ORAL HISTORY – 1989 RVIB ORAL HISTORY LUNCH 1989

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| 0021 | CHAIRMAN (UNIDENTIFIED) |
|  | Can I call you to attention |
| 0026 | CHAIRMAN: |
|  | I must call you to attention.  And firstly, let me welcome you, as I hope one of your oldest friends to this luncheon today which has been designed specifically that we can tap into your memories of this great institute that we, we’ve all been part of |
| 0043 | RESPONSE |
|  | Hear, hear |
| 0045 | CHAIRMAN: |
|  | I….I’ll tell you know, who, who we’ve got here, well, you know me as chairman. Norm Rees, my old colleague over there and I’m telling you who has lost an inch or two in height, but he denies it. I’m looking for Norm for his background in music and braille writing.  We’re looking for my old mate Jimmy Smith, not for (indecipherable) pleased to know, but in association with his (indecipherable) the school, the mat shop and the union, ‘cos Jim and I were both presidents at various times.  I’m sorry to tell you that Dick and Ethel Sutcliffe couldn’t come because Dick, unfortunately is unwell.  My old mate Charlie, my colleague at the Trojan club days…..athletes, cricket, basket shop. He wasn’t a bad basket maker incidentally, he made a very good eighteen inch basket and that’s about all he did. He used to make four a day at one stage when he was young and fit. He’d come back on the board and the bugger was bludging. |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE (PRESUMED TO BE CHARLIE) |
|  | I did too |
| 0139 | CHAIRMAN: |
|  | I said, ‘What are you doing? How do you fill in your time Charlie?’ and he said, ‘Well, there’s no pressure on, there’s no piece work anymore.’ |
| 0146 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE (PRESUMED TO BE CHARLIE) |
|  | It used to be nice too |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | There’s Ray Smart of course, my old mate Ray. My competitor from the Trojan Club days. One of the dirtiest wrestlers Victoria ever produced. |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Laughter and indecipherable conversations |
| 0159 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Mat shop, mat shop, you knew it well and the Trojan club. And my old mate Alf. The strongest hand gripper in the institute |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | Still is |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | If you didn’t get your hand solidly locked in Alf’s hand before he started, my god, you suffered. And my old mate Reuben who I’ve had a lot to do with over the years and he’s a great credit to himself and this organisation. |
| 0224 | INIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE (PRESUMED TO BE REUBEN) |
|  | Thank you |
| 0226 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | That’s true, and I am genuine in this and I am generally am genuine, ‘cos I am fairly frank in what I say. The girls we’ve got with us today of course…. |
| 0233 | UNIDENTIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | We’ve got Edna over there |
| 0234 | CHAIRMAN: |
|  | Edna, the delightful Edna. Well, we’ve listened about her activities, you know, in skipping and so forth, and she would never give in and that’s the spirit that predominates amongst this group, the spirit that kept us all going. And I may say, as Jim keeps reminding me, ‘We are the Trojan boys. |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Muffled responses |
| 0254 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | From Blucher….. From Charlie, and Jimmy, and Ray and Alf and myself… and I would say that, that ‘Trojan Club’ laid a foundation for all of us for fitness and if I may say so, sportsmanship that you don’t often find prevalent today.  The girls with us today, you’ll be pleased to know, there’s of course Marge up the end who you know fairly well. She only goes back a year or two in association with the institute and in that year or two, she carried on superbly, I’ll report to you. |
|  | RESPONSE: |
|  | Laughter |
| 0328 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | We’ve got Linley Wallace whom you all know and Linley’s part of our structure so that we can get our history and our museum functioning properly.  Lorraine Bolton….. Where’s Lorraine? |
| 0335 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | She’s out washing the dishes. |
| 0343 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Very, very admirable past time for Lorraine, a delightful girl and I might aIso say, she’s got very nice eyes.  My mate Adrian Gallagher who is a son of a friend of mine, Gayle Gallagher, my local pharmacist who I visit occasionally. Adrian is a tower of strength in the library as you all probably know  And we’ve got also our delightful volunteer and a free loader today, is Patricia McQueen. She’s just up there, she looks like a teenager, but she assures me she is a year or two past that stage. But she’s got the nicest smile around the table |
| 0420 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | An interesting age |
| 0422 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Yes, very interesting age.  This is the first luncheon that we proposed to give researching the history of the institute because the oldest amongst us of course is Alf who’s nudging eighty-five next month and he was at the school from 1916 or 17  And Normie Rees was there around about the same time. Normie could have only been a pup at that stage and (indecipherable)  Bull Adams of course is a proper designation of Bull’s performance because he was very, very solid, I think fourteen or fifteen stone when I first caught up with him. And we used to have Rex up on the landing outside the basket shop and the pushing and shovelling that went on there was incredible.  Now, we’re going to….we’ll hear of course,… and incidentally, I hope you enjoyed your lunch because we decided with your long time association with the institute, this year deserved we give you a proper feed. And I would like to ask our dear friend Margaret to outline what we expect from you and I’ll hand over to Margaret. |
| 0536 | RESPONSE |
|  | Applause and then indecipherable conversations |
| 0551 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | He’s still alive, up in Queensland, probably married to his seventh wife. |
