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Transcript of an interview with
Harold Theodore Altus

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DATE OF INTERVIEW: 2000

INTERVIEWER: David Kindred

TRANSCRIBER: --

DURATION: 1 hr., 4 min., 10 sec.

REFERENCE NUMBER: **OH4665/2**

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Tape 2 - Oral History Project
David Kindred interviewing Harold Theodore Altus
Farmer and Shire Councillor from Broomehill
-25th March 2000

"What is your full name?"

"Harold Theodore Altus"

"Where did you come from before settling in Broomehill?"

"I was born in South Australia and lived there until I was 21 or 22 years old, and then my family moved to Western Australia and settled at Cunderdin. Those were the days when I was still single. I got engaged to be married in 1956 and the property at Cunderdin wasn't big enough for my parents, my brother and myself. So I had to branch out. I found this property down at Broomehill, out towards Peringillup Siding and bought that"

"What year was that Harold?"

"It was early in 1957 that I took possession of that. Actually in March 1957."

"What were your first recollections about arriving in that part of the district?"

"I was a stranger I suppose in a strange land. I would say the country wasn't that much different to what I was used to in the Cunderdin area. The property hadn't actually been farmed. George Hall owned the property before we came there and bought it from him. He had moved to Albany and the farm was a little bit run down. It hadn't had a resident owner on it for some time, so it needed building up. I had been with my family all of my life, so it was hard batching there for three months before I got married."

"Did you have a car at that time to get in and out of town?"

"I only had an old, well it wasn't that old, Holden utility. That was the main way of getting around at that time"

"Who did you marry and what year was that?"

"Her name was Barbara Ann Steele, and she was a nurse. She had nursed at the children's hospital in Adelaide and we married on July 6th 1957"

"What was her opinion of Broomehill when she first arrived?"

"She had seen the house on the property before we got married. My mother was a little bit worried that she probably wouldn't want to come down there to live. It was an old house built by the previous owners. It was built with boards, lime and concrete. There wasn't too much cement in the concrete and if you had a good sharp nail you probably could have scratched a hole in the wall. There were only four rooms, a passage and a bathroom in the house. As I say, the farm hadn't been lived in for a while, so the house was fairly run down. The laundry was a pretty open sort of a thing. The bathroom had an old concrete bath in it, but I managed to get rid of that. It would be an antique these days, but I got at it with a crow-bar. I put in a new cast iron type bath, or enamel bath in. That sort of improved the bathroom a little bit, but things weren't too wonderful compared with what Barbara would have been interested in those days"

"What was the water supply like?"

"There was only tank water David. There were probably about five tanks on the kitchen side of the house and that was the only water supply for the house. So if it didn't rain, we didn't have very big baths. There wasn't a shower in the bathroom, so it was all baths in that time"

"Did you have a copper as well?"

"Yes, the laundry had a copper, and a big concrete or cement type wash trough. We didn't have any money to spare, but we did get an electric washing machine. I don't know whether you're interested in the power supply as well? It was a 32 vault power supply. We had a Banford diesel engine that drove the generator. My wife is a city girl, but she learnt to crank up that engine. It had a self starter, but if the batteries went a little bit flat, you couldn't always start it. So you had to use a compression lever on the engine to take the compression off, so you could crank it as an engine. She learnt to do that and she was only 22 years old I think. She adapted very well to the farm."

"Harold, we'd like to ask before we go much further, what was the name of the farm?"

"Shapsbury" I think it was. We called it "Carrawatha" when we moved there. "Carrawatha" means place of pines. It was rather appropriate for that place because there's a pine drive and pines around the house. Also out the back on an old homestead block there was quite a lot of pines there. Those pines are still actually there and around the house, although they are getting rather ancient now and starting to die out"

"How many acres was the property?"

"It was 1485 acres when we brought it. We paid ten pounds an acre for it, which is \$20 an acre these days. We had to borrow over half the money from the bank, so we had quite a fair mortgage to start off with"

"What bank did you borrow that from?"

"That was through what was known as the Commercial Bank. It would be Challenge or Westpac now."

"Harold, with the various paddocks that you have on the farm, do you have a numbering system? How do you actually identify them? Are there names of the paddocks?"

