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ROSEWORTHY AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

This is an interview with Alistair Gordon McFarlane, commonly known as Bardy, who graduated with a Roseworthy Diploma of Agriculture in 1972. His Diploma number is 1192. This interview was conducted at the State Library of South Australia on Tuesday the 29th of August 2023. So, it's a welcome, Bardy. It's good for you to come in and talk about your times at Roseworthy. So, let's talk with how you started and what got you going to Roseworthy.

I've actually done Leaving twice and failed twice. And but I had an interest in agriculture because obviously family connections and back in those days most people in the city finished up going and staying on farms with relatives or whatever. So I came in as a late applicant into Roseworthy and that was probably reflected in my first room I was in, which was the last room available. And I think everywhere else they'd done it alphabetically. But I was in with Reg Wilkinson at the top of the stairs, and I think it was either room 1 or 2 that I went in there and my first recollection of meeting other students at there was it must have been the night of the third years off partying or something like that, because at some ungodly hour of the morning the beds were up ended and we finished up on the floor and people started screaming [laughs] and carrying on. So it was an interesting introduction to Roseworthy.

And, you know, let's talk about your first couple of weeks, if you can remember the routines or what was it like to be a, I suppose it was a full-time boarding experience.

Yeah. Look, I quite enjoyed it. We were gainfully employed during the day with lectures and everything else. It was an interesting saga going across to the shop that was run. It used to be over, in the by the end of the corridor in the next building, and people used to go over there with some trepidation because it was always a fear of running into some of the more senior students as part of that. And then, as we spent time there, we understood there was going to be the so-called steeplechase and the auction of horses and various other things. And that was I again, I didn't, wasn't too fussed by that. I did some pretty demeaning things at the time, pushing peanuts up the corridor with my nose and getting people cups of tea early in the morning and that sort of thing. But yeah, it was I think, I found it very beneficial because you actually learnt very quickly about a lot of things around the college. And while I know in later years it was outlawed as bastardisation, I actually think it was quite a useful exercise the way it was done.

With your living up, you're up in the main block there. Was that only the first year? What was the progression of where you lived for the rest of the time?

Only first year in the main block and then we shifted across to the two storey accommodation. I can't recall exactly what that was called, but that was a mixture of second years and third years and RDAT [Roseworthy Diploma of Agricultural Technology] students in there and some of the Plonkies [Oenology students] I think were in there at one stage and then they shifted across to their own accommodation. So it's a mixed bag of people in there. Yeah, it was adequate accommodation. I wouldn't call it luxurious, but you used to get quite attached to it as a sort of a refuge and a place to study. There was a general decorum most times, occasionally it could get out of hand and be an indoor cricket game or something like in played. But I think generally it was pretty well respected that was your house or your home and people respected that except for people coming back from the pub late at night who seemed to lose track of what the rules were.

So was this place like, were your rooms locked or were they unlocked or what was the story?

No, it was basically an open-door policy, remembering that at that stage it was male only. There was no alcohol allowed on campus. In fact, I think we at that stage were barred from any of the adjoining hotels. So there was always a Roseworthy Pub, there was a back room and there was a back room out in some of the pubs. In, I think it was the Railway Hotel in Gawler and as I found later on when I took up rifle shooting with some of the third years, you'd disappear down the back roads and behind every bush there used to be either a bottle or flagon of port or a bottle of beer or something, so you could have a quiet drink later in the afternoon.

And what about the meals and stuff like that? Do you remember what that was like?

Yeah, the meals, I was always fairly happy, but I'm sort of one of these that eat anything that is put in front of me. The abiding memory, though, was Gabe MacGowan, who was one of the cooks who wasn't in the most pristine health most of the time. And good old Gabe would do you a fried egg because that was one thing the college had plenty of, was fresh meat and eggs. But the fried eggs were in the fat that was used for cooking chips. He would drop it in the top and sink to the bottom and come out and it would be instantly fried and put on your plate, which was a pretty interesting way of doing fried eggs.

Good for your cholesterol!

Yeah, we had a couple of competitions, particularly when you are on dairy [milking the cows] or one of the earlier things [early work duties], so there weren't a lot of people in the dining room. You'd start at the table nearest the servery and have two eggs and then you'd go and get two more and move up a

table. And I think I piked out [gave up] at about 6 or 7 eggs, but somebody got up to about 9 or 10 and I, yeah I suspect they weren't very functional that day. But I was going to say the food … the food was reasonably good. The way it was cooked, probably left sometimes left stuff to be desired because they had really good quality meat, but they managed to be able to convert it into less than pristine meals from time to time. But I think the highlight of the week was if you were playing sport, you always got sausage rolls on the Saturday, which were spot on.