| 0555 | RESPONSE |
|  | Laughter and indecipherable conversation |
| 0600 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | He was always a man on honour  Right, Margaret’s got the chair |
| 0610 | SPEAKER MARGARET |
|  | When we… It’s been a long time since the idea of developing a museum was first conceived, in fact, it’s been a long time between drinks and we’ve made several attempts, all of which have unfortunately crashed, rather sadly around our ears. However, this time it seems as though we’re up and away and the major problem that we have is to try to gather information about so many aspects of the organisation. There are so many areas that we need to cover.  Now, you gentlemen are amongst the oldest if you like…… well you’re not amongst the oldest…. I suppose there are others who fall into that group but we thought that the history of the organisation should be tackled perhaps from the turn of the century or as far back as we can go up until about the 1940’s. Then we should take it from 1940 to 1960 and then from 1960 to 1980 and onwards.  Now you may have some ideas about on whether or not you think that will work, but we certainly, to begin with, want to tackle the area between the turn of the century or as far back as we can get to the 1940’s and we felt that you were the best group of people to gather together to try to begin to sort out how we might go about that. Because you represent a lot of different areas. For example, Norm, with music and braille writing and other areas as well. You’re all involved in everything but maybe you’ve got specialities as well. So, I guess what we want to find out from you is which, which people in this group would be interested in working in which area and how best you think we should tackle that.  Not an easy task I know, because we’ve got music and braille writing and we’ve got the union, we’ve got the mat shop, we’ve got the school, we’ve got piano tuning, the orchestra. |
| 0755 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Don’t forget sport |
| 0756 | SPEAKER MARGARET |
|  | Okay |
| 0758 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | Athletics and dancing |
|  | UNIDENTIIFED MALE VOICE |
|  | Cricket |
| 0800 | SPEAKER MARGARET |
|  | Athletics, cricket and dancing. That’s a good one. Dancing. And what can you tell us about that Edna? |
| 0803 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh, quite a bit |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Yes, that’s good because we want ….. (Interjections with indecipherable background conversations) I would suggest that you start off at the beginning with Norm Rees |
| 0821 | SPEAKER MARGARET |
|  | Yes? |
| 0822 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And go back to 1915 and Norm you could give you an idea of when you came to school (muffled indecipherable speech) was like… (Indecipherable muffled conversations) Say some of you, um, the factory… (Indecipherable comments) …the concert party. |
| 0836 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | I know a lot about that |
| 0837 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable comments) Yeah this is good And then of course your braille writing. If you could give us some idea of what things were like (Indecipherable)  Norman Holland you have the chair |
| 0853 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I go back a heck of a long way, don’t I? (indecipherable background comments) When I….. The first day I was here I met George Finland. Of course, he’s gone now, but ah……he was only four years old then. But anyway, Miss Ashton, Matilda, Tilly Ashton and Miss Bryant were the teachers then and Dobson was the headmaster.  And I went there for a few years until 1922 I went to an outside school then and that was the last I had of school there. |
| 0936 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Where’d you go to school? |
| 0937 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
| 0938 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Where’d you go to school? |
| 0941` | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I went to Gardiner Central School for two years and got me Intermediate and then Jack Burns and I went to Melbourne High School for a year and I got ‘Leaving’ then but after that I was put in charge of what they called a reference library, I think, just opposite the old dining room |
| 1008 | RESPONSE |
|  | Indecipherable background comments |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Anyway, after that from 1936 to half way through 40 I was out in the country concert party and we went all over Victoria and part of New South and Jack (indecipherable) and Alf Broadway was the manager of that show |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Indecipherable |
| 1014 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
| 1035 | RESPONSE |
|  | Indecipherable |
| 1037 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Well Ron was the brother and Alf was the manager. He was the head bloke. |
| 1044 | CHAIRMAN: |
|  | He used to have his own show and his wife got killed |
| 1048 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
| 1044 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | He had his own show and then his wife got killed in an accident and then old Stan Hedger got into (Indecipherable) house. That was the history |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Multiple indecipherable comments |
| 1103 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | 1920 |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | 1919 |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
| 1106 | 1920 in April |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable) Chair….Because you’re being recorded. You’re being recorded so let them speak. Anybody, any comments, straight through the chair |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Indecipherable background noises and comments |
| 1118 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | I want to ask a normal question here because I think it is important.  He went to Gardiner and then he got his Leaving. What years would that be when you got your Leaving at Melbourne High? |
| 1126 | SPEAKER HOLLAND: |
|  | 1924 |
| 1129 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | Twenty-four. Thank you |