"No, we haven't got numbers. We probably identify them by things that happen there. I don't know whether you're interested in the property that we bought afterwards? One paddock we called the "new ground paddock", even though it's been farmed now for over 40 years by us. When we took over the block it had only had one crop on it. There were a lot of mallee-roots and quite a lot of suckers there. So that was known as the "new ground paddock", because it was the newest ground on the property at the time. It's retained that name ever since. I mentioned to you that there's another paddock with pines out the back. An old homestead block, that's still known as the pine paddock. We have another paddock joining a place that was owned by Milies, and that paddock's called "Milies paddock." Another paddock known as the "jam paddock", had quite a big patch of jam trees on it, and they're still there, even though we've cut a lot of posts out of there.

There was a paddock where the dam was going salty and was known as the "salt dam paddock." Is that the sort of thing you wanted to know?"

"Absolutely, yes"

"We have another one that's a hundred acres exactly by survey. That's known as the "top hundred acres". That's one of the higher paddocks. Another paddock joins where there used to be an old cottage and that's known as the "cottage paddock". One paddock we grew milliter summit crop on, in one of the earlier years when I was there, has retained the name "millet paddock" ever since. Another paddock with mallet trees in it is known as the "mallet paddock" and that sort of thing"

"Absolutely, that's very interesting"

"Another paddock we bought off our neighbour Jo Marsh when he left, that's known as the "tobacco paddock". I asked him why it is called that and he said that when his father was farming, he lost his tobacco pouch there. Apparently when he was driving the horse team. It has always been known as, (even in his day), the "tobacco paddock". And we have carried that name on"

"That's very significant isn't it? Is it a very good way of identifying the various properties?"

"Yes, you need to be able to identify paddocks when you're telling somebody where the sheep are. Or what paddock needs top dressing, super-spreading and where to get the sheep from and that sort of thing. You could use a numbering system, but I think the paddock naming system has got more character to it I suppose"

"I imagine they'd be better known to the owners of the property, but other people wouldn't identify with them as well?"

"No, I think probably only the family would identify with them, or people that have been working with you for some time"

"Did you have any children and did they live on the farm with you?"

"Yes, we started our family very soon after we were married. Jennifer our eldest child, was born eleven months after we were married. David our second child and eldest son was next. Mark was born three years after David and he was a good runner. I don't know if you're interested in that side. He is quite a good athlete. Then Tim our youngest son was born three years after Mark"

"Where did they go to school Harold?"

"Well, because of the way the school bus ran in those days, the only school that we could get them to on a school bus route was the Tambellup Primary School. Which I think had about 200 students in those days".

"How far away was that?"

"It was around about nine or ten miles from our farm property to the Tambellup school, and virtually the same distance to the Broomehill School. But as I say, the school bus run didn't suit to send them to Broomehill. Even though it would have been nice if we could have sent them there"

"Who is on the property at the moment?"

Tim our youngest son got married about six years ago. There's only one house on the farm, and somebody had to move off the place. Guess who it was? It happened to be Mum and Dad. Tim's on the farm now. We are running it as a partnership, and we've got other property as well. David our eldest son, Tim the youngest son and Barbara and myself are in partnership running the property in a joint sort of basis"

"Have they got any family?"

"David our eldest son has got three children. Tim the youngest has got two. His son is just over 12 months old. He has a little girl who is four years old. She's just started at the pre-school in Broomehill. The bus runs have changed a little bit, so hopefully they're going to be able to send their two to Broomehill. David's house is in Katanning, so his three go to the Primary School in Katanning"

"Harold, who did they marry?"

"Tim married a Perth girl, Sheryl Evans. David married Christine Walker. Her father and family had been farming in the Katanning area at one stage, but they were farming in Albany when they met. But I think David had known Chris before that. They got engaged and she is a school teacher. But her parents had a property out at Green Range at the time."

"With the property at Peringillup, who are some of your neighbours?"