Where were you living? Were you living at a place at Brinkworth or were you living at Adelaide then or…?

I was home, mum and dad were living in Adelaide, but I also used to go down to Brinkley at Wellington every opportunity I got to go down there and spend time down there working on the farm, which was good. And I also had relatives down in Victoria and I'd go down there as well.

So when you had time off being at the college, you spent your time, most of your time in Adelaide or your weekends down at Brinkley?

Down at Brinkley? Yeah, in Adelaide to a degree. But over in the Barossa getting tangled up with the wine plonkies was a bit of an experience. By the time we got to third year, usually after a footy game or a cricket game you'd migrate across to the Barossa and the plonkies would lead you astray, quite happily!

So you played, you played in the football team?

Yeah, I played footy up at college. I hadn't actually played footy at school funnily enough. I'd played a lot of basketball but not football. So I played footy. We had the premiership, I think it was in 71, we won the Premiership and that was the local league. So we played Hamley Bridge, a couple of teams from in at Gawler, so Williston and South and Centrals and Lyndoch were in the league. Yeah, it was, it was a reasonable competition. And then once a year at the end of the season, we'd either do a trip interstate to Dookie or Longerenong [Agricultural colleges in Victoria] or they would come across to Roseworthy and we'd play an intercollegiate game, if you like.

And you said you did rifles as well?

Rifle shooting? Yeah. They had a full range out in the paddocks at Roseworthy and they had the butts and I think there were two targets. And then on the corners of all the roads that led into the rifle range, you'd put up your red flags and we're shooting 303s [rifles] at that stage. So they were fairly long, I think 500 to 1000m, but I'm not sure. I can't recall whether the Roseworthy range was a full 1000. I think it was about 800, but we'd go down and shoot at the Dean range and that was also an inter-college sport. So the ag colleges at that stage were Muresk in WA [Western Australia] Hawkesbury in New South Wales, Dookie and Longerenong in Victoria and Gatton in Queensland. And there have been intercollegiate sports which was tennis and rifle shooting.

Did you have to pay for the ammunition, that sort of stuff which you would use or…?

I can't recall ever putting my hand in my pocket for that [laughs].

Yeah. You think it would be expensive? Expensive these days anyway if you had to pay for.

Well, I don't know. It was the ammunition or the shooter, but it wasn't all that accurate [laughs] Some of the ammunition, so it was ex World War Two, I don't know? But certainly, the ammunition was supplied from my recollection. I can't remember buying or paying for any ammunition.

It might have been sort of state, state supplied somehow.

Yeah, well, I don't know. They might have had a huge cache hidden away somewhere, but that was always a fairly interesting exercise, riffle shooting.

And with the, any other sport you mentioned the other day about, you played some rugby at one stage?

Oh, we, we entered the sevens competition down at Elizabeth and there was I think there were a couple of quick guys and then myself, Neville Sprig, Don Chambers, who are big, big blokes. We went and played the Sevens. The only problem we had, we had no idea what the rules were. And so if someone on the opposition side got the ball, our objective was to maul [heavy tackle] him completely. And when you were running, you just took off and knocked anybody else over [laughs]. So we... Yes, didn't understand that in rugby you actually respect the referee because if you say anything back you just get penalised.

And so we got marched off the field a couple of times for querying the ref and the referee's wisdom or where he came from and his heritage [using derogatory language!].

Yeah. So how did you do in the competition?

I think we came about third out of about ten teams, so not too badly.

Yeah, well, that's terrific. Let's get to some of the more academic stuff at Roseworthy. Like what about lectures and that sort of stuff? Was it a bit of a shock when you left school to come to this different sort of environment?

No. I mean, as I said, I'd repeated Leaving, so I'd had my academic fill. No, lectures were interesting. I was, some of the lecturers were fairly interesting too. I can remember one of them was the farm bookkeeping or accounting. I can't remember the exact name of the course, but I loved the lecturer, he'd turn up and look at his matchbox and then start the lecture [laughs]. So, but he did come out with one of my favourite quotes at one stage, and he put it on the board one morning and that was "When you're up to your ass in alligators, it's a bit late to remember the original plan was to drain the creek!" [laughs].

It might have been a guy called Nankervis, I think it was Tony.