| 1130 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Twenty-two and three, I was at Gardiner and then went to Melbourne High for a year and it was 1924. Twenty-two and twenty-three I was at Gardiner and then twenty-four at Melbourne High |
| 1146 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | A question Ron… you totally blind then? |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | You were totally blind at that stage? |
| 1153 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I was totally blind ever since I was six-year-old |
| 1157 | SPEAKER (UNIDENTIFIED MALE) |
|  | A great achievement |
| 1200 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | A great achievement. Incidentally David, before you ask that question, let me announce to the group, that we have with us David Blythe who is the Director of our Community Service and I didn’t overlook him on any……. earlier because I wanted to make sure I told you about him later, but David’s been a great success and also the President of the Blind Workers Union at one stage and he’s on this Board for seven years and his contribution to the Board’s discussions was invaluable and I’m delighted to know that he is holding down the job that he is at the present time. |
| 1231 | RESPONSE |
|  | Hear, hear |
| 1236 | SPEAKER (UNIDENTIFIED MALE) |
|  | Your presence at … (indecipherable)… |
| 1237 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | Here today |
| 1240 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Here today (indecipherable) David |
| 1245 | SPEAKER DAVID BLYTHE |
|  | How’d you manage with written material in those days (indecipherable) particularly at Melbourne High. |
| 1255 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | David wants to know how you managed with written material (indecipherable) |
| 1257 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Oh… |
| 1259 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable) |
| 1302 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Well, I used braille, I mean I learnt typing, I mean I could do typing, but even there at I mean, Melbourne High, it , it was mostly being, you know, be lectured, you know, by the teachers, but at Gardiner, well, I used braille then. |
| 1328 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable) Text books |
| 1333 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Text books ? Well, they were rather scarce in those days |
| 1338 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Before Margaret’s days |
| 1338 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | As far as Margaret’s concerned, pretty scarce and only in recent years that where students have had a, you know, a lucky ride, really (indecipherable) you know, voluntary writers and all that sort of thing, but in my days of study, I mean, it was very hard to get books in braille, braille, I mean,you know, study books. They were pretty hard to get, you had to depend on having them written and that sort of thing. |
| 1414 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Your memory, you’d have, you’d have to depend so much on your memory |
| 1421 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I suppose |
| 1422 | MALE SPEAKER (UNIDENTIFIED) |
|  | From the lectures I mean |
| 1424 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Well, that’s true. In this (indecipherable) is one of Tilly Aston’s problems wasn’t it? (indecipherable) getting information. Tilly Aston’s problem was she had a breakdown because she couldn’t get the information she wanted because there was no facility for getting things done in those days, in her day. |
|  | RESPONSE |
|  | Multiple conversations in background (indecipherable) |
| 1444 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | It was a pretty hard job in the way of having to have everything read in the way of text books. It was pretty hard going and it’s only in recent times that, you know, the Institute has got around to books brailled and that. It’s a lot different to what I’m talking about. |
| 1509 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Norman, will you carry on from there, from Melbourne High on to the subsequent years, either in the factory, if you were at the factory or the music that you moved in to. |
| 1520 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | You got up to when you (indecipherable) you’ve got up to doing transcribing, but you haven’t touched on the music particularly have you? Or playing in the band |
| 1540 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I think, I think, I was in the orchestra in the 20’s because (indecipherable) first cricket match played on Wesley, Wesley Ground and it was between the orchestra and the Braille library and I played in the orchestra team that year, so I must have started around that time |
| 1604 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Did you win? Norman? |
| 1606 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | No, I’m not sure we had a win or a draw |
| 1613 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | What year would that be Norm? |
| 1614 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | That would be.., I‘d say, around early twenties, I think |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | And who comprised the band then, Ted, who can name the members? |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Dave Palmer, he was, he was the head bloke and in the team in the early days anyway, Fred Sutcliffe and (indecipherable due to background conversations) and |
| 1645 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Tom Clark |
| 1648 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Oh yes, Tom Clark |
| 1652 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Tom Clark trombone. What did you play Norman? |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I played the sax, in fact two different saxes I played at different times like the alto tenor and (indecipherable) soprano alto tenor. I used to … when I was out at the concert parties I used to play duets with Reg Hill. We used to play a lot (indecipherable) on the …… But, they were pretty busy times after the orchestra (indecipherable) after I’d been on the concert party for four and a half years, went back and of course, we had pretty busy time, not only, you know working every night, like, in fact I can remember on one week when I got home and the clock was striking three and I was up at seven o’clock then to get breakfast and go to day work. It was, you know, pretty strenuous at that time |