"When we first came to the farm it was Potters on one side of us. Jo Marsh took over that place and bought that property only two or three years after we arrived there. We bought part of that property when Jo sold up and moved to Pingelly. On the other side we've got Mike Collins. I think that property has probably been in their family right from the start. Holz knecht join us on another boundary. It used to be Don Barrio joining us on the other side. His property came right to the opposite of the road from our shearing shed. John Perrolo, who was a nephew of Don's, took over the property after Don died - I don't know whether you're interested in those early days? Don was a bachelor himself, of Italian descent. He really befriended me in the early years, within the months when I first moved there. As I say I bached for those first three months and I didn't know anybody. I think after George Hall showed me the property and we decided to buy it, he took me over and introduced me to Don. Don would have been quite a bit older than I was, but he really befriended me in those days. He used to come across when I was baching and put in time with me, and probably gave me a few hints on what was the best way to farm in that area too. He also taught me to smoke and roll my own cigarettes. I've never been a great smoker, and haven't smoked a lot. But when people offer you cigarettes, you have to buy some after a while to offer them back. Then you get into the habit yourself. I don't smoke any more now though.

Another interesting thing I suppose in those days, in the farming area in particular: A young couple when they got married, moved onto the place and it used to have a 'tin kettling'. The young couple weren't supposed to know about it, so it was a surprise. A matter of weeks after you were married, the neighbours would turn up rattling cans and tins and that sort of thing in the evening and you were expected to invite them in and get to know them. That happened to us too. The Holz knechts, the Barrios, the Potters and JZ Green and his family. Louie Perrola - I forgot to mention Louie, was part of Don Barrios farming family. The Shillings they turned up too, they lived on 'Chillicup'. You weren't expected to supply them with supper or anything like that. They brought supper along and it created friendship right from the start and made you feel pretty much at home. Louie Perrola brought along a bottle of home made wine and we kept that for a while and hoped that it would mature. Louie's not around now, so he won't mind me saying this. But when Barbara finally decided to use it, it tasted like vinegar, so I don't think she used it in a trifle like she had intended to originally."

"Were there any other families that you recall that made wine?"

"Actually I don't think Louie actually made it. He got his from Bunbury or Donnybrook. But the Nellie's used to make wine. I didn't ever see the winery, but I know they did make it. I think it went out of production soon after that, but they had a little winery and grew their own grapes. But I don't know much about it David."

"Would you say that the Peringillup area is a very friendly, close-knit community?"

"Yes, it was then and I think it still is too. There's not as many of the community about any more because the farms have got larger. As I said Jo Marsh sold out and we brought some of his property. The Temby's were another family that were involved in the 'tin kettling'. They bought some of Jo Marsh's as well. The properties have got larger so the population has got smaller. But I think the friendship and the cooperation is there. If you ever need something you can rely on your neighbours to come in your hour of need sort of thing."

"Do you recall much about the Holz knecht family?"

"Yes, there's Able and Elsie and they were very good to us too. Able, he was a very funny man, he could tell some funny stories. He spoke about the time when he and his wife were painting the inside of the house. Apparently they were standing on the table and Elsie must have been doing the ceiling. He said she sort of inadvertently stepped over the edge of the table and she went down with all colours flying.

John wasn't married at that stage when we moved there. He and I used to do a little bit of shearing together. I had to go out shearing in those early days to help pay off some of the mortgage on the place. I did a little bit of shearing for Don Barrio and for Holz knechts. John Holz knecht was shearing too, and he and I were shearing together. I shored over at Jo Marsh's and also over at Temby's. It was quite convenient being close like that, and I tried to farm in between as well."

"How many sheep a day did you shear?"

"I wasn't a gun like some of the people today doing 200 a day. I think my best days were around about 130-140. I think the sheep might have been a little bit tougher in those days too. That's my excuse for not doing more anyway."

"Who were some of the good shearers that you recall?"

"I can't actually recall the names anymore. The Mill's brothers were very good. They had a name as good shearers. But in those days they didn't have four stand teams like they've got now, or four stand sheds. Our shed had a little portable, which was driven by an engine and you had to fuel your engine up each run. I think most of the others around the area - like the Barrios, had an overhead stand. That was probably a four stand shed, but that only happened a few years after I had been there. It was only a two stand at the start, but they were all engine driven portable plants."

"Was it a big occasion for Barbara when it was time to shear your sheep?"

"Yes it was a fair bit different to today when shearers bring their own meals with them. The housewife was expected to supply morning and afternoon tea, and the shearers went up to the house for dinner. I wouldn't say it was a big occasion, it was probably a fairly stressful time for the housewife. And in those days with a young family too, it was quite a big effort I think."