Tony. Oh yeah, I was being polite, [laughs] but no, and the other lecturer who sticks in my mind was Frank Hardy for vet science, and I feel it was called Anatomy at that stage and he was a delightful fella, although he used to, people used to feel a bit terrorized by him because he sort of had a fairly strong persona. And when he did the practical, you did two parts of the exam. One was a written and the other was you'd go in and sit down and he'd pull out bones and point at them and ask you what it was, which was a bit nerve wracking. You'd hope he'd pull out the bone that you knew what it was, where it came from. But there was a lovely photo in one of the student magazines of him in his front yard with the kilt on, talking to an emu, eye to eye. Yeah, so but a lot of, a lot of the lectures, yeah there was information being passed out that I found the more interesting stuff was some of the assignments you were asked to do and you'd do obscure things. I remember one in poultry where I looked at feeding crayfish shell to poultry and what that did to the eggs in terms of colour. Totally impractical but it was an interesting little topic that I had to look at. And then you had the sheep, you know, the practical on the farm,

physical work at dairy and up at the sheep and shearing and slaughtering and all those sorts of things. And then the grain and the wheat development and those sort of areas. But I remember poor old Cliffy Hooper being up and we were talking about the Dorsets and he had a number of rams in his yard and we were all sitting around the fence and he kept looking at the rams and he said, “one thing you can't do is turn your back on him”, and at that point he looked away and this ram went whack, and took him over! [laughs].

And so being off, you had family properties, did that give you a few advantages over the agricultural language and knowledge and stuff?

Yeah, I think it did to a degree. I was pretty familiar with a lot of the stuff that we were doing. Engineering was a whole new world. That was interesting and at that stage they had new engineering building up by the farm opposite the farm office. So, yes, I think it did probably, could be a bit of an insight into a lot of stuff that we were being taught at that stage.

Can you remember the routines of I mean, you had outside work and lectures. What sort of ratios of how many days of this and that you did?

I think it was one, one. It was sort of a practical out there. But look, I wouldn't be sure on that at this stage. But, and then there was weekend work and that sort of thing, and you'd rotate through dairy or poultry or horticulture or whatever it was, or on the farm, wheat breeding or breeding, cereal breeding. And the other thing that was good is occasionally you'd get off farm trips to go and work with, particularly the cereal guys, to go and look at plots and set them up and help with getting them in the ground. And when I first got to Roseworthy, we were still using horses for some of the stock work, but I think by the time I left, they had retired the horses. Yeah, and we basically, I think Mini Mokes [open top, low level recreational vehicles] had just turned up. Well, that was great fun if you got to drive the Mini Moke. And there was a guy named Hayden who loved his motorbikes and he worked on the farm and they used to have a motorbike race from Adelaide up to Gawler, and then they'd do circuits around through the bush and through all the bush tracks. And I think he won it one year. But here's my abiding memory of him as there was a loading ramp, and he'd come flying along and take off the loading ramp and land out in, in the yard beyond it. So yeah, he was an interesting character.

And what are things like you had exams twice a year, do you remember that sort of stuff? Was it the end of semester or…?

Yeah, that was the time when you attempted to go and pray over in the chapel [laughs]. Look, exams were if you've done your work, they were reasonably straightforward. Yeah, I can't recall the exams per se, but it seemed logical, I didn't get overly concerned about them. I must have been, I wasn't overly concerned about studying that hard. I was having a great time with the freedom up at Roseworthy. Yeah, look, occasionally you get some obscure questions, but most times the good thing about it was that if they put obscure questions in, you could guarantee that the rest of the year were going to be in trouble on the same question, so, I didn't get too concerned [laughs].

So how many, how many exams you reckon you did at any one time?

When the exam cycle came around, oh, it would have been 6 or 8. I think it was, yeah, probably 6 or 8. I honestly can't remember. It would reflect whatever the lectures were that we were having at that stage. So it was farm management anatomy. Well, it depends a year or two because you had different subjects at each of the years going forward. But no. So, exams weren't my forte in terms they had, they were necessary evil, I guess, that you had to go through. Yeah.

Did you have to do any supplementaries?

I think I did supps one year, but I can't remember what it was for. I may not have...no, look, I'd need to try and dig out my academic record, which wouldn't have been particularly brilliant, but I think I was sufficient to get through. But it certainly wasn't up there with blokes like Alan Richardson, who absolutely shone and Alan was interesting because he didn't come from any agricultural background, but he just loved everything about agriculture and everything around it and you could see that in the work time he spent studying and everything clear in his own head. Yeah, it was good.

He ended up running the shop too, in the end, didn't he? The college shop.

Dougy Clifford, I think, was the one who did that.

Oh yeah.

Doug Clifford from down at Penola. I think he…

Was he in your year?