| 1802 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Were you in the factory Norman? |
| 1804 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
| 1806 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Were you in the factory Norman? |
| 1807 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Yes, I think I was. First of all, first of all…. I was doing transcribing work as I said in that little room there opposite the dining room then I was in the (indecipherable due to duelling background conversations). Then I was in the (indecipherable due to duelling background conversations) shop. I met Jim Murphy then (indecipherable) .. concert party (Indecipherable) I was in the mat shop then…… |
| 1857 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Was that in the 1930’s? Norman? |
| 1900 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Oh well, no, 1936 to 40 I was in the concert party (indecipherable) and I got into the mat shop making the mats. Then from fifty-one I was at the end of a six months Long Service Leave and I got the chance to go into the recent reference library, I suppose you call it or transcribing for mainly for the students of that day, students both secondary and tertiary. And (indecipherable) Nathan used to read to me. |
| 1954 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER |
|  | He still records, reads today |
| 2001 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | When I first started in that, then when I got the chance to go into that and Ken Brunton was the chief and not long after it started really, he got the chance to go to Adelaide which he took and I haven’t heard how he’s got on, like in recent times. But I was put in charge of the transcribing and then for the next twenty years and I retired, or I had to retire I suppose. |
|  | INDECIPHERABLE BACKGROUND CONVERSATIONS |
| 2045 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | KODAK? That was back in the early forties. Well, that’s right I’d forgotten about that, I mean, I got the chance in the early part of the war from thirty-nine to forty-five, that’s when Andrew Finlay (indecipherable) and about half a dozen of us got the chance to work outside and it was in KODAK and we were in the dark room of course and they had to put us in there because we were working with girls too. |
| 2125 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Splendid. Thank you, Norm (Indecipherable background conversations) |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I worked at KODAK and when I finished at KODAK, that was when I had he six months long service leave, I think, and then after that was when I went into transcribing that went to the end of my working years |
| 2149 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | When you first started transcribing Norm, it would have been hand brailling |
| 2152 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Hey? |
| 2153 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | When you first started transcribing, it was writing stain and dye. |
|  | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | Oh yeah |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | When did the Stainbury’s become apparent. (Indecipherable) |
| 2208 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I forget exactly when the Stainbury’s came in, I mean if we’re talking exactly about what year, I couldn’t say when that was. I know in the early days, of course it was stain ???? and dye you know for writing but later we got onto the Stainbury and it made writing a heck of a lot easier. |
| 2236 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Look, we’ve got a few. I think we’ve had a fair bit from Norm and I propose to move around the table. Before I go further, what was the year Stan Hedger started here? |
| 2247 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | April 1919 |
| 2249 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER |
|  | I say April 1920 |
|  | (Indecipherable conversations in background) |
| 2252 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Edna says April 1920 |
| 2300 | SPEAKER HOLLAND |
|  | I say 1919 because I thought he had thirty-three years there and he was ….. in 1952 |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Well, we can check that. Hedger was a remarkable man and given leadership…… |
| 2315 | MALE SPEAKER (IDENTIFIED LATER AS JAMES) |
|  | (Indecipherable) We had a very good team and the union dinners….(indecipherable). |
| 2323 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | We’ve got that |
|  | SPEAKER JAMES |
|  | Oh, you’ve got that have you? |
| 2330 | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | No, we haven’t |
|  | SPEAKER JAMES |
|  | Indecipherable |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | No, we haven’t, |
|  | SPEAKER JAMES |
|  | (Indecipherable)…. bring it down |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE |
|  | Appreciate that, only a copy of course |
|  | SPEAKER JAMES |
|  | Copy’s got to come back |
| 2333 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Yes, of course James. (Indecipherable) I would like at this stage, I would like to move on this time, to my old mate Bull Adams (Indecipherable) Bull’s been here forever and with prompting from Jim, Bull might be kind enough to give us some early reminiscences. |
| 2356 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Well, my school days were nothing much really special. Just came here and went to school. I was more interested in the surroundings of the whole building. How lives changed. First of all, you know, where the mat shop was down the horse yard and then the (indecipherable) And the (indecipherable) |
| 2428 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Bull, I noticed the room…… |
| 2429 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | The storeroom before (indecipherable) floor (indecipherable) stage (indecipherable) They had all that (indecipherable) ordinary church. The whole building, we had a white picket fence (indecipherable) fence. Then another portion on the building where the mat shop was over by the Melbourne Hospital site there, it was single storey. The mat shop was there |
