanted to grow grapes again, it was good soil for grapes so we bought 900 acres at Cundinup. After that, Marg and I decided that we were going to help Rob set the farm up and get him started. We bought a place at Nannup near the Blackwood River; it was six acres and it had a nice house on it. We were there for four and a half years and then we decided we'd come to Busselton and we left Nannup in 2005 and came back to Busselton.

MD How did you feel about selling the home property?

DAWSON Well I didn't like it very much because it had been in the family for a long time [from approximately 1920], and Dad worked very hard in the early days to get it up and going, so it was sad actually, I still don't like going out there much now and seeing all those houses on it [chuckles].

MD Over what period of time was the sale of the blocks planned and how long did it take to sell them all?

DAWSON Well we sold the first section, which was Kealys and Dowells, then they bought part of the back block because I think he had difficulty in getting money for the rest. Eventually it went through and took about two or three years. Yes, a few little hiccups; we got a bit stressed out there two or three times [chuckles].

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- MD When you bought the 900 acres at Cundinup, what was the soil type, and what was the vegetation like on the property?
- DAWSON It was jarrah, marri sort of country; big trees. And it was sort of red loamy country with pockets of granite in the hills, it had beautiful views on the property it was a very nice block. In the end I was quite sorry to have to sell it but, anyway, that's another story.
- MD So Robert went out there to live and there was a house on the farm.
- DAWSON There was an old house on the farm and I said to Rob, 'You can't live in that.' Because all the toilets and septic systems were pretty antiquated so I said, 'You'd better build a house.' I suggested to him that they get a transportable, and you can get nice transportables these days. Anyway, they decided they'd build a house that was quite a big house; four bedrooms, five bedrooms actually, and two bathrooms. It was a nice house that they built.
- MD After you bought the Cundinup farm and Rob went out there, did you have the two farming operations going at the same time, and as well as grapes what type of other farming was he undertaking?
- DAWSON Well he was going to run beef cattle, like baby beef, you could run 200, probably 220 baby beef quite comfortably on that sort of country. Anyway we ended up building a big dam for the grapes and you could just about water ski on it, it was that big. Actually the grapes did very well out there, but then there was a bit of a glut of grapes and he couldn't sell them. Well he could sell them, but he wasn't getting much for them. Then the price of cattle came down ... he had the grapes there and if the price of cattle came down he could fall back on his grapes and vice versa but they both went down at the same time, so put him in a fair bit of debt.
- MD How many acres did he plant out there?
- DAWSON Eighteen.
- MD And what varieties?
- DAWSON Cab sav and shiraz, and they did very well. He used to have a bit of bird problem. Amberley bought them one year and they reckoned they were really good grapes and they were very happy with them, but they didn't like buying out of the Margaret River region. Then another chap bought them, but he didn't pay much for them. At least he probably got some of his expenses out of it.

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- MD Before Rob had the new home built, his future wife, Liza, moved out there to live with him, didn't she?
- DAWSON Yes.
- MD How long after the blocks sold at Vasse, and you'd already bought your house at Nannup, how long before you left the farm?
- DAWSON We could have stayed at the farm 'cause the chap that bought it he was a developer and by the time he got all his project together it was at least 10 years. So we could have stayed there for another 10 years, or probably leased some of it back off him. I thought probably the best thing would be ... once you sell a place you're better to get out of it and go somewhere else. Anyway, we did buy a unit in the Broadwater which was being built but we thought we'd better go out and help Rob get set up and we bought the place at Nannup. We used to come in to Busselton every second weekend in to the unit at Broadwater.
- MD And that wasn't without its problems.
- DAWSON That wasn't without its problems, either.
- MD Purchasing that!
- DAWSON It was handy to have it but, when we decided to live in Busselton, we decided to sell it and then we bought a house in Broadwater.
- MD We sold the [Vasse] farm and I think it was about May 2000 and can you tell me about that, what we did then?
- DAWSON We ended up buying a caravan and a four-wheel drive and we ended up being grey nomads, and we went up to Kununurra with Kevin and Mel Rainbird. They'd retired at the same time, and they bought a caravan and four-wheel drive, and so we headed up that way and stayed at different places. We were away for about three months. We came back and headed out to Nannup in our new house out there.
- MD You've had other family holidays away in the caravan when the children were younger. Can you tell me about your first caravan?
- DAWSON Oh I bought an old Baravan. I wanted to hire a van but we couldn't hire one in Busselton so there was one advertised, it was only a 12-ft van and it was a very solid van, it was called a Baravan had an annexe on the side. The double bed was also the main table in the van and [when] we had to go to sleep we had to take the table off and then make the double bed up which was a bit of nuisance [chuckles]. We had a lot of fun in that van, we went up to Warroora, we went to Esperance and quite a few places.