No, he was a year behind, but he just took to it like a duck to water because we had the shop and then we shifted it over to what was the old…

The old bird cage.

Bird cage. Yeah. And put it in there and lashed out and put things like milkshakes on the menu because we could then access milk from the dairy. So Doug did a very good job. He absolutely thrived in that.

Perhaps you could explain to our listeners what you meant by the bird cage.

Oh, the bird cage was a building with bird wire right around the outside of the veranda. And it had a veranda and it had an inside building. I'm not sure what it was used originally for. It was used for I think we did judo and boxing and various other sort of indoor physical activities.

I think it was there to keep the birds eating the grain from the Plant Breeding [cereal genetics].

Oh, okay so that's what it was originally put there for! Yeah. So it was redundant by the time we got there. It wasn't being used for that purpose because all the plant breeding had just had some new buildings built. But yeah. So it was, it was quite a big building and so they shifted the shop into that and that's where Doug ran the shop.

You...while you were there, you moved into the leadership roles in the, in the Student Representative Council, the SRC. Can you tell us a bit about how you got into that and what it was like?

Bad luck [laughs]. I know that I think Mort Clark was the first-year rep and then when it got to the second year I think we had two reps on it and I was one and I think Mort was still on at that stage and I forget who was president; It might have been Johnny Chaps. Johnny Chappell might have been president at that stage.

In 1970 that would have been.

Yeah, so Chaps was president. We were kicking it around because we were in a situation where it was called the Student Representative Council, but we had difficulty, unless it was the principal's mindset that, that would occur, it didn't occur. So, when you say student representative council, yes, we were representative in that we came from the student body but our ability to influence the way the college was being run or the things that were impacting on students was pretty limited. We'd meet regularly with the principal who at that stage was Bob Herriot, but he was the one who determined exactly what happened and when it happened and how it happened. So it was and that then led and I think it was the end of second year, beginning of third year where we changed from the Student Representative Council to the Student Union Council, which unfortunately had the acronym of SUC and that was endeavouring to try and say, well, hang on, we've actually got a role here to try and influence the way the College is run from not only academic but physically and the welfare of students etc, which was much more difficult as a student representative body, which had limited ability to do anything. But this also, in fairness, I think there was a bit of an apathetic student community. People were generally just wanting to get on with their business and their life. And I think if you look at the '72 student magazine, there's a very not satirical but it's really a little article I wrote about voting on whether we should have more custard or less custard and that was the sort of the feeling from where I was of trying to get the students motivated to say, well hang on, we can do stuff better than we are at the present time. And I think that was also when the Australian Union of Students was starting to get active and saying to universities, we need to get a better say in what's actually happening as part of our education and part of our, in our case, residential position within the college.

Can you remember some actual...I think you were talking about it before about negotiating some stuff with some students who got into a bit of trouble there?

Yeah. Look, that would come up from time to time. People would go off campus and or off college and quite often get on the turps [alcohol] and come back, you know, and then there could be a bit of a ruckus. I remember one where some people were trying to break into a room upstairs because the resident in the room didn't want them coming in and there was a door broken or something, and we got summoned at some ungodly hour of the evening to say that this had happened. And then the result of that was that the students involved were paraded in front of Herriot and that was the end of them. They

were out, which we argued. Well, yes, if you want to suspend them from residential, by all means. That's, you know, if that's what you believe is the appropriate penalty, but at least allow them to finish the academic part of their course and we failed dismally on that. That was not accepted by, by the administration.

Yeah. So in hindsight, the way the College was run in those days by Herriot was a bit draconian compared to how things are done in modern times.

Oh, very autocratic. Yeah, it was. I remember there was in the first year we had been out, I think we'd been through the steeplechase, so we'd graduated in the eyes of the other students and we went out to Templars Hall and there were kegs of beer and everything else. And we had the usual sculling race [drinking competition] against all the various year groups. And we came back to college at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning and surprise, surprise, Bob Harriet was down there posting a letter. Anyway, he was appalled by the behaviour of everybody. So that was in my first year and we lost all of our first-year holidays that were coming up in May and instead of that, we were sent out with brand new axes to cut down a whole lot of pine trees, which retribution, I guess you'd call it. But I was always puzzled as to what he was doing down there at 2am, because his house was a good kilometre away, but obviously he'd got a tip off somewhere that there was a bit of a ruckus going on. Yeah. So...

How many students were gated in that affair?