"It would have been a fairly important occasion because I suppose as soon as the fleeces were shorn a lot of income would have become available?"

"Yes, we would have been depending on half our income coming from the wool and sheep in those days. We had made it right through, although at the present time with the drop in wool prices, it doesn't work out that way. We're still running perhaps the same number of sheep, or the same percentage of sheep in the farming rotation, but the income is not there now. Though, even in those days wool had its cycles. When we moved to Western Australia in 1950, my family moved to Cunderdin. That was the days when wool was a pound a pound, but there was a drop in the market too. So it was only 80 pence, which probably wasn't that bad if you convert that to today's values. Well it was probably pretty good."

"Harold, how many sheep did you shear?"

"There were only about 700 the first year we moved there. I think we got about 22 bales off our first wool clip."

"Did you bring your sheep down from Cunderdin?"

"Yes, actually there's a little bit of a story attached to that. When we moved to Western Australia we had to buy sheep from all over the place. You got a lot of odds and sods. Most people only sell their sheep when they are getting old, which are culled for age. If you buy younger sheep they are culled because there is something wrong with them. So we finished up with a fairly mixed flock when we moved to Cunderdin. To improve the flock my father and brother came down, strangely enough to Broomehill. They bought some young 'Nardlah' blood sheep and took them up to Cunderdin. When I branched out by myself I managed to bring some of those 'Nardlah' blood sheep back to Broomehill again. And other sheep I brought onto the property were part of George Hall's flock. I think that they were probably not too bad and were older sheep, so I wasn't buying culls in that case."

"How did you cart your wool initially?"

"We used an old truck. In those days at Peringillup there was a platform there. A siding that had a little waiting shed attached to it. We used to cart the wool to there. You would ring the station-master at Katanning and ask him whether he would put in a rail truck at the siding, so that you could load your wool there. You would drive up onto the ramp so that your truck was a little bit higher than the railway truck. Then roll your wool off into the railway truck there. I think one railway truck would have taken our wool clip in those early years."

"Was it a van type situation or was it an open carriage?"

"It depended a little bit on what the station-master at Katanning put there for you. Some times it was a van, which was good because he didn't have to tarp it. But it wasn't all that convenient because the bales didn't always fit in quite as well as they did with an open railway tray"

"I recall it was quite an art to do that..."

"It was, yes. You had to use a little bit of pressure sometimes to get the bales in. If they expanded a little bit in the pressing, it took a little bit of pressure to force them in, so that you could get as many in as the station-master thought you should be able to."

"Do you recall some of the shortcomings on farm machinery in the initial stages?"

"Are you interested in when I started off with my farming plant? Well I didn't say, but I had a brother and sister when my parents moved over from South Australia. I was farming with my brother and father in partnership. My brother and I had acquired a plant of our own as part of the partnership. When I moved down to Broomehill I brought a tractor. It was an old Oliver 90 kerosene tractor. You started it up with petrol and then turned it over to kerosene when it warmed up. It was flat out at five and a half miles an hour. I brought that plus a combine we had brought across from South Australia when we moved over. Also a sixteen international string time combine, a fourteen disk Wilds plough and an old number two sunshine header that we brought across from South Australia too. My brother was sort of branching out by himself too, but staying on the Cunderdin farm. I moved down here and I bought that plant for a thousand pounds in those days, plus an old K Five international truck. It was an old army truck. So there was a little bit different value to start off with the farming plant, compared to what you'd need to start off with today."

"The International truck, was that very reliable?"

"Well, I suppose it was considering its age. It had been used in the army and that would have been in 1939-1945 days of the war. It gave me a good run though. Yes, I didn't have any big problems with it, it wasn't very fast and it had a canvas roof too."

"You were probably fortunate that the rail line was pretty close so you didn't have to go far did you?"

"No, our property was only about a mile and a half from Peringillup Siding, so it was very handy. We didn't actually need a very good truck to get the wool down to the Siding, but we needed something a little bit better to get the grain into Broomehill, as it was about nine miles away."

"Did you pick up Super from Peringillup Station?"