DISC FOUR TRACK ONE

MD The Nannup house was a lovely designed house but when we got in there, we hadn't looked that closely and we did find a few problems didn't we?

DAWSON Yes it was never finished off very well but I ended up finishing it off, it was quite ... I think it was a home builder type home and ... nothing major, but it was a bit annoying at times to keep finding things.

MD What about the improvements you made to the yards and gardens?

DAWSON It never had a fence around the whole block so I put a fence around it because we were inundated with kangaroos and one day we came home and we had about 15 emus on the back lawn, of all different sizes. So I fenced it off and that made a big difference. I think the people that had it before us were fairly 'green', and they left a lot of the trees and some of the trees were overhanging the house so we had to get Greg Mader, who had a bulldozer and front-end loader. I had to go to the Shire to get permission to shift all these trees, because over there you've got to get permission to cut trees down. Anyway, Greg came in and I didn't know how he was going to get some of the trees down but he did, he did a good job. I think it looked a lot better after we got the trees down because every now and then the cockatoos used to come and get in the top of the redgum trees and drop nuts on the roof and it was quite annoying. I don't think they came back after that, after we got rid of the trees [chuckles]. We left some there, just the trees that were overhanging the house were a bit of a worry so we got them taken out.

MD What was your social life like in Nannup.

DAWSON Actually, Nannup was a good social life. We made some good friends over there and about every month we used to have a drinks night, nibbles and things like that and, yeah, it was really good.

MD Did you join any clubs or anything there?

DAWSON Joined the golf club which was pretty basic over there, the old golf club was very steep and ...

MD The one out in the forest?

DAWSON Yeah, out in the forest. What happened was, because members were declining, they decided they'd ... George Spalding, who was one of the mainstays at the golf club, he was on the Shire at the time and they wanted to find a new area to build a golf course. In

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the middle of the town, or where the town main hall is [Nannup Recreation & Community Centre], there was a big bushy area there and you could make it into a nine-hole golf course. They got Doug Edwards from Manjimup, a well-known golfer over there, he came and designed it. We decided to build a golf course there. I was made the co-ordinator of it all; took me a lot of time and we got a chap in with an excavator ... he did all the fairways. The Shire were very helpful they graded the fairways for us, and we had a big burn off, because we had all these big trees there, and it was very smoky in Nannup for a while [chuckles], in the township, I think there might have been a few complaints.

MD Who else was involved with you in the developing?

DAWSON Well George Spalding, it was virtually his idea, but George was good on ideas but he wasn't good at doing anything else much [chuckles]. There were two other chaps I'd mention. There was Bill Stallard, Bill has been the backstay of the golf club for years and years, and he had a fair say in what was going on, and Rob Raffin and his wife [Gail]. We had to get a grant from the government to ... The only way we could get a grant was for irrigation (we had sand greens) but for the tees we had to get a grant for that. And that took a lot of doing, all the paraphernalia you had to go through to get that, but I don't think they used it for the tees, I think they might have used it for something else [chuckles]. It's quite a nice little area there now.

MD Close to the Recreational Centre, they use that as the clubhouse now.

DAWSON Yeah they do. They wanted to build their own because at the old one ... I don't know whether it was a spark that flew out (because they had a big open fireplace in it), and it burnt all the clubhouse down with all their paraphernalia like their all their champions, and presidents and all that, all their signs got burnt down [chuckles]. So, anyway, they got \$120 000 for it from the insurance company, so they'd be pretty well off [chuckles]. They thought someone might have gone and dropped a match, but I don't think it did happen like that, I think a spark did fly out.