I think it was well over half if not two thirds or three quarters of the whole student populace because it was all years were out there. And I don't recall it would have been too many got out of it, who avoided it. But it did generate some interesting bonding amongst the people who were gated for that period because you were given an axe and you know, go and chop wood effectively and chopping pine is not the best thing. But we did entertain ourselves as one pine tree that had fallen over and it was on an angle off the ground, about six foot off the ground at the thinnest end and on the ground at the base, and so we created the Master Axemans competition, where much the same as they do at the Royal Show, where they start the wood chopping on a handicap event. So the first person will start and then so many seconds later the second and the theory is you'll all finish about the same time. So the person, we lined six people up and the first person stood out as far as they could on the branch about six feet off the ground. And then the next person was about 8 or 10 feet inside them and so on, until the base of

the tree and the person on the highest point started first started cutting, and then the person on the inside of them started cutting and you weren't allowed to get down until you'd cut through your bit. And fortunately, nobody got injured, but it was quite entertaining watching that happen.

Well, it's very interesting. Well, let's move on for your time after being at Roseworthy, you went back to the family property and...

Yeah, I went back to Wellington on the River Murray and worked down there for 14 years, basically. When I went back, it was run very much as a pastoral proposition, so it was about 24,000 acres at that stage. You'd see the sheep probably three times a year, shearing, lamb marking and crutching. So no drenching, no other sheep work other than checking waters and that sort of thing. And by the time I'd left we'd developed about 10,000 acres of Lucerne, dryland Lucerne, which was, yeah, it was, it was beautiful country. But it occurred, the development occurred at about the time the Lucerne, I think it was Lucerne flea, started to wipe out a lot of the Lucerne in the upper South East and down through the... sort of down towards Keith. But because our stands were new, we were still getting away with using Hunter River, so we weren't having to go to the resistance stands which hadn't yet been developed and that gave us a beautiful resource because it sat over... that country has got a very shallow water table, being adjacent to the lakes and so Lucerne with its roots, once it got into the water table would flourish and particularly out towards Cooke Plains. I can remember one year, one very dry, almost a drought year you could graze the Lucerne off and it looked like there was nothing there and you'd come back 6 or 8 weeks later in the rotation and you'd have Lucerne up, you know, 18 inches, a foot, two feet high, and everybody driving past would swear you were irrigating it. Well, effectively that's what was happening because the roots were down in the water. So it was yeah, it was a good, good period of time on the farm.

And you lived near Wellington, if I remember rightly?

Yeah, so Wellington's about an hour south of Adelaide, just below Tailem Bend, where the highway divides between the Dukes Highway goes through to Melbourne and the Princes Highway goes South and the property is actually divided by the Princes Highway and then touches the Dukes Highway out at Cook Plains. So yeah, we had some interesting stuff, we had a lot of livestock theft going on at one stage and so we organised all the local farmers got together and we organised to go out and do patrols at

night and it was before we had CB radios but not UHF and we were just getting into UHF radios at that stage so we could talk to each other. Anyway, we did it for about a month and a half and that stopped any further thefts. Even though none went on, the police weren't very happy; they were thankful we were a mob of vigilantes. Anyway, it was it was an interesting exercise to see how the community or all the neighbouring farmers got together on it to try and solve the common issue, which was good.

Now, you didn't stay there forever. You moved, went back, did some, went back to university and did some more studies. What was, what precipitated that?

I got sick of the relatives [laughs]. No, it's being a large family property you've got by the time I got down there, we had close to 30 shareholders in the company spread around Australia. And one of the things I did do was try and consolidate that back into a much smaller number of shareholders, which by the time I left, we'd got back to two families, so about 6 or 8, but always being questioned about what you were doing and I just got sick of it and Dad was a lawyer in town [Adelaide] and so I'd always had an interest in law. I'd sat as a JP [Justice of the Peace] in Tailem Bend until the police decided I shouldn't be there. But that wasn't because I'd committed an offence. It was because they brought these cases that were just complete nonsense. They'd booked a truck driver who had the weights and measures guys and pulled him over and they'd gone through him, held him up for an hour and a half and eventually they found he was eight inches over height on his truck and they prosecuted him. And it came up in front of me and they sort of presented their case and I sort of conferred with my fellow JP, and we dismissed it. There was no cost, and that didn't endear us to the powers that be. So, I wasn't asked to come back again and sit on the bench [laughs]. But no, I'd always had an interest in law and, and yeah, it sort of made sense to shift down to town [Adelaide] and we rented a place over at Oaklands Park and I became a full time student. And then during the, during the holidays I worked in various bottle shops and sold Christmas trees for a number of years from the Christmas tree farm, which obviously is fairly seasonal and did all sorts of truck driving, drove interstate for a number of the breaks between study. Yeah, so it was all good experience.