| 2513 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Did you go straight from school to the mat shop Bull? |
|  | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Pardon? |
| 2518 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Did you go straight from the school to the mat shop? |
|  | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Yes, no, I went to the millet broom shop. That’s where the store is now. Was a wooden place with the millet broom shop. Stables at the end of it. I noticed all those changes |
| 2532 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Were you working on piece work in those days? |
| 2534 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | No, I wasn’t then, I was sorting all the millet and cutting the brooms |
| 2339 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | But when you went to the mat shop |
| 2543 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Oh, then I was working on piecework . yes |
| 2548 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And then you were on the ….. |
| 2549 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Weaving, matting |
| 2551 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | When did you start with the band, Bull? |
| 2554 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Oh, before I went to the (indecipherable) school even. I always played drums of some sort and I bought a set of my own then and went on and on. |
| 2604 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Did you travel the countryside at all? |
| 2609 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | No, only when we went to the main towns to swell the concert party |
| 2615 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Do you remember the concert band Bull? |
| 2617 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Yes |
| 2618 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Can you tell us something about that |
| 2620 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Concert band? |
| 2622 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Yeah |
| 2624 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Well, there was all sorts in the concert band. In what way do you mean? |
| 2629 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | What was in it, what did it comprise, what was in it? |
| 2631 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | There were sighted people as well, girls dancing (indecipherable) singing (indecipherable) |
| 2638 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | John Burns? |
| 2642 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | John Burns, well he was mainly in the country |
| 2645 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | You must have had a great number of musicians in those days |
| 2649 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Biggest tour we ever had was twenty-five – vignette (Indecipherable) |
| 2655 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Indecipherable |
| 2658 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Indecipherable |
| 2701 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | So, twenty-five, meant you could keep the band in but send people away. |
|  | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | That’s right |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | You could break them up |
|  | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | (Indecipherable) Dancing as well. |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And what about Bert Reid? Did he…was he… (Indecipherable).. tickets. |
| 2712 | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | Bert Reid? Yes, he was the band’s agent |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable).. in the country |
|  | SPEAKER ADAMS |
|  | That’s right, mainly in the country, he was |
| 2722 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Okay. Edna. Perhaps you could (indecipherable) how you were (indecipherable) dancing? |
| 2728 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well, I started school, um…. |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | When? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | 1917. Well, I could see quite an amount then and….. |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Call yourself a (indecipherable) in those days |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, yes. Then there was Miss Bryant, Miss Tilly Ashton and Mr Dobson, he was the headmaster, as was said. And…um…. |
| 2757 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Excuse me Edna. He was the headmaster. Did they have a house master? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | House master – Mr Dobson |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable) |
| 2809 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, at that time. And then of course Matron Braemar was there when I first went there. And it was very… the conditions and everything at that particular time was very bare, very cold, there was no carpets down, nothing like that at all and it was very….. the dining hall used to shiver in the winter time. It was very cold. |
| 2822 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Stone floors |
| 2834 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Stone floor. Stone floor. The dining hall was terrible. Yes, and they used to sit instead of having small tables, they used long forms… and just a long table |
| 2848 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Indecipherable |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Pardon? |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | The organ was there then? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes. We used to have, I remember distinctly, we didn’t have cups, we used to have big mugs, thick horrible mugs. And we used to…. |
| 2903 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Institution mugs |