"Yes, in those days you used to get your super in bags. The rail trucks were dropped off at the siding at Peringillup and you would go down there with your truck. I only had an old sack truck with steel wheels in those days and I would cart it up to the farm. We were lucky in a way because the shearing shed had a raised board, so you used to be able to wheel it straight off the truck and into the shearing shed. My wife, as I said to you, was a nurse and a city girl. But she adapted very well to the farm and the second year we were married for my birthday present she bought me rubber tyred wheels for the sack trolley. She managed to get the right type of wheels and she put them on the sack trolley. She also painted the trolley a nice yellow and put plastic handles on it. I've still got that sack trolley. The rubber tyred wheels served their term about two years ago and we had to put new ones on, so they did very well. I've always had very fond memories of what she did for me in that time."

"Well you remember the steel tyres very well!"

"Yes, you certainly do, they weren't too easy to push around. Rubber tyres made life a lot easier."

"Do you remember how many bags of super there were to the tonne?"

"Yes, twelve bags to the tonne. In those days you didn't have bulk handling, so at seeding time you had to wheel them onto your truck, plus the bags of seeds that you needed for a days work. Well, with a sixteen combine and a tractor that only did five and a half miles an hour, you didn't do very many acres in a day. I used to lump the bags of grain by back from the truck and put them onto the combine and empty the bags out into the back. Then Don Barrio told me that it was a bit silly doing it that way. He said why don't you back the truck up behind the combine and take them straight off the truck and empty them in? So, I started doing that and it made life a lot easier. On my back too."

"Did you ever crop at night time?"

"Yes, the old tractor didn't have a very good lighting system in those days. It was around about 1936/37 when it came out new. We put a six hole generator on it and that was driven off the power pulling. It only had one headlight and one tail light. It didn't have a cab in it and we made up kind of a hessian cover to put over it for summertime. That was all it had for winter too. It only had an old steel plough seat, so it wasn't all that comfortable, but yes we used to drive at night. I think we felt our way around the paddocks, the light wasn't that much help, but it was a little bit better than nothing. We used to go until midnight to try and get a little bit extra done."

"Did you work a shift with another family member or did you bring a contract laborer in?"

No I did it all myself David. I couldn't afford to contract and everybody else is busy by themselves anyway. Barbara wasn't the tractor driving type either, and with a young family I couldn't have expected her to. So I used to work pretty long hours. Start early in the morning and go till late at night because the first year I was there I cropped about 400 acres seasoned oat. I remember this because it was Easter on the 22nd April which was also my birthday. It was a late Easter that year. And when the opening rains came I ploughed everything up - 400 acres with this 14 disk plough, and then I worked it back a little bit later with a 16 run combine. I was waiting for rain because I was getting married that year on 6th July. Barbara was an Adelaide girl, so the wedding was in Adelaide. So I had to get the seeding finished to get over there in time, and it wouldn't rain. Rain finished up coming about the 29th May I think. I was cropping the "new ground paddock" that year, and blow me down the rains came and I got bogged straight away. I wasn't used to being bogged and I had a little bit of trouble getting out. I got that sown, and the rain stopped again and it got a little bit dry. Then it came again and then the same thing - too much rain. I was wanting this cropping done, and in the end Don Barrio came across. He had a Chamberlain Super 70 and he had duals on his tractor. He was flying through the mud and slush giving me a hand to finish seeding. Anyway, I got it finished and got across to South Australia in time for the wedding."

"How many acres would be a good day seeding?"

"On a good day, we used to average around about four and a half acres an hour seeding. So, I think my best days were around about 70 acres, that would have equated to about fifteen or sixteen hours seeding. You've got to bear in mind that you had to load up before you started in the morning and probably come back to the shed and pick up some more grain and super. That took time out of the actual seeding. It probably finished up being a 17 or 18 hour day some of the days."

"What was the sort of crop that you were planting?"

"Pretty much the same as today as far as cereals go. The first year I put mainly barley, oats and a little bit of wheat. The wheat wasn't very wonderful, finished up with septoria I think. I had around a ten bag crop of barley, and the same with oats. I think for those days I was fairly happy with it."

"Harold, I think it must be asked, in those night times, there must have been some experiences? Did it all go to plan? Were there times that you went to sleep? Nothing like that happened?"

"No, probably one of the main recollections of working at night were sober, there was no cab on the tractor. You sort of sat there and relied on the differential of the tractor - the gear box, to put out a little bit of warmth to warm you up. You wore an overcoat. My wife took pity on me and brought me these flying boots with fleecy lining and a flying helmet, that helped. In those days you had to change points by yourself. It usually seemed to be at night time that the points wore out. So you either waited until the next morning to do it in daylight or if you were pushed for time like I was this first year before I got married, you changed it at night. I don't think I had any nasty experiences. I never ever went to sleep at night so that I dropped the combine off like I have heard of. Or the scarifier coming unhooked and the first thing the bloke knew about it was when he ran into it coming around the next time around."

"I was going to ask if you'd heard of any experiences of people having some fun at night."

"Yes, I think that's the only one I think David."

"Now on the farm there's a lot of hazards, like fires, did you experience any fires while you were there?"

"I only went to a couple of others that had gotten away. In those days a wet bag was probably more use in the bush. That was probably about all you had in those early days, you didn't have the fire fighting equipment that you have now. We had nap-sack sprays. It was only probably two or three years afterwards, that they got into fire fighting equipment, and that wasn't probably as modern as what we've got now. They didn't have a big tanker system or fire equipment with plastic tanks on the back of utes, because we only had an old truck. So, it wasn't that easy to get around to fires. I do know that people used to cooperate very well because there was still quite a lot of clearing going on in those days. We didn't do a lot of clearing ourselves, but there was a little bit and all your neighbours used to come along on the day you had your clearing burn."

"Was that organised in any way?"

"Yes, the Fire Officer used to arrange that. We did have Fire Officers then and you put somebody else in charge because you were always busy running around yourself. It was better to have somebody else in charge of something like that and see that people were spread around to catch up with any sparks that got away starting a fire where it shouldn't be."

"What Ward were you in?"

"In the South East Ward of the Shire David."

"Was there a particular name of your fire brigade?"

"Yes, it was the Peringillup Brigade. This started a few years after we were there, but still in the days when Jo Marsh was there. I think he was the first Fire Captain of that Brigade."

"Did they have 2-way radio?"

"I can't recollect if they did. I think they probably did right from the start, but I wasn't a member of the Brigade right from the start, so I'm not absolutely certain. But I think the Fire Captain had a Brigade Radio."

"Do you recall Cyclone Alby?"

"Yes, very well David. My son David was working on the farm in those days. We were actually crutching sheep and it was getting stormier and stormier. We'd had a pig die a few days before cyclone Alby and we carted it out into the bush. Not that far away from the bush we lit a fire on the pig to get rid of the carcass, and we hadn't gone back to check that there weren't any more coals burning. We thought after two or three days it should have burnt out. Anyway, we were in the shearing shed crutching. It must have been the Shire inspection day, and some of the Shire Councillor's called in and said: "Hey, did you know you've got a fire in the bush out there?" We dropped everything and went out and put out this fire that was spreading through the bush a little bit. There were a couple of nasty fires on the West side of Broomehill, but we had to watch our own fire before we could go and help with that one. Anyway, we finished up getting across around about midnight. Mark our middle son came with me. We had reasonable fire fighting equipment in those days. I can particularly remember the sand as we were battling to get across to the fire, because of the lack of vision. There was so much dust and sand about that we had to travel very slowly or we might have finished up being a casualty too. I remember the ute screen had got sand blasted, and you couldn't see through it properly after cyclone Alby. I can also remember all the sand that had lifted onto the road. Unfortunately I think the paddocks were a little bit barer in those days than what they should have been. So a lot of the paddocks were blown out onto the road. It was a dry cyclone too. We didn't get the rain with it, so it didn't settle the dust or anything."

"You didn't have any damage to fences or anything of that nature?"

"No, we only had straw and sand blown up against fences. We didn't have any actually flattened. But Shire graders came in, and in some areas had to grade this sediment off the fence lines."

"So generally it wasn't a great problem, only the sand blasting of the utes?"

"Not on our particular property, no."

"What about floods? Did you cop any heavy years of flooding?"

"Yes, I think 1982 would have been the worst year we had. We couldn't get through to the highway, down Peringillup. We had to go around Jam Creek Road to get out. I remember Tambellup being flooded. I think the Hotel actually had water come up to it that year. So certainly there was a lot of water around. We were battling to get between our farm and Broomehill."

"Any other experiences you recall while you were farming?"

"Can't remember any highlights David."

"Did the trains actually cause any fires? You're, pretty close to the railway line. Do you recall anything by coal coming loose? "

"Yes, we had one fire and fortunately that didn't get very far. It was adjoining our property. It burnt along the railway line and only just got into our property a little bit. But it didn't do a lot of damage. The biggest problem was that it was in bush and you needed to stay and watch it so that it didn't get any further."

"Harold, we are going to do a slight diversion now. We would like to know more on your history with the Local Government in Broomehill. I believe that you are a Councillor and I would like you tell us when this happened?"

"I can't remember the actual year. I think I've been a Councillor, and this probably sounds a bit absurd to not know for sure, for about fourteen years. I became a Councillor when Neil Richardson retired. I was a little bit reluctant at the time because I've been involved with the Lutheran Church quite a lot. I was on what they call the State District Council. I had just been elected to the General Church Council which meant travelling to Adelaide twice a year. So I thought that I'd been on Church things for a lot of the time and I hadn't been involved in Local Broomehill community things very much at all. I thought that I should be serving my own community too, so I accepted the position and I've found it very enjoyable and very rewarding too. I've never regretted it and I look forward to Shire Council Meetings.

"Harold, what ward do you represent?"

"I represent the South East Ward."

"Is there any other Councillor in that Ward or are you the only Councillor?"

"Well, the Ward system is still operating. But you don't actually have to be in that Ward to be a member or a Shire Councillor for that Ward. We've still got representatives for the various Wards. I don't know whether you want the names of the Shire Councillors at all?"

"Yes, that would be very handy...."

"Scott Witham, Danny Bignell, Greg Holly and myself. We've just got a new Councillor as we've had a few resignations in the last twelve months. Not because of dissatisfaction I think. Dorothy Dennis was elected at our last meeting."

"Dorothy Dennis is on a fairly well known property isn't she?"

Yes, she's on 'Eticup'. Her husband died a few years back and her two sons are running it with her at the present time. She's involved in community things a fair bit too. I think she's going to make a very good Councillor."

"'Eticup' was virtually the beginning of Broomehill wasn't it?"

"Yes, I probably don't know the history as much as some would, but it dates back a long time. The original townsite was there and it was only because of the railway being located in a different place that it was moved from there."

"Harold, you mentioned some of the Councillors, which is excellent...."

"David Kempin is another one..."

" Which farm is David on?"

"He's farming on Terry McGuire's property. Terry would have been one of the original pioneers, or his family would have been."

"Are there any Shire Clerk's that you would like to recall?"

"Well, probably Reg and Fay Lester would be one of the first ones I knew there. They were in Barbara's and my early years. They were a young couple like us, and we were very friendly with them. I probably can't remember some of the others names actually.... In the time I've been there, Peter Fitzgerald is the latest one, Peter Mason before him, Robert Madson before him and then Thorney before that..."

"Geoff Thorne?"

"Yes that was Geoff Thorne who was known as Thorney. Geoff was there when I first came on the Shire. He sort of helped make life fairly easy for me too. Ross Meyer was the first Shire President that I served under and then Jim Witham, Greg Holly and Alf Pagononi.

"Harold, what days do councils meet?"

"Generally on the third Thursday of every month David. Shire Council meetings start at 10 o'clock. Then we have lunch at the recreational complex, which is catered for by one of the Broomehill ladies. At the present time it's Judy Anderson. The meetings go for as long as necessary, but generally we finish at about 4-30 to 5 o'clock."

"Are there any particular memories that stand out whilst on your term of office with Council?"

"Probably the building of the recreational sporting complex. That was a community effort, and was a highlight I think, for a lot of the residents of Broomehill. As I said, we weren't that involved with the community in our early years. Possibly because our children went to the Tambellup School. With 4 young children we didn't get out possibly as much as we could have. My wife was involved with the ladies of Broomehill in summer sports there. Tennis and that sort of thing, but I had my nose to the grindstone on the farm a lot of the time. When the sporting complex was broached, there was a lot of voluntary labour needed for that. A lot of soil and that sort of thing had to be carted there. We used to have rosters for various trucks that were carting. I think that brought the community together really, it certainly involved me a lot more than I had been, and I think it was good."

"Harold can you tell me some of the sports that are catered for in the new complex?"

"Yes, originally bowls and tennis were more in the town site. Now they are virtually all at the sporting complex. We have a beautiful green there for bowls. I'm not involved in any of the sports but my two sons are involved with golf. The golf course is still in the original position. They have got a nice set up for cricket as well."

"Did they expand the golf course?"

"Yes, it is an 18 hole course now. A lot of the community was involved with the expansions. I think part of the extensions are on the old rifle range."

"So do you recall a bit about the old rifle range?"

"Yes, I wasn't involved with that, but the mounds are still there where they shoot. You can still see some of the various different range sites."

"How do they get the water for the bowling greens? Is that off the water supply?"

"I think most of the water is from the town supply. It was a town dam originally erected for the old bowling green. That's used for that at this stage. They are talking about putting in a larger water supply because they would like to reticulate some of the Oval for cricket."

“Do you get one membership for all clubs, or do you join individual clubs even though it is one complex?”

“You pay a complex fee, that covers you for use of facilities at the complex. Then a membership for each of the clubs that you belong to or join.”

“Just going back to a few council matters. Council is a library and a few other benefits to the community. Do people frequent the library to your knowledge?”

“As far as I know. There is computer equipment there. I think it is a type of Telecentre and the public are able to use them. I think there may be a small fee attached to use it, and it is used quite a bit.”

“Has the Broomehill Shire got a website? Is it on the Internet?”

“I think it is. Sorry I’m a bit vague on this, but I’m not involved a lot with that. I think they have got a website.”

“As a councillor with a longstanding term, have you seen changes in Broomehill over these times? Do you feel it is becoming a lot tidier and more complete?”

“Yes, we are in the tidy towns competition each year. I think that helps to make it tidy and neat. Broomehill has always been a nice town as far as I am concerned. There has been more trees planted there and rubbish bins have been upgraded. They look quite attractive, I mean the community ones not the wheely bins. Around the town there has been a lot of paving done, outside the post office, the town hall and the hotel. The hotel has been upgraded a lot too. That hasn’t been a Shire thing, although the Shire have encouraged it. Even to the extent that it has subsidized the rate to a certain extent. So some of the rate payment money that was allowed, from rate payment, was put into the hotel. They even got the verandah replaced, a bull nosed one. I believe the road system is pretty good in the Broomehill shire. Better than most shires, as we’ve got very good up to date equipment with low hours.”

“Harold just on that, you may not know the Shire logo, we make better roads or something.”

“I should know that one David, but I don’t. They are looking at changing the logo and having a town entrance. I think that is probably good when visitors come to the place. One thing I would like to mention is the Aquafest. This was something that brought the town together too. The first one was last year and we are going to have another Aquafest this year. That probably sounds strange. You talk about Aquafest and you talk about water. Broomehill hasn’t got much water. It is held in Holland Park which is named after one of the early pioneers. They decided to hold the Aquafest and invite the locals to bring in their boats as they have a boat judging competition. They ask businesses involved in marine type products to come. They also have old type vintage machinery involved. I think quite a few of the community were quite dubious about it at the time. I’ve got to be honest and say I had my doubts. We have to thank our committee and credit also goes to our Shire President Greg Holly. He was probably the leading force behind it. It turned out to be a great success, there was no entrance fee because we thought it would encourage people to come. It was a community thing more than anything else. There was certainly a lot of people there, between 1000 to 2000.”

“How many boats would have been there?”

“I can’t tell you that. There were lots of boats.”

“Did they have any boats on water for the kids?”

“There is only a dry drain there. We had a fairly big downpour of rain before that and one of our Shire Councilors had the presence of mind to block off the drain, and there was water in there. We had a boat floating on that. For the children, there was a little train made out of drums doing tours around the town.”

“Did they have gilgies for sale, or could you have barbecues?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“That must have been very exciting for Broomehill. Are they going to hold another one?”

“Yes, it will be a little bit different this year. They are looking at incorporating something different, at this stage there is nothing definitely decided.”

“Harold we have just came to the end of our tape, so I would like to thank you for your contribution. It will be greatly appreciated by the people of Broomehill.”