So, what was it like as a mature age student going back to study again? Was it different?

It was because you tend... If you're managing a property or whatever you're doing, you tend to read a lot of stuff and digest it. But I'd been used to doing that so reading wasn't the problem. But the first exam I sat was criminal law, and there were four questions or five questions and the first two and a half

questions that I got done, I basically got 100%, but I didn't get the full five and six, and so I failed the exam. And then I actually came into the university and did a study course with the mature age, and that then led to a much better performance as I then had to manage my time effectively, even though I knew a lot of stuff that I want to put down, you just had to put the bones down, you couldn't dribble on forever. And after that I don't think I... no I didn't even come close to failing everything, I think I had an average of 75 or 80% for most of the way through, which was good. In fact, I won the Constitutional Law Prize in second year. As yeah, that was, we had Alex Castles was the lecturer and loved to go into all the ins and outs of constitution law, particularly the stuff that originally came out of England. So I was capable of telling a good story with people so, I just managed to jag [laughs] that prize for some reason.

So you would have been in your 30s, I guess, by then, yeah?

Yeah, I came back at a tender age of 34, so 1984 came back. Mum had died the same year I came back and I think that sort of destabilised me a bit and when I thought no, where am I going? Because I was basically working full day doing the books at night on the farm and, you know, getting paid an absolute pittance at that stage. And I thought, no, I can do better than this. And Sue was teaching. She was a kindergarten teacher. So like all good farmers, you marry a good income. So she kept on teaching and I was just a full time student. But, it was interesting getting into the mature age admission because when I applied the university came back and said No no, you've matriculated. So, and I said, “well, I haven't, even though I sat twice, and I passed a whole bunch of subjects” and they said, “oh you have”, and I said “well, give me the certificate” and then they came back and said “oh, we can't because you haven't matriculated”, so one of those lovely little conundrums. So, after that I said, well, I want to sit in the mature age, and they said, “oh, you can't, it's too late. You should have applied by this date”, which I'd already applied, but they'd... so it ended up that I came down and did my admission exams for mature age the same day that all the Asian enrolments were happening from students coming in from Asia. And they sat me next to the Vice Chancellor's office, and the Asian students who were enrolling were all coming in to the Vice Chancellor's office, but obviously they couldn't read the sign because they kept walking in while I was trying to sit the exam, which was entertaining and there was two parts to the exam, one was a multiple choice and the other was an essay. Everybody else in the mature age had done the multiple choice one day and then the essay a week later. So I had to do the whole lot in one day, which I did. And then I actually topped the whole thing of mature age entry into law. And the dean at that stage said “well, there's no places” and John Bradson actually intervened on my behalf and said

"Well, that's ridiculous. This guy has been stuffed around, we'll find you a place" and so that's how I got into law school. It was a convoluted methodology to get in, but I just treated it very much as a full time job. So, I'd come in on the train at 8:00 o'clock in the morning and go home at 5:00-530 at night, and just studied full time and then worked during the breaks. One thing I did see, though, was a lot of kids who are really smart, bright, who'd been in the, you know, primary and secondary education for such a long time, they got to university and it was the first time they hadn't had discipline you master, so make your own choices. And there were some really smart people who failed and failed university. Then first year, even though they'd come in with brilliant qualifications academically and it was just related to the fact that they'd had 13 years or 11 years of concentrated study and then they suddenly had these freedoms. You could go down to the Uni bar, there were blokes or women to chase and was... I always found it very sad that they did that. And with my kids I more or less said after they'd finished school, "You need to take a gap year" be it go off overseas somewhere or go and work somewhere, but just have a gap off from study. Because I thought that the pressures that were building as you get through your secondary schooling to perform and to get good results, they would just need that time out.

Did you... did your time at Roseworthy you think give you a different background or skill level as a student again?

Yeah, I think agriculture generally, you're trying to find solutions and you're not interested in pardon the French, dicking around, you want to find how to you know how do you resolve this issue. And I think the law is very much about how do you resolve this issue, this conundrum. So there's a lot of stuff I really enjoyed. I thought it was excellent. My...I did a...did come in with that background of agriculture and solution finding and the fact that I came in at the mature age obviously helped from my perspective. Um, yeah. So I think I did come in with a healthy respect for what you're actually trying to achieve, very focused when I went back to uni.

And when you finished your course, you pursued an agricultural bent in that career area didn't you?