| 2904 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | We used to do this indefinitely. We’d get our hands on the side and each one that passed, we’d push it along a bit further and then we’d push it along a bit further until we came to the end and then it’d crash on the floor And we used to break them like nobody’s business. Well they were never replaced. And we eventually got cups. It was just a little trick we used to do.  Well then, after that, Matron Briggs….Mr Hedger came, to my recollection in 1920 in the April and in the following year, Matron Briggs came. She came on the 2nd of March. How I remember that so distinctly, was the day my mother passed away. So that was sort of an indelible thing on my mind ever since.  And from then on well, we started physical culture. We used to do…Miss Bosworth used to be with us. And there was a few others, Miss Maitland and a few others that used to come and go. Miss Hutchins, she was later, yes, she was later on. . |
| 3016 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Indecipherable |
| 3020 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, that’s right, yes, yes, well, then it was decided that they’d try and see how we got on dancing. So, we started in a very, you know, small way at first with just simple things and eventually we got on to folk dancing. We used to do Russian dancing and sleigh bells and we used to do rod swinging and club swinging and exercises with rods and…….. |
| 3047 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Indecipherable |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Ahh, mainly eight of us. Others were tried out, but there was mainly I’d say eight to twelve at the most. |
| 3057 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Do you remember the names |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well, I remember Ethel Hall, Edie West.(indecipherable) West. I think Bessie Searle, her name was then. Jean McLaren, she was very, very deaf but she used to do a marvellous job, Jean and there was a few different others that used to sort of come in occasionally, but they were the main ones that were in …… |
| 3130 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Who was teaching the dancing Edna? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh well, there was different ones. There was Miss Bosworth of course. She was teaching. And there was …….I can’t remember the names… the names of the actual ones, but Miss Bosworth used to do a lot of it. She was in the head of it as I remember her very, very well. |
| 3150 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Who was at the start of this girl group? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well, I’d say, Ethel Hall an myself |
| 3156 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Yes, I can remember Ethel doing solos |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, I did too |
| 3202 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | You did too? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, but maybe it was later on that she …..see she was in it later on, because I left you see. |
| 3211 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Indecipherable |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Larry Wilson was in it for a while, yes and Neil West and Dick Sutcliffe, yes, Dick Sutcliffe was in it for a little while. Yes, it was only….in the….. they used to… we used to do the minuet and the boys used to be in the minuet. And that was their main… that was what they used to do dancing in mainly. There’d be four girls and four boys. And then we went up to the Ballarat competitions. I think we only went in one year and we got third in our section. I don’t think………to my knowledge, we only went in the once, but they may have gone in a bit later after I left, but that’s as far as I know and then of course we used to do fancy skipping. And they used to have…..like , we used to travel around in, mainly in the suburbs. Sometimes we might go, a few of us would go up to Kyabram or around about the different towns, from you know, to spend about a fortnight away, but they only did that very infrequently. Mainly around the cities and we used to go to different schools and do demonstrations and all that sort of thing. There was braille writing done and reading and braille reading and all that sort of business. |
| 3343 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | How many instructional periods would you have a week in dancing? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh well, that would depend. If we were preparing for a concert we would do a lot of practice but we would …we’d have… well, I’d say three or four times a week at least. Then we’d always be taken to the hall or whatever place it was we were going to dance. We had to go up on the platforms to make sure that we didn’t, you know, get too close to the edge and all that sort of business because some of the dancing you’d have to go forward quite an amount and you would have to sort of allow, so you wouldn’t fall or like I did one night, I kicked the headlight off the stage. Caused a bit of a sensation, but it would be me that would do it, nobody else. If there was any trouble around, I was the one who got into trouble. It was just that, you know, when you kicked your foot out, I kicked my foot too far and just knocked it over. |
| 3452 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable)… Edna, dancing group, how long did it last? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well, it lasted well after I left, a long time after, but then it gradually….the ones that were in it, well, they did do quite a bit of it after, but not the same. Nowhere near as much. |
| 3512 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Was the broad aim of the show the talent of the blind girls? |
| 3516 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well, to be honest, I think a lot of it was. It was… it was….Matron Briggs was very forward in that sort of thing. She thought it was a very good thing, she thought it was good exercise and she thought it would give us confidence |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And good movement |
| 3533 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | And also, it was very well known that we were one of the big drawcards because you know, blind people dancing, they thought it was wonderful. Sometimes we would join in with some of the deaf and dumb people. Sometimes we danced with them and it was remarkable the time that they kept, you know, in the dancing and that, you know. |