MD You joined the bowls club, is that when you first started to play bowls?

DAWSON Yeah that's right.

MD And enjoyed that?

DAWSON I did, yeah, it was good fun, because Mum and Dad used to play, I think I mentioned that they played before. Yeah, it was good, and a nice little club there but now it's all ... they wanted to get ... because it's grass greens and they only had volunteers who cut

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the greens, and all that sort of thing, and they didn't know much about it but it was always very slow, the greens. But, anyway, we had a lot of fun there. I still see some of the members playing bowls now and catch up with them.

MD What were Margaret's interests when you were there?

DAWSON Well she was in to oral history, of course, and she interviewed a few people out there. They had a big round up of photos in the town, because there's a lot of history in Nannup, and Margaret was one of the instigators of that with Debbie Stallard. So that was a big turn out there when they opened it up to the public.

MD That was a very sad time after that when Debbie was drowned.

DAWSON Yes, that's right.

MD When the Cundinup property was put on the market, who purchased the first section of the farm?

DAWSON There was a local chap by the name of Greg Mader, he had a bulldozer business and he bought it. I think he wanted to subdivide it, but I think in the end the Shire wouldn't allow him to.

MD Soon after this, Rob and Liza moved to the property they'd purchased at Forrest Beach. What happened to the home block then?

DAWSON Yes, we did lease it to a South African chap who was going to buy it but that fell through, and then we leased it to Thomas's for a certain time. I had to give them three months' notice if someone came and bought the property so that's how that worked out. But they only leased the property, they never leased the house or any of the sheds, they just leased the property, so I had to look after the house. I did a lot of work fencing, and just maintaining the place, and did quite a few odd jobs out there. It was quite hard work [chuckles], and I had to buy a tractor and all that sort of thing, so it was a fairly expensive enterprise.

MD Who finally purchased the property and what year was that?

DAWSON The property was sold in 2016, and Alf Carroll and his son Mike purchased the property.

MD Once you came back to Busselton what interests did you pursue then?

DAWSON Fishing, [golf] and bowls was about all. I was on the green committee and match committee in bowls and used to go to different carnivals around the place. We went up to South Perth and played bowls up there and we won it one year, the Invitation Fours. That was pretty good, actually, because there were a lot

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of good players that came from all over the State played up there you see.

DISC FOUR TRACK TWO

MD What about overseas holidays have you had a few of those?

DAWSON Yes, I think we've been on about five cruises, and we did a trip up to the Kimberleys and then across to Indonesia, some of the islands in Indonesia, that was on the *Silver Seas Explorer*. The last one we did we went to Spain, Portugal, France and England and that was a good trip. About six years ago we went on another cruise and we met these lovely Scottish people. We lost track of them over that period, anyway, on the last cruise we went we were on a bus going to this particular place and we heard this Scottish voice and we turned around and it was Nick and Elaine and it was good to catch up with them again, and we had a few night outs with them and, yeah, it was good.

MD Of all your trips, which one do you think you've enjoyed the most?

DAWSON The best trip we went on was Africa, we went to Capetown, Zambia and Botswana, three different places we went to and we probably went to three safari [camps]. We went fishing on the Zambesi River and Margaret caught a big cod-looking thing, and I caught a tigerfish [chuckles], and we went and saw the Victoria Falls. I'd go back to Africa again if I could I reckon it was good. Some of the camps that they had were really terrific and they really looked after you well.

MD Cliff would you like to say a little bit more about your trips to Canada, you've had two trips, where did you stay and some of the things you did over there?