Yeah, it was interesting because Adelaide Uni Law School saw itself as a black letter law school. Black letter, meaning you write about the law, pure and simple. So trusts or corporations or whatever it is. I did my honours degree and my topic for my honours was whether people who are regulated out of existence are entitled to compensation and by that, I mean it was a time when there was the native veg

[vegetation] legislation had come in or was getting close. And I was interested to determine whether at a state level there was any right to compensation where the state enacts some law for the benefit of everybody else. But you as a farmer suffer and suffer in the sense that you can't go on with what you proposed, that you've invested yourself into. And that was interesting because the dean at that stage wasn't happy that I was doing that because it was not about trusts or the usual sort of black letter law. It was more a social question that I was trying to nut out and answer. And well, the short answer was that at a federal level, yes, if the Commonwealth is taking, then compensation, it's in the constitution. At a state level unless it's in the legislation, you don't get compensated. And so subsequently you find that the native veg stuff, they actually put a compensation in there. They didn't call it compensation, they called it a financial assistance, but effectively it was recognised that they did impact on farmers who had not clear felled everything in sight but was maybe developing their properties over time. They were impacting to a large degree on farmers who had done what I'd call the right thing, and suddenly the state had come along and said "Well you can't do that anymore" and in a lot of cases, it was, you know, I spent a lot of time with a lot of farmers, and there were some horrible cases where people were close to suicide because they couldn't, you know, they'd backed in. This is what they were going to do with their property over time. And yeah, and eventually we started to get some sensible compensation, albeit called financial assistance paid and at least Yelland [Leith], who was ex Roseworthy [1960] guy, he was very good. He came in as part of the Native Vegetation Council or authority at that stage and was prepared to sit down and look at what the actual costs were and what was reasonable compensation.

So, this honours project that you did ended up leading you to be engaged with a law firm?

Yeah, look, I went and worked with Piper Alderman mainly because one of the lecturers was a New Zealand guy named Corkery, and they were looking for rugby players and I thought, oh, well, I'll go and play rugby, you know? So I had a very limited career in rugby union.

This is at Adelaide Uni?

Yeah, Adelaide and the tender age of 38, I think it was my last game [laughter] and the last game occurred because we were playing Onkaparingas, who had famously one of the members of the Onkaparinga footy team had bitten the ear off one of our guys in the A-grade and this was the first

match back where Onkaparinga, this guy was back and allowed to play again and he was playing Adelaide Uni again in the A-grade. And so a lot of guys boycotted. So I played thirds and then I played seconds on the same day. And the second game I was, I tackled a big Samoan guy, I think it was, who was coming down the pitch with the ball and I absolutely flattened him and we ended up with a bit of fisticuffs rolling around on the ground. The ref [referee] got a bit grumpy, but I went out for a lineout where, you know rugby lineout, and you're all you're in a line and you're leaping up to try and grab the ball. And as I went up I saw this fist coming towards me. Anyway, I got smacked in the chops from in the mouth for my troubles and went down. Not satisfied of having hit me in the face, he then raked his boot down across my face and I got up, blood squirting everywhere and I turned to the ref and I said "You can stick this game!" and walked off. And fortunately, one of the A graders was an oral surgeon so he managed to sort of give me a bit of an anaesthetic and stitch me up in the clubrooms. But yeah, that was my last game of rugby.

Memorial! So how long did you stay with Piper Alderman?

Stayed there for 12 years. Came in as obviously the solicitor, finished up as a partner, did a lot of work with obviously rural stuff so the native vegetation. I actually had probably 20 or 30 people, I was doing some work illegally or not illegally but off the books, farmers who are being affected by the native veg and that practice grew, did a lot of work for the fishing industry which again primary production the use of natural resources. So, I enjoyed working with the farmers and the fishing guys because they were real people. I also did a lot of big commercial litigation cases, which is people playing with other people's money and so you... well, I enjoyed the challenge of putting all that together. I was much happier working with the farmers. We did one called the Bi-Lo and the Egg Board, which was challenging the ability of the South Australian Egg Board to stop Bi-Lo supermarkets bringing eggs in from interstate and that succeeded and that basically was the end of the Egg Board or broke that monopoly of the Egg Board in South Australia. So there was some interesting sort of agriculture related cases. Another one was down in Tasmania looking at abalone and canning abalone and the technique that was being used by this particular company. One of the, one of their scientists actually took the information and provided it to a company in Victoria. So it was a case about that, finished up going... we lost on the first instance and then went on appeal and won three zip in the full court. So it was an interesting time. It's also the time when Native Title first recognised and the legislation came in. At that stage pastoralists were the subject of the first claims put into South Australia play, particularly up in the Flinders Ranges with the

Adnyamathanha. And I was talking to SAFF one day, South Australian Farmers Federation, and they said look, we can't pay you, but are you happy to come and talk to these people? And we did. And I went up there and up to the Flinders and met with some of the pastoralists and then we like all farmers or pastoralists, most times they're asset rich but cash poor and we ran an argument to the Commonwealth Government for legal aid to help them deal with this new thing called Native Title that they hadn't done anything to attract. It was just the law had become, you could put a claim in and there were all sorts of outrageous statements being made by some of the claimants like and I can remember old Gordon Coulthard, I think he's passed away. Gordon was the first claim in South Australia, but he turned up at the property and said, Oh, I'm just coming to have a look at my new house. And so there was all this fear going on. But we did manage to get legal aid funding out of Canberra. We ran the argument, well, it's not their choice, why are you, why are we being, why are pastoralists and agricultural people being discriminated against? They've...you know they have done nothing, but they've been dragged in and asked to participate and get legal advice. And that was really my introduction to Native Title and everything that went with that and by the time I finished at Piper Alderman, I was basically representing pastoralists, farmers, fishers, local government, mining, oil, gas across the whole state. I think there was only one claim where I didn't have some clients. So it was a pretty big practice right across the state.

But you then moved on from there into other work?

Yeah, the…I got a call, or I got a letter arrived the day I left for overseas and I didn't see it until I got back and were away for three months. And I got back and it was a letter asking if I'd be interested in going into the National Native Title Tribunal as a full time member. And I got back, and I got the letter, and I rang them up and I said, “Look, I'm back, but obviously it may have shifted on”. And they said “Oh, no, come along” and so I went to do an interview in Adelaide and was appointed as a full-time member, which is an appointment by the Governor-General. So, it's an independent statutory body, but the appointments by the Governor-General and that meant then as a full-time member, you had the role of sort of education, mediation and then litigation. I spent most of the time in mediation. I did a little bit around the education stuff but mediating right around Australia with the National Native Title, Native... National Native Title Tribunal. And I think I worked in every state except South Australia initially. And the reason I couldn't work in South Australia was perceived conflict of interest, which subsequently I was asked to go up to the Pitjantjatjara lands, to the west of Marla and address a big gathering of the people out there, which I did, wandered up on myself and went out in the bush and there would have been 150

200 senior men, and I got given the microphone and told to introduce myself. And then I got cross-examined of which footy team I barracked for [laughs] and but no, they were satisfied that I could be relied on not to be biased one way or the other if I was asked to come in and mediate. And then subsequently I did some mediation at a claim around Marla and then over in Birdsville and basically across the whole state after that. So yeah, it was an interesting, it got me back. I mean, what I loved about the tribunal, you were paid to go camping around Australia, which was fabulous and you met some fabulous people and you saw some amazing country. Yeah, so I was in the tribunal for eight years, and I was the first person ever to resign from the tribunal as a member. And I got a nice letter back from the governor general thanking me for my service. But I resigned because I was going into work with BHP to do all their Native Title negotiations up in the Pilbara for their iron ore mines, which I did for seven years.

And then and then you retired after that or?

Notionally retired. But the...I was still... while I was in the tribunal, I was still chairing the Seafood Council in South Australia. The guys I worked in the industry were keen to get me in there, so I chaired that, but because I was a Commonwealth employee in Commonwealth government, I couldn't accept any other remuneration. And so they used to send me bucket loads of prawns and crayfish and oysters and I thought, yep, that's a fair deal. So because I'd had that close linkage, somehow Western Australian Government learnt that I'd been involved in the seafood industry so I was brought in to do some mediation work in... with the seafood industry over there and the government. And then I did a fishing one up in the area around Carnarvon. So one of the commercial fisheries where there was conflict between recreationals trying to catch snapper and the commercials who were catching snapper. We developed a management plan which everybody accepted and then BHP got me back to help them out in the area out to the east of Kalgoorlie, out in the nickel province to do another negotiation out there. And there's just things flying left, right and centre. Fortunately I was in a position I could pick and choose. If it sounded like it was going to be entertaining, I'd go and do it. Otherwise I wouldn't. Which is a good position to be in. But at the same time, we were building a house down on the farm at Bridgetown and trying to get that set up. So, yeah.

You've had an interesting career.

Yeah, well, it's entertaining.

Taken you everywhere. Well, look, we might wind it up here and I thank you very much for giving your time up to contribute to the Roseworthy Agricultural College Oral History collection.

END OF INTERVIEW
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