| 3556 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | What sort of music support did you have? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Well mainly piano, sometimes orchestra, sometimes…. It depending upon where we were and what dances we were doing. A solo dance, we quite often just had piano |
| 3612 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And when you finished your dancing, what did you do then? What place did you go? |
| 3616 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | I went into the brush shop |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | You went to the brush shop? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Was (indecipherable) there then? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh no, not then. Mr Visser (?) was there |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Mr Visser, Vissy |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Vissy, yes. And he was a very hard task master, but a marvellous teacher. |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | This was (indecipherable) brushes |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, brushes and brooms and all those types of things |
| 3637 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Are there any questions from anyone around the table you’d like to ask? |
| 3642 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Before this became an institute, the first superintendent here was Hogarth, Mr Hogarth |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | I have a question. Can anyone tell me about the benefit concerts that used to be held. |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | (Indecipherable) hall |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, (Indecipherable) hall |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Yes sir, packed houses. They were once a year |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | That was mainly concert, that was the senior choir and the orchestra and anyone of these that were in the senior choir. They used to sing, sometimes a few duets and all that sort of thing. It was all music you know, no dancing. |
| 3724 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | How many would have been in the choir in those days? Any idea Edna? |
| 3728 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh, about twenty-five. Twenty-five, yes. Around about that. Sometimes there’d be a little less. But we had a very good senior choir in those days, it was very good indeed., |
| 3741 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Was Dave Palmer the music director? |
| 3744 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes |
| 3745 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Genius |
| 3745 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | Who was that? |
| 3747 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | We’re talking about the benefit concerts |
| 3748 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | That was in the twenties, yes, |
| 3751 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | It went into the thirties, didn’t it? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, it went into the thirties, but mainly it was the twenties. |
|  | (Multiple indecipherable conversations heard in background) |
| 3758 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Yes, it was in the twenties |
| 3802 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | We had a concert at Ballarat one year. We had two (indecipherable) going on at the one time (indecipherable) concert. How’s that? |
|  | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | Oh yes, we had an experience. We were dancing. |
| 3810 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | (Indecipherable) we were going back and forth, back and forwards |
| 3815 | SPEAKER EDNA |
|  | We were, we were, we were dancing that night and we had to have… we were dancing and we were on the program four times and we had to change, we had to dance and then rush over to the other town hall, do it again, rush back to the first one, get changed. We had to do that four times. We did eight dances that night. It was hard work. Hard work |
| 3836 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Thank you, Edna. I think we’ll move around to Charlie now (indecipherable) |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | What do you want me to cover? |
| 3849 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | (Indecipherable) …when you went to school? |
| 3854 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | I went there about 1922 I should think. Yes, Miss Bryant and Miss Green was another teacher and much later on we had of course, our friend Mr Dent, a great friend of ours. Mr Fiddleson and Chucker was the house master. Miss Bryant was an absolute marvel though. She was outstanding, outstanding, Miss Bryant. |
| 3922 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | She was junior school? |
| 3926 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | Yes, she did the junior always |
| 3931 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | (Indecipherable) …Chapman come after Dobson? |
| 3933 | Must of, I wasn’t there when Dobson was. Anyway, in the school we used to be on the concert doing pyramids. A group of boys, I think Ray would have been in that. |
| 3945 | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | Yeah, I was. |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | The pyramids, we used to… we were on pretty regularly, doing those different formations of groups. And we used to finish up doing with what they called the carriage. The carriage was very spectacular, when we marched off stage with the carriage. |
| 4004 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | How many kids on board the carriage? |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | There’d be about four (indecipherable) eight in the group. around about eight in the group, I think we had. |
| 4012 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Charlie, when you finished school, did you automatically go straight to the shop? |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | Yes, went straight to the basket shop after school. |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | (Indecipherable ) sixteen or younger? |