DAWSON Our first trip was in 1992, our son went over there on a Rural Exchange he stayed with people who lived in a place called Sedgewick in Alberta. He was there for seven months and went over there and arrived when it was in their winter, which was very cold at the time, I think it was 30 degrees [Fahrenheit] below. On the farm they had grain, and they had a cattle set-up; they ran about twelve hundred steers [a year] in a feedlot and they sold them off to butchers, as we do in Australia. There were always problems over there when it was winter time because in their water troughs they used to have elements that kept it from freezing, and the cattle were all out in the open, they had wind shelters, and some of their ears used to freeze off and they used to feed them with straight barley to keep them warm. That caused problems there, too. They had bedding; they had straw for bedding for them and the other thing was, with all the machinery they had to spray with anti-freeze to stop all the wiring from rotting. All the pipes had to be 10ft underground for the

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cattle and the house because they used to freeze otherwise. We have our problems in Australia, but they have their problems over there, too [chuckles].

Some of the cattle were mainly Charolais cross, Simmental cross, with Angus and Herefords. And I went to a sale over there with one of the cattle buyers and he took me to this big saleyard centre; it was all under cover, it was all computerised, and it was very quick. They sold about 2 000 head of cattle. I didn't stay there for the whole event. And that's when I noticed some strange people, Hutterites. When you first see them, the men have got beards, braces and trousers and boots and a hat, and the women have long dresses and a bonnet and they just looked a bit out of place amongst everyone else. The Hutterites first came to America about the turn of the century [20th century], they are a bit like the Amish, although the Amish have horses and carts these people are a bit more modernised than that. They bought up land in the area which the locals didn't like because they never spent any money in the town or anything, they were self-sufficient. Anyway, the Hutterites buy up all the good land and the only thing they buy is their machinery, like tractors and ploughs and all that sort of thing, to do with grain farming. All their dairies and things are stainless steel and very well-equipped.

MD You were fortunate enough to visit a Hutterite community in Stettler, can you tell me a little bit about that?

DAWSON Well we stayed with some friends, and Becky Baltimore her name is, her father was the machinery dealer and he said, 'Would you like to go out and see one of these Hutterite communities?' We said, 'Oh yes, that would be good it would be something a bit different.' So we went out to this property; they had 30 000 acres of land they'd bought up. What happens, when they get to a certain number of people in the community they branch out, a group of them branch out and then they go and buy another property and they have their own little community. I think when they get to about 150 in their community they go and buy another property and start another community. I think in the whole of Canada there are about 20 000 or 30 000 of them. And they have all the state-of-the-art tractors and things like that; that's all they buy. They're all self-sufficient 'cause they have their beef and their chickens, dairy, and feedlots ... I don't know whether they do have feedlots, but they do just have enough for their own use. We went to this particular place and all the houses (they build their own houses), and all their furniture, and it's beautifully made. They are probably professionals in their own right when it comes to that. We went and saw the dairy which was all stainless steel and all the modern things that a lot of that, probably, the Canadians or Australians wouldn't have. They do everything pretty well because I don't think they have too much like parties or anything like that [chuckles]. Well they have their church which is

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pretty well ... they've got to go to church every day, virtually. Anyway, they kill their own ... they just live off the land. It was interesting to see, but I wouldn't like to be living [like that]; it's a little bit like communism, because everyone is equal. The Canadians don't like them because they buy up all the best land and they don't spend any money in the town, so there's not much more I can say about it [laughs].

DISC FOUR TRACK THREE

- MD In April 2005 many whales were beached not far from Dolphin Road, West Busselton. You were involved in the rescuing of the whales, could you tell me about that experience?
- DAWSON Yes, that was just after we came back from Nannup and we were living where we are living now. Actually, I saw Brad Fraser and ... I think he might have heard it on the news, to start with. No, that's right, we heard it on the news so I went down to have a look and I saw Brad Fraser down there and they needed people to keep them [whales] wet, so the sun didn't affect them. So I thought, 'I'll go and give them a bit of a hand.' Brad said, 'I've got an old wetsuit. Go down home and get it and it will keep you warm'. Because it was during the winter time, I think it was.
- MD April [2nd June] 2005.
- DAWSON April, was it [June]? But it was a fairly cold sort of a day. Anyway, there were 102, I think, of these false killer whales washed up on the beach and they were strewn for probably about half a kilometre long, I suppose, from the boat ramp nearly up to Mandalay [Mandalay Holiday Resort]. It was quite a sad scene really to see all these whales washed up, and some of them probably would have weighed about 5 ton, I suppose. The ... what do you call them, not CALM, I forgotten what they call them now [WA Department of Conservation and Land Management], anyway they help people that look after those sorts of things. There were about 6 people, we took on this particular killer whale or false killer whale, and we kept him moist, and turned his head around to the sea.
- MD So did a few people look after one whale?
- DAWSON Yes, that's right, and they're beautiful animals they were like rubber and their eyes were ...
- MD Were there also part of the pod still out further?
- DAWSON Yeah, and there were boats out there keeping them so they wouldn't beach themselves. And then they'd take, like half a dozen whales at a time and put them into deep water and push them out and make sure they didn't come back in again, and