| 4016 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | Sixteen, yes sixteen. Of course… we started….. sporting was my main outlook in life. We started cricket in 1929. The Blind Institute rules was financed from the management here mainly. They gave us great support and ….the gymnasium. I think we started in 1934, the gymnasium. It was well equipped by the Institute here, they gave tremendous support to the equipping of the gymnasium and Bob Blucher was the head man. He lost his sight in the Victoria Police Force in an accident. He was totally blind. He did a magnificent job over the years. |
| 4103 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER |
|  | (Indecipherable) Commercial Road (Indecipherable) He was on a motorbike |
| 4106 | UKNOWN MALE VOICE (And multiple discussions in background) |
|  | Somewhere near the Alfred Hospital. |
| 4110 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | Yeah, somewhere down there. That’s where he lost his sight, but still, that’s only incidental. And… firstly the gymnasium. We were very successful and known as the Trojan Club. We had several blind competitors in it, supported by some sighted people. We used to complete against outside clubs…Railway Institute, Beatty’s, Beatty’s gymnasium, the Webbers, The Vikings, Chelsea and the Bonbeach Life Savers, that’s right, and later on Monbulk came in, much later on |
| 4144 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | We also had the VRR |
| 4145 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | DRI…. |
| 4146 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Victorian Railway Institute |
| 4147 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | They really started us. Course, I was mainly interested in the skipping…. in the…. DRI had skipping when we first formed the gymnasium. And they got us interested in skipping, speed skipping over half a minute and one minute and two minutes, all competitive. We used to have the Victorian championships in those days. I think I managed to get third one year, which was about my best. |
| 4212 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | You were a brilliant half minute performer |
| 4214 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | I used to go on the half minute, yeah, against….. |
| 4224 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | What year did you win (indecipherable) championship? |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | About 1938, I think. I was first to establish 157 turns in half a minute. That was the world record at the time. It only improved to 159 eventually to…..pretty close. But we’ve got to give our thanks to the Blind Institute for the great support they gave us in the cricket and the gymnasium and the education side too was a vital part of our life span |
| 4252 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And you worked as well |
| 4254 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | And I went to the basket shop about 1929 and the Institute provided the hostel down Raleigh street for us country boys and we had a very good home down there until marriage came along, of course, later on. |
| 4311 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And what country town were you from Charlie? |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
| 4314 | I came from Costerfield, up near Bendigo. We only went up there on holidays of course, but, as I say, we were extremely thankful for what the Institute provided. We had to put in an effort of course |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | And piece work all the time? |
| 4332 | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | I was on piece work until I got into that luxury job of teaching as (indecipherable) mentioned before. I could take it very easy then. Course I went into the mat for seven years too when the basket shop closed down during the war. They couldn’t get the cane, so they………. I had the privilege, I had the privilege of meeting Joe Foster and a few of the good teacher, and Harry, Harry Foster. . |
| 4356 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | What were you doing? Weaving? |
|  | SPEAKER CHARLIE |
|  | Weaving and (indecipherable) Mats and weaving. I finished up, of course at the finish on assembly. |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Thank you, Charlie, we’ll come back to you. Ray (indecipherable) background. Ray Smart. When did you go to the school? |
| 4414 | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | I came down here about 1924 I think it was. I came from a place called Buchan, not a caveman. I came down here, and I had been at a little school, there was ten of us, in a school in Buchan East and we used to have to ride our horses to school, up rivers and up the mountains to get to school. I was a real bush boy I was and knew nothing. Never seen an electric light or a tram or an electric train or anything until I came down here. You can imagine how I felt, I was homesick and came into a lot of totally blind chaps or a good part of them. It made you a bit sad you know, but at any rate, I settled down to school here. I forget her first name… Miss Breen, I think and there was another blind bloke that used to …… |
| 4520 | UNDIENTIFIED MALE VOICES |
|  | Dent |
|  | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | No |
|  | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICES |
|  | Howarth, Mr Howarth |
|  | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | Howarth. He was a great old mate of mine. He was a (indecipherable) at one of the colleges down here and he’d lost his sight. He was a great help |
| 4533 | UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE |
|  | Good teacher |
|  | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | Then I was sent….. Tommy White (indecipherable) and I were the first two when they opened the hostel, we were the first boarders down there in Raleigh St. Later on of course, all the boys, bush fellas came down. Charlie and Dale Benson, Gary O’Donnell, Roy Lock, Bill Jones. Poor old Bill, died at a very young age, unfortunately. |
| 4608 | CHAIRMAN |
|  | How many of you were in the hostel in the finish, ten or twelve? |
|  | SPEAKER RAY |
|  | About eight, I think was the limit |
|  | CHAIRMAN |
|  | Did we feed you well in those days? |