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that's how they eventually got them all off. Except one which they think, when they did an autopsy on him, they found that he had a lot of foreign ... like worms and things like that inside, him and they reckon that's why he came ashore, and the others followed.

MD A unique experience.

DAWSON It was actually, yeah.

DISC FOUR TRACK FOUR

MD We had a lot of stock agents over the years, we had some we particularly got on with and some we remember more than others. Would you like to tell us who some of those were?

DAWSON Ron Hancey he was mainly for Elders, and Maurie Moore, and Ross Tyson, and John Fisher. And with Wesfarmers it was ... I remember when I bought my first lot of cattle, I was 16, and Bob Black was the, I think he was the overall ... in charge of the southwest area. Anyway, he took me down to Margaret River and it was when, from the AIS, the Friesians was just starting to come in. Anyway I bought, I think it was, 16 Friesians and I paid £25.10.0. [\$51], I think it was. They were about 14 months old at the time.

MD Was your father pleased with them?

DAWSON He was quite pleased because we sold them for £60 [\$120] [laughs], so we made quite a good profit on them and that was my first introduction of buying these heifers. Cliff Fraser was another one, he was a good rep in town, and I think he ended going up to Merredin in the end because they shift them around quite a bit. And then we had Neil Henchie he looked after me pretty well, Neil. That's how Wesfarmers got my cattle in the heifer sales and things like that. Yeah, they were good stock agents.

MD Apart from the houses that have been built on the original home block, what other buildings or facilities are there?

DAWSON Well the Cape Naturaliste College and sporting grounds were built, not far from the old house which has been demolished now. Some of the street [names] that we submitted to the developer were Egyptian Street, which was the original ship that John Dawson sailed in to Western Australia. Then the main entrance is named Kenwyn Drive, and Sparks Way is after our daughter Jane's married name, and Gribble Circuit is Anne's married name, and Denman Lane is Liza's Rob's ex-wife's maiden name. Names of other family members were submitted but they didn't use them; from a long list they only chose those names.

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- MD In the commercial area (near Coles and the other places), there are some plaques in the footpath can you tell me what those plaques are?
- DAWSON The plaques are set in the foot path to acknowledge the Armstrong, Dawson and Reading families. These properties form the development of the residential and townsite development.
- MD Last year (the year before last) you had a double knee [replacement].
- DAWSON Yes, I had to give golf away because my knees were too sore so I went to the doctor and he said, 'Well, I'll put you onto a specialist.' Greg Janes his name was, and I went to him and he had a look at my X rays, and he said, 'They're both stuffed!' [Chuckles]. So I said to him, 'Can you do both of them at the same time?' And he said, 'Yes, no problem.' So I went to Hollywood Hospital and had them done and it's been good; I haven't had any trouble. The only thing I have when I kneel sometimes, I've got to be careful, but that's about the only time.
- MD Now we're about to wind-up is there anything else you would like to mention that I haven't asked you about?
- DAWSON [Pause] I can't think of anything at this stage. Well I'm proud of my children, the way they've done well, so I hope in the future they have a happy life. And our grandchildren, too, have done very well.
- MD So family contact, we've had a lot.
- DAWSON Family contact, yes. There was a little saying that, I read it in a book the other day that I thought was good advice for anyone, 'You never leave a job unfinished'.
- MD Cliff, you can be very proud of what you have achieved in your farming, business, and personal life. You have provided well for your family and by example instilled high standards, good manners, respect for others, and a strong work ethic for your children.
Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW