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Transcript of an interview with

Kimberley Maurice Chance

b 1946 -

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INTERVIEWER: John Ferrell

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FULL CAPITALS in the text indicate a word or words emphasised by the person interviewed.

Square brackets [] are used for insertions not in the original tape.

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Introduction to Transcript.

Interviewee : Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC.

Interviewer: John Ferrell.

[A series of ten one-hour sessions of interviewing covers the life of Kim Chance. Recording was made on a *Sound Devices 722* digital recorder and a pair of *Rode NT3* microphones, using 24 bit 48kbps specifications.

Sessions were held at Parliament House, Perth on various occasions during 2010 and 2011. File names reflect the initials of the interviewee, the date of each session and the track number within the whole series. Eg KC-13AU10T22 denotes Kim Chance, interviewed on 13 August 2010, track 22.]

Hon Kim Chance was appointed to a casual vacancy for the Agricultural Region, in the Legislative Council of WA in March 1992, on the resignation of Hon Jim Brown. He retained the seat in four subsequent elections until his own retirement in 2009. Prominent as a minister in the Gallop and Carpenter governments, Kim was also Leader of the Government in the Upper House from 2001 to 2008. His many portfolios related mainly to rural and primary industries.

Born in Perth in 1946, Kim was raised on a family farm established by his maternal grandfather, near Doodlakine in the eastern wheatbelt. He attended the local government primary school, then became a boarder at Wesley College, Perth, for his secondary schooling. He was a good student and active in rowing, rugby, football, athletics and the cadet corps.

Returning from school he became first a share-farmer, then later a partner with his sister and brother-in-law farming part of the home property and a developing a new farm at Carabbin. When economic hardship demanded, he worked away from the farm as a construction labourer in the Pilbara mining region or as a truck-driver for a Kellerberrin transport company.

Following his father's example, Kim became active in rural politics through the WA Farmers' Federation and National Farmers' Federation, and was a keen participant in local football competitions both as a player and official of the association.

It is not surprising that Kim aspired to a parliamentary career. As a child he was surrounded by family members who frequently discussed politics, expressing views across the whole spectrum from communist left to conservative right persuasions. Among his relatives, were two former federal parliamentarians. Kim chose to join the Australian Labor Party in 1971 and thereafter was heavily involved in branch affairs, the WA State Executive of the ALP and O'Connor federal electorate. Before gaining a seat in parliament, he contested federal elections for O'Connor on four occasions, and twice stood for a WA upper house seat.

Kim married Suzanne Jean O'Rourke and has a daughter Ceridwen and son Tom. Mrs Chance, a district nurse, has also been active in ALP branch affairs.

(John Ferrell, February 2012)

INTERVIEW ONE

[track 1]

JF This meeting contains the recording of interview No 1 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, in a series commissioned by the Western Australian Parliamentary History Project. It is being recorded on 25 June 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

Kim, what's your very earliest memory?

CHANCE I think probably the floods of 1953. We had major flooding in the area. That's just a memory that sticks with me. I don't particularly remember 1952. I do know it was a drought year but it was followed by a flood in '53 which was quite unlike anything we've seen before or since. It was huge. It came right up to our house. It washed the roads out. We had no access back into town or anywhere, in fact, off the farm, and stayed that way for a week or more. I think that's my earliest recollection. I also remember we grew huge crops that year. One of the reasons the memory sticks in the mind was my father had just bought a camera, one of those slide projector-type cameras. We had endless photos of these huge crops with my sister and I standing in them and the crops being a foot or more over our heads. I think that's probably my earliest memory.

JF They would have been late summer floods, were they?

CHANCE No, my recollection is the rain came at exactly the right time. It was an autumn flood. That's my recollection anyway, otherwise we wouldn't have had those huge crops. But you're right; normally our major flood events have been late summer floods, although I do remember one or two during the winter.

JF Of course the size of the crop or the height and so on that you talked about of the crop wouldn't have been apparent until probably three months later.

CHANCE Oh, yes, but in that country all it really lacks is rainfall. If you're given enough rain, it can grow anything.

JF That country being Doodlakine or thereabouts?

CHANCE Yes, the farm was north of Doodlakine in a very fertile valley area.

JF We'll talk about the farm perhaps now since it's come up. How many acres did you have there?

CHANCE On that particular property it was only about 2 000 acres but we later expanded. We were farming about 11 000 acres by the time I finished up.

JF For the early '50s, 2 000 acres, even in that part of the country, was relatively small, was it?

CHANCE No, no. That was about average. I mean, the '50s were a time of unprecedented wealth in farming. Two thousand acres was more than enough to support two, sometimes three, families.

JF Oh, yes, of course, because that was the day of married couples, as they were called, working on farms.

CHANCE Yes, indeed. Every farm had one; some had more than one. The population was probably higher than [it] had ever been before and certainly much higher than it is now. Just to go back, when I was playing football, the catchment area, which raised our whole team, which wasn't a bad team (it actually made the finals in what was then the top football league in the state, in country football, eastern districts league) now supports probably only three or four farming families, one of whom is farming almost 100 000 acres. Things have changed markedly.

JF You were riding on the sheep's back of course at that time.

CHANCE Sheep's back, yes, because it's not long after the 1951 wool boom but of course grain was fairly strong then. It was a seller's market. You weren't that far after the Second World War. The limitations, apart from the obvious one of rainfall that I mentioned, was getting machinery. Machinery was very, very hard to come by, still in that post-war period.

JF What machinery did you have when you were a kid on the farm there?

CHANCE We used the West Australian-made Chamberlain tractors, of course, which were remarkable. It was a real “beating the sword to make the ploughshare” thing because Chamberlain Industries in Welshpool were an armaments manufacturer, although they had pre-existed the war. They were an engineering firm before that. But the 40k, the 45k, the KAs, they were remarkable machines when really getting tractors at all was a major event. You went on a waiting list. All you could really get, probably the best of them, was the Perkins P6 powered Fordson. There were a lot worse than that there, and the odd American tractor, the odd John Deere, Oliver, Case. But Chamberlain made a big contribution and they were far and away the biggest tractors available of that day. In terms of other machinery, it was all Australian made. These days there’s virtually nothing made in Australia. [They are made by] International [and] Massey Ferguson. International produced a grain harvester, the A81, which became the dominant harvester in Western Australia. It was a very modern machine, but that was made out of Victoria.

JF When did you have that machine? The old Sunshine harvester, the old AL models, were still around in the '50s, were they not?

CHANCE Yes, but the Inter A81 replaced the GL-200. People call it a GL-200 because it had 200 grease nipples and the Inter A81 had only, if I recall correctly, 13 grease nipples. It was a revolution in its day but it was also a very solid, reliable machine. I think the first A81 probably came out in about 1961.

JF Would that have been a header or a harvester?

CHANCE It was a header. The last of the harvesters was the AL, although it is interesting that the stripper harvester technology has just been reinvented by, of all people, a British engineering firm.

JF Are they using it with wheat?

CHANCE Yes, indeed. One of the things they are finding is that, firstly, it greatly reduces the amount of horsepower you need to harvest because you are only dealing with the head rather than a portion of the straw. Just some later research I’ve read in areas where you rely on snow retention as the main part of your summer growing season, like in west Asia and Kazakhstan, for example, it is important to leave the greatest length of straw that you can still anchored to the ground because

that retains the snow. This is where that technology is really taking off. It's also been widely accepted in the United States.

JF That sort of harvester machine technology depends on the stalk breaking beneath the head of grain, doesn't it?

CHANCE Yes, snapping just at the head. Effectively, you're using a mechanical mechanism to, if you like, comb through the stubble but then snap the head off and leave the stubble standing at its maximum height. If the crop you grow is a metre high, you're effectively leaving a metre of stubble behind.

JF When would your family have gone into bulk handling?

CHANCE We were amongst the first. In fact, my father designed the first bulk wheat bin for trucks, which was made for him by Electweld Steel, and delivered the first load of bulk wheat into the Doodlakine bin. It was quite an amazing thing because he didn't have a clue whether it was going to work or not. He rolled in with his first load of wheat and everyone standing around, half of whom are saying it will never work, and he started the little engine up and opened the door and let rip into the old elevator. This is before the grain receival points had grids. You emptied into an elevator. It just worked perfectly and kept on working. That bin, I think we kept on using it for 30-odd years.

JF Amazing. Did you say that was in the '60s that he did that or earlier?

CHANCE Let me just think. It was before I started farming. It was quite a long time before. No, that would have been in the late '50s.

JF Some people were still working on bags at that time, weren't they?

CHANCE Everyone was. There was one or two bulk bins I did see later that people had made themselves by bending up bits of corrugated iron but they were flat bottom, and you had to get in and shovel the wheat out. That wouldn't have been fun. It's hot in there. [chuckles]

JF So yours was sloped?

CHANCE Yes, sloped in and fed in to a central lateral auger, so the auger was in line with the axles of the truck, and driven by a little two and a half horsepower Villiers engine, which is all it needed because it wasn't elevating at all. It was only a flat elevator, a flat auger. It delivered perfectly.

JF It was along the lines that were later manufactured by W.T. Lees at Tammin, I suppose.

CHANCE Yes, although Electweld Steel kept the patent on that. When other manufacturers like Lees, BHP, Bassula ... I'm trying to think of the others. Lees in particular, because he couldn't adopt exactly the same design as my father, and Electweld had put together. He had a modified design where the gravity fall was not just from front and rear; it was from half of the sides as well, so the wheat actually delivered into a relatively short contact with the auger, probably only about 600 millimetres of contact, whereas our design had full contact, the full width of the truck.

JF Was that a good venture financially for your dad to have been involved with the design?

CHANCE I don't think so. He just wanted a bin that worked and Electweld were happy to make it for him.

JF You would have had stock as well on that farm; I guess, it was wheat and sheep. What number of stock were you running?

CHANCE Then, probably only about 1 500 sheep and 20 cattle perhaps, which was more than enough in those days.

JF Did you run a few pigs or not?

CHANCE No, we were never piggies.

JF You grew up on a farm. Who else was there with you? Who were your siblings and so on?

CHANCE I only had one sister. She was four years older than me. She's dead now. My mother, my father, my sister and usually a working couple. At one stage (we'll get into this when we go into my primary schooling) we had an Italian migrant camp in Doodlakine, a big railway camp. From time to time, they came out and worked on the property as well. One, whose name was Gaetano, stayed with us for a long time and actually taught dad Italian. I picked up a tiny little bit myself. That was, I suppose, when I was seven or eight. It gave me an experience of people from outside the country and post-war refugees; in fact, just what it was like to have a different life experience, which was good.

JF Childhood environment, generally then, what was the home itself like, the house?

CHANCE We were very comfortable. Our house was a huge place. It was 50-odd squares. Unusual design. It was concrete, built in 1926. Great big sprawling place but very, very comfortable.

JF That farm would have been a fairly early farm for the district.

CHANCE It was, and the reason the house was so huge. It was originally my grandfather's property. My grandfather was a very innovative farmer who farmed on a huge scale. He was at one stage probably one of the biggest single wheat growers in the world. He was a gold miner. The family came from New South Wales, from the Snowy Mountains. They came over here in one of the gold rushes. I guess that would have been around about the turn of the nineteenth, twentieth century. They did very well. They were mostly on the Montana flats in Coolgardie. But they did very well on the Goldfields. When he gave up mining, he moved west looking for a place that he wouldn't be too far from the Goldfields but he could see that the Goldfields were going to expand and they needed food. He went as far west as he thought he needed to go to get enough rainfall and established in Doodlakine where there was still that very fertile soil of the eastern Wheatbelt but there was reasonable rainfall.

JF What sort of rainfall was it experiencing then?

CHANCE It's basically a 350 millimetre rainfall area, 12 inches in the old money. What he looked for, I think, was the combination of the big salmon gums. Salmon gums on their own don't indicate good country but where salmon gums mix with

gimlet, you get the really strong country. By the time you get to Kellerberrin, you're basically in salmon gum only but at Doodlakine or basically from Woollundra on, you got the mix of gimlet and morrell, which indicated very fertile soil, quite high phosphate levels naturally. He cleared 17 000 acres down that valley in a very short period of time, in the space of probably less than 10 years.

JF Goodness; that was huge.

CHANCE Huge, yes.

JF That would not have been with the aid of bulldozers because they didn't exist then.

CHANCE Oh, no; it was all axe. There were 1 200 people working there, clearing. It was quite a remarkable effort.

JF Had he come from a farming background?

CHANCE Yeah, farming pastoral. The family were Snowy Mountains cattlemen whose winter country was down in Cooma, which is still pretty cold, but they would be up in the Snowy Mountains all summer. He did a time in the New South Wales police service. In fact, my aunt still has a photo of him as a young man in his trooper's outfit. He was a remarkable man. His brother was a federal MP. I don't even know what the electorate was. If you look at my numberplates, I've got Doodlakine numberplates on my car and there's a cryptic little line down the bottom which says "Doodlakine, the forgotten capital". It's probably only urban legend these days because there's no way you can ever check it but we claim that because Jack Prowse, my grandfather's brother, proposed Doodlakine as the seat of the national capital instead of Canberra. We claim that we've already got a lake; we didn't have to build Lake Burley Griffin, and we've got a much nicer climate than Canberra [chuckles].

[track 2]

JF So, did you know your grandfather then?

CHANCE No, he died a year and a half before I was born, and my grandmother died the same year as I was born. And sadly they died just a day or so inside 18 months of each other, when 18 months was the threshold for double

probate, and if you died 18 months and one day apart ... no, I am sorry, it must have been a couple of days over the 18 months, because if you died 18 months and one day apart, you paid probate on both estates, and they paid probate in the end between the two estates of over £300 000.

JF That was a terrible imposition on farming families in particular, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF How did the family manage to weather that?

CHANCE Well, the first probate was no problem, they basically wrote out a cheque for something approaching £200 000; they were a very wealthy family. But to pay the second probate, they actually broke up the estate, sold a lot of it. It was time to break it up anyway, so it went to the various components of what was quite a large family. So, while we had the homestead block of that property, we had 2 000 acres of 17 000.

JF And you mentioned that his surname was Prowse, so he was your mother's father?

CHANCE My mother's father, yes.

JF So, was Edgar Prowse related to you?

CHANCE Edgar Prowse was his son, so my mother's brother.

JF Your uncle?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Because Edgar of course has political associations.

CHANCE Yes, I'm not even sure what party old Jack Prowse was. He's the Prowse that Prowse Street over here in West Perth is named after and probably also Prowse Street in Bassendean. I think it was probably the Nationalists in those

days, I'm not sure. Edgar of course was Country Party. But, we've had seven MPs from Doodlakine, and most of them have leant towards the left after those first two conservatives! [laughter]

JF That brings up a question which I was going to bring up later, but perhaps I'll bring it up now since you've mentioned it. What is it that leads a farming person into the ALP?

CHANCE Well, there was a left culture in the area; a left position was thought to be normal in the area in the time that I grew up. You've got to put yourself back into that era in the 50s. Communism was regarded as a worthy and proper direction. I mean, it wasn't until the mid to late 50s that things started coming apart with Stalinism in particular, and there was a very active Communist Party in my area in fact. Another uncle was a very strong communist through his whole life ... also a farmer. He married my mother's sister and was a dear friend, just the nicest person you could ever meet. So, the left culture was strong. The right was seen as big business. We saw ourselves as workers, grain growers; I mean, we worked with our hands, so we never thought it odd. The wheat growers' culture is very different from the graziers' culture, and you could see that in the industrial organisations. The Wheatgrowers' Union—

JF You're contrasting wheat growers with, say, the station pastoralists?

CHANCE No, more the southern graziers.

JF The southern pastoralists, oh yes.

CHANCE Station owners were different again; that was a different group, and politically, then, they were all over the place anyway. To compare, say, a Narrogin farmer to a Merredin farmer, even our industrial organisations until 1947 were different. The Wheatgrowers' Union, which amalgamated with the PPA (Primary Producers' Association) was at one time communist-led, and people forget this, but it's really well recorded in that history written by the guy from Murdoch University, *A Fine Country to Starve In*.

JF Geoff Bolton.

CHANCE Yes, Geoffrey Bolton! It is a wonderful, wonderful book. I read the ink off that book, because it brought me back to all of those things that my father had told me about. And really the key influence from the left had not come externally; it had really come from the returning soldiers from the First World War, and they were the influential people in the area, because they were the people that everybody looked up to. They were the elders of the area; they were the pioneers. Most of those came back from the trenches in France very much convinced that if the system which had caused what happened in the First World War, then nothing could be worse. And many of them, indeed, perhaps most, came back as either communists or from the left end of the socialist spectrum. They continued to have an influence, and you could see that it wasn't something that was just confined to Doodlakine, although people have said that in the past; they've said there's something in the water in Doodlakine. But it was an expression right across the Wheatbelt, and it dates back to the returning soldiers from the First World War and then the Depression and the way those returning soldiers were natural leaders in that, and it was out of the Depression and running up into that period, say, into the mid-40s, which is about when the Country Party was born, in the same area incidentally. The Country Party, Dexter Davies assures me, was actually formed in Kellerberrin first in Western Australia. But that also was a very left-wing party. The early Country Party was very much left. In fact there is interesting history to be written there about the genesis of the Country Party and where it actually started from. But our people never saw the Country Party as the answer. We thought they could never govern in their own right and, for some reason, possibly because of, I think it was the Deakin government in Victoria, which was the only time there was a coalition between Labor and the Country Party, was such a failure ... it was probably the worst government Australia had ever had ... they saw the Country Party's future lying with the Liberals and not with Labor. So, they said, "Well, all right. We're going to make a choice here."

[track 3]

JF We have talked a little bit about your Prowse forebears. What about your father's people?

CHANCE Another big family, but they were born on the England–Wales border. My grandmother was Welsh. Her husband owned a newspaper, which is still in existence, *The Citizen: Gloucester*; but their home was Gloucester. They had a divorce. Now let me get this right; I'm trying to get the dates right. When did my father come here? About 1922; certainly pre-Depression. Somewhere between 1922 and 1924. His mother had a very significant divorce settlement because the newspaper

owner was quite a substantial businessman. The whole family came out, with the exception of my dad's older brother who was much older than the rest of the family. He was a merchant mariner. He stayed on in England, although he was the first to come to Australia. He came to Australia first —

JF On board ship?

CHANCE Yes. He actually farmed here out at Muckinbudin, and then when the rest of the family came here he left again. He was always a loner [laughs]. His name was Tom. So they came out here. They were all school age then; they lived in Leederville, went to Perth Boys, then bought a farm at Kondinin and developed that, but went into the Depression owing no money but having no cash because they had spent it all on the development of the farm. And of course they were the first to go because they had no banker to support them; nobody had to support them. He then trained as a wool classer. That's what I referred to in our earlier conversation; went into the north west in that pre-war period and had some remarkable experiences. Then he was in the army from 1939 to 1945, served in the Middle East and then with the 9th Division in New Guinea. He then returned to basically put together what was left of his wife's farm, which was a long and fairly painful experience.

JF His mother's?

CHANCE His wife's farm, yes.

JF So we're talking about your father?

CHANCE Yes. They married during the war.

JF Right. I was trying to get that clear in my mind.

CHANCE Yes. My mother was the matron of a private hospital, Niola, in Leederville. My father's mother lived right next door; 67, I suppose it is Cambridge Street. They married during the war. That was just before my father went to the Middle East. They had to decide whether to buy a car so that mum could get around, or a block of land so that they could build a house when he came back. They looked at a Fiat 500 car, brand new, and a block of land at Mt Pleasant. They were both £99. So they bought the car [laughs]. £99.

JF Golly. Incredible the price differences these days.

CHANCE Yes.

JF So when he came back from the war, they then went farming?

CHANCE Yes, because my mother was then nursing her mother, who was in decline, and died. She died in 1946. It was at that point that the whole farm was split up but in the meantime my father and my uncle (my mother's brother), or one of my mother's brothers, was trying to make the old structure work but of course they had no machinery, no men. It was a difficult time; [we] couldn't get fuel. It was just very difficult.

JF And they couldn't get shearers, I think, if they were shearing either, at that stage. That was another problem.

CHANCE Yes, that was probably —

JF Or earlier, perhaps the war was the time shearers were a problem.

CHANCE There were probably shearers around then, but it was really tractors and steel, yeah. What tractors they had they virtually worked around the clock and all year, because it was all fallow. You couldn't grow a crop without fallow in those days. Tractors of about 28 to 30 horsepower, kerosene powered, you didn't get a lot done in the day. And the horses were still around too, yeah. There were still some horses.

JF Do you remember horse teams being used or is that in their day rather than yours?

CHANCE No. I don't think I've even seen horses working. I still remember, though, seeing a few horses around and of course we had a horse but not a draught horse, no.

JF I was going to say, what transport was available to you on the farm because you obviously would have had to drive perhaps to Merredin or Kellerberrin or other such places?

CHANCE Dad bought a new American car every year, usually Chryslers.

JF Even that was a big comeuppance from the Fiat 500.

CHANCE From the Fiat 500 indeed, yes. But fuel was available then because that was one of the compelling reasons why he bought the little Fiat. You only got a gallon of fuel a week or whatever it was, and fuel was one of the things you could get in the post-war period.

[track 4]

JF Thinking about the local area, what sort of facilities were there around about Doodlakine, because it's relatively small? It may be the forgotten capital!
[chuckles].

CHANCE The forgotten capital, yes.

JF What was the town actually operating on?

CHANCE Kellerberrin was our centre, and Kellerberrin had everything. It had then, and still has, a kind of a high school, although only three year, but most kids only went to third year.

JF To junior.

CHANCE It had a very good hospital. Yes, you didn't lack for anything at all. It actually had much, much better services than exist now, and that's pretty much the case right through the Wheatbelt.

JF Yes.

CHANCE Because the population declines really happened in the decade of the '70s. I remember that Julian Grill and somebody else did a study on it, and in the north eastern Wheatbelt (now that's a little north of us) the population decline in the 10 years of the '70s was 33 per cent.

JF Good heavens, yes.

CHANCE That was the peak. It's sort of stable now, but it was really sad to see the social structures just diminishing before your eyes. At one stage, there were whole places out there where there used to be towns, and the areas are still known by those names, like Mollerin and Cleary and Wialki, all there is of those towns, which used to have football teams (they were sizable towns), is a sign [saying] "This is where the town of Cleary used to be", [and] "This is where the town of Mollerin used to be." It was really, really sad.

JF So you were able to get anything you wanted, pretty much, from Kellerberrin?

CHANCE Yes.

JF You were also on the eastern railway, weren't you so that you were able, I suppose, to get supplies and so on by rail?

CHANCE Oh yes; terrific. Yes, [with] no problems at all. [We would] make a call one day; the parts would be on the co-op veranda or the railway station siding, if not the next day, then the day after. It was probably better then that it is now [even] with internet and ...

JF So that would be a siding at Doodlakine where you'd pick things up?

CHANCE Yes, [there was] a siding at Doodlakine. Doodlakine, at its peak, had a railway staff of probably ... well, there were five railway houses, so it must have had a staff of at least five.

JF Yes, yes.

CHANCE [There was] a full-time stationmaster, who was, you know, a pillar of society. You looked up to the stationmaster; you used to go to him to get your documents witnessed.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE All of that's gone.

JF I realise that Merredin was a railway town but I didn't know that Doodlakine, which is relatively close, was so big as well.

CHANCE Yes. Of those five houses, probably two of the [occupants] would have been maintenance people and three would have been administration [staff] or [people who were] looking after the station itself. I think it was fairly common in every Wheatbelt town that there were staff numbers like that, because I recall Tammin having a similar number of railway houses. As you say, Merredin was a huge rail centre because it was a junction, and because we still had the eight-hour shift then and that made Merredin the logical hub out of Northam for the change of shift. So not only did these towns have big resident populations of railway workers, there were also huge single men's railway barracks. But even Kellerberrin had a huge railway barracks complex just near the flour mill.

JF Coming right back to what we started talking about, which was the flood, where did the water come from that flooded you? Is there a creek or a river or a lake or something?

CHANCE Yes, we were in what is known as the Wallatin valley, and the Wallatin valley gets its name from my grandfather's farm, which was Wallatin. It has a catchment area of about 64 000 hectares. It originates in north Kellerberrin and comes in through Doodlakine, and then dumps into the Yilgarn River about two farms south of the Great Eastern Highway, so the bulk of it is north of the Great Eastern Highway. It's quite a big catchment, and when that gets full of water it rips through. It's very flat, being valley country. I think in our whole farm the rise from south to north in vertical distance was only about a metre or so.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes, right across the whole farm, so it's pretty flat. In those days the water used to bank up on the railway line and the Great Eastern Highway; now they've got better drainage underneath both of those transport corridors. The water used to bank up there and then flood back up the valley, and that was where the big floods came from. Now, the water gets away a lot better.

JF And there is probably a lot less coming these days, is there?

CHANCE Well, we're certainly getting less rain, but you can still get those big rainfall events where six or seven inches of rain falls in a day. That can still happen, particularly with cyclones and so on. But, no, I would never say you're never going to see another one of those floods again [laughs] but it does drain better now.

JF Now, I'm dodging around a little bit, but we didn't talk about which cereal crops you grew and how much of each and so on.

CHANCE Wheat was king; wheat was king. Mostly, in those days, it was the variety insignia, which was a semi-dwarf and was very highly regarded. There is a story about insignia that a farmer from Mukinbudin was taking his bank manager around looking at the crops, (it was a very bad year; a very dry year) and there was one paddock where nothing had germinated. It was just bare; there was nothing there. The bank manager, half joking, said, "Bill, what do you reckon this paddock's going to go?" Bill said, "Oh, I reckon it'll go about three bushels." He said, "Oh come on, Bill, there's nothing there." He says, "Yes, but it's insignia; it always goes a bag better than it looks!" But, yes, wheat was king; we didn't grow much else. People with piggeries used to grow barley (the old American six-row variety, Beecher) and if they had a bit of saline land, of course they'd grow barley on that because it was quite adaptable to saline conditions. But we didn't have a lot of salt. On your poorer country you'd occasionally grow some oats for sheep feed, and that was about it, but wheat was king, and still is.

JF So you wouldn't have had much in the way of haymaking or that sort of thing going on, would you?

CHANCE Yes, because in those days we had a rule in the shire that you had to provide firebreaks, but that rule is gone now, but that was compulsory. You had to provide a firebreak around every paddock to a width of 12 feet, which meant that we would sow up to the fence line, then cut hay (usually three cuts wide) and bale that up. Given that the cropping areas were getting fairly extensive, that was enough for me to hate making hay, yes [laughs] and then going and picking it up.

JF That's even worse, isn't it?

CHANCE Well, the worst of picking hay up in our country was that we always had a lot of snakes in our country, and of course they find a hay bale a perfect place

to live under because there are mice there and also it's nice and cool. When you're picking up hay without a loader (just manually picking it up and throwing it on the truck) the natural way to do it is to grab the two strings on the bale, lift it, and then you put your left foot where the bale was and then you lever yourself to throw it up into the truck. Of course, your left foot is where the snake is you and can't see it because the bale is in the way. The number of people who have been bitten by snakes like that ... I mean, the poor old snake, he's just had his house moved and then somebody stands on him; of course he's going to bite! So I evolved a system of rolling it over first and having a bit of a look. [laughs]

JF Prudent. So you never got bitten?

CHANCE I never got bitten, no, no.

JF We didn't talk about what you had in the way of ploughing machinery. You mentioned the header; what did you have as a plough?

CHANCE Chamberlain-made again. Chamberlain made a full range of machinery (not seeding combines until later, although they later did make quite a good one). Ploughs and scarifiers were Chamberlain-made, and that's what we owned. It was good solid stuff.

JF Well now, your father, you said, had a farming background but went into wool classing, predominantly, as his profession. So he was no stranger to farming when it came to taking over that property with his wife?

CHANCE No; he had farming experience at Kondinin.

JF Talking about him, what was your relationship like with your dad?

CHANCE Good, although we were both fairly strong willed, and fathers and sons do clash from time to time; but, no, we were close. He's not long died. He lived till he was 95 and he was as sharp as a tack. His body was starting to fall around him, but he still lived independently. Yes, we got on well. He was clever [and] articulate. He never had a huge amount of education; I think he went to school at Perth Boys until he was 14. He then had to upgrade his mathematics when he was in the army because he was trained as an artillery officer, although he was a machine gunner,

but it's the same training. So he had to do geometry, trigonometry and basic physics to matriculation standard, but he did that quite quickly.

JF That would have stood him in quite good stead on the farm, I guess?

CHANCE Yes, and he loved mathematics. Mathematics was his thing; it's what he didn't pass on to me [laughs]. I was never a mathematician. He was a clever man. He went on to be a member of the Australian Wool Board and the International Wool Secretariat, so he travelled a lot. He also started the process of trading meat into Dubai when Dubai was basically just a village beginning to stir itself; this is going back into the very early '70s. I'm trying to think of the ruler's name at the time; I can see his face but I can't get his name. But [he was] the current Maktoum's grandfather, who actually sent me a wedding present when I got married in 1974.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Wonderful. So you'd be welcome there today, too, probably?

CHANCE I still have a close relationship with not so much the Maktoum family because they have sort of grown away, but with Dubai generally, yes, although it's not my favourite place, I have to say. Dubai became a place ... it's really about real estate development and British tourism. Abu Dhabi is a much more business-oriented area.

JF Thinking about your father, what characteristics or attitudes of his do you think you have adopted or inherited or whatever?

CHANCE A capacity to visualise and resolve problems laterally that isn't always the same as everyone else's. I think that comes from being able to clearly visualise what the challenge is and: how do you go about doing this? I think that's something that came relatively easily to both of us. It's not something we ever worked at; it was just a gift that we had, and everything really springs from that. Of course, sometimes you come up with the wrong solutions, too [laughs] because you didn't visualise it correctly in the first place. But, yes, I think we were always able to see things somewhat differently, and in that respect we're the same. We don't actually share all

that many attributes in my view; some, we do. But very few people have ever said (apart from my mother, and only in a disparaging sense) that I was just like my father. [laughs]

JF Yes. To what extent do you think that the farm situation fosters that, sort of, independence of thinking?

CHANCE Yes, you've got to find your own solutions, yes. But given that situation, not everyone achieves the capacity to think laterally. They all have to achieve an independence in their actions and an understanding of cause and effect and the fact that you can't blame anyone else when it goes wrong. Everyone eventually gets there, but what I'm talking about in that context is (flowing from that) I just think we had (we didn't develop, I think we had or have) an ability to clearly visualise an issue which might leave you with a different outcome. It doesn't always. Just going back to that wheat bin, he actually visualised the right answer (one that worked straightaway) when nobody else had, and yet it all seemed so clear to him. He couldn't work out why nobody else had done it. It's in that that I think I'm grateful that I did get some of that from him.

[track 5]

JF Yes. Going to the other side of the family now, what about your mother? What sort of personality did she have and what do you think you have inherited or learned from her?

CHANCE Probably more of my character comes from her than from my dad. She was actually quite a conservative person and certainly politically conservative. My father was an ardent Labor voter, but my mother would've never ever thought of voting anything but Country Party, which doesn't make me a political conservative, but I am conservative in many of my approaches. By Labor standards, I'm a conservative left-winger. I belong to the old school of Labor. But methodical, careful ... I don't know exactly, because every child is a hybrid, and hybrids don't always follow particularly either side. She was more careful, more considerate than my father, but that's probably because she was a woman. [laughs] My father was a little bit crash or crash through, whereas mum was more likely to think about things too long; yes.

JF Thinking about your family ethos, was religion important at all in your upbringing?

CHANCE My mum and dad were churchgoers in the Methodist Church. My mother's family were staunch Methodists in every respect other than Freemasonry; they were anti-Freemason Methodists, which is a bit odd because Methodists were mostly Freemasons in those days. They were confirmed non-drinkers. We used to go to church. I can still remember going to Sunday school as a kid.

JF Would you go to Kellerberrin for that or was there a church in Doodlakine?

CHANCE No, Doodlakine. We had at one stage three churches. We had the Methodist Church, which had by far the biggest congregation, but there was also a little Church of England and there was a Catholic Church, although that wasn't functioning in my recollection, but I remember it being there. The Catholics and the Church of England were over the other side of the line; we were on the right side of the line, the Methodists! [chuckles] It was a very active little church. A nice church community; they were nice people. We had some pretty amazing ministers.

JF Were they running a circuit of several churches?

CHANCE Yes; Kellerberrin-based and they would do, I think, Tammin, Kellerberrin and Doodlakine every Sunday, and then, I think, every second Sunday, they used to go out to north Baandee, because I think our time used to change. We were normally 11 o'clock services and I think the day they were going out to Baandee it was earlier than that, yes. But they might have dropped off Tammin; Tammin might have been every second Sunday. I went to a church-run school, again the Methodists.

JF Yes; we'll come to Wesley College in due course.

CHANCE Yes, yes. It didn't stop me being quite an enthusiastic drinker, though, so they never really won me! [laughs]

JF But not only thinking about the social issues, how much did you adopt the general Christian ethos and so on? Do you have an enduring Christian faith of a personal nature?

CHANCE I actually do, but it's not one that you would ever see much expression of. One thing I'm always grateful to the Methodists for was that they had a very laissez faire concept of what faith was and that began right from the very beginning. Faith was faith, and that was it. It didn't particularly matter whether that faith was Christian or Muslim or Hindu, which I thought was quite modern and remarkable given that they're generally known for being fairly small-minded. But I thought that was quite remarkable and maybe it's what I wanted to hear, too; I don't know. I'm really grateful for that because it meant that I was able then to go on and get past what I think people get stymied in their faith for, because they tend to think of their faith in the same way as people think of football teams: I'm good because I barrack for the Catholics and you're bad because you're a Hindu. You know. It's not about football sides; it's about faith and belief. I'm still not entirely sure what faith is all about, but I think it's a fundamental human condition that we like to think there is something beyond the mortal. I think it's a human need, like food and drink.

[track 6]

JF Was politics discussed much at home?

CHANCE Constantly, yes, and not only at home; and this brings you to the peculiarity of our area. We'd go to football training, and I think it's probably the only place, not perhaps in the world (because it might happen in Serbia or it might happen in Ireland, where people are outwardly political) but one of the few places in Australia where a bunch of blokes would sit down and have a beer after football training and 80 per cent of the conversation would be about politics. Quite remarkable; I mean, I just can't imagine it happening anywhere else [chuckles]. So politics was something that we were all engaged in. Just thinking back to that football team, you're only talking about 22 blokes. Three members of that football team became MPs; at least another one was a candidate. That's four; that's one in five of a footy team [chuckles].

JF Would you like to mention the names?

CHANCE Yes, well, Peter Walsh was our captain and coach, Jim Scott was the first Green MP, and Mike Fitzpatrick was a Labor candidate in Merredin.

JF And then of course there's yourself.

CHANCE And myself, yes. But as I said earlier, there had been seven MPs from Doodlakine, which has a population of about 40 [laughter].

JF Yes, incredible. Going on to some of the other things, was music important to you as a kid?

CHANCE No; not really, no.

JF Methodists are often associated with sort of a musical element and I wondered ...

CHANCE Methodism was born in song; yes.

JF You know that quote [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes, indeed I do. But, no, not really; my mother gave up trying to teach me the piano. We had a piano, and I wasn't even a great music listener. I do enjoy heavy rock and roll; I still do (I'm an AC/DC fan), but I get very sick of it. If there's music on now in a pub or somewhere where I'm trying to concentrate or talk to anyone, I can't hack it; I go out and leave.

[track 7]

JF Just in the last few minutes, other than the activities on the farm, what was your chief leisure concern when you were a kid?

CHANCE While I was on the farm?

JF While you were still on the family farm, yes.

CHANCE Really, football, of course. By then Aussie Rules; although earlier I was a rugby player, but [there was] not a lot of rugby played in the Wheatbelt, and I wasn't a gifted Aussie Rules footballer. I was a good rugby player but it took me a while to master the aerial skills, and I couldn't kick. But nonetheless, I played regularly in A grade and that was good. It was a good social mix. [They were] a really nice group of people, but there wasn't a lot of sporting opportunities in those days. Football was basically it. [There was] a bit of water skiing in summer maybe, because we had a lake, but the field-type athletics that I had enjoyed so much was something that I couldn't do unless I was prepared to come to Perth to do it, which I wasn't. I

was good at throwing things, like shot-put and stuff like that. I bought a shot and I used to still train with it but ...

JF That followed your time at Wesley, did it, your interest in athletics and that sort of thing?

CHANCE Yes, both track and field. I was a sprinter. I was certainly no distance runner, but 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, yes.

JF Wheatbelt families used often (and perhaps usually) to go away from the Wheatbelt for summer holidays. Did your family do likewise and where did they go?

CHANCE Oh, yes. Because my mother, who was born and bred in the Wheatbelt (she was born near York) hated the heat, absolutely hated it, (the rest of the family thrived on it; I still do love the heat, as long as it is not humid, but that beautiful, dry, desert heat we had out there was just lovely), but as a consequence of that we had to go to Albany every year.

JF Good choice [laughs].

CHANCE For two weeks and we just hated it [laughs]. It is so cold. Lovely place, yes.

JF Where did you stay in Albany?

CHANCE Well, all over, but a couple of times I remember staying at one of the really old caravan parks. What's the name of it? Diamond?

JF Dymesbury Park?

CHANCE Dymesbury; yes, which was nice.

JF On the King River?

CHANCE Yes. A couple of times [we stayed] at a guest house that was actually owned by the widow of one of the leading communists out of Baandee. Her name

was Rose. Her husband was tragically killed fishing near The Gap when he was only a young man (32 years old or something) which was tragic because he was a wonderful guy. We stayed at her place a couple of times and various places like that. It's a long time ago but I do remember. Her guest house is still there overlooking the harbour near that park.

JF Did you fish or swim? What did you do there?

CHANCE Yes, [we] swum. I used to love putting a mask on, and a snorkel, and poking around; although I was then, and I remain, petrified of sharks. We weren't great fishers, although I did start boat fishing much later around Kalbarri and I'd still like to do more of that.

JF I think we've probably come to the end of today's session. Thank you very much. [It was] a good start.

END OF INTERVIEW ONE

INTERVIEW TWO

[track 8]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number 2 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 1 July 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

Just picking up, Kim, on where we were last week, we discussed the old house you lived in on the farm, but we didn't go into any great amount of detail. I was wondering: did you grow up with electric power, did you grow up with water supply and that sort of thing?

CHANCE Yes, indeed, it was very civilised. We had what was standard in those days, right up until 1963, when we connected to grid power, we had the common 32-volt system that everyone had with a big bank of batteries and a diesel engine that used to chug away all night. It wasn't usually fired up during the day; the batteries would carry you through the day unless there was some heavy demand on. But the workshop didn't use a lot of electrical power because our main electrical loads there, like welding, were carried out by independent engines, so it was only fairly light stuff. But one of the strange things about those old 32-volt systems was of course television came along before mains power. Television sets only come in 240-volt AC and we had 32-volt DC, so we had to go through a converter process. The converters were quite modern solid state things, although the old rotary types, the analogues, were probably better. They were very sensitive to input power, so you had to balance your voltage out to get the right voltage coming out of the inverter, and 32-volt systems are so-called because that's the voltage that you've got to have at the point of the appliance. But of course you begin at 36 volts because you're actually running 18 two-volt batteries and you had those extra four volts for your volt drop between your generator and your house. The trick was you had to have the engine running and then you would turn the television on but you had then too much voltage at the inverter, so you had to go around the house turning lights on to get the balance exactly right [laughs]. If you turned too many on, the screen would start to close in, so it was this fine balancing of which lights to have on and which lights not to have on so that you got exactly 240 volts at the system.

JF So the screen was like a meter for you?

CHANCE It was, yes, and a very accurate one [laughter].

JF And did you say you were connected to the mains in '63?

CHANCE '63, yes. Everything happened in '63. That was when the standard gauge railway line went through. As a result of that, CBH built a new handling facility which was outside of the town, further east. That of course had to have three-phase power. That was connected to three-phase. That actually brought the power closer to us and there was a wonderful scheme that the SEC, then the power provider, had, called the CES (the contributory extension scheme) whereby it was basically a loan to those people who wanted to connect to the power for the capital cost of the line and you paid that loan off over 25 years. If you were the only one on that line, you paid the total cost or you incurred the debt for the total cost. Then, as other people connected they paid you for the ...

JF So you had a rebate on your expenditure.

CHANCE Yes. But it was just wonderful to be on power; didn't realise how good it was.

JF So you jumped straight from 32 to mains 240.

CHANCE Yes. We never had a 240-volt generating system. Some people did, but they had their upsides and downsides. One of our neighbours actually had a wind generator, AC power, which was really going ahead, backed up by diesel. And that was a 240-volt system, but the Lister Dunlite system was the most common of the 240-volt systems. The problems with those, though, if somebody got up at night to go to the toilet and turned on one light, that would start the diesel.

JF Yes.

CHANCE Yes, they were a demand-start operation. Some people got over that by having the wiring for both 240-volt systems and 32-volt systems in their house, so light load, or late at night when they didn't want to wake people up, they would just use the 32-volt line. But we only ever had 32 volt.

JF Yes, and what sort of water supply did you have to your house?

CHANCE No problems at all; we were connected to the Goldfields system.

JF Oh right, so you can't have been too far away from the Goldfields pipeline?

CHANCE No, only two miles north. No, we always had excellent water.

JF So all the way from Mundaring and thereabouts.

CHANCE All the way from Mundaring, yes.

JF And you said it was a big house, so you would've enjoyed your own room, I suppose.

CHANCE Oh yes, even a choice of them [laughs].

JF Which of the rooms do you picture most vividly when you think of that house?

CHANCE Basically in the middle of the house was a massive open-plan family-cum-dining room and that was where we spent most of our life, other than the kitchen area, which was also a very big open-plan area. There weren't actually a lot of rooms in the house; they were just very big rooms. I think there were five bedrooms but the house was dominated by those two big rooms. Those two were where we spent most of our time.

JF Was it often the scene of big entertainments?

CHANCE Yes, from time to time we had some big ... Well, with fairly big families, yes, we had some memorable events [chuckles].

JF Were books very important in the home?

CHANCE Yes, because most of this was in the pre-television era, books were vital to me. I mean, the family had its own library, but in my own room I had a bookcase stacked full of books. Yes, I love books.

JF And what about artworks and other embellishments decorating the house?

CHANCE We weren't really big on art, no. I've already spoken about the piano; that was our concession to culture, but, no, we weren't great on art [chuckles].

JF And I suppose it was surrounded by quite considerable gardens, was it?

CHANCE Yes, huge gardens. When the house was originally set up and presumably before there was a connection to the Goldfields water supply (and this is going back into my grandparents' day) they had constructed a very reliable dam which was actually covered with poles and brushwood to keep the evaporation down. There was a beautiful Chicago Aermotor windmill on it, absolutely magnificent thing, and that used to supply, through a two-inch pipeline, huge quantities of water for the garden, so there was a big garden there and my mother was a very, very keen gardener.

JF Did she keep the house supplied in veg or was the garden not devoted to that?

CHANCE No, from time to time ... The vegetable garden used to vary a bit; my mother was a flower person. But we did have a big area that was devoted to vegetables because there was a little patch in the house yard that was actually quite sandy. Even though the house was built in a heavy valley floor, there was one little area that was quite gritty sand, probably from some ancient flood event that dropped it there. Of course, that was beautiful garden soil. Yes, from time to time our garden used to flourish. I remember the peas. Mum never got to eat any of her peas; we used to eat them straight off the garden [laughter].

JF Yes. I think children have done that since time immemorial.

CHANCE I still do it! [laughter]

JF Now, we spoke about your relations with your dad and mum a little bit last week but we didn't pick up on relations with your sister. Tell me about how you got on with your sister.

CHANCE We got on very well. She was four years older than me, and she died at the age of 57 as a result of a brain tumour, which was unbelievably sad. But she was a lovely person, always looked after me, didn't brutalise me too much. Indeed, she reminds me so much of my daughter that sometimes you find yourself being confused about who you're talking to ...

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. She even looks like her.

JF She remained important to you throughout your life, I take it.

CHANCE Yes. Well, she was my only sibling. But, yes, she was sort of a guide and mentor through most of my life.

JF And where did she go to school after Doodlakine?

CHANCE Methodist Ladies' College for the years 10, 11 and 12. She went to Kellerberrin District High School for years 8 and 9. I think that's how it broke up. I think the reason for that was there weren't sufficient places to allow her to be there for years 8 and 9. I think that was the story.

JF Yes, that was always subject to long waiting lists, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes. She didn't go away then until she was, say, 14, whereas I went away when I was 12.

JF Just before we come on to talking about school and so on for you, who were the other people, not including teachers and outside the immediate family, who were significant to you as a child on the farm at Doodlakine?

CHANCE Well, they were mostly family and neighbours. I had an uncle who was my mother's brother-in-law (married to my mother's sister) who was ... Actually, a

couple of them, but my uncle Clay Stevens and his wife Shirley (my mother's sister) were amongst our closest friends, regardless of whether they were related or not. A cousin of my mother's, Bill Prowse, was a very firm friend of my father's and their children were the same age as we were, and two of the boys in fact remain ... Well, one of the boys was almost born on the same day as me, Johnny Prowse, and we've been friends for years. They were like brothers and sisters. Then there was my uncle Jack Fewster, married to another of my mother's sisters. Jack was my communist uncle and one of my favourite people. He was an amazing guy. There were some interesting stories because his brother-in-law, of course, was Edgar Prowse, the very conservative ...

JF The former senator.

CHANCE ... Country Party senator, and not someone I liked particularly. We didn't get on at all. His other closest friend was Paddy Troy [chuckles].

JF Oh, yes.

CHANCE Around about Christmastime, the whole Fewster clan used to move down to our house. They had a beat-up old house in Shoalwater. A huge, rambling, dysfunctional ... They were the most dysfunctional family you ever came across. It was just noise and activity and screaming kids, and that's the way they lived. I mean, that was their lifestyle. He'd be sitting down having a chat to Paddy (not a beer because Jack would never drink) and there'd be this urgent message, "Edgar's coming! Edgar's coming!" and you couldn't possibly in those days have Paddy Troy and Edgar in the same house [laughter].

JF It was as serious as that!

CHANCE There had to be all these processes of holding up Edgar at the front door while they moved Paddy out the back door [laughs]. But I remember Paddy, as a kid. He was a lovely guy, but a bit sort of grumpy; he wasn't like my uncle.

JF And was Edgar at Arthur River then?

CHANCE No ...oh, well, that's a good point. Darkan.

JF Darkan, that's what I meant, yes.

CHANCE Yes, he was. And in fact I can't remember that family, which again was a big family, six kids, five kids. I don't remember them at Doodlakine, but they hadn't long left because my sister remembered them being at Doodlakine because they used to catch the bus at the same corner. So the Prowse kids used to come down in a horse and buggy and leave it at a tree on this corner [chuckles]. To think of it now, it sounds bizarre. She only had to walk down to that tree; it was only three, 400 metres away. They used to catch the school bus from that corner. They knew each other much better than I ever did because by the time my recollections first started to form, they had already gone to Darkan. So I didn't see that much of them, but Edgar used to turn up every now and again for formal family occasions and he and I never really saw eye to eye. He's probably the reason I became left-of-centre in my politics [chuckles].

JF [chuckles] Well, that's a significant influence then, isn't it?

CHANCE Well, it would be entirely subliminal because I never even thought it through until that very moment [laughter].

JF So they're some of the people that were most important to you.

Now, you've just talked about going to school, and so you, like your sister, would've been fairly close to the bus.

CHANCE Yes, we had a very easy childhood; no long drives.

JF And you were only, what, two miles north of the town anyway, were you; is that right?

CHANCE Yes, three miles by road.

JF So school wasn't very far.

CHANCE No.

JF Not like some of the kids who had to endure perhaps an hour's drive in the bus.

CHANCE Yes. And school buses weren't quite the same standard then as they are now. Our standard school bus was an Austin, I suppose it would have been an A30, A40, or a Cambridge, something like that; a van. The last one in was given a piece of hay bale twine. The purpose of the hay bale twine was to tie around the catch of the door at the back of the bus to hold the doors closed and you had to sit there [laughs]. That was when the Austin A40, or whatever it was, was running. When it wasn't running, they used to carry us on the back of a truck. And on good days, as a concession to safety, they'd put the stock sides on the truck; otherwise you were just on the back of an open truck.

JF An open truck, goodness.

CHANCE The kids from south Doodlie were always one up on us because they actually had a bus. It was an orange and green and white bus, or it was after a while. There was an older bus (I remember a Fargo van) driven by and owned by a Mr Morgan. I don't know why I remember that, but still ... because it was probably called the Morgan bus. But they rolled that bus over, fortunately not injuring anyone, so then they got the green, gold and white bus. We still had the old truck [chuckles].

JF So it was a different contractor altogether for your bus.

CHANCE Yes, north Doodlakine and south Doodlakine. For some reason the south Doodlakine bus was either called Morgan's bus, that was because Mr Morgan had it, or it was called the Mindabooka bus, and that was after a school that was south of Doodlakine, Mindabooka, that had closed down. Some of the older kids had actually been to that school so it must've been closed down in the ... gee, I don't know, late '40s, yes.

[track 9]

JF So, Doodlakine Primary School, then, was a two or three teacher school, was it?

CHANCE Yes, two. It actually had two buildings; a big room and a little room. The big room was for grades 4, 5, 6, 7. It was the classical wheatbelt school [which were of] the very tall weatherboard structures. Every town had one. They had very

high ceilings, [which were] very comfortable in the summer, [but] cold as charity in the winter. The little room was a much more modern building. It was a frame and fibro building, fairly low slung (a long narrow building). We didn't have grades in those days so infants class 1 and class 2 were in that one. A Miss Whitfield was our first teacher and Miss McBeth replaced her. [There was] one teacher, normally female, in the little room for the little kids, and the headmaster was the teacher in the big room for the big kids.

JF And do you remember your first day at school?

CHANCE I do. I even remember what I was wearing.

JF Do you? [laughs]

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about it.

CHANCE I remember what I was wearing because ... oh well, everyone wore the same thing, so it was actually easy; grey shorts, grey shirt, brown sandals. But what I remember was [that] my mother made me wear a solar toupee, and I hated that thing with a passion. It never survived the first day. When I came home without it she said, "Where's your hat?" And I said, "Oh, I had a bit of an accident and it got broken". In fact, I tore it up [laughter]. But, yes, I do remember my first day.

JF What do you remember about Miss Whitfield?

CHANCE She was lovely; brisk and businesslike. She was a strawberry redhead with curly hair. She was very trim. She must have been quite young, although we thought she was ancient. She was probably in her mid or early twenties. I'm not sure but I think she may have married somebody locally. I am not sure about that. Yes, they were great, both she and Miss McBeth, who was different; she had black hair.

JF Teacher accommodation was often a problem in the country in those days. Do you know how they were domiciled?

CHANCE I think Miss Whitfield and Miss McBeth actually lived in Kellerberrin and drove into school every day, and that continued to be the practice right up pretty much until the school closed. The only resident teacher lived in a wonderful old house, built at the same time and in a similar style to the big room, so it was heavy weatherboard; again, pretty much a typical building. You could see that house repeated in town after town. I'm not exactly sure when it was built, but one of the older residents of Doodlakine told me that he can remember as a kid delivering milk to that house in 1920, so it was certainly there then. I guess it was built around that era of 1912 to 1914, when so much of that old part of the wheatbelt was built. It's actually a house I later bought and lived in for some years.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That was built as the school house, was it?

CHANCE Yes. [It was] all solid jarrah. There must have been 200 tonne of jarrah in it. The house is still there.

JF So the school would have dated from about that 1912–14 era, would it, in Doodlakine?

CHANCE Oh yes.

JF So there were enough people there to warrant a school at that time.

CHANCE Oh, it was a big town then. At that time, say, before 1920 and, in fact, probably right up to the Depression, it was a bigger town than Kellerberrin. In some of the old maps, Doodlakine is marked in big black capitals and Kellerberrin is just a little side note to it, which was something we were always very proud of.

JF Well, that makes more sense of your uncle's (was it your uncle's?) suggestion that it might become the capital.

CHANCE My grand uncle, yes.

JF Your grand uncle. [laughs]

CHANCE Yes. If indeed that's the truth, but urban legend in time becomes the truth.

JF Yes. [laughter] Okay, and presumably your first headmaster was Mr Colin Lee.

CHANCE How did you know that?

JF Well, I did a little bit of research on this, I must confess.

CHANCE Colin Lee, father of Malcolm Lee, QC. Yes.

JF And what do you remember of him?

CHANCE Yes, I do remember him, although he never taught me. He was the headmaster; he taught my sister. I remember his violin. He used to play the violin to the kids, including us. The little room used to go over to hear Mr Lee play the violin. I can remember him nestling his chin onto the rest of the violin and then he wasn't happy with that, so he used to take his handkerchief out and fold it up and put that there, so he was happy and then he'd play the violin, which to me sounded then, as violins still do to me, like a cat in agony. He was a lovely guy. And I remember Malcolm Lee as a kid. He was a great friend, in fact, of my sister. He had the most stunning head of red hair you ever saw, so he was obviously "Megs". "Ranga" hadn't been invented as a term then; he was "Megs". And there was also a daughter, who I don't remember so well. She married the man who later became the Prime Minister of New Guinea.

JF Oh, yes; I can't remember the name.

CHANCE A name like Omari or Kumari; something like that. She was quite religious and I think she was a missionary in New Guinea.

JF Really. She was influenced by Doodlakine too [chuckles]!

CHANCE Yes.

JF An influential little place [chuckles]!

CHANCE But Malcolm Lee did go on to become a very significant figure in legal circles.

JF Yes.

CHANCE I am told [he is] a really nice guy. I once had occasion to study a report that he had done, actually before he was a QC, on ratings systems for irrigation and drainage areas, which sounds fascinating. But it was a troubling thing for governments at the time, particularly concerning the rating for areas like urban Busselton, where they used to pay a rate. Until the Lee report, there was no way of legally determining the primary, secondary and tertiary beneficiaries of public works, and that's what the Lee report was about. And it remains the seminal work in that area.

JF Interesting. So you would have been taught first by Miss Whitfield and then I think Mr Murray perhaps. Would that be right?

CHANCE Yes. Mr Murray was there for years and years and years and years. He was not a great teacher. I think the education authorities took the view that, "He seems to be comfortable in Doodlakine; let's not inflict him on anyone else". [chuckles]. He had a son, Ean, who was again the same age as me. Four kids in my school were born on literally the same day as me, which was remarkable given that we only had about 30 kids. Ean later went on to become a police officer. I actually remember him pulling me up once.

JF Yes. So as far as that [goes], was Mr Murray your final teacher?

CHANCE No. Thankfully, for my further education, because I didn't learn much in all of that time [that] Mr Murray was there, we had a guy come in whose name was Boyd Anderson. Boyd had one look at what we had learnt and was absolutely appalled. He just thought, "These kids have got to go to high school next year."
[interruption for phone call]

[track 10]

CHANCE In my last year we had a teacher called Boyd Anderson and he took one look at us and decided that we had a huge amount of work to do to get to the stage where we were going to be able to compete at high school level, but to his credit he gave us about four years of education compressed into one year. We didn't particularly like him for it at the time because he made us work like we had never worked in our lives before, but I've been very, very grateful to him ever since because he had a huge job. He was actually quite a young man because he was still playing football, although he had grey hair and we thought he was really, really old and we thought it was strange that a person with grey hair could play football [laughter]. He got a football injury, which resulted in a fracture of his skull, which was undiagnosed, and that caused him some behavioural difficulties and it was not until they actually diagnosed what the problem was that they were able to get that sorted out. So, I hope that didn't affect his career. I'm sure it didn't because he was an outstanding teacher.

JF Yes. Now, while you're reminiscing about the school, which are the events of the school year that you remember most vividly?

CHANCE Okay. I think it would be the sports days. We actually had three different sports days. We weren't a great sporting school because there weren't enough of us and I had never played a game of Australian rules football (one or two perhaps) and very little cricket, because we didn't have enough kids to do it. But athletics was something that our small size didn't influence. We were able to do all the running and the jumping that kids are supposed to do, so that became a big issue for us. We had two different forms of sports day, but there was one that was part of the school system but was sometimes conducted at the golf course on the number 7 fairway of the Doodlakine golf club. It had a nice shaded area at one end. It was actually ideal and it was a nice smooth area and they used to go up there the day before and mark out the lanes because our oval was a bit small and tended to be a bit overgrown with weeds and prickly things [chuckles]. They weren't great ovals. So that was the school sports day and then about two weeks either side of the school sports day we used to have the Sunday school sports day. That was a much better event because at the Sunday school sports day we had ice-cream.

JF [Chuckles]

CHANCE Yes. Then there would be the inter-school sports day and this was a very serious event indeed. A huge number of schools used to turn up to it. It would be in a big town like Cunderdin or Quairading, something of that nature. I mean my recollection is [there were] about 5 000 schools there. There was probably about 20, but it seemed like 5 000 and the schools actually had their own lines laid out and that was where you were supposed to be inside those lines. It was very military in its structure. Then you'd get called up to events and your name would be taken before and after the event so that there was actually a winners list printed and it was very, very professional. I was so impressed with it and then we would all drink gallons and gallons of strawberry creaming soda in the bus on the way back and invariably all vomit in the passageway of the bus and generally have a great time. We were horribly sunburnt, but I remember that being a real high point of the school year. We used to look forward to every bit of it [chuckles].

JF Yes. Was swimming ever done at Doodlakine?

CHANCE No, no; there were no pools in those days in the Wheatbelt. Kalgoorlie had one and had had one since the '20s I think. Merredin was one of the first towns to get one, but we didn't get to Merredin that often. I guess the Merredin pool was built round about the mid-'50s. I should know that because I later lived almost opposite it, but my guess is mid to maybe late '50s. I do remember swimming in it, but I wasn't a great swimmer then (we never had the opportunity) and I remain not a great swimmer.

JF So that wasn't on the curriculum?

CHANCE No, we were desert kids.

JF So amongst the school kids that you knew would have been quite a considerable number of migrant children, from what you said, with that railway camp nearby.

CHANCE Yes, all Italian and the kids generally spoke passable English, so they must have learnt English at school before they immigrated.

JF Or they possibly picked it up very quickly in Australia, because they do.

CHANCE Yes, true, true. But no, my sense is that their English was too good for that. But frequently their parents, and particularly their mothers, had no English at all, so our school would have day school for the kids and all our classes were together (Italian and Australian), so there was no need to separate on the basis of language. Then at night the parents would come in and they'd have night school. But a big proportion of our school were Italian; my feeling is [it was] probably half or maybe a bit more. So we were almost an English second-language school in those days.

JF How were they received by the Aussie kids?

CHANCE Oh, we loved them. Yes, loved them to bits because they were different and exotic and very friendly and open. It was a real experience, you know, to have an exposure to another culture, but also to gain an understanding of what it is like to come out of a country that has been completely destroyed and have to start all over again. When we did learn about the academic and trade skills that the breadwinners of those families had and see them working basically as navvies on a rail road because Australia would not accept their education qualifications, yes, that struck us as being grossly unfair, even at that age. We would look at a man and say, "He's an engineer. I've never met an engineer in my life, never," or, "He's a draughtsman; I know one draughtsman, and he's thought of as a highly paid professional and there's the two of them with picks and shovels. You know, what are we doing here?" So we actually sort of evolved a belief, which is probably wrong, I don't know, that they were all highly qualified professionals and they probably weren't, but that was what we thought.

JF Did you have any close personal social relations with them? Like, did you get invited into their homes at all?

CHANCE Not much. They didn't have the capacity to do that because they lived in camps; it was pretty rough. They would sometimes come and stay with us, yes, but no, we weren't encouraged to go into the camp area. Because it was a railway camp it was ...

JF Yes. I think you said you had one of the Italian people working on the farm from time to time, so that was your introduction to Italian culture too.

CHANCE Yes, Gaetano. I think Gaetano was probably not associated with the group in the railway camp, because he certainly was not a railway worker. I think Gaetano was probably one of the post Second [World] War prisoners of war who had stayed here. Now, I don't know how they got to do that, but some POWs didn't go home, because a family friend, their father, came from the same basis; he was a POW actually captured by the British at Eritrea, sent to Cyprus initially and then Northam and he just never went home (there was nothing at home to go to) and then brought up his family here. I think Gaetano was probably of that nature. I think he was an ex-prisoner of war and probably from North Africa somewhere.

JF Did he actually live on the farm when he was working there?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Was he domiciled with you or were there quarters?

CHANCE We had quarters attached to the main workshop, which were comfortable enough. The problem with the quarters, though, was they were right alongside where the diesel generator was, so it was a bit noisy [chuckles].

JF Yes. Now, can you recall prizes or other accolades that you won while you were a primary school student?

CHANCE I don't think we had any. I don't remember there being any. I remember Father Christmas coming, but I don't remember anything like a school speech night. We didn't have prizes, because that was during Mr Murray's era and that would have required just too much effort. I remember winning an apple in a reading competition. That's about all I remember winning, but it was a huge apple [laughter]. Well, Mr Murray's earlier school had been at Bridgetown, so he had access to apples.

JF Oh, right. Yes, by the case [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes, indeed he did.

JF Now, was anything much made of the preparation for the scholarship when you were at primary school?

CHANCE No.

JF So you would have been there between '52 and '58 I guess?

CHANCE Yes.

JF So the scholarship was still in existence and I wondered if they made anything of it in that little school?

CHANCE No; I really think Mr Murray wouldn't have got engaged in that and I think Boyd Anderson probably thought that his job was to get us to a point where we were at least competitive. Certainly, none of us could have got to a situation where we excelled. So, that's probably why it never arose. He probably thought, well, none of these kids are going to get it, so we won't burden them with it.

JF Right.

CHANCE But I do remember the scholarship. I remember people talking about it. That was to Perth Mod.

JF Yes, and you could take some of them up at any government high school. You know, you got your funding to do that or else you could go to Mod.

[track 11]

While you're talking about the school, I guess that brings up the town site to some extent.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Paint me a picture of the town site as you remember it when you were a kid.

CHANCE Intensely busy by today's standards. There were people everywhere. There were actually two shops. There was the co-op, which is actually still there and still trades as a store, although not as a co-op, and there was Kelsey's store, which was also a fairly big general store. Then there was another group of buildings across the road from Kelsey's which contained a restaurant, the baker's shop and another

shop that used to trade sometimes and not other times. Opposite that was the butcher's shop. There was a very impressive two-storey hotel that was built in 1926. Around the corner there was another group of shops, only one of which traded, but that was a stand-alone greengrocer. I am just trying to remember the name of the people who had that ... no, it has escaped me, I am sorry ... just a greengrocer. That was the same block of houses. It was a semi-detached block with commercial premises in the front and residential at the rear. My recollection is that there were three such units in one block. In the easternmost block, the Scott family lived, and I think they did operate a shop. Yes, they did for a while. And that was Jim Scott's family home. Jim and I subsequently served together in the Legislative Council. There was also a connection with the greengrocer's and Frank Hough's family, but I won't go into that in any detail, because it was a bit of a scandal at the time, yes, and I was not supposed to hear those stories.

JF You haven't mentioned motor garages. They were often important in little country Wheatbelt towns.

CHANCE We did not actually have one. But Malcolm Hamersley, who was a really sweet old guy, but an advanced alcoholic ... people said of Malcolm, in his sober moments he was the finest mechanic that ever lived, and I am not sure whether that was true or not, but I used to take advice from Malcolm from time to time. He used to take some work in, but he would do that in his mother's garage or house, basically.

JF And fuel, would the co-op have handled fuel?

CHANCE The co-op had fuel. My recollection is that Kelsey's did as well. Yes, I think that was about all.

There were two churches. I do recall the third one being there, the Catholic Church. [There were] a number of houses, perhaps a dozen or more. It was, by today's standards, a thriving little centre.

JF Did you have a resident doctor?

CHANCE No; Kellerberrin. But we were well served in Kellerberrin. Remember that Kellerberrin is only 12 miles away, and they had a hospital. We really did not lack services at all. It was not a deprived upbringing; it was a privileged upbringing.

JF Did your family use the butcher to an extent?

CHANCE Yes, indeed. My family were always very insistent that you did all of your shopping locally.

JF But I was wondering whether you killed your own meat.

CHANCE Oh, I see. No, actually not much; every now and again. Later on, I did enough to know that I can do it. No, it was always easier to go and buy meat. But if you want those local tradesmen to continue to be in the town, you'd have to support them.

JF You said on your questionnaire that you remember the smell of baking bread. When and where did that hit you?

CHANCE The school was at the northern end of town, and opposite the school was the headmaster's house, which I later bought. There was then a vacant block to the south, and then at the other side of that vacant block was another of those semi-detached commercial-cum-residential buildings. The building nearest us was the baker's shop, and that was old 'Doughy' Wright who ran the baker's shop. His son was in my class at school, and again born on the same day as me. That was Leon Wright. We would be sitting there in the morning ... he must have baked late in the day, which does seem strange, doesn't it, because normally they bake, like, four o'clock in the morning. But I can remember this being more like 10 in the morning we could smell the bread baking. Maybe he was doing a separate run.

JF A second batch, yes.

CHANCE But I remember the smell of the baking bread used to come drifting in through the windows, and that was it. All concentration for the rest of that day was gone until we got food.

[track 12]

JF How involved were your parents in the community?

CHANCE Heavily involved. My father was always a leader in the community. As I may have said before, he later went on to be a member of the Australian Wool Board and the International Wool Secretariat. He was heavily involved in farmer politics, never much in conventional politics.

JF Local government?

CHANCE Yes, he did. He did get involved in local government. I don't know how it came about but it was suggested to him that he should run for the East Ward of the Kellerberrin shire council. He did that despite the fact that two of the strongest pieces of advice that he ever gave me was never ever get involved in the administration of a sports club and don't waste your time going into local government. You don't get involved in sports clubs because that is the worst form of politics imaginable, the dirtiest, the meanest, and local government is basically a waste of time. And there was a considerable issue too when he was in local government because it was at that time that the Shire of Kellerberrin decided to build its pool. Pools were very contentious things because the only beneficiaries of the pool were the town residents, and the people who paid for the pool were the ward residents who never got to use it; some of whom were far too far away to ever use the pool. Of course the East Ward was the most far flung of the wards. I think we must have had two councillors per ward, and the other councillor of the East Ward was a trenchant opponent of the pool. My father had to be the peacemaker because he knew it had to happen. He knew we had to have a pool, but he also understood the argument of the more rural residents. He went through a process of negotiating the compromise agreement which actually saw that pool delivered, but the other East Ward member was in fact our neighbour, who I'm not going to name because his family are still around. He was a great guy in many ways but he was mean and vicious and personal. He took to the shire clerk in a very, very personal way. The shire clerk was a guy who my dad had a lot of respect for and I know that he thought we were very lucky to have someone of that ability. He had to deal with his mate and his fellow East Ward councillor behaving extremely badly. It was in that process that I learnt a lot about politics, although I was still very young then. But it struck a chord and as a result of that I've never had any engagement in local government at all and I avoid it like the plague.

JF To what extent was your mum involved with local organisations?

CHANCE Yes, she was in everything that mums were in in those days. She was very active in the church. She was much more religious than my dad was. That included of course the church guild which was the major social club for women. She was somewhat less active in the CWA. The church guild seemed to be more active than the CWA in our area; I don't know. But she was in the CWA but it wasn't regarded as a big deal. But, yes, everything that was going, the hospital auxiliary, whatever.

JF P&C?

CHANCE Yes, P&C, absolutely.

JF Was P&C a very active force?

CHANCE Yes. Quite small; small, efficient. They looked after us, from that auxiliary point of view, extremely well, yes.

[track 13]

JF Just to tail off for today, I wonder if you can talk about what events of world, national or even state significance, were you becoming aware of in your primary school years. I mean, there were things like royal visits, there were things like *Sputnik* and so on. What impacted on you?

CHANCE The royal visit, we missed largely, that was '53. We missed that because ... no, it must've been a later royal visit; it couldn't have been '53. Anyway, it was during the polio scare and we were all set to go and then they said, "No; the risks of putting so many kids together is too high." I think we were going to Northam. I think that's where the royal visit was. So that got cancelled, and then we found that the guy that I sat alongside in school, that same Ean Murray, was a polio carrier or a diphtheria carrier. It might have been diphtheria. Anyway, there was some enormous epidemic. I never got to see the Queen until about 1961 or thereabouts, when she waved to us, which I thought was rather nice of her! We were rowing a racing shell just downstream a bit from the brewery, but quite close to the road as she went past. We actually saw her look out to where our boat was and wave to us [laughs]. That was very nice. It is the only time I have seen the Queen. What was it you said?

JF *Sputnik* and space.

CHANCE *Sputnik*; I remember *Sputnik*. I remember going out on a front lawn and watching it go over, and we had a calf born; our milking cow had a calf that night, so of course that calf became *Sputnik*, and *Sputnik* later graduated to become our milking cow, so *Sputy* was around for a while [laughter].

But major events: the world was a pretty quiet place, but some do stick in my mind and they might seem a bit strange. But one of the people who has been influential in my life was Gamal Abdel Nasser, who I had huge respect for, and I followed the Suez crisis issues, this is 1955 and '56. I wasn't even 10 then, but I was cutting those stories out of the paper because I sensed that something huge was happening here and perhaps I wasn't quite aware of how significant it was, but when Eisenhower told the British to get out, basically, that they were wrong, I thought, "That's the United States actually being true to its roots." I didn't have a very high opinion of Eisenhower as it happened, but I thought, "That's the United States' role in the world", and it was quite prescient because that's actually what did happen. It was the beginning of the end of colonialism and that was the significant thing for me, that Nasser would pit Egypt against the greatest colonial power the world has ever known, and win. I mean, people had done it before, but they'd never won. Then Nasser went into his pro-Russian period, which never bothered me, but it just meant that the superpowers couldn't take anything for granted anymore, and I thought that was a good thing. And then we saw that followed by the steady destruction of the colonial era, sometimes with results that weren't all that good, I have to say, but it was a watershed in history. I had huge respect for Nasser as a result, more so than most Egyptians do now. I do spend quite a lot of time in Egypt, but when I speak to Egyptians about my regard for Nasser I'm actually thought quite strange.

JF Really?

CHANCE He's not highly regarded.

JF That's amazing when you think of how he put them on the world map.

CHANCE Yes, but to them Sadat is their hero and Nasser ... I'm not too sure what corrupted their view of him, because he was an amazing man.

JF It's perhaps a little bit later you talked about Johnson, LBJ, being another of your aficionados [laughs].

CHANCE Yes, LBJ is a hero of mine, and again he's a character that history treated badly, because all people of our age recall about LBJ is that chant, "LBJ, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?" and the Vietnam protest period. In fact, Vietnam wasn't LBJ's fault; it was well and truly on the way when he was there. He did oversee some escalation of the engagement in Vietnam, but I don't think he had a lot of choice in that either. I mean, that was a mistake we had already made. The reason I thought so highly of LBJ: one, he was a Texan. Texas is an area with a profoundly fundamentalist Republican outlook and he took on the Republicans in Texas; took them on by making an appeal to the poor white farmers and the blacks in Texas and by a recruiting and engagement campaign that should be used by any aspiring politician as a text. It was absolutely amazing, because in the US it's not just a matter of getting people to vote for you, it's a matter of getting people to vote and to have the courage to turn up at a polling booth; the courage and the interest. And that's exactly what he did. He stood on stumps in every redneck town in Texas and first got himself elected governor and then ultimately into Congress. Later, LBJ delivered most of the major social revolutions that JFK was credited with. JFK did not do the things that we credit him for, and could not do. He was a Catholic from Massachusetts, how could he? How could a Yankee do what his administration is credited for doing in the '60s in the south? Couldn't. A Yankee, especially a Catholic Yankee, who was a lawyer and came from Massachusetts, he couldn't do it. It was LBJ as the deputy who did that. He was a Texan; he could go down and speak to the good old boys in Louisiana and say, "Good old boys, you've got to change your ways, because if you don't change your ways, things ain't going to be real good. Now, this is what you've got to do." And they would accept that from a Texan. They were never going to accept it from a Boston lawyer. And yet Kennedy, he was the president; he got the benefit from all of that, but in fact it was LBJ's work. And logic actually demonstrates that he's the only one who could have. He had the courage to stand aside for what he believed was right and he had the tenacity to find the way to get there. He has never really been given credit for the extent of his success, but the major successes in reforming social justice in the United States, you can find LBJ's fingerprints all over them.

JF Fascinating. You later became interested, I think, in motorsports. I wonder if Donald Campbell's land speed attempts and things like that tickled your fancy as a kid.

CHANCE I used to watch them, and, like every kid, we were actually brought up on Donald Campbell and Malcolm Campbell and their amazing exploits. But speed records were never my thing; I always thought they were a bit contrived. I just loved motorsport in all of its forms.

JF And lastly, things like federal politics, did that impact on you much at Doodlakine when you were a kid?

CHANCE Oh, yes.

JF I mean, it was the Menzies era essentially, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes, very much so. I actually saw Menzies in question time once. In 1963 I went over with my school playing football in Canberra, and part of every school tour of Canberra is a visit to Parliament House. They were good enough to arrange a visit during question time. I remember a question of Menzies in which the opposition member asking the question (a backbencher as I recall) went through what was quite a long and involved question, not overly long. I mean, the Speaker hadn't pulled him up at all. The question was complex but very clearly put. I forget the issue, but it was a very well constructed case which really, really put the acid on Menzies. I thought, "How is he going to crawl his way out of this one?" While the question was being asked, Menzies was sitting at the dispatch box taking notes, looking up occasionally he'd take another note, the question concluded and the questioner sat down and Menzies sat back and then stood and said to the Speaker, "Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could ask the honourable member to repeat that question; I didn't quite catch it." [laughter] He was a master! I think he was a horrible man and I hated all of the things that he did, but he was a master [laughs].

JF And perhaps some of the interesting characters on the other side at that time, people like Evatt and Calwell and so on, were some interesting characters. Did they appeal to you?

CHANCE Amazing characters; but no, they didn't. The old style Labor Party (and we saw this get expressed in the Whitlam cabinet) were the bitter old men, and the bitter old men never did a thing for me. I wasn't a critic of the Whitlam government, and in fact some of the things that they did I thought were just amazing, wonderful achievements, but they were always diminished by the stuff that came out as a result of being in opposition for 23 years. The bitterness, the hatred, the issues around the split in the ALP in the '50s, which was still kind of painful even then, and even now. I mean, you can trace back most of Brian Burke's horrible bloody actions to the fact that he feels bitter about the way the split treated his father, or the way Chamberlain in particular treated his father. His father was a bloody fool. Tom Burke was an idiot. I mean, Chamberlain was no hero in anyone's estimation, but I think in terms of what he did with Tom Burke, he didn't have a choice. He was a left-wing leader of a party that was, in Western Australia, totally left, and these oddball right-wingers were running around disrupting things. Well, you've got to get rid of them [laughter].

Some of the things that have happened in the Labor Party, and the fact that the New South Wales Labor Party (which is not a body I have any time for at all; I think they're a bunch of mongrels) many of their problems traced back to the fact that while in Victoria you had a formal split between the DLP and the ALP, and that bloodletting that occurred in the '50s in Victoria as a result of that, you never had that formal split in New South Wales, so the poison stayed inside the system, in my view. And I don't think New South Wales, or Queensland for that matter, have ever properly recovered from that. I'm deeply distrustful of anything that comes out of Sydney in the ALP as a result. Here we didn't have the problems except ... it was a fringe issue, and basically the fringe issue was around Tom Burke. But Brian never got over it. Brian had debts to settle, and he still has, in my view. He saw the Carpenter government in particular as a left-backed government, even though Carpenter himself was non-factional, and if he had a faction it probably would have been way to the right of where we were; where the left were. But the left recognised in him, as we have with Ripper as being the right person at the right time, and he [Brian Burke] decided it was his job to bring it down, which is outrageous. What do you do? Anyway, your worst enemies are inside.

JF And on that word of wisdom, perhaps we'll fold up for the day. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW TWO

INTERVIEW THREE

[track 14]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview session 3 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance. It is in the series commissioned by the Western Australian parliamentary history program and it is being recorded on the 9th July 2010 at Parliament House, Perth with interviewer John Ferrell. Kim, today we are going to take off from your experiences at Wesley College.

CHANCE Yes.

JF As an introductory statement, how and why was it determined that you would attend Wesley for your secondary schooling?

CHANCE Oh, I see. Well, my family were members of the Methodist Church. Wesley was a highly regarded school. You had to go away somewhere, because there was no high school locally. The nearest high schools to us were in Northam, Perth or Kalgoorlie. So we had a need for boarding facilities, and Wesley was chosen, ultimately.

JF The obvious one, I suppose, yes. It would have been quite a big decision for a family to make because of the cost, I suppose, too in those days.

CHANCE Yes, it was very expensive, as it is now, particularly in the first year, [as] both my sister and I were at boarding schools.

JF And she was at MLC?

CHANCE At MLC.

JF Now, you became a boarder, obviously. Would you like to tell me about the boarding house and what living in the boarding house was like?

CHANCE There were three main dormitories, which housed the bulk of the first year, second year and third year students. Fourth years and fifth years were like dormitory prefects, so they were also in the same dorms. Then there was another wing of smaller dormitories, what we used to call the rabbit warren; the connotation is

obvious! They had only three or four people in each dormitory, but the big dorms, A dorm, B dorm and K dorm, housed 26 people.

JF So big open spaces with beds lining the walls, were they?

CHANCE Yes. There was no dividers and no study room; all study was carried out in the classrooms. It was like photographs people have seen of military hospitals. That is about as near as I can get.

JF And of course in those days communal bathrooms.

CHANCE Yes. One bathroom served the whole of the boarding school [and] that was up on the second floor. You were allocated a time and somebody would come and rap on the door and say, "Your shower time is now", and everyone would race up the stairs and have their shower and race back again and try to get dressed in time.

JF This communal life was a new experience for you, wasn't it?

CHANCE It was new, but that was relatively easy to adapt to. A lot of it was fun.

JF Yes. So who or what helped you to adjust to life as a boarder?

CHANCE Time. You're a long way from home. You only saw your parents a few times a year. I was 12 years old then, and you just get used to it. You make friends. I have to admit the first year was difficult. After that it came fairly easily, but I was still glad when it was all over.

JF Yes. And the first year of course was 1959, I think I am right in saying.

CHANCE Yes, that's right.

JF Who was sort of in charge of you there? Did you make a warm contact with, say, a boarding house master or matron or anybody of that nature?

CHANCE Yes, there was a boarding house master who was also a senior teacher. His name was Mr Glenn. Yes, he was our first point of reference. We also had a number of housemasters who actually lived in the boarding school. The

boarding master had his own house. They were, in the main, university students, usually ex-scholars who understood the system well. They were there as a first point of contact, but ultimately Mr Glenn was the boss.

JF Were they fulfilling a teaching role as well or were they just there as supervisors?

CHANCE Mr Glenn was; he was a senior teacher and a very, very good one. I still remember specific things that he taught me. He was a geography teacher and geography became my key passion, and remains so. What he taught me allowed me to ... If you were to point to any individual point on a globe of the earth I could tell you what the climate and land use patterns are in that area without having any prior knowledge of that country. His system of teaching was so good that we were able to actually identify not just what climate and land use existed but why it existed. That, to me, marks a great teacher; one who can teach you to understand why things occur and not what things occur. Some [teachers], I thought, failed miserably in that, but Mr Glenn was the best I ever came across.

JF Did he last through your whole five years there?

CHANCE Yes, he did. I am told he did leave Wesley and went to teach in Sydney. I am also told he eventually achieved the lifetime ambition that he and his wife had to have a daughter. They had four sons when I was there, all carbon copies of Mr Glenn. He was quite a distinctive looking man. One of the distinctive things was [that] he had two prominent bumps in his forehead (horns he called them), and all of his children had these horns, and they looked exactly the same as each other [laughs]. I heard from somebody who I know who lives in Sydney that also knew him who told me that Mr Glenn had a daughter. I said, "That's great after four boys," he said, "No, six boys." He had another two boys before they got their girl [laughter]. So there's six of them running around there somewhere, but I would recognise them in a minute.

JF We'll go on to other staff members perhaps now, because you've talked about him as making a very warm sort of relationship with you and being a significant influence. What about other people who were significant masters?

CHANCE Well, there was the headmaster, of course, who I didn't feel anywhere near as warm about.

JF That was Norman Roy Collins.

CHANCE Norman Roy Collins, yes.

JF Of course, in your first year you would hardly have had much to do with him, I suppose, but as you grew older no doubt you could have.

CHANCE Yes. I've got no doubt that Norman Roy Collins was a first-class person. He ran a very, very good school, but he was a scary character to little kids. We were all a bit concerned about him. I mean, that was his job, but he did run a very good school. Some of my friends actually later became quite close to him and had a very strong relationship with him. My relationship with him was always, not cool; I think wary is probably ... [laughter]

JF And probably understandably.

CHANCE Well, I think it's exactly what he wanted [laughs].

JF Yes. The headmaster can sort of set the pattern as to what he expects [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes. And he had very firm standards of behaviour. Unusually for the headmaster of a Methodist school, he was not a Methodist and he was a drinker.

JF He was, I understand, a colleague of the first two headmasters who'd been invited to join the staff from Queensland.

CHANCE Yes, that's correct. He was a boxer of some reputation. He had two nicknames; he was "Boxer" and he was to us, more commonly, "the Bean". Where that came from I don't know, but if you were mucking around or doing what you weren't supposed to be doing and somebody said, "Hey, the Bean's coming," you stopped mucking around quickly [laughs].

JF Goodness. That sort of nickname is not something you'd know how to spell, I suppose.

CHANCE "The Bean"? No it was B-E-A-N; "the Bean". I think it referred to his very bald head.

JF Oh, of course.

CHANCE But why "the Bean" and not "Chrome Dome" or something like that, I don't know [laughs].

JF It was the '50s and '60s after all [laughs].

CHANCE Yes.

JF Apart from Mr Collins, who else did you make some sort of warm contact with among the staff members?

CHANCE Well, we had an accountancy teacher who was an Olympian, and that was unusual. Mr Bell was from the famous Bell family of hockey players. He was an Olympian and that was something that we used to look to. Wesley was very much a hockey school; it dominated hockey. I think [that] of the 13 age teams in Wesley, in one year 12 won premierships and one shared its premiership with another school. It was a remarkable sport; not that I played hockey, but a number of my friends did. I was a rugby player. We had a rowing coach who was not a part of the school team; he was ONLY the rowing coach, and also a member of the Western Australian Eight. He was an influential man for most of us.

JF What was his name?

CHANCE I am just trying to recall.

JF I don't think he featured on the staff lists I looked at.

CHANCE No; he wouldn't be on the staff list. It will come back in a moment, because I know it as well as anything.

JF Did you have any contact with Mrs Mildred Manning?

CHANCE Oh, yes.

JF Because she was there for a long, long time. I think your last year there was her fortieth year of teaching there.

CHANCE Yes. Mildred was a Wesley icon. She actually taught my uncle while she was still Miss Le Souef then. She was just remarkable. Everybody loved Milly; everybody. We started a scholarship foundation after she died. That is still rolling along to this day, I think specifically around science. She was a science teacher; [she taught] biology. [She was] just a remarkable person. There were a number who I had a huge amount of time for. Mr Philpot who was my art teacher tried very hard to instil a sense of the arts in me and failed miserably. Our tech drawing teacher was more successful.

JF Who was that? I'm sorry; I'm pressing your memory here.

CHANCE Yes. I remembered Colin Philpot's name but not his. It'll come back again. [There were] some who I remember as being really good people, but I always held a bit of a grudge that they didn't have that skill to enable the capacity to teach their students why things happen and not what happened. In part Mr Bell was one of those, but he was only [the] junior accountancy [teacher]. The senior accountancy teacher was a guy by the name of MacLean, who was a very successful teacher. In terms of getting his students through leaving certificate accountancy, his pass rate was practically 100 per cent. He was remarkably successful, but it was learning by rote and I never clearly understood the accountancy systems.

JF Despite which, you got a distinction at leaving, I think.

CHANCE I got a distinction because he was a good teacher in terms of getting people through, but I still never quite grasped it until much, much later. I thought it would have been so much easier to tell us why you were moving that posting from that side of that account to that side of that account and what is the logic of that, but that is what they never did. You just knew that when you went from cashbook to ledger it shifted from one side to the other, from debit side to credit side. Nobody told me why; you just did it that way. That was different from the way Glenn was able to

get things across. But in areas like economics, which was my other great love ... Arthur Simpson was our economics teacher and also the coach of the first 18 football club. He tried very hard to make me an Aussie Rules footballer but he was less successful at that. But Arthur was an amazing guy; I suspect not the brightest guy in the world, but just a very, very good, solid teacher. He mastered the art of getting economics through to people; why things happen. This major event occurred, like the Corn Laws in England, for example. "Why are the Corn Laws significant to today's economy?" and the whole process of protectionism within a foreign trade, export trade environment? That remained a passion for me, but Arthur's fatal flaw was [that] he was politically far to the right. We had this wonderful contrast with a guy who never actually taught me, but he was Dr Trenaman. Trenaman was a brilliant, brilliant man and politically far to the left. We had this wonderful set of contrasts. We used to play them off against each other, and they knew that very well. Arthur would tell us something and we'd say, "But Dr Trenaman said that that wasn't the case," even though he hadn't actually said that, but we thought he might have [laughter]. And Arthur would have to fumble his way through saying why Dr Trenaman was wrong, without contradicting him. It was a wonderful contrast. Did Dr Trenaman teach me or not? He was a history teacher, but I didn't do history. He must have come in on occasions to do something with us, because I remember being in his class, but I don't remember him being my teacher. Anyway, we had this wonderful opportunity to balance left against right. I was fascinated by the way people interpret things differently. We thought it was entirely legitimate that they had different views; it wasn't a matter of saying, "Well, why is one teacher telling us this and another teacher telling us that?" We knew we were dealing with an inexact science.

JF Economics in the days you were studying it still had quite a strong economic history component, didn't it?

CHANCE Absolutely.

JF I think 40 per cent or something was economic history.

CHANCE Oh, 50–50, yes. It was fascinating. I am really, really disappointed in the way economics is taught now, which is all statistics, and that's rubbish.

JF Theoretical; yes.

CHANCE Yes. Statistics are a key to proving a case and to construct a mathematical model, but that's further along. To me, you've got to understand what the systems are and then you start using the tools of analysis. To understand what the systems are, you have to understand how you arrived at those systems. You have to have history and you have to have systems. The mathematical end of it is actually another science, to me. [What] if somebody were to say to you, "Look, here's a Third World country and we want you to go in and reform its economy"? I once had this discussion with Eric Ripper. I said, "Eric, if somebody said to you, 'We want you to take over as the economic modeller, the Treasurer, of this Third World country and try to get it to a point', how would you go about it?" He said, "What a fascinating question." He'd never thought about it. That is the difference between he and I; I think about things like that all the time. How would I do that? I was in Ethiopia recently and I thought, "How would you go about fixing a country like this?" In fact, the answers are all pretty much applicable from one country to the next. There are simple, basic rules that you've got to have. It comes down to, after you've sorted out issues like transparency and integrity (beating corruption is probably the biggest thing), and that is doable, you've got to have a system which has transparent decision-making processes which actually knows where it's going and which gives people some control over the system. It doesn't matter whether you're in Ethiopia or the United States of America, the answers are all the same.

JF Yes, so I wondered when you said to me a few days ago that maths was not your strong point, I see some sort of relationship between the theoretical side of economics and maths.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Those two abilities often are related. I wondered if you'd had difficulties with the theoretical side of it on that score.

CHANCE No, none at all. Mathematics wasn't my strong subject because nobody ever explained to me the purpose and function of algebraic calculations. Again, they just failed to get through to me what the purpose of those symbols was. In other forms of mathematics, and particularly geometry and trigonometry, I was a high performer, but just in that area of algebra I never got it. Much later it occurred to me what the value of the systems were and I understood it. I don't have a problem with mathematics now. I can read quite complicated formulae and understand them,

but nobody had got me to that point. It was a period when teachers were hard to come by. Many of the people we had teaching us weren't teachers at all.

JF And teaching by rote was one of the strong things of that day, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Teach them the rules of thumb and leave them to apply those rules.

CHANCE Yes, and that's what they didn't do; they didn't give us those rules of thumb to apply. Sorry, some didn't. But many of our teachers were not trained as teachers. They had a relevant degree, but they weren't trained as teachers.

JF Yes, and that was actually later coming in for the private colleges than it was for the state system. You wouldn't have got a job in the '60s within the state system without a teacher training certificate.

CHANCE No, that's right.

JF But you could still get it on the basis of perhaps a degree or something like that, or just long service, in the private system.

CHANCE Yes. I mean even our headmaster who was himself a very good teacher still used to teach poetry; he just loved it. He had a list of qualifications as long as your arm, but his education qualifications were only at diploma level. I remember seeing that.

JF That's right; MA, Dip Ed.

CHANCE Yes.

[track 15]

JF We've talked quite a bit about staff, so perhaps we should change the focus now. Whom did you pick up with as friends in your time at Wesley, particularly those who've remained important to you afterwards?

CHANCE Some certainly have. Firstly, there was a group in the boarding school that we'd been together ever since first year, but a lot of my friends were principally

people who were engaged in the same sports as I was, particularly the rowers. The rowers were a club of their own, and we very much stuck together and actually tried to bring into our group those of our friends who were not rowers. Some of them we brought in very successfully. The rowers and the Rugby players tended to be the same people. And then athletics, because athletics is very much an individual sport, that did matter not so much. Although I did have a very good friend who later went on to play football for Richmond, who was [in] the first division in our age group in shot-put ... an amazing athlete and one who could have been an Olympian.

JF Who are we talking about?

CHANCE Ray Boyanich. [He] sat alongside me in year 12. Arthur Simpson, the Aussie Rules coach, took Ray under his wing and actually coached him through to a leaving certificate that he was never going to get when he first went into year 12. As a student, he was a great athlete. Ray was six foot five. He weighed 16 stone. He was an amazing athlete, and coordinated. He was an incredible guy. He broke the under-17 shot-put record, which is an event measured in half inches ... broke it by five feet; just incredible. He was identified (this is before we had a WA Institute Of Sport) as an Olympic ... I always get this one mixed up ... decathlete ... anyway, the one that does not have equestrian in it, because he was just an amazing all-round sportsman: high jump record setter, long jump record setter, shot-put record setter, the lynch man in the relay team. He was blindingly fast ... just an incredible guy. But in those days, you couldn't have any professional link to your sport and still be an Olympian, and he wanted to play professional football. So he played for West Perth briefly, and without a great deal of success, I have to say. Then Richmond picked him up, and he was fairest and best three years running with Richmond ... an amazing athlete.

JF Have you kept in touch with him much over the years?

CHANCE No, I haven't ... enough to know that he's still here, because when I was at the Karragullen field day last year, which is where he came from (he was up in the hills area ... they were market gardeners or fruit growers) I met a guy with the same name, Boyanich. I said, "Are you related to Ray?", and he said, "Yes, Ray is my nephew." And I said, "Is he still here?" He said, "Ray's still here. In fact he was here 10 minutes ago", but I missed him. I'd love to catch up with him again.

JF And other fellows that were important to you?

CHANCE Of the rowing fraternity, Malcolm Sedgewick, who tragically died not long ago. Alan Moir, also now dead ... he died quite young. It's awful when you start going back through it. Neville Phillips, who was my best man at my wedding, and I still see quite a lot of him. Ian Lloyd; not a rower, but he was part of our little group. Malcolm Hams. It was basically everybody that we rowed with. In fact we are thinking about bringing together that crew, because in 2013 (we raced in 1963) it will be 50 years.

JF That's a good excuse.

CHANCE We've lost two of them.

JF So rowing became something of a passion, but your introduction to that was new at Wesley, was it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about the first experiences with rowing and what attracted you?

CHANCE From the time I saw the sport and from the time that I learnt about it, I wanted nothing else but to be an oarsman. We weren't allowed to be rowers in year 1 (you had to be a year 2), and you had to have at least intermediate certificate swimming, which I didn't have, so I had to do that, before you got into the boat. But we had a rowing pool on the school grounds, just near the science block. There were allocated times when budding oarsman were allowed to go down and work out on this rowing pool, which was just like a swimming pool, a small swimming pool, but with a set of slides and a seat and an oar. So I worked on that all of year 1 and was able to finally get into a boat in year 2 after I had passed the necessary swimming qualifications, yes, which was a battle for me; I was never a great swimmer. Once that was done, I got into a boat. I still remember the first stroke that I took in an old tub pair, and I thought, "Oh, yes. This is it." I actually made a crew for the head of the river event in that first year of rowing. I was in the second IV. I graduated to the first IV in the next year, then made the first VIII in fourth year, and was captain of boats in fifth year.

JF You ended up with colours, I think, and a stroke trophy, didn't you?
Was it in fifth year?

CHANCE Yes; fifth year. Actually I think I won my colours in fourth year. I won general colours in fourth year for rowing and athletics and then rowing colours in fifth year.

JF And your other new sport ... was it a new sport at Wesley ... Rugby?

CHANCE Rugby was new, yes. I played in the very first first XV that we put together. That was great fun. I hadn't quite taken to Aussie Rules, because I'd had no background in football, because primary school did not have enough kids to play football. Rugby was an amazing sport ... it is an amazing sport ... because you can fit all kinds of physique and aptitude into a Rugby team, because there's 15 completely different tasks in a Rugby team, whereas an Aussie Rules team, basically, everyone is the same. Basically, six foot two, 85 kilograms, and you can play anywhere; the skills are all very much the same. In Rugby the skills are all totally different, and we had some very different people. Basically we had the leftovers from Aussie Rules, because in those days you weren't allowed to play Rugby if an Aussie Rules coach wanted you. Arthur Simpson did pull me out of the first XV in the preseason in 1963, and that's why I actually went to Canberra with the first XVIII. He said, "You're big. You're fast. I need a ruckman, and you're coming to play with us," and I had to; I had no choice.

But in Rugby we had a guy, he was no athlete. He was an American actually. His name was Robert Brueski, but he was the best prop forward I'd ever come across. Massive ... huge man. Brueski ... Polish probably, Polish-American. Shoulders about five feet wide and he could just lock a pack together. The problem was finding another prop forward to match him in size and strength. Then we had this little guy, who was a cheeky little guy, he was our hooker. He used to hang in between these two huge people. We had another guy who was about six foot seven, long skinny guy, but he was the best lock forward I'd ever come across, because he could use those long legs to stop the pack from spinning. With novice Rugby Union sides, the biggest problem is the pack will either collapse in the middle or it will spin, and that will put you all offside if you spin. He could lock our pack together. So I loved it.

JF While we are on sport, you eventually then did get into Australian Rules there, but only in your fifth year.

CHANCE No, only temporarily, because Arthur said, after he came back from Canberra, "Look, you played okay, but you need to learn more of the basics of the game, so I am going to play you in the second XVIII." And I said, "Arthur, you're not allowed to do that," because the limitation was they could only pull you out of Rugby if they offered you a side in the first XVIII; they couldn't put you back into the second XVIII. So he said, "So you don't want to play Aussie Rules, do you?" I said, "Well, no. I was happy playing Rugby." He said, "Oh, well, you can go back." So I went back then to the first XV. It was only the year after that that it became an officially recognised sport, but it wasn't then an officially recognised sport.

JF What a shame, because you could have excelled as well in that perhaps.

CHANCE Oh, well, no, but I did love it, and I did get a chance to try for state selection. I didn't get it, but it was nice to be asked to come and train.

JF You were a boarder. What was the state of play in relations between day boys and boarders at Wesley?

CHANCE Okay. It was sort of like being different families, but our relationships were good. Indeed Neville Phillips, who I indicated was my best man, was a day boy who hadn't come to Wesley until fourth year. He'd been at Applecross high school. As I said, he and I remain great friends. But no, there was no tension between day boys and boarders, as there was at some schools. We were kind of like different families. Boarders were a family. Day boys had their family somewhere else, so there was some difference there. If you had a problem, you were more likely to go to a boarder than you were to a day boy, if you needed help. Aside from that, our relationship was good.

[track 16]

JF I was going to ask you, was there any tradition of initiations that you had to go through in coming to Wesley?

CHANCE No, no; that was something that Mr Glenn would not permit. No, he was good at that. Without making a big thing about it, he just said, “No, look, we don’t do that”, and everyone understood that we don’t do that.

JF Which house were you allocated to?

CHANCE I was Mofflin House, and that’s one of the things I think that created that rapport between the day boys and the boarders. In some schools the boarders all belonged to one house; we didn’t. So in any one house there were about one-third boarders, two-thirds day boys, because that was the proportion across the whole school. So we were house colleagues even though we might be day boy and boarder, and I thought that was good.

JF Yes.

CHANCE Yes, because the houses were important in terms of our competitive structure; they were very real. Many of my friends were in other houses, and the competition in that was tremendous.

JF So the houses were important in sporting areas, were they?

CHANCE Yes; only in sport.

JF Only in sport?

CHANCE Yes. They didn’t have any other function.

JF Didn’t have others?

CHANCE No. I mean, we used to have house captains; indeed, I was the vice-captain of Mofflin. The joint captains of Mofflin happened to be also the joint captains of the school (that was just something that happened) but it really had no significance outside sport.

JF Whilst you were there, and certainly in Mr Collins’ era, I believe there were quite a few building developments on site at Wesley.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What do you remember of those?

CHANCE Well, the big one was the chapel; that was the big one. The science block had just been finished when I got there, and it was great to have that. The chapel was huge. We were fundraising all the way through my time there, and then it was actually built while I was there, so that was a major change. Then I think the next development (and this is after I left) was the redevelopment of the dining room area, which was quite a big development. They were just talking about that; they were on the planning stages. The swimming pool was finished just as I left. They were actually digging the hole for it while I was there. I don't think I ever swam in it as a student. I remember going back there and swimming there, but, no, the river was our pool, but, yes ...

JF The boatshed had been established before you got there, had it?

CHANCE Yes. The boatshed was pretty crappy actually. [laughs] It was.

JF Oh. I think that does date from Mr Collins' earlier years then, does it?

CHANCE Oh, does it? I didn't know that.

JF I think boatsheds and boats were listed as one of the things that he worked on when he first got there, which I think was '52 or something ... no, no; he was headmaster in '52, but he was there in the '30s, I think.

CHANCE Okay. See, that would have surprised me, because we always thought he wasn't all that sympathetic to the oarsmen.

JF He had passed on from that, perhaps, onto the thing of the moment.

CHANCE Yes, yes. But the boatshed was a smelly, horrible place.

JF Was it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Right. The recreation centre, was that part of the swimming pool complex?

CHANCE Yes, yes. It may have even been a second stage of that; I don't think it happened consecutively.

JF No. Mentioning the chapel, how did you relate to the religious emphasis of the school? How strong was that?

CHANCE We had a great chaplain; when I got married I asked him to perform the ceremony ... well, yes, and no. Reverend Green was the chaplain while I was there, and it was actually Frank Drysdale who married us. Frank took over from Green, but not while I was there. But I knew Frank because he used to be the minister in Kellerberrin.

JF Yes.

CHANCE The religious end of it was really a matter of choice at Wesley. If you wanted to be heavily involved in the religious end, you could; it just wasn't my choice, and has never been. But I've always been grateful for the way in which they taught us our religion, in a sense that it's okay to question accepted beliefs and it's okay to embrace other faiths, and I thought that was good. The essential message was that, you know, there is a fundamental code being taught here; it is the code that's important, not anything else. I thought that was really useful because we're ... it was a bit like the way Mr Glenn taught geography. He told you the whys and the hows rather than the whats. I think people who are taught religion in the sense of the whats were more likely to abandon it because the prescriptive-type teachings didn't serve them well. But I could have done with about 75 per cent less formal religious teaching than I actually had. I used to resent some of it such as having to turn up for chapel every morning, and the Sunday night Evensong I hated with a passion. I understand depression without ever having it, but I reckon I went really close to it on Sunday evenings while I was at boarding school. Your weekend was over, the sun was going down, you had to look forward to Monday, and then they wanted you to go to this bloody Evensong when all you wanted to do was put your head down into a book or whatever.

JF Yes. What was so horrible about it? Can you recall particular things?

CHANCE Well, it was the association of the end of your weekend, and the fact that you weren't really happy about another week's school. Yes, and it was just an association of things; it was something I did not want to do.

JF I wondered if it had anything to do with an evangelistic sort of approach. Were they trying to push decision making for Christianity or something?

CHANCE No, I don't think so.

JF No?

CHANCE No, because there wasn't much of that. It was a relatively short service and you'd have a couple of hymns and it was all over in half an hour, but I think it was what it marked. But it was depressing. I used to hate it. I think I understand ... well, if people feel like that all the time when they've got depression, then I am very sympathetic.

JF Some of the other things that you participated in: we haven't talked a lot about your own participation in athletics. We mentioned Boyanich's exploits, but tell me about your athletics at Wesley?

CHANCE I was fast and I was strong. I was a good jumper; not a great high jumper, I was a long jumper. I was a sprinter; although I tried hard, when I was younger, to be a middle distance runner, I never got much better. Eight hundred metres I was okay on, but 400 metres I was very competitive; 200 metres, that was probably my best event. I was close to even time on 200 metres. One hundred metres; I would make the relay team but I wouldn't anchor it (that was Boyanich). There were probably two others in my age group faster than me, so I would normally run second in the second leg of the relay. But shot; I loved shot. We had this great old Welshman, Taffy Morgan, who was about 4'5", I reckon, and probably six feet across the shoulders. He was a real Welshman. He was a great coach, and he coached people like myself and Boyanich and Ron Melville, who was a great shot-putter, a great footballer. He couldn't do much. I think he had emphysema or half a lung missing or something; he used to wheeze and cough and splutter. He was an amazing old guy.

JF Was he on the teaching staff?

CHANCE No.

JF Was he just a coach from outside?

CHANCE All he coached was shot, but he was like a sort of a retainer of the school, and, being a Welshman, probably somehow connected with the Methodist Church. He used to live on the school grounds; in fact, we had our own shot-put training area, because shot-put is dangerous if there are other kids running around. We had our own shot-put training area which was virtually in his backyard; it was between the backyard and the cadets' arsenal. There was a little area, and the scout hall was in the same area, and we could close that off (it had a fence) so that the shot-putters were able to train in there and not kill anyone, which was really good. God knows what we would have done if we'd had javelin, as the girls' schools did; I don't know how they worked that. We'd have been spearing people left, right and centre! [laughs] But, yes, I loved my athletics. I made the inters athletics team first as a sprinter, I suppose, in second year, and then every year after that as a shot-putter and sprinter, yes. I loved athletics; it was good.

JF The cadets is another big part for you of that school experience.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF When did you start the cadet association?

CHANCE In second year. I was promoted to sergeant in the next year, a mortar specialist, then an under officer after that, and company commander.

JF So that was quite a success story for you?

CHANCE Yes, I loved the cadets, yes; every Tuesday.

JF Was it only once a week during the term?

CHANCE Yes, every Tuesday, and then a two-week camp in ... it must have been about April. In the first school holidays, anyway; between first term and second term.

JF Yes.

CHANCE And then for the promotion camps, they were in summer. Particularly if you were going to a specialists school for mortar or machine guns or whatever to go to sergeant, that's the only way you could get there. That was in summer, and then the under officer school was also in summer.

JF Where did you do your camps?

CHANCE Northam.

JF Oh yes, all at Northam army camp?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That was pretty rugged, wasn't it, in those days in terms of its facilities or lack thereof? [chuckles]

CHANCE We didn't even have beds. The first camp I went to, they issued us with like an empty chaff bag (a clean, new one) each, and then, between three people, a bale of hay. The three people broke up the bale of hay into thirds and then fluffed the hay up and stuffed it into this palliasse, and that was your bed. It made you understand what the groundsheet was for; it was to stop the hay coming through and spearing you in the night. [laughs] But after the first year they did issue us with camp stretchers, which were much better. The facilities were ... I mean, we loved it.

JF What about showers? I think they only had cold running water, didn't they?

CHANCE Yes, it was cold water, yes.

JF I don't know, but in some experiences of Northam you had to shower at six in the morning, straight after reveille?

CHANCE Yes, before reveille.

JF Before reveille?

CHANCE It was straight after the reveille sounded, yes, and before morning parade. Yes, that was a bit nippy, but we didn't seem to mind that. The food was excellent; yes, the food was really, really good. The army had a lot of resources. When I was in cadets, that was just after the end of Nashos, so they had considerable resources available to them, because all of the stuff the Nashos used to use was basically available to us, including some very good mostly WO2s, a couple of WO1s, as trainers, and they were specialists; they were really good.

JF Who were some of those who you remember; some of the ARA men?

CHANCE Yes, okay. Oh, gee, there was a guy called Merredith who was a WO1, and his son was actually at our school ... or was he? He was certainly in one of my training camps, anyway. Pitt? Pik, Pik!

JF Pik? Oh yes.

CHANCE Warrant Officer Pik, who was actually a World War II corporal and was with my father's unit in World War II.

JF He was also at national service training at Swanbourne, I think.

CHANCE I bet he was, yes. He was an amazing guy, Pik. He had a voice on him; you could hear him from 100 miles away. He was a lovely guy. [laughs] My father told me a story of how he'd gone from ... it must have been from Cairo, I imagine, during the war, and he'd been sent to England for a specialist drill training course (this is in the middle of the war; it's an amazing thing). Anyway, they got on the ship in Alexandria or wherever, and he got on the booze while he was on the ship to England and managed to lose his rifle. [laughs]

JF Oh dear!

CHANCE So at one stage when he was bawling me out for doing something I just said, "Well at least I didn't lose my bloody rifle", and he said, "What?" [laughs] Lovely guy. I never thought I would remember those two names; I haven't had to think about them for 40 years.

JF I mean, in a way that was your opportunity to learn something about leadership.

CHANCE Yes.

JF To what extent did you have real responsibility within the cadet corps?

CHANCE Oh, it was actually very real, to the point of knowing how to give an order, knowing how to explain to somebody why something had to be done when they didn't want to do it, explaining safety procedures when we were using live ammunition in particular, and why the safety procedures were necessary. We were using dangerous weapons (heavy machine guns, mortars) something that they wouldn't allow these days. We even used to fire the mortars on the school oval, for Christ's sake! Can you imagine anyone allowing you to do that now? Yes, we used to set up a cluster of cardboard boxes up at one end and we'd bed down our base plate and fire mortars. [laughs]

JF Good grief!

CHANCE Boom!

JF Golly! What sort of a shot were you, because I take it you started with rifles before moving onto that?

CHANCE Yes, I was a member of our Challenge Cup shooting team. We shot our way out of B grade into A grade (that was probably our most successful year) but then they changed, as the army changed completely throughout Australia, from the standard targets that civilians still use, which was the tin hat target, that one, where the bull is there. [draws diagram].

JF Oh yes.

CHANCE They changed from that target to the figure target, and all you had to do was hit it; it didn't matter where you hit it.

JF It took the fun out of it? It took the competition out, I suppose, in a way?

CHANCE Yes, yes; I wasn't as good as that, because with shooting at that target (and this is exactly what they do now because I still go to the Queen's Prize every year) if you hit the target in, say, a maggie out here [draws diagram], the target would go down, and they'd put a mark on it and then put it up again so that you knew you were going high and right and your wind direction was, say, 10 knots that way so you'd know how to adjust for that. You'd have to think through why you were high, because you shouldn't be (that's an error). So you'd think through about how you were holding things, are you relaxing properly, but you certainly wouldn't adjust your sight. So if your next shot came in there, you'd say, "Well, I've got my wind right but I've still got this issue about height."

JF So that was 12 o'clock, say, because we can't see the diagram on tape?

CHANCE Yes, exactly, yes.

JF So you'd then adjust for it being high?

CHANCE Yes. Whereas with a figure target, if you hit it, it wasn't marked. So you might have been firing high and right, but you didn't know that, so your next shot might have gone all the way off the target, which was bad. [laughs]

JF Did you have any experience with FN30s, or were you always only on 30s?

CHANCE I did use FN762s, yes, but the old Lee-Enfield 303 was our bread and butter, but also Owen guns, Bren guns, Vickers machine guns.

JF Quite exciting for a teenager, I think, that sort of stuff?

CHANCE Oh yes! To let kids go ... at one stage in Northam we were using Owen guns, which was very unusual, but there was a whole stack of this nine millimetre or 38-calibre ammunition that they were trying to get rid of because it was too old to keep and they had no further use for it. So they said, "Give it to the kids and let them blast it through these Owen guns." [laughs] We went through cases and cases of ammunition; it was a lot of fun.

JF They are not terribly accurate, are they?

CHANCE No.

JF They are sort of a splatter gun?

CHANCE Yes. We were only using them on a 25-metre range.

JF Yes.

CHANCE That's about all they were ever designed to do, and, frankly, 38 calibre ... I mean, you get hit any further than 25 metres away, it isn't going to hurt much anyway.

JF No.

CHANCE It's quite a low-velocity bullet. It hits hard when it hits because it's a big bullet, nine millimetre, but it was designed and it was very effective for very close infighting in jungle or urban warfare conditions. It was very effective. Not all that reliable, though; they used to jam.

[track 17]

JF Yes. Now, we're sort of getting towards the end of the time for today. Can you draw this together and talk about overall how significant you think Wesley was in your development?

CHANCE Oh, very. For a country boy, I think I did at least half my mental and physical development on the water, which was something Wesley gave me a chance to do as an oarsman. It also taught me a number of things about what it is to be a citizen in a total sense; it gave me a sense of wanting to be a part of the structure of society. It enabled me to question commonly accepted values that

probably weren't very valuable, things like racism for example. It gave us an opportunity to say, "Well, society has a point of view about ethnicity which is wrong" and that's one of the things that you can go and do something about. So, yes, I thought it was a valuable part. I just wish they'd fed us better.

JF [laughs] So the kitchens and dining room was not a feature?

CHANCE The food was terrible and it was just inadequate and I think I have a minor eating disorder as a result of it.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. I can be almost compulsive about eating, yes.

JF Goodness. I shouldn't prolong this too much more today, but you managed an eight subject junior. Were you pleased with your results for junior?

CHANCE Yes. One of those I picked up in the next year because you could only do seven, but I did one junior subject as a fourth year because I wanted to do it in my leaving. I don't think you were able to sit a leaving subject without doing —

JF First off, no.

CHANCE I think so, yes, something like that, so that's why it's unusual.

JF Yes, and you didn't include maths in your upper school line-up.

CHANCE No. I stuck with it until I passed my first examination and then I pulled out. I thought I knew everything I needed to know and I wasn't going to get anywhere with these algebraic formulae if nobody was going to tell me what they were about, so I dropped it.

JF Right. Just one very last thing to talk about, I noticed you were on a library committee, mentioned as being on a library committee at Wesley. What did that entail?

CHANCE Well, I was on a number of committees actually. The library committee probably is the least of them.

JF Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't pick the others up [chuckles].

CHANCE But that was Dr Trenaman's committee. I think we just used to help out a bit in the library, stack some books and, yes, we didn't do much at all. Trenaman used to consult with us as to what sort of books to buy. I'm sure he never took any notice of what we told him but he did used to consult. No, my main committees were the ... the general sports committee was the big one of course because it is the general sports committee which allocates colours. I don't know what else I was on.

JF Yes, well I think we haven't picked up on a number of little things which we might talk about next week briefly on our next occasion. But thank you very much, that's a very good day's work.

CHANCE Thanks, I've got to go now to a funeral.

END OF INTERVIEW THREE

INTERVIEW FOUR

[track 18]

JF This meeting contains the recording of interview number four with the Honourable Kimberly Maurice Chance, MLC, in a series commissioned by the Western Australian Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 6 August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

Now, Kim, thinking about your school days, you were at an all-boys school for that period, at Wesley? To what extent were you able to have, as a Wesley boy, interaction with the opposite sex?

CHANCE We had our sister school, of course, the Methodist Ladies College, which we used to mix with quite frequently. We had dancing classes on usually Saturday afternoons, which was an opportunity. But, generally speaking, it was fairly limited, yes.

JF When you said Methodist Ladies College, you were talking about MLC Claremont, I suppose?

CHANCE Claremont, yes.

JF Was Penrhos going then, or not?

CHANCE Not under that name, but there was its precursor school, which was then called MLC South Perth, which wasn't on the Penrhos site. That was down closer to the Royal Perth Golf Club.

JF I think it was Angelo Street, was it, or one of those?

CHANCE No, further down towards ... what street is it ... South Terrace, down that way.

JF Yes, could be?

CHANCE Down towards the south end of Royal Perth Golf Club.

JF They weren't associated with you?

CHANCE No. Not in any sense, really, no.

JF So you had what might be termed a nearly celibate existence for those five years?

CHANCE Quite monastic, yes. Quite monastic, yes.

JF But you had school socials and so on, I guess, that involved the girls?

CHANCE We did, yes; yes.

JF What about dancing? Did you take to that?

CHANCE It was really just an opportunity to mix with the girls. I never took it that seriously. But our main social events were the school balls, and there was basically one of those each term. So, yes, they were the sort of highlights of our life, yes.

JF I guess coming from a rural community, you would have probably been familiar with dancing a little bit before that, were you?

CHANCE A bit. I mean, they were, in those days, the key social function, yes.

JF I suppose, from my knowledge of rural WA, it would have involved all the old-time dancers a lot in those days?

CHANCE Yes. Yes, well, this was still in the early years of rock, of course. A rock band ... to get to hear one ... you had to go to usually one of the surf club functions, so we used to frequent a few of those as well.

JF Did you, yes. And you were allowed out to do that from, were you, from Wesley?

CHANCE Yes. We had boarders' weekends, which gave us opportunity to get out. Generally, if school was in session, you wouldn't be able to go to something like that, yes.

JF That was the main thing I wanted to pick up from Wesley. But then to think about after Wesley, were you associated very much with the old boys' association?

CHANCE No. I was never much of an old boy. I mean, I did all of the things that one feels they have to do. I'm part of the Mildred Manning Foundation, but, no, I think I've been to one old boys' event in my whole life. And that was fun, I have to say. It was good to catch up with people that you hadn't seen for 30 years and just to see how much and how little they'd changed. One of the things that really struck me (physically people changed, obviously) but how 30 years of adult life actually doesn't change people one iota. They tend to be, with a couple of significant exceptions, exactly the same as they were.

JF It sort of confirms the personality that's there, rather than changes it?

CHANCE Yes. So at age 17 it's pretty much locked in. Yes, there are significant exceptions, but in the main people are what they always were, which is kind of comforting [laughter].

JF It's comforting if you start off well, I suppose?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF The Mildred Manning Foundation, how much time does that take and what does your role involve?

CHANCE It doesn't take any time. I just made an up-front contribution to it when it was first launched, and we continue to be recognised. It's accumulated a significant amount of money now, and I think it's a great tribute to Mildred.

JF What are the proceeds used for?

CHANCE I think for scholarships to assist deserving students ... hopefully, given Mildred's background, deserving science students.

JF Coming then to your post-school life, you had completed year 12. Had you had a career plan of any sort while you were a student?

CHANCE I just wanted to be a farmer. I had absolutely no ambition whatever to attend university, which in those days was still pretty rare, not many people did. But I had well and truly had enough of formal education; I just wanted to go and get my hands dirty.

JF Did you have any opportunities as a schoolboy for part-time occupations?

CHANCE No.

JF Had you experienced the world of work to any degree?

CHANCE Only when I was at home on the farm, yes.

JF And, of course, every farm boy gets well and truly involved in everything that's going on there, I suppose?

CHANCE Yes. I learned to drive when I was 10 or 11, yes. It was in a truck what's more, so I learnt to master crashed gearboxes at a very early age.

JF Double declutching and all that?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That leads naturally on to talking about a driver's licence. I suppose you were first in line on your birthday to get it when you were 17?

CHANCE No, no. In fact, I waited a whole nearly nine days.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE Yes, which was thought to be a bit strange. People were starting to question that I'd waited that long. My licence is still dated from the date I first got it, and it's on about ... in fact, it might have been 10 days ... I think it's 26 November is my licence date. My birthday is on the 16th, so I waited 10 days.

JF Goodness me.

CHANCE Yes. I'm not too sure why that happened, but usually people were knocking on the policeman's door at seven o'clock in the morning of their birthday [chuckles].

JF Yes, indeed.

CHANCE I don't know. Perhaps the local policeman had been on holiday or something, I don't know. I don't recall what the reason was, but it was a fairly informal process in those days. You turned up with a licensed driver ... in my case with my dad ... and you asked if you could have a licence, please, and usually the police officer said, "Yes, well I've seen you driving around, you don't do a bad job." In my case, we did actually go for a drive around town, yes.

JF Was this done in Doodlakine or Kellerberrin?

CHANCE Kellerberrin, where the police station is. Sergeant Colin Bake was my tester, and we went for a drive around town, and we even had to back up a laneway. Yes, it was quite a sophisticated test by the standards of those days. We came back; he deemed that I was capable of driving and I was a licensed driver from then on.

JF Were you in the truck at that stage for your test?

CHANCE No. You couldn't get a truck licence until you were 21 in those days, which wasn't a bad thing, in fact, because trucks were very much more difficult things to drive in those days than they are now. I mean they're really wussy things now; but they were a manful occupation to drive those things in those days: the brakes didn't work very well, the steering was very heavy; it was quite an athletic pursuit to drive one.

JF And not to mentioned the crash box, which you've already talked about?

CHANCE And the crash box, yes.

JF So when you'd left school then did you begin straightaway to work on the family farm?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Was there some formal agreement about that with your dad? How did that work because often farm boys were expected to do things rather than be formally employed with pay for it and so on?

CHANCE I actually started with a sharefarming agreement, so I was a sharefarmer.

JF From the beginning, yes.

CHANCE And didn't become a partner in the business until some years later.

JF That's interesting. I noticed the date, you see, because I think you said sharefarming from '60 to '64. Were you sharefarming with your dad even before you'd left school?

CHANCE That doesn't look right to me.

JF No. Well, I don't know where I got that date from, but somewhere it said '60 to '64.

CHANCE Yes, '63 and '64, I was sharefarming, and then I guess I joined the partnership in '65. So in my third year.

JF Did you have a particular aspect of the farm that was your responsibility or did you just get into everything?

CHANCE No, whatever happened, I was there, yes.

JF How did you go with things like shearing, for example? Were you a shearer?

CHANCE No. And I deliberately avoided it for a long time. But, given my father's earlier profession as a wool classer, I did learn that trade, and later got my own stencil.

JF So you did wool classing then, at a tech school somewhere, did you?

CHANCE Fremantle tech, at what is now ... well it's the old Fremantle lunatic asylum. Do you know the building ... the strange building?

JF Yes. The Fremantle Arts Centre it's called these days.

CHANCE The Fremantle Arts Centre, that's right, yes. My mother actually knew the building as a nurse in Perth because occasionally she had to go and pick up patients from there. She remembers it as being just the scariest place in the world; it really was. When I called it a lunatic asylum, I wasn't being politically incorrect; that's what it was called, and it was quite a scary place. It was all being renovated when we were there. We actually used outbuildings which were out the rear, temporary-type buildings at the rear of the main building. But that was all being renovated at that stage and it was quite an imposing (and it is) a very imposing building, but scary.

JF What did the course entail? Was it a continuous course for some weeks or was it once week for so many weeks or something?

CHANCE It was a block, yes. In the same way as apprenticeships were done in those days, it was a block and then you were given a provisional stencil, as I recall. Then I think your next five wool clips were monitored for compliance with the standards. Once you had gone through that, you then became ... this is for owner class, this is not a professional stencil. With the professionals, they went through similar process: they had a provisional and then they got a P1 stencil, and then they were still monitored; and then they went to P2, which was the full professional qualification, but we were only ever O class, owner licence.

JF What was the method of monitoring that was used?

CHANCE Your clip was very carefully examined as it arrived in the wool store. They looked at a range of issues, but obviously the key ones to make sure you got your types properly graded ... issues like the degree to which your percentage of

main line clip and skirtings came out (because we were at that stage being told not to overskirt) and detail things like the cleanliness of the clip; did you get all of the pizzle stain out of the bellies, for example, was a big one (if you didn't, you were marked down heavily); did you have any out-of-type fleeces in the wrong lines? In other words, did you exceed the micron-count range that was permissible in a given range? Did you overclass the clip or underclass the clip? Because overclassing can be as bad as underclassing ... splitting it into too many lines. So it was pretty rigorous, and they let you know very quickly if you made a mistake and would threaten to pull your stencil if you kept on doing it.

JF Who was managing this testing process?

CHANCE The Australian Wool Testing Authority probably. I'm not sure, but I imagine it was AWTA.

JF Did they then have a headquarters down in South Fremantle as they do today?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That's a fascinating place, that laboratory.

CHANCE It is, yes. That was the stage when objective measurement was just coming in, and that was radically changing the way in which traditional classing was being altered to suit objective measurement standards. That's why I mentioned the issue of overclassing. With traditional classing, which was very subjective, it was necessary, or thought necessary, to split the clips into a large number of lines. When we had access to objective measurement, the first thing we learnt was we'd been overclassing for years and we needed to have less and less lines and to make sure the lines were bigger. That took some doing because, visually, we were used to classing over a range, depending on the size of the clip, of probably two points of quality, so 60s and 64s together. What the objective measurements allowed was a much wider interpretation of that, but more careful attention to things like length and quality. So, yes, it was quite a different process.

JF And, of course, you continued then to be doing wool classing at every time you had a shearing session, I guess?

CHANCE Yes. An O class licence allowed you to class a clip ... any clip at all in which you had a financial interest. So if you had a share of another farmer's wool clip, you were allowed to class that. So I did class other sheds on the basis that I had some financial interest in the clip.

JF Was sheep working your thing or not?

CHANCE I can't say it was, no. Cropping then, as it is now, was less labour intensive. It was potentially more rewarding, although the risks were much higher. The two industries made a good balance for each other, and it's not been until the emergence of no-till farming, which is only in the last decade, that we've actually seen a separation of the two industries. Before that, the two were reliant upon each other, and had the effect also, in terms of farm economics, of balancing some of the cyclical flow of income. But the trend these days is to separate them, and cropping has been really a livestock-free zone, effectively. Livestock practices are carried out where cropping is only an opportunity thing, not a full-time occupation.

JF Did you also become au fait with things like vasectomising, mulesing and all the other things?

CHANCE Oh yes. Yes, I've cut my share of skin off, yes [laughter].

JF What about butchering your own flock?

CHANCE Yes. Although we weren't great butchers, but every now and again we'd knock off one of our own. But, generally, it was time consuming; it was like milking your own cow. My dad used to love having a milk cow, but even he saw in the end it was really a huge investment in time and it just didn't match up.

JF And it was a tie, wasn't it, if you were milking, you had to be there?

CHANCE Yes. And we lived close to town, so buying our milk and our meat was actually the clever thing to do.

JF So at about the time you were becoming a sharefarmer, I think the wheat quota had come in, hadn't it? How did that affect you?

CHANCE A little later. The first year of wheat quotas was the drought year of 1969. It might have actually been 1970, but all of the work was done in '69. I'm not too sure which was the first year, but in '69 wheat quotas didn't matter much because nobody grew any wheat anyway. I suspect that the 1970 harvest was the first year of wheat quotas. Yes, it did affect people, not so much us because our farm had a very strong production history and your wheat quota was determined on your production history from that farm. The people that it really hurt were the new-land farmers who were just starting and hadn't had time to get a production history and the sharefarmers, who really had no rights at all. Even though they'd grown the wheat the production history belonged to the owner, and generally the owner said, "Well, sorry, but I need that quota." In point of fact, the real effect was it made no difference at all because there was never one year ... you were always allowed to deliver over-quota wheat. You weren't proscribed from delivering over your set tonnage, but it was delivered as over quota and wasn't covered by the commonwealth funding arrangement. So you had just to take the risk that it would be sold. In point of fact, there was never one year in which over-quota wheat was paid differently from quota wheat, not one year.

JF In practice, that's how it worked out?

CHANCE Yes. So if you'd just ignored it, you would have ended up in exactly the same situation. But the practical effect was huge, because it meant that dozens and dozens of people were cut out of the wheat industry, principally the sharefarmers, but also a number of the new-land farmers just said, "Well, we can't survive on this." A couple of years into the wheat quota arrangements there was a reallocation of quota, a process called top cut, and that's where quota was taken from the people with the high production history, like ourselves, and actually given to people with low production history, particularly the new-land farmers. That was politically very divisive, as you can imagine.

JF Yes, I can.

CHANCE But, again, it made no difference at all, because all of the over quota wheat was received and paid for.

JF So it would have tended to discourage people from going into the industry mostly, wouldn't it?

CHANCE Yes. And also encouraged diversification. It was during that period ... well, prior to the quotas, we only grew wheat. That was our business; we grew wheat. We began, sort of against the trend a bit, a sharefarming arrangement with a large farm south of Doodlakine in the first year of the quotas, but on the basis that we didn't deliver any wheat. He said, "You can do what you like with it, as long as you don't grow wheat. If you do grow wheat, you've got to deliver on it your quota." So we grew a huge volume of barley at that stage. And then we said, "Well, if we're growing this amount of barley, we might as well be walking it off than trucking it off." So we started feed lotting at that stage. It made us more innovative. But, as I said, in point of fact, if we'd ignored it, you'd have been in exactly the same situation: all of your wheat was still going to be sold.

JF So you've mentioned wheat and barley. Were you into oats as well?

CHANCE Some, but we had mostly good soil, and oats you tend to grow only on very poor soil.

JF Barley is a bit tolerant of soil type, too, isn't it?

CHANCE Barley likes the high alkaline-type soils and saline soils, although we didn't have much of saline soil. No, we grew barley basically because that was all we could grow at that stage. That was feed barley, the old Beecher, the old American six-row barley. We later went into some of the emerging two-row varieties, which were malting varieties, and we did very, very well with that. It was just a great place to grow two-row barley.

JF How was barley marketed? I don't recall having to cart barley to the siding, for example; but was it?

CHANCE Yes, it was a prescribed grain, so you only had really one buyer, and that was the Grain Pool of Western Australia. It was one of the state prescribed grains, under state rather than commonwealth law. There was quite a lot of private trade done, mostly from grain growers to piggery operators. And, yes, we sold a lot of barley privately. No, it was pretty much the same system as wheat because it was

sold to the grain pool. And oats were the same in those days, but because it was sold to the Grain Pool rather than the AWB, your payments were a bit quicker. The Grain Pool tended to work on a 12-month payment cycle, whereas wheat in those days you could still be receiving payment seven years after the delivery.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE Yes, it was quite a long process.

JF That was a delay, wasn't it? Goodness.

CHANCE Yes. The way the AWB worked in those days was it would borrow a minimal amount to fund the first advance. The same process happens now, albeit through different agencies, but they would only pay a first advance at a level of about 50 per cent of the expected final value of the crop. That was borrowed money. The AWB would then repay that, plus the interest on that, and then it would start accumulating credit; and when the credit got up ... with sales and payments ... bearing in mind payments a lot of wheat was sold on credit in those days because we were exploring new markets (China was a brand-new market). China paid very well; it paid in gold, in fact, but the payments were spread over, typically, five to seven years. Big markets were government-to-government sales, principally to China and Egypt, and they were both long-term credit markets. We desperately wanted them, because we wanted to push the Americans out of those markets. There was so much wheat around the world in those days (that's why we had the quotas) and it was very hard to sell. So we competed on longer and longer credit. The AWB wouldn't make those subsequent payments until it actually had that money in the bank. So it would wait until it had, say, 30 or 40c a bushel in the bank and then it would pay out; it would make a second payment, then a third payment, then a fourth payment. We went out to as far as seven payments.

JF Golly.

CHANCE Some of that wheat have actually never been paid for. A delivery in I think 1990 or 1991 to Iraq. The Iraqis made the payment and that was running into the first Gulf War, but because all wheat is traded in US dollars it got caught by the US sanctions, so the payment was made by Iraq but was actually absorbed into the US economy somehow and has never been released to Australia.

JF Really?

CHANCE I've never been paid for that wheat.

JF Heavens. So the farmer was carrying this for a long time himself?

CHANCE Yes, yes. It actually doesn't sound like very good management but it was, in effect, because what replaced it was a system where the first advance payment was much more heavily borrowed. So instead of paying 50 per cent, they'd pay 80 or 90 per cent. That meant a huge flush of money coming in, but it also destabilised the farm income, which was really based on all these little payments coming in in dribs and drabs, which evened out your drought-and-boom effect. The change to the big up-front payments, which were sought by a lot of people and were appreciated by a lot of people, but I never particularly saw it as being a long-term advantage because it was all borrowed money. You were still paying interest on it, even though AWB can borrow on a lower rate than a farmer can, and that was the justification for a lot of farmers actually wanting that system. But, in the end, it meant (particularly if you didn't have a lot of debt) that you were funding debt that you didn't need. Then you had that destabilisation effect, which has an effect, obviously, on your income tax.

[track 19]

JF Yes. Tell me, were you ever involved with premium wheat production? That works independently of the AWB, doesn't it?

CHANCE No ... well, it does now. "Premium" can mean a number of things. Premium wheat usually is taken to mean 28-chromosome wheat which is at 13 per cent or greater protein. It's also called Prime Hard. In a bad year all of our crop would effectively be premium wheat. Sometimes there were special delivery arrangements for wheat over 13 per cent, and, commonly, yes, we did grow wheat over 13 per cent. On occasions we would deliver that down to Tammin, where they had different holding facilities, and it was segregated and you were paid a little bit more for it. But premium can also be deemed to be Prime Hard. Prime Hard is also 13 per cent-plus but tends to be of specified varieties, so you have to actually nominate to grow a particular type. It was still then covered by the AWB arrangements, yes.

JF Was it?

CHANCE And in barley of course you have your two grades as well: the malting, which is Premium; and feed.

JF I was just trying to think of something that came to mind. I've lost it.

CHANCE Well, there is another kind of premium wheat and that is the 17-chromosome wheat, which is durum, which is the pasta wheat. That may well have been dealt with separately, but it never really took off in Western Australia; there's very little pasta wheat being grown.

JF Is that determined climatically?

CHANCE Climatically and soil types. I mean, you can grow it, particularly if you go into that area sort of north from Merredin, into that drier very fertile country, and perhaps Southern Cross as well. So in an arc through from Southern Cross through Mukinbudin, on the better country ... Bencubbin ... it is possible to grow durum there. But we have never been able to grow it in sufficient volume to make it a viable industry sector. It's a pretty small market because it's mostly a domestic market. Most of it's grown in Queensland because you do get very high protein in Queensland, but to export it ... It's a lucrative market but until you have enough volume, it's very hard to compete with the durum producers in North Africa and the Mediterranean, and most of the market is in North Africa and the Mediterranean. The big market is Italy, obviously. Libya is a big market; they eat as much durum there as they eat bread wheat. But worldwide it's not huge. The United States ... I don't know where they get their durum from actually; though I doubt that they grow it themselves. They may do.

JF What varieties were you growing on your land over that period, say, from the '60s to the turn of the century?

CHANCE In the '60s the dominant variety was Insignia. It was just wonderful stuff. It was a great little wheat, very short. Its parentage was heavily Mexican and it was short, very drought tolerant and a great yielder; it was just amazing stuff. It was very flexible. You could sow it very early. You could sow it very late ... arguably, the greatest wheat I've ever [chuckles] come across, but it had quality problems and wasn't highly regarded in the market. There was a major switch on then to a locally

bred wheat, which also had Mexican parents but was much more acceptable quality, and that was Gamenya. In many ways Gamenya was ideal for Western Australia in that it could be grown in quite poor soil and have quite low protein but chemically it performed well in the bread-making process, even though it was grown in poor conditions. It had its problems, though, and I was never very keen on Gamenya. We switched over to a South Australian wheat which became very popular in Western Australia and was at one stage the predominant variety, and that was Halberd. We grew Halberd for many, many years until some of the locally bred varieties started to catch up with it. Bodallin was one of those (Bodallin became a major wheat for us) and Gutha for a time was also a very good wheat. They were our key wheats, but we weren't great Gamenya fans. The only time we would grow Gamenya is if we had a very late seeding because it was quite a quick wheat.

JF Now, we spoke briefly once before about the machinery and so on that you had on the farm. Of course, over the period from the '60s to the end of the century the scene there changed dramatically and the costs of it changed dramatically also. Just sketch briefly for me the history of the machines that you were using when you first became a sharefarmer and what you ended up with when you left farming.

CHANCE The Chamberlain Champion was the iconic Western Australian tractor. It had a four-cylinder, 270 cubic inch Perkins diesel, nine forward gears. It was very reliable, locally made right here in Perth, and they sold millions of them. It was just a great little tractor. As I said, it was the iconic tractor of the West Australian Wheatbelt. It was supported by some bigger brothers: the Countryman, which was almost exactly the same tractor as the Champion except that it had the six-cylinder Perkins, the 354 cubic inch Perkins. The top of the market from Chamberlain was the super series, which had the three-cylinder GM diesel. We had all three of those in some numbers [chuckles], but the Champion was what we started with. That was capable of seeding at a rate of about seven or eight acres per hour. When we finished our biggest tractor was a Massey Ferguson 4840, which had a V8 Cummins engine of 903 cubic inches, articulated four-wheel drive capable of seeding about 25 acres an hour. Things changed rapidly over that period of time. The articulated tractors were a real revolution, but so too were tractors like the little Chamberlain Champion. They were a revolution in that they were cheap; they were very powerful compared with their predecessors; and most important of all they were very reliable. You just never had to do anything with them. You started them up and drove them; that was it. That

was very different from tractors of an earlier era where breakdowns and rebuilds during the season were common, whereas these tractors you wouldn't even think about a rebuild until perhaps your seventh or eighth year of working.

JF So it was a really long-term investment.

CHANCE Yes. They were great machines. Even by modern standards their reliability was outstanding. But the big articulated tractors took us to the next stage. Since then the wheels have been replaced by rubber tracks and we're at a whole new level now. But, yes, costs, they did get quite expensive [chuckles].

JF And then the other machinery you need apart from the tractor; I mean, when you come to headers and harvesting machinery of various sorts.

CHANCE Yes. Harvesting machinery is enormously expensive and I find it really hard to justify, even today, the costs of a harvesting machine. When I look at a tractor and I think, "Yes, well, it's \$300 000, \$400 000", I can actually see why it's three or \$400 000. When I look at a harvesting machine at five or \$600 000, I just can't see it ...

JF No, because it stands doing nothing for 10 months of the year, I suppose.

CHANCE And it's such an insubstantial thing. I mean, it's just tinplate and bearings. It doesn't have that massive transmission or that huge engine that the tractors have and the complicated hydraulics. It's something you could literally build in your backyard; it's not all that complicated. The other reason I'm a bit resistant to new harvesting machinery (I never once bought a new harvesting machine, never) is that the one advantage our long endless summer gives us is that we are not under pressure at harvest time. If you have a breakdown you can walk around gently and fix the breakdown and get the machine going; it didn't really matter. It doesn't matter here if you're still harvesting in February, except you might want to take a holiday, unlike North America say where ...

JF Where you're waiting for the snows or the blizzards.

CHANCE Yes. If you don't get it off, you don't get it all, you know, and they are under huge pressure (and in Europe) to get the crop off. There is absolutely no pressure in Western Australia to get the crop off, and to me that provides an opportunity to actually make some capital savings. We always bought second-hand machinery. We'd buy the machine. We'd go all the way through it, completely refurbish it, which is a 100 per cent tax deduction because it's parts and repairs. Although you are technically supposed to own it for six months or something before you can do that, but that never bothered us much. And then we would go in with, effectively, what is a new machine. There was always plenty of labour around. We could always hire drivers. There was no problem with that. In summertime there's nothing else to do. We used to use mostly shearers as header drivers. Yes, we used to get a big crop off very cheaply.

JF Another aspect of farming of course that's become even more topical latterly than it was years ago is the increasing salinity of soils and so on. Did you have much experience of that in your part of the Wheatbelt?

CHANCE Yes, we had some. We weren't as badly affected as others who farmed in the valley, and we were predominantly in the valley; that's where our main operations were, and it's the valleys that are prone to salinity. I mean, we had some, but it wasn't a huge thing. It was a matter of just trying to adapt to it. It was a bit scary because you didn't know how much it was going to take and it had the ability to come up and take your best soil. It always took your best soil, and nobody yet has come up with a solution. I think there are solutions out there but ...

JF Were you actively involved in any salt land reclamation?

CHANCE No. I mean, we would've been had we stayed on but, no, we didn't do a lot. We were interested in watching what was happening and in learning. The West Australian Wheatbelt went through a number of different processes of saying, "Yes, this is the solution", and then 10 years later, "Well, that didn't work. This is the new solution". Each wave was actually very expensive, and people who'd committed to a particular solution often found that everything that they had done had been wasted. So we used to watch very carefully and observe, and we used to do a little bit of work ourselves, but we weren't ready, because we didn't have to, because we didn't have that much salinity, to make those big financial commitments. It's like the adoption of the Whittington interceptor bank system, for example, which clearly worked in some

circumstances but not all. That was the problem. People would seize on a particular system, because they were so desperate to find an answer and convince themselves that this was going to be the answer, and make huge financial commitments and sometimes for no reward at all, sometimes negative value came out of it. There was a kind of salinity evangelism developed that people said, "I've got the system. This is the way and the truth and the life, and there is no other way of doing it". It was quite evangelistic; people closed their minds to other options. I always thought that was quite distressing that people would do that.

JF Further to what we said earlier, you told me that you became a sharefarmer with your father and then you became a partner. I saw mention that later on you had probably at Carrabin ... is that the one that you're talking about that you went into for the barley production or is that separate again?

CHANCE No, that was another farm. We operated them all at one time, but the Carrabin property was one we bought in I think 1979, but the first crop year would have been 1980, which was the other huge drought that we had. That was a 5 000 acre property partly developed between Bodallin and Burracoppin. That was really our first new land block. We developed that, cleared it and put all the fencing and the dams in, yes.

JF What method of clearing were you using there, was that ...

CHANCE A bit radical actually, because it had been partly cleared before so scrub was relatively thin, but because it had been thinned down, the mallees were big. We just went straight into that with blade ploughs, which actually plough beneath the ground and lift the mallee root up out of the ground (so we didn't chain it; we just went straight in). We then used a huge pinwheel rake, like three times the size of a conventional pinwheel, which raked in the root and the whole mallee tree into a windrow and then burnt that off. And then, basically, went through a more conventional cleanup system, because there's still quite a lot of trash on that ground. But that saved a lot of time and we were able to bring in a lot of country in the first year.

JF Within a season?

CHANCE Yes, we brought in over a thousand acres in the first year. About two and a half thousand acres of it was already cleared.

JF Now, this whole operation has changed in economies of scale and so on and really the family farmer is no longer the same thing, is he, as in the '50s, for example?

CHANCE Well, it's the same model but they are much bigger. But the switch out of the traditional family-type enterprise hasn't happened yet; it's still where it was in that sense.

JF So the families that've remained have got bigger holdings but it's still a family operation?

CHANCE Yes, but they're not corporate yet. I mean, they are corporate in the strictly legal sense, but when you go behind the corporate door, it's the same family farm; it's the same structure.

JF Right.

CHANCE It hasn't really changed at all.

JF What about the effect of people like Chase and so on coming into develop Esperance? Was that not sort of corporate inspired?

CHANCE It was, and that's not to say there's never been corporate engagement in Western Australian agriculture; it's just that it's never been successful. A number of corporations, some very big ones, have engaged in Western Australian agriculture and to this day I think you would be very hard-pressed to find one that you could say was truly successful. To perhaps a slightly lesser extent that's true right across Australia. I mean, there's been some big corporations operate some big swags of country in Australia, particularly in the cattle pastoral sector, but you're still hard to find one that's had a long-term success. I mean, AMP, for example, were the biggest landowner in Australia at one stage. AMP are now out of agriculture entirely. The other corporations to a greater or lesser extent haven't had the same sort of success in agriculture in Australia as corporate farming has in other continents. I think that's about to change. I think it is, and I think where we're going to see the change is going

to be in the Wheatbelt because the technology of farming has changed so much now that I believe the agronomy is now adaptable to a corporate style of management. And that's why it never was before, in my view, but I really think the agronomy is there now to farm at a different scale with a high level of management. You're always able to do it, but you could never achieve as high a level of management outcomes as the family farm could. The family farm had clear advantages in terms of applying a high level of management consistently across a given area of land, and the corporates can't, in part because of a problem which is shared by all Australian industry; that is, we are deficient in our midlevel management. We've got quite good low-level management, quite good high-level management, but our middle-level management is deficient and expensive and a bit flighty. It tends to wander off quickly; when you need continuity, it's not there. At that level of management, people change jobs at about a three-year cycle. Well, in agriculture, anything less than a 20-year cycle is short term, so it's never quite worked out, and yet corporate farming has been enormously successful in North America and in South America. So it's not to say it's not possible, but I just think it's an interesting study for somebody who wanted to do a PhD thesis on it, just analysing what corporate models have been successful in Australian agriculture and why they haven't been. My theory is it's because we have unique management deficiencies in the midlevel, which is where farming is.

[track 20]

JF There are so many other things that could come up in this discussion, like the dependence on farm advisers. Now, that was a trend, I think, that started coming in, perhaps in the late '50s or '60s.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What's happened to that, and did you have to work with a farm adviser?

CHANCE They're still there; and, in fact, we were members of either the first or the second farm advisory group in Western Australia. We brought a guy over from New Zealand (they all came from New Zealand, Lincoln **University**). Ken Boughton, his name is, who is still a partner in one of the leading farm advisory companies in Western Australia. This was in its infancy. It started in 1963, so the same time as I started farming. Ken used to come and sit down in our office and we'd talk through things. It was interesting. He used to complain that we never took his advice. But he

said that didn't matter as long as we heard his advice, and if we rejected it, that's fine, because you've made a conscious decision in light of the information. Your question was, "Where is it now?" [It is] very strong, yes. That farm consultancy business is now very strong. The best farmers all employ, not only an economic adviser of that ilk but probably also an adviser in agronomy. So it's not uncommon for there to be more than one adviser (economic and agronomic).

JF Had you left farming before computers became an important tool?

CHANCE Yes. I mean, I learnt to operate a computer in my last year or two as a farmer, but we hadn't really applied them, no. The technology revolution came not only as a result of the arrival of computers, but also some of the other data collection technology and GPS. It wasn't until you had the confluence of a data processing facility and a data accessing facility, which was the yield mapping and the GPS-GIS systems. It wasn't until those two came together that the process had any more relevance to agriculture, other than an accounting system. And our accounting systems were pretty simple anyway. Computers really had no influence because there's no difference between an accounting system run on a computer and the same accounting system run on paper. They are the same thing; it's just that one's a bit neater than the other, but they're the same system. The real differences in agriculture came when that other data collection availability became available. It still hasn't reached its ultimate expression yet. I think we've still got a little way, but I think the application of IT to agriculture has got huge potential. But it hasn't realised anything like its potential yet, because the technology is not quite there yet.

[track 21]

JF Just to bring this to a sort of conclusion for today, what led you to abandon the land, or leave the land?

CHANCE We'd expanded very rapidly and we had huge debt, even by today's standards, and we ran into that period in the late '80s, early '90s when marginal rates of interest were 25 per cent and it was just unsustainable. So we made the decision to get out while we could and we got out. I also was looking forward to going into Parliament and I knew that that was achievable by 1992. It was in 1990 we made the decision, so I had a gap year to fill, and that was the year I spent working at Moylans. I didn't have much choice. I mean, if we hadn't sold out we'd have gone broke, so it was a matter of saying, "Well, you either hang in here waiting for the interest rates to fall but put up with that erosion of your capital, or get out while you've still got a bit of

capital left, even though you're going to sacrifice a lot of it, but you'll sacrifice it every day that you stay on."

JF And there were still plenty of buyers around, were there, that were willing to take over?

CHANCE We almost gave the farm away, but the important thing was to stop the erosion.

JF Well, I think that's probably about our issue for today, so thank you very much.

CHANCE Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW FOUR

INTERVIEW FIVE

[track 22]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview No 5 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on the 13th of August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 23]

Kim, you obviously went back to live in the family home from school. How long did you remain living in the family home?

CHANCE Until I was married in 1974.

JF Right; so roughly nine years, I suppose.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF We'll come on to the story of your marriage and so on in due course, but before we do that, I'd like you to recall some of the highlights of your life in that period immediately before marriage and in the nine years that you were home. I note, for example, that you were associated with various football clubs over your lifetime. Was football a big interest?

CHANCE Football was our main sport, because I was never a cricketer and I never quite got into the idea of basketball, so I didn't have much in the way of summer sport. But we used to start training for football around about January anyway, so there wasn't much time. Harvest concluded and we got back into training. So football was the dominant sport and, if you like, almost the dominant social event in our lives; yes.

JF And was that just local in Baandee, was it?

CHANCE Yes. I played all of my football at Baandee, although I was also later a member of the Kellerberrin football club, which is actually in a different league. Kellerberrin is in the Avon league.

JF There is a dividing line between them.

CHANCE Almost about where my farm is. Anywhere west of my farm, people thought of themselves as being a part of the Kellerberrin club, and, indeed, we were part of the Kellerberrin shire even where we live. But from our place east, it was the eastern districts. Baandee was an eastern districts club.

JF Yes. So why did you eventually become a member of the Kellerberrin club?

CHANCE I had friends there and they had actually asked if I would represent their club at the Avon Football Association, which I was happy to do but I wasn't even a member of the club at that stage so I had to join the club to nominate.

JF Yes. And was that much after you were at home from school?

CHANCE Yes; a long time after; a long time after I'd stopped playing football.

JF Right; yes.

CHANCE Yes; that was sort of late '80s.

JF Yes. So you were more or less associated with Baandee from the time you went home —

CHANCE Yes.

JF But the Kellerberrin thing?

CHANCE Yes. The Baandee club actually folded eventually, and it joined Merredin Towns to become Merredin Lions. And I was a member of Merredin Lions, not a player, but I was a financial supporter of Merredin Lions.

JF Yes. I want to pick up on your representing Kellerberrin at the association. How much time and what did that entail?

CHANCE We used to meet (I don't know) four or five times a year, normally in Northam, which is the headquarters of the Avon league. It wasn't an enormous amount of time, but it was an interesting process. I'd never really been involved in

sport administration before. Most of my fellow directors had a lifetime's history in sport administration, and, in fact, one of the people who came from Cunderdin (one of the other directors who I used to pick up as I drove through to Northam) had been in football administration, I think, since his teens, and he was in his '70s then. So he had a wealth of experience, yes. I was able to learn a great deal from them.

JF What is the main role of the association?

CHANCE Organising the good functioning of the league and its annual activities. A large part of its work was preparation and the conduct of that league's participation in what was then the Mobil country football championships, now the Wesfarmers country football championships, which was a big event, particularly in those days; it was a huge event. The two leagues that I'd been associated with had been quite dominant in those leagues. First, the eastern districts, which I think won three in a row, which was an outstanding performance. And then Avon emerged as one of the major contenders. These days it tends to be dominated by ... Well, the South West, of course, had a huge run, but then Upper Great Southern became a dominant force. But the southern leagues, with their greater population, have a very high standard of football, and, of course, our population dwindled. But those first teams that we sent to the then Mobil championships (that must have started about 1964, I suppose) were extraordinary. I can recall in the first team we sent; we actually left out 14 ex-league football players. Left out of the team, that's how good the team was.

JF Good heavens.

CHANCE Yes; it was quite remarkable. I remember a couple of memorable grand finals against Great Northern, who were then our arch rivals, the Geraldton-based side.

JF And were you playing in any of those yourself [chuckles]?

CHANCE No; I was never quite good enough to make that cut. This was very high level football. It was about the standard, or very [nearly] approaching the standard, of the West Australian Football League.

JF Great. Now, you mentioned Merredin in association with your more local club. How important was Merredin to you and how often were you in and around there? How far is it from the farm, for example?

CHANCE 30 miles. Not as much as Kellerberrin, but still quite a lot because some of the major businesses in the area were represented in Merredin but not Kellerberrin, although most of our machine parts, which was our main reason for visiting a major centre, were available in Kellerberrin. Coventry's, for example, were in Merredin but not Kellerberrin. They had the swimming pool in the early days, when Kellerberrin didn't get one until a little bit later. It had a senior high school. Kellerberrin has never had a senior high school, only a three-year school. So it was in many senses the main regional centre. All of the state government agencies, for example, were based in Merredin: the water authority, railways.

JF Yes; it's quite a big railway centre, isn't it?

CHANCE It used to be huge; it's not now to anywhere near the same extent and that change came when Westrail shifted from the eight-hour shift to the 11-hour shift, which made it possible to get the trains right through to Kalgoorlie in one shift, whereas, formerly, they could only get as far as Merredin, so Merredin became a major base. With the 11-hour shift, Kalgoorlie became the main rail centre.

JF Now, at some stage during your life, I believe you were a member of the WA Sporting Car Club.

CHANCE I still am; yes.

JF When did that begin and what has been the nature of your participation with them?

CHANCE I was engaged with racing for many, many years (decades). But I think I only first joined the WA Sporting Car Club probably when I started racing, so about 1992 or thereabouts.

JF So it's quite a late part of your life.

CHANCE Yes. You can't get a CAMS licence without being a member of an accredited club, so it was something I had to do, although I remain a member now, even though I don't hold a valid CAMS licence because the only racing I do now is sanctioned by a different body, by the Australian automotive sport association [Australian Auto-Sport Alliance], which doesn't require club membership. But in that particular event, I just don't need a CAMS licence anymore and it's very expensive.

JF Yes; so you've got to be winning to pay for it.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What was the beginning, or the origin, of your interest in motor racing or motoring?

CHANCE It was something people that I knew well were engaged in and I just loved it. I loved the whole sport of it.

JF What sort of motor racing was it that you were doing?

CHANCE Initially, I was working on teams running what they called then Formula Libre (open-wheeler) races. Later it evolved into the Australian national Formula Two and I worked on a Formula Two car for some time. We campaigned that around Australia. I went to the first open-wheeler meeting at Eastern Creek when the new circuit opened there. We raced at Mallala in South Australia and of course here. And then we sort of evolved from that into rallying almost by accident. But that became our main form of motor sport.

JF And can you recall the first time you raced?

CHANCE Yes, I can; yes.

JF Where and when was that?

CHANCE In Tasmania.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. And singularly unprepared. We had a number of mechanical issues, but we actually got through. We finished the event (it was a five-day event) and got through. How we did it I don't know; we learnt a lot that year.

JF So you were not doing it in Western Australia before that?

CHANCE No. I mean I'd worked on race teams. I was pit crew, but the first time ... And certainly I'd been in race cars in a circuit environment before, so I actually knew what to expect, but of course rallying is very different from circuit racing.

JF I'm interested in the beginning of this. Dare I say it, you were not a young fellow when this started.

CHANCE No.

JF And sometimes it's associated with younger people who grow into it. What triggered it?

CHANCE Racing's a very amateur sport in Australia. There's only a handful of professionals in bitumen racing. Speedway is different. That does get younger people in because you can actually make some money in speedway. But bitumen racing, whether it be circuit or bitumen rallying, is an enormously expensive sport and really the precursor to entry is how much money you've got [chuckles].

JF Right; that sort of explains it, yes [chuckles].

CHANCE Just to give you some idea, the entry fee for Targa Tasmania is about \$8 500, just the entry fee. Each tyre (and we are limited to six tyres) costs close on \$600, and you only use them once. To build an engine of the kind we use, [costs] upwards of \$20 000. It's an expensive business.

JF Yes. And so did you call on sponsorship to help you fund this?

CHANCE No. We did that ourselves. There's some minor sponsorship, but sponsorship's something that in racing sometimes you have to have it and if you have to have it, well, you bend to the demands of it. But it's actually a bit of a pain,

because you've got to satisfy your sponsors all the time. We prefer to do our own thing.

JF You're not still involved with the CAMS racing now, but you're still involved in some aspect of it.

CHANCE With Targa Tasmania, yes. And from time to time, I may want to enter an event that's not sanctioned by that body [but] that's sanctioned by CAMS, and then I'll have to go back and get my CAMS licence. A CAMS licence just to race at Wanneroo isn't all that expensive, but because Targa Tasmania was an international event, we had to get our licences upgraded to an international standard. So, basically, with the licence I had, I could've raced anywhere in the world, but it was just very expensive, three or four times the price of a local licence. So I was very happy when they said I didn't need it anymore.

JF Describe your the main features of the most memorable racing car you've used.

CHANCE We've actually raced three different cars in that event in Tasmania, although the stable of racing cars that I work with is much bigger than that. We started racing with a group C Falcon, an ex-Bathurst car. It raced in Bathurst from '76 to '78. it was built as a circuit car and it was quite difficult to adapt it for rally conditions; almost impossible. You'd have to start all over again. But we raced that for four, five years with increasing amounts of success but it was very high strung and it didn't have enough suspension, really, for rallying. We then purpose built a 1964 Ford Galaxy for the event, which was actually built as a rally car, and that was a remarkable car. It was very reliable and very fast (over 600 horsepower). We then, because that car was later, by rule changes, ruled illegal because our chassis and suspension modifications were pretty radical, built another light-weight version of the Galaxy. This one, a two door, which weighs about 500 kilograms less than the original car with the same running gear [had] 600 horsepower. And that's been a very, very good car, but now we're about to build our dream car, which is the Ford Thunderbolt, which wasn't all that well known here; same era '63, '64. Its chassis's very similar to the '64 compact Fairlane, which you would be familiar with, but it's a two-door version of that and was homologated as a light weight, which really means you can unbolt the steel panels and put light-weight fibreglass panels on. That means we can get our weight down somewhere near the Mustangs, which are our main

competition in that class, and have a lot more horsepower than the Mustangs, because they're really limited to the 289, the little small-block V8, which is probably good for about 400 horsepower, tops. So it would be an extremely competitive car. We've actually sourced the car now; we've brought it over from America and we're ready to start. But it'll be a long, long job. We'll probably be too old to race it when we've finished it [chuckles].

JF Where do you do your modifications and so on?

CHANCE It's all done by the owner, Mike Moylan, at his facility in Kellerberrin.

JF Right. So, have you got some trophies to show for all the effort you've had on the ...

CHANCE Oh, yes, indeed. We've been class winners. In fact, not this year (we were second this year) but last year, we won our class and a number of Targa trophies, which is the reward for finishing all 36 or 40 [or] however many stages there are within the time allowed for that stage. Yes; we've done okay. And in our first year there, despite all of the problems we had, we actually won the teams trophy, so we beat the Ferrari team [and] we beat the Porsche team. And this has become known as a Porsche event, but we had a team of three Fords: one Ford GT40, one Shelby 350 Mustang, and our own group C Falcon. So it was a formidable team. Yes; we actually won despite not knowing what we were doing [chuckles]!

JF You're obviously majoring on Ford.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF But you're totally independent of the Ford Motor Company, except ...

CHANCE Absolutely, yes. Ford Motor Company don't want to know us [chuckles]!

JF Fantastic. Right; perhaps we'll go away from that one for now and go back to the mention that came up earlier of your being married. When and where did you first meet your wife? I think Suzanne's her name, is it?

CHANCE Sue, yes. We first met in Hines Hill. How did that all happen? A friend of mine was going out with Sue's cousin at that time, and she was staying there for the weekend and she'd brought Sue up with her. So, we met then. Actually, our first social event was rabbit shooting [chuckles]. As things like that happen in the country, yes. We went out in the ute spot lighting.

JF What was her background?

CHANCE She's a nurse. Still is nursing, yes; still working.

JF So you might say you kept it in the family. Your mother was a nurse, I believe.

CHANCE And my sister, yes.

JF And your sister, yes.

CHANCE Yes, but not our daughter. She was the smart one. She took up teaching.

JF Tell me about the wedding.

CHANCE Okay. We were married at the Wesley Chapel by Frank Drysdale, and the reception, which is unusual, I think, for the day, but we had our reception in a vineyard in Benara Road. It was then Houghton's, then became Dear Friends. Dear Friends is better known now in the Hyatt, but it was before the owner of Dear Friends bought it, but it was then Houghton's vineyard. [It was] daytime, February and hot as hell and vineyard licences in those days didn't allow you to sell beer, so all my friends were drinking wine for the first time in their lives.

JF Oh dear! [chuckles]

CHANCE Yes; in a day that was about 104 degrees. It got a bit messy! [laughs]

JF Where did you establish your matrimonial home?

CHANCE In south Doodlakine on the property we were share farming.

JF So how far were you from your original home?

CHANCE Ten, 12 kilometres.

JF Was that all part of the family partnership, or were you on your own from there on?

CHANCE Yes. At that stage I was in partnership with my sister and her husband, David Blair, so Sandra and David. We were in partnership from 1969 until 1991; yes. We share-farmed a big property south of Doodlakine and there was a spare house there and we lived there.

JF I think I'm right in saying that there was quite a bit of building of new homes in the Wheatbelt in the '60s. I wondered whether that continued in your part of the Wheatbelt and whether you were one of them, but obviously you occupied an existing home.

CHANCE No. There were so many empty houses, because the depletion of population had already started by then. There were all these empty houses everywhere; yes. The slack was taken up a little bit by people who worked in town [and who] actually lived on farms in vacant houses because they were almost free. So a lot of people did that, but, sadly, a lot of those houses very quickly fell into rack and ruin with nobody looking after them, which is really, really sad, because there are some lovely houses out there. But, no, nobody was building new houses. The building boom in our area was in the post-war period, with big families, growing families, and a return of population. But the population started to fall off from the late '60s really. The '69 drought was a killer, and between then and, say, 1979 we would have lost more than a third of our population in that period.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE I actually remember a parliamentary study that involved Julian Grill, but I forget who the other members were. It was a study of the area slightly to the north of us, the north eastern Wheatbelt, but they said in the decade of the '70s the population of that area had reduced by one-third, and that was when whole towns started to disappear, and we've referred to that early in the transcript.

JF And so you remained in that home until you left for parliamentary appointment, did you?

CHANCE No. They discontinued the south Doodlakine school bus and that caused us to rethink what we were going to do. The old headmaster's house in Doodlakine had come up for sale so we bought that so our kids only had to walk across the road to go to school. By that time, I was also developing another farm east of Merredin at Carabbin, and it was just as convenient for me to live in town and then just run straight down the highway. So, yes, we moved out there. That would've been, gee, about '78, somewhere around there; '78 or '79. And we lived there until our family started to grow and we needed a slightly bigger house. Also, our kids were getting to high school age and I actually got a builder in. I didn't want to leave Doodlakine. I got a builder in to price the renovations that we would need for the extensions to accommodate our family. He gave me a quote and I said, "Well, for that price, I can buy a house in Merredin." And the next weekend I did just that. So, yes, we bought a lovely house right near the high school, which was very convenient. Our shifts were really dictated by our kids' progression through.

[track 24]

JF Talk about fatherhood for a few minutes. You've had two children, I believe.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about them.

CHANCE They've both been an absolute delight. I hear stories about how painful kids can be at times, and I'm just very lucky. I've got two great kids. They've done well for themselves. They've both settled down now, but neither of them caused me too much hassle [laughs].

JF So it's one daughter and one son, isn't it?

CHANCE Yes. The elder is Ceridwen, our daughter, who's now about to become a mother herself for the second time in the next couple of days, and our son is Tom, and he works for the education department, not as a teacher; he does the payroll.
[laughter]

JF A very significant task, yes.

CHANCE Yes. But, no, they've both been terrific kids.

JF And that perhaps reflects your style as a father, does it?

CHANCE I think I'm just lucky. [laughter]

JF Fine. Coming back now to the other things that you did before going into Parliament. You mentioned having been a builder's labourer for a year.

CHANCE Yes, I was.

JF When did that happen, and why and how?

CHANCE We started in partnership farming in our own right (my sister and brother-in-law and myself) and our first year was 1969, which was that crippling drought, and we didn't have a lot to start with. The drought was so severe that there was just no money to fund our operations and the next year's, so I went and worked in the first stages of the construction of Karratha. When I went to Karratha, the only buildings that were there ... there was one concrete pad down and a little site hut, and that was it; the rest was spinifex.

JF Goodness. Just remind me: what year did you say that was?

CHANCE That was the end of '69.

JF The end of '69; yes, I see. So you didn't stick around in the drought period on the family farm?

CHANCE Well, we got the crop off, such as it was. [chuckles] That didn't take long. Then I went north. No, that was an interesting period. Because there was nothing at Karratha, obviously, we didn't live there. We lived in Dampier, although I later moved to the halfway point between Karratha and Dampier, which was then a Bell Brothers' camp on Dampier Salt, which Bell's were still constructing at that stage. But they had some spare accommodation and it was much less crowded than

it was in Dampier. Dampier was a crazy place. In those days, I think there were 4 000 single men in those one, two, three, four camps in town.

JF Golly.

CHANCE Whereas out in Dampier Salt I think there were only about 60 or 70 of us. It was terrific; like a holiday camp.

JF [chuckles]

CHANCE And it was that little bit closer to the work site. We worked, basically, a 60-hour week; six 10-hour days. I worked briefly for the company and then later for a subcontractor on roofing on the construction side itself.

JF So you didn't have any sort of building trade qualification, you just took it up as a —

CHANCE No, but I was a farmer. Farmers can do anything! [laughter]

JF I know they can, yes; I know very well.

CHANCE In fact, while I was working for the company (and occasionally I used to help out even when I was with the subbie) I was the crane driver. Those were the days when you could just hop onto a crane and drive it. Nobody asked if you had a ticket. We used to do some pretty hairy loads from time to time. These days I shudder to think what would have happened if anything had gone wrong, because we unloaded some quite awkward loads, including big structural steel loads where you've got riggers crawling all over the load. It's quite spooky, because if one of those comes loose, it turns itself into a 45-foot guillotine. But I managed not to kill anyone or injure anyone! But I did enjoy construction. Again, you know, you learn a lot.

JF On the job.

CHANCE Yes.

JF And most of all, I suppose, you learn an awful lot about people in a situation like that.

CHANCE Oh yes. It was a funny workforce. Myself, and one of the foremen and the construction manager were the only three Western Australians on that whole site.

JF Good heavens.

CHANCE There was only a handful of Australians. There were a couple of guys from Queensland, but generally, yes, there were no Australians on the site. Probably, of a workforce of 70 or 80, all of the Australians would have numbered maybe seven, and even that'd be pushing it a bit.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE The rest were Europeans in the main, Slavic, Austrian, for some reason (we had a lot of Austrians) a few Kiwis. The carpenters (the chippies) all tended to be Kiwis, although the Austrians were strong in that as well. And then after that, everything (Spaniards, Frenchmen, Americans) we had all kinds. It was really, really interesting.

JF What stage was the American communications base at that stage?

CHANCE Carnarvon?

JF No. Wasn't there one at the point not far from Karratha?

CHANCE There was nothing there then.

JF There was nothing there then, no. I was just trying to get my mind around when this was.

CHANCE On the Burrup Peninsula, is it?

JF I think there was one there, but maybe I've got my facts wrong.

CHANCE There was, in those days, nothing at all on the Burrup. The only reason I ever went out there was actually to pick up some drums once from a rubbish dump out there, because we didn't even do a rubbish run out there. I was also the truck driver, so I used to do the rubbish runs, because we had a little rubbish dump set aside near the light industrial area in Karratha, which is still, I believe, the rubbish dump.

JF Golly. Was there much tourism there in those days?

CHANCE No. Nobody in their right mind would go there. There was no doubt about it; Dampier is probably one of the most beautiful towns in Western Australia. Its surroundings, it's just beautiful. The Dampier Archipelago, with all those little islands, is just a lovely place. I guess, in winter (although I haven't been there much in winter) the climate would be very rather nice as well, but we were there in mid-summer.

JF It would be pretty hot and steamy at that time, yes.

CHANCE It's hot, yes, particularly in the few days preceding a cyclone. They are horrendous. I could take heat. I was only 21 then, and heat didn't bother me much, but heat combined with that awful humidity that comes in in those few days before a cyclone ... you just can't wait for the cyclone to come, you know, to cool things down and break the tension. The air actually buzzes. It's an amazing feeling.

JF But construction didn't halt in that season; you just kept on keeping on.

CHANCE Immediately after a cyclone you get a couple of days when you can't get on the site because it's just mud. Each of the cyclones we had (we had two) dropped four inches of rain, and that country can't absorb water very well; it just turns into a quagmire. The first cyclone, I stayed in town. Of course, what I didn't know was that ... all of our power then came from the Dampier C power station for the town. There was Dampier A, Dampier B, and Dampier C, and the domestic power was Dampier C, and that was a ship. Of course, when a cyclone came, it unplugged and went out to sea (it didn't stay) so there was no power at all. The pub closed, the shops closed; you couldn't get a beer, you couldn't get a packet of smokes.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE It was appalling. The second cyclone, we anticipated this one and we said, “We’re not going to get stuck in Dampier”, so we went up to Roebourne, which then was just the best place in the world. I just loved Roebourne. After fortifying ourselves a little bit in Roebourne, we decided to go a bit further up to Whim Creek, which is halfway to Hedland, and the cyclone came and it really hammered the place. When we tried to get out again after the cyclone, the river had come up (I’ve just forgotten the name of the river now; it’ll come back) and that was —

JF It’s not the Ashburton, is it?

CHANCE No; Ashburton’s a bit further north. I’ll get it in a minute. There’s now a bridge there, but there was no bridge in those days, and when we got there of course we couldn’t get back and we had to wait then for the river to fall. When we did eventually get back (we were there a couple of days) we got back onto site thinking that: “Oh, they won’t be back at work yet because it’s too wet.” We got there and everyone is working, and the foreman said, “Where have you two been?” [laughter] We told him we got stuck on the wrong side of a river and we said, “We didn’t think you’d be working because of the cyclone.” He said, “No. Cyclone went a bit north of us up through a place called Whim Creek.” [laughter] So we drove right into it.

JF Oh dear. How long did that last, that period as a builder’s labourer?

CHANCE Four or five months, yes. I came back. My nephew had a health problem and they were a bit concerned about him and I needed to be back on the farm, so I came back.

JF And there was some prospect —

CHANCE But it was about time to come back anyway.

JF Yes, there was some prospect of a good season.

CHANCE We were getting ready and we had enough money to get going again next year.

JF I suppose every young bloke needs his ... I don't know whether you'd call it an initiation or a time away from home —

CHANCE Yes, I suppose so.

JF — when you can do your own thing and you be your own boss, probably for the first time.

CHANCE Yes. Or have a boss for the first time. [chuckles]

JF Yes, yes; that's a significant experience too. Skirting around the whole business then: later on, having sold the farm, you then went to work for someone else, didn't you?

CHANCE Yes, I did. I went to work for Mike Moylan, who I race with.

JF That's M-O-Y-L-A-N, is it?

CHANCE That's right, yes. Mike and I have been close friends for many, many years and our families have been friends. He was having a few difficulties himself, and I sort of helped him through that and worked for him for 12 months off and on, mostly as a truck driver, but I also did a bit of work around the sheds, mostly on the automotive side, although he was more manufacturing, and did a bit of work on my own car. I did a rejuvenation of my wife's Mini (rebuilt that) and that basically filled the year in.

JF Do you share the view that they've spoilt motor cars by all the computerisation, because you could rebuild a Mini in those days in your backyard probably, but you can't very well do that with a modern car, can you?

CHANCE Yes, you can. While I had that view when it first came in, and I was really, really concerned about this new technology and what was going to happen to those cars when they were 20 years old (how were you going to fix them, because you can't fix them with a bit of baling wire anymore?) those fears were generally not warranted in my view. I think the new technology ... some of the first expressions of it weren't very good, but as it has improved and advanced ... the new technology is basically hard-wire technology. If something fails, you just pull it out and slot a new

one in and it's good to go again for another 20 years. No, I think it's been a net advantage, although it can look a bit confusing. Electronics has never been my strong point; I am just a little bit intimidated by it. But, no, in general I think it's good, although we prefer to work, in racing, with the older technology, yes; carburettors and points and plugs. [chuckles]

JF Something an individual can manage. [chuckles]

CHANCE Coils and [laughs]

JF As part of your working for Mike Moylan, I think you became a member of the Transport Workers' Union, did you?

CHANCE Yes, I did.

JF I'm going to lead into your, sort of, political aspirations, so was this your first real encounter with the union movement, or had you been involved with that earlier?

CHANCE No, no. Because I've been a member of the Australian Labor Party since 1971, we had close attachments with union people, rather than the union movement. I knew all of the people in the TWU, although politically I was never aligned with the TWU. They were a centre union, and I didn't have a great deal of time for the centre, but I thought they were an excellent union. I thought they fulfilled all of the requirements, and I remained a member of the TWU for many years after I stopped driving trucks, even though you're not technically allowed to do that.

JF Yes. [chuckles] So did you hold office or anything in the union group that you were with?

CHANCE No.

JF Had you had any union experience as a builder's labourer?

CHANCE No. It was a union-free site. Yes, the whole area was. The only people who had union coverage up there then were the HI employees.

JF And what about the actual truck driving that you did for Moylans?
Where did that take you?

CHANCE All over the state; all over the Wheatbelt. It was delivering silos, so it was over-width work. Huge loads, massive over-width, over-length loads; two 2 000-bushel silos on one semi. Lake Grace, Esperance, Geraldton; you name it, we went there.

JF What sort of vehicles were you using to transport that?

CHANCE Mostly Kenworth K125s, which is the cab over Kenny. I also had my own truck on that run as well, which was a Scania.

JF I think you referred to the modern truck the other day as a wussy vehicle. [chuckles]

CHANCE Wussy, yes. Kenworth's a man's truck! [laughter]

JF Did you enjoy your time as a truck driver?

CHANCE I did, yes. I found, though, that it's a very health-challenging job, and the TWU have made a major issue of that as well. They now provide health advice to truck drivers because they are challenged. It's a sedentary job; it's very easy to overeat. Your sleep time isn't great (although that's one of the beauties of over-width work, because you can't work at night, you can only work in the daylight hours so you do get enough sleep). No, I loved it; yes.

[track 25]

JF Maybe now is the time to talk about the move into political interests.

CHANCE Yes.

JF First of all, as a teenager how aware were you of political institutions and processes?

CHANCE Oh, very, very. I came from a political family anyway, and that political family lived within a very political society. Our local society took a keen interest in,

and was forever discussing, politics. I thought that was normal. It's obviously not, but I thought it was, yes. [laughter]

JF So it was principally the family, then, where you learned all this?

CHANCE Yes.

JF You've said once before that you were influenced by some world figures; Nasser and Johnson were two that you referred to. Were they significant in developing your political ideas, or were they just inspirational for other reasons?

CHANCE No, I think you could say the former, as long as you take the concept of political ideas very broadly. Nasser was really the first person that I could see who had taken on the old colonial powers and won, and he did it with almost no loss of life. Other people later on came and did it (like Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya) but did it with horrific loss of life, and he was one of the early terrorists, whereas Nasser was never a terrorist. There was a sort of a war, but it wasn't a bloodthirsty thing. He actually played the game according to the rules that the superpowers imposed; it wasn't terrorism action at all. I found that impressive (and I still find that impressive) to beat people at their own game. To some extent, the way he did was to turn the superpowers on each other. When Eisenhower said to the then British Prime Minister, not Harold ...

JF Macmillan, was it, or Eden?

CHANCE Eden or Macmillan; one of those two, yes. Eisenhower said, "You're wrong; get out." and he did Nasser's dirty work for him. And it was a bit annoying (particularly to have the Suez Canal blocked by those scuttled ships for so long) but he had to do that to make the point that this was a very important trade route that he controlled. So, yes, I saw him as a real hero because the concept of colonialism has always appalled me, always, and yet I am very strong in my support for the commonwealth in its role. Right to this day I think the commonwealth is an underrated organisation, but there is a long gap between colonialism and the formation of the commonwealth. To me, that was really important at the time. LBJ was a very different process. I just saw this hero-worship that Australians and others had for John Kennedy, and I never quite shared it. It always seemed to me that everything Kennedy did that was really lasting, he didn't do at all, and that it was

actually Johnson that did those big things in 1963 in the south, for example, with the civil rights. Kennedy would have obviously supported that, but there is no way he could have done that. You couldn't, in America, do that then or now. If you were a boy from Massachusetts, you just couldn't do it (they wouldn't listen to you) but a Texan can get away with those things. Then I saw the enormous pressure LBJ was put under as a result of Vietnam; he probably had the same views as I did about Vietnam privately. It wasn't his issue; he was just stuck with it. The fact that the escalation of the bombing occurred in his time was, I think, very sad, but there was military reasons for that. Once you embark on a course (as we are discovering in Afghanistan) you have to take actions that are consistent with your earlier decisions, whether they were right or wrong. So I always had a lot of time for him, but I read a little, also, about his life and his early political life, and I identified with the sort of things that he was doing, yes.

JF Coming then to your association with the ALP, I think you said you joined in 1971.

CHANCE Seventy-one, yes, so I'd actually been a member for 20 years, or 21, before I became a member of Parliament, so I was qualified. [laughter]

JF Where did you actually join the party?

CHANCE At a branch in Kellerberrin. Peter Walsh was our president. We used to meet regularly in the Country Women's Association hall in Kellerberrin. Most of us were actually from Doodlakine, but because the Kellerberrin members were older people and couldn't move about quite as freely, we used to travel down to Kellerberrin for the meetings.

JF What sort of numbers were your meetings there in Kellerberrin at that time?

CHANCE We'd maybe get a dozen to a meeting, yes.

JF And apart from helping, say, at election time, what activities did you do?

CHANCE We wrote endless letters [laughter] and passed endless motions. It was a very active branch, and there was some very talented people in the branch. Oh no, we actually thought we were changing the world, and then we used to laugh about that sometimes. [chuckles]

JF Did you have a role in preselection for candidates?

CHANCE No. The Western Australian Labor Party has a very centralised preselection system based on the state executive, but we had a member of the state executive, Peter Walsh. He used to drive down to Perth every Monday, or whenever it was they had the state executive meetings, so we were represented in that process. But preselections ... they are still quite centralised in the Western Australian party, but there is now a local component, but that didn't happen until the '90s, the local component, and even then it's only 25 per cent maximum. Having observed the different ways parties do preselections, I actually think (while it's not terribly democratic) centralised preselection is by far the better way of doing it, because even in the Labor Party there's wide variation. In the New South Wales party it's about 80 per cent local, 20 per cent central, I think. Victoria is the nearest to 50–50, and we are the most centralised. The worst of the branch rorts happened in New South Wales, for that very reason. If you have ever read Graham ...

JF Richardson?

CHANCE Richo, yes ... *Whatever it Takes*. Have you ever read that?

JF No, I didn't read it.

CHANCE I never liked Richo, and after I finished reading his autobiography, I hated him. Normally, reading someone's autobiography brings you a little closer to them, but *Whatever it Takes* was an adequate title. What they used to do to rort preselections was just appalling. They used to pass the branch membership book from one house to another down the street, and people would sign the membership book that they attended that meeting and that they made this decision. The branch never met.

JF It was total fiction.

CHANCE It was just fraud, yes; just fraud. And that's where the ethnic branches came from (they were mostly Vietnamese branches) and they just used to sign them. It was appalling.

JF So are you saying you can't trust people with democracy?

CHANCE No, no ... in a sense, that's right. If you're going to have a democratic system, you have to make sure that it is democratic and that it's not fraudulent.

JF So you didn't become a member of the state executive for quite some time?

CHANCE When did I? I'd have been a member by the late '70s, early '80s, yes. I just forget exactly when. Somehow, 1981 pops into my mind; I don't know why. I was, for many years, on the state executive.

JF So you graduated to being involved with preselections and things that that the executive looks after?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Perhaps for a few moments: you were with Peter Walsh in that part of the party. A few thoughts about Peter: he was rather an independent thinker, I think.

CHANCE Peter was unbelievably clever. Even to this day, I don't think people understand just what kind of a brain Peter's got. I mean, he's generally acknowledged to have been a superb finance minister. What people probably don't understand about Peter is that his formal education never got beyond primary school.

JF Is that true?

CHANCE He didn't even go to high school. He did study for a time for an economics degree, but I don't think he completed that. But he just had an amazing brain. I can remember seeing him multiplying four figures by four figures in his head and just spitting the answer out; it was quite remarkable. We used to have these wheat docketts; it'd all be done in tonnes, hundredweights, pounds, quarters ... whatever. He used to be able to look at one of those docketts with, say, seven loads

on it and he'd just look at it and say, "No, that's not right. You're two hundredweight short."

JF Yet you've got all those funny tables, haven't you, like 28 pounds to a quarter?

CHANCE Yes, yes. But he was just remarkable. His teachers regarded him as uneducable, but they just didn't understand gifted kids in those days. Because he was bored out of his mind, he obviously behaved very badly so he was actually regarded as a bit of a delinquent. Yes, his behaviour was, at times, eccentric and he loved creating a stir, which all made him great fun to be around. I was very fond of Peter; although he was quite a lot older than me, we got on very well. One of his colleagues, when he first went to Parliament, dubbed him "mad, bad and dangerous to know", and that really summed Peter up.

JF He certainly made his mark in federal politics anyway, didn't he?

CHANCE He did, and in agricultural politics beforehand. He has a brother, John, who was similarly a very, very smart guy, and they worked closely together on the farm and in the party. John went on to become, I think, the deputy president of the Farmers Union and president of the wheat section. But he was not really any more conventional than Peter was; he still had very strong ideas about the way things should be done. John ultimately bought our farm.

JF You were involved with the Rural Labor Association, were you?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about the Rural Labor Association, when you were involved with it?

CHANCE The driving force was a guy you actually may even know (given your education background) a guy by the name of Gordon Appleton, a former principal of Narrogin Ag. When Gordon retired, he said, "Well, I'm quite happy to do the work as the body's executive officer free of charge, if the party will support us in the consumables and whatever." So we started this organisation off and Gordon was very much the steadying figurehead, and he sort of brought it all together; he was a

wonderful guy. So we started the Rural Labor Association, and it was a very vibrant association. Basically, it's year-to-year function was a meeting place for the country branches, and then its once-a-year function was the rural Labor conference, which also drew in other sectors of the party. So it was a ...

JF So that had a policy-making function, did it?

CHANCE Yes, we actually had a vote on the state executive, and it was very highly thought of as a body. We also had great support from the then state secretary, Bob McMullan, who I should mention. It was really Bob's leadership and Gordon's ethic that made it run properly. A later state secretary didn't quite have the same commitment to the RLA, but by the end it had got its own impetus ...

JF Momentum.

CHANCE Yes, and it ran on for some years after that.

JF Can you pinpoint some of the things that you would attribute to it as achievements?

CHANCE It was at a time of depopulation of the regional areas, and we looked hard at causes for that and solutions for that. That was where we developed some of our earliest ideas about the necessity to create employment in regional areas by value adding in those areas. If you actually go to my maiden speech, that's what it was all about. I don't know that we were successful in doing any of that, but we actually started people thinking about where is this community going to go in the long term. Someone argued that now it's almost too late to save it because it's so depleted. That was probably one of our biggest areas of concern, but we also looked at issues like drought management policy, quite a few environmental issues ... because our people weren't all farmers; a lot of them were people who lived in regional areas who had a very strong environmental line, and that would have formed the basis for what later became the protecting the old growth forest movement. It was a catalyst for getting those different points of view together.

JF And important within the Labor Party for that?

CHANCE Yes. And it did bring an attention back from the urban-centric drivers within the Labor Party to remember the fact that their roots actually started in Barcaldine by a group of shearers in country Queensland. Certain state presidents and state secretaries had different interpretations about our value, but I thought that overall it gave very good value.

JF And your particular role in that, apart from being a member of it, you represented them at state executive level, did you?

CHANCE Yes, I was the RLA's second president. I think John Bird was the first, but I can't quite remember that. Yes, I was the president for some years, and then I think Darren West took over, and then Graeme Campbell. And, really, when Graeme was there, nothing happened; it just sort of fell over, but it might have been on its last legs anyway. We had some very, very good years, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW FIVE

INTERVIEW SIX

[track 26]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number six with Hon Kimberly Maurice Chance, MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 20th August 2010 at Parliament House with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track27]

Kim, just picking up on a couple of things that we missed out on in a previous interview: we spoke about football but I didn't ever ask you what position you played.

CHANCE Oh, okay. I mostly played in the half-back flank position, although I played a few games as second ruck-rover.

JF Were you ever the recipient of any awards, trophies, or fairest and best, that sort of thing?

CHANCE I think one year I won the best junior, yes.

JF Are there any highlights of your football career that you didn't tell me about that we should canvass in the course of talking about your life?

CHANCE No, not really, but you'll be aware of that footballer who is still in his 70s and still playing football in the Goldfields league. He's had quite a lot of media in recent years. He was an elderly man by football standards when I was playing football, and this guy is still going. He's quite remarkable. He was actually responsible for breaking my wrist.

JF Ouch!

CHANCE Yes [laughter]. He didn't intend to do it but it was a very windy day. We were playing at Burracoppin; that was his home team. The ball had gone out on the windward flank, where it hadn't been all day. I basically went out to retrieve the ball. I was sort of trotting away in a little world of my own. The game was on but there was just nobody out there. I picked up the ball and leisurely turned around to look for somebody to kick it to you, and bang, he'd been running behind me, which was the kind of footballer he was; he'd never ever give up, you know. I fell a bit awkwardly and managed to break my wrist [laughter].

JF Oh, dear; a memorable game!

CHANCE Yeah, a memorable game.

JF If that's the sum total of your football career ...

CHANCE No, no; I enjoyed my football, but I never made any great highlights, no.

JF The other thing that I wanted to pick up on: we talked about your becoming a partner, with your sister and brother-in-law, in farming. I presume that your father stayed on his property and that was a separate operation.

CHANCE No, no, no; I was one of those people who never left home. My parents ran away from home! They retired in '68, and then we started our farming partnership in '69, yes.

JF So you were operating the original property plus the others that came along?

CHANCE Yes, exactly.

JF At this moment perhaps it would be fitting to mention your father's involvement in agropolitics, since we're mentioning him. Can you just give us a quick sketch of his involvement, I think it was the International Wool Secretariat?

CHANCE Yes. That came about as a result of his membership of the Australian Wool Board. Well, it began firstly through the farmers' union, and he was the president of the wool section. He progressed from there to what was then the Australian Wool Board, became later the corporation, and from there he was simultaneously a member of the International Wool Secretariat. That required him to do a lot of travelling around the world, and [he] told me some amazing stories about some of his fellow members because the IWS had members from Australia and New Zealand of course, but also South Africa and Uruguay; probably Chile and Argentina as well, although the Uruguayans were the ones that he used to talk about

most. Portugal, Spain ... yeah, it was quite an involved process although about 80 per cent of the funding actually came from Australia.

JF When was he at his height in this; was that after he left the farm?

CHANCE Sort of, yes. That would have been about 1970, '71, in that era, yeah. The wool board morphed into the Australian Wool Corporation and he left it at that point, yes.

JF Is he still around?

CHANCE No. We lost our dad a couple of years ago, but he was 95 years old and he was in great shape right up to the day he died; still living independently. He was a remarkable bloke, yeah.

JF And your mum?

CHANCE No; she died 30 years before. But dad had a remarkable story. I could never get him to do something like this. I always wanted him to do an oral history because he was one of the few people still alive that had pre-war experience of the north west. When he was a wool classer, he used to work in those areas. In fact I went to the Revolutions exhibition at Whiteman Park a couple of days ago and they have their bit of the history of those travelling shearing teams. They've got an old truck there that they used to travel on, although it was a bit more modern than the one he described to me. I think they had a Chef Peacock! But quite remarkable things happened up there in those days. Everything changed of course after the war, but he joined the army while he was still wool classing.

JF For you there was a tiny spin-off for his IWS contacts. You told me, I think off tape, that you actually got wedding congratulations from ...

CHANCE Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum.

JF Yes.

CHANCE That wasn't from the IWS. He was later a director of Rural Traders Cooperative, and RTC was really started up on the basis that they would establish a

meat trading operation directly into the gulf. It was a very far-sighted agenda, driven largely by Sir Basil Embry, then the president of the farmers' union. My father formed some very firm friendships in the Middle East. They were mostly dealing through Dubai which was then just a growing village. It was quite a small place because the real building of the Middle East as we know it now was just at its very beginning. You can't say it hadn't started because it was underway, but really the high oil prices didn't hit until 1973; this was still two years before that. But he was very impressed with Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, and he was kind enough to send me a wedding present when he said ... I was married in '74, so the oil boom had started, just. He said to Sheikh Rashid he had to get back to his son's wedding, and the next thing he knew somebody met him at the airport as he was leaving and said, "This is a present for your son."

RF Isn't that nice.

CHANCE Yes.

RF Have you ever met the sheikh yourself?

CHANCE No. Of course Sheikh Rashid is long dead now, but no, I've never met his sons, although I have met more minor members of the Al Maktoum family, and in particular the chairman of Emirates airlines.

[track 28]

JF I think at this stage then, we come back to you. We talked about your joining the ALP in 1971 and I wondered if you could just tell me, which we didn't mention, what actually precipitated the joining?

CHANCE Well, we've discussed earlier that Doodlakine and surrounds was a very political area and the fact that I just thought that was normal; I thought everyone was like that! The area had quite a strong left-wing focus and I had teetered around the edges of joining the party from about 1969. There were a couple of issues to resolve in my own mind, but by 1971 I had those issues resolved and I was ready to join.

JF And these were philosophical issues, were they?

CHANCE Well, they were more administrative actually. I took some time to accept the idea of party discipline; I was a fairly independent type of person and the idea that one was bound by a collective decision took a while for me to accept. But, once I'd thought that through ... and I remain to this age a believer that that is the right way to do it. No matter how much you may be personally against a particular resolution which is adopted by your colleagues, if you can't convince them that you're right and they're wrong, and they make that decision, then you are bound by that decision. That's the whole basis of being a delegate and something that I found in my other work with the Farmers' Union, which also started at about the same time. I found delegates, even at a very senior level, never accepted that. They would be delegated to represent their members on an issue that they didn't agree with, that their members required them to vote for and they would just proceed to vote according to their own views, not their members', which I thought was just outrageous.

JF Yes, so it's a matter of accurately representing your electorate, so to speak, or the body behind you?

CHANCE Yes. I remember Wolf Boetcher, who was a later president of the Farmers' Union articulating that very clearly. He said, "Look, when you're in a position like that, you can speak as vigorously as you wish against the resolution, as long as you vote for it; that's what you were sent here to do. And, you should declare that when you start." But, even so, I saw some very, very distressing things happen when people thought that they could just vote whichever way they wanted, regardless of their direction. That actually caused the end of a number of promising careers in the Farmers' Union, because they'd just never really thought the issue through properly that they were sent not in their own rights, but they represented other people. It was a very, very important lesson and one that held me in good sway through my parliamentary career.

JF Yes, because that's exactly the position you're in as a party member, I guess.

CHANCE Yes, and it becomes more refined at a political level because of the effective sanctity of caucus in the Labor Party. You can say whatever you like in caucus and you can preach something that is absolutely contrary to Labor Party

policy; that's absolutely fine. You are the freest voice you can imagine, as long as you never ever say it outside! [laughter]

JF And quid pro quo I suppose; the party looks after you in some situations in return for that sort of loyalty.

CHANCE Absolutely, and that's why caucus has to be confidential, because as soon as you get a leak out of caucus, and regrettably, we had one or two, then members of the caucus will feel constrained in what they can say, and it is their absolute right to have that free voice within caucus. And similarly, when you win an issue in caucus very narrowly, against perhaps the Premier ... the Premier may have been in a voting group opposite you ... the Premier is bound by the same rules. He might hate it; he can hate it all the likes, but he is bound by it. So, everyone is equal in caucus.

JF It's all a matter of what limits you place on democracy and where they are placed I guess, isn't it?

CHANCE Yes, and it goes much more broadly than simply that small group of people who are MPs; it applies right across the board. The strength of a major party is when they say something before an election, you can hold them to account if they don't do it. It doesn't mean they're always going to do it, because there may be a number of things happen which cause them not to do it, some reasonable, some quite unreasonable; a number of things might happen. But, you can hold them to account for not doing it. So, if they say they're going to build 25 new schools in their first year and they only build 21, then you can quite reasonably say, "Well, you didn't do what you said you were going to do." When you get down to the Independents and minor parties, they can effectively say whatever they feel like saying, because they're never going to get a chance to be in government. And when we look at political stability, political stability is a function of large parties. Political instability is a function of multiple small parties. Going back in history a bit, because both Italy and France, for example, are now more stable than they used to be, but when you look back at their past through the '50s, the '60s, even the '70s, countries like Italy and France really never had a party with more than about 15 per cent of the majority vote. They were governments formed on loose coalitions and often you would see a new Prime Minister, if not a new president, three times in a year. Italy was outrageous and France not a lot better.

JF Linking that to the present day, you hear a lot of people say that the people didn't approve a change of Prime Minister in the current Labor government, but obviously, that same sort of party discipline is operating behind the scenes there I suppose.

CHANCE Absolutely, yes. It's been, I think, a ludicrous argument; the Labor Party knew that it couldn't win with Kevin Rudd as its leader. They had to change, didn't have a choice, for the same reason or perhaps a more pragmatic reason than the Liberals did exactly the same thing a few months before.

JF And just as it was their right to appoint a leader, namely Kevin Rudd in that instance, it was equally their right to dismiss him!

CHANCE Exactly. That's one of the costs, I suppose, of a very strong party structure, but the upside of the strong party structure is stable government. [track 29]

Having said that, what you've also got to accept, if you're going to have large, powerful parties, you've got to accept that, within those parties, you're going to have a very broad range of opinions that somehow have to be accommodated. And the Liberal Party in Australia and the Labor Party in Australia, both of whom I think have served Australia very well, have always had deep divisions, sometimes quite bitter divisions, but the strength of a large party is that it is able to accommodate that range of directions.

JF Yes. When you joined the ALP, that was the heady days of "Super Tonk", wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes. He was an amazing guy and would have been re-elected, I believe, were it not for the fact that the Whitlam Government in Western Australia was, by then, quite unpopular. But "Super Tonk" was, well, at one level a great guy, but he was also a Premier that I think probably enjoyed more broad-spread affection by the people than any other Premier I've known. People loved "Tonk"; he was a great guy. He spoke their language. He had a passion and a belief in people. He probably struck the best balance of any Premier between the state and the commonwealth and the state and its place in the commonwealth that any did.

Underrated, in my view. And perhaps, had he been able to serve another term, people would have understood just what a capable person he was.

JF Did you have any close associations or encounters with him?

CHANCE No, no, but close enough to know what he was. Yes.

JF Moving on from that for the moment, away from the party, you said it was about the same time as joining the party that you became involved with the Farmers Union or is that the WA Farmers Federation?

CHANCE Well, it is now, but it was the Farmers Union; yes.

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes talking about what you did within that organisation?

CHANCE Yes, sure. The Farmers Union then was a very powerful organisation. Even as late as, I think, 1979 I was the general treasurer of the union, and I know then that we had over 10 000 active members. It was enormously powerful. It's probably about one-eighth of that now. It had a turnover of over \$1 million. It was immensely politically powerful, and it took seriously its non-political stance, or its multi-political stance would have been a more accurate term, because everyone was political, so much so that at the time I was towards the top of the organisation, it was actually dominated by left-wingers. That's not a complete surprise, I suppose, because there are two farm organisations to this day and there certainly were then: the Farmers Union and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. And the PGA was always a kind of industrial wing of the Liberal Party, so the Farmers Union tended to be made up of, in the main, Country Party voters, but very strongly represented was Labor Party voters, so Peter Walsh, John Walsh and myself, Des O'Connell, Patrick Moore—a whole range of left-wingers. But the union members knew what our politics were; it wasn't something we ever hid, and they kept on voting for us, because, I guess, they thought we were doing a good job. It was interesting. We also had conservative governments then. I think the members saw some value in having people who weren't too close to the government. We had our local branch in Doodlakine. Our zone council was based in Merredin and was a very powerful organisation. Our membership was entirely voluntary of course, but our membership, I think, covered over 80 per cent of the active farmers in the region.

JF Goodness. That's a high percentage, isn't it, for any group?

CHANCE Yes, for a voluntary membership. When I say they were active members, they didn't just turn up for meetings; they plotted and schemed. It was really quite an introduction. I was elected first to the general executive of the body, which is like a broad consultative body (but there is one member from each zone; I think our zone had about 800 members) and then ultimately to the general council (the general executive is the peak body, but the general council is the distillation of the peak body, which had, I think, 10 members) and from there to, firstly, the Australian Farmers Federation, then the National Farmers Federation and also as the general treasurer. I'd pretty much reached my peak then, and I pulled out to further our farming interests, because, by then, we'd bought the new land block, and I was needed there. I really enjoyed my time there. I learnt a great deal. I travelled a lot around the state. We had one big campaign in 1980, which was the rail freight campaign when we took on the then Deputy Premier, who was Minister for Transport, Cyril Rushton. Wheat in those days was a regulated commodity. You had to send it by rail. You could not cart it by truck except to the rail head. Because it was regulated, and it was a very large part of Westrail's freight, they were able to charge whatever they felt like charging or whatever was politically acceptable. It was getting to the stage where, for the more distant grain growers, who are the larger grain growers, and we represented most of them because Southern Cross is the longest rail haul, they couldn't afford to grow wheat, because the freight was taking as much as a third of their gross receipts. So we started a campaign, which was heavily backed by the Labor Party. They provided us with a publicist, although we did pay him some money, but he was the ALP's publicist. We had a media conference, which was well covered by the television. We had a great campaign document called "The Great Grain Train Robbery", and we really hurt the government of the day, because they were running into an election at that stage, which was partly why the ALP supported us. It was a strange experience for some, because my colleague, Romilo Petroni, who was actually leading the charge (I was the PR man for the campaign) was a very staunch Liberal, and probably still is for all I know. I took Romilo into the ALP headquarters, and he said, "Just hang on a second, Kim; I've got to cross myself before I walk in there." [laughter] Romilo and I were very good friends. Anyway, it was a successful campaign. Out of that, we won the right to negotiate a contract for grain, which was all we asked for. We only wanted the same rules as the iron ore people who were using the same line (that was when Koolyanobbing was in

operation) except we were being charged \$24 a tonne. They were being charged \$6 a tonne. The government just found that indefensible in the end. We never got down to \$6 a tonne, but we did carve a substantial slice ultimately off the price; around \$7 I think we took off the top. It was a very successful campaign. It changed things remarkably. To this day there is still a similar contract organised.

JF Yes, and of course a lot less rail carting being done in some respects, because there's a lot more —

CHANCE A lot of the lines have closed now. And that was part of the government's problem. They had the political argument on one side that they had to keep all these little inefficient branch lines open, and then they had the political argument on the other side that the cost of doing that was so high they could not pass it on, nor could they absorb it, so they were really caught in a bind. In a sense, we did for government what they rationally had to do anyway, and that involved the resurrection of some lines and the closure of others. In terms of that main eastern line, the standard-gauge line, there is more grain being carried on that now than there ever was. It's a very efficient railway line, and others were done up, like the Goomalling was done up.

JF And over what period of the year is grain actually carted on that, because, unlike iron ore, which can be carted year long, I suppose, grain would be a seasonal thing, wouldn't it?

CHANCE No, it's also now year long. That was partly an outcome of our contract negotiations. There were three parties to the negotiations: Westrail, CBH and the farmers. CBH were an important part of that, because what CBH were able to deliver in the longer term (and we knew that we had to work towards that) was more country storage so that they could keep the trains moving right through the year. That was a major breakthrough from Westrail's behalf, because that took all of that time pressure off them in December–January and enabled them to make some significant savings. So, yes, it made sense all round.

JF So you were involved in the publicity aspect of that particular campaign. You were also a national delegate, were you not, for that organisation?

CHANCE I was a member, yes, of the National Farmers Federation, yes, and the AFF. That rail campaign was not officially a function of the Farmers Union; it was a function of the Merredin zone council of the Farmers Union. We had then a vice-president, Peter Lee, who you would know, and he's also a very good friend of mine. Peter was the one Liberal, and he was under a lot of pressure, I think, from the government to make sure that this didn't get out of hand. I sat down with Peter and I said, "No, look, Peter, you don't have to support us; just don't come out against us, and we will run this as a function of the Merredin zone council so that you're able to stand back and say, 'No, my hands are clean.'" We both were happy about that, because, in a sense, he was not being unreasonably political about that, because I was the one who'd taken the matter to the ALP. He said, "Well, you know; it's against our constitution, Kim", and it was. [laughter]

JF So that issue is the major one you can remember having a hand in with ...

CHANCE That was probably the biggest, although we had a number of other issues that I worked through, particularly we had severely declining terms of trade then, and farmers were experiencing difficulties, and we were trying to find ways to support them. No, the rail freight one was my big one.

[track 30]

JF Coming back to the political scene, you left the Farmers Federation to concentrate on your own farm, but you were still a member of the ALP and you started to become, perhaps over the period of the next decade, more interested in politics than you had been. At what stage did you actually see a political future for yourself in terms of Parliament?

CHANCE I think it was always somewhere at the back of my mind. I didn't know quite how I was going to do it, but, remember then, that Labor held the seat of Merredin ... Jimmy Brown. The seat was called Merredin-Yilgarn and it really had an east-west axis and ran right through to Kambalda, I think. It picked up a lot of that resident mining boom in the east.

JF And perhaps the resident railway workers and people like that?

CHANCE Yes, quite. The Labor vote in Merredin itself was actually quite strong. Then (and this coincided with the time that Hendy Cowan first came into Parliament)

the seat of Merredin-Yilgarn became the seat of Merredin. It changed from an east-west axis to a north-south axis, so it picked up Mukinbudin in the north right down through to Kulin, I think, in the south, but certainly Narembeen. Hendy Cowan was well known. The seat was very clearly a Country Party seat. Hendy came in on that. That would have been, I guess, somewhere around 1976. That took out really our last Labor seat in the Wheatbelt. But the '86 election (I think it was the '86 election, but either '86 or '89) saw the birth of regionalism and the upper house changed from its old provincial system to the regional system. I think it was '86, and that was where ... I'm not too sure about that; it might have been '89. Anyway, we can sort that out. That was when I thought there is a chance of winning that one. Jimmy Brown re-emerged, so he swapped from the Legislative Assembly to the Legislative Council, and that's when I thought that was the seat I could work for. That's ultimately how it happened. I was visualising the opportunity a long time before that, and I ran in, I think, four federal election campaigns for O'Connor against my old mate Wilson Tuckey, who amazingly is still there. I just can't believe it. He's still there [chuckles].

JF I was going to bring that up, if you hadn't, of course (the O'Connor contests). Can you just remind me; which election was it?

CHANCE The first election for O'Connor was 1980, but I didn't run in that one. In fact, an old mate of mine, Roy Duncanson ran that. The next federal election was '83 and that was my first. Then we had that series of elections through the Hawke years that came very close together. I know we had one in '86 and one in '87, so I don't know whether it was '83, then '86 or whether there was an intervening one, but in total I ran four. Then in '86 I first ran for a state seat. That was the old provincial seat of East Avon or something like that ... Mick Gayfer's seat anyway. Oddly, a friend of mine was also running for the Liberal Party at the same time, John Panizza, who later became a Liberal Party senator. John, I always thought, was a Labor man. In fact, I asked him. I said, "Why are you running for the Libs, John?" He said, "Well, I'm never going to win as a Labor man, am I [laughter]?" He's been dead for a while now, but he wouldn't thank me for saying that. Because I had such high regard for John Panizza, I convinced the party to give our preferences to Panizza, not Gayfer. Of course, Mick was very unhappy about that [chuckles]. We had an unusually high drift of preferences for that time; I think about 17 per cent of our preferences went back to Mick and that was all that got him elected. Because on just the straight allocation of votes between ALP and Liberal Party, Panizza would have won it.

JF But for yourself, you had no realistic idea that you would in fact take the seat of O'Connor, did you?

CHANCE No, no.

JF So was it in the nature of an apprenticeship?

CHANCE Yes, and a bit of fun. We did have a lot of fun. There were three-way contests always. The Nats always ran somebody. The Nats always thought they could win O'Connor, and it's exactly the same this year. I had some time for Wilson, and not a lot for the Nats. The Nats ran a couple of very good candidates, and one of them was Trevor Flugge, who later got caught up in that AWB stuff. Trevor and I were good friends. I had a lot of time for him. I thought he was a very, very good operator. They put enormous effort and an enormous amount of money (something like a half a million dollars) into that campaign in about '84, I suppose. Trevor was at his peak then. Everybody knew and admired Trevor. He was a cleanskin. He had no negatives at all; very articulate and intelligent. He and I actually went to a number of election-type meetings together. We were always good friends. Anyway, after putting all that effort in (and in my total effort in the campaign I think I spent \$1 500) [chuckles] and I beat Trevor on the numbers because he had to beat me to get my float. He said, "I can't believe it, Chancy [chuckles]. I worked my backside off and I couldn't even beat you" [laughter].

JF To what extent were the family on your side when you were making these experimental moves.

CHANCE They were fine, yes.

JF Did they get their hands dirty in polls and polling places and so on?

CHANCE Certainly my wife and kids did, and my brother-in-law and my sister, yes. They went out handing [out] how-to-vote cards Yes, my word.

JF At the time (we're looking at the '80s now) the Burke government had come in and you were on the state executive at that time, I presume, still?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Did you have opportunity to rub shoulders much with Brian Burke?

CHANCE A little bit. I used to go and help out Ken McIver in Avon, and Ken and Burkie were great mates. It was really through only the Avon campaigns that I ever worked very closely with Brian. We were different based factionally. I was always a left member, and he couldn't abide the left, of course. But personally we got on pretty well. He's a nice guy. His public persona these days is not one anyone wants to be associated with, and I understand that, but as a bloke, he was a great guy.

JF I suppose you said that you didn't exactly support what he did in government in some respects.

CHANCE Well, I thought he did a pretty good job in government actually, yes. I had no real problems with that. In fact, some of the things that he did, which were later most heavily criticised as being part of the WA Inc thing, were really well-motivated. It was in the execution they did terrible things ... covering up financial losses. I mean, the execution was just awful, but the vision that lay behind the WA Development Commission and the other one that used to take on the longer shots. There was WADC and [pause] ... anyway, the other state development arm. I thought that was great vision, and I wish we still had it.

JF And we might have had if there hadn't been such a disaster.

CHANCE If they'd just been honest. The fact is they were dishonest, and the execution was dishonest. That really annoyed me because they then allowed all of the good things that they did to be tarnished with the same brush. Exim was the other one. You mention either of those two words now and people just think, "Oh well, that was part of the crooked '80s and that's WA Inc." Well, they were part of WA Inc, but they didn't have to be a part of the dishonesty. They were the vehicles through which the dishonesty occurred, but it's people that cause dishonesty, not the corporate structures. I just thought those structures were great; they appealed to me.

JF So you didn't have great qualms at the time?

CHANCE No.

JF Probably you didn't know at that time all that was happening behind the scenes?

CHANCE Well, who did?

JF Yes, who did?

CHANCE Exactly. I mean, we have pretty vigorous media in Western Australia. All the way through the '80s, even when people in the Liberal Party, who had worked out what was happening ...

JF Bill Hassell and co?

CHANCE I was thinking more Barry Mackinnon and the guy who was later Minister for Finance, Max Evans. Max is smart. Max is really smart. Max had worked that out, but he could never explain it to people. You know what Max was like; he used to mumble away. But, in fact, Max picked it all. He was a very clever guy. He knew what was going on. With all of that knowledge, the media didn't pick it up. There were people who did know or strongly suspect. Maybe some of it was an educated guess, but the media weren't following it. When we say nobody knew, a few people did know but they couldn't get their message through.

JF Because Brian himself was an ex-media man, wasn't he, which probably ... would that have helped in keeping it dark, do you think?

CHANCE Probably [laughter]. Probably.

JF And what did you think of the rights and wrongs of the leader's fund?

CHANCE That's dishonest, yes. I mean, passing cash out the back door. How did that cash get in there in the first place? I mean, it's a deliberate attempt to subvert the Electoral Act. Had Exim and WADC been exposed to a bit of transparency, we may still have them. That's what I am annoyed about. Congratulations to them for thinking of a great idea, but I'm really disappointed that they then let it go under. I think we all learnt a lot in that process. Everybody looked for ways in which you could guarantee that WA Inc could never happen again, and we put in this whole series of complicated manoeuvres, some of which actually make life very difficult for anybody

trying to take the state forward, when all we needed to do was to put in guarantees of transparency. I've always been a great believer in the fact that when the lights are on, people don't misbehave. Turn the lights on, let everybody see what's happening, and if you've got transparency you don't need any of that other nonsense, which clever people will find their way around. Crooks are very clever sometimes. But if all the lights are on and if everybody can see ... If there's total transparency about what an organisation like WADC is doing (you've got the Parliament, the courts, all kinds of sophisticated mechanisms, ASIC, the Federal Police, the state police) look, nothing will ever go wrong. You don't actually need a CCC. I just think the CCC has been quite damaging, because it stops people doing what actually needs to be done sometimes. Just turn the lights on; let everybody see it for what it is.

JF Thinking now about the national scene and stepping back nearly a decade, what was your reaction to the election of Whitlam and the Whitlam era?

CHANCE Whitlam was the start of modern Australia. Australia as we know it today began with, and very largely as a result of, Whitlam, yes. The first few days of the Whitlam government actually achieved more than Australian governments had achieved for years. It was the beginning of something new. Even those, I think, who at the time hated Whitlam, because he was a guy who invoked strong passions (you either loved him or you hated him) I think now, in moments of quiet reflection, look back and see that was when Australia changed. They might not have liked all the changes, but they were changes that had been put off for a long, long time. Yes, Whitlam was a remarkable breakthrough and remains today a kind of a beacon of Australia's place in the world. He was the one, I think, that [made] the world first notice [that] Australia existed. As a result of his actions I think we became an international community. I think, probably (although I never liked him much) Paul Keating was the other one. I think Keating put us on the map in the financial sense, but I always had my problems with Keating.

JF Harking back to Whitlam for a moment, do you have any personal interactions with Whitlam that are memorable?

CHANCE A couple. I had lunch with Gough here in Parliament House with John Cowdell. It was just wonderful. He was 86, I think, at the time, and he was witty and amusing, just a remarkable guy.

JF Now John Cowdell was, what, secretary of the executive at that stage, was he?

CHANCE Yes.

JF How did you find John?

CHANCE John and I got on well. I mean, we clashed once or twice, but generally speaking we had a good relationship. I think we saw the world quite differently. We came from very different backgrounds.

JF Though fellow Methodists?

CHANCE Yes. As, of course, was Geoff Gallop. Yes, different worlds, different backgrounds, different values in a sense, but we got on well, yes.

JF Now, come to Keating, whom you mentioned. What are your thoughts about him? You say you weren't always in support of Keating.

CHANCE No. I think Keating in his fervour to make Australia, in its financial sense, a part of the modern world, pushed too far too fast. I think he saw things in terms of black and white. [He was] different from Malcolm Fraser, who I think actually did understand what would happen if you freed up the Australian financial system as quickly as Keating did. Fraser did take us off the fixed dollar to a kind of a floating dollar. A term he used at the time was the "managed float", but Keating just opened it up and leapt far ahead of where we should have been at that stage. Even though the Australian dollar is a very small player in the world financial circles, it was at one stage the third or fourth most traded currency in the world. Our currency was being used basically as a betting chip by any cowboy with a computer terminal. I think that really hurt us, and we got to a stage in the recession (there wasn't much Keating could have done about the recession; it was a world recession that was going to sweep over us) when he left us in a recession at a time when we not only had very high interest rates, we also had an over-strong dollar. If you've got a strong dollar, you're going to have high interest rates. Yet they kept saying, "We have to raise the interest rates again because the dollar is too high." Well, that just seemed to me to be contrary to everything I believed in. He was the first true anti-Keynesian. I was always a Keynesian and, for that reason, I just couldn't follow their logic. I still can't.

JF You'd have revalued at that point, would you?

CHANCE I'd have left the dollar managed in the way Fraser had it. I knew we had to move on, but I would've held out on the freeing up of the Aussie dollar until I felt confident that we had the means of controlling interest rates and the dollar beyond those that were proposed by Milton Friedman; in other words, beyond the monetarist principles. I hated the system of monetarism and I saw what Rogernomics had done in New Zealand. I mean, the cost on workers is just enormous. You lose your job because all of a sudden what you made is now coming from China, and your interest rates just went up to 19 per cent; you can't find another job, what do you do? And Rogernomics forced New Zealanders into soup kitchens. New Zealand should be one of the wealthiest nations on earth. You shouldn't have workers lining up for soup kitchens. To me, that is completely anathema. While Keating didn't go as far, Roger what's his name, the New Zealand Treasurer, we had Thatcherism, Rogernomics and Keatingnomics at the time. They were the three leaders. What I could see (this was prior to the unification of Germany) is that the economies in Scandinavia and West Germany, who had not adopted monetarist principles, were actually doing extremely well. That was when West Germany really reached its peak, and yet they hadn't done any of this nonsense. They'd held their protective mechanisms. Of course, the protective mechanisms had to be broken down, but they should have been broken down at a pace we knew we could manage. Instead, Keating just swept it all off the board, and there was huge cost, mostly in the form of interest rates.

JF That grew out of asking you about Keating himself. It's mainly that sort of policy you are talking about when you say you didn't agree with Keating. Did you have much personal interaction with him at any stage?

CHANCE Met him once; didn't like him [chuckles]; cold fish; wasn't impressed.

JF A couple of other ALP figures that you might have stumbled across at the time ... What about Bill Hayden?

CHANCE I don't think I ever met Bill. Oh, yes, I did. I met him once. No, I can't say that I knew him well, but he was an impressive man. I like Bill.

JF And Hawke?

CHANCE Hawke I met, and, of course, everyone loves Bob, but Bob disappointed me as a Prime Minister. Not that he did such a bad job, but because when he was elected, he had Australia in the palm of his hand; he could have done anything. His best friend was the Leader of the Opposition. Together, those two could have done an enormous amount (Peacock and Hawke), but they just sat there and did nothing. The Hawke governments were a huge waste of opportunities. It was Peter Walsh that called Bob Hawke “old Jellyback”, remember? In a sense he was. He didn’t have the courage, having got there, to then do something with it. We all thought he was a doer, and he let us down. He didn’t do. Just a quarter of what Whitlam had, if you’d put that into Hawke’s head, we would have been a great country.

JF The Accord then, how do you feel about that?

CHANCE [It was a] significant achievement, yes, the Accord. But that was really the product of the trade union movement [more] than of the Labor government. The Labor government just facilitated it. No, the Accord was a good breakthrough.
[track 31]

JF Well, I think probably at this stage we’ve got a few minutes left and maybe in that you could talk about the actual way by which you managed to get into your seat eventually. You were able to be nominated into an early retirement seat, were you not?

CHANCE Yes. When the preselections came up in (what was it?) the 1990 election, I nominated for the number one position and I had the numbers to win it. Because both Jimmy Brown and I were left members, the other factions simply said to the left, “Well, they’re both yours, you work out who you want.” So the decision was actually not made at the state executive; it was made at the broad left executive. I actually won the poll in the broad left executive. That news filtered back to the Premier [pause] Burke. Yes, it filtered back to Premier Burke and he said, “Well, guys, I’ve already given an undertaking that every sitting member will be able to contest their seat if they want to, so you’re going to have to change it because I’ve given that undertaking to Caucus and basically Caucus have signed off.” So you had this stand-off between the political wing and the lay party, but the lay party only represented in the decision made by a part of the lay party - the left. So there was

some toing and froing between the lay party and the left, and the left came back to me and said, "Look, we're caught in a bind here. We actually want you to be the member but, you know, we've got this conflict of commitments." I said, "Oh, I don't want to cause any trouble. Jim's got to retire anyway," (because we still had an age rule in those days) "Jim's got to retire in '91 anyway, so let him retire midterm." That was the deal that was done, and Cowdell was the state secretary, you're quite right, because I remember Cowdell's involvement in that. The deal was written down and lodged in Cowdell's safe [laughs] that Jim would retire in '91. I never saw it, but I was assured [laughter]; Cowdell assured me it was in the safe [laughter]. Then I have to ... Yes, Cowdell did protect my interest very strongly then, and then Jim somehow was able to push that out a bit. I said, "Look, I don't mind; I'm doing something else now. I'm ready to start in '92, if that's what Jim wants to do." So, Jim actually served three years of that term instead of two as agreed. There was no animosity about that; he got his extra year and I was happy doing what I was doing. It actually gave me a bit more time to get ready, so that's how that occurred. That's how I came to be a member of Parliament in '92 when the elections occurred in '93.

JF Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW SIX

INTERVIEW SEVEN

[track 32]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number seven with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on the 27th of August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 33]

Today, Kim, we're going to talk through into the first few years of your parliamentary experience, but just before we do, I want to pick up a couple of things that I could have developed more from the last discussion. The first of those is: you said you had two concerns (at least two concerns, I think was your phrase) that kept you worried about becoming a member of the ALP's parliamentary situation, and one of them you said was the solidarity issue. I wondered what the others were [chuckles].

CHANCE It's a very good question because I don't actually remember saying there were two. But certainly the parliamentary solidarity, well, the party solidarity issue, the requirement to be bound by a decision that is collectively made, even though you might not agree with it, is an issue for me. There was one other minor one, I suppose. The Labor Party then had a requirement in the pledge that you signed. Signing the pledge at all was another issue, but it's disappeared now from the entry requirements of the Australian Labor Party, but at that stage we were required to sign a pledge which said that we were not members of the Communist Party and nor did we sympathise with the aims of the Communist Party. I think that was a carryover from the split in the '50s. Well, I certainly had no trouble saying I was not a member of the Communist Party; I had more difficulty answering honestly that I didn't sympathise with any of the aims of the Communist Party, some of which are very high ideals in my view. I mean, communism's a great system; it's just that nobody's ever tried it yet. But in the end I thought, "Well, I'm sure that's not what they mean", so I signed the pledge anyway; but, yes, that's probably the second factor.

JF Thanks for that. The other thing that I wanted to pick up on, you said in the course of our discussions previously that you were always a member of the left faction. I wondered if you might talk for a few moments about the rise of factional influence, which I think I'd be correct in saying, since you joined, has been pretty phenomenal in the party, because back in '71 factions were not overwhelmingly important or you didn't hear as much about them, did you, as we certainly do today?

CHANCE No, not in Western Australia. I mean, factionalism was there in the '50s. The reason you didn't observe factionalism in operation in Western Australia was because right up to and including Joe Chamberlain's time, the whole Western Australian branch of the party was a left-wing party and you didn't see the emergence of a second group, a second faction, which was the right, really until Brian Burke emerged. Now, clearly there were people who sat outside the left structures before then, but they weren't recognised as a faction (Brian's own father, Tom Burke, for example) and they were dealt with pretty brutally by Joe and the party structure that existed at the time. They were fairly straight-talking, straight-acting people in those days. But Brian Burke did bring a second faction in, and then in the late '70s, probably early '80s, you saw the emergence of a group in the middle, largely driven by the states of South Australia and Western Australia, (although I think it began in South Australia) and that was the emergence of the centre-left and that really made Western Australia a three-faction town.

JF Do you have an opinion about that development and particularly about the influence of factional leaders on policy and procedure and so on within the party? Has it enhanced or otherwise the running of the party?

CHANCE Well, not everyone's going to agree with me but I take a fairly benign view of the formalisation of the factions. I stress the word "formalisation" because in any group of people any larger than three, you're always going to have at least three different opinions and on occasions even one person will have three different opinions. But the Labor Party is a very large party; it engages an incredible scope of people. We referred to that when I referred to one of the inner-city suburbs and the way the dynamics of the suburb changed (the term we use is gentrification) where, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the gentrification, the Labor Party vote increased when the doctors and lawyers moved in in the place of the retiring blue-collar workers. The Labor vote actually increased in spite of the expectation that that wouldn't be the case, and I think that's an indication of the breadth of demographic that support Labor or that will occasionally vote Labor. In order to accommodate that within a single party, particularly one which has a very tight policy agenda and a policy agenda which binds all of its members to it, means that you have to have, I think, a formal way of resolving that, otherwise the party would be continually at war with itself. What I believe the factions' formalisation gave to the Labor Party was a capacity to negotiate those issues outside of the public eye and outside of the heat and contention of the floor of State Conference and State Executive. It meant that we

were able to organise power-sharing arrangements and generally guarantee the good conduct of the party. In its ultimate expression, though, that capacity also had a downside and that downside meant that our State Executive meetings and our State Conference meetings became really, really boring because the deals were already hammered out and you didn't see the same level of debate on the floor as we had in my early years in the party.

JF So does this mean that the rank and file members really are afforded less opportunity to have an input?

CHANCE I think that's fair to say, although, you know, I wouldn't apply that too broadly. But I think that's a fair comment because they still have the capacity to have their say at State Conference and State Executive, and people do, it's just that they're less likely to be successful if the position they have chosen to take is different from the position which has been pre-organised by the faction leaders. But nothing prevents them from making those points. Similarly, if they are activists, nothing prevents them engaging at a much higher level in that debate through their factional caucuses, and really that's where the debate has shifted to.

JF At this stage then I think we'll just flip across to your early moves to stand for election. You told me last week about the contention of preselection for your seat, which eventually saw you take over from Jim Brown. I wondered how stringent were the preselection requirements when you first started contesting O'Connor? Did you have to go through a grill then with State Executive or something?

CHANCE No. The State Executive only actively engages in the preselection process where there is more than one person seeking the position. The only time I ever appeared (as far as I can recall anyway) before the State Executive was when I was a Senate preselection candidate; an unsuccessful senate preselection candidate. But other than that, nominating for preselection for O'Connor was simply a nod from the State Executive, yes; nobody was required to address it because there was never more than one candidate.

JF And you were well enough known anyway, I suppose, by that stage, were you?

CHANCE By then, yes.

JF And similarly when it came to the seat that you finally got into, you say it was all organised within the factional system because you and Jim were the only possible contenders and you were both in the same cohort, were you?

CHANCE We did have a number of contenders, because now we're talking about a ticket vote because by that stage we ...

JF It was Upper House, yes.

CHANCE Yes, and by that stage the Upper House had gone over to the regional system so it was a ticket vote. So what you nominated for was a position on the ticket, and I did nominate against Jim Brown for the first position, but as I said in an earlier interview, the other factions had effectively said, "Well, the Agricultural Region belongs to you, both of the candidates are left candidates, so it's for the left caucus to determine who gets number one". That caucus did give me number one but that was later negotiated, mostly through the intervention of the Premier, which wasn't a great concern to me; I was quite happy to fit in with that. I thought, "Well, if that's the wish of the party that I run in number two, I'll run in number two", but there was also another candidate who had the number three position ...

JF And that was?

CHANCE I don't remember just now [chuckles].

JF Okay. I can check that out anyway.

CHANCE It was a woman, and her name will come back to me.

JF Which associates were of greatest support to you in your decision to nominate for that position?

CHANCE I had some very close friends in the party, all of whom in the left, but Senator Jim McKiernan was probably the strongest. Jim McGinty, although he and I have probably never been close friends, but McGinty was also a very strong supporter. John Cowdell, as the State Secretary, always made me feel as though I was being dealt with honestly, and then other less prominent members of the left;

Chuck Bonzas, for example. I always felt comfortable that Chuck was able to give me some guarantee of support, particularly from the Fremantle end of the party, but a whole range of people; Jackie McKiernan, yes.

JF And locally, who did you have as a team of people supporting you when it came to election times? I know you didn't have to contest the election as such (well, you did, I suppose). So all right, you did; correct me.

CHANCE We had three very active branches in the electorate. My own, which by then was called the Eastern Wheatbelt branch but was a combination of the branches in Kellerberrin, Merredin and Narembeen, but we re-formed as a single branch; the Avon branch based in Northam; and of course the Geraldton branch when Geraldton was in the electorate. We had good supporters in Albany (because at one stage Albany was in the electorate) and a handful of people in Esperance. So it's starting to give you some idea just how complicated and how widespread it was. In between, we had a number of individuals who used to turn out on polling day and man booths for us; terrific people. But, yes, it was a combination of individual and branch support and every year they used to turn out; yes, tremendous.

JF Did you have what you would term a campaign manager amongst those people?

CHANCE In the early years we did but usually I was my own manager. I mean, there were limited resources available and most of those resources I provided myself, so I was not only my own campaign manager but usually managing another campaign; for example, the Geraldton campaign I managed three times, and that required a lot of work. I mean, Geraldton was a highly contentious and very marginal seat. My office was in Geraldton and I managed campaigns for three different candidates, the last of whom we finally got up, which was tremendous; yes, it was great.

JF That would have posed some difficulties for you, I suppose, because Geraldton is not altogether accessible from Merredin, is it? I mean, you can get there but it takes time and driving and flying or whatever.

CHANCE Yes, well there's no air service connecting Merredin and Geraldton so it was necessary to drive to Perth or drive direct to Geraldton. In those years, in those

days the arrangement for our lease vehicles used to expire at 40 000 kilometres. They now go a bit longer, but I would go through three vehicles in one year, just driving between Geraldton and Merredin, so I got to know that track pretty well [laughter].

[track 34]

JF All right, well, I think at this stage we could actually talk about the first little time in Parliament, and I'm going to confine that to generalisation today, rather than go into the detailed legislation and so on of that period in opposition. How did you prepare yourself for taking a seat in Parliament as a first-time member?

CHANCE Well, I didn't do what I recall my uncle doing before he went into the Senate, and that was read *Hansards* like novels. I always thought it was an indication of some deep-seated sickness, but I did do some strategic reading. Mostly I talked to experienced MPs and I relied heavily on the two that I sat alongside, Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport, who were both very good friends, and still are. They sort of guided me through; it was learn on the job, basically [chuckles].

JF Was there any form of induction for new members in those days?

CHANCE There was supposed to be, but I'm still waiting for mine. It didn't happen. Jimmy Brown took me around the Parliament House and introduced me to a number of people. I should recognise here also the contribution that Laurie Marquet made to getting me up to speed. Laurie was terrific, and he remained a tremendous source of information and enthusiasm. Laurie was the parliamentarian's parliamentarian ... tremendously experienced; we were so lucky to have him.

JF Yes, and he had a particular aim, I think, in mind to develop the upper house in a way that made it more akin to the Senate, perhaps, in its procedures; is that right?

CHANCE Even more advanced than the Senate. There were factors that were shared by only two upper houses in the whole world, and that was the New Zealand Parliament, although that is not an upper house, it's unicameral, but it's a parliamentary practice that was shared only with the Legislative Council in Western Australia. Of course, the common denominator was ...

JF Was Laurie.

CHANCE Laurie was the Clerk to both Parliaments. We had a number of practices that were either unusual or unique but went to the better running of the Parliament. He did make a huge contribution. Parliament was changing anyway. The Legislative Council began to change, I think probably from the time that people like Tom Stephens and Peter Dowding came into the Parliament. Before the arrival of those two in particular (there may well have been others) it wasn't uncommon ... I honestly didn't believe this when they told me about it, so I went back and checked the *Hansard*, and they were right. There were actually times before their arrival when the President called for questions without notice, there were none. There were no questions. I could not believe it.

JF How can a house of review not do that, yes?

CHANCE Not have a SINGLE question. It really was a gentleman's club. It had no women in it and it had no politics. Of course, the arrival of Dowding and Stephens changed that [chuckles]. Our question time, I think, is one of the great advantages. People are very critical of question time in the Legislative Assembly, as they are of the house of reps, and rightly so. If you don't have an effective functioning question time, you are degrading democracy because question time, to me, is the most important single function of a Parliament. It's where you get accountability. It's where it stems from. The Legislative Assembly will go through its entire question time with as few as four questions being addressed. I used the word "addressed", not "answered", because usually there isn't any answer. I used to make a habit of counting the number of questions in our question time, and it was not uncommon for between 20 and 25 questions to be dealt with. And, of those 20 or 25, there would only be perhaps a maximum of half a dozen where you could say that answer was a non answer, but mostly because the minister would have to refer to advice; generally not because they stood up and made some kind of ministerial statement. We did have a very effective question time.

JF That was one of the ways in which the upper house here was unique. Were there others?

CHANCE This is a relatively recent change, but I was always disappointed with what was possible to be achieved during estimates week. We got one week in the year when we were able to bring in ministers and senior officials and quiz them on

their budget. I thought it was quite remarkable that the Parliament actually agreed to extend that estimates process right through the year, through the powers of the estimates committee. I might need correction here, but I think it happened at the beginning of the Gallop government in 2001. I was actually surprised and, to some extent, disappointed that that enormous power wasn't used as much as it could have been. But it's still there, and it's a very important power. To be able to concentrate on a particular issue or a particular department or a particular minister through the powers of the estimates committee is a huge advantage and absolutely essential, absolutely.

JF Did that come about because the estimates committee became a standing committee as against being an occasional committee?

CHANCE Yes. There was an estimates committee, you're quite right, before 2001, but really its only function revolved around the estimates week and its organisation. When it became a standing committee, it still had that role, although that all-encompassing estimates period, which involves the whole house now, is only one day in the Legislative Council, not three days, but its ongoing work is extremely important. Imagine you have a problem in the Department of Health, for example, at any time through the year that committee is able to bring health department officers and the minister representing the Minister for Health, if he or she is in another house, to bring them before the committee, and bring them back and back and back and back until they are satisfied. There is no limit on what they can do. I think that's tremendously important. And while a similar situation does exist in the Senate, we never had anything like that capacity in Western Australia before.

JF You had to go through a fairly sudden transition from being an active rural practical person as a farmer or driver and you became, obviously, more sedentary, urban and theoretical in a sense. How did you handle the transition?

CHANCE Not badly, I suppose. I was also 46 years old when I came into the Parliament, so the idea of being a little bit more sedentary didn't seem like such a bad idea at the time. The transition was easier than it might have otherwise been because I was capable of reading law. I have no qualification in law, but it came relatively easily to me. The biggest change is the idea of dealing with the concept that you are public property, and when a particular group of people want to speak to you, you have a duty and an obligation to get yourself there and speak to them. That

was drummed into me very quickly after I became the shadow Minister for Primary Industry then it was, not agriculture, when I was summoned to the Cue Parliament. The doyen of the Cue Parliament (his name will come back to me) Mr Price, but the then president of the Cue shire, summoned me and said, "Cue Parliament is on and you're required to be there." It was on a Friday. Parliament had been sitting that week, so I had to get out of Parliament on Thursday night and drive all the way to Cue, but I had to be there because Mr Price said I had to [chuckles]. I mean, the Cue Parliament itself was a real institution. That was a change, but it was a change I enjoyed. I like mixing with groups like that and we had a lot of fun together.

JF I've never come across the Cue Parliament; tell me about it.

CHANCE The Cue Parliament (now what do they call them?), it's a regional organisation of councils. It involves the councils of, obviously, Cue, Murchison, Gascoyne, and I guess a couple of others. It's the local regional organisation.

JF Mt Magnet would be part of that, would it?

CHANCE Yes, absolutely. It was a group of councillors, probably three from each council, or something like that, so about a dozen councillors then. Also a number of public servants, the regional managers, for example; the Agriculture Protection Board, Main Roads (people like that) people with a direct connection to local government and local government themselves, usually a senior local member. Norman Moore, for example, would have barely missed one because it was in his electorate. Norman actually used to wear a tie to them too and always criticised me for not wearing a tie. But it's a whole-day get-together in the town of Cue. You stay in the local hotel and go back to the hotel for lunch, which was a very pleasant occasion, and the meetings would be in the old Cue shire council buildings, which are an experience in themselves. But Mr Price (I'll get his name in a moment) in fact he opened the Carnarvon jetty when it was reopened after it had been refurbished. I thought, "Why is Mr Price doing this when his shire is so far distant?" It turned out it was his grandfather that built it. I wish I could remember his first name. He was a delightful character. He was very blunt, very aggressive, so much so that he was almost a caricature of himself. It was lots of fun.

JF So it was a sort of an overgrown local government association meeting but they'd called the parliament?

CHANCE But it was called the Cue Parliament, yes [laughter].

JF They gave themselves airs, didn't they?

CHANCE Yes. I've never known it called anything else. It was never referred to by its proper name; it was always just the Cue Parliament.

JF Great.

[track 35]

Now, coming back to the urban aspect, where in the city did you live whilst attending Parliament?

CHANCE Well, I shared a flat with a friend when I first came here, in Como, and that was because I was only here like three days a week, and then I was going back to Merredin at that stage. And then later, when my friend moved to Kalgoorlie, I stayed on for a while in that flat but then moved to another one in South Perth, which was rather lovely because it had views right out over the water; not an expensive one but it was a lovely location. So that continued until 2001. When we were re-elected in 2001 I found that I was hardly getting home at all, perhaps six weekends a year was all I was getting home for. I had moved from that flat, we'd bought a house then in Maylands because I think both of my children ... yeah, both of my children were then living in Perth with me and I just didn't have room in the flat. But because I wasn't getting home, Sue and one dog were living in Merredin [chuckles], myself and two children and the other dog were living in Maylands by then. Because I wasn't getting home, we then sold the house in Merredin. Sue changed jobs and moved to Perth and then later we sold Maylands and moved to where we are now, Guildford, which we're just in the process of moving again to Millendon.

JF Talking about accommodation, think now about the Parliament House, where were you accommodated in the house in terms of an office and so on?

CHANCE Right at the beginning?

JF Mmm.

CHANCE Right at the beginning I shared that office, which was immediately on your right as you enter the south entrance; so it was actually at the Legislative Assembly end. I shared that with three people, Nick Catania, Larry Graham and Yvonne Henderson. But it was just madness, four people in one office. They were all Assembly people, you know; it was a long way away from the chamber. Anyway, I ended up missing a division very early in my career, the only one that I'd ever missed, and it was then decided that my location was inappropriate and I needed to move closer to the Council chamber. Where did I go then? Well, I moved down into that area here on the ground floor at the north end of the building, in an area where actually most of the people in that area were members of the broad left. So we were almost separated factionally, so much so we used to call it the Kremlin; the whole area was called the Kremlin. It remained called the Kremlin until the Democrats were elected and they moved them into our area too, and we said, "Well, we can't call it the Kremlin anymore", so it became known as Lubyanka. I was down in that area for quite a while, sharing in the main ... I shared with John Halden for a long time (John and I were very close friends) and with Tommy Helm; and sometimes all three. We stayed together for years and years and years; in fact until I became a minister and moved upstairs.

JF What were your feelings about Parliament House as a workplace then? With more than one person to an office and so on, you obviously have limitations on what you can do.

CHANCE It was unbelievably bad. It was a shocker. Even down to not having sufficient lighting in the offices. There was no air conditioning, so it was unbelievably hot. In summer, when you opened the door to our office (because we were on the east side) it was just like opening an oven door; it was unbelievable. Smoking was permitted everywhere; in offices, in lobbies, everywhere. No air conditioning, the lights were lousy, the offices were unbelievably cramped. Even an office of this size would have three people in it.

JF Goodness. This being about, what, is it 10 foot square?

CHANCE It might be 12, yeah ... somewhere between. Yeah, three people; with all of your books and your bookcases and your desks and filing cabinets. It was just unbelievable. Then you moved into the corridors and the corridors were full of staff. They had temporary offices actually built out into the corridors. It's quite remarkable

the changes that were made. The chambers themselves weren't air conditioned. They were not bad in summer, because they had overhead fans and they're quite tall, but in winter they could be really, really vicious. We did have a little heater in front of you, which didn't work very well. So the conditions were pretty rough. You couldn't believe, actually ... you look at the building now, you couldn't believe it's the same building. The people that made the changes were the two Georges, George Cash and George Strickland. When George Cash was the President and George Strickland was the Speaker, they said, "This is ridiculous." We [were] so sensitive about not spending any money on the building that we'd actually created a workplace that wouldn't pass WorkSafe standards if they applied, because WorkSafe standards don't apply. But we had fire risk, we had electric cords all over the floor. It was shocking. So, George and George's strategy (and I'll always be grateful to them) was just to move bit by bit every year and make one little improvement every year. But at least go forwards, not backwards. It really got us to where we are now, in quite a short time. Now of course we've also had the refurbishment of both chambers, which reminds me I must go and have a look at the Legislative Council chamber. I haven't seen it since it has been done.

JF And you came into the Parliament at a time when there was no longer a resident controller I think, didn't you? There used to be a flat at the ...

CHANCE No, no, he was still there.

JF He was still there, was he?

CHANCE Vince; yes. Vince Pacecca. In fact Vince's flat was right opposite my office.

JF Oh, right. I thought that that's where they might have developed offices. I think they probably have since.

CHANCE Oh yes, that's now the Parliamentary Services wing. But that was Vince's flat, yeah, which was just crazy. But it was what had been the case for years and nobody was going to change it.

JF What were your general impressions of the Parliament in your first few weeks of sitting? I mean, was it as you imagined it might be, or were you surprised by anything?

CHANCE Pretty much. I think my main bewilderment came from the arcane processes that you went through. At the end of the bill, when you go through the end of the second reading and then the third reading and then the report back to the committee, and then the committee reports back to the President. I don't think I ever really grasped it [laughs] ... "I move that you do report the bill to the house." And the niceties which weren't written in the rules, but yes, you can do that but you don't because you do it this way. The standing orders of the house, which are not quite as written in black and white in the standing orders, what actually happens is very different and when you ask the question, "Why are we doing this contrary to the standing orders?", you're told that that's the custom and usage of the house. In other words, that's the way we've always done it. But it's contrary to the law, if the standing orders are taken as the law governing the rules of the house. You're just greeted with a look of bewilderment, "No; custom and usage of the house is part of it." It's crazy. The issues around privilege and the enormous complexity of that issue which really, really became an issue in 2008 with Fels and Shelley Archer. I don't think we've ever properly come to grips with that. Just getting to the point ... Norman Moore made some very good points in debate on that. He said, "When I look at what the term 'deliberation' means, it can mean anything. You're taking it to mean anything including one member saying, 'Shall we have lunch now or wait for half an hour?' That's a deliberation of the house and is thus confidential." And maybe there are reasons why it has to be like that, but what Fels and Archer were accused of doing was taking advice from outside, providing to those people outside the knowledge of what was imparted inside the committee. The more you look at it, the more opaque it becomes because it could be that a discussion with another committee member on the way back from the committee meeting to Parliament House (coming back from, it used to be in Hay Street, it's now Parliament Place) but coming back from that external meeting place, a discussion that you have with a committee member about a committee matter, you're still covered by privilege. Most people wouldn't have thought that, but if I was walking along with another member and I said, "I don't know about this petition. I actually think that it's been put together by a smaller group than is represented on the petition form", that's actually privileged information, even though it didn't happen within the meeting. I'm not sure the rules actually provide for that. The same if I meet somebody in the open area between the chambers, if I

mention anything to another committee member about what's happening, technically that's privileged. If I do that in front of somebody who is not a member, then I'm in breach. It really caused us all to think about it. I mean, rules are supposed to serve us, not impede us. I think the lack of clarity prevented, in some cases, people being held accountable for what they did when what they did was, in reality, wrong. I mean you do not disclose to anybody what anybody says inside a committee meeting. To disclose it to a person who has a personal and proprietary and financial interest in the matter is especially wrong.

[track 36]

JF How did you feel about the pomp and ceremony that sometimes especially is seen in the upper house with processions and that sort of thing? Was that your thing?

CHANCE No, it was absurd; and the fact that we used to have prorogation every year was absurd. Happily, we decided during the term of the Gallop government (although Geoff Gallop was actually opposed to it as I recall) we determined that prorogation was only ever meant to happen every fourth year, not every year. What prorogation meant was that when you resumed it was a new Parliament, therefore, you had a new address-in-reply debate. The address-in-reply debate had precedence, and that meant that the Parliament wasted weeks and weeks of time. I was sitting there with 85 bills that I was trying to get through.

JF Now you mentioned the influence of Laurie Marquet in improving the structures and procedures of the house. What other staff were significant to you: people like clerks and so on?

CHANCE Well, they all were. They were a terrific bunch of people so I don't want to single any of them out. Janine Robinson (because we worked together so closely for so many years) was terrific ... no, I don't want to single them out because they were all so very good and very professional, very helpful, because sometimes, particularly while we were in opposition, sometimes we really relied very heavily, not only on their professional skills but on their personal discretion. That was always an issue with Marquet. Marquet always had the position that, "What you tell me is confidential, but you've got to understand that I'm not going to see the government surprised by anything." I said, "What does that mean, Laurie?" He said, "Well, you work it out." What it meant was, he would provide advice to the government that they

might be facing an issue around a particular point, and that point is the one that you've just raised with him.

JF Which is perfectly legitimate for him in his post to do.

CHANCE Yes, but we just had to consider that through. But having said that, he provided a vast wealth of information to us.

[track 37]

JF Tell me about setting up an electorate office.

CHANCE Well, that was relatively easy for me, because I just took over Jimmy Brown's office in Geraldton. So lock, stock and barrel just shifted over to me ... all of the hardware, and his wonderful electorate officer, Dianne Spowart, who stayed with me for years afterwards. Yes, it was a very easy process. When I hear stories from people about the problems they have setting up a new office, I just appreciate how lucky I was. I just walked into a functioning office, and that was it, so that was quite easy. Sadly, Dianne died while she was working for me. I then had to go through the process of getting another electorate officer. I was unbelievably lucky again. I actually chose somebody from outside the political spectrum, came out of the service sector. She was then in Mullewa, but she was ready to move to Geraldton because her kids were high-school age, so it suited her to come into Geraldton. She did not know half as many people as Dianne did; Dianne just knew everybody in Geraldton. She was an old Geraldton hand ... born there, and a Geraldton city councillor. But my new electorate officer, Judy, she adapted very, very quickly, so I was lucky. I only ever had the two.

JF And you we're only allowed to employ one at a time then, weren't you?

CHANCE Yes, only one. Then we got .4 added to that, and then shortly after that another .4, so I went from a long history of having one to effectively two, because I didn't roll the two .4s together. I actually had two part-timers who would come in two days a week on pay, and half a day without pay, so I got a full person out of that, two .4s.

JF What routines did you establish for servicing the electorate? Did you have a system or did you just respond to crises? How did you handle it?

CHANCE Because the electorate is so big, most of the communication with my office was electronic, although we did have an office in a large city and as a consequence we had a certain amount of walk-in business. That was mostly concerned with Aboriginal affairs issues, there were Homeswest issues and Western Power issues. Those three, of our walk-in traffic, would have been 50 or 60 per cent of our whole business. All of those were entirely handled by my two electorate officers. They were just very good at that sort of thing. I would try to be in my office at least one day a week, but after I became a minister there was no way I could do that. So the idea of having a Friday electorate day just didn't work. Fridays I had other stuff to do. But they ran it just the same and did it very, very well.

As electronic communication improved ... I mean, when I started we did not even have a fax. I would hand write a letter and then I would ring my electorate officer and read it out to her. She would write it down in shorthand, and then she would type it and send it out. I didn't get a chance to read it again. And then I bought, out of my own money, two fax machines. They were old National thermal paper fax machines, and they cost me \$1 250 each, which was about a month's pay, but that revolutionised things, because then I was able to send stuff through to her. She could type it up, fax it back to me for checking. It was just groundbreaking. And then the internet and that just revolutionised everything ... PCs, laptops. It's just amazing what we've got now. I saw the whole evolution of the technology revolution.

JF Let's look into the participation in Parliament. What do you recall of the occasion of your first address to the Parliament, of your maiden speech?

CHANCE I still remember that. It was done in the address-in-reply debate, as was normally the case. I was able to expand on my views, particularly about the future of regional Australia. I drew fairly heavily on, by way of example, a particular region in Italy, the Biella region, which the Italian consul was able to help me with to a significant extent. It's an old wool processing area with a 600-year history. I said, with something like 1 or 1.5 per cent of the Australian wool clip, the Biella region has a gross revenue development which is equivalent to half the Australian wool clip. And I said, "That can be ours if you want it. This is how you're going to rebuild Western Australia or the regions." Some of that happened, and it was exciting to see some of that happening, the development of secondary industry in the regions. It's been the saviour of a number of towns. Dalwallinu is a classic example, and I noted that in my last speech. It was great to be associated with some of that. The Meenar Industrial

Park at Northam ... it already existed when I came to Parliament. Or did it? No, it didn't actually; it was just about to. That was Ian Taylor's baby, but then it went through a long period of time where it sat there and did nothing, and then we were able, while I was the Wheatbelt minister, we were able actually to get that firing and it is now in stage two or stage three, so it's been very successful.

JF Yes, and you see that as a way forward probably still, do you, for the regions?

CHANCE Yes, the development of appropriate secondary industry. I was never suggesting that we should go into wool processing, because there are a number of reasons why you don't do that. We had huge opportunities, in my view, to engage in more secondary industry than we were, and to a large extent that has happened. We've made a lot of mistakes along the way, but to a large extent that's happening now.

JF Just picking up the wool industry one for a minute, I think Albany Woollen Mills would have been one of the chief secondary industry developments in wool. Had that closed by the time you came into Parliament?

CHANCE Closed and reopened again, and then closed again while I was in Parliament, yes.

JF You said you wouldn't go into wool processing again. What are the reasons behind that?

CHANCE People always imagine with any conversion of a raw commodity to a process good that you can go part of the way; for example, with iron ore fines. It actually makes sense to go from fines to pellets or even to de-oxygenated, like the South Hedland plant, although that failed ultimately. You don't have that option with wool. If you look at wool, it would make absolute sense to wash it, to scour it and then to export the clean commodity, because when you export raw wool, half of what you're exporting is actually grease and dirt, and it's crazy. The reason that doesn't work is you can't blend scoured wool; you can only blend greasy wool, so you've got to go through the blending process before you go to the scour, and you don't know what blend is required. It is only the manufacturer who looks at what he's got at this stage, and says, "Well, that's what I need to produce in terms of a yarn. That's the

blend I'll use." So he'll then draw that stock out and send that through to the scours and then straight from the scours back into his mill. So it's not possible to do that. The only way you can do that is to go all the way through to ... probably the least manufactured stage you can go to is tops. You'd have to go all the way through scouring, spinning, to top making, and then you'd need to be able to hold sufficient to have the orders ready to go. So you'd have to have quite a lot of tops in store, which would be a very big financial risk, but it's doable. The issue now is the Chinese have got so efficient at this that nobody can compete with them anyway.

The little bit of saving that you make just isn't worth it. China's got the market tied up. But there are a number of areas in which we can. I think when you look at what's happening, say, at Meenar, or even to a lesser extent what's happening in places like Perenjori and Dalwallinu, it is possible to pick the niche that can be best serviced by industrial capacity close to where the demand is, and that's principally driven by the mining industry.

JF Did you ever visit Biella in the northern Italy?

CHANCE No. I have actually never been to Italy. I've been very close to the border on the Slovenian side ... in fact it used to be part of Italy ... which is not all that far from Biella.

JF I wondered, when I read the speech, whether you'd actually been there. Within that speech, I think you made reference to Muriel Patterson, who accused you of being in the wrong party.

CHANCE Yes. Oh well, that was fairly common, that people would say, "Why are you in the Labor Party?", but they quickly learnt [chuckles].

JF And so in the last few moments, who were some of the people close to you in those early days in Parliament who were significant within the chamber?

CHANCE Oh, well, I've already mentioned Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport; John Halden and Joe Berinson of course. Joe was my leader and just an amazing guy; he was incredible. I would've love to have seen him in his golden era, which was during the 80s when all those things were going wrong here in the Assembly. Joe apparently was just magnificent. They gave him a terrible time, because he was the

only senior minister. They'd ask him these complicated legal questions, and Joe would just stand up and go through the whole legal question, citing precedents, all without notes or warning. Apparently people were just dumbfounded by it. He could just go through and quote: "Then of course there was the Crown v Robinson in 1923 ... and Williams J found that so and so and so and so ... and on appeal that was later contested, and Saunders F made the point that Williams J had made an error in respect of his judgement", and he would just go on and on and on and on [laughter]. It occurred to some people that he was just making it up! [laughter]

JF A very clever man.

CHANCE Yes. But I never saw him do that. He was only there that one year, but he was a delightful bloke, yes.

JF You've mentioned Norman Moore briefly a while ago in another context. You both had rural areas in common. How did you get on with each other generally?

CHANCE Norman and I sat opposite each other for eight years, and we actually got on really well, yes ... we got on well. He was a grumpy old bugger [chuckles]. No, we got on, given the circumstances, very well.

JF I think probably at this stage we'd better sign off for today.

END OF INTERVIEW SEVEN

INTERVIEW EIGHT

[track 38][file **KC-29JL11T38**]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview session number eight with the Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament Oral History Project. It's being recorded on 29 July 2011 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 39] [file **KC-29JL11T39**]

Kim, I have been reading your valedictory speech, recently, and you began by saying it was a time to assess your achievements in terms of your objectives when you entered Parliament. I wondered if you would enlighten me at this stage: what personal objectives did you have, as distinct from party policies and things, as you entered Parliament?

CHANCE As I outlined in my initial speech, I was concerned about the state of regional Western Australia as it was then. It seemed to be in decline; certainly populations had heavily declined and had done basically since the decade of the seventies when our area in the north eastern Wheatbelt lost a third of its population in those 10 years. That was accelerating. Obviously there were reasons why that was happening; with better communications, better machinery, better transport, [we] needed less people to grow our staple crop of wheat. We also had the sheep industry in decline, and that had been a major employer. I indicated my concerns were that the agriculture region had never taken advantage of the opportunities for further processing of their main commodities. I gave the example of the Biella region in northern Italy and how they generate a huge mass of employment by using just a tiny fraction of the Australian woolclip (I think only about one per cent) and yet it employed some 60 000 people in one small region. [It is] an industry that is 600 years old, incidentally; that is the region where Cunzana and others have made so famous. I said perhaps that is not what we can do; however, there must be some way of rebuilding our community. So, when in my valedictory speech I referred to my original objectives, I think I said it's been good to see at least some of those objectives achieved, because if you go out into the regions now you do see more confidence, more prosperity. Certainly the towns look terrific, and there *has* been a growth of industry in those areas. I'm not sure if I referred to it specifically in the valedictory speech, but I had previously given the example of the town of Dalwallinu, which was a town in severe decline in 1992. The town of Dalwallinu now has a vibrant and very active new and profitable manufacturing base. It's good to see that

happen. It didn't happen exactly the way I thought it might have, because there is still very little use of the primary product as a raw material. However, the manufacturing base is built partly around the adjacent mining activity, but partly around the fact that it is readily available, low-cost industrial land where that is almost priced out of the market now in the Perth–Fremantle metropolitan area. We've seen that growth. We've seen the growth of the Avon Industrial Park, which had been started many, many years before I came to Parliament but sat there doing nothing. [It] is now in its first and second stages fully allocated because of its proximity to Kalgoorlie. It has been good to see some of these objectives achieved and to see the economic fabric of the Wheatbelt in a much stronger state than it was when I came to Parliament.

JF What personal qualities did you recognise in yourself that you thought fitted you to be the representative of your people in Parliament?

CHANCE I think I had a good understanding of the whole demographic of the Wheatbelt. Many Wheatbelt MPs have a fairly narrow understanding, and it's confined to their specific area, usually (that's agriculture). I think Brendon Grylls is another one with a much broader perspective on what the Wheatbelt is, and that's shown in Brendon's political activity. It's a matter of understanding, I think, that the Wheatbelt is an unusual community, but in fact it's only a tiny minority of the population [that] are directly engaged in agriculture. The Wheatbelt is a fully developed society and it includes many other things than simply agriculture. I think Brendon has that understanding. I think I had that understanding. I'd worked in the manufacturing sector in the Wheatbelt. I had an idea of what the strengths and weaknesses of the Wheatbelt might be, and what some of the opportunities might be. I think we've only just started on those opportunities. The vision that Brendon Grylls has for regional cities and bigger and more diverse towns is exactly the same as I had. One example of that is, for example, the town of Merredin trains every pilot that flies with China Southern Airlines, which is one of the biggest airlines in the world. It does all of their basic training before they convert to jets, where they begin their training in Jandakot and then later in China on airliners. But all of their initial training is carried out in Merredin. China Southern has actually built a small suburb in Merredin, which is entirely China Southern and a magnificent airport facility for which they pay a rental of, I think, \$1 a year. It was just a great example of what you can do. When you think about it, for trainee pilots, what a wonderful area to be in. The flying weather is great 350 days of the year. If they make a mistake and get lost or run out of fuel or have engine trouble, you can land virtually anywhere; it's a very

safe place to fly, and there's almost no air traffic (certainly at the levels they are flying at). It's a great place to learn to fly. It has some clear advantages. Sometimes we don't always see those advantages because we're too close to them. I once had a look at an air navigation map for the state of Kansas, and you would think Kansas in the US would be a pretty open place to fly, but the whole thing is a mass of red lines, because you've got all kinds of civilian and military exclusion areas, and it just looks like a nightmare. And it made me think: how would you train a pilot, particularly if you were in Britain or France or Germany, where the air traffic lines must be 10 times more complicated than the state of Kansas? By those [same] standards, when you look at the same air navigation map for, say, Merredin, there's no red lines on it at all; you can basically go wherever you like.

JF That's very interesting. I note you quote Brendon Grylls, who's a National Party man. Of course, one of the things you had in your background was a breadth of political experience through different family members being involved in not only one party, but several parties. Do you think that your breadth of vision derives partly from that?

CHANCE I think so. It's simply the attitude that I have evolved myself. I always regarded myself as a political moderate, but I joined the party in 1971 and I didn't see any reason to change my position. By the time I formalised a faction membership, I found the only place I was comfortable was in the left, which does seem a bit strange for somebody who regards himself as a moderate. But the left attracted me because it was very much pro-development. I've always had a deep suspicion for those people who are already comfortable, but then don't want anybody else to share in the opportunities that they had with respect to employment in the mining industry or even getting a benefit from the mining industry or the agricultural industry. You've got to have them; they're the basis for our wealth. I really appreciated what the AMWU, for example, who lead the left here, what they were trying to do in manufacturing industry. Indeed, they were the key drivers behind the Australian Marine Complex, which has been an enormously successfully industrial operation. I could see the benefit in partnerships between labour and capital. I'm very pro-secondary industry, although I come from a primary industry base. But, I think if you're going to develop a strong fabric in our economy, we've got to try to rebuild our manufacturing sector, got to. It's actually been in decline in Australia for 70 or 80 years. We've got to do something about regaining that, and I think the AMWU are real leaders in that area.

JF And, of course, globalisation hasn't helped that, I suppose; it's triggered it in some respect.

CHANCE Yes. It means if you want to be engaged in heavy steel construction, you've got to be competitive with the likes of China and Korea. But we can be. That's the point. You do have a natural advantage. People think, well, it's one-for-one at the factory gate; you've got to be competitive. Well, of course, we can't be. But because of our location in such close proximity to where this equipment is needed, we have a huge natural advantage. We also have a reputation for quality and finishing jobs on time and time is money for those big investors. I know we battle, and I know that much of our competition is still overwhelming us, but the fact is we have developed a very strong heavy metals sector and in boat building [we have] a pre-eminent position.

[track 40][file **KC-29JL11T40**]

JF Now, when you joined the Parliament, you were in the Lawrence government.

CHANCE Indeed I was.

JF I wondered if you see in Carmen Lawrence some of the things that rang bells for you. I see you both come from rural backgrounds, for example.

CHANCE Yes. Carmen and I did see eye to eye on many things, although Carmen was always more driven by social outcomes, whereas I was more driven by social outcomes, if you like, but social outcomes as a result of economic outcomes. So Carmen belonged to a part of the party that was actually closer to where the other part of the left come from—the missos [Miscellaneous Workers' Union] left. They were great partners. To have the metals left and the missos left in the same grouping was an ideal offset because we were able to keep check on each other's excesses [chuckles]. Carmen was an amazing person to work with, just the most intelligent person I have ever, ever come across, and I had the privilege of working with people like Geoff Gallop as well, but Carmen's amazing ability to follow a line of reasoning was almost frightening. I can recall trying to explain things to Carmen that I didn't understand all that well. She'd bring me in, "Can you brief me on this?", and I'd be battling my way through it, trying to get to grips with the issue myself and then explain it to someone else, and I'd get about halfway through and she'd say, "Oh, you

mean”, and then she would outline it perfectly. Even through the filter of me grappling with the subject, she could still see the facts. Quite amazing.

JF I think you paid tribute to her in the valedictory speech as ‘a person of clear intelligence and enormous compassion’.

CHANCE Yes, she was, yes. And that needed to be said, because she was driven overwhelmingly by the need to improve the role in society of the poorest in society. Her decline in Parliament, partly as a result of the Easton affair, I just thought was grossly unfair, grossly unfair. She was painted as something that is so opposite to what she really is that it was deeply saddening for me.

JF Yes, we’ll come to the Easton affair later on, because you were on the select committee. So we’ll leave Carmen for the moment. I think you also paid tribute to Ian Taylor and Jim McGinty. Would you like to spend a few moments giving me your impressions of working with either of those two or both of those two?

CHANCE I separated both Ian and Jim out because they were the leaders who never became Premiers, but they were the leaders that I served with. I think they deserve special mention because a leader who never becomes a Premier isn’t a failure. A leader who never becomes a Premier has got to be credited with getting you to the point where you can become government, and that’s what both of them did. They were very different people. Taylor was a man more in my ilk, hard economic line, left-winger; whereas Jim was very solidly in the missos’ camp, but also from the left. So they did things differently but I think both of them took us a long, long way, Taylor because he gave us credibility with the job creators, the employers. He gave us real credibility because he was looked up to by business in Western Australia mostly because of his long service as the Minister for State Development. McGinty didn’t have that, but McGinty had a capacity to appeal to a very wide sector in society and he was also an amazingly bright guy who could see his way through the manipulation of an issue. In a political sense, probably the cleverest I ever worked with. He was a great political strategist, so much so he had a few enemies in the party [laughter] because he was too clever. He did an enormous amount towards the election of the Gallop government, and then, afterwards, maintaining our position. He was a visionary. He had the vision to see that the Fiona Stanley Hospital was something that he had an opportunity to drive because of the state’s growing wealth and that that was the time to drive it. He locked into that vision because he knew it

was the right thing to do. He also gave us one vote, one value, which had been tried and tried and tried before, never successfully. I think he did it by giving away too much in the Legislative Council, but he achieved his aim and his aim was one vote, one value in the popular house; and nobody had ever been able to do that before. So, he was a man with significant achievements as a minister, but sometimes I think his leadership contribution probably hasn't been given enough credit, possibly because he was such a successful minister.

JF I think you were fairly close to John Halden; in fact, sharing an office I think you told me at one stage.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes talking about perhaps John and maybe others who were close colleagues in that first period?

CHANCE Yes. Well, John Halden of course was very close to me, as were Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport. They were probably the three that I was closest to, and I used to sit between Cheryl and Tom. They were tremendous. In my first year, they sort of guided me through all of the things that I needed to go through. This was when Joe Berinson was our leader. Then John took over as the Leader of the Opposition, and he was a fearsome leader. He would have been very, very difficult to sit opposite, I think. [chuckles] He was clever, aggressive, tough—everything that a leader needs to be in opposition. But a great mate. We did share an office for many years and I learnt a lot of my politics from him, although he wasn't a Jim McGinty, but he was a great political strategist.

JF Are there others who were influential, particularly in your early period, that you'd like to mention?

CHANCE Joe [Berinson], of course, was just wonderful. I'm very, very fond of Joe. I just thought he was an amazing person. Who else? Those were the people that I worked with most closely. No, I don't want to go too far.

JF Okay. Among the non-Labor members, who were of most importance to you?

CHANCE Jim Scott joined us in ... When did Jim come in? He must have come in in '93, so in my second year. We also sat alongside each other in my second Parliament. I thought that was just amazing. We'd been schoolkids together; we'd played football together. It was incredible to have Jim, the first ever Green MP in the Western Australian Parliament. To have my old mate alongside me was really good. But non-Labor? There were some fascinating characters around in those days. Phil Lockyer, for example, from Mining and Pastoral. Norman Moore was always worth a bite. [laughs] Norman and I actually became quite good friends. They were a good mob generally, yes.

JF Norman Moore, of course, has been there for absolute ages.

CHANCE Yes.

JF So he's got endurance if nothing else.

CHANCE I recall the day he celebrated his twenty-fifth year in Parliament and I gave a little speech just to note the occasion and said that this is a significant time in Norman's career marking the halfway point in his political career! [laughter] It's become less of a joke now. [laughter]

JF Yes. I think you quoted him, too, in the valedictory speech as having done something that you admired when you were on leave.

CHANCE He did indeed. Yes. I was on leave but Parliament was sitting. I'd taken a week's leave because I was in Tasmania racing in the Targa. A noted ABC journalist seized on the fact that I was away and actually got ABC Tasmania to send through some film footage of us racing. He basically asked the question very publicly whether somebody being paid as much as I was should be out racing cars while Parliament was sitting, which is a fair question, I suppose. But when that question was put to Norman Moore, he said, "Look, as far as I know, Kim's on leave and what he does when he's on leave is his business", which I thought was pretty big of him. He could have made an issue of it, and it would have been an easy shot to make, but he just refused to do it. So, he grew about 10 feet in my estimation, yes, because he basically killed the story. Nobody else picked it up outside the ABC.

JF Among the other people who were non-Labor members of the Council, are there any that stand out as people that you either got on with particularly well or people who challenged you?

CHANCE Phil Pandal, and Tomlinson (what was his name?) from East Metro. .
Derrick.

JF Derrick Tomlinson, yes.

CHANCE They were two that I worked quite closely with. In fact, when we get on to the committees, I think my very first committee was with Derrick and Phil, and that was the *Batavia* committee, which was rather a big issue for me at the time. We dubbed ourselves the old wrecks committee. But both of those were very, very bright people, very articulate, very well read, and they were just fascinated, as I was, by the whole *Batavia* issue. They were always people I felt I could go and talk to about things. Phil Lockyer was another one, because Phil and I saw the world in similar terms in many ways. Not so much Norman. My relationship with Norman was more in the Parliament, not outside. We didn't really talk much outside the Parliament until we were opposite each other as leaders, and then we got on quite well. But we hadn't had much time together. Those two of the non-Labor side were impressive parliamentary performers and they had good brains.

JF We'll leave some of the others, but they might come up in conversation, some of the others, even, that you paid tribute to in your valedictory speech. But we can move on now.

[track 41][file **KC-29JL11T41**]

Moving into committee service, that was quite an important segment of your early period in Parliament, perhaps more so than the later when you were ministerial. You have mentioned the *Batavia*. What about picking up that committee? In talking about the select committees that you were on, if you can briefly outline the nature of the investigation and highlight particularly your own contribution to that committee, as well as talking about the general outcome.

CHANCE Okay. Well, there are a few select committees that I was engaged in. The *Batavia* was the first. The others tended to be select committees of privilege. Somehow (I don't how it happened quite), somehow I became a legal expert on privilege [chuckles], partly because the first privilege committee I served on was the

toughest. That was the select committee of privilege inquiring into whether John Halden had breached privilege in the Easton case. That was very tough, because Phil Pandal was a part of that committee, Peter Foss was a part of that committee, and Foss was the chairman, an acknowledged legal expert. Because he was the chairman, he had to take a more conciliatory role. It seemed very clear to me that Foss wanted a report which was not littered with minority comment or even a minority report. In the end we did achieve that aim, although on a couple of the critical recommendations I did stand aside from the majority. That was very challenging because Phil Pandal clearly wanted to bury Halden. The grounds weren't there, the legal arguments were convoluted and difficult, and it was made even more difficult by the fact that you never quite knew who was on trial. You never knew whether Brian Easton was on trial, because there was a later select committee dealing with Easton himself, or whether Halden was on trial or, indeed, whether Laurie Marquet was on trial. It was very, very difficult [chuckles]. Everybody knew that if that select committee had a set of terms of reference which excluded another party, then there would later be a select committee of privilege dealing with that party. So one thing could not be separated entirely from the other; so you were forever positioning yourself for a corner about four corners ahead.

JF For a racing driver, that ought to be quite a challenge [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes, and you had to be able to see just what was coming, what the strategies were that they were planning, whether giving ground here was going to compromise you there. I used to come out of those meetings, which usually lasted about two and a half, three hours, just exhausted. They were very tough. That was probably a useful start to one's political career. From that I did gain some expertise in the laws around privilege and somehow became regarded as our expert on privilege. I used to be consulted by Premiers on that [chuckles], with no legal training at all. They were interesting but they did dominate my life there for a couple of years off and on.

JF Essentially, Halden was exonerated in that particular committee.

CHANCE Yes, he was. He got a small smack on the wrist. I think the majority view was that he had not breached privilege but he could have been more careful. There were two minority views: Pandal, who said he did breach privilege; and myself,

who said he took all due care. I still think I'm right, but that was the compromise we settled on.

JF It is interesting to me to ponder the fact that Halden and you were fairly close in sharing an office, for example, probably at that time. Had he said anything much to you about the line he was pursuing in the Easton matter outside the committee?

CHANCE No. In fact, very little was said at all. I know that there was an attempt to portray this as some kind of conspiracy, but in fact I think he saw an opportunity come up to cause some damage to the Court government and pursued it by presenting the single-person petition. The rules then permitted exactly that. The rules are now different as a result of the Easton affair. But at that stage, any citizen could come in and lodge a petition. Now they have to provide some evidence that what they're saying is, in fact, true. It was always doubtful to me whether Easton hadn't told the truth anyway. I don't think it was ever established. Certainly you would never establish in a court of criminal law that he had done it and I'm doubtful if, under the standard of evidence in a civil court, you would find him guilty. I can't go too far into it but basically it was a matter of what he said, and there's no doubt that he said it, because what he said in evidence in divorce proceedings. The question arose as to did his wife actually say the things that he is reported to have said? Well, yes, she did, because that's also a matter of evidence. But did she say it because he told her that was the case? Well, there's actually no doubt that he did tell her that. So where is the lack of truth? It's a very hard one to prove.

JF The *Batavia* relics was also in the same year, I think, as that first Easton committee. Would you like to talk about *Batavia* for a little while?

CHANCE It was the first of two, if not three, reports on it. There was a later report done, incidentally, also involving Phil Pandal by the Legislative Assembly after Phil had moved over to South Perth. We picked that up because we thought the *Batavia* story was more obscure than it needed to be. We thought it was a great event in our state's very early history then. It was something that had occurred 365 years beforehand, and these were probably the first Europeans to reside for any length of time in the Australian continent.

JF Albeit unwillingly.

CHANCE Albeit unwillingly, yes, but the story itself was so fascinating. The discoverers of the wreck had probably never been given proper credit. So we were able to make all of that public, and that involved, in particular, Max Cramer from Geraldton. Investigations went into where the relics should be stored. That was the key political issue for me in Geraldton. It led to the establishment of the new Geraldton Maritime Museum, which is a magnificent facility, and it was a more fitting place for some of the relics than the old maritime museum, which was really a cobbled-together structure. The other key political issue is where the main hull should rest. It was then and still is in the Fremantle Maritime Museum. The Fremantle Maritime Museum argued very strongly that the hull should stay in Fremantle because they were the only people who had the technology to look after such a fragile piece of gear. That wasn't something that went down really well in Geraldton, who saw it as theirs but I think people are generally resigned to it now. The issue was: which relics could be and should be held in Geraldton?

JF And of course Geraldton being within your electorate, it was doubly of interest to you [chuckles].

CHANCE I had a real interest, yes, in Geraldton, and the Abrolhos of course. It's an amazing story. I thought what we did was useful. The later Legislative Assembly committee looked a little further than just the *Batavia*, but the *Batavia* was certainly a key part of it. But an amazing story and still one that affects me. I think if you know the story, you cannot sleep on Beacon Island at night without having nightmares for weeks afterwards (you cannot), and I'm not prone to have nightmares, but it's just such a spooky, spooky place when you know the story.

JF [laughter] I suppose you got the story from Jonathan Edwards.

CHANCE Hugh.

JF Hugh Edwards, *The Wreck on the Half-Moon Reef*.

CHANCE Yes. The Hugh Edwards book that I really enjoyed was ...

JF The *Islands of Angry Ghosts*. Yes, I was getting confused.

CHANCE ... which was very good, because one half of the story is a reconstruction of events the way he believes they would have occurred, and there is some journalistic license in that but it made a great read. The second half of the story is about how the discovery occurred and the more solid facts of the story, more technical, as to why it took so long to find and how it was found eventually and how its original finding was then covered up by the finder who didn't want anyone to know and how that story got out. It was always thought to have been located some 20 miles from its real location and that was from a misunderstanding of the coordinates. But the real discovery, and Max Cramer was a key part of that; he was in that first dive along with Hugh Edwards and another infamous character whose name slips my memory now. But it must have been an amazing discovery. It is so shallow. I've been over the wreck. I didn't dive on it because the water was full of tiger sharks. There were about 20 of them between us and the wreck so I thought discretion is a greater part of valour. But even a diver of my limited capacity could have comfortably dived on the wreck. You could see it very clearly from the boat above the wreck because it was a very calm day and you could see the shape of the wreck.

JF Amazing. Coming away from *Batavia* now, then, not much later you were involved in the second Easton select committee, Easton non-compliance, '94. You might not want to go into the details of the actual committee but what about the outcome of Easton going to prison?

CHANCE Well I think it's the first and only time the Parliament has exercised its power. The first determination of the committee was that Easton be required to apologise. Easton refused to do that. And I could understand his reasons for refusing. That meant he was in contempt of Parliament. He actually went to jail by virtue of the contempt rather than the privilege issue because there were no options. It was a silly outcome. [interruption by a knock on the door from outside]

[track 42][file **KC-29JL11T42**]

JF Right, before that —

CHANCE Yes. It was a silly outcome, and unfortunately it was the only outcome that was open to us. The options available to the Parliament then were imprisonment, exoneration or censure. There was no other capacity. Now, both houses have revised the list of options, which can include barring persons from the parliamentary

precinct. It can include a fine, which would have been more appropriate. But the point was made that even if we had initiated a fine, even if that option was available to us, Mr Easton probably would not have paid it. So, we would have been back in the same position. So, we had to ask ourselves the question: should Parliament have the right to imprison at all? And Parliament later did deal with that question, although many years later. But, because of that lack of options, that was what we did. And we jailed him for an unspecified period, but in the end it was seven days.

JF It must have had a personal impact on members, I think, having to deal with an issue like that. Did you lose any sleep over that one?

CHANCE Yes, I did, yes, because I was never entirely convinced that what Easton did was all that wrong. But then, of course, when he is told to do something and does not, then the question of his initial bill is irrelevant. He has been given an order by the Parliament and he is in contempt because he did not abide by the order. And we had no option. He might have thought he had no option. But it was a case of a number of things coming together and you've just got to go with the flow eventually. But Parliament no longer has the power of imprisonment.

JF A couple of the other select committees you were involved with included one about the use of executive power in relation to documents held by a royal commission. Is that one a notable experience that leads —

CHANCE That was the Dr Murphy issue, was it?

JF Well I've got "the failure to produce documents Murphy." That was 98–99.

CHANCE Yes. Murphy was censured for his failure to produce documents that he was required to produce. He felt he was acting correctly according to his minister's instructions, and we disagreed. Again, happily, we only censured him, but he wasn't happy about it because he thought he was doing the right thing. But it's just conflict between the executive and Parliament. It's an interesting conflict and one that I was much happier about the outcomes, even though Dr Murphy wasn't, but he didn't like me much then [laughter]. But we didn't have any option. He had been ordered by the Parliament to do something. He had refused to do it. He was in contempt. It's as simple as that.

JF You were also involved with a couple of standing committees, manager of government ... sorry, no, manager of government agencies.

CHANCE Yes, which became public administration.

JF I see; those two linked together.

CHANCE Yes. They are the same committee in that public administration took over from government agencies and had a somewhat broader charter, but it was still effectively the same committee, and I chaired that committee for some years while I was in opposition. Yes, we did some interesting work in that. Obviously at the time this was the time of the third-wave industrial legislation, and as an opposition we were pulling every string we could to remind the government of what they had done wrong, and we had issues around privatisation and contracting out, and whenever we thought we could squeeze those issues into the committee's charter, we did. [laughter]. It was an opposition-dominated committee, so the government members, including the current President, had a really, really hard time [laughter].

JF How did you become a part of that committee, that standing committee? Were you seen to have particular aptitude or something like that that would give you an obvious seat on it?

CHANCE Well, if I did, I don't know what it was because that would be in someone else's mind. But, you know, people thought that I did have an understanding of the way public administration worked, and I had an interest in government agencies, although it would have been the other way around, I suppose, in terms of time. But it was a role I really enjoyed. I loved it. It had a very broad mandate. Probably the biggest thing we did was to send half of our committee to Great Britain to look at the post-Thatcher compulsory tendering and contracting out policy as it applied to local government. Of course local governments there are bigger than our state governments. And that was timed at 15 years after the initiation of the policy. So, enough water had flowed under the bridge to be able to make a valid comparison. It was a very good report. I wasn't a member of that committee and I stood back from it, but Cheryl Davenport went, the current President, Barry House, and the Democrat, the woman anyway who was the Democrat, those three went, and I think they did a great job of reporting. It was certainly an insightful look at a

particular policy, which at that time we were beginning to pursue ourselves. It came up with some really odd findings. For example, the local government authorities which had most strongly resisted compulsory tendering and contracting out, had deployed the policy far more successfully than the local government authorities who were the strongest advocates of it, which I thought was bizarre.

JF Interesting, yes.

CHANCE Yes, the Labour councils in Newcastle and Sheffield had done really, really well because they re-formed their workforce as a private sector body; even though it was publicly owned, it was still private sector. Whereas the Conservative councils who had been the strongest advocates for the policy tended to go straight to the market to deliver the services. What they found was that even in a country as big as Britain, the market wasn't deep enough to give a true competitive base. And you were getting a situation in some of those very upmarket London suburbs where the garbage was just piling up on the streets because there was no contractor able to do the work. They would bid at the lowest possible bid. They would then go bankrupt. You couldn't find anyone behind them to pick the contract up. Whereas Newcastle, for example, they just kept all their old people, and they said, "Well, you're now working for the council corporation rather than council." And they did extremely well, and they actually achieved the benefits. They made the comment that, "We weren't in favour of this policy but we have to say it's the best thing that ever happened to us because we're now leaner, more efficient, everything's working well." So, it was interesting. But what we learnt from that was: never overestimate the depth of the supply market for services, because you'll find that it ain't there when you go looking for it.

[track 43][file **KC-29JL11T43**]

JF Now, coming away from the standing committees, you were manager of government business, I think, in the Legislative Council from some time in '93 onwards. Can you tell me about that responsibility and how it worked?

CHANCE It was actually a fairly difficult job because, in a sense, from Halden's point of view, he wanted a stopping point between him in his negotiations with Norman Moore, so that Norman would actually negotiate with me and then I would report those negotiations to Halden, who had the time to say, "All right, what's he trying to do here?" and give a more considered response. But, fundamentally, my job was to organise who was going to speak on what issues and when. So, in very short

form that was how we worked it. It was good training, in fact, for when I later became leader.

JF And, you became leader eventually ...

CHANCE Only for a very short time.

JF For a short time, yes. Outline how you came to be in that position.

CHANCE When Halden was stood down, I became the leader, but then there were issues within the Labor Party which caused the left to divide somewhat from the rest of the party, and part of that division was the left refused to hold any official positions, and so I had to stand down and Tom Stephens took over. It is just one of the bad things that happen.

JF In getting that position in the first place, are you voted into your position by your party room?

CHANCE Yes; it's a caucus vote.

JF Were there many people in the offing who were likely to be also candidates?

CHANCE I think I was unopposed.

JF Yes, because there weren't all that many Labor people probably available at that time, were there?

CHANCE I mean, Tom Stephens took over from me.

JF Tom was able to, yes.

CHANCE But we held sufficient numbers of the votes to be able to guarantee that we could beat Tom, but it was Tom that I turned to, when I found that I had to stand down, and I said, "Tom, it's important that you do this," because I didn't want Nick Griffiths to get the job by default, because I just thought Tom would be a much better leader.

JF Now, at the time that you were Leader of the Opposition in the house, you were also currently a shadow minister, I think. Do those two positions marry well together or are they inclined to conflict with each other?

CHANCE No; I don't think either statement is correct. I think they're separate in their functions and certainly holding one was never a difficulty, but it was never particularly an advantage to the other role either. They were just different things that we did. It's always nice to have a leadership role because then you've got a better chance of bringing your issues on. But there's a limit on you in doing that, too, because people will say, "Well, hang on, you're using your leadership position to exclude the issues that we want a raise." So you've got to be very careful. But, no, I don't think the two had much effect on each other.

JF It struck me that the shadow minister, especially when you were holding a number of portfolios, probably would have been quite a big job. Did you find it a big job?

CHANCE You're pretty much on your own. I briefly had Transport, which I loved, I just loved it, but transport is really an urban issue. I always I saw it as a regional issue, and of course it's important in the regions, but most of the public's investment in transport is in the urban area, and I didn't have much sympathy with those issues or understanding of those issues. So that was ultimately taken over by Kay Hallahan when I went to Primary Industry.

JF I think, at that stage, we might leave it for today.

CHANCE Yes.

JF So thank you very much.

CHANCE Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW EIGHT

INTERVIEW NINE

[track 44][file **KC-05AU11T44**]

JF This is session number nine in the series of interviews with the Honourable Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, which is a series being commissioned by the Western Australian Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 5 August 2011 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 45][file **KC-05AU11T45**]

Now, Kim, on my original questionnaire I asked you was there a piece of legislation that caused you particular anguish and one which caused you particular joy.

CHANCE Yes.

JF You answered that the industrial regulations brought in by the Richard Court government were the anguish ones and I think the repealing of those was one of the joys [laughter]. So I thought we might spend a few minutes today, you telling me the contexts in which you became aware of what they were trying to do and why it was so anguish-making for you.

CHANCE Yes. The principle which lay behind the three waves of industrial legislation that the Court government introduced were principles that I felt deeply offensive. Despite some high-minded rhetoric about individual responsibility, they were principles that aimed to do nothing more than weaken the bargaining power of workers and to advantage their employers. I describe myself as a political moderate. Certainly I'm the first to accept that there were mistakes made and excesses in practice carried out by rampant union power, but at the same time the three waves of industrial legislation that made up the Industrial Relations Reform Act were highly offensive. They were a massive overreaction, and I thought destructive in that the very things that had been put in place to try to engender a stronger relationship between employers and employees, such as through the enterprise bargaining arrangements whereby workers could negotiate a better deal but they had to deliver better productivity, and that was a legally-binding structure. The new waves of industrial legislation actually broke down those EBAs and concentrated everything on individual bargaining arrangements. The way in which employers used the powers that they had under those individual bargaining arrangements, and indeed abused those powers, was entirely predictable in my view. We said so at the time, and I think our position was fully justified. Employers did make contracts with employees where

the employee was under duress. I actually personally know of cases where the employee was presented with the contract, told that he must sign it then and there on pain of losing his job, and was even refused the capacity to take the draft contract home and show it to his wife to read, not an industrial lawyer, his wife, who happened to be a schoolteacher. I just thought that was entirely predictable, and that's exactly what did happen. So it was a great moment in my life when we passed the repeal bills on those legislation.

JF Do you say that there was quite widespread abuse of them, or are you only able to instance one or two?

CHANCE No, the cases of abuse that were presented to us, principally by the union movement in relation to both their members and those workers not protected by union membership, were numerous, and we detailed them in great length. It was a filibuster debate. Tom Stephens led the debate in our house and in so doing set a record for the amount of time spoken by one member on one debate.

JF Just remind me, how long did they actually apply and how long was it before you were able to bring the repeal act in?

CHANCE Well, we repealed it virtually as our first piece of major legislation when we came in, so that would've been in 2001. How long were they in place? I think it was about '97, the last of the three waves went through. It was a major factor in us winning the 2001 election and Minister Kierath actually losing his seat of Riverton.

JF You weren't in the same house of course, but did you ever lock horns with Graham Kierath yourself personally on this?

CHANCE No, actually at a personal level I found him quite a decent bloke. I had great sympathy for him later, too, when his wife got very sick. But, no, dealing with Graham, he was a complicated person. But as an individual there was absolutely nothing offensive about him. He was tough and courageous. There were admirable qualities to his character. But he was charged with doing a job and he did it with great zeal [laughter].

JF Just before we go on to other topics, picking up something while we are talking about the Court government era, you apparently shared an interest with Richard Court.

CHANCE Yes, Richard and I sometimes on a quiet day, like on Friday if we were both in the house and there was nobody else around, we would sometimes have lunch together. The first time it happened he came in, saw me sitting on my own at the Labor table and said, "Can I join you?", and I said, "Of course you can, Premier." We do share an interest in American race cars. He worked for Ford for some time. He was in the United States at the time the Boss Mustang was a new car, and he was telling me about the opportunity he had to drive one across the state and what a great car it was. So, yes, we did share an interest in motor cars. I still see Richard from time to time because he now lives out in my part of the world; he lives out in the eastern suburbs. I run into him in places like Bunnings when we are in there buying hardware [laughs]. It's really quite strange.

JF Did you ever talk to him about things other than your common interest in motor cars?

CHANCE I can't say that I did, no. It was a very tense time, and that sort of fraternisation was looked down on.

JF Okay, well now let's look at your ministerial portfolios, which we come to pretty well next. I thought if we looked at them sort of folio by folio and asked you what were some of the memories you have of things that were issues. A couple that I picked up on, which may or may not be terribly important, what's the background to the Grain Licensing Authority? I think you were responsible for establishing that or at least appointing members to it.

CHANCE Yes, I was. This is set against the background of the competition policy, the National Competition Policy. One of the things that state governments were required to do to qualify for their NCP payments was to basically deregulate all of the statutory authorities in the state. That was something that I was absolutely opposed to. We didn't have that many within the state because most statutory marketing authorities have a commonwealth legislative base.

JF That's because they are relating to foreign trade, is it?

CHANCE Yes, basically because they're export industries, yes. But it's more a matter of convenience, because some export industries were state-controlled. One of those relates specifically to the Grains Licensing Authority, because, of the grains, wheat then was the only grain which was regulated by the commonwealth. That goes back to the post-war period, in fact even the pre-war period. And then during wartime there was a national authority established, and then in 1947 the Chifley government introduced the Australian Wheat Board because of demand from Australian wheat growers to continue those wartime arrangements, which was a monopoly market. And that worked extremely successfully for a long, long time. But in the other grains, and specifically barley, lupins and canola, which are three major grains in Western Australia, we had a monopoly exporting structure, and a monopoly domestic trade structure to some extent, which was held by state legislation and administered by the Grain Pool of Western Australia. It was the Grain Pool monopoly that the competition policy basically demanded that we deregulate. Graeme Samuels was then the head of the competition policy unit. It's interesting that at that stage there were no plans to deregulate the commonwealth-regulated grain of wheat, although that did happen later. But the imperatives did not seem to rest on the commonwealth at all; they seemed to rest only on the states.

Anyway, I was informed by the Treasurer that Samuels and the state treasury had had discussions and that they had resolved that those three grains would be deregulated. And I said, "Well, that's interesting because I wasn't even invited to that meeting, and it's not my intention to introduce legislation to do that, whatever agreement they might've have come to." That caused the Treasurer to cough and splutter a little bit, but he knew what I said was correct: if I did not introduce the legislation, then it was not going to happen. I said, "Look, I think you've made a mess of this. I'm going to go and speak to Samuels next week and we will sort this out." Then I later informed him that I had an appointment to Samuels, I think it was 6.00 am at Tullamarine airport. The Treasurer said, "Well, Treasury don't find that convenient." I said, "Treasury aren't invited. They mucked it up, and I'm going to fix what they did."

So we got on the midnight horror, flew to Tullamarine. Graeme Samuels was very generous in terms of meeting me at that ridiculous hour of the morning. I was booked on the, I think, 8.30 am flight back to Perth, because I had to be back in Perth the same day. So we conducted our meeting between six and eight o'clock in the airport,

and then I hopped on the plane and came straight back again with an agreement with Samuels. I thought Samuels was very good. The agreement was we would establish the Grain Licensing Authority, which would give effect to a continuation of the monopoly but with sufficient flexibility in it to satisfy him. In other words, there was a way for competition to occur through a licensing arrangement, whereby the name springs, and that licensing arrangement could be held by private sector exporters who could apply for the export licence. [It was] similar in effect to what later happened with wheat. In fact the wheat industry actually used our legislation as a model. We got our legislation up with bipartisan support. I was quite proud of that. It was very much my own work.

JF And it worked well after it was instituted then?

CHANCE It did, although it was repealed shortly after the election of the conservative government. Even though they had supported it, they felt that it had run its course. In other words, it had served as a transition arrangement, and that was always open in the interpretation that that could be what it was used for.

JF Yes. Did I see something somewhere, I think perhaps in the agricultural press, about it limiting the export of barley, which was not something that particular growers were interested in or were in favour of?

CHANCE There were growers who felt we would have been better served going straight to full deregulation. Even so, the organisation that represents those growers, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, still supported the legislation. They very much saw it as only a stepping stone, but nonetheless they supported the legislation very strongly.

JF Thinking of the agricultural lobby groups and so on, the PGA you say were behind it. What about the Farmers Federation?

CHANCE The Farmers Federation come from an entirely opposite point of view. Their preference is for monopoly exporters. However, they also supported the legislation, with some dissent, I have to say, but they supported the legislation because it was better than full deregulation. So the PGA supported it because it was a step to deregulation. The Farmers Federation supported it because it was delaying at least the evil day.

JF Right. Another thing related to cereal cropping is the problem of GM crops. There's some reference occasionally to that in some of the press articles relating to your time as minister. Just fill me in about the impact that the GM argument had on your portfolio.

CHANCE I was always presented as an anti-GM advocate, which isn't actually true. But I think the highest you can put it is I was a very wary sceptic. I didn't trust the companies who were bringing it in. I didn't trust their record. I didn't trust what they were saying to us. I didn't trust the fact that they would not allow their product to be tested independently; would not allow it, on penalty of jail. There were advocates of GM, principally people who were in a position to or actually were benefiting in terms of research funding emanating from the life science companies, particularly Monsanto but not exclusively so. They ran a very strong pro-GM campaign using figures which couldn't be verified, and you couldn't run the trials to give it any verification whatever. I did try to institute a trial, carried out by an independent body, specifically the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association, which is a farmer scientific body based in Esperance. In the end, Monsanto refused to supply seed to that trial. So there was no provision for independent testing, and I thought I had reasonable reason to be sceptical.

There were concerns also around health. Indeed, the main resistance from consumers, which is even stronger than resistance amongst farmers, is concern that that kind of artificial interference with the DNA code could have health issues, because cancer, for example, is a classic example of the DNA going wrong—that's all cancer is—the DNA just goes wrong; it starts doing things, it starts expressing proteins that it's not supposed to express, and those proteins become a cancerous growth. There's reason to be concerned. When I looked at what scientific work had been done, it was virtually non-existent; in terms of long-term trials on animals, virtually non-existent. Most of it had been short cut by the process of what the American food and drug authority had deemed to be substantial equivalent. So if it was roughly the same as the non-GM product, therefore it was the same.

JF Not exactly scientific.

CHANCE It meant that if the canola seed was black and round, then it was the same. The science was very shallow. There were significant examples of where

scientists had attempted to do something about it and had attempted to look at the trials objectively, and they had been pilloried by the rest of the scientific establishment, even to the point of when we did partially fund a trial to be carried out in Australia by a scientist who had laboratory rights at the University of Adelaide, that university and its vice-chancellor were leant on so heavily by the scientific establishment, they were forced to withdraw Dr Carman's laboratory rights. That was simply to carry out a trial, which was partly government funded. I think we put up about \$92 000 to do that. The trial itself was opposed bitterly, even to the point of trying to find out who the peer review panel was before the trial had even started so that they could apply the same pressure to that peer review panel. It shocked me that universities would actually be party to that sort of thing.

JF That they would bow to the pressures.

CHANCE Yes. And much of this pressure came out of other universities.

JF Did it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF You'd expect perhaps that the financial interests would be the ones pushing.

CHANCE No; these were scientists who had a financial interest, because that's where their research funding was coming from. It was so blatantly the case, but people just couldn't see it. But I was shocked, because I always regarded universities as places where diversity of opinion is celebrated. Well, diversity of opinion was brutally smothered in this instance, brutally. It left a really nasty taste in my mouth. At the same time, I still only regarded myself as a sceptic. I didn't have evidence that there was anything wrong with the stuff. In fact, I dearly wished it was really good, because ...

JF It solves some of the problems that farmers have, yes.

CHANCE Absolutely. The broader field of biotechnology, and GM is only a tiny splinter of a very big field, is fascinating, and that is where we're going to find the answers to feed a growing population. But it just seemed to me such a shame that

commercial interests had so corrupted the whole process that biotechnology now is viewed with great suspicion, when it shouldn't be, because the very issues about some of the cures to genetic diseases and to cell abnormalities like cancer may well lie in biotechnology. I'm not an anti-GM advocate, but I'm still a sceptic.

JF Because nobody's done the work.

CHANCE Yes, still nobody's done the work, yes.

JF There have been some limited trials allowed, I think, of growing it.

CHANCE It's now commercial, yes.

JF Is there any effective way of quarantining the GM product from the other?

CHANCE No. And that was one of the problems with GM in Western Australia, that the debate was all about canola. Certainly GM canola is widespread in the world, but it's certainly not the only GM plant. Had it been one of the other plants, I wouldn't have had a problem, because you can effectively quarantine it and you can carry out testing and you can do all of those things. If you decide you don't want it anymore, you can get rid of it.

JF Is that with wheat or other ... what other products?

CHANCE No, not so much wheat, because there is no market for GM wheat. For example, any of the legumes are very easily controlled; so lupins, peas, a whole range of legumes. Corn not so much so, although corn has been very successful in the United States, GM corn, but that's usually not fed to humans in the first instance. It's only in Africa that people actually eat corn. Lupins, in fact I encouraged some GM work on lupins because I thought we needed a breakthrough. Soya bean of course is the other huge one; also a legume. Unfortunately canola, whether GM or not, is a very promiscuous plant. It spreads its genes everywhere. Even the seed, it's small, it's round, it's highly mobile. It's said that if you are assessing a truck bin as to whether it can hold canola without spilling, you work on the principle that, if the tipper will hold water, it will hold canola.

JF Really?

CHANCE It flows that readily. It's also wind-borne. It has very promiscuous pollination habits, where you can pick up pollen up to five kilometres from the originating site, whereas wheat, for example, can barely pollinate across rows, so 150 millimetres. But yes, you measure pollination promiscuity in kilometres, not millimetres. So it was just the wrong plant to start with. There was absolutely no hope of introducing GM canola and expecting that you could ever get rid of it. Once you've got it, you've got it forever. I argued that were we to adopt GM canola, we might just as well do what the Americans did and go straight to non-discriminating receipt, so whether it's GM or not GM, you take it all on the assumption that it is GM. The Americans did try to disaggregate or separate the two lines but gave up after one year. The Canadians never tried; they knew it was an impossibility.

[track 46][file **KC-05AU11T46**]

JF Talking about broadacre farming or cereal farming, one of the things that's not directly related to what we've been talking about is the matter of the drought. You had a lot of drought years while you were in that seat and it caused you quite a lot of problems I suppose.

CHANCE A lot of pain, yes. All of our early years were drought years, and it was a drought which had begun in the eastern states and then visited us with a vengeance. We had farms that were successively in drought declared areas for some years, particularly in the north-eastern Wheatbelt and the northern Wheatbelt. Drought is essentially, and has been since 1992, a commonwealth issue. There was a COAG agreement in '92 and that basically gave disasters to the states and drought to the commonwealth. The assistance mechanisms that we had from the commonwealth at that time were very inflexible and required hard boundaries to be set on who could apply for assistance, and it took me years working with Warren Truss, the then commonwealth minister, to convince him that we needed a buffer zone around these hardline areas, because it was as absurd as driving out of Jerramungup, driving east from Jerramungup one day, actually with Warren Truss, I said, "Warren, see the country on the right? That's drought-declared. Now, we are on the road, see the paddocks on the left of the road, do they look any different to you?" He said, "No; they all look the same." And I said, "Well that's actually not a drought area." I was just trying to bring it home to him that you cannot draw hard boundaries. And he said, "Well, I mean we have funding limits and we can't make this available to

everyone." And I said, "No; that's not the point. The point is that whether you're in an area or not, you still have to be able to meet the qualifications. Just being in an area doesn't mean you get assistance; it means you get assistance if you qualify. And if you make the areas larger or put a buffer zone around the areas, they still have to qualify; you're not going to have any more people getting in than you do now." Eventually, he saw it my way, but it took a lot of persuasion. So, when we introduced the buffer zones, all of those issues or 80 per cent of the problem issues disappeared overnight.

JF And this relates to what they called 'extreme circumstances' funding?

CHANCE Exceptional.

JF 'Exceptional circumstances' funding.

CHANCE EC, exceptional circumstances, yes, which was actually quite generous funding. It covered interest up to a limit of \$100 000 in one year; that's a significant sum, so that's supporting a lot of borrowing. It was important because it gave bankers the certainty of knowing that their interest bill was going to be paid, or at least the vast majority of it was going to be paid, and that made them much more inclined to continue their own support for the farm business. So, I think the existence of EC meant that there are probably hundreds of farm families now still farming that would have gone under were it not for EC, even though, it has to be said, that in a typical drought in Western Australia, farmers will probably lose close to \$2 billion, and the highest amount of EC payment we ever made would have been less than \$100 million, so it's only a tiny fraction of the total losses. But, it was key money; it was key drought-support money in that it hit the interest. So, if you were in an EC area and you qualified on all of the criteria but you didn't have any debt, then you didn't get any money; and some people felt that was bad. And I used to say to them, "No; you should celebrate the fact that your neighbour got \$100 000 and you didn't; you didn't get any money because you didn't need it, because you're a good manager, or you were lucky." [laughs] But the drought was just as bad for him as it was for his neighbour. And some didn't see it that way, and I said, "This is not a reward, or it's not a compensation for having a drought; it's to actually keep your business going", and unless your business is threatened, why should the taxpayer kick in \$100 000? It's a lot of money, when you're asking (and I used this example a number of times) a hairdresser from Balga or a truckie from Kewdale to actually give

you their money. Now, you've really got to deserve that before I'm going to ask that hairdresser, who's only been \$35 000 a year, to actually give you some of her money; give, not lend [laughs]. Some understood what I was saying [chuckles].

JF Now the question of drought, of course, is always with us, but it has been more pronounced perhaps in recent years than ever before. Do you think we opened up agricultural land, particularly out around the Jerramungup area and east, too quickly and without sufficient research?

CHANCE We certainly opened it up without understanding fully how fragile it was, but that's not to say I think it was a mistake, and indeed I'm one of a tiny [chuckles] number of people who believe we can go still further; we can push those boundaries out further. But it would need to be done very, very carefully. But we now have farming technologies that enable sustainable long-term farming in very marginal country and we can actually bring back some of the land that was degraded. So, carefully carefully; I mean, I wouldn't find one per cent of people in the community that would support me in this, but it's a scientific fact, and given the pressure on our food supplies, I think it's morally defensible as well. But, you wouldn't do it on the same sort of broad scale sweep that we've done it in the past. You'd try to do in a chequerboard-type fashion so that you integrated farming into the environment much more sympathetically than we ever did in the past. I mean, what we did was clumsy and in many respects wrong, but it's not to say that the drive through the '60s and '70s to open all that land up was in itself wrong. Some of it was a bit misdirected, but you go back there now and have a look at the way it's being farmed now and it's very hard to find fault, very hard. The salinity probably is the only issue that still bugs me a bit, and when you denude a landscape of its natural cover and remove the plants that use the water from deep underground, you are going to have a salinity issue.

JF Salinity, of course, is one of the long-term problems. I remember even in the late '50s, early '60s, people doing salinity reclamation projects and so on in around the central Wheatbelt, where I was teaching. Salinity is a very big problem. But to some extent have we got potential to change crops and perhaps go into tree growing and things like that to counter it?

CHANCE Yes, there is that. And I'm also a bit of a fan of deep drainage. I think deep drainage can, very economically, ameliorate valley-floor salinity and sandplain-

seep salinity. The problem with the drainage, though, is the lack of a disposal point. I think deep drainage will be revolutionised as a technology if and when we're able to develop a low-cost desalination system where that hyper-saline water can be collected into a sump, rather than discharged into a waterway, and desalinated on site. So, that kind of implies some kind of solar desalination ...

JF Yes, and there's a salt industry to be made there, is there?

CHANCE Well, there's a salt industry, but you can reincorporate those salts even with your fertiliser and spread them back where the salt came from, back on the hills, because some of those salts are very valuable in terms of their contribution to soil fertility, but they've been leached out and then they've concentrated over about 100 years of farming, although down at Jerramungup it happened much faster than that because the water is more dynamic. But, put it back where it came from. I don't think there's really much commercial value in those salts, no. And they tend to contain in the Wheatbelt some interesting metals that are very toxic, cadmium for one; the Wheatbelt's full of cadmium.

JF What about trees? I think you had something to do with promoting, was it a growing a mallee for oil?

CHANCE Yes, we did all of that, and also the Infinitree program, while I was Forestry Minister, with the Forest Products Commission, was a share-farming arrangement, and that was mostly around the establishment of the maritime pine in what a forester would call a low-rainfall area and what a farmer would call a medium-rainfall area. But, principally the Midlands area was our target; so from, say, Muecha to Moora, in that band. We had a drought come along and kill a huge proportion of our trees. But I still think that attempt to integrate share farming-based forestry, so the state doesn't have to own the land, with forestry projects of about 25 to 35 years in duration, to integrate that into the Wheatbelt landscape, would be an enormous advantage. It would bring a lot more jobs into the area, some of them long-term jobs. It would give farmers an alternative income to cover the bad years, once you'd got up to a certain level, and I think it would be very good for the landscape, particularly in soaking up that excess water that when it reaches the valley floor becomes a problem. So, yes, I was enthusiastic about it; the current government doesn't share that enthusiasm, but I think it is agronomically and structurally sound. I think its economic soundness in the early years is a bit weak, but once established I think it

makes a much stronger economic case. But, you've got to be able to look a decade, even two decades into the future to see that structural soundness in its economics.

JF And probably because of the long-term nature of the return, it would require some sort of government initiative, would it?

CHANCE Yes, and that is what Infinitree wants. Infinitree was actually a very generous program in terms of attracting it. And the land we were looking for, particularly for the maritime pine, *Pinus pinaster*, will grow on very poor soil; it's quite the opposite of *Pinus radiata*, which requires good soil. *Pinaster* evolved on the fringe of the Mediterranean, on both continents, on both the African and the European continents. Our particular species comes from Portugal, but that came from testing of *pinaster* species which goes right back to the 1920s. So, out around where Ellenbrook is now were the earliest trials. A whole range of both *pinaster* and *Pinus brutia*, from Turkey, were tried there and *pinaster* came up really, really well. So, virtually all of those pines from Gnangara north are all *pinaster*, on that poor white sand. You wonder how it can grow at such a huge volume, whereas *radiata* tends to be further south in kinder climates and better soils. But *pinaster* is much stronger than *radiata*; it's an excellent timber. Slow growing, but even so, within 35 years at, say, Lancelin rainfall, if you managed it properly you would have a very significant resource, much more so than the one sheep an acre that it will carry now.

JF Shifting focus for a moment away from the Wheatbelt, were there significant developments in horticulture, in the orchards and the vines and that sort of thing, in your time as minister that you'd like to talk about?

CHANCE There were some very exciting things done. The horticulture area has always been ... edgy is my word for it. You're never quite sure which way it's going to go; and that's typical with horticulture. I mean, the worst thing that can happen to you is have a great year, because if you've got a great year, you flood the market and price falls in a hole. But, yes, we saw expansion of the horticultural industry, which is in effect two industries. You have the local industry, which is very price sensitive and very supply sensitive, but supplies the local fruit and vegetables that we eat here. Then there's an export industry, which tends to be the big-scale stuff. That's dominated by carrots in this state. We saw a huge growth in the carrot industry; big farmers using machinery, relatively low labour because it's a machine harvested crop; and, some very entrepreneurial people like Nick Tana got involved,

Frank Tedesco, and created a great industry which was pretty much all focused on East Asia, particularly through the Singapore Exchange. That almost fell in a hole when China came in and undercut us by 30-odd per cent. At that stage, we'd done a lot of market development work in the Middle East and I suggested to the carrot growers that that's where they needed to go, because we'd spent a lot of time and a lot of money developing those markets. They were a bit sceptical, I think, at first, but they went and had a look. Now 80 per cent of our exports are going into the Gulf region. So, yes, that was something I was really, really proud of, that we'd opened that market up and it was able to fill that gap.

JF Did you tell me that you had a family connection with people who were in the ruling families of some part of the Middle East? Did that help at all in your negotiations [chuckles]?

CHANCE No! But, yes, we did have a relationship going back a long way with the Al Maktoum family in Dubai. My father had a long history in that area.

[track 47][file **KC-05AU11T47**]

JF A few minutes now on livestock. I think there was a little bit to do with live sheep trade.

CHANCE The *Cormo Express*.

JF The *Cormo*, yes.

CHANCE At the time it was a very serious issue. It's also one of the funniest things that I ever got involved in. The *Cormo Express* was ... well, it arrived to discharge in the port of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea. There was an issue going on when the ship arrived, and the people associated with the cargo knew there was something wrong because when they arrived there wasn't the usual mass of people there to receive them. The vets, the trucks, the stockmen, they just weren't there. There was something happening. Clearly, there was an issue inside Saudi Arabia between the importer, Sheikh Hamad, and (I've got to be a little bit careful here) other companies linked to the Al Saud royal family. Sheikh Hamad is a Bedouin and the Al Sauds aren't, and there were issues there. But clearly there was some commercial issue going on between the two groups. It transpired that the

veterinarians who received the stock held the view that the sheep had a disease, specifically scabby mouth, and they said, “Look, take the ship back out to the Red Sea; come back in three days’ time.” Now, all the Saudis were trying to do, I think, was give a little bit of time to sort the issue out inside Saudi Arabia, and they didn’t want to admit that to anyone. Bear in mind that some of this is supposition and some of this is what I put together later, particularly after speaking to Sheikh Hamad in Kuwait. Then the Australian government made a fatal mistake. There was something different about this shipment also in that those sheep were actually owned by Sheikh Hamad. Normally, the change of ownership doesn’t occur until you unload at Jeddah. These sheep were owned by Sheikh Hamad before they left Perth. That’s quite unusual, and it changes the legal status of the cargo. The mistake the Australian government made was they decided to pick a fight with the Saudis and issued instructions to the shippers to take the cargo up to Aqaba and to unload there; so, basically to unload at one of Sheikh Hamad’s competitors, which is the Hijazi company, and that’s the only place you could unload. When the Saudi Arabians heard that this load was heading north, and presumably it could only go to Sokhna in Egypt or Aqaba in Jordan, or Alat, I suppose, in Israel, they got very hostile, very hurt about this, as you would be. I mean, it was stealing a cargo.

JF Yes, especially seeing the ownership was not Australian.

CHANCE Yes; the ownership was actually Saudi. And even though the Saudi royal family might have been in dispute with that owner, they weren’t going to see him ripped off. Anyway, that started all kinds of difficulty. So, the Saudis declared the cargo and the ship black, right; nobody is to touch it. And that created a huge problem for us, it created a huge problem for the Australian government. Such was their determination that they were not going to be beaten by the Australians on this, everywhere the Australian government went to try to find another port of disembarkation, the Saudis would follow them. And they’d reach agreement here, Uganda for example, or where were some others? It doesn’t matter. They’d actually reach agreement to unload the sheep there, and the Saudis would be there the next day and say, “Oh, no, no, no, let me tell you something” [laughs]. And they’d start talking about their foreign-aid budget. It was really quite serious. And the whole issue was being run by the Australian government, but we were being kept informed almost on an hourly basis from official and unofficial sources, because I had sources inside Meat and Livestock Australia who were keeping me updated on an hourly basis. So, I knew what was happening, and I thought, all right; we’ve got to find a solution to this.

I asked some friends, who to this day need to remain nameless, but a business contact of mine in Libya and another in Cairo. I asked them if they could use their diplomatic contacts to help us, and they said, "Okay, we'll have a look." And they came back with this idea of unloading in the port of Massawa in Eritrea, which ironically is right opposite Jeddah; it's just so close [laughs]. I thought, we can't tell the Australian government about this just yet because they'll want to go to Massawa and that will be the end of it; the Saudis will be in there like a shot. But the Libyans at that stage had a bit of a grudge on with the Saudis and they were also attempting to generate some goodwill amongst African nations, because this just preceded the African unity congress in Durban where Gaddafi was trying to introduce a particular point. So, we then started the story that we were going to re-import the sheep. And we ran it in the press and we actually called local authorities to arrange disposal sites and we were going to bring the sheep back and shoot them and dump them; bury them. So, all of the world's attention was on that. Meantime, we had to go and set up the yards in Eritrea, because there were no yards suitable to hold them, so we had a team of vets there running welders and doing the plumbing [laughter]. The Eritrean minister called into the yards, approved them, and basically ... well then I told the Australian government and I said, "Get that ship in there now; and this is the deal", and then they did their financial deal with the Eritreans, because they actually paid them to take them. And it was amazing. Everything went like clockwork, and the Saudis never found out.

JF Really?

CHANCE It was quite incredible.

JF So, the original owner of the stock, did he get compensated?

CHANCE He was paid, yes.

JF On that basis, I'm surprised you didn't end up going into federal Parliament after that and become Minister for Trade [laughs].

CHANCE No, because I would have had the same difficulties. I would have had DFAT officers and DAF officers being followed around by the Saudis [laughter]. And there's a whole lot that I haven't told and some things I can and some things I can't

tell, but particularly those two Arabs that helped me out, one man, one woman, their help was on the basis that nobody ever found out [laughs].

[track 48][file **KC-05AU11T48**]

JF Is there anything cloak and dagger in relation to other animals? I notice there was some complaint in the press somewhere about goats which you were involved with, I think. Was it goats escaping from somewhere, or wild goats? I can't remember what the reference was. If it were not important, we can forget it.

CHANCE No, I don't remember anything about goats, although I think they're a great opportunity. Horse flu was an issue.

JF Oh, yes.

CHANCE Yes, horse flu was an issue. I mean we certainly had our critics in the way we managed that. But in the end we operated strictly according to the National Veterinary Council, and there were horse trainers and all kinds of people who thought that they knew how to manage a disease better than the nation's top vets. Well, I had to disagree with them. In the end, the management systems that we used were successful and we didn't get a single case of horse flu. So, regardless of what the owners and trainers thought, or at least officially, we handled that well. But I used to get this press comment coming through from the owners and trainers. Then I'd get half a dozen individual owners and trainers call me, giving me an entirely opposite story, you know; so it's just individuals with ... they were losing money. They had horses tied up in the east that they couldn't get out; or they had all their horses here, and they didn't want their competitor to get his horses back. This is a scientific question, guys: what's safe; what isn't safe? There were cases when horses were already en route by road, and they called us from the South Australian–Western Australian border and said, "What do we do?", and they were instructed to continue their journey, because you couldn't leave a horse out there. They continued their journey. We then put them into quarantine on their own farm, with at least 200 metres separation. It's very similar to human flu in its contagion. If somebody's got the flu 200 metres away from you, they're never going to be a problem to you. So we made sure that their perimeter was sound. And it was much better to actually hold them in quarantine on their own farm than it was to have them in a single group. But a lot of people didn't understand that. They said, "Well, if they're coming into quarantine,

where's the quarantine facility?" Well, actually, we don't have one, [chuckles] and they don't need one. So, yes, that was an interesting one.

[track 49][file **KC-05AU11T49**]

JF The other area that we haven't touched at all is cattle. Were you involved with anything to do with cattle? There was a big expansion, wasn't there, in your period, of cattle in the north of the state?

CHANCE Yes, and the growth of the Indonesian cattle trade, which has been on the news lately. Firstly, my comment on the West Australian beef industry is that it is not a highly developed industry in the way that Queensland or the Territory industry is. It doesn't have much depth. It's actually two different industries; the southern industry is totally unrelated to the northern industry. The southern industry is really about, principally, local demand, with some export, but the export is the tail of the dog. The northern industry is all export. There is no domestic component effectively at all and it's all live because there's now no abattoir anywhere in northern Australia. Even Katherine has closed. So we are totally reliant on the live export industry. The live export industry, in turn, is dominated by Indonesia. There have been attempts to expand the footprint to Korea and to Malaysia and they've been partly successful but at this stage it is all about Indonesia. It's such a good trade. The difficulty is Indonesia has got a lot of abattoirs. Some of them ain't real good, as we found. Some of them are bloody disgusting. I was surprised that the manure hadn't hit the fan earlier because I'd been into some of those abattoirs and knew how bad they were. MLA [Meat and Livestock Australia] are charged with the task of making sure all of the abattoir standards are met, and clearly they couldn't do anything about it. I'm not saying they were slack; I'm expressing some sympathy for them. They just couldn't physically do anything about it. We had the same issues in Egypt, and in the end we shut Egypt down entirely. Now the only Australian cattle that go to Egypt live are those slaughtered at the Port Sokhna facility, which we helped to set up. That's a modern German abattoir. It is a good industry. I'm saddened that it's had this bad exposure and I hope the exposure that it's had has some good in the end because it is a natural industry.

Kimberley country, and to a lesser extent, the Territory, is country where you can get calves on the ground probably cheaper than you can anywhere else in the world, even Brazil. It's very, very low cost breeding country, but you cannot finish cattle

there. So the only other way of actually getting the cattle to a stage where you can slaughter them is wean them early, probably bring them down a bit further south into, say, the Pilbara if the season's okay, because you've got good soil and plenty of minerals there. The Kimberley's just leached out. It grows a lot of feed but it's very, very poor quality, whereas the Pilbara grows very little feed but it's very good quality. So you can actually grow out muscle and bone there and then bring them in their third stage down to, say, Geraldton and grain-finish them, and then you could slaughter them at a local abattoir. I heard people like Nick Xenophon say, "All you need to do is put abattoirs in the north." Well, there's no cattle for them to slaughter. There's nothing marketable in the north. [The] Territory's a little bit different, and that's certainly the case with the Kimberley. There is no future for those guys without the live cattle trade. So all we can do is try to improve standards in Indonesia.

JF And now that the federal government's sort of got involved in that, is there some prospect of that actually happening, that improvements will flow?

CHANCE Yes, absolutely, because that's what happened in Egypt. So if we can do it in Egypt, we can do it here. But it's not something that's going to happen overnight. It's going to take a long time.

[track 50][file **KC-05AU11T50**]

JF We haven't spoken about dairy but the big problem about the dairy industry rationalisation project ...

CHANCE The deregulation.

JF The deregulation. That was something that caused you some problems, I think.

CHANCE That was my second most disturbing piece of legislation, the repeal bill. It was clear from the start that the deregulation of the dairy industry was going to cost a lot of people their future. The dairy industry in Western Australia is tiny by Australian standards. It's only four per cent of the total dairy production. It was only concerned with supplying the local fresh milk market. It had no real interest in manufacturing. Literally just the surplus was going into manufacturing. Brownes were making a bit of cheese and some desserts, which were quite profitable for them, the

yoghurts and ice-cream, whatever. But essentially we were a white milk, liquid milk, industry, and the difference in price between liquid milk and industrial milk, manufacturing milk, is about 300 per cent favouring liquid milk. So the more manufacturing milk you've got, the more you dilute the dollars for the total price per litre. That was the situation in Victoria, in particular, where about 80 per cent of their production was going into manufacturing. Here we were probably less than 20 per cent. It was just a nice balance. Then they decided that they were going to go to national deregulation and it was very clear to me and to others what was going to happen as a result. So I fought it from the beginning. In the end, the weight of the other 96 per cent of the industry made its presence felt, but in the end the Victorian Premier leant heavily on our Premier. That was Bracks. I have no time for Bracks to this day because I think he lied to our Premier. The Premier instructed me in the end that I was to vote for the legislation, which was one of the worst days of my life. Everything we thought would happen did happen. Even the other means of restructuring the industry that were put in place to try to give farmers some kind of ownership of the manufacturing sector, even those fell over; that was Challenge Dairy. It was successful for a while but in the end it was trying to do too much with too little, and competing against some big players like Peters, Brownes and Frontera. So, yes, really, really sad. Totally unnecessary. I mean, we were four per cent of the nation's industry. They could have just left us alone. But in the end, can't cry over spilt milk.

[track 51][file **KC-05AU11T51**]

JF Just finally, we haven't mentioned in any way your control of the fishing industry. Are there some issues there that should be canvassed?

CHANCE Well, I love the fishing industry. It was bloody hard work, though. And I remember Monty House saying to me when I took over this role, he said, "Have you got Fisheries as well?", and I said "Yes", which is exactly what *he* had, because he had that Primary Industry portfolio, and he said, "It's 20 per cent of your responsibility and it'll take 80 per cent of your time", and that's exactly what happened.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes, exactly, because it's a highly regulated industry, far too highly regulated in my view, but it needs to be regulated because you're dealing with the

private use of a public resource, and it's a very sensitive public resource, because you've got competing users, and in greater number, with the recreational fishers, so there's all of these tensions between the pros and the recs. But it's a resource owned by the public which is used for private profit by individual fishermen. So, regulation has to be pretty strict. But it went over the top. To license a boat a foot longer than the one they're using actually required the minister's personal intervention. Just absurd. Anyway. But it was fascinating, and I really enjoyed the process, particularly of managing new fisheries. I had a lot to do with the Kimberley wetline and trap fishery, which I thought was fascinating. We are the only state who really have the majority control of all of their fisheries. In other states, it tends to be done by the commonwealth through the swap-overs. But in Western Australia, with the exception of the tuna industry, all of the commonwealth powers in the joint-managed fisheries have been swapped over, but back to the state rather than the commonwealth; whereas in the other states it's the other way round. The tuna industry has to be commonwealth controlled because you've got a resource that swims right around the country, so you have to have a single manager; and we didn't want it anyway. Yes, fascinating. The fights we had with the conservationists and the Department of Environment about their grandiose ambitions for marine parks were interesting and almost as vicious as the fights we had in Forestry over the old-growth forest. But that's the nature of government. I mean, government is there to represent differing and, sometimes, conflicting points of view. But that comes down to sometimes personal conflict with one of your best friends, which is difficult. Judy Edwards and I had some terrible blues and yet we were great mates, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW NINE

INTERVIEW TEN

[track 52][file **KC-12AU11T52**]

JF This is session number 10 in the series of interviews with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It is being recorded on 12 August 2011 at Parliament House with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 53][file **KC-12AU11T53**]

Kim, last time we were talking about your various ministries. Just to link to that, we didn't really talk at any length about the forestry portfolio.

CHANCE No.

JF I just wondered whether there are some highlights of that that you would like to bring forward. I wondered, for example, by the time you were minister whether logging in old-growth forests was an issue that you had to deal with in any sense. I think probably it was earlier.

CHANCE No, no, no, that's absolutely the issue. Indeed, it could be argued that the election of the Gallop government in 2001 was very largely on the back of the Gallop government's policy to protect old-growth forests. The protecting old-growth forests policy was a key initiative and was implemented immediately on our election. We then had to work out how to make all of the arrangements for the restructuring of the industry. On the day of the election (indeed, even before the ministers had been sworn in) the Forest Products Commission suspended all logging in old-growth forests immediately, which was running rather ahead of our policy, I guess. We had a huge job then to implement the policy, to try to structure the future of the industry in such a way that we did have an ongoing native forest industry within the very much smaller scope of operation that the protecting old-growth forests policy permitted. It roughly cut the total size of the industry to between one-third and one half of its earlier size. We paid out in the end compensation somewhere between \$150 million and \$160 million to restructure the industry. I use the word "compensation", which is not strictly correct. They were restructuring payments and in some instances actually resulted in the development of new products from the smaller boll logs. That was a difficult time, extremely difficult. There was a lot of tension between ministers in that

but we did work together and we did bring down a policy that I think worked as well as it could have. Whether in the cold light of day it was the right thing to do or not didn't really matter that much. But it is very clear that we were over-exploiting the native forest.

Where I have a difference from the conservationists is that I think what we should have done is rather than set aside vast areas of forest to be completely untouched, and I'm not talking here about conservation reserves because I think they have their own place, but we set aside huge areas of the forest to be completely untouched which were not taken into reserves. I think we would have been much better off taking a lighter footprint on the forest rather than stopping logging altogether in some sections and logging to maximum capacity in others. I don't think the forest benefits from either of those approaches. I think a better approach is to be more selective in our logging and to try to leave the forest when we've finished with it. I'm applying this argument only to jarrah at this stage because karri is quite a different operation. In the jarrah and marri logging, I think the forests would have been better had we just taken a lighter approach. Karri is different because karri requires clear-felling and gap-filling and burning, so it's quite a destructive process, but karri regrows like weeds; it's just amazing how fast it grows. Indeed, if you've ever visited the 100-year forest near Pemberton, that huge forest once grew a crop of wheat. It's really hard to imagine when you see the size of the trees. It's a very rapid grower. It grows in much better soil than jarrah does. It prefers those red loamy soils that are ideal agricultural soils, in fact, and its rate of growth is enormous.

JF You would have run foul of some of your union buddies, I think, in taking that action about the forests.

CHANCE The AWU in particular and, to a lesser extent, CFMEU, although on a national level the CFMEU were more active because they had different coverage. Here it was largely the AWU. I worked very closely with Tim Daly from the AWU. Indeed, he was part of the advisory committee that I established, which was made up almost completely of industry personnel. I was impressed with the way the employers and the employees' representatives worked in that. Tim and I formed a very close relationship.

JF And they were happy in the end, as happy as they could be expected to be, I suppose?

CHANCE Had the forest management plan, which took a long time to put together, finished up with a global number of about 180 000 to 200 000 tonnes of allowable harvest and had it been spread over a slightly bigger area, we could have made it work a lot better but commitments had been given which prevented that. Much of what we did was actually out of our control because we said, "No, the Conservation Commission is going to be the arbiter on this." Well, when you allow somebody else to be the arbiter and you're trying to implement your policy, it just doesn't make sense. You have to determine what the parameters are and then say to the Conservation Commission, "Now, you make this work", not the other way around.

JF Work within the parameters.

CHANCE Yes, and that was a mistake that I will never make again. [laughs]

JF Fine. We can leave forestry now probably and leave the separate ministries now, unless there was anything else you wanted to bring forward that I didn't talk about last time.

CHANCE I don't think we spent a lot of time on fisheries.

JF No, we didn't actually. Are there some specific issues that you'd like to bring forward?

CHANCE I really enjoyed fisheries. We made the point in our earlier interviews that it is a highly regulated, indeed, probably over-regulated, industry, but managing the private use of a public resource is always interesting. What I really enjoyed was actually establishing new fisheries where we could see that there was an exploitable resource and working through with the industry and with the scientists to try to determine a way that we could make maximum economic use of the resource while at the same time maintaining the ecological viability of the biomass. That was fascinating. There's some wonderful science going on there.

JF Whereabouts were these particular ones you're thinking of?

CHANCE One that I was heavily involved with was the Kimberley trap fishery. It's the wet-fish operation that runs north of the Pilbara trawl fishery. I suppose you

could say it starts somewhere along Eighty Mile Beach and extends to the very northern extremity of the state and out all the way past that area called the deep slope, which runs into the trench eventually. That's only in lines on the map. Essentially, it was centred around the Lacepede Islands. It was a red emperor job-fish fishery. I was fascinated by the potential of that fishery. I still think it's got far more potential than is currently exploited. Trap fishing, if it's done correctly, is a very gentle way of fishing. The Pilbara fishery is a trawl fishery and because it's trawl, it's commonwealth administered. I think it is vastly over-exploiting that resource there. It's mostly a snapper fishery.

JF Trawl takes everything in its path, doesn't it?

CHANCE It takes the lot, yes, and it takes the lot regardless of size, whereas you can have some control over size in a trap fishery. It's a much gentler way of fishing. It doesn't do any bottom damage and can be quite easily regulated, but the best thing about the trap fishery is that it takes all varieties, whereas with the trawl fishery, you can target varieties. If you can target varieties, you are changing the basic ecology of the ocean because you are favouring one species over another. With a trap fishery, you take what you get and you get that mix of fish. You can control size because you have outlets to let the smaller fish get away and people then are faced with the job of, "Well, how do we sell those lower value species", but they've got them, they have to take them.

JF Were the markets for that mainly local?

CHANCE Yes. We're not big exporters in the fisheries business. The only really big export industry, setting aside the tuna industry, which is really based in South Australia, not here, is the rock lobster and the prawn fisheries. Generally speaking, our finfish fisheries are very high-value fisheries. We are actually net importers of finfish because all of the low-value type fish are basically imported. But when you eat snapper and dhufish and red emperor and, if you're lucky, coral cod and bluebone groper, you know you're getting local fish and it will be West Australian, not just Australian. But they're rather too expensive to have a place in the overseas market.

JF Yes, they're a bit expensive here for a lot of pockets too.

CHANCE Indeed they are.

JF I think we might move on then now to another aspect altogether. You worked under four different Presidents of the upper house in the course of your time there: Griffiths, Cash, Cowdell and, I think, Nick Griffiths.

CHANCE Yes.

JF I wondered if you would spend a few minutes talking about the role of the President and perhaps highlighting the strengths or weaknesses of those fellows whom you worked with.

CHANCE I could write a book about those four. [laughs]

JF Let's make it something about five minutes, 10 minutes.

CHANCE Starting with President Griffiths . . .

[track 54][file **KC-12AU11T54**]

. . . I mean, he was the first President and I learnt an enormous amount from him. He was very highly regarded. He'd been the President for many, many years, and will go down in history as one of our great presiding officers. [He was] very competent, very fair, because he was the President that handled that very very tough debate on industrial relations and I never ever felt, even though he was a staunch member of the Liberal Party, as though he played anything but a straight bat with us on that matter. He clearly didn't like what we were doing, but one of his favourite sayings was, "Members may not like what the honourable member is saying but they do have to listen to him [laughter]". And he lived by the same creed. He was an excellent President.

George Cash was very different. George is a businessman and George is a negotiator, and he's a very good negotiator. And the deals that you did with George were deals that you could rely on. And I always felt that while President Griffiths was what you saw in the Chair and he made his decisions in the Parliament for everyone to see, George preferred to sit down and talk to you about what it was you were trying to achieve and how you might do that, and what it was that the government was trying to achieve and how they might achieve their ends. And, as a result, I think

he ran a slightly smoother Parliament because he was a negotiator. That was simply George's style, but also absolutely fair. Indeed, I sometimes thought he rather favoured the opposition over the government [laughter]; and a delight to work with and he was, in his later role as Chairman of Committees, he was always good to work with. You could trust what he said and a deal was a deal with George; he would always stick by it.

John Cowdell, again, brought a very different style. He was a hybrid of Griffiths and Cash, to some extent, closer to Griffiths probably than Cash; not inclined to do deals behind the chair. He could be very short with you if he lost his patience. And even though he was one of ours, I sometimes thought that the Liberals got a better deal out of Cowdell than we did. But he insisted on very, very high standards, so to that extent he was closer to Griffiths than Cash, who preferred to let the game roll on. He wasn't an umpire that blew the whistle a lot.

And then Nick Griffiths. Nick and our group had developed a few tensions over a number of unrelated issues. He was a very capable President and I think some of his decisions were interesting and some of those decisions I actually appealed against, unsuccessfully; particularly in terms of the issues I had with Nick were around the clear wording which exists around our standing orders and the way in which he interpreted those, which sometimes seemed to me contrary to the black-letter law of the standing orders. When I challenged him on these matters, he would refer to precedent, and that's entirely proper because the custom and practice of the house is as important as the black-letter law. But I don't think the two should be in conflict; I think one should be a finessing of the other but not a turning over. So, Nick and I had a few issues about that. He was a competent Presiding Officer, but in my view not one of the great Presiding Officers.

JF Thank you for that. I think the book will be very interesting when it comes out [laughter]. Turning attention then away from Presidents, you worked with two particular Premiers that I'd like you to speak about. Firstly, Geoff Gallop, to whom you attributed the statement, "He was a beacon for WA", in your valedictory address. So, I'd like you to talk about Geoff and to elucidate your comment on him in the address and talk about how it was working with him.

CHANCE Geoff was really interesting to work with. He was clearly a very intelligent guy. He was much, much greener than I would normally appreciate,

because I come from the brown side of Labor politics. As a result of that, we had a few tensions, particularly over things like marine parks and the protecting old-growth-forest policy where I had a job to do, and he always recognised that; I mean there was nothing personal in it. He said, "Well, you know, that's the side of the government that you represent. I don't belong to that, I'm sorry." [laughs] But he was always a bloke that I could sit down and chat with about things that were bothering me or where I thought we could be doing things better. He was always very open to that. Capturing his attention was sometimes challenging, and I actually wonder if that wasn't part of his later illness; whether his attention span was shorter than one would expect from somebody of his undoubted ability. But that aside, I found him a relaxing person to deal with. I always felt at ease with him and always felt as though I was getting at least as good a run as anybody else was. We had differences, and that's inevitable between a minister and a Premier, particularly over those things that I mentioned but also over the dairy deregulation issue where I thought he took a position that actually favoured Steve Bracks' point of view rather than mine, and I wondered why I couldn't have had a say in that and why I couldn't have spoken to Bracks. But that aside, Geoff and I remain good friends. We always were. Geoff made the comment after he left the role of Premier that he sat through ... what was he Premier for, seven years? At least six anyway. Six to six and a half years. He said he sat there in cabinet with the economic dry, anti-regulation Treasurer Eric Ripper on his right hand and the agro-socialist Minister for Agriculture on his left hand, and somehow he had to steer a course through the middle [laughter]. And that was pretty much the case. Yes, although, strangely, Eric and I never had any serious differences. We got on very well. So, yes, he was a beacon in that I thought Geoff offered something to WA that WA people were looking for, and it was an open, approachable style; a style which actually looked at what people felt was important to them. And how he interpreted that and how the rest of the party interpreted that and how I interpreted that is not important in the end. What's important is I think Geoff offered Western Australian people a 'light on the hill', if that's not being too presumptuous.

JF Some people have suggested that he was a bit (controlled is too strong a word) but perhaps under the influence very much of one or two strong people in the background, and I think the name "McGinty" has been mentioned in this context. To what extent was Geoff his own man and able to maintain that within the job of Premier?

CHANCE Well, firstly, any cabinet that has Jim McGinty in it is going to be very heavily influenced by Jim McGinty, regardless of who the Premier is. I mean, there are only two ways to deal with Jim: you either lock him out or you let him play his game. And that's what Geoff was doing, and it would have been pointless to lock out such a tremendous contributor as McGinty. But if you let McGinty in, McGinty will try to run the show, but that's just his way of doing things. [laughter] Both Geoff and Alan Carpenter shared an unusual issue, which leaves both of them open to that comment. Neither of them came from or was directly supported by one of the key factions. I mean, Geoff's history was in the right, but the right had morphed and changed and split and rebuilt to the extent that it was basically unrecognisable as the right that he and, say, Kim Beazley had come from. And Geoff and Kim in many ways [are] very similar politically, although Kim had a few areas in foreign affairs and defence that were a bit different from Geoff.

JF Are you talking about Kim the elder or Kim the younger?

CHANCE Kim the younger, yes, but probably you could include Kim the elder in that too, although that was more ... yes, but certainly Kim the younger. Because they didn't have a factional base of any scale, they had to be more inclusive in the way they took their advice. Both of those Premiers, and Carpenter in particular, but it applied to Geoff ... I mean, Geoff was never seriously challenged by anyone, so the issue of factional support didn't arise much. But the left were then the dominant faction and the left strongly supported them. Now, this is where McGinty comes in as a major left player. People have made the assumption, and I think the incorrect assumption, that because both of those Premiers relied so heavily on the left, even though neither was from the left, that the left in general, and McGinty in particular, had an unbalanced influence. It's actually not correct. Had McGinty not been a member of the left, he still would have had the same influence simply because that's who he is. To the extent that the balance of the left influenced the Premiers, that was support, yes, but it was support that didn't come with a price tag. It was support that was given because we thought they were the best available and we never, as far as I'm aware, put it to Geoff that he had to see things our way otherwise our support would be removed. So, no, I think the assumption that people arrived at is a logical assumption, but I don't think it's correct.

JF Right. You were thrown into some degree of confusion, of course, by Geoff's fairly sudden announcement of illness and Alan was asked to take over. Would you like to just sketch the scene when that happened?

CHANCE I was away out of Australia at the time. I was actually in Bangladesh when the announcement came through and on my way to Qatar. Clearly, it was a fairly tumultuous time, and I can only report what I understood to be the case, but there seemed to be three players in the mix: Michelle Roberts, Jim McGinty and Alan Carpenter. Firstly, we were stunned by Geoff's revelations. We really (not even those of us that were closest to Geoff like Eric Ripper, who worked with him on a daily basis) had no inkling that he was as sick as he was because he hadn't declined quickly. I mean, what had happened was that he'd gone to visit his mate Tony Blair in England, he had a nice holiday and he realised at some stage during that event, or perhaps even as late as on the way back, that he couldn't go back to the job he was doing. So, it was the break that actually did it. He saw things more clearly. He realised that he was ill and he made the snap decision. As I said, it stunned all of us because we just didn't know. But, anyway, then there was the turmoil about the leadership. That turmoil resolved itself pretty quickly. People made it quite clear that Michelle Roberts was not their choice, and that Jim had been leader and that he was a very hard leader to sell, and Jim understood that. That left Carpenter as the only one standing unless anybody else put their heads up, and a lot of support then came in behind Carpenter because we saw him as perhaps a longish shot but a real opportunity to be a great Premier.

[track 55][file **KC-12AU11T55**]

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes, then, talking about Alan's style and success, or otherwise, and so on?

CHANCE I was one of Alan's closest supporters. I just loved working with him; he was a delight to work with. Sometimes he seemed a little uncertain of himself, which I suppose is expected when you get catapulted from being an ABC journalist to the Premier of the state in a very short period of time. His great weakness was that he just didn't understand the Labor Party. He understood in very broad terms what a social democratic party was about, and he had his own views about that and they were very strong views that he articulated very clearly, and they were views that I strongly supported. It went back to his own youth and how he had come from a

working-class family which could not have afforded the education that ultimately gave him his opportunity. It was Whitlam government education initiatives which allowed him to gain that education as a working-class boy. But the Labor Party is a complicated machine. It has a lot of different players in it, some of whom (people are people and they're complicated animals) can be difficult to deal with. I was really proud, and indeed in my later discussions with Alan I was really pleased that he always felt that the left, and Jock Ferguson in particular, were just there all the time, always supportive. That's what I thought we were doing, and that's why I said what I said earlier. We never asked for anything. We gave our support because he was the one that we thought was best equipped to do the job.

Alan for some reason was torn apart by the press. I couldn't understand why they did that to one of their own. I could never understand it; just appalling stuff. I saw interviews (standing alongside Alan doing interviews) when these 17 and 18-year-old kids were basically calling the Premier a liar, with no evidence of that. I just thought that was terrible. That was one of the reasons why I decided this was no longer for me.

JF You referred to him in your valedictory speech and said he wanted to return to the people what they had given to him. Did he say such things as that from time to time?

CHANCE Yes. When he defined his aims and ambitions as Premier, he would go back to that fact that as a working-class boy from a working-class suburb in Albany, Australian society had given him the chance for an education, a chance for a better future. That's what he wanted for everyone. He didn't just mean working-class families (he meant them, of course) but Aboriginals, the disadvantaged, the homeless, to give them an opportunity. Not a handout, but a hand up, if you like. That's how he defined his role. That's the classical role for a social democratic party, and that's what he wanted to deliver.

[track 56]

JF Now, you mentioned a few moments ago that you were overseas when the change of Premiers took place. I thought we'd spend a few minutes talking about what travel you undertook as a politician. Perhaps you'd like to just tell the story simply.

CHANCE It was almost entirely within the Islamic world, the Middle East, Turkey and Bangladesh. I made a conscious decision to do that, even though most of our trade is with North Asia and China in particular. I didn't think I could make any difference at all in North Asia. The market is simply too big, and one little provincial minister isn't going to have any impact, whereas I felt we *could* have an impact in the Middle East. I enjoyed working there. I like the people, and I remain very close to Arabs and to the Islamic world. Although I'm not a Muslim, I can see their point sometimes [laughter]. Some of the most spiritual places I've ever been to are Islamic rather than Christian. I actually think Christianity has lost a lot in the translation, and there's been many, many translations. When I visited the Grand Mosque in Muscat, Oman, it's actually the most spiritual experience I've ever had. It remains with me as if it happened yesterday. [I was] not so impressed by the Sheikh Zayed mosque in Abu Dhabi, which is bigger, but I just find it distracting. I think a place of worship needs to be modest and it needs to be quiet. No matter how grand it is, it can still be modest. I think the Grand Mosque in Muscat is that.

We have actually covered some of this in an earlier interview, but I really enjoyed the Middle East. I've visited now every country in the Middle East except Iraq, I think ... Tunisia I've not been to, Morocco I've not been to; I'm going there later this month, but every other, and a few around it, as I said, including countries like Turkey, which, technically, I suppose, is West Asia, not the Arab world. A beautiful place; I've been back there as a tourist as well.

JF Tell me, where did the initiative or the impulse come from or the interest in that part of the world? You've mentioned your father was negotiating in the Middle East. Does it go back to that?

CHANCE In part, but no; primarily, the decision that we made (that is, the department and myself, together) to concentrate on the Middle East was based on the fact that we already had a significant trade volume in that area in agricultural commodities and the belief, which turned out to be correct, that there was significant potential to increase that. We did. In that seven-year period, we increased our trade in agricultural goods from half a billion dollars a year to \$1.5 billion a year, so it was a very significant difference that we made. I wanted to be able to see and measure what we were doing. It's a major live animal export destination for us. It's a major grain export destination. We aimed to make the agricultural export side into the

Middle East a much more mature trade, that it was not simply a live sheep and wheat market. That is where I think we were successful. We've got a lot now of horticultural produce into the Middle East.

JF Yes, you mentioned carrots last time.

CHANCE Yes. Certainly it's a startling example, but that was just one example of what we were able to do. We also looked at expanding our trade in areas other than simply commodity trade. In that, we had hoped to work (and we did ultimately do so) with other Australian and Western Australian service exports, particularly health and education. I think there's still a lot of room for growth in those two areas. Currently, the Victorians are beating us hands down in the education side of it, but they have a very mature export education industry. Indeed, I accompanied the Victorian Minister for Education in Abu Dhabi. She was due to be in Kuwait, but it was at the time that Sheikh Jaber died (the ruler). She had to cancel her whole itinerary, so we coupled up our itinerary with hers, and we had a wonderful time [chuckles].

JF Talking in general terms about travel by politicians, it's sometimes a controversial area. How do you ensure that the taxpayer gets the best value out of such things?

CHANCE Measure your performance. You could even go so far as to writing key performance indicators. In fact, that's probably a good idea, because then you've got standards to measure your performance against.

JF Did you do that?

CHANCE No, but I could do it in hindsight [laughter]. But we had in mind ... again, I say "we", because very much the department was a part of this ... the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food has an international development division which funds itself and actually returns money back to the department. We thought through each step of what we were doing very carefully, so we actually could've written KPIs, and we also monitored everything that came out of that. Some of what we did resulted in direct contracting between ourselves for our services in things like soil science and rangeland management, particularly in Abu Dhabi and Libya we did a lot of work.

The department has been providing direct services to Libya since the early 1970s; it goes back a long, long way. Obviously we know the country very well, and we were deeply distressed with what happened there. I don't think the Libyans are going to see any benefit. I wasn't an enemy of the Gaddafi regime. He may have been crazy, but I think people in Libya were as free and as happy as any in the Arab world, but I formed that view in western Libya. I have to say that when I did visit eastern Libya not long before the Arab Spring, it was clear that there were some unhappy people out there. I think east Libyans are a bit like Western Australians; they feel remote from the centre of power.

JF Yes.

[track 57][file **KC-12AU11T57**]

Taking a totally different line for a moment, minor parties became pretty significant in the running of the Legislative Council. I just wondered if you might assess the influence that they had, in your experience. The Nationals were always a small group, but often allied to the bigger one. The Greens, of course, became very important at various stages, and even One Nation, I suppose, had one little burst of influence. I wonder if you could talk for a few minutes about what you've seen minor parties able to do, or how they worked in the upper house.

CHANCE The existence of minor parties in Parliament is the public's will, and that is the nature of democracy. Do they ever deliver what the public hopes they will deliver? Very rarely, in my view; and you've got to deal with them one by one. Start with One Nation, which was the flash in the pan. One Nation was a populist party. I was going to use the term "racist" because they did have racist elements, but it was a party based on populism. I actually learnt a lot from the phenomena of One Nation; its growth and then its spectacular burnout and its complete failure to deliver anything of any value. It was a complete waste of time. But, as an academic exercise, I found it instructive, and I think all of us that had the experience with One Nation are now looking with some cynicism at the formation of the Tea Party and its influence in the United States, and on the Republicans in particular. And I am just fascinated to see Sarah Palin driving around in a bus with "one nation" written on it. It actually seems to be the same print style. As an exercise I accessed a couple of Neo-Fascist websites out of the United States, and I was fascinated that they had a special section dealing

with One Nation in Australia. I don't know whether One Nation saw themselves as Neo-Fascists, but certainly the Neo-Fascists saw them as Neo-Fascist. Whether that was simply their racial thing, I don't know, but it was quite sickening to read it. One website in particular, "Stormfront", which is a big Neo-Fascist–Neo-Nazi website coming out of the southern states of the US spoke of the formation of One Nation in Australia in glowing terms; it was sickening. I can't see that the Tea Party in the US is going to do anything of any value; and, indeed, it is probably going to destroy the Republicans because it has forced the Republicans into a position that they are either going to support this ultraconservative right, or hold to their own values, which are going to make them look like Democrats. Because, historically, there's not a huge difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. While, if I was an American, I would undoubtedly be a registered Democrat, the Democrats have got a lot to be ashamed of as well, particularly in the southern states, where they are even worse than the Republicans. It's not simple politics, the US. So that's my view on One Nation in Australia. I learnt a lot. I think other Australians also learnt a lot from the experience. It was a painful experience. I think it was an expensive experience in terms of our credibility in our region, in particular; and in particular, in Malaysia. But any other value than the education side? None.

The Greens: I am in two minds about the Greens. The Greens, basically, picked up segments of Labor's left wing (basically the socialist left) and segments of Labor's environmental component, although they didn't take it all; that's still there. There's still a very strong environmental ethos in the Labor left, in particular. Have they made a contribution? Yes, I think so, because they so often hold the balance of power that they are able to shift decisions with leverage that you would not normally have in a big party. So, to that extent, yes, they make a difference and they can focus public attention more on issues. Do they make a contribution to the ALP? Undoubtedly, yes, because while they have taken some of our voters, they've also bought in, particularly in the western suburbs, some voters that would not normally vote Labor. So we have doctors' wives, for example, the classic Green, effectively delivering a vote for Labor in Dalkeith. To that extent, I'm appreciative, and that's of course why the Liberals hate them so much [laughter]. In the long run, do they make a difference? Yes, I think you've got to say now that the Greens do make a difference; they do have leverage. The Democrats are long gone and don't require any further comment. I'm not too sure what they were about. I think it was a personality cult around Don Chipp. Don was a great guy. I had huge respect for him and what he was trying to do. I just don't think he was followed by people who even understood

what he was trying to do. But Don was the Liberal's left, and he was trying to promote a more human conservative political structure. If the Libs learnt anything from that, they disproved that by electing Abbott, instead of, say, Joe Hockey or Malcolm Turnbull who are in that sort of mould. I think they are people who could take the Liberal Party somewhere.

So the minors, certainly from a house manager's point of view, are a pain in the backside, but that's their job, to be a pain [chuckles]. I think they rarely deliver what their voters think they can, and this applies even more so to the Independents, who have no hope at all. I'm a major party person. I like the idea of major parties. I think what's not understood by voters generally is that major parties have within them all of the political points of view which are expressed by the minors, but they're not allowed to come out and give that point of view, unless they can convince the majority that that is their point of view. The minor parties have the advantage, to the extent that they can, but then they don't have the advantage of the major parties' broader policy. I don't think it makes a lot of difference.

JF The Nationals? You haven't picked them up particularly as a minor party.

CHANCE We've been through such a long period in our lifetimes of formal coalition that the idea of a coalition not in coalition is a bit strange. But I don't see that practically it made any difference. They perform in exactly the same way, not in coalition as they do in coalition. Find one serious debate in which the Liberals and the Nationals have voted differently. It's not there. I used to have these discussions ... a number of the Nationals are close friends of mine; Murray Criddle is one of those. Murray was the sole National for a long time in the Legislative Council. I used to have these discussions with Murray, who always has been and remains a very honest, straight-talking guy, and I'd approach Murray about supporting us in a particular vote. And he said, "Mate, you know I can't do that. You know what the rules are. Why are you bothering?" That's just his style. He would always say it like it is; and that pretty much sums it up, it's "Mate, you know I can't do that. I belong to the other side." Having said that, when Alan Carpenter was having those discussions with the Nats about forming a Labor-National coalition, I really believe that the people he was speaking to, Wendy Duncan and Brendon Grylls, honestly believed that they could deliver a Labor-National coalition. I don't think that they were in any sense being disingenuous. I think people like Terry Redman and Tuck Waldron and

others could not have had those talks because they were so committed to the conservative side. But I really think Wendy and Brendon believed in what they were saying. It might have been foolhardy of them, but it wasn't dishonest; and in the end the party just said to them, "No, you can't do that." And I knew all the time that that was going to be the outcome. It was interesting though, talking to Wendy and Brendon about the possibility, and it might change in the future. Who knows? It was a brave thing for them to do. But have they made a difference? Yes, they do. Yes, the Nats make a difference. They're able, particularly now, to force what is basically an urban-based party in the Liberal Party to be far more responsive to what happens in the regions. But whether you regard them as a minor party or not is a moot point.

[track 58][file **KC-12AU11T58**]

JF Kim, what would you like to say about some of the controversial reforms that were attempted during the Gallop period; for example, the abortion debate?

CHANCE The abortion debate, like all of those bioethical issues, is in the Labor Party a free vote, because we have a substantial Catholic influence in the Labor Party and we have a tradition of having a free vote in all of those bioethical issues, so stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia are all free votes. The opposition similarly had determined on a free vote. Free vote debates, especially around controversial issues, are absolutely fascinating. Some people find them really painful; I didn't. I found it a very pure form of politics uncorrupted by party machinery. And it was an excellent debate.

Just for the record, we actually debated Cheryl Davenport's private member's bill twice in the Legislative Council because we debated it and resolved it within 24 hours, I might say, on the first occasion, then the debate went to the Legislative Assembly where it dragged on forever. Now, for some reason (and I don't know, we'd have to check the records on this) the bill came back from the Assembly and we had to debate it all over again. I don't know why, whether we had prorogation or something like that in between, but there was some issue which caused that. Again, we finished that debate in 24 hours. It was a full 24 hours, I grant you, but it was something I was really proud of the Legislative Council in the way they handled that debate, particularly since we were the house of origin of the bill. As I said, the debate went on for weeks and weeks and weeks and it wasn't a high-quality debate in the

Assembly; it was [chuckles] a very poor debate. But I was glad that Cheryl was ultimately successful in getting the abortion debate through, yes. It was very important to her and I think once she'd done that she really felt as though she'd done what she needed to do and she was ready to move on then, yes. It was ...

JF It would've thrown up some interesting alliances and associations which you wouldn't normally have seen.

CHANCE That's very true, yes; [laughter] very true. Well, in this debate, in the stem cell debate and in debates on euthanasia, those alliances fall together very quickly and they are across the chamber, yes.

JF And you said a few moments ago that you're a great believer in the big party system, but at the same time you were admiring this departure from it. [chuckles]

CHANCE Well, "admiring" may or may not be the right word.

JF Well, mine, but I'm sorry. [chuckles]

CHANCE But I enjoyed it; I certainly enjoyed it. Perhaps I enjoyed it just because it was different, but, no, I don't think so. I think it was a pure form of debate. I think it was the way that Parliaments were intended to function, probably, and it's certainly a lot more interesting and engaging than crunching the numbers in a major party-dominated debate. But just because it's more entertaining and enjoyable, doesn't mean it's better. I'm a major party fan because I think you can deal with these issues efficiently and effectively through the major parties, and logically. The problem with minor parties is if they have the capacity with their couple of votes to turn the vote one way or the other, they do deals with one, or perhaps even both, of the major parties to say, "We will vote for this part of the bill provided you put in our words here". Now, the part of the law that they're seeking to add is not developed in the context of the whole bill. It may even destroy the bill (and I've had one occasion when that happened) or it might sit out of context with the rest of the bill or it might simply just be bad law. But because they *can* do it, it's like climbing Mt Everest; they feel as though they *have* to do it, and they can make an awful mess of a piece of good legislation.

Now, that's never going to happen with the major parties. Yes, they can make bad decisions in forcing compromises. One example of that was the compromise that the Liberal Party forced on the Labor government with the disaggregation of the energy structure in Western Australia when they forced the government to commit to, I think, it was a five-year period of no increases in tariffs. But that problem came back to visit the Liberals because when they got into government they found that because there'd been no increases (in fact, it was a decade) in power tariffs for a decade, they immediately had to lift power prices by 50 per cent over two years. So it came back to haunt them; there is some karma. [laughter]

JF The one vote, one value one is another one that was interesting.

CHANCE Yes, a great debate.

JF What's your take on that?

CHANCE It was a terrific debate; I loved it, absolutely loved it. I mean, just hearing people's justification for one person having four times the voting power of another is fascinating; you know, an otherwise an intelligent person trying to say he believes in democracy but he thinks one person should have four times the voting power of another. I loved it and I love getting engaged in it. They used to put it to me, "You know you're letting your own people down". "No, I'm not; I'm delivering them democracy." [laughs] It was great fun and a big win for McGinty, a big win, yes.

JF Now, the Clerk, Laurie Marquet, was a very significant person and I think with particular reference to the upper house. How do you think he should be remembered?

CHANCE Oh, as a HUGE contributor, as an enormously influential man who influenced and will continue to influence the way this Parliament operates for decades to come. Insightful, brilliant mind, a flawed character as a person, but that detracts in no way from his contribution or his ability. He was an amazing bloke and a very good friend. I really liked Laurie. We used to sit down for hours on end just chatting about obscure elements of law and not just necessarily current law, but mediaeval law and further back. Yes, it was fascinating. I learnt so much from Laurie and I still miss him today, yes.

JF Was there any obvious ... was anything of his flawed character obvious to you as you negotiated with him in a private way, you know?

CHANCE Not the deepest flaws, no, but he was an unconventional guy. In terms of contact with drugs, he actually seemed to be violently opposed to particularly some forms of drugs. I can remember what he told me about the amphetamines group and how difficult they were to treat. He was involved in drug treatment; he was a contributor to Holyoake. Probably because of that as much as anything else, I thought he probably had some experience with drugs but that he was largely reformed, although he still used to smoke marijuana almost everywhere but that didn't bother anyone. But we had no clue that he was engaged in the kind of hard drugs that he was.

JF And what about the embezzlement aspect of what happened?

CHANCE Well, that's a consequence of the drugs. Yes, it was all just sad in summary in the end. But I hope he was able to sense at the end that he still had friends; that the circumstances might've been horrible, but we still thought highly of him. I hope he sensed that; I don't know if he did or not.

JF We're coming towards the end of things and I wondered if you could talk for a few minutes about the costs to you and perhaps to your family of having been in Parliament.

CHANCE Well, I don't think you can look at costs without rewards, and when you line the two up in a cashbook, there were no costs.

JF Lots of politicians cite things like, you know, they even have Parliament to thank for marital breakdowns and so on, but ...

CHANCE No, no, no, they have themselves to thank for marital breakdowns and they've found a hook to hang their grievance on because anybody who works long hours may place personal relationships at risk. I worked long hours before I came here, so that wasn't an issue for me. I mean, yes, of course there are costs but there are huge rewards. I mean, this is an enormous privilege to be able to serve in the Parliament. I really never had much sympathy for people who said how much less money they were making in Parliament than they were beforehand or how much

harder they were working or how difficult it all was, because my view was nobody forced you here, you weren't conscripted, you actually put your hand up to do this. If this is not what you want to do, go away, because there are a lot of people out there who would give their left arm to be here. I used to think about that every day; every day before the Parliament started, every day we returned to Parliament, which was never my favourite day, I have to say, it reminded me of coming back to school and it wasn't all good [laughter], but I used to remind myself every day of how privileged I was and how fortunate I was to be here. So the costs don't matter as long as they're less than the rewards and when they're less [more?] than the rewards, go away and do something else; which is what I did.

JF Yes, so talking about the decision to retire, what led you to think that it was time?

CHANCE The biggest single issue is probably what I have already said when I was talking about the way the press dealt with Alan Carpenter. I just watched that with my mouth open and [pause] I realised in that instant, in that one interview (I could actually take you to the spot where it happened) I realised I didn't want to do this anymore and I didn't want to work with people like that anymore and I didn't want to be nice to people like that anymore because they didn't deserve it. And then I thought, "There's a lot of good people out there who want to do this job that I'm doing, if I'm feeling bad about it, go away", so I took my own advice. It took two years [laughter] but I had made my decision then.

JF And talking about life after Parliament, what does it hold for you?

CHANCE Well (people have told me this and I didn't believe them) but people have told me that a little while after you retire, you wonder how you ever found time to go to work and it's pretty much where I am now. I work on two advisory committees for the Australian government: the Australian Landcare Council, which I chair; and I have just recently joined the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, Senator Conroy's committee. They take a bit of time. I did establish my own business and that was a trading and consulting business in the Middle East, which I haven't done much with in the last 12 months, mostly because of the strength of the dollar.

JF Just excuse me, the collar is touching the microphone.

CHANCE I am the executive director of Habitat for Humanity, which is a housing solutions non-government organisation here in Western Australia. And that doesn't leave me much time to spend in my shed, which was the only reason I moved from Guildford to Millendon so that I could have a shed to play with my toys in. [laughter] So, yes, I mean, that's the one disappointment I've got. There's only 24 hours in a day and there's still only seven days in a week.

JF Yes, your toys of course being your motorcars?

CHANCE Yes, motorcars.

JF So are you going to win any more Targa events or that sort of thing?

CHANCE Well, we didn't race in 2010 because our driver's health wasn't good. Hopefully, he is going to be fit again for next year, but he'd just had a major joint operation and he was a little bit immobile. So, yes, we're building a new engine in America now (Holman Moody are building it in America now) and it sounds like a very exciting engine, and the work that we've done on the car to complement the new engine is all coming along nicely. So we'll be well and truly ready, because we've had two years to get ready this time; normally it's a bit of a rush. But, yes, I intend to keep racing as long as we can. I mean, I'm 65, the driver's 63, we're pretty much "Team Geriatric" now.

JF Right, well, look, I'm aware that there were a whole lot of things you said you might've wanted to talk about in the course of interviews, but the time is well and truly past. So I think at this stage I should draw it to a conclusion, but only to say thank you very much for your cooperation and I've enjoyed immensely speaking with you, so thanks.

CHANCE And thank you for your patience with me when I was, through that long period of time, unavailable, but it has been an enjoyable experience, thank you.

JF Good; thanks very much, Kim.

END OF INTERVIEW TEN

INTERVIEW TWO

[track 8]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number 2 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 1 July 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

Just picking up, Kim, on where we were last week, we discussed the old house you lived in on the farm, but we didn't go into any great amount of detail. I was wondering: did you grow up with electric power, did you grow up with water supply and that sort of thing?

CHANCE Yes, indeed, it was very civilised. We had what was standard in those days, right up until 1963, when we connected to grid power, we had the common 32-volt system that everyone had with a big bank of batteries and a diesel engine that used to chug away all night. It wasn't usually fired up during the day; the batteries would carry you through the day unless there was some heavy demand on. But the workshop didn't use a lot of electrical power because our main electrical loads there, like welding, were carried out by independent engines, so it was only fairly light stuff. But one of the strange things about those old 32-volt systems was of course television came along before mains power. Television sets only come in 240-volt AC and we had 32-volt DC, so we had to go through a converter process. The converters were quite modern solid state things, although the old rotary types, the analogues, were probably better. They were very sensitive to input power, so you had to balance your voltage out to get the right voltage coming out of the inverter, and 32-volt systems are so-called because that's the voltage that you've got to have at the point of the appliance. But of course you begin at 36 volts because you're actually running 18 two-volt batteries and you had those extra four volts for your volt drop between your generator and your house. The trick was you had to have the engine running and then you would turn the television on but you had then too much voltage at the inverter, so you had to go around the house turning lights on to get the balance exactly right [laughs]. If you turned too many on, the screen would start to close in, so it was this fine balancing of which lights to have on and which lights not to have on so that you got exactly 240 volts at the system.

JF So the screen was like a meter for you?

CHANCE It was, yes, and a very accurate one [laughter].

JF And did you say you were connected to the mains in '63?

CHANCE '63, yes. Everything happened in '63. That was when the standard gauge railway line went through. As a result of that, CBH built a new handling facility which was outside of the town, further east. That of course had to have three-phase power. That was connected to three-phase. That actually brought the power closer to us and there was a wonderful scheme that the SEC, then the power provider, had, called the CES (the contributory extension scheme) whereby it was basically a loan to those people who wanted to connect to the power for the capital cost of the line and you paid that loan off over 25 years. If you were the only one on that line, you paid the total cost or you incurred the debt for the total cost. Then, as other people connected they paid you for the ...

JF So you had a rebate on your expenditure.

CHANCE Yes. But it was just wonderful to be on power; didn't realise how good it was.

JF So you jumped straight from 32 to mains 240.

CHANCE Yes. We never had a 240-volt generating system. Some people did, but they had their upsides and downsides. One of our neighbours actually had a wind generator, AC power, which was really going ahead, backed up by diesel. And that was a 240-volt system, but the Lister Dunlite system was the most common of the 240-volt systems. The problems with those, though, if somebody got up at night to go to the toilet and turned on one light, that would start the diesel.

JF Yes.

CHANCE Yes, they were a demand-start operation. Some people got over that by having the wiring for both 240-volt systems and 32-volt systems in their house, so light load, or late at night when they didn't want to wake people up, they would just use the 32-volt line. But we only ever had 32 volt.

JF Yes, and what sort of water supply did you have to your house?

CHANCE No problems at all; we were connected to the Goldfields system.

JF Oh right, so you can't have been too far away from the Goldfields pipeline?

CHANCE No, only two miles north. No, we always had excellent water.

JF So all the way from Mundaring and thereabouts.

CHANCE All the way from Mundaring, yes.

JF And you said it was a big house, so you would've enjoyed your own room, I suppose.

CHANCE Oh yes, even a choice of them [laughs].

JF Which of the rooms do you picture most vividly when you think of that house?

CHANCE Basically in the middle of the house was a massive open-plan family-cum-dining room and that was where we spent most of our life, other than the kitchen area, which was also a very big open-plan area. There weren't actually a lot of rooms in the house; they were just very big rooms. I think there were five bedrooms but the house was dominated by those two big rooms. Those two were where we spent most of our time.

JF Was it often the scene of big entertainments?

CHANCE Yes, from time to time we had some big ... Well, with fairly big families, yes, we had some memorable events [chuckles].

JF Were books very important in the home?

CHANCE Yes, because most of this was in the pre-television era, books were vital to me. I mean, the family had its own library, but in my own room I had a bookcase stacked full of books. Yes, I love books.

JF And what about artworks and other embellishments decorating the house?

CHANCE We weren't really big on art, no. I've already spoken about the piano; that was our concession to culture, but, no, we weren't great on art [chuckles].

JF And I suppose it was surrounded by quite considerable gardens, was it?

CHANCE Yes, huge gardens. When the house was originally set up and presumably before there was a connection to the Goldfields water supply (and this is going back into my grandparents' day) they had constructed a very reliable dam which was actually covered with poles and brushwood to keep the evaporation down. There was a beautiful Chicago Aermotor windmill on it, absolutely magnificent thing, and that used to supply, through a two-inch pipeline, huge quantities of water for the garden, so there was a big garden there and my mother was a very, very keen gardener.

JF Did she keep the house supplied in veg or was the garden not devoted to that?

CHANCE No, from time to time ... The vegetable garden used to vary a bit; my mother was a flower person. But we did have a big area that was devoted to vegetables because there was a little patch in the house yard that was actually quite sandy. Even though the house was built in a heavy valley floor, there was one little area that was quite gritty sand, probably from some ancient flood event that dropped it there. Of course, that was beautiful garden soil. Yes, from time to time our garden used to flourish. I remember the peas. Mum never got to eat any of her peas; we used to eat them straight off the garden [laughter].

JF Yes. I think children have done that since time immemorial.

CHANCE I still do it! [laughter]

JF Now, we spoke about your relations with your dad and mum a little bit last week but we didn't pick up on relations with your sister. Tell me about how you got on with your sister.

CHANCE We got on very well. She was four years older than me, and she died at the age of 57 as a result of a brain tumour, which was unbelievably sad. But she was a lovely person, always looked after me, didn't brutalise me too much. Indeed, she reminds me so much of my daughter that sometimes you find yourself being confused about who you're talking to ...

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. She even looks like her.

JF She remained important to you throughout your life, I take it.

CHANCE Yes. Well, she was my only sibling. But, yes, she was sort of a guide and mentor through most of my life.

JF And where did she go to school after Doodlakine?

CHANCE Methodist Ladies' College for the years 10, 11 and 12. She went to Kellerberrin District High School for years 8 and 9. I think that's how it broke up. I think the reason for that was there weren't sufficient places to allow her to be there for years 8 and 9. I think that was the story.

JF Yes, that was always subject to long waiting lists, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes. She didn't go away then until she was, say, 14, whereas I went away when I was 12.

JF Just before we come on to talking about school and so on for you, who were the other people, not including teachers and outside the immediate family, who were significant to you as a child on the farm at Doodlakine?

CHANCE Well, they were mostly family and neighbours. I had an uncle who was my mother's brother-in-law (married to my mother's sister) who was ... Actually, a

couple of them, but my uncle Clay Stevens and his wife Shirley (my mother's sister) were amongst our closest friends, regardless of whether they were related or not. A cousin of my mother's, Bill Prowse, was a very firm friend of my father's and their children were the same age as we were, and two of the boys in fact remain ... Well, one of the boys was almost born on the same day as me, Johnny Prowse, and we've been friends for years. They were like brothers and sisters. Then there was my uncle Jack Fewster, married to another of my mother's sisters. Jack was my communist uncle and one of my favourite people. He was an amazing guy. There were some interesting stories because his brother-in-law, of course, was Edgar Prowse, the very conservative ...

JF The former senator.

CHANCE ... Country Party senator, and not someone I liked particularly. We didn't get on at all. His other closest friend was Paddy Troy [chuckles].

JF Oh, yes.

CHANCE Around about Christmastime, the whole Fewster clan used to move down to our house. They had a beat-up old house in Shoalwater. A huge, rambling, dysfunctional ... They were the most dysfunctional family you ever came across. It was just noise and activity and screaming kids, and that's the way they lived. I mean, that was their lifestyle. He'd be sitting down having a chat to Paddy (not a beer because Jack would never drink) and there'd be this urgent message, "Edgar's coming! Edgar's coming!" and you couldn't possibly in those days have Paddy Troy and Edgar in the same house [laughter].

JF It was as serious as that!

CHANCE There had to be all these processes of holding up Edgar at the front door while they moved Paddy out the back door [laughs]. But I remember Paddy, as a kid. He was a lovely guy, but a bit sort of grumpy; he wasn't like my uncle.

JF And was Edgar at Arthur River then?

CHANCE No ...oh, well, that's a good point. Darkan.

JF Darkan, that's what I meant, yes.

CHANCE Yes, he was. And in fact I can't remember that family, which again was a big family, six kids, five kids. I don't remember them at Doodlakine, but they hadn't long left because my sister remembered them being at Doodlakine because they used to catch the bus at the same corner. So the Prowse kids used to come down in a horse and buggy and leave it at a tree on this corner [chuckles]. To think of it now, it sounds bizarre. She only had to walk down to that tree; it was only three, 400 metres away. They used to catch the school bus from that corner. They knew each other much better than I ever did because by the time my recollections first started to form, they had already gone to Darkan. So I didn't see that much of them, but Edgar used to turn up every now and again for formal family occasions and he and I never really saw eye to eye. He's probably the reason I became left-of-centre in my politics [chuckles].

JF [chuckles] Well, that's a significant influence then, isn't it?

CHANCE Well, it would be entirely subliminal because I never even thought it through until that very moment [laughter].

JF So they're some of the people that were most important to you.

Now, you've just talked about going to school, and so you, like your sister, would've been fairly close to the bus.

CHANCE Yes, we had a very easy childhood; no long drives.

JF And you were only, what, two miles north of the town anyway, were you; is that right?

CHANCE Yes, three miles by road.

JF So school wasn't very far.

CHANCE No.

JF Not like some of the kids who had to endure perhaps an hour's drive in the bus.

CHANCE Yes. And school buses weren't quite the same standard then as they are now. Our standard school bus was an Austin, I suppose it would have been an A30, A40, or a Cambridge, something like that; a van. The last one in was given a piece of hay bale twine. The purpose of the hay bale twine was to tie around the catch of the door at the back of the bus to hold the doors closed and you had to sit there [laughs]. That was when the Austin A40, or whatever it was, was running. When it wasn't running, they used to carry us on the back of a truck. And on good days, as a concession to safety, they'd put the stock sides on the truck; otherwise you were just on the back of an open truck.

JF An open truck, goodness.

CHANCE The kids from south Doodlie were always one up on us because they actually had a bus. It was an orange and green and white bus, or it was after a while. There was an older bus (I remember a Fargo van) driven by and owned by a Mr Morgan. I don't know why I remember that, but still ... because it was probably called the Morgan bus. But they rolled that bus over, fortunately not injuring anyone, so then they got the green, gold and white bus. We still had the old truck [chuckles].

JF So it was a different contractor altogether for your bus.

CHANCE Yes, north Doodlakine and south Doodlakine. For some reason the south Doodlakine bus was either called Morgan's bus, that was because Mr Morgan had it, or it was called the Mindabooka bus, and that was after a school that was south of Doodlakine, Mindabooka, that had closed down. Some of the older kids had actually been to that school so it must've been closed down in the ... gee, I don't know, late '40s, yes.

[track 9]

JF So, Doodlakine Primary School, then, was a two or three teacher school, was it?

CHANCE Yes, two. It actually had two buildings; a big room and a little room. The big room was for grades 4, 5, 6, 7. It was the classical wheatbelt school [which were of] the very tall weatherboard structures. Every town had one. They had very

high ceilings, [which were] very comfortable in the summer, [but] cold as charity in the winter. The little room was a much more modern building. It was a frame and fibro building, fairly low slung (a long narrow building). We didn't have grades in those days so infants class 1 and class 2 were in that one. A Miss Whitfield was our first teacher and Miss McBeth replaced her. [There was] one teacher, normally female, in the little room for the little kids, and the headmaster was the teacher in the big room for the big kids.

JF And do you remember your first day at school?

CHANCE I do. I even remember what I was wearing.

JF Do you? [laughs]

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about it.

CHANCE I remember what I was wearing because ... oh well, everyone wore the same thing, so it was actually easy; grey shorts, grey shirt, brown sandals. But what I remember was [that] my mother made me wear a solar toupee, and I hated that thing with a passion. It never survived the first day. When I came home without it she said, "Where's your hat?" And I said, "Oh, I had a bit of an accident and it got broken". In fact, I tore it up [laughter]. But, yes, I do remember my first day.

JF What do you remember about Miss Whitfield?

CHANCE She was lovely; brisk and businesslike. She was a strawberry redhead with curly hair. She was very trim. She must have been quite young, although we thought she was ancient. She was probably in her mid or early twenties. I'm not sure but I think she may have married somebody locally. I am not sure about that. Yes, they were great, both she and Miss McBeth, who was different; she had black hair.

JF Teacher accommodation was often a problem in the country in those days. Do you know how they were domiciled?

CHANCE I think Miss Whitfield and Miss McBeth actually lived in Kellerberrin and drove into school every day, and that continued to be the practice right up pretty much until the school closed. The only resident teacher lived in a wonderful old house, built at the same time and in a similar style to the big room, so it was heavy weatherboard; again, pretty much a typical building. You could see that house repeated in town after town. I'm not exactly sure when it was built, but one of the older residents of Doodlakine told me that he can remember as a kid delivering milk to that house in 1920, so it was certainly there then. I guess it was built around that era of 1912 to 1914, when so much of that old part of the wheatbelt was built. It's actually a house I later bought and lived in for some years.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That was built as the school house, was it?

CHANCE Yes. [It was] all solid jarrah. There must have been 200 tonne of jarrah in it. The house is still there.

JF So the school would have dated from about that 1912–14 era, would it, in Doodlakine?

CHANCE Oh yes.

JF So there were enough people there to warrant a school at that time.

CHANCE Oh, it was a big town then. At that time, say, before 1920 and, in fact, probably right up to the Depression, it was a bigger town than Kellerberrin. In some of the old maps, Doodlakine is marked in big black capitals and Kellerberrin is just a little side note to it, which was something we were always very proud of.

JF Well, that makes more sense of your uncle's (was it your uncle's?) suggestion that it might become the capital.

CHANCE My grand uncle, yes.

JF Your grand uncle. [laughs]

CHANCE Yes. If indeed that's the truth, but urban legend in time becomes the truth.

JF Yes. [laughter] Okay, and presumably your first headmaster was Mr Colin Lee.

CHANCE How did you know that?

JF Well, I did a little bit of research on this, I must confess.

CHANCE Colin Lee, father of Malcolm Lee, QC. Yes.

JF And what do you remember of him?

CHANCE Yes, I do remember him, although he never taught me. He was the headmaster; he taught my sister. I remember his violin. He used to play the violin to the kids, including us. The little room used to go over to hear Mr Lee play the violin. I can remember him nestling his chin onto the rest of the violin and then he wasn't happy with that, so he used to take his handkerchief out and fold it up and put that there, so he was happy and then he'd play the violin, which to me sounded then, as violins still do to me, like a cat in agony. He was a lovely guy. And I remember Malcolm Lee as a kid. He was a great friend, in fact, of my sister. He had the most stunning head of red hair you ever saw, so he was obviously "Megs". "Ranga" hadn't been invented as a term then; he was "Megs". And there was also a daughter, who I don't remember so well. She married the man who later became the Prime Minister of New Guinea.

JF Oh, yes; I can't remember the name.

CHANCE A name like Omari or Kumari; something like that. She was quite religious and I think she was a missionary in New Guinea.

JF Really. She was influenced by Doodlakine too [chuckles]!

CHANCE Yes.

JF An influential little place [chuckles]!

CHANCE But Malcolm Lee did go on to become a very significant figure in legal circles.

JF Yes.

CHANCE I am told [he is] a really nice guy. I once had occasion to study a report that he had done, actually before he was a QC, on ratings systems for irrigation and drainage areas, which sounds fascinating. But it was a troubling thing for governments at the time, particularly concerning the rating for areas like urban Busselton, where they used to pay a rate. Until the Lee report, there was no way of legally determining the primary, secondary and tertiary beneficiaries of public works, and that's what the Lee report was about. And it remains the seminal work in that area.

JF Interesting. So you would have been taught first by Miss Whitfield and then I think Mr Murray perhaps. Would that be right?

CHANCE Yes. Mr Murray was there for years and years and years and years. He was not a great teacher. I think the education authorities took the view that, "He seems to be comfortable in Doodlakine; let's not inflict him on anyone else". [chuckles]. He had a son, Ean, who was again the same age as me. Four kids in my school were born on literally the same day as me, which was remarkable given that we only had about 30 kids. Ean later went on to become a police officer. I actually remember him pulling me up once.

JF Yes. So as far as that [goes], was Mr Murray your final teacher?

CHANCE No. Thankfully, for my further education, because I didn't learn much in all of that time [that] Mr Murray was there, we had a guy come in whose name was Boyd Anderson. Boyd had one look at what we had learnt and was absolutely appalled. He just thought, "These kids have got to go to high school next year."
[interruption for phone call]

[track 10]

CHANCE In my last year we had a teacher called Boyd Anderson and he took one look at us and decided that we had a huge amount of work to do to get to the stage where we were going to be able to compete at high school level, but to his credit he gave us about four years of education compressed into one year. We didn't particularly like him for it at the time because he made us work like we had never worked in our lives before, but I've been very, very grateful to him ever since because he had a huge job. He was actually quite a young man because he was still playing football, although he had grey hair and we thought he was really, really old and we thought it was strange that a person with grey hair could play football [laughter]. He got a football injury, which resulted in a fracture of his skull, which was undiagnosed, and that caused him some behavioural difficulties and it was not until they actually diagnosed what the problem was that they were able to get that sorted out. So, I hope that didn't affect his career. I'm sure it didn't because he was an outstanding teacher.

JF Yes. Now, while you're reminiscing about the school, which are the events of the school year that you remember most vividly?

CHANCE Okay. I think it would be the sports days. We actually had three different sports days. We weren't a great sporting school because there weren't enough of us and I had never played a game of Australian rules football (one or two perhaps) and very little cricket, because we didn't have enough kids to do it. But athletics was something that our small size didn't influence. We were able to do all the running and the jumping that kids are supposed to do, so that became a big issue for us. We had two different forms of sports day, but there was one that was part of the school system but was sometimes conducted at the golf course on the number 7 fairway of the Doodlakine golf club. It had a nice shaded area at one end. It was actually ideal and it was a nice smooth area and they used to go up there the day before and mark out the lanes because our oval was a bit small and tended to be a bit overgrown with weeds and prickly things [chuckles]. They weren't great ovals. So that was the school sports day and then about two weeks either side of the school sports day we used to have the Sunday school sports day. That was a much better event because at the Sunday school sports day we had ice-cream.

JF [Chuckles]

CHANCE Yes. Then there would be the inter-school sports day and this was a very serious event indeed. A huge number of schools used to turn up to it. It would be in a big town like Cunderdin or Quairading, something of that nature. I mean my recollection is [there were] about 5 000 schools there. There was probably about 20, but it seemed like 5 000 and the schools actually had their own lines laid out and that was where you were supposed to be inside those lines. It was very military in its structure. Then you'd get called up to events and your name would be taken before and after the event so that there was actually a winners list printed and it was very, very professional. I was so impressed with it and then we would all drink gallons and gallons of strawberry creaming soda in the bus on the way back and invariably all vomit in the passageway of the bus and generally have a great time. We were horribly sunburnt, but I remember that being a real high point of the school year. We used to look forward to every bit of it [chuckles].

JF Yes. Was swimming ever done at Doodlakine?

CHANCE No, no; there were no pools in those days in the Wheatbelt. Kalgoorlie had one and had had one since the '20s I think. Merredin was one of the first towns to get one, but we didn't get to Merredin that often. I guess the Merredin pool was built round about the mid-'50s. I should know that because I later lived almost opposite it, but my guess is mid to maybe late '50s. I do remember swimming in it, but I wasn't a great swimmer then (we never had the opportunity) and I remain not a great swimmer.

JF So that wasn't on the curriculum?

CHANCE No, we were desert kids.

JF So amongst the school kids that you knew would have been quite a considerable number of migrant children, from what you said, with that railway camp nearby.

CHANCE Yes, all Italian and the kids generally spoke passable English, so they must have learnt English at school before they immigrated.

JF Or they possibly picked it up very quickly in Australia, because they do.

CHANCE Yes, true, true. But no, my sense is that their English was too good for that. But frequently their parents, and particularly their mothers, had no English at all, so our school would have day school for the kids and all our classes were together (Italian and Australian), so there was no need to separate on the basis of language. Then at night the parents would come in and they'd have night school. But a big proportion of our school were Italian; my feeling is [it was] probably half or maybe a bit more. So we were almost an English second-language school in those days.

JF How were they received by the Aussie kids?

CHANCE Oh, we loved them. Yes, loved them to bits because they were different and exotic and very friendly and open. It was a real experience, you know, to have an exposure to another culture, but also to gain an understanding of what it is like to come out of a country that has been completely destroyed and have to start all over again. When we did learn about the academic and trade skills that the breadwinners of those families had and see them working basically as navvies on a rail road because Australia would not accept their education qualifications, yes, that struck us as being grossly unfair, even at that age. We would look at a man and say, "He's an engineer. I've never met an engineer in my life, never," or, "He's a draughtsman; I know one draughtsman, and he's thought of as a highly paid professional and there's the two of them with picks and shovels. You know, what are we doing here?" So we actually sort of evolved a belief, which is probably wrong, I don't know, that they were all highly qualified professionals and they probably weren't, but that was what we thought.

JF Did you have any close personal social relations with them? Like, did you get invited into their homes at all?

CHANCE Not much. They didn't have the capacity to do that because they lived in camps; it was pretty rough. They would sometimes come and stay with us, yes, but no, we weren't encouraged to go into the camp area. Because it was a railway camp it was ...

JF Yes. I think you said you had one of the Italian people working on the farm from time to time, so that was your introduction to Italian culture too.

CHANCE Yes, Gaetano. I think Gaetano was probably not associated with the group in the railway camp, because he certainly was not a railway worker. I think Gaetano was probably one of the post Second [World] War prisoners of war who had stayed here. Now, I don't know how they got to do that, but some POWs didn't go home, because a family friend, their father, came from the same basis; he was a POW actually captured by the British at Eritrea, sent to Cyprus initially and then Northam and he just never went home (there was nothing at home to go to) and then brought up his family here. I think Gaetano was probably of that nature. I think he was an ex-prisoner of war and probably from North Africa somewhere.

JF Did he actually live on the farm when he was working there?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Was he domiciled with you or were there quarters?

CHANCE We had quarters attached to the main workshop, which were comfortable enough. The problem with the quarters, though, was they were right alongside where the diesel generator was, so it was a bit noisy [chuckles].

JF Yes. Now, can you recall prizes or other accolades that you won while you were a primary school student?

CHANCE I don't think we had any. I don't remember there being any. I remember Father Christmas coming, but I don't remember anything like a school speech night. We didn't have prizes, because that was during Mr Murray's era and that would have required just too much effort. I remember winning an apple in a reading competition. That's about all I remember winning, but it was a huge apple [laughter]. Well, Mr Murray's earlier school had been at Bridgetown, so he had access to apples.

JF Oh, right. Yes, by the case [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes, indeed he did.

JF Now, was anything much made of the preparation for the scholarship when you were at primary school?

CHANCE No.

JF So you would have been there between '52 and '58 I guess?

CHANCE Yes.

JF So the scholarship was still in existence and I wondered if they made anything of it in that little school?

CHANCE No; I really think Mr Murray wouldn't have got engaged in that and I think Boyd Anderson probably thought that his job was to get us to a point where we were at least competitive. Certainly, none of us could have got to a situation where we excelled. So, that's probably why it never arose. He probably thought, well, none of these kids are going to get it, so we won't burden them with it.

JF Right.

CHANCE But I do remember the scholarship. I remember people talking about it. That was to Perth Mod.

JF Yes, and you could take some of them up at any government high school. You know, you got your funding to do that or else you could go to Mod.

[track 11]

While you're talking about the school, I guess that brings up the town site to some extent.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Paint me a picture of the town site as you remember it when you were a kid.

CHANCE Intensely busy by today's standards. There were people everywhere. There were actually two shops. There was the co-op, which is actually still there and still trades as a store, although not as a co-op, and there was Kelsey's store, which was also a fairly big general store. Then there was another group of buildings across the road from Kelsey's which contained a restaurant, the baker's shop and another

shop that used to trade sometimes and not other times. Opposite that was the butcher's shop. There was a very impressive two-storey hotel that was built in 1926. Around the corner there was another group of shops, only one of which traded, but that was a stand-alone greengrocer. I am just trying to remember the name of the people who had that ... no, it has escaped me, I am sorry ... just a greengrocer. That was the same block of houses. It was a semi-detached block with commercial premises in the front and residential at the rear. My recollection is that there were three such units in one block. In the easternmost block, the Scott family lived, and I think they did operate a shop. Yes, they did for a while. And that was Jim Scott's family home. Jim and I subsequently served together in the Legislative Council. There was also a connection with the greengrocer's and Frank Hough's family, but I won't go into that in any detail, because it was a bit of a scandal at the time, yes, and I was not supposed to hear those stories.

JF You haven't mentioned motor garages. They were often important in little country Wheatbelt towns.

CHANCE We did not actually have one. But Malcolm Hamersley, who was a really sweet old guy, but an advanced alcoholic ... people said of Malcolm, in his sober moments he was the finest mechanic that ever lived, and I am not sure whether that was true or not, but I used to take advice from Malcolm from time to time. He used to take some work in, but he would do that in his mother's garage or house, basically.

JF And fuel, would the co-op have handled fuel?

CHANCE The co-op had fuel. My recollection is that Kelsey's did as well. Yes, I think that was about all.

There were two churches. I do recall the third one being there, the Catholic Church. [There were] a number of houses, perhaps a dozen or more. It was, by today's standards, a thriving little centre.

JF Did you have a resident doctor?

CHANCE No; Kellerberrin. But we were well served in Kellerberrin. Remember that Kellerberrin is only 12 miles away, and they had a hospital. We really did not lack services at all. It was not a deprived upbringing; it was a privileged upbringing.

JF Did your family use the butcher to an extent?

CHANCE Yes, indeed. My family were always very insistent that you did all of your shopping locally.

JF But I was wondering whether you killed your own meat.

CHANCE Oh, I see. No, actually not much; every now and again. Later on, I did enough to know that I can do it. No, it was always easier to go and buy meat. But if you want those local tradesmen to continue to be in the town, you'd have to support them.

JF You said on your questionnaire that you remember the smell of baking bread. When and where did that hit you?

CHANCE The school was at the northern end of town, and opposite the school was the headmaster's house, which I later bought. There was then a vacant block to the south, and then at the other side of that vacant block was another of those semi-detached commercial-cum-residential buildings. The building nearest us was the baker's shop, and that was old 'Doughy' Wright who ran the baker's shop. His son was in my class at school, and again born on the same day as me. That was Leon Wright. We would be sitting there in the morning ... he must have baked late in the day, which does seem strange, doesn't it, because normally they bake, like, four o'clock in the morning. But I can remember this being more like 10 in the morning we could smell the bread baking. Maybe he was doing a separate run.

JF A second batch, yes.

CHANCE But I remember the smell of the baking bread used to come drifting in through the windows, and that was it. All concentration for the rest of that day was gone until we got food.

[track 12]

JF How involved were your parents in the community?

CHANCE Heavily involved. My father was always a leader in the community. As I may have said before, he later went on to be a member of the Australian Wool Board and the International Wool Secretariat. He was heavily involved in farmer politics, never much in conventional politics.

JF Local government?

CHANCE Yes, he did. He did get involved in local government. I don't know how it came about but it was suggested to him that he should run for the East Ward of the Kellerberrin shire council. He did that despite the fact that two of the strongest pieces of advice that he ever gave me was never ever get involved in the administration of a sports club and don't waste your time going into local government. You don't get involved in sports clubs because that is the worst form of politics imaginable, the dirtiest, the meanest, and local government is basically a waste of time. And there was a considerable issue too when he was in local government because it was at that time that the Shire of Kellerberrin decided to build its pool. Pools were very contentious things because the only beneficiaries of the pool were the town residents, and the people who paid for the pool were the ward residents who never got to use it; some of whom were far too far away to ever use the pool. Of course the East Ward was the most far flung of the wards. I think we must have had two councillors per ward, and the other councillor of the East Ward was a trenchant opponent of the pool. My father had to be the peacemaker because he knew it had to happen. He knew we had to have a pool, but he also understood the argument of the more rural residents. He went through a process of negotiating the compromise agreement which actually saw that pool delivered, but the other East Ward member was in fact our neighbour, who I'm not going to name because his family are still around. He was a great guy in many ways but he was mean and vicious and personal. He took to the shire clerk in a very, very personal way. The shire clerk was a guy who my dad had a lot of respect for and I know that he thought we were very lucky to have someone of that ability. He had to deal with his mate and his fellow East Ward councillor behaving extremely badly. It was in that process that I learnt a lot about politics, although I was still very young then. But it struck a chord and as a result of that I've never had any engagement in local government at all and I avoid it like the plague.

JF To what extent was your mum involved with local organisations?

CHANCE Yes, she was in everything that mums were in in those days. She was very active in the church. She was much more religious than my dad was. That included of course the church guild which was the major social club for women. She was somewhat less active in the CWA. The church guild seemed to be more active than the CWA in our area; I don't know. But she was in the CWA but it wasn't regarded as a big deal. But, yes, everything that was going, the hospital auxiliary, whatever.

JF P&C?

CHANCE Yes, P&C, absolutely.

JF Was P&C a very active force?

CHANCE Yes. Quite small; small, efficient. They looked after us, from that auxiliary point of view, extremely well, yes.

[track 13]

JF Just to tail off for today, I wonder if you can talk about what events of world, national or even state significance, were you becoming aware of in your primary school years. I mean, there were things like royal visits, there were things like *Sputnik* and so on. What impacted on you?

CHANCE The royal visit, we missed largely, that was '53. We missed that because ... no, it must've been a later royal visit; it couldn't have been '53. Anyway, it was during the polio scare and we were all set to go and then they said, "No; the risks of putting so many kids together is too high." I think we were going to Northam. I think that's where the royal visit was. So that got cancelled, and then we found that the guy that I sat alongside in school, that same Ean Murray, was a polio carrier or a diphtheria carrier. It might have been diphtheria. Anyway, there was some enormous epidemic. I never got to see the Queen until about 1961 or thereabouts, when she waved to us, which I thought was rather nice of her! We were rowing a racing shell just downstream a bit from the brewery, but quite close to the road as she went past. We actually saw her look out to where our boat was and wave to us [laughs]. That was very nice. It is the only time I have seen the Queen. What was it you said?

JF *Sputnik* and space.

CHANCE *Sputnik*; I remember *Sputnik*. I remember going out on a front lawn and watching it go over, and we had a calf born; our milking cow had a calf that night, so of course that calf became *Sputnik*, and *Sputnik* later graduated to become our milking cow, so *Sputy* was around for a while [laughter].

But major events: the world was a pretty quiet place, but some do stick in my mind and they might seem a bit strange. But one of the people who has been influential in my life was Gamal Abdel Nasser, who I had huge respect for, and I followed the Suez crisis issues, this is 1955 and '56. I wasn't even 10 then, but I was cutting those stories out of the paper because I sensed that something huge was happening here and perhaps I wasn't quite aware of how significant it was, but when Eisenhower told the British to get out, basically, that they were wrong, I thought, "That's the United States actually being true to its roots." I didn't have a very high opinion of Eisenhower as it happened, but I thought, "That's the United States' role in the world", and it was quite prescient because that's actually what did happen. It was the beginning of the end of colonialism and that was the significant thing for me, that Nasser would pit Egypt against the greatest colonial power the world has ever known, and win. I mean, people had done it before, but they'd never won. Then Nasser went into his pro-Russian period, which never bothered me, but it just meant that the superpowers couldn't take anything for granted anymore, and I thought that was a good thing. And then we saw that followed by the steady destruction of the colonial era, sometimes with results that weren't all that good, I have to say, but it was a watershed in history. I had huge respect for Nasser as a result, more so than most Egyptians do now. I do spend quite a lot of time in Egypt, but when I speak to Egyptians about my regard for Nasser I'm actually thought quite strange.

JF Really?

CHANCE He's not highly regarded.

JF That's amazing when you think of how he put them on the world map.

CHANCE Yes, but to them Sadat is their hero and Nasser ... I'm not too sure what corrupted their view of him, because he was an amazing man.

JF It's perhaps a little bit later you talked about Johnson, LBJ, being another of your aficionados [laughs].

CHANCE Yes, LBJ is a hero of mine, and again he's a character that history treated badly, because all people of our age recall about LBJ is that chant, "LBJ, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?" and the Vietnam protest period. In fact, Vietnam wasn't LBJ's fault; it was well and truly on the way when he was there. He did oversee some escalation of the engagement in Vietnam, but I don't think he had a lot of choice in that either. I mean, that was a mistake we had already made. The reason I thought so highly of LBJ: one, he was a Texan. Texas is an area with a profoundly fundamentalist Republican outlook and he took on the Republicans in Texas; took them on by making an appeal to the poor white farmers and the blacks in Texas and by a recruiting and engagement campaign that should be used by any aspiring politician as a text. It was absolutely amazing, because in the US it's not just a matter of getting people to vote for you, it's a matter of getting people to vote and to have the courage to turn up at a polling booth; the courage and the interest. And that's exactly what he did. He stood on stumps in every redneck town in Texas and first got himself elected governor and then ultimately into Congress. Later, LBJ delivered most of the major social revolutions that JFK was credited with. JFK did not do the things that we credit him for, and could not do. He was a Catholic from Massachusetts, how could he? How could a Yankee do what his administration is credited for doing in the '60s in the south? Couldn't. A Yankee, especially a Catholic Yankee, who was a lawyer and came from Massachusetts, he couldn't do it. It was LBJ as the deputy who did that. He was a Texan; he could go down and speak to the good old boys in Louisiana and say, "Good old boys, you've got to change your ways, because if you don't change your ways, things ain't going to be real good. Now, this is what you've got to do." And they would accept that from a Texan. They were never going to accept it from a Boston lawyer. And yet Kennedy, he was the president; he got the benefit from all of that, but in fact it was LBJ's work. And logic actually demonstrates that he's the only one who could have. He had the courage to stand aside for what he believed was right and he had the tenacity to find the way to get there. He has never really been given credit for the extent of his success, but the major successes in reforming social justice in the United States, you can find LBJ's fingerprints all over them.

JF Fascinating. You later became interested, I think, in motorsports. I wonder if Donald Campbell's land speed attempts and things like that tickled your fancy as a kid.

CHANCE I used to watch them, and, like every kid, we were actually brought up on Donald Campbell and Malcolm Campbell and their amazing exploits. But speed records were never my thing; I always thought they were a bit contrived. I just loved motorsport in all of its forms.

JF And lastly, things like federal politics, did that impact on you much at Doodlakine when you were a kid?

CHANCE Oh, yes.

JF I mean, it was the Menzies era essentially, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes, very much so. I actually saw Menzies in question time once. In 1963 I went over with my school playing football in Canberra, and part of every school tour of Canberra is a visit to Parliament House. They were good enough to arrange a visit during question time. I remember a question of Menzies in which the opposition member asking the question (a backbencher as I recall) went through what was quite a long and involved question, not overly long. I mean, the Speaker hadn't pulled him up at all. The question was complex but very clearly put. I forget the issue, but it was a very well constructed case which really, really put the acid on Menzies. I thought, "How is he going to crawl his way out of this one?" While the question was being asked, Menzies was sitting at the dispatch box taking notes, looking up occasionally he'd take another note, the question concluded and the questioner sat down and Menzies sat back and then stood and said to the Speaker, "Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could ask the honourable member to repeat that question; I didn't quite catch it." [laughter] He was a master! I think he was a horrible man and I hated all of the things that he did, but he was a master [laughs].

JF And perhaps some of the interesting characters on the other side at that time, people like Evatt and Calwell and so on, were some interesting characters. Did they appeal to you?

CHANCE Amazing characters; but no, they didn't. The old style Labor Party (and we saw this get expressed in the Whitlam cabinet) were the bitter old men, and the bitter old men never did a thing for me. I wasn't a critic of the Whitlam government, and in fact some of the things that they did I thought were just amazing, wonderful achievements, but they were always diminished by the stuff that came out as a result of being in opposition for 23 years. The bitterness, the hatred, the issues around the split in the ALP in the '50s, which was still kind of painful even then, and even now. I mean, you can trace back most of Brian Burke's horrible bloody actions to the fact that he feels bitter about the way the split treated his father, or the way Chamberlain in particular treated his father. His father was a bloody fool. Tom Burke was an idiot. I mean, Chamberlain was no hero in anyone's estimation, but I think in terms of what he did with Tom Burke, he didn't have a choice. He was a left-wing leader of a party that was, in Western Australia, totally left, and these oddball right-wingers were running around disrupting things. Well, you've got to get rid of them [laughter].

Some of the things that have happened in the Labor Party, and the fact that the New South Wales Labor Party (which is not a body I have any time for at all; I think they're a bunch of mongrels) many of their problems traced back to the fact that while in Victoria you had a formal split between the DLP and the ALP, and that bloodletting that occurred in the '50s in Victoria as a result of that, you never had that formal split in New South Wales, so the poison stayed inside the system, in my view. And I don't think New South Wales, or Queensland for that matter, have ever properly recovered from that. I'm deeply distrustful of anything that comes out of Sydney in the ALP as a result. Here we didn't have the problems except ... it was a fringe issue, and basically the fringe issue was around Tom Burke. But Brian never got over it. Brian had debts to settle, and he still has, in my view. He saw the Carpenter government in particular as a left-backed government, even though Carpenter himself was non-factional, and if he had a faction it probably would have been way to the right of where we were; where the left were. But the left recognised in him, as we have with Ripper as being the right person at the right time, and he [Brian Burke] decided it was his job to bring it down, which is outrageous. What do you do? Anyway, your worst enemies are inside.

JF And on that word of wisdom, perhaps we'll fold up for the day. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW TWO

INTERVIEW THREE

[track 14]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview session 3 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance. It is in the series commissioned by the Western Australian parliamentary history program and it is being recorded on the 9th July 2010 at Parliament House, Perth with interviewer John Ferrell. Kim, today we are going to take off from your experiences at Wesley College.

CHANCE Yes.

JF As an introductory statement, how and why was it determined that you would attend Wesley for your secondary schooling?

CHANCE Oh, I see. Well, my family were members of the Methodist Church. Wesley was a highly regarded school. You had to go away somewhere, because there was no high school locally. The nearest high schools to us were in Northam, Perth or Kalgoorlie. So we had a need for boarding facilities, and Wesley was chosen, ultimately.

JF The obvious one, I suppose, yes. It would have been quite a big decision for a family to make because of the cost, I suppose, too in those days.

CHANCE Yes, it was very expensive, as it is now, particularly in the first year, [as] both my sister and I were at boarding schools.

JF And she was at MLC?

CHANCE At MLC.

JF Now, you became a boarder, obviously. Would you like to tell me about the boarding house and what living in the boarding house was like?

CHANCE There were three main dormitories, which housed the bulk of the first year, second year and third year students. Fourth years and fifth years were like dormitory prefects, so they were also in the same dorms. Then there was another wing of smaller dormitories, what we used to call the rabbit warren; the connotation is

obvious! They had only three or four people in each dormitory, but the big dorms, A dorm, B dorm and K dorm, housed 26 people.

JF So big open spaces with beds lining the walls, were they?

CHANCE Yes. There was no dividers and no study room; all study was carried out in the classrooms. It was like photographs people have seen of military hospitals. That is about as near as I can get.

JF And of course in those days communal bathrooms.

CHANCE Yes. One bathroom served the whole of the boarding school [and] that was up on the second floor. You were allocated a time and somebody would come and rap on the door and say, "Your shower time is now", and everyone would race up the stairs and have their shower and race back again and try to get dressed in time.

JF This communal life was a new experience for you, wasn't it?

CHANCE It was new, but that was relatively easy to adapt to. A lot of it was fun.

JF Yes. So who or what helped you to adjust to life as a boarder?

CHANCE Time. You're a long way from home. You only saw your parents a few times a year. I was 12 years old then, and you just get used to it. You make friends. I have to admit the first year was difficult. After that it came fairly easily, but I was still glad when it was all over.

JF Yes. And the first year of course was 1959, I think I am right in saying.

CHANCE Yes, that's right.

JF Who was sort of in charge of you there? Did you make a warm contact with, say, a boarding house master or matron or anybody of that nature?

CHANCE Yes, there was a boarding house master who was also a senior teacher. His name was Mr Glenn. Yes, he was our first point of reference. We also had a number of housemasters who actually lived in the boarding school. The

boarding master had his own house. They were, in the main, university students, usually ex-scholars who understood the system well. They were there as a first point of contact, but ultimately Mr Glenn was the boss.

JF Were they fulfilling a teaching role as well or were they just there as supervisors?

CHANCE Mr Glenn was; he was a senior teacher and a very, very good one. I still remember specific things that he taught me. He was a geography teacher and geography became my key passion, and remains so. What he taught me allowed me to ... If you were to point to any individual point on a globe of the earth I could tell you what the climate and land use patterns are in that area without having any prior knowledge of that country. His system of teaching was so good that we were able to actually identify not just what climate and land use existed but why it existed. That, to me, marks a great teacher; one who can teach you to understand why things occur and not what things occur. Some [teachers], I thought, failed miserably in that, but Mr Glenn was the best I ever came across.

JF Did he last through your whole five years there?

CHANCE Yes, he did. I am told he did leave Wesley and went to teach in Sydney. I am also told he eventually achieved the lifetime ambition that he and his wife had to have a daughter. They had four sons when I was there, all carbon copies of Mr Glenn. He was quite a distinctive looking man. One of the distinctive things was [that] he had two prominent bumps in his forehead (horns he called them), and all of his children had these horns, and they looked exactly the same as each other [laughs]. I heard from somebody who I know who lives in Sydney that also knew him who told me that Mr Glenn had a daughter. I said, "That's great after four boys," he said, "No, six boys." He had another two boys before they got their girl [laughter]. So there's six of them running around there somewhere, but I would recognise them in a minute.

JF We'll go on to other staff members perhaps now, because you've talked about him as making a very warm sort of relationship with you and being a significant influence. What about other people who were significant masters?

CHANCE Well, there was the headmaster, of course, who I didn't feel anywhere near as warm about.

JF That was Norman Roy Collins.

CHANCE Norman Roy Collins, yes.

JF Of course, in your first year you would hardly have had much to do with him, I suppose, but as you grew older no doubt you could have.

CHANCE Yes. I've got no doubt that Norman Roy Collins was a first-class person. He ran a very, very good school, but he was a scary character to little kids. We were all a bit concerned about him. I mean, that was his job, but he did run a very good school. Some of my friends actually later became quite close to him and had a very strong relationship with him. My relationship with him was always, not cool; I think wary is probably ... [laughter]

JF And probably understandably.

CHANCE Well, I think it's exactly what he wanted [laughs].

JF Yes. The headmaster can sort of set the pattern as to what he expects [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes. And he had very firm standards of behaviour. Unusually for the headmaster of a Methodist school, he was not a Methodist and he was a drinker.

JF He was, I understand, a colleague of the first two headmasters who'd been invited to join the staff from Queensland.

CHANCE Yes, that's correct. He was a boxer of some reputation. He had two nicknames; he was "Boxer" and he was to us, more commonly, "the Bean". Where that came from I don't know, but if you were mucking around or doing what you weren't supposed to be doing and somebody said, "Hey, the Bean's coming," you stopped mucking around quickly [laughs].

JF Goodness. That sort of nickname is not something you'd know how to spell, I suppose.

CHANCE "The Bean"? No it was B-E-A-N; "the Bean". I think it referred to his very bald head.

JF Oh, of course.

CHANCE But why "the Bean" and not "Chrome Dome" or something like that, I don't know [laughs].

JF It was the '50s and '60s after all [laughs].

CHANCE Yes.

JF Apart from Mr Collins, who else did you make some sort of warm contact with among the staff members?

CHANCE Well, we had an accountancy teacher who was an Olympian, and that was unusual. Mr Bell was from the famous Bell family of hockey players. He was an Olympian and that was something that we used to look to. Wesley was very much a hockey school; it dominated hockey. I think [that] of the 13 age teams in Wesley, in one year 12 won premierships and one shared its premiership with another school. It was a remarkable sport; not that I played hockey, but a number of my friends did. I was a rugby player. We had a rowing coach who was not a part of the school team; he was ONLY the rowing coach, and also a member of the Western Australian Eight. He was an influential man for most of us.

JF What was his name?

CHANCE I am just trying to recall.

JF I don't think he featured on the staff lists I looked at.

CHANCE No; he wouldn't be on the staff list. It will come back in a moment, because I know it as well as anything.

JF Did you have any contact with Mrs Mildred Manning?

CHANCE Oh, yes.

JF Because she was there for a long, long time. I think your last year there was her fortieth year of teaching there.

CHANCE Yes. Mildred was a Wesley icon. She actually taught my uncle while she was still Miss Le Souef then. She was just remarkable. Everybody loved Milly; everybody. We started a scholarship foundation after she died. That is still rolling along to this day, I think specifically around science. She was a science teacher; [she taught] biology. [She was] just a remarkable person. There were a number who I had a huge amount of time for. Mr Philpot who was my art teacher tried very hard to instil a sense of the arts in me and failed miserably. Our tech drawing teacher was more successful.

JF Who was that? I'm sorry; I'm pressing your memory here.

CHANCE Yes. I remembered Colin Philpot's name but not his. It'll come back again. [There were] some who I remember as being really good people, but I always held a bit of a grudge that they didn't have that skill to enable the capacity to teach their students why things happen and not what happened. In part Mr Bell was one of those, but he was only [the] junior accountancy [teacher]. The senior accountancy teacher was a guy by the name of MacLean, who was a very successful teacher. In terms of getting his students through leaving certificate accountancy, his pass rate was practically 100 per cent. He was remarkably successful, but it was learning by rote and I never clearly understood the accountancy systems.

JF Despite which, you got a distinction at leaving, I think.

CHANCE I got a distinction because he was a good teacher in terms of getting people through, but I still never quite grasped it until much, much later. I thought it would have been so much easier to tell us why you were moving that posting from that side of that account to that side of that account and what is the logic of that, but that is what they never did. You just knew that when you went from cashbook to ledger it shifted from one side to the other, from debit side to credit side. Nobody told me why; you just did it that way. That was different from the way Glenn was able to

get things across. But in areas like economics, which was my other great love ... Arthur Simpson was our economics teacher and also the coach of the first 18 football club. He tried very hard to make me an Aussie Rules footballer but he was less successful at that. But Arthur was an amazing guy; I suspect not the brightest guy in the world, but just a very, very good, solid teacher. He mastered the art of getting economics through to people; why things happen. This major event occurred, like the Corn Laws in England, for example. "Why are the Corn Laws significant to today's economy?" and the whole process of protectionism within a foreign trade, export trade environment? That remained a passion for me, but Arthur's fatal flaw was [that] he was politically far to the right. We had this wonderful contrast with a guy who never actually taught me, but he was Dr Trenaman. Trenaman was a brilliant, brilliant man and politically far to the left. We had this wonderful set of contrasts. We used to play them off against each other, and they knew that very well. Arthur would tell us something and we'd say, "But Dr Trenaman said that that wasn't the case," even though he hadn't actually said that, but we thought he might have [laughter]. And Arthur would have to fumble his way through saying why Dr Trenaman was wrong, without contradicting him. It was a wonderful contrast. Did Dr Trenaman teach me or not? He was a history teacher, but I didn't do history. He must have come in on occasions to do something with us, because I remember being in his class, but I don't remember him being my teacher. Anyway, we had this wonderful opportunity to balance left against right. I was fascinated by the way people interpret things differently. We thought it was entirely legitimate that they had different views; it wasn't a matter of saying, "Well, why is one teacher telling us this and another teacher telling us that?" We knew we were dealing with an inexact science.

JF Economics in the days you were studying it still had quite a strong economic history component, didn't it?

CHANCE Absolutely.

JF I think 40 per cent or something was economic history.

CHANCE Oh, 50–50, yes. It was fascinating. I am really, really disappointed in the way economics is taught now, which is all statistics, and that's rubbish.

JF Theoretical; yes.

CHANCE Yes. Statistics are a key to proving a case and to construct a mathematical model, but that's further along. To me, you've got to understand what the systems are and then you start using the tools of analysis. To understand what the systems are, you have to understand how you arrived at those systems. You have to have history and you have to have systems. The mathematical end of it is actually another science, to me. [What] if somebody were to say to you, "Look, here's a Third World country and we want you to go in and reform its economy"? I once had this discussion with Eric Ripper. I said, "Eric, if somebody said to you, 'We want you to take over as the economic modeller, the Treasurer, of this Third World country and try to get it to a point', how would you go about it?" He said, "What a fascinating question." He'd never thought about it. That is the difference between he and I; I think about things like that all the time. How would I do that? I was in Ethiopia recently and I thought, "How would you go about fixing a country like this?" In fact, the answers are all pretty much applicable from one country to the next. There are simple, basic rules that you've got to have. It comes down to, after you've sorted out issues like transparency and integrity (beating corruption is probably the biggest thing), and that is doable, you've got to have a system which has transparent decision-making processes which actually knows where it's going and which gives people some control over the system. It doesn't matter whether you're in Ethiopia or the United States of America, the answers are all the same.

JF Yes, so I wondered when you said to me a few days ago that maths was not your strong point, I see some sort of relationship between the theoretical side of economics and maths.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Those two abilities often are related. I wondered if you'd had difficulties with the theoretical side of it on that score.

CHANCE No, none at all. Mathematics wasn't my strong subject because nobody ever explained to me the purpose and function of algebraic calculations. Again, they just failed to get through to me what the purpose of those symbols was. In other forms of mathematics, and particularly geometry and trigonometry, I was a high performer, but just in that area of algebra I never got it. Much later it occurred to me what the value of the systems were and I understood it. I don't have a problem with mathematics now. I can read quite complicated formulae and understand them,

but nobody had got me to that point. It was a period when teachers were hard to come by. Many of the people we had teaching us weren't teachers at all.

JF And teaching by rote was one of the strong things of that day, wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Teach them the rules of thumb and leave them to apply those rules.

CHANCE Yes, and that's what they didn't do; they didn't give us those rules of thumb to apply. Sorry, some didn't. But many of our teachers were not trained as teachers. They had a relevant degree, but they weren't trained as teachers.

JF Yes, and that was actually later coming in for the private colleges than it was for the state system. You wouldn't have got a job in the '60s within the state system without a teacher training certificate.

CHANCE No, that's right.

JF But you could still get it on the basis of perhaps a degree or something like that, or just long service, in the private system.

CHANCE Yes. I mean even our headmaster who was himself a very good teacher still used to teach poetry; he just loved it. He had a list of qualifications as long as your arm, but his education qualifications were only at diploma level. I remember seeing that.

JF That's right; MA, Dip Ed.

CHANCE Yes.

[track 15]

JF We've talked quite a bit about staff, so perhaps we should change the focus now. Whom did you pick up with as friends in your time at Wesley, particularly those who've remained important to you afterwards?

CHANCE Some certainly have. Firstly, there was a group in the boarding school that we'd been together ever since first year, but a lot of my friends were principally

people who were engaged in the same sports as I was, particularly the rowers. The rowers were a club of their own, and we very much stuck together and actually tried to bring into our group those of our friends who were not rowers. Some of them we brought in very successfully. The rowers and the Rugby players tended to be the same people. And then athletics, because athletics is very much an individual sport, that did matter not so much. Although I did have a very good friend who later went on to play football for Richmond, who was [in] the first division in our age group in shot-put ... an amazing athlete and one who could have been an Olympian.

JF Who are we talking about?

CHANCE Ray Boyanich. [He] sat alongside me in year 12. Arthur Simpson, the Aussie Rules coach, took Ray under his wing and actually coached him through to a leaving certificate that he was never going to get when he first went into year 12. As a student, he was a great athlete. Ray was six foot five. He weighed 16 stone. He was an amazing athlete, and coordinated. He was an incredible guy. He broke the under-17 shot-put record, which is an event measured in half inches ... broke it by five feet; just incredible. He was identified (this is before we had a WA Institute Of Sport) as an Olympic ... I always get this one mixed up ... decathlete ... anyway, the one that does not have equestrian in it, because he was just an amazing all-round sportsman: high jump record setter, long jump record setter, shot-put record setter, the lynch man in the relay team. He was blindingly fast ... just an incredible guy. But in those days, you couldn't have any professional link to your sport and still be an Olympian, and he wanted to play professional football. So he played for West Perth briefly, and without a great deal of success, I have to say. Then Richmond picked him up, and he was fairest and best three years running with Richmond ... an amazing athlete.

JF Have you kept in touch with him much over the years?

CHANCE No, I haven't ... enough to know that he's still here, because when I was at the Karragullen field day last year, which is where he came from (he was up in the hills area ... they were market gardeners or fruit growers) I met a guy with the same name, Boyanich. I said, "Are you related to Ray?", and he said, "Yes, Ray is my nephew." And I said, "Is he still here?" He said, "Ray's still here. In fact he was here 10 minutes ago", but I missed him. I'd love to catch up with him again.

JF And other fellows that were important to you?

CHANCE Of the rowing fraternity, Malcolm Sedgewick, who tragically died not long ago. Alan Moir, also now dead ... he died quite young. It's awful when you start going back through it. Neville Phillips, who was my best man at my wedding, and I still see quite a lot of him. Ian Lloyd; not a rower, but he was part of our little group. Malcolm Hams. It was basically everybody that we rowed with. In fact we are thinking about bringing together that crew, because in 2013 (we raced in 1963) it will be 50 years.

JF That's a good excuse.

CHANCE We've lost two of them.

JF So rowing became something of a passion, but your introduction to that was new at Wesley, was it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about the first experiences with rowing and what attracted you?

CHANCE From the time I saw the sport and from the time that I learnt about it, I wanted nothing else but to be an oarsman. We weren't allowed to be rowers in year 1 (you had to be a year 2), and you had to have at least intermediate certificate swimming, which I didn't have, so I had to do that, before you got into the boat. But we had a rowing pool on the school grounds, just near the science block. There were allocated times when budding oarsman were allowed to go down and work out on this rowing pool, which was just like a swimming pool, a small swimming pool, but with a set of slides and a seat and an oar. So I worked on that all of year 1 and was able to finally get into a boat in year 2 after I had passed the necessary swimming qualifications, yes, which was a battle for me; I was never a great swimmer. Once that was done, I got into a boat. I still remember the first stroke that I took in an old tub pair, and I thought, "Oh, yes. This is it." I actually made a crew for the head of the river event in that first year of rowing. I was in the second IV. I graduated to the first IV in the next year, then made the first VIII in fourth year, and was captain of boats in fifth year.

JF You ended up with colours, I think, and a stroke trophy, didn't you?
Was it in fifth year?

CHANCE Yes; fifth year. Actually I think I won my colours in fourth year. I won general colours in fourth year for rowing and athletics and then rowing colours in fifth year.

JF And your other new sport ... was it a new sport at Wesley ... Rugby?

CHANCE Rugby was new, yes. I played in the very first first XV that we put together. That was great fun. I hadn't quite taken to Aussie Rules, because I'd had no background in football, because primary school did not have enough kids to play football. Rugby was an amazing sport ... it is an amazing sport ... because you can fit all kinds of physique and aptitude into a Rugby team, because there's 15 completely different tasks in a Rugby team, whereas an Aussie Rules team, basically, everyone is the same. Basically, six foot two, 85 kilograms, and you can play anywhere; the skills are all very much the same. In Rugby the skills are all totally different, and we had some very different people. Basically we had the leftovers from Aussie Rules, because in those days you weren't allowed to play Rugby if an Aussie Rules coach wanted you. Arthur Simpson did pull me out of the first XV in the preseason in 1963, and that's why I actually went to Canberra with the first XVIII. He said, "You're big. You're fast. I need a ruckman, and you're coming to play with us," and I had to; I had no choice.

But in Rugby we had a guy, he was no athlete. He was an American actually. His name was Robert Brueski, but he was the best prop forward I'd ever come across. Massive ... huge man. Brueski ... Polish probably, Polish-American. Shoulders about five feet wide and he could just lock a pack together. The problem was finding another prop forward to match him in size and strength. Then we had this little guy, who was a cheeky little guy, he was our hooker. He used to hang in between these two huge people. We had another guy who was about six foot seven, long skinny guy, but he was the best lock forward I'd ever come across, because he could use those long legs to stop the pack from spinning. With novice Rugby Union sides, the biggest problem is the pack will either collapse in the middle or it will spin, and that will put you all offside if you spin. He could lock our pack together. So I loved it.

JF While we are on sport, you eventually then did get into Australian Rules there, but only in your fifth year.

CHANCE No, only temporarily, because Arthur said, after he came back from Canberra, "Look, you played okay, but you need to learn more of the basics of the game, so I am going to play you in the second XVIII." And I said, "Arthur, you're not allowed to do that," because the limitation was they could only pull you out of Rugby if they offered you a side in the first XVIII; they couldn't put you back into the second XVIII. So he said, "So you don't want to play Aussie Rules, do you?" I said, "Well, no. I was happy playing Rugby." He said, "Oh, well, you can go back." So I went back then to the first XV. It was only the year after that that it became an officially recognised sport, but it wasn't then an officially recognised sport.

JF What a shame, because you could have excelled as well in that perhaps.

CHANCE Oh, well, no, but I did love it, and I did get a chance to try for state selection. I didn't get it, but it was nice to be asked to come and train.

JF You were a boarder. What was the state of play in relations between day boys and boarders at Wesley?

CHANCE Okay. It was sort of like being different families, but our relationships were good. Indeed Neville Phillips, who I indicated was my best man, was a day boy who hadn't come to Wesley until fourth year. He'd been at Applecross high school. As I said, he and I remain great friends. But no, there was no tension between day boys and boarders, as there was at some schools. We were kind of like different families. Boarders were a family. Day boys had their family somewhere else, so there was some difference there. If you had a problem, you were more likely to go to a boarder than you were to a day boy, if you needed help. Aside from that, our relationship was good.

[track 16]

JF I was going to ask you, was there any tradition of initiations that you had to go through in coming to Wesley?

CHANCE No, no; that was something that Mr Glenn would not permit. No, he was good at that. Without making a big thing about it, he just said, “No, look, we don’t do that”, and everyone understood that we don’t do that.

JF Which house were you allocated to?

CHANCE I was Mofflin House, and that’s one of the things I think that created that rapport between the day boys and the boarders. In some schools the boarders all belonged to one house; we didn’t. So in any one house there were about one-third boarders, two-thirds day boys, because that was the proportion across the whole school. So we were house colleagues even though we might be day boy and boarder, and I thought that was good.

JF Yes.

CHANCE Yes, because the houses were important in terms of our competitive structure; they were very real. Many of my friends were in other houses, and the competition in that was tremendous.

JF So the houses were important in sporting areas, were they?

CHANCE Yes; only in sport.

JF Only in sport?

CHANCE Yes. They didn’t have any other function.

JF Didn’t have others?

CHANCE No. I mean, we used to have house captains; indeed, I was the vice-captain of Mofflin. The joint captains of Mofflin happened to be also the joint captains of the school (that was just something that happened) but it really had no significance outside sport.

JF Whilst you were there, and certainly in Mr Collins’ era, I believe there were quite a few building developments on site at Wesley.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What do you remember of those?

CHANCE Well, the big one was the chapel; that was the big one. The science block had just been finished when I got there, and it was great to have that. The chapel was huge. We were fundraising all the way through my time there, and then it was actually built while I was there, so that was a major change. Then I think the next development (and this is after I left) was the redevelopment of the dining room area, which was quite a big development. They were just talking about that; they were on the planning stages. The swimming pool was finished just as I left. They were actually digging the hole for it while I was there. I don't think I ever swam in it as a student. I remember going back there and swimming there, but, no, the river was our pool, but, yes ...

JF The boatshed had been established before you got there, had it?

CHANCE Yes. The boatshed was pretty crappy actually. [laughs] It was.

JF Oh. I think that does date from Mr Collins' earlier years then, does it?

CHANCE Oh, does it? I didn't know that.

JF I think boatsheds and boats were listed as one of the things that he worked on when he first got there, which I think was '52 or something ... no, no; he was headmaster in '52, but he was there in the '30s, I think.

CHANCE Okay. See, that would have surprised me, because we always thought he wasn't all that sympathetic to the oarsmen.

JF He had passed on from that, perhaps, onto the thing of the moment.

CHANCE Yes, yes. But the boatshed was a smelly, horrible place.

JF Was it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Right. The recreation centre, was that part of the swimming pool complex?

CHANCE Yes, yes. It may have even been a second stage of that; I don't think it happened consecutively.

JF No. Mentioning the chapel, how did you relate to the religious emphasis of the school? How strong was that?

CHANCE We had a great chaplain; when I got married I asked him to perform the ceremony ... well, yes, and no. Reverend Green was the chaplain while I was there, and it was actually Frank Drysdale who married us. Frank took over from Green, but not while I was there. But I knew Frank because he used to be the minister in Kellerberrin.

JF Yes.

CHANCE The religious end of it was really a matter of choice at Wesley. If you wanted to be heavily involved in the religious end, you could; it just wasn't my choice, and has never been. But I've always been grateful for the way in which they taught us our religion, in a sense that it's okay to question accepted beliefs and it's okay to embrace other faiths, and I thought that was good. The essential message was that, you know, there is a fundamental code being taught here; it is the code that's important, not anything else. I thought that was really useful because we're ... it was a bit like the way Mr Glenn taught geography. He told you the whys and the hows rather than the whats. I think people who are taught religion in the sense of the whats were more likely to abandon it because the prescriptive-type teachings didn't serve them well. But I could have done with about 75 per cent less formal religious teaching than I actually had. I used to resent some of it such as having to turn up for chapel every morning, and the Sunday night Evensong I hated with a passion. I understand depression without ever having it, but I reckon I went really close to it on Sunday evenings while I was at boarding school. Your weekend was over, the sun was going down, you had to look forward to Monday, and then they wanted you to go to this bloody Evensong when all you wanted to do was put your head down into a book or whatever.

JF Yes. What was so horrible about it? Can you recall particular things?

CHANCE Well, it was the association of the end of your weekend, and the fact that you weren't really happy about another week's school. Yes, and it was just an association of things; it was something I did not want to do.

JF I wondered if it had anything to do with an evangelistic sort of approach. Were they trying to push decision making for Christianity or something?

CHANCE No, I don't think so.

JF No?

CHANCE No, because there wasn't much of that. It was a relatively short service and you'd have a couple of hymns and it was all over in half an hour, but I think it was what it marked. But it was depressing. I used to hate it. I think I understand ... well, if people feel like that all the time when they've got depression, then I am very sympathetic.

JF Some of the other things that you participated in: we haven't talked a lot about your own participation in athletics. We mentioned Boyanich's exploits, but tell me about your athletics at Wesley?

CHANCE I was fast and I was strong. I was a good jumper; not a great high jumper, I was a long jumper. I was a sprinter; although I tried hard, when I was younger, to be a middle distance runner, I never got much better. Eight hundred metres I was okay on, but 400 metres I was very competitive; 200 metres, that was probably my best event. I was close to even time on 200 metres. One hundred metres; I would make the relay team but I wouldn't anchor it (that was Boyanich). There were probably two others in my age group faster than me, so I would normally run second in the second leg of the relay. But shot; I loved shot. We had this great old Welshman, Taffy Morgan, who was about 4'5", I reckon, and probably six feet across the shoulders. He was a real Welshman. He was a great coach, and he coached people like myself and Boyanich and Ron Melville, who was a great shot-putter, a great footballer. He couldn't do much. I think he had emphysema or half a lung missing or something; he used to wheeze and cough and splutter. He was an amazing old guy.

JF Was he on the teaching staff?

CHANCE No.

JF Was he just a coach from outside?

CHANCE All he coached was shot, but he was like a sort of a retainer of the school, and, being a Welshman, probably somehow connected with the Methodist Church. He used to live on the school grounds; in fact, we had our own shot-put training area, because shot-put is dangerous if there are other kids running around. We had our own shot-put training area which was virtually in his backyard; it was between the backyard and the cadets' arsenal. There was a little area, and the scout hall was in the same area, and we could close that off (it had a fence) so that the shot-putters were able to train in there and not kill anyone, which was really good. God knows what we would have done if we'd had javelin, as the girls' schools did; I don't know how they worked that. We'd have been spearing people left, right and centre! [laughs] But, yes, I loved my athletics. I made the inters athletics team first as a sprinter, I suppose, in second year, and then every year after that as a shot-putter and sprinter, yes. I loved athletics; it was good.

JF The cadets is another big part for you of that school experience.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF When did you start the cadet association?

CHANCE In second year. I was promoted to sergeant in the next year, a mortar specialist, then an under officer after that, and company commander.

JF So that was quite a success story for you?

CHANCE Yes, I loved the cadets, yes; every Tuesday.

JF Was it only once a week during the term?

CHANCE Yes, every Tuesday, and then a two-week camp in ... it must have been about April. In the first school holidays, anyway; between first term and second term.

JF Yes.

CHANCE And then for the promotion camps, they were in summer. Particularly if you were going to a specialists school for mortar or machine guns or whatever to go to sergeant, that's the only way you could get there. That was in summer, and then the under officer school was also in summer.

JF Where did you do your camps?

CHANCE Northam.

JF Oh yes, all at Northam army camp?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That was pretty rugged, wasn't it, in those days in terms of its facilities or lack thereof? [chuckles]

CHANCE We didn't even have beds. The first camp I went to, they issued us with like an empty chaff bag (a clean, new one) each, and then, between three people, a bale of hay. The three people broke up the bale of hay into thirds and then fluffed the hay up and stuffed it into this palliasse, and that was your bed. It made you understand what the groundsheet was for; it was to stop the hay coming through and spearing you in the night. [laughs] But after the first year they did issue us with camp stretchers, which were much better. The facilities were ... I mean, we loved it.

JF What about showers? I think they only had cold running water, didn't they?

CHANCE Yes, it was cold water, yes.

JF I don't know, but in some experiences of Northam you had to shower at six in the morning, straight after reveille?

CHANCE Yes, before reveille.

JF Before reveille?

CHANCE It was straight after the reveille sounded, yes, and before morning parade. Yes, that was a bit nippy, but we didn't seem to mind that. The food was excellent; yes, the food was really, really good. The army had a lot of resources. When I was in cadets, that was just after the end of Nashos, so they had considerable resources available to them, because all of the stuff the Nashos used to use was basically available to us, including some very good mostly WO2s, a couple of WO1s, as trainers, and they were specialists; they were really good.

JF Who were some of those who you remember; some of the ARA men?

CHANCE Yes, okay. Oh, gee, there was a guy called Merredith who was a WO1, and his son was actually at our school ... or was he? He was certainly in one of my training camps, anyway. Pitt? Pik, Pik!

JF Pik? Oh yes.

CHANCE Warrant Officer Pik, who was actually a World War II corporal and was with my father's unit in World War II.

JF He was also at national service training at Swanbourne, I think.

CHANCE I bet he was, yes. He was an amazing guy, Pik. He had a voice on him; you could hear him from 100 miles away. He was a lovely guy. [laughs] My father told me a story of how he'd gone from ... it must have been from Cairo, I imagine, during the war, and he'd been sent to England for a specialist drill training course (this is in the middle of the war; it's an amazing thing). Anyway, they got on the ship in Alexandria or wherever, and he got on the booze while he was on the ship to England and managed to lose his rifle. [laughs]

JF Oh dear!

CHANCE So at one stage when he was bawling me out for doing something I just said, "Well at least I didn't lose my bloody rifle", and he said, "What?" [laughs] Lovely guy. I never thought I would remember those two names; I haven't had to think about them for 40 years.

JF I mean, in a way that was your opportunity to learn something about leadership.

CHANCE Yes.

JF To what extent did you have real responsibility within the cadet corps?

CHANCE Oh, it was actually very real, to the point of knowing how to give an order, knowing how to explain to somebody why something had to be done when they didn't want to do it, explaining safety procedures when we were using live ammunition in particular, and why the safety procedures were necessary. We were using dangerous weapons (heavy machine guns, mortars) something that they wouldn't allow these days. We even used to fire the mortars on the school oval, for Christ's sake! Can you imagine anyone allowing you to do that now? Yes, we used to set up a cluster of cardboard boxes up at one end and we'd bed down our base plate and fire mortars. [laughs]

JF Good grief!

CHANCE Boom!

JF Golly! What sort of a shot were you, because I take it you started with rifles before moving onto that?

CHANCE Yes, I was a member of our Challenge Cup shooting team. We shot our way out of B grade into A grade (that was probably our most successful year) but then they changed, as the army changed completely throughout Australia, from the standard targets that civilians still use, which was the tin hat target, that one, where the bull is there. [draws diagram].

JF Oh yes.

CHANCE They changed from that target to the figure target, and all you had to do was hit it; it didn't matter where you hit it.

JF It took the fun out of it? It took the competition out, I suppose, in a way?

CHANCE Yes, yes; I wasn't as good as that, because with shooting at that target (and this is exactly what they do now because I still go to the Queen's Prize every year) if you hit the target in, say, a maggie out here [draws diagram], the target would go down, and they'd put a mark on it and then put it up again so that you knew you were going high and right and your wind direction was, say, 10 knots that way so you'd know how to adjust for that. You'd have to think through why you were high, because you shouldn't be (that's an error). So you'd think through about how you were holding things, are you relaxing properly, but you certainly wouldn't adjust your sight. So if your next shot came in there, you'd say, "Well, I've got my wind right but I've still got this issue about height."

JF So that was 12 o'clock, say, because we can't see the diagram on tape?

CHANCE Yes, exactly, yes.

JF So you'd then adjust for it being high?

CHANCE Yes. Whereas with a figure target, if you hit it, it wasn't marked. So you might have been firing high and right, but you didn't know that, so your next shot might have gone all the way off the target, which was bad. [laughs]

JF Did you have any experience with FN30s, or were you always only on 30s?

CHANCE I did use FN762s, yes, but the old Lee-Enfield 303 was our bread and butter, but also Owen guns, Bren guns, Vickers machine guns.

JF Quite exciting for a teenager, I think, that sort of stuff?

CHANCE Oh yes! To let kids go ... at one stage in Northam we were using Owen guns, which was very unusual, but there was a whole stack of this nine millimetre or 38-calibre ammunition that they were trying to get rid of because it was too old to keep and they had no further use for it. So they said, "Give it to the kids and let them blast it through these Owen guns." [laughs] We went through cases and cases of ammunition; it was a lot of fun.

JF They are not terribly accurate, are they?

CHANCE No.

JF They are sort of a splatter gun?

CHANCE Yes. We were only using them on a 25-metre range.

JF Yes.

CHANCE That's about all they were ever designed to do, and, frankly, 38 calibre ... I mean, you get hit any further than 25 metres away, it isn't going to hurt much anyway.

JF No.

CHANCE It's quite a low-velocity bullet. It hits hard when it hits because it's a big bullet, nine millimetre, but it was designed and it was very effective for very close infighting in jungle or urban warfare conditions. It was very effective. Not all that reliable, though; they used to jam.

[track 17]

JF Yes. Now, we're sort of getting towards the end of the time for today. Can you draw this together and talk about overall how significant you think Wesley was in your development?

CHANCE Oh, very. For a country boy, I think I did at least half my mental and physical development on the water, which was something Wesley gave me a chance to do as an oarsman. It also taught me a number of things about what it is to be a citizen in a total sense; it gave me a sense of wanting to be a part of the structure of society. It enabled me to question commonly accepted values that

probably weren't very valuable, things like racism for example. It gave us an opportunity to say, "Well, society has a point of view about ethnicity which is wrong" and that's one of the things that you can go and do something about. So, yes, I thought it was a valuable part. I just wish they'd fed us better.

JF [laughs] So the kitchens and dining room was not a feature?

CHANCE The food was terrible and it was just inadequate and I think I have a minor eating disorder as a result of it.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. I can be almost compulsive about eating, yes.

JF Goodness. I shouldn't prolong this too much more today, but you managed an eight subject junior. Were you pleased with your results for junior?

CHANCE Yes. One of those I picked up in the next year because you could only do seven, but I did one junior subject as a fourth year because I wanted to do it in my leaving. I don't think you were able to sit a leaving subject without doing —

JF First off, no.

CHANCE I think so, yes, something like that, so that's why it's unusual.

JF Yes, and you didn't include maths in your upper school line-up.

CHANCE No. I stuck with it until I passed my first examination and then I pulled out. I thought I knew everything I needed to know and I wasn't going to get anywhere with these algebraic formulae if nobody was going to tell me what they were about, so I dropped it.

JF Right. Just one very last thing to talk about, I noticed you were on a library committee, mentioned as being on a library committee at Wesley. What did that entail?

CHANCE Well, I was on a number of committees actually. The library committee probably is the least of them.

JF Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't pick the others up [chuckles].

CHANCE But that was Dr Trenaman's committee. I think we just used to help out a bit in the library, stack some books and, yes, we didn't do much at all. Trenaman used to consult with us as to what sort of books to buy. I'm sure he never took any notice of what we told him but he did used to consult. No, my main committees were the ... the general sports committee was the big one of course because it is the general sports committee which allocates colours. I don't know what else I was on.

JF Yes, well I think we haven't picked up on a number of little things which we might talk about next week briefly on our next occasion. But thank you very much, that's a very good day's work.

CHANCE Thanks, I've got to go now to a funeral.

END OF INTERVIEW THREE

INTERVIEW FOUR

[track 18]

JF This meeting contains the recording of interview number four with the Honourable Kimberly Maurice Chance, MLC, in a series commissioned by the Western Australian Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 6 August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

Now, Kim, thinking about your school days, you were at an all-boys school for that period, at Wesley? To what extent were you able to have, as a Wesley boy, interaction with the opposite sex?

CHANCE We had our sister school, of course, the Methodist Ladies College, which we used to mix with quite frequently. We had dancing classes on usually Saturday afternoons, which was an opportunity. But, generally speaking, it was fairly limited, yes.

JF When you said Methodist Ladies College, you were talking about MLC Claremont, I suppose?

CHANCE Claremont, yes.

JF Was Penrhos going then, or not?

CHANCE Not under that name, but there was its precursor school, which was then called MLC South Perth, which wasn't on the Penrhos site. That was down closer to the Royal Perth Golf Club.

JF I think it was Angelo Street, was it, or one of those?

CHANCE No, further down towards ... what street is it ... South Terrace, down that way.

JF Yes, could be?

CHANCE Down towards the south end of Royal Perth Golf Club.

JF They weren't associated with you?

CHANCE No. Not in any sense, really, no.

JF So you had what might be termed a nearly celibate existence for those five years?

CHANCE Quite monastic, yes. Quite monastic, yes.

JF But you had school socials and so on, I guess, that involved the girls?

CHANCE We did, yes; yes.

JF What about dancing? Did you take to that?

CHANCE It was really just an opportunity to mix with the girls. I never took it that seriously. But our main social events were the school balls, and there was basically one of those each term. So, yes, they were the sort of highlights of our life, yes.

JF I guess coming from a rural community, you would have probably been familiar with dancing a little bit before that, were you?

CHANCE A bit. I mean, they were, in those days, the key social function, yes.

JF I suppose, from my knowledge of rural WA, it would have involved all the old-time dancers a lot in those days?

CHANCE Yes. Yes, well, this was still in the early years of rock, of course. A rock band ... to get to hear one ... you had to go to usually one of the surf club functions, so we used to frequent a few of those as well.

JF Did you, yes. And you were allowed out to do that from, were you, from Wesley?

CHANCE Yes. We had boarders' weekends, which gave us opportunity to get out. Generally, if school was in session, you wouldn't be able to go to something like that, yes.

JF That was the main thing I wanted to pick up from Wesley. But then to think about after Wesley, were you associated very much with the old boys' association?

CHANCE No. I was never much of an old boy. I mean, I did all of the things that one feels they have to do. I'm part of the Mildred Manning Foundation, but, no, I think I've been to one old boys' event in my whole life. And that was fun, I have to say. It was good to catch up with people that you hadn't seen for 30 years and just to see how much and how little they'd changed. One of the things that really struck me (physically people changed, obviously) but how 30 years of adult life actually doesn't change people one iota. They tend to be, with a couple of significant exceptions, exactly the same as they were.

JF It sort of confirms the personality that's there, rather than changes it?

CHANCE Yes. So at age 17 it's pretty much locked in. Yes, there are significant exceptions, but in the main people are what they always were, which is kind of comforting [laughter].

JF It's comforting if you start off well, I suppose?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF The Mildred Manning Foundation, how much time does that take and what does your role involve?

CHANCE It doesn't take any time. I just made an up-front contribution to it when it was first launched, and we continue to be recognised. It's accumulated a significant amount of money now, and I think it's a great tribute to Mildred.

JF What are the proceeds used for?

CHANCE I think for scholarships to assist deserving students ... hopefully, given Mildred's background, deserving science students.

JF Coming then to your post-school life, you had completed year 12. Had you had a career plan of any sort while you were a student?

CHANCE I just wanted to be a farmer. I had absolutely no ambition whatever to attend university, which in those days was still pretty rare, not many people did. But I had well and truly had enough of formal education; I just wanted to go and get my hands dirty.

JF Did you have any opportunities as a schoolboy for part-time occupations?

CHANCE No.

JF Had you experienced the world of work to any degree?

CHANCE Only when I was at home on the farm, yes.

JF And, of course, every farm boy gets well and truly involved in everything that's going on there, I suppose?

CHANCE Yes. I learned to drive when I was 10 or 11, yes. It was in a truck what's more, so I learnt to master crashed gearboxes at a very early age.

JF Double declutching and all that?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That leads naturally on to talking about a driver's licence. I suppose you were first in line on your birthday to get it when you were 17?

CHANCE No, no. In fact, I waited a whole nearly nine days.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE Yes, which was thought to be a bit strange. People were starting to question that I'd waited that long. My licence is still dated from the date I first got it, and it's on about ... in fact, it might have been 10 days ... I think it's 26 November is my licence date. My birthday is on the 16th, so I waited 10 days.

JF Goodness me.

CHANCE Yes. I'm not too sure why that happened, but usually people were knocking on the policeman's door at seven o'clock in the morning of their birthday [chuckles].

JF Yes, indeed.

CHANCE I don't know. Perhaps the local policeman had been on holiday or something, I don't know. I don't recall what the reason was, but it was a fairly informal process in those days. You turned up with a licensed driver ... in my case with my dad ... and you asked if you could have a licence, please, and usually the police officer said, "Yes, well I've seen you driving around, you don't do a bad job." In my case, we did actually go for a drive around town, yes.

JF Was this done in Doodlakine or Kellerberrin?

CHANCE Kellerberrin, where the police station is. Sergeant Colin Bake was my tester, and we went for a drive around town, and we even had to back up a laneway. Yes, it was quite a sophisticated test by the standards of those days. We came back; he deemed that I was capable of driving and I was a licensed driver from then on.

JF Were you in the truck at that stage for your test?

CHANCE No. You couldn't get a truck licence until you were 21 in those days, which wasn't a bad thing, in fact, because trucks were very much more difficult things to drive in those days than they are now. I mean they're really wussy things now; but they were a manful occupation to drive those things in those days: the brakes didn't work very well, the steering was very heavy; it was quite an athletic pursuit to drive one.

JF And not to mentioned the crash box, which you've already talked about?

CHANCE And the crash box, yes.

JF So when you'd left school then did you begin straightaway to work on the family farm?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Was there some formal agreement about that with your dad? How did that work because often farm boys were expected to do things rather than be formally employed with pay for it and so on?

CHANCE I actually started with a sharefarming agreement, so I was a sharefarmer.

JF From the beginning, yes.

CHANCE And didn't become a partner in the business until some years later.

JF That's interesting. I noticed the date, you see, because I think you said sharefarming from '60 to '64. Were you sharefarming with your dad even before you'd left school?

CHANCE That doesn't look right to me.

JF No. Well, I don't know where I got that date from, but somewhere it said '60 to '64.

CHANCE Yes, '63 and '64, I was sharefarming, and then I guess I joined the partnership in '65. So in my third year.

JF Did you have a particular aspect of the farm that was your responsibility or did you just get into everything?

CHANCE No, whatever happened, I was there, yes.

JF How did you go with things like shearing, for example? Were you a shearer?

CHANCE No. And I deliberately avoided it for a long time. But, given my father's earlier profession as a wool classer, I did learn that trade, and later got my own stencil.

JF So you did wool classing then, at a tech school somewhere, did you?

CHANCE Fremantle tech, at what is now ... well it's the old Fremantle lunatic asylum. Do you know the building ... the strange building?

JF Yes. The Fremantle Arts Centre it's called these days.

CHANCE The Fremantle Arts Centre, that's right, yes. My mother actually knew the building as a nurse in Perth because occasionally she had to go and pick up patients from there. She remembers it as being just the scariest place in the world; it really was. When I called it a lunatic asylum, I wasn't being politically incorrect; that's what it was called, and it was quite a scary place. It was all being renovated when we were there. We actually used outbuildings which were out the rear, temporary-type buildings at the rear of the main building. But that was all being renovated at that stage and it was quite an imposing (and it is) a very imposing building, but scary.

JF What did the course entail? Was it a continuous course for some weeks or was it once week for so many weeks or something?

CHANCE It was a block, yes. In the same way as apprenticeships were done in those days, it was a block and then you were given a provisional stencil, as I recall. Then I think your next five wool clips were monitored for compliance with the standards. Once you had gone through that, you then became ... this is for owner class, this is not a professional stencil. With the professionals, they went through similar process: they had a provisional and then they got a P1 stencil, and then they were still monitored; and then they went to P2, which was the full professional qualification, but we were only ever O class, owner licence.

JF What was the method of monitoring that was used?

CHANCE Your clip was very carefully examined as it arrived in the wool store. They looked at a range of issues, but obviously the key ones to make sure you got your types properly graded ... issues like the degree to which your percentage of

main line clip and skirtings came out (because we were at that stage being told not to overskirt) and detail things like the cleanliness of the clip; did you get all of the pizzle stain out of the bellies, for example, was a big one (if you didn't, you were marked down heavily); did you have any out-of-type fleeces in the wrong lines? In other words, did you exceed the micron-count range that was permissible in a given range? Did you overclass the clip or underclass the clip? Because overclassing can be as bad as underclassing ... splitting it into too many lines. So it was pretty rigorous, and they let you know very quickly if you made a mistake and would threaten to pull your stencil if you kept on doing it.

JF Who was managing this testing process?

CHANCE The Australian Wool Testing Authority probably. I'm not sure, but I imagine it was AWTA.

JF Did they then have a headquarters down in South Fremantle as they do today?

CHANCE Yes.

JF That's a fascinating place, that laboratory.

CHANCE It is, yes. That was the stage when objective measurement was just coming in, and that was radically changing the way in which traditional classing was being altered to suit objective measurement standards. That's why I mentioned the issue of overclassing. With traditional classing, which was very subjective, it was necessary, or thought necessary, to split the clips into a large number of lines. When we had access to objective measurement, the first thing we learnt was we'd been overclassing for years and we needed to have less and less lines and to make sure the lines were bigger. That took some doing because, visually, we were used to classing over a range, depending on the size of the clip, of probably two points of quality, so 60s and 64s together. What the objective measurements allowed was a much wider interpretation of that, but more careful attention to things like length and quality. So, yes, it was quite a different process.

JF And, of course, you continued then to be doing wool classing at every time you had a shearing session, I guess?

CHANCE Yes. An O class licence allowed you to class a clip ... any clip at all in which you had a financial interest. So if you had a share of another farmer's wool clip, you were allowed to class that. So I did class other sheds on the basis that I had some financial interest in the clip.

JF Was sheep working your thing or not?

CHANCE I can't say it was, no. Cropping then, as it is now, was less labour intensive. It was potentially more rewarding, although the risks were much higher. The two industries made a good balance for each other, and it's not been until the emergence of no-till farming, which is only in the last decade, that we've actually seen a separation of the two industries. Before that, the two were reliant upon each other, and had the effect also, in terms of farm economics, of balancing some of the cyclical flow of income. But the trend these days is to separate them, and cropping has been really a livestock-free zone, effectively. Livestock practices are carried out where cropping is only an opportunity thing, not a full-time occupation.

JF Did you also become au fait with things like vasectomising, mulesing and all the other things?

CHANCE Oh yes. Yes, I've cut my share of skin off, yes [laughter].

JF What about butchering your own flock?

CHANCE Yes. Although we weren't great butchers, but every now and again we'd knock off one of our own. But, generally, it was time consuming; it was like milking your own cow. My dad used to love having a milk cow, but even he saw in the end it was really a huge investment in time and it just didn't match up.

JF And it was a tie, wasn't it, if you were milking, you had to be there?

CHANCE Yes. And we lived close to town, so buying our milk and our meat was actually the clever thing to do.

JF So at about the time you were becoming a sharefarmer, I think the wheat quota had come in, hadn't it? How did that affect you?

CHANCE A little later. The first year of wheat quotas was the drought year of 1969. It might have actually been 1970, but all of the work was done in '69. I'm not too sure which was the first year, but in '69 wheat quotas didn't matter much because nobody grew any wheat anyway. I suspect that the 1970 harvest was the first year of wheat quotas. Yes, it did affect people, not so much us because our farm had a very strong production history and your wheat quota was determined on your production history from that farm. The people that it really hurt were the new-land farmers who were just starting and hadn't had time to get a production history and the sharefarmers, who really had no rights at all. Even though they'd grown the wheat the production history belonged to the owner, and generally the owner said, "Well, sorry, but I need that quota." In point of fact, the real effect was it made no difference at all because there was never one year ... you were always allowed to deliver over-quota wheat. You weren't proscribed from delivering over your set tonnage, but it was delivered as over quota and wasn't covered by the commonwealth funding arrangement. So you had just to take the risk that it would be sold. In point of fact, there was never one year in which over-quota wheat was paid differently from quota wheat, not one year.

JF In practice, that's how it worked out?

CHANCE Yes. So if you'd just ignored it, you would have ended up in exactly the same situation. But the practical effect was huge, because it meant that dozens and dozens of people were cut out of the wheat industry, principally the sharefarmers, but also a number of the new-land farmers just said, "Well, we can't survive on this." A couple of years into the wheat quota arrangements there was a reallocation of quota, a process called top cut, and that's where quota was taken from the people with the high production history, like ourselves, and actually given to people with low production history, particularly the new-land farmers. That was politically very divisive, as you can imagine.

JF Yes, I can.

CHANCE But, again, it made no difference at all, because all of the over quota wheat was received and paid for.

JF So it would have tended to discourage people from going into the industry mostly, wouldn't it?

CHANCE Yes. And also encouraged diversification. It was during that period ... well, prior to the quotas, we only grew wheat. That was our business; we grew wheat. We began, sort of against the trend a bit, a sharefarming arrangement with a large farm south of Doodlakine in the first year of the quotas, but on the basis that we didn't deliver any wheat. He said, "You can do what you like with it, as long as you don't grow wheat. If you do grow wheat, you've got to deliver on it your quota." So we grew a huge volume of barley at that stage. And then we said, "Well, if we're growing this amount of barley, we might as well be walking it off than trucking it off." So we started feed lotting at that stage. It made us more innovative. But, as I said, in point of fact, if we'd ignored it, you'd have been in exactly the same situation: all of your wheat was still going to be sold.

JF So you've mentioned wheat and barley. Were you into oats as well?

CHANCE Some, but we had mostly good soil, and oats you tend to grow only on very poor soil.

JF Barley is a bit tolerant of soil type, too, isn't it?

CHANCE Barley likes the high alkaline-type soils and saline soils, although we didn't have much of saline soil. No, we grew barley basically because that was all we could grow at that stage. That was feed barley, the old Beecher, the old American six-row barley. We later went into some of the emerging two-row varieties, which were malting varieties, and we did very, very well with that. It was just a great place to grow two-row barley.

JF How was barley marketed? I don't recall having to cart barley to the siding, for example; but was it?

CHANCE Yes, it was a prescribed grain, so you only had really one buyer, and that was the Grain Pool of Western Australia. It was one of the state prescribed grains, under state rather than commonwealth law. There was quite a lot of private trade done, mostly from grain growers to piggery operators. And, yes, we sold a lot of barley privately. No, it was pretty much the same system as wheat because it was

sold to the grain pool. And oats were the same in those days, but because it was sold to the Grain Pool rather than the AWB, your payments were a bit quicker. The Grain Pool tended to work on a 12-month payment cycle, whereas wheat in those days you could still be receiving payment seven years after the delivery.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE Yes, it was quite a long process.

JF That was a delay, wasn't it? Goodness.

CHANCE Yes. The way the AWB worked in those days was it would borrow a minimal amount to fund the first advance. The same process happens now, albeit through different agencies, but they would only pay a first advance at a level of about 50 per cent of the expected final value of the crop. That was borrowed money. The AWB would then repay that, plus the interest on that, and then it would start accumulating credit; and when the credit got up ... with sales and payments ... bearing in mind payments a lot of wheat was sold on credit in those days because we were exploring new markets (China was a brand-new market). China paid very well; it paid in gold, in fact, but the payments were spread over, typically, five to seven years. Big markets were government-to-government sales, principally to China and Egypt, and they were both long-term credit markets. We desperately wanted them, because we wanted to push the Americans out of those markets. There was so much wheat around the world in those days (that's why we had the quotas) and it was very hard to sell. So we competed on longer and longer credit. The AWB wouldn't make those subsequent payments until it actually had that money in the bank. So it would wait until it had, say, 30 or 40c a bushel in the bank and then it would pay out; it would make a second payment, then a third payment, then a fourth payment. We went out to as far as seven payments.

JF Golly.

CHANCE Some of that wheat have actually never been paid for. A delivery in I think 1990 or 1991 to Iraq. The Iraqis made the payment and that was running into the first Gulf War, but because all wheat is traded in US dollars it got caught by the US sanctions, so the payment was made by Iraq but was actually absorbed into the US economy somehow and has never been released to Australia.

JF Really?

CHANCE I've never been paid for that wheat.

JF Heavens. So the farmer was carrying this for a long time himself?

CHANCE Yes, yes. It actually doesn't sound like very good management but it was, in effect, because what replaced it was a system where the first advance payment was much more heavily borrowed. So instead of paying 50 per cent, they'd pay 80 or 90 per cent. That meant a huge flush of money coming in, but it also destabilised the farm income, which was really based on all these little payments coming in in dribs and drabs, which evened out your drought-and-boom effect. The change to the big up-front payments, which were sought by a lot of people and were appreciated by a lot of people, but I never particularly saw it as being a long-term advantage because it was all borrowed money. You were still paying interest on it, even though AWB can borrow on a lower rate than a farmer can, and that was the justification for a lot of farmers actually wanting that system. But, in the end, it meant (particularly if you didn't have a lot of debt) that you were funding debt that you didn't need. Then you had that destabilisation effect, which has an effect, obviously, on your income tax.

[track 19]

JF Yes. Tell me, were you ever involved with premium wheat production? That works independently of the AWB, doesn't it?

CHANCE No ... well, it does now. "Premium" can mean a number of things. Premium wheat usually is taken to mean 28-chromosome wheat which is at 13 per cent or greater protein. It's also called Prime Hard. In a bad year all of our crop would effectively be premium wheat. Sometimes there were special delivery arrangements for wheat over 13 per cent, and, commonly, yes, we did grow wheat over 13 per cent. On occasions we would deliver that down to Tammin, where they had different holding facilities, and it was segregated and you were paid a little bit more for it. But premium can also be deemed to be Prime Hard. Prime Hard is also 13 per cent-plus but tends to be of specified varieties, so you have to actually nominate to grow a particular type. It was still then covered by the AWB arrangements, yes.

JF Was it?

CHANCE And in barley of course you have your two grades as well: the malting, which is Premium; and feed.

JF I was just trying to think of something that came to mind. I've lost it.

CHANCE Well, there is another kind of premium wheat and that is the 17-chromosome wheat, which is durum, which is the pasta wheat. That may well have been dealt with separately, but it never really took off in Western Australia; there's very little pasta wheat being grown.

JF Is that determined climatically?

CHANCE Climatically and soil types. I mean, you can grow it, particularly if you go into that area sort of north from Merredin, into that drier very fertile country, and perhaps Southern Cross as well. So in an arc through from Southern Cross through Mukinbudin, on the better country ... Bencubbin ... it is possible to grow durum there. But we have never been able to grow it in sufficient volume to make it a viable industry sector. It's a pretty small market because it's mostly a domestic market. Most of it's grown in Queensland because you do get very high protein in Queensland, but to export it ... It's a lucrative market but until you have enough volume, it's very hard to compete with the durum producers in North Africa and the Mediterranean, and most of the market is in North Africa and the Mediterranean. The big market is Italy, obviously. Libya is a big market; they eat as much durum there as they eat bread wheat. But worldwide it's not huge. The United States ... I don't know where they get their durum from actually; though I doubt that they grow it themselves. They may do.

JF What varieties were you growing on your land over that period, say, from the '60s to the turn of the century?

CHANCE In the '60s the dominant variety was Insignia. It was just wonderful stuff. It was a great little wheat, very short. Its parentage was heavily Mexican and it was short, very drought tolerant and a great yielder; it was just amazing stuff. It was very flexible. You could sow it very early. You could sow it very late ... arguably, the greatest wheat I've ever [chuckles] come across, but it had quality problems and wasn't highly regarded in the market. There was a major switch on then to a locally

bred wheat, which also had Mexican parents but was much more acceptable quality, and that was Gamenya. In many ways Gamenya was ideal for Western Australia in that it could be grown in quite poor soil and have quite low protein but chemically it performed well in the bread-making process, even though it was grown in poor conditions. It had its problems, though, and I was never very keen on Gamenya. We switched over to a South Australian wheat which became very popular in Western Australia and was at one stage the predominant variety, and that was Halberd. We grew Halberd for many, many years until some of the locally bred varieties started to catch up with it. Bodallin was one of those (Bodallin became a major wheat for us) and Gutha for a time was also a very good wheat. They were our key wheats, but we weren't great Gamenya fans. The only time we would grow Gamenya is if we had a very late seeding because it was quite a quick wheat.

JF Now, we spoke briefly once before about the machinery and so on that you had on the farm. Of course, over the period from the '60s to the end of the century the scene there changed dramatically and the costs of it changed dramatically also. Just sketch briefly for me the history of the machines that you were using when you first became a sharefarmer and what you ended up with when you left farming.

CHANCE The Chamberlain Champion was the iconic Western Australian tractor. It had a four-cylinder, 270 cubic inch Perkins diesel, nine forward gears. It was very reliable, locally made right here in Perth, and they sold millions of them. It was just a great little tractor. As I said, it was the iconic tractor of the West Australian Wheatbelt. It was supported by some bigger brothers: the Countryman, which was almost exactly the same tractor as the Champion except that it had the six-cylinder Perkins, the 354 cubic inch Perkins. The top of the market from Chamberlain was the super series, which had the three-cylinder GM diesel. We had all three of those in some numbers [chuckles], but the Champion was what we started with. That was capable of seeding at a rate of about seven or eight acres per hour. When we finished our biggest tractor was a Massey Ferguson 4840, which had a V8 Cummins engine of 903 cubic inches, articulated four-wheel drive capable of seeding about 25 acres an hour. Things changed rapidly over that period of time. The articulated tractors were a real revolution, but so too were tractors like the little Chamberlain Champion. They were a revolution in that they were cheap; they were very powerful compared with their predecessors; and most important of all they were very reliable. You just never had to do anything with them. You started them up and drove them; that was it. That

was very different from tractors of an earlier era where breakdowns and rebuilds during the season were common, whereas these tractors you wouldn't even think about a rebuild until perhaps your seventh or eighth year of working.

JF So it was a really long-term investment.

CHANCE Yes. They were great machines. Even by modern standards their reliability was outstanding. But the big articulated tractors took us to the next stage. Since then the wheels have been replaced by rubber tracks and we're at a whole new level now. But, yes, costs, they did get quite expensive [chuckles].

JF And then the other machinery you need apart from the tractor; I mean, when you come to headers and harvesting machinery of various sorts.

CHANCE Yes. Harvesting machinery is enormously expensive and I find it really hard to justify, even today, the costs of a harvesting machine. When I look at a tractor and I think, "Yes, well, it's \$300 000, \$400 000", I can actually see why it's three or \$400 000. When I look at a harvesting machine at five or \$600 000, I just can't see it ...

JF No, because it stands doing nothing for 10 months of the year, I suppose.

CHANCE And it's such an insubstantial thing. I mean, it's just tinplate and bearings. It doesn't have that massive transmission or that huge engine that the tractors have and the complicated hydraulics. It's something you could literally build in your backyard; it's not all that complicated. The other reason I'm a bit resistant to new harvesting machinery (I never once bought a new harvesting machine, never) is that the one advantage our long endless summer gives us is that we are not under pressure at harvest time. If you have a breakdown you can walk around gently and fix the breakdown and get the machine going; it didn't really matter. It doesn't matter here if you're still harvesting in February, except you might want to take a holiday, unlike North America say where ...

JF Where you're waiting for the snows or the blizzards.

CHANCE Yes. If you don't get it off, you don't get it all, you know, and they are under huge pressure (and in Europe) to get the crop off. There is absolutely no pressure in Western Australia to get the crop off, and to me that provides an opportunity to actually make some capital savings. We always bought second-hand machinery. We'd buy the machine. We'd go all the way through it, completely refurbish it, which is a 100 per cent tax deduction because it's parts and repairs. Although you are technically supposed to own it for six months or something before you can do that, but that never bothered us much. And then we would go in with, effectively, what is a new machine. There was always plenty of labour around. We could always hire drivers. There was no problem with that. In summertime there's nothing else to do. We used to use mostly shearers as header drivers. Yes, we used to get a big crop off very cheaply.

JF Another aspect of farming of course that's become even more topical latterly than it was years ago is the increasing salinity of soils and so on. Did you have much experience of that in your part of the Wheatbelt?

CHANCE Yes, we had some. We weren't as badly affected as others who farmed in the valley, and we were predominantly in the valley; that's where our main operations were, and it's the valleys that are prone to salinity. I mean, we had some, but it wasn't a huge thing. It was a matter of just trying to adapt to it. It was a bit scary because you didn't know how much it was going to take and it had the ability to come up and take your best soil. It always took your best soil, and nobody yet has come up with a solution. I think there are solutions out there but ...

JF Were you actively involved in any salt land reclamation?

CHANCE No. I mean, we would've been had we stayed on but, no, we didn't do a lot. We were interested in watching what was happening and in learning. The West Australian Wheatbelt went through a number of different processes of saying, "Yes, this is the solution", and then 10 years later, "Well, that didn't work. This is the new solution". Each wave was actually very expensive, and people who'd committed to a particular solution often found that everything that they had done had been wasted. So we used to watch very carefully and observe, and we used to do a little bit of work ourselves, but we weren't ready, because we didn't have to, because we didn't have that much salinity, to make those big financial commitments. It's like the adoption of the Whittington interceptor bank system, for example, which clearly worked in some

circumstances but not all. That was the problem. People would seize on a particular system, because they were so desperate to find an answer and convince themselves that this was going to be the answer, and make huge financial commitments and sometimes for no reward at all, sometimes negative value came out of it. There was a kind of salinity evangelism developed that people said, "I've got the system. This is the way and the truth and the life, and there is no other way of doing it". It was quite evangelistic; people closed their minds to other options. I always thought that was quite distressing that people would do that.

JF Further to what we said earlier, you told me that you became a sharefarmer with your father and then you became a partner. I saw mention that later on you had probably at Carrabin ... is that the one that you're talking about that you went into for the barley production or is that separate again?

CHANCE No, that was another farm. We operated them all at one time, but the Carrabin property was one we bought in I think 1979, but the first crop year would have been 1980, which was the other huge drought that we had. That was a 5 000 acre property partly developed between Bodallin and Burracoppin. That was really our first new land block. We developed that, cleared it and put all the fencing and the dams in, yes.

JF What method of clearing were you using there, was that ...

CHANCE A bit radical actually, because it had been partly cleared before so scrub was relatively thin, but because it had been thinned down, the mallees were big. We just went straight into that with blade ploughs, which actually plough beneath the ground and lift the mallee root up out of the ground (so we didn't chain it; we just went straight in). We then used a huge pinwheel rake, like three times the size of a conventional pinwheel, which raked in the root and the whole mallee tree into a windrow and then burnt that off. And then, basically, went through a more conventional cleanup system, because there's still quite a lot of trash on that ground. But that saved a lot of time and we were able to bring in a lot of country in the first year.

JF Within a season?

CHANCE Yes, we brought in over a thousand acres in the first year. About two and a half thousand acres of it was already cleared.

JF Now, this whole operation has changed in economies of scale and so on and really the family farmer is no longer the same thing, is he, as in the '50s, for example?

CHANCE Well, it's the same model but they are much bigger. But the switch out of the traditional family-type enterprise hasn't happened yet; it's still where it was in that sense.

JF So the families that've remained have got bigger holdings but it's still a family operation?

CHANCE Yes, but they're not corporate yet. I mean, they are corporate in the strictly legal sense, but when you go behind the corporate door, it's the same family farm; it's the same structure.

JF Right.

CHANCE It hasn't really changed at all.

JF What about the effect of people like Chase and so on coming into develop Esperance? Was that not sort of corporate inspired?

CHANCE It was, and that's not to say there's never been corporate engagement in Western Australian agriculture; it's just that it's never been successful. A number of corporations, some very big ones, have engaged in Western Australian agriculture and to this day I think you would be very hard-pressed to find one that you could say was truly successful. To perhaps a slightly lesser extent that's true right across Australia. I mean, there's been some big corporations operate some big swags of country in Australia, particularly in the cattle pastoral sector, but you're still hard to find one that's had a long-term success. I mean, AMP, for example, were the biggest landowner in Australia at one stage. AMP are now out of agriculture entirely. The other corporations to a greater or lesser extent haven't had the same sort of success in agriculture in Australia as corporate farming has in other continents. I think that's about to change. I think it is, and I think where we're going to see the change is going

to be in the Wheatbelt because the technology of farming has changed so much now that I believe the agronomy is now adaptable to a corporate style of management. And that's why it never was before, in my view, but I really think the agronomy is there now to farm at a different scale with a high level of management. You're always able to do it, but you could never achieve as high a level of management outcomes as the family farm could. The family farm had clear advantages in terms of applying a high level of management consistently across a given area of land, and the corporates can't, in part because of a problem which is shared by all Australian industry; that is, we are deficient in our midlevel management. We've got quite good low-level management, quite good high-level management, but our middle-level management is deficient and expensive and a bit flighty. It tends to wander off quickly; when you need continuity, it's not there. At that level of management, people change jobs at about a three-year cycle. Well, in agriculture, anything less than a 20-year cycle is short term, so it's never quite worked out, and yet corporate farming has been enormously successful in North America and in South America. So it's not to say it's not possible, but I just think it's an interesting study for somebody who wanted to do a PhD thesis on it, just analysing what corporate models have been successful in Australian agriculture and why they haven't been. My theory is it's because we have unique management deficiencies in the midlevel, which is where farming is.

[track 20]

JF There are so many other things that could come up in this discussion, like the dependence on farm advisers. Now, that was a trend, I think, that started coming in, perhaps in the late '50s or '60s.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What's happened to that, and did you have to work with a farm adviser?

CHANCE They're still there; and, in fact, we were members of either the first or the second farm advisory group in Western Australia. We brought a guy over from New Zealand (they all came from New Zealand, Lincoln **University**). Ken Boughton, his name is, who is still a partner in one of the leading farm advisory companies in Western Australia. This was in its infancy. It started in 1963, so the same time as I started farming. Ken used to come and sit down in our office and we'd talk through things. It was interesting. He used to complain that we never took his advice. But he

said that didn't matter as long as we heard his advice, and if we rejected it, that's fine, because you've made a conscious decision in light of the information. Your question was, "Where is it now?" [It is] very strong, yes. That farm consultancy business is now very strong. The best farmers all employ, not only an economic adviser of that ilk but probably also an adviser in agronomy. So it's not uncommon for there to be more than one adviser (economic and agronomic).

JF Had you left farming before computers became an important tool?

CHANCE Yes. I mean, I learnt to operate a computer in my last year or two as a farmer, but we hadn't really applied them, no. The technology revolution came not only as a result of the arrival of computers, but also some of the other data collection technology and GPS. It wasn't until you had the confluence of a data processing facility and a data accessing facility, which was the yield mapping and the GPS-GIS systems. It wasn't until those two came together that the process had any more relevance to agriculture, other than an accounting system. And our accounting systems were pretty simple anyway. Computers really had no influence because there's no difference between an accounting system run on a computer and the same accounting system run on paper. They are the same thing; it's just that one's a bit neater than the other, but they're the same system. The real differences in agriculture came when that other data collection availability became available. It still hasn't reached its ultimate expression yet. I think we've still got a little way, but I think the application of IT to agriculture has got huge potential. But it hasn't realised anything like its potential yet, because the technology is not quite there yet.

[track 21]

JF Just to bring this to a sort of conclusion for today, what led you to abandon the land, or leave the land?

CHANCE We'd expanded very rapidly and we had huge debt, even by today's standards, and we ran into that period in the late '80s, early '90s when marginal rates of interest were 25 per cent and it was just unsustainable. So we made the decision to get out while we could and we got out. I also was looking forward to going into Parliament and I knew that that was achievable by 1992. It was in 1990 we made the decision, so I had a gap year to fill, and that was the year I spent working at Moylans. I didn't have much choice. I mean, if we hadn't sold out we'd have gone broke, so it was a matter of saying, "Well, you either hang in here waiting for the interest rates to fall but put up with that erosion of your capital, or get out while you've still got a bit of

capital left, even though you're going to sacrifice a lot of it, but you'll sacrifice it every day that you stay on."

JF And there were still plenty of buyers around, were there, that were willing to take over?

CHANCE We almost gave the farm away, but the important thing was to stop the erosion.

JF Well, I think that's probably about our issue for today, so thank you very much.

CHANCE Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW FOUR

INTERVIEW FIVE

[track 22]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview No 5 with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on the 13th of August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 23]

Kim, you obviously went back to live in the family home from school. How long did you remain living in the family home?

CHANCE Until I was married in 1974.

JF Right; so roughly nine years, I suppose.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF We'll come on to the story of your marriage and so on in due course, but before we do that, I'd like you to recall some of the highlights of your life in that period immediately before marriage and in the nine years that you were home. I note, for example, that you were associated with various football clubs over your lifetime. Was football a big interest?

CHANCE Football was our main sport, because I was never a cricketer and I never quite got into the idea of basketball, so I didn't have much in the way of summer sport. But we used to start training for football around about January anyway, so there wasn't much time. Harvest concluded and we got back into training. So football was the dominant sport and, if you like, almost the dominant social event in our lives; yes.

JF And was that just local in Baandee, was it?

CHANCE Yes. I played all of my football at Baandee, although I was also later a member of the Kellerberrin football club, which is actually in a different league. Kellerberrin is in the Avon league.

JF There is a dividing line between them.

CHANCE Almost about where my farm is. Anywhere west of my farm, people thought of themselves as being a part of the Kellerberrin club, and, indeed, we were part of the Kellerberrin shire even where we live. But from our place east, it was the eastern districts. Baandee was an eastern districts club.

JF Yes. So why did you eventually become a member of the Kellerberrin club?

CHANCE I had friends there and they had actually asked if I would represent their club at the Avon Football Association, which I was happy to do but I wasn't even a member of the club at that stage so I had to join the club to nominate.

JF Yes. And was that much after you were at home from school?

CHANCE Yes; a long time after; a long time after I'd stopped playing football.

JF Right; yes.

CHANCE Yes; that was sort of late '80s.

JF Yes. So you were more or less associated with Baandee from the time you went home —

CHANCE Yes.

JF But the Kellerberrin thing?

CHANCE Yes. The Baandee club actually folded eventually, and it joined Merredin Towns to become Merredin Lions. And I was a member of Merredin Lions, not a player, but I was a financial supporter of Merredin Lions.

JF Yes. I want to pick up on your representing Kellerberrin at the association. How much time and what did that entail?

CHANCE We used to meet (I don't know) four or five times a year, normally in Northam, which is the headquarters of the Avon league. It wasn't an enormous amount of time, but it was an interesting process. I'd never really been involved in

sport administration before. Most of my fellow directors had a lifetime's history in sport administration, and, in fact, one of the people who came from Cunderdin (one of the other directors who I used to pick up as I drove through to Northam) had been in football administration, I think, since his teens, and he was in his '70s then. So he had a wealth of experience, yes. I was able to learn a great deal from them.

JF What is the main role of the association?

CHANCE Organising the good functioning of the league and its annual activities. A large part of its work was preparation and the conduct of that league's participation in what was then the Mobil country football championships, now the Wesfarmers country football championships, which was a big event, particularly in those days; it was a huge event. The two leagues that I'd been associated with had been quite dominant in those leagues. First, the eastern districts, which I think won three in a row, which was an outstanding performance. And then Avon emerged as one of the major contenders. These days it tends to be dominated by ... Well, the South West, of course, had a huge run, but then Upper Great Southern became a dominant force. But the southern leagues, with their greater population, have a very high standard of football, and, of course, our population dwindled. But those first teams that we sent to the then Mobil championships (that must have started about 1964, I suppose) were extraordinary. I can recall in the first team we sent; we actually left out 14 ex-league football players. Left out of the team, that's how good the team was.

JF Good heavens.

CHANCE Yes; it was quite remarkable. I remember a couple of memorable grand finals against Great Northern, who were then our arch rivals, the Geraldton-based side.

JF And were you playing in any of those yourself [chuckles]?

CHANCE No; I was never quite good enough to make that cut. This was very high level football. It was about the standard, or very [nearly] approaching the standard, of the West Australian Football League.

JF Great. Now, you mentioned Merredin in association with your more local club. How important was Merredin to you and how often were you in and around there? How far is it from the farm, for example?

CHANCE 30 miles. Not as much as Kellerberrin, but still quite a lot because some of the major businesses in the area were represented in Merredin but not Kellerberrin, although most of our machine parts, which was our main reason for visiting a major centre, were available in Kellerberrin. Coventry's, for example, were in Merredin but not Kellerberrin. They had the swimming pool in the early days, when Kellerberrin didn't get one until a little bit later. It had a senior high school. Kellerberrin has never had a senior high school, only a three-year school. So it was in many senses the main regional centre. All of the state government agencies, for example, were based in Merredin: the water authority, railways.

JF Yes; it's quite a big railway centre, isn't it?

CHANCE It used to be huge; it's not now to anywhere near the same extent and that change came when Westrail shifted from the eight-hour shift to the 11-hour shift, which made it possible to get the trains right through to Kalgoorlie in one shift, whereas, formerly, they could only get as far as Merredin, so Merredin became a major base. With the 11-hour shift, Kalgoorlie became the main rail centre.

JF Now, at some stage during your life, I believe you were a member of the WA Sporting Car Club.

CHANCE I still am; yes.

JF When did that begin and what has been the nature of your participation with them?

CHANCE I was engaged with racing for many, many years (decades). But I think I only first joined the WA Sporting Car Club probably when I started racing, so about 1992 or thereabouts.

JF So it's quite a late part of your life.

CHANCE Yes. You can't get a CAMS licence without being a member of an accredited club, so it was something I had to do, although I remain a member now, even though I don't hold a valid CAMS licence because the only racing I do now is sanctioned by a different body, by the Australian automotive sport association [Australian Auto-Sport Alliance], which doesn't require club membership. But in that particular event, I just don't need a CAMS licence anymore and it's very expensive.

JF Yes; so you've got to be winning to pay for it.

CHANCE Yes.

JF What was the beginning, or the origin, of your interest in motor racing or motoring?

CHANCE It was something people that I knew well were engaged in and I just loved it. I loved the whole sport of it.

JF What sort of motor racing was it that you were doing?

CHANCE Initially, I was working on teams running what they called then Formula Libre (open-wheeler) races. Later it evolved into the Australian national Formula Two and I worked on a Formula Two car for some time. We campaigned that around Australia. I went to the first open-wheeler meeting at Eastern Creek when the new circuit opened there. We raced at Mallala in South Australia and of course here. And then we sort of evolved from that into rallying almost by accident. But that became our main form of motor sport.

JF And can you recall the first time you raced?

CHANCE Yes, I can; yes.

JF Where and when was that?

CHANCE In Tasmania.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes. And singularly unprepared. We had a number of mechanical issues, but we actually got through. We finished the event (it was a five-day event) and got through. How we did it I don't know; we learnt a lot that year.

JF So you were not doing it in Western Australia before that?

CHANCE No. I mean I'd worked on race teams. I was pit crew, but the first time ... And certainly I'd been in race cars in a circuit environment before, so I actually knew what to expect, but of course rallying is very different from circuit racing.

JF I'm interested in the beginning of this. Dare I say it, you were not a young fellow when this started.

CHANCE No.

JF And sometimes it's associated with younger people who grow into it. What triggered it?

CHANCE Racing's a very amateur sport in Australia. There's only a handful of professionals in bitumen racing. Speedway is different. That does get younger people in because you can actually make some money in speedway. But bitumen racing, whether it be circuit or bitumen rallying, is an enormously expensive sport and really the precursor to entry is how much money you've got [chuckles].

JF Right; that sort of explains it, yes [chuckles].

CHANCE Just to give you some idea, the entry fee for Targa Tasmania is about \$8 500, just the entry fee. Each tyre (and we are limited to six tyres) costs close on \$600, and you only use them once. To build an engine of the kind we use, [costs] upwards of \$20 000. It's an expensive business.

JF Yes. And so did you call on sponsorship to help you fund this?

CHANCE No. We did that ourselves. There's some minor sponsorship, but sponsorship's something that in racing sometimes you have to have it and if you have to have it, well, you bend to the demands of it. But it's actually a bit of a pain,

because you've got to satisfy your sponsors all the time. We prefer to do our own thing.

JF You're not still involved with the CAMS racing now, but you're still involved in some aspect of it.

CHANCE With Targa Tasmania, yes. And from time to time, I may want to enter an event that's not sanctioned by that body [but] that's sanctioned by CAMS, and then I'll have to go back and get my CAMS licence. A CAMS licence just to race at Wanneroo isn't all that expensive, but because Targa Tasmania was an international event, we had to get our licences upgraded to an international standard. So, basically, with the licence I had, I could've raced anywhere in the world, but it was just very expensive, three or four times the price of a local licence. So I was very happy when they said I didn't need it anymore.

JF Describe your the main features of the most memorable racing car you've used.

CHANCE We've actually raced three different cars in that event in Tasmania, although the stable of racing cars that I work with is much bigger than that. We started racing with a group C Falcon, an ex-Bathurst car. It raced in Bathurst from '76 to '78. it was built as a circuit car and it was quite difficult to adapt it for rally conditions; almost impossible. You'd have to start all over again. But we raced that for four, five years with increasing amounts of success but it was very high strung and it didn't have enough suspension, really, for rallying. We then purpose built a 1964 Ford Galaxy for the event, which was actually built as a rally car, and that was a remarkable car. It was very reliable and very fast (over 600 horsepower). We then, because that car was later, by rule changes, ruled illegal because our chassis and suspension modifications were pretty radical, built another light-weight version of the Galaxy. This one, a two door, which weighs about 500 kilograms less than the original car with the same running gear [had] 600 horsepower. And that's been a very, very good car, but now we're about to build our dream car, which is the Ford Thunderbolt, which wasn't all that well known here; same era '63, '64. Its chassis's very similar to the '64 compact Fairlane, which you would be familiar with, but it's a two-door version of that and was homologated as a light weight, which really means you can unbolt the steel panels and put light-weight fibreglass panels on. That means we can get our weight down somewhere near the Mustangs, which are our main

competition in that class, and have a lot more horsepower than the Mustangs, because they're really limited to the 289, the little small-block V8, which is probably good for about 400 horsepower, tops. So it would be an extremely competitive car. We've actually sourced the car now; we've brought it over from America and we're ready to start. But it'll be a long, long job. We'll probably be too old to race it when we've finished it [chuckles].

JF Where do you do your modifications and so on?

CHANCE It's all done by the owner, Mike Moylan, at his facility in Kellerberrin.

JF Right. So, have you got some trophies to show for all the effort you've had on the ...

CHANCE Oh, yes, indeed. We've been class winners. In fact, not this year (we were second this year) but last year, we won our class and a number of Targa trophies, which is the reward for finishing all 36 or 40 [or] however many stages there are within the time allowed for that stage. Yes; we've done okay. And in our first year there, despite all of the problems we had, we actually won the teams trophy, so we beat the Ferrari team [and] we beat the Porsche team. And this has become known as a Porsche event, but we had a team of three Fords: one Ford GT40, one Shelby 350 Mustang, and our own group C Falcon. So it was a formidable team. Yes; we actually won despite not knowing what we were doing [chuckles]!

JF You're obviously majoring on Ford.

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF But you're totally independent of the Ford Motor Company, except ...

CHANCE Absolutely, yes. Ford Motor Company don't want to know us [chuckles]!

JF Fantastic. Right; perhaps we'll go away from that one for now and go back to the mention that came up earlier of your being married. When and where did you first meet your wife? I think Suzanne's her name, is it?

CHANCE Sue, yes. We first met in Hines Hill. How did that all happen? A friend of mine was going out with Sue's cousin at that time, and she was staying there for the weekend and she'd brought Sue up with her. So, we met then. Actually, our first social event was rabbit shooting [chuckles]. As things like that happen in the country, yes. We went out in the ute spot lighting.

JF What was her background?

CHANCE She's a nurse. Still is nursing, yes; still working.

JF So you might say you kept it in the family. Your mother was a nurse, I believe.

CHANCE And my sister, yes.

JF And your sister, yes.

CHANCE Yes, but not our daughter. She was the smart one. She took up teaching.

JF Tell me about the wedding.

CHANCE Okay. We were married at the Wesley Chapel by Frank Drysdale, and the reception, which is unusual, I think, for the day, but we had our reception in a vineyard in Benara Road. It was then Houghton's, then became Dear Friends. Dear Friends is better known now in the Hyatt, but it was before the owner of Dear Friends bought it, but it was then Houghton's vineyard. [It was] daytime, February and hot as hell and vineyard licences in those days didn't allow you to sell beer, so all my friends were drinking wine for the first time in their lives.

JF Oh dear! [chuckles]

CHANCE Yes; in a day that was about 104 degrees. It got a bit messy! [laughs]

JF Where did you establish your matrimonial home?

CHANCE In south Doodlakine on the property we were share farming.

JF So how far were you from your original home?

CHANCE Ten, 12 kilometres.

JF Was that all part of the family partnership, or were you on your own from there on?

CHANCE Yes. At that stage I was in partnership with my sister and her husband, David Blair, so Sandra and David. We were in partnership from 1969 until 1991; yes. We share-farmed a big property south of Doodlakine and there was a spare house there and we lived there.

JF I think I'm right in saying that there was quite a bit of building of new homes in the Wheatbelt in the '60s. I wondered whether that continued in your part of the Wheatbelt and whether you were one of them, but obviously you occupied an existing home.

CHANCE No. There were so many empty houses, because the depletion of population had already started by then. There were all these empty houses everywhere; yes. The slack was taken up a little bit by people who worked in town [and who] actually lived on farms in vacant houses because they were almost free. So a lot of people did that, but, sadly, a lot of those houses very quickly fell into rack and ruin with nobody looking after them, which is really, really sad, because there are some lovely houses out there. But, no, nobody was building new houses. The building boom in our area was in the post-war period, with big families, growing families, and a return of population. But the population started to fall off from the late '60s really. The '69 drought was a killer, and between then and, say, 1979 we would have lost more than a third of our population in that period.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE I actually remember a parliamentary study that involved Julian Grill, but I forget who the other members were. It was a study of the area slightly to the north of us, the north eastern Wheatbelt, but they said in the decade of the '70s the population of that area had reduced by one-third, and that was when whole towns started to disappear, and we've referred to that early in the transcript.

JF And so you remained in that home until you left for parliamentary appointment, did you?

CHANCE No. They discontinued the south Doodlakine school bus and that caused us to rethink what we were going to do. The old headmaster's house in Doodlakine had come up for sale so we bought that so our kids only had to walk across the road to go to school. By that time, I was also developing another farm east of Merredin at Carabbin, and it was just as convenient for me to live in town and then just run straight down the highway. So, yes, we moved out there. That would've been, gee, about '78, somewhere around there; '78 or '79. And we lived there until our family started to grow and we needed a slightly bigger house. Also, our kids were getting to high school age and I actually got a builder in. I didn't want to leave Doodlakine. I got a builder in to price the renovations that we would need for the extensions to accommodate our family. He gave me a quote and I said, "Well, for that price, I can buy a house in Merredin." And the next weekend I did just that. So, yes, we bought a lovely house right near the high school, which was very convenient. Our shifts were really dictated by our kids' progression through.

[track 24]

JF Talk about fatherhood for a few minutes. You've had two children, I believe.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about them.

CHANCE They've both been an absolute delight. I hear stories about how painful kids can be at times, and I'm just very lucky. I've got two great kids. They've done well for themselves. They've both settled down now, but neither of them caused me too much hassle [laughs].

JF So it's one daughter and one son, isn't it?

CHANCE Yes. The elder is Ceridwen, our daughter, who's now about to become a mother herself for the second time in the next couple of days, and our son is Tom, and he works for the education department, not as a teacher; he does the payroll.
[laughter]

JF A very significant task, yes.

CHANCE Yes. But, no, they've both been terrific kids.

JF And that perhaps reflects your style as a father, does it?

CHANCE I think I'm just lucky. [laughter]

JF Fine. Coming back now to the other things that you did before going into Parliament. You mentioned having been a builder's labourer for a year.

CHANCE Yes, I was.

JF When did that happen, and why and how?

CHANCE We started in partnership farming in our own right (my sister and brother-in-law and myself) and our first year was 1969, which was that crippling drought, and we didn't have a lot to start with. The drought was so severe that there was just no money to fund our operations and the next year's, so I went and worked in the first stages of the construction of Karratha. When I went to Karratha, the only buildings that were there ... there was one concrete pad down and a little site hut, and that was it; the rest was spinifex.

JF Goodness. Just remind me: what year did you say that was?

CHANCE That was the end of '69.

JF The end of '69; yes, I see. So you didn't stick around in the drought period on the family farm?

CHANCE Well, we got the crop off, such as it was. [chuckles] That didn't take long. Then I went north. No, that was an interesting period. Because there was nothing at Karratha, obviously, we didn't live there. We lived in Dampier, although I later moved to the halfway point between Karratha and Dampier, which was then a Bell Brothers' camp on Dampier Salt, which Bell's were still constructing at that stage. But they had some spare accommodation and it was much less crowded than

it was in Dampier. Dampier was a crazy place. In those days, I think there were 4 000 single men in those one, two, three, four camps in town.

JF Golly.

CHANCE Whereas out in Dampier Salt I think there were only about 60 or 70 of us. It was terrific; like a holiday camp.

JF [chuckles]

CHANCE And it was that little bit closer to the work site. We worked, basically, a 60-hour week; six 10-hour days. I worked briefly for the company and then later for a subcontractor on roofing on the construction side itself.

JF So you didn't have any sort of building trade qualification, you just took it up as a —

CHANCE No, but I was a farmer. Farmers can do anything! [laughter]

JF I know they can, yes; I know very well.

CHANCE In fact, while I was working for the company (and occasionally I used to help out even when I was with the subbie) I was the crane driver. Those were the days when you could just hop onto a crane and drive it. Nobody asked if you had a ticket. We used to do some pretty hairy loads from time to time. These days I shudder to think what would have happened if anything had gone wrong, because we unloaded some quite awkward loads, including big structural steel loads where you've got riggers crawling all over the load. It's quite spooky, because if one of those comes loose, it turns itself into a 45-foot guillotine. But I managed not to kill anyone or injure anyone! But I did enjoy construction. Again, you know, you learn a lot.

JF On the job.

CHANCE Yes.

JF And most of all, I suppose, you learn an awful lot about people in a situation like that.

CHANCE Oh yes. It was a funny workforce. Myself, and one of the foremen and the construction manager were the only three Western Australians on that whole site.

JF Good heavens.

CHANCE There was only a handful of Australians. There were a couple of guys from Queensland, but generally, yes, there were no Australians on the site. Probably, of a workforce of 70 or 80, all of the Australians would have numbered maybe seven, and even that'd be pushing it a bit.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE The rest were Europeans in the main, Slavic, Austrian, for some reason (we had a lot of Austrians) a few Kiwis. The carpenters (the chippies) all tended to be Kiwis, although the Austrians were strong in that as well. And then after that, everything (Spaniards, Frenchmen, Americans) we had all kinds. It was really, really interesting.

JF What stage was the American communications base at that stage?

CHANCE Carnarvon?

JF No. Wasn't there one at the point not far from Karratha?

CHANCE There was nothing there then.

JF There was nothing there then, no. I was just trying to get my mind around when this was.

CHANCE On the Burrup Peninsula, is it?

JF I think there was one there, but maybe I've got my facts wrong.

CHANCE There was, in those days, nothing at all on the Burrup. The only reason I ever went out there was actually to pick up some drums once from a rubbish dump out there, because we didn't even do a rubbish run out there. I was also the truck driver, so I used to do the rubbish runs, because we had a little rubbish dump set aside near the light industrial area in Karratha, which is still, I believe, the rubbish dump.

JF Golly. Was there much tourism there in those days?

CHANCE No. Nobody in their right mind would go there. There was no doubt about it; Dampier is probably one of the most beautiful towns in Western Australia. Its surroundings, it's just beautiful. The Dampier Archipelago, with all those little islands, is just a lovely place. I guess, in winter (although I haven't been there much in winter) the climate would be very rather nice as well, but we were there in mid-summer.

JF It would be pretty hot and steamy at that time, yes.

CHANCE It's hot, yes, particularly in the few days preceding a cyclone. They are horrendous. I could take heat. I was only 21 then, and heat didn't bother me much, but heat combined with that awful humidity that comes in in those few days before a cyclone ... you just can't wait for the cyclone to come, you know, to cool things down and break the tension. The air actually buzzes. It's an amazing feeling.

JF But construction didn't halt in that season; you just kept on keeping on.

CHANCE Immediately after a cyclone you get a couple of days when you can't get on the site because it's just mud. Each of the cyclones we had (we had two) dropped four inches of rain, and that country can't absorb water very well; it just turns into a quagmire. The first cyclone, I stayed in town. Of course, what I didn't know was that ... all of our power then came from the Dampier C power station for the town. There was Dampier A, Dampier B, and Dampier C, and the domestic power was Dampier C, and that was a ship. Of course, when a cyclone came, it unplugged and went out to sea (it didn't stay) so there was no power at all. The pub closed, the shops closed; you couldn't get a beer, you couldn't get a packet of smokes.

JF Goodness.

CHANCE It was appalling. The second cyclone, we anticipated this one and we said, "We're not going to get stuck in Dampier", so we went up to Roebourne, which then was just the best place in the world. I just loved Roebourne. After fortifying ourselves a little bit in Roebourne, we decided to go a bit further up to Whim Creek, which is halfway to Hedland, and the cyclone came and it really hammered the place. When we tried to get out again after the cyclone, the river had come up (I've just forgotten the name of the river now; it'll come back) and that was —

JF It's not the Ashburton, is it?

CHANCE No; Ashburton's a bit further north. I'll get it in a minute. There's now a bridge there, but there was no bridge in those days, and when we got there of course we couldn't get back and we had to wait then for the river to fall. When we did eventually get back (we were there a couple of days) we got back onto site thinking that: "Oh, they won't be back at work yet because it's too wet." We got there and everyone is working, and the foreman said, "Where have you two been?" [laughter] We told him we got stuck on the wrong side of a river and we said, "We didn't think you'd be working because of the cyclone." He said, "No. Cyclone went a bit north of us up through a place called Whim Creek." [laughter] So we drove right into it.

JF Oh dear. How long did that last, that period as a builder's labourer?

CHANCE Four or five months, yes. I came back. My nephew had a health problem and they were a bit concerned about him and I needed to be back on the farm, so I came back.

JF And there was some prospect —

CHANCE But it was about time to come back anyway.

JF Yes, there was some prospect of a good season.

CHANCE We were getting ready and we had enough money to get going again next year.

JF I suppose every young bloke needs his ... I don't know whether you'd call it an initiation or a time away from home —

CHANCE Yes, I suppose so.

JF — when you can do your own thing and you be your own boss, probably for the first time.

CHANCE Yes. Or have a boss for the first time. [chuckles]

JF Yes, yes; that's a significant experience too. Skirting around the whole business then: later on, having sold the farm, you then went to work for someone else, didn't you?

CHANCE Yes, I did. I went to work for Mike Moylan, who I race with.

JF That's M-O-Y-L-A-N, is it?

CHANCE That's right, yes. Mike and I have been close friends for many, many years and our families have been friends. He was having a few difficulties himself, and I sort of helped him through that and worked for him for 12 months off and on, mostly as a truck driver, but I also did a bit of work around the sheds, mostly on the automotive side, although he was more manufacturing, and did a bit of work on my own car. I did a rejuvenation of my wife's Mini (rebuilt that) and that basically filled the year in.

JF Do you share the view that they've spoilt motor cars by all the computerisation, because you could rebuild a Mini in those days in your backyard probably, but you can't very well do that with a modern car, can you?

CHANCE Yes, you can. While I had that view when it first came in, and I was really, really concerned about this new technology and what was going to happen to those cars when they were 20 years old (how were you going to fix them, because you can't fix them with a bit of baling wire anymore?) those fears were generally not warranted in my view. I think the new technology ... some of the first expressions of it weren't very good, but as it has improved and advanced ... the new technology is basically hard-wire technology. If something fails, you just pull it out and slot a new

one in and it's good to go again for another 20 years. No, I think it's been a net advantage, although it can look a bit confusing. Electronics has never been my strong point; I am just a little bit intimidated by it. But, no, in general I think it's good, although we prefer to work, in racing, with the older technology, yes; carburettors and points and plugs. [chuckles]

JF Something an individual can manage. [chuckles]

CHANCE Coils and [laughs]

JF As part of your working for Mike Moylan, I think you became a member of the Transport Workers' Union, did you?

CHANCE Yes, I did.

JF I'm going to lead into your, sort of, political aspirations, so was this your first real encounter with the union movement, or had you been involved with that earlier?

CHANCE No, no. Because I've been a member of the Australian Labor Party since 1971, we had close attachments with union people, rather than the union movement. I knew all of the people in the TWU, although politically I was never aligned with the TWU. They were a centre union, and I didn't have a great deal of time for the centre, but I thought they were an excellent union. I thought they fulfilled all of the requirements, and I remained a member of the TWU for many years after I stopped driving trucks, even though you're not technically allowed to do that.

JF Yes. [chuckles] So did you hold office or anything in the union group that you were with?

CHANCE No.

JF Had you had any union experience as a builder's labourer?

CHANCE No. It was a union-free site. Yes, the whole area was. The only people who had union coverage up there then were the HI employees.

JF And what about the actual truck driving that you did for Moylans?
Where did that take you?

CHANCE All over the state; all over the Wheatbelt. It was delivering silos, so it was over-width work. Huge loads, massive over-width, over-length loads; two 2 000-bushel silos on one semi. Lake Grace, Esperance, Geraldton; you name it, we went there.

JF What sort of vehicles were you using to transport that?

CHANCE Mostly Kenworth K125s, which is the cab over Kenny. I also had my own truck on that run as well, which was a Scania.

JF I think you referred to the modern truck the other day as a wussy vehicle. [chuckles]

CHANCE Wussy, yes. Kenworth's a man's truck! [laughter]

JF Did you enjoy your time as a truck driver?

CHANCE I did, yes. I found, though, that it's a very health-challenging job, and the TWU have made a major issue of that as well. They now provide health advice to truck drivers because they are challenged. It's a sedentary job; it's very easy to overeat. Your sleep time isn't great (although that's one of the beauties of over-width work, because you can't work at night, you can only work in the daylight hours so you do get enough sleep). No, I loved it; yes.

[track 25]

JF Maybe now is the time to talk about the move into political interests.

CHANCE Yes.

JF First of all, as a teenager how aware were you of political institutions and processes?

CHANCE Oh, very, very. I came from a political family anyway, and that political family lived within a very political society. Our local society took a keen interest in,

and was forever discussing, politics. I thought that was normal. It's obviously not, but I thought it was, yes. [laughter]

JF So it was principally the family, then, where you learned all this?

CHANCE Yes.

JF You've said once before that you were influenced by some world figures; Nasser and Johnson were two that you referred to. Were they significant in developing your political ideas, or were they just inspirational for other reasons?

CHANCE No, I think you could say the former, as long as you take the concept of political ideas very broadly. Nasser was really the first person that I could see who had taken on the old colonial powers and won, and he did it with almost no loss of life. Other people later on came and did it (like Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya) but did it with horrific loss of life, and he was one of the early terrorists, whereas Nasser was never a terrorist. There was a sort of a war, but it wasn't a bloodthirsty thing. He actually played the game according to the rules that the superpowers imposed; it wasn't terrorism action at all. I found that impressive (and I still find that impressive) to beat people at their own game. To some extent, the way he did was to turn the superpowers on each other. When Eisenhower said to the then British Prime Minister, not Harold ...

JF Macmillan, was it, or Eden?

CHANCE Eden or Macmillan; one of those two, yes. Eisenhower said, "You're wrong; get out." and he did Nasser's dirty work for him. And it was a bit annoying (particularly to have the Suez Canal blocked by those scuttled ships for so long) but he had to do that to make the point that this was a very important trade route that he controlled. So, yes, I saw him as a real hero because the concept of colonialism has always appalled me, always, and yet I am very strong in my support for the commonwealth in its role. Right to this day I think the commonwealth is an underrated organisation, but there is a long gap between colonialism and the formation of the commonwealth. To me, that was really important at the time. LBJ was a very different process. I just saw this hero-worship that Australians and others had for John Kennedy, and I never quite shared it. It always seemed to me that everything Kennedy did that was really lasting, he didn't do at all, and that it was

actually Johnson that did those big things in 1963 in the south, for example, with the civil rights. Kennedy would have obviously supported that, but there is no way he could have done that. You couldn't, in America, do that then or now. If you were a boy from Massachusetts, you just couldn't do it (they wouldn't listen to you) but a Texan can get away with those things. Then I saw the enormous pressure LBJ was put under as a result of Vietnam; he probably had the same views as I did about Vietnam privately. It wasn't his issue; he was just stuck with it. The fact that the escalation of the bombing occurred in his time was, I think, very sad, but there was military reasons for that. Once you embark on a course (as we are discovering in Afghanistan) you have to take actions that are consistent with your earlier decisions, whether they were right or wrong. So I always had a lot of time for him, but I read a little, also, about his life and his early political life, and I identified with the sort of things that he was doing, yes.

JF Coming then to your association with the ALP, I think you said you joined in 1971.

CHANCE Seventy-one, yes, so I'd actually been a member for 20 years, or 21, before I became a member of Parliament, so I was qualified. [laughter]

JF Where did you actually join the party?

CHANCE At a branch in Kellerberrin. Peter Walsh was our president. We used to meet regularly in the Country Women's Association hall in Kellerberrin. Most of us were actually from Doodlakine, but because the Kellerberrin members were older people and couldn't move about quite as freely, we used to travel down to Kellerberrin for the meetings.

JF What sort of numbers were your meetings there in Kellerberrin at that time?

CHANCE We'd maybe get a dozen to a meeting, yes.

JF And apart from helping, say, at election time, what activities did you do?

CHANCE We wrote endless letters [laughter] and passed endless motions. It was a very active branch, and there was some very talented people in the branch. Oh no, we actually thought we were changing the world, and then we used to laugh about that sometimes. [chuckles]

JF Did you have a role in preselection for candidates?

CHANCE No. The Western Australian Labor Party has a very centralised preselection system based on the state executive, but we had a member of the state executive, Peter Walsh. He used to drive down to Perth every Monday, or whenever it was they had the state executive meetings, so we were represented in that process. But preselections ... they are still quite centralised in the Western Australian party, but there is now a local component, but that didn't happen until the '90s, the local component, and even then it's only 25 per cent maximum. Having observed the different ways parties do preselections, I actually think (while it's not terribly democratic) centralised preselection is by far the better way of doing it, because even in the Labor Party there's wide variation. In the New South Wales party it's about 80 per cent local, 20 per cent central, I think. Victoria is the nearest to 50–50, and we are the most centralised. The worst of the branch rorts happened in New South Wales, for that very reason. If you have ever read Graham ...

JF Richardson?

CHANCE Richo, yes ... *Whatever it Takes*. Have you ever read that?

JF No, I didn't read it.

CHANCE I never liked Richo, and after I finished reading his autobiography, I hated him. Normally, reading someone's autobiography brings you a little closer to them, but *Whatever it Takes* was an adequate title. What they used to do to rort preselections was just appalling. They used to pass the branch membership book from one house to another down the street, and people would sign the membership book that they attended that meeting and that they made this decision. The branch never met.

JF It was total fiction.

CHANCE It was just fraud, yes; just fraud. And that's where the ethnic branches came from (they were mostly Vietnamese branches) and they just used to sign them. It was appalling.

JF So are you saying you can't trust people with democracy?

CHANCE No, no ... in a sense, that's right. If you're going to have a democratic system, you have to make sure that it is democratic and that it's not fraudulent.

JF So you didn't become a member of the state executive for quite some time?

CHANCE When did I? I'd have been a member by the late '70s, early '80s, yes. I just forget exactly when. Somehow, 1981 pops into my mind; I don't know why. I was, for many years, on the state executive.

JF So you graduated to being involved with preselections and things that that the executive looks after?

CHANCE Yes, yes.

JF Perhaps for a few moments: you were with Peter Walsh in that part of the party. A few thoughts about Peter: he was rather an independent thinker, I think.

CHANCE Peter was unbelievably clever. Even to this day, I don't think people understand just what kind of a brain Peter's got. I mean, he's generally acknowledged to have been a superb finance minister. What people probably don't understand about Peter is that his formal education never got beyond primary school.

JF Is that true?

CHANCE He didn't even go to high school. He did study for a time for an economics degree, but I don't think he completed that. But he just had an amazing brain. I can remember seeing him multiplying four figures by four figures in his head and just spitting the answer out; it was quite remarkable. We used to have these wheat docketts; it'd all be done in tonnes, hundredweights, pounds, quarters ... whatever. He used to be able to look at one of those docketts with, say, seven loads

on it and he'd just look at it and say, "No, that's not right. You're two hundredweight short."

JF Yet you've got all those funny tables, haven't you, like 28 pounds to a quarter?

CHANCE Yes, yes. But he was just remarkable. His teachers regarded him as uneducable, but they just didn't understand gifted kids in those days. Because he was bored out of his mind, he obviously behaved very badly so he was actually regarded as a bit of a delinquent. Yes, his behaviour was, at times, eccentric and he loved creating a stir, which all made him great fun to be around. I was very fond of Peter; although he was quite a lot older than me, we got on very well. One of his colleagues, when he first went to Parliament, dubbed him "mad, bad and dangerous to know", and that really summed Peter up.

JF He certainly made his mark in federal politics anyway, didn't he?

CHANCE He did, and in agricultural politics beforehand. He has a brother, John, who was similarly a very, very smart guy, and they worked closely together on the farm and in the party. John went on to become, I think, the deputy president of the Farmers Union and president of the wheat section. But he was not really any more conventional than Peter was; he still had very strong ideas about the way things should be done. John ultimately bought our farm.

JF You were involved with the Rural Labor Association, were you?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Tell me about the Rural Labor Association, when you were involved with it?

CHANCE The driving force was a guy you actually may even know (given your education background) a guy by the name of Gordon Appleton, a former principal of Narrogin Ag. When Gordon retired, he said, "Well, I'm quite happy to do the work as the body's executive officer free of charge, if the party will support us in the consumables and whatever." So we started this organisation off and Gordon was very much the steadying figurehead, and he sort of brought it all together; he was a

wonderful guy. So we started the Rural Labor Association, and it was a very vibrant association. Basically, it's year-to-year function was a meeting place for the country branches, and then its once-a-year function was the rural Labor conference, which also drew in other sectors of the party. So it was a ...

JF So that had a policy-making function, did it?

CHANCE Yes, we actually had a vote on the state executive, and it was very highly thought of as a body. We also had great support from the then state secretary, Bob McMullan, who I should mention. It was really Bob's leadership and Gordon's ethic that made it run properly. A later state secretary didn't quite have the same commitment to the RLA, but by the end it had got its own impetus ...

JF Momentum.

CHANCE Yes, and it ran on for some years after that.

JF Can you pinpoint some of the things that you would attribute to it as achievements?

CHANCE It was at a time of depopulation of the regional areas, and we looked hard at causes for that and solutions for that. That was where we developed some of our earliest ideas about the necessity to create employment in regional areas by value adding in those areas. If you actually go to my maiden speech, that's what it was all about. I don't know that we were successful in doing any of that, but we actually started people thinking about where is this community going to go in the long term. Someone argued that now it's almost too late to save it because it's so depleted. That was probably one of our biggest areas of concern, but we also looked at issues like drought management policy, quite a few environmental issues ... because our people weren't all farmers; a lot of them were people who lived in regional areas who had a very strong environmental line, and that would have formed the basis for what later became the protecting the old growth forest movement. It was a catalyst for getting those different points of view together.

JF And important within the Labor Party for that?

CHANCE Yes. And it did bring an attention back from the urban-centric drivers within the Labor Party to remember the fact that their roots actually started in Barcaldine by a group of shearers in country Queensland. Certain state presidents and state secretaries had different interpretations about our value, but I thought that overall it gave very good value.

JF And your particular role in that, apart from being a member of it, you represented them at state executive level, did you?

CHANCE Yes, I was the RLA's second president. I think John Bird was the first, but I can't quite remember that. Yes, I was the president for some years, and then I think Darren West took over, and then Graeme Campbell. And, really, when Graeme was there, nothing happened; it just sort of fell over, but it might have been on its last legs anyway. We had some very, very good years, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW FIVE

INTERVIEW SIX

[track 26]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number six with Hon Kimberly Maurice Chance, MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 20th August 2010 at Parliament House with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track27]

Kim, just picking up on a couple of things that we missed out on in a previous interview: we spoke about football but I didn't ever ask you what position you played.

CHANCE Oh, okay. I mostly played in the half-back flank position, although I played a few games as second ruck-rover.

JF Were you ever the recipient of any awards, trophies, or fairest and best, that sort of thing?

CHANCE I think one year I won the best junior, yes.

JF Are there any highlights of your football career that you didn't tell me about that we should canvass in the course of talking about your life?

CHANCE No, not really, but you'll be aware of that footballer who is still in his 70s and still playing football in the Goldfields league. He's had quite a lot of media in recent years. He was an elderly man by football standards when I was playing football, and this guy is still going. He's quite remarkable. He was actually responsible for breaking my wrist.

JF Ouch!

CHANCE Yes [laughter]. He didn't intend to do it but it was a very windy day. We were playing at Burracoppin; that was his home team. The ball had gone out on the windward flank, where it hadn't been all day. I basically went out to retrieve the ball. I was sort of trotting away in a little world of my own. The game was on but there was just nobody out there. I picked up the ball and leisurely turned around to look for somebody to kick it to you, and bang, he'd been running behind me, which was the kind of footballer he was; he'd never ever give up, you know. I fell a bit awkwardly and managed to break my wrist [laughter].

JF Oh, dear; a memorable game!

CHANCE Yeah, a memorable game.

JF If that's the sum total of your football career ...

CHANCE No, no; I enjoyed my football, but I never made any great highlights, no.

JF The other thing that I wanted to pick up on: we talked about your becoming a partner, with your sister and brother-in-law, in farming. I presume that your father stayed on his property and that was a separate operation.

CHANCE No, no, no; I was one of those people who never left home. My parents ran away from home! They retired in '68, and then we started our farming partnership in '69, yes.

JF So you were operating the original property plus the others that came along?

CHANCE Yes, exactly.

JF At this moment perhaps it would be fitting to mention your father's involvement in agropolitics, since we're mentioning him. Can you just give us a quick sketch of his involvement, I think it was the International Wool Secretariat?

CHANCE Yes. That came about as a result of his membership of the Australian Wool Board. Well, it began firstly through the farmers' union, and he was the president of the wool section. He progressed from there to what was then the Australian Wool Board, became later the corporation, and from there he was simultaneously a member of the International Wool Secretariat. That required him to do a lot of travelling around the world, and [he] told me some amazing stories about some of his fellow members because the IWS had members from Australia and New Zealand of course, but also South Africa and Uruguay; probably Chile and Argentina as well, although the Uruguayans were the ones that he used to talk about

most. Portugal, Spain ... yeah, it was quite an involved process although about 80 per cent of the funding actually came from Australia.

JF When was he at his height in this; was that after he left the farm?

CHANCE Sort of, yes. That would have been about 1970, '71, in that era, yeah. The wool board morphed into the Australian Wool Corporation and he left it at that point, yes.

JF Is he still around?

CHANCE No. We lost our dad a couple of years ago, but he was 95 years old and he was in great shape right up to the day he died; still living independently. He was a remarkable bloke, yeah.

JF And your mum?

CHANCE No; she died 30 years before. But dad had a remarkable story. I could never get him to do something like this. I always wanted him to do an oral history because he was one of the few people still alive that had pre-war experience of the north west. When he was a wool classer, he used to work in those areas. In fact I went to the Revolutions exhibition at Whiteman Park a couple of days ago and they have their bit of the history of those travelling shearing teams. They've got an old truck there that they used to travel on, although it was a bit more modern than the one he described to me. I think they had a Chef Peacock! But quite remarkable things happened up there in those days. Everything changed of course after the war, but he joined the army while he was still wool classing.

JF For you there was a tiny spin-off for his IWS contacts. You told me, I think off tape, that you actually got wedding congratulations from ...

CHANCE Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum.

JF Yes.

CHANCE That wasn't from the IWS. He was later a director of Rural Traders Cooperative, and RTC was really started up on the basis that they would establish a

meat trading operation directly into the gulf. It was a very far-sighted agenda, driven largely by Sir Basil Embry, then the president of the farmers' union. My father formed some very firm friendships in the Middle East. They were mostly dealing through Dubai which was then just a growing village. It was quite a small place because the real building of the Middle East as we know it now was just at its very beginning. You can't say it hadn't started because it was underway, but really the high oil prices didn't hit until 1973; this was still two years before that. But he was very impressed with Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, and he was kind enough to send me a wedding present when he said ... I was married in '74, so the oil boom had started, just. He said to Sheikh Rashid he had to get back to his son's wedding, and the next thing he knew somebody met him at the airport as he was leaving and said, "This is a present for your son."

RF Isn't that nice.

CHANCE Yes.

RF Have you ever met the sheikh yourself?

CHANCE No. Of course Sheikh Rashid is long dead now, but no, I've never met his sons, although I have met more minor members of the Al Maktoum family, and in particular the chairman of Emirates airlines.

[track 28]

JF I think at this stage then, we come back to you. We talked about your joining the ALP in 1971 and I wondered if you could just tell me, which we didn't mention, what actually precipitated the joining?

CHANCE Well, we've discussed earlier that Doodlakine and surrounds was a very political area and the fact that I just thought that was normal; I thought everyone was like that! The area had quite a strong left-wing focus and I had teetered around the edges of joining the party from about 1969. There were a couple of issues to resolve in my own mind, but by 1971 I had those issues resolved and I was ready to join.

JF And these were philosophical issues, were they?

CHANCE Well, they were more administrative actually. I took some time to accept the idea of party discipline; I was a fairly independent type of person and the idea that one was bound by a collective decision took a while for me to accept. But, once I'd thought that through ... and I remain to this age a believer that that is the right way to do it. No matter how much you may be personally against a particular resolution which is adopted by your colleagues, if you can't convince them that you're right and they're wrong, and they make that decision, then you are bound by that decision. That's the whole basis of being a delegate and something that I found in my other work with the Farmers' Union, which also started at about the same time. I found delegates, even at a very senior level, never accepted that. They would be delegated to represent their members on an issue that they didn't agree with, that their members required them to vote for and they would just proceed to vote according to their own views, not their members', which I thought was just outrageous.

JF Yes, so it's a matter of accurately representing your electorate, so to speak, or the body behind you?

CHANCE Yes. I remember Wolf Boetcher, who was a later president of the Farmers' Union articulating that very clearly. He said, "Look, when you're in a position like that, you can speak as vigorously as you wish against the resolution, as long as you vote for it; that's what you were sent here to do. And, you should declare that when you start." But, even so, I saw some very, very distressing things happen when people thought that they could just vote whichever way they wanted, regardless of their direction. That actually caused the end of a number of promising careers in the Farmers' Union, because they'd just never really thought the issue through properly that they were sent not in their own rights, but they represented other people. It was a very, very important lesson and one that held me in good sway through my parliamentary career.

JF Yes, because that's exactly the position you're in as a party member, I guess.

CHANCE Yes, and it becomes more refined at a political level because of the effective sanctity of caucus in the Labor Party. You can say whatever you like in caucus and you can preach something that is absolutely contrary to Labor Party

policy; that's absolutely fine. You are the freest voice you can imagine, as long as you never ever say it outside! [laughter]

JF And quid pro quo I suppose; the party looks after you in some situations in return for that sort of loyalty.

CHANCE Absolutely, and that's why caucus has to be confidential, because as soon as you get a leak out of caucus, and regrettably, we had one or two, then members of the caucus will feel constrained in what they can say, and it is their absolute right to have that free voice within caucus. And similarly, when you win an issue in caucus very narrowly, against perhaps the Premier ... the Premier may have been in a voting group opposite you ... the Premier is bound by the same rules. He might hate it; he can hate it all the likes, but he is bound by it. So, everyone is equal in caucus.

JF It's all a matter of what limits you place on democracy and where they are placed I guess, isn't it?

CHANCE Yes, and it goes much more broadly than simply that small group of people who are MPs; it applies right across the board. The strength of a major party is when they say something before an election, you can hold them to account if they don't do it. It doesn't mean they're always going to do it, because there may be a number of things happen which cause them not to do it, some reasonable, some quite unreasonable; a number of things might happen. But, you can hold them to account for not doing it. So, if they say they're going to build 25 new schools in their first year and they only build 21, then you can quite reasonably say, "Well, you didn't do what you said you were going to do." When you get down to the Independents and minor parties, they can effectively say whatever they feel like saying, because they're never going to get a chance to be in government. And when we look at political stability, political stability is a function of large parties. Political instability is a function of multiple small parties. Going back in history a bit, because both Italy and France, for example, are now more stable than they used to be, but when you look back at their past through the '50s, the '60s, even the '70s, countries like Italy and France really never had a party with more than about 15 per cent of the majority vote. They were governments formed on loose coalitions and often you would see a new Prime Minister, if not a new president, three times in a year. Italy was outrageous and France not a lot better.

JF Linking that to the present day, you hear a lot of people say that the people didn't approve a change of Prime Minister in the current Labor government, but obviously, that same sort of party discipline is operating behind the scenes there I suppose.

CHANCE Absolutely, yes. It's been, I think, a ludicrous argument; the Labor Party knew that it couldn't win with Kevin Rudd as its leader. They had to change, didn't have a choice, for the same reason or perhaps a more pragmatic reason than the Liberals did exactly the same thing a few months before.

JF And just as it was their right to appoint a leader, namely Kevin Rudd in that instance, it was equally their right to dismiss him!

CHANCE Exactly. That's one of the costs, I suppose, of a very strong party structure, but the upside of the strong party structure is stable government.

[track 29]

Having said that, what you've also got to accept, if you're going to have large, powerful parties, you've got to accept that, within those parties, you're going to have a very broad range of opinions that somehow have to be accommodated. And the Liberal Party in Australia and the Labor Party in Australia, both of whom I think have served Australia very well, have always had deep divisions, sometimes quite bitter divisions, but the strength of a large party is that it is able to accommodate that range of directions.

JF Yes. When you joined the ALP, that was the heady days of "Super Tonk", wasn't it?

CHANCE Yes. He was an amazing guy and would have been re-elected, I believe, were it not for the fact that the Whitlam Government in Western Australia was, by then, quite unpopular. But "Super Tonk" was, well, at one level a great guy, but he was also a Premier that I think probably enjoyed more broad-spread affection by the people than any other Premier I've known. People loved "Tonk"; he was a great guy. He spoke their language. He had a passion and a belief in people. He probably struck the best balance of any Premier between the state and the commonwealth and the state and its place in the commonwealth that any did.

Underrated, in my view. And perhaps, had he been able to serve another term, people would have understood just what a capable person he was.

JF Did you have any close associations or encounters with him?

CHANCE No, no, but close enough to know what he was. Yes.

JF Moving on from that for the moment, away from the party, you said it was about the same time as joining the party that you became involved with the Farmers Union or is that the WA Farmers Federation?

CHANCE Well, it is now, but it was the Farmers Union; yes.

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes talking about what you did within that organisation?

CHANCE Yes, sure. The Farmers Union then was a very powerful organisation. Even as late as, I think, 1979 I was the general treasurer of the union, and I know then that we had over 10 000 active members. It was enormously powerful. It's probably about one-eighth of that now. It had a turnover of over \$1 million. It was immensely politically powerful, and it took seriously its non-political stance, or its multi-political stance would have been a more accurate term, because everyone was political, so much so that at the time I was towards the top of the organisation, it was actually dominated by left-wingers. That's not a complete surprise, I suppose, because there are two farm organisations to this day and there certainly were then: the Farmers Union and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. And the PGA was always a kind of industrial wing of the Liberal Party, so the Farmers Union tended to be made up of, in the main, Country Party voters, but very strongly represented was Labor Party voters, so Peter Walsh, John Walsh and myself, Des O'Connell, Patrick Moore—a whole range of left-wingers. But the union members knew what our politics were; it wasn't something we ever hid, and they kept on voting for us, because, I guess, they thought we were doing a good job. It was interesting. We also had conservative governments then. I think the members saw some value in having people who weren't too close to the government. We had our local branch in Doodlakine. Our zone council was based in Merredin and was a very powerful organisation. Our membership was entirely voluntary of course, but our membership, I think, covered over 80 per cent of the active farmers in the region.

JF Goodness. That's a high percentage, isn't it, for any group?

CHANCE Yes, for a voluntary membership. When I say they were active members, they didn't just turn up for meetings; they plotted and schemed. It was really quite an introduction. I was elected first to the general executive of the body, which is like a broad consultative body (but there is one member from each zone; I think our zone had about 800 members) and then ultimately to the general council (the general executive is the peak body, but the general council is the distillation of the peak body, which had, I think, 10 members) and from there to, firstly, the Australian Farmers Federation, then the National Farmers Federation and also as the general treasurer. I'd pretty much reached my peak then, and I pulled out to further our farming interests, because, by then, we'd bought the new land block, and I was needed there. I really enjoyed my time there. I learnt a great deal. I travelled a lot around the state. We had one big campaign in 1980, which was the rail freight campaign when we took on the then Deputy Premier, who was Minister for Transport, Cyril Rushton. Wheat in those days was a regulated commodity. You had to send it by rail. You could not cart it by truck except to the rail head. Because it was regulated, and it was a very large part of Westrail's freight, they were able to charge whatever they felt like charging or whatever was politically acceptable. It was getting to the stage where, for the more distant grain growers, who are the larger grain growers, and we represented most of them because Southern Cross is the longest rail haul, they couldn't afford to grow wheat, because the freight was taking as much as a third of their gross receipts. So we started a campaign, which was heavily backed by the Labor Party. They provided us with a publicist, although we did pay him some money, but he was the ALP's publicist. We had a media conference, which was well covered by the television. We had a great campaign document called "The Great Grain Train Robbery", and we really hurt the government of the day, because they were running into an election at that stage, which was partly why the ALP supported us. It was a strange experience for some, because my colleague, Romilo Petroni, who was actually leading the charge (I was the PR man for the campaign) was a very staunch Liberal, and probably still is for all I know. I took Romilo into the ALP headquarters, and he said, "Just hang on a second, Kim; I've got to cross myself before I walk in there." [laughter] Romilo and I were very good friends. Anyway, it was a successful campaign. Out of that, we won the right to negotiate a contract for grain, which was all we asked for. We only wanted the same rules as the iron ore people who were using the same line (that was when Koolyanobbing was in

operation) except we were being charged \$24 a tonne. They were being charged \$6 a tonne. The government just found that indefensible in the end. We never got down to \$6 a tonne, but we did carve a substantial slice ultimately off the price; around \$7 I think we took off the top. It was a very successful campaign. It changed things remarkably. To this day there is still a similar contract organised.

JF Yes, and of course a lot less rail carting being done in some respects, because there's a lot more —

CHANCE A lot of the lines have closed now. And that was part of the government's problem. They had the political argument on one side that they had to keep all these little inefficient branch lines open, and then they had the political argument on the other side that the cost of doing that was so high they could not pass it on, nor could they absorb it, so they were really caught in a bind. In a sense, we did for government what they rationally had to do anyway, and that involved the resurrection of some lines and the closure of others. In terms of that main eastern line, the standard-gauge line, there is more grain being carried on that now than there ever was. It's a very efficient railway line, and others were done up, like the Goomalling was done up.

JF And over what period of the year is grain actually carted on that, because, unlike iron ore, which can be carted year long, I suppose, grain would be a seasonal thing, wouldn't it?

CHANCE No, it's also now year long. That was partly an outcome of our contract negotiations. There were three parties to the negotiations: Westrail, CBH and the farmers. CBH were an important part of that, because what CBH were able to deliver in the longer term (and we knew that we had to work towards that) was more country storage so that they could keep the trains moving right through the year. That was a major breakthrough from Westrail's behalf, because that took all of that time pressure off them in December–January and enabled them to make some significant savings. So, yes, it made sense all round.

JF So you were involved in the publicity aspect of that particular campaign. You were also a national delegate, were you not, for that organisation?

CHANCE I was a member, yes, of the National Farmers Federation, yes, and the AFF. That rail campaign was not officially a function of the Farmers Union; it was a function of the Merredin zone council of the Farmers Union. We had then a vice-president, Peter Lee, who you would know, and he's also a very good friend of mine. Peter was the one Liberal, and he was under a lot of pressure, I think, from the government to make sure that this didn't get out of hand. I sat down with Peter and I said, "No, look, Peter, you don't have to support us; just don't come out against us, and we will run this as a function of the Merredin zone council so that you're able to stand back and say, 'No, my hands are clean.'" We both were happy about that, because, in a sense, he was not being unreasonably political about that, because I was the one who'd taken the matter to the ALP. He said, "Well, you know; it's against our constitution, Kim", and it was. [laughter]

JF So that issue is the major one you can remember having a hand in with ...

CHANCE That was probably the biggest, although we had a number of other issues that I worked through, particularly we had severely declining terms of trade then, and farmers were experiencing difficulties, and we were trying to find ways to support them. No, the rail freight one was my big one.

[track 30]

JF Coming back to the political scene, you left the Farmers Federation to concentrate on your own farm, but you were still a member of the ALP and you started to become, perhaps over the period of the next decade, more interested in politics than you had been. At what stage did you actually see a political future for yourself in terms of Parliament?

CHANCE I think it was always somewhere at the back of my mind. I didn't know quite how I was going to do it, but, remember then, that Labor held the seat of Merredin ... Jimmy Brown. The seat was called Merredin-Yilgarn and it really had an east-west axis and ran right through to Kambalda, I think. It picked up a lot of that resident mining boom in the east.

JF And perhaps the resident railway workers and people like that?

CHANCE Yes, quite. The Labor vote in Merredin itself was actually quite strong. Then (and this coincided with the time that Hendy Cowan first came into Parliament)

the seat of Merredin-Yilgarn became the seat of Merredin. It changed from an east-west axis to a north-south axis, so it picked up Mukinbudin in the north right down through to Kulin, I think, in the south, but certainly Narembeen. Hendy Cowan was well known. The seat was very clearly a Country Party seat. Hendy came in on that. That would have been, I guess, somewhere around 1976. That took out really our last Labor seat in the Wheatbelt. But the '86 election (I think it was the '86 election, but either '86 or '89) saw the birth of regionalism and the upper house changed from its old provincial system to the regional system. I think it was '86, and that was where ... I'm not too sure about that; it might have been '89. Anyway, we can sort that out. That was when I thought there is a chance of winning that one. Jimmy Brown re-emerged, so he swapped from the Legislative Assembly to the Legislative Council, and that's when I thought that was the seat I could work for. That's ultimately how it happened. I was visualising the opportunity a long time before that, and I ran in, I think, four federal election campaigns for O'Connor against my old mate Wilson Tuckey, who amazingly is still there. I just can't believe it. He's still there [chuckles].

JF I was going to bring that up, if you hadn't, of course (the O'Connor contests). Can you just remind me; which election was it?

CHANCE The first election for O'Connor was 1980, but I didn't run in that one. In fact, an old mate of mine, Roy Duncanson ran that. The next federal election was '83 and that was my first. Then we had that series of elections through the Hawke years that came very close together. I know we had one in '86 and one in '87, so I don't know whether it was '83, then '86 or whether there was an intervening one, but in total I ran four. Then in '86 I first ran for a state seat. That was the old provincial seat of East Avon or something like that ... Mick Gayfer's seat anyway. Oddly, a friend of mine was also running for the Liberal Party at the same time, John Panizza, who later became a Liberal Party senator. John, I always thought, was a Labor man. In fact, I asked him. I said, "Why are you running for the Libs, John?" He said, "Well, I'm never going to win as a Labor man, am I [laughter]?" He's been dead for a while now, but he wouldn't thank me for saying that. Because I had such high regard for John Panizza, I convinced the party to give our preferences to Panizza, not Gayfer. Of course, Mick was very unhappy about that [chuckles]. We had an unusually high drift of preferences for that time; I think about 17 per cent of our preferences went back to Mick and that was all that got him elected. Because on just the straight allocation of votes between ALP and Liberal Party, Panizza would have won it.

JF But for yourself, you had no realistic idea that you would in fact take the seat of O'Connor, did you?

CHANCE No, no.

JF So was it in the nature of an apprenticeship?

CHANCE Yes, and a bit of fun. We did have a lot of fun. There were three-way contests always. The Nats always ran somebody. The Nats always thought they could win O'Connor, and it's exactly the same this year. I had some time for Wilson, and not a lot for the Nats. The Nats ran a couple of very good candidates, and one of them was Trevor Flugge, who later got caught up in that AWB stuff. Trevor and I were good friends. I had a lot of time for him. I thought he was a very, very good operator. They put enormous effort and an enormous amount of money (something like a half a million dollars) into that campaign in about '84, I suppose. Trevor was at his peak then. Everybody knew and admired Trevor. He was a cleanskin. He had no negatives at all; very articulate and intelligent. He and I actually went to a number of election-type meetings together. We were always good friends. Anyway, after putting all that effort in (and in my total effort in the campaign I think I spent \$1 500) [chuckles] and I beat Trevor on the numbers because he had to beat me to get my float. He said, "I can't believe it, Chancy [chuckles]. I worked my backside off and I couldn't even beat you" [laughter].

JF To what extent were the family on your side when you were making these experimental moves.

CHANCE They were fine, yes.

JF Did they get their hands dirty in polls and polling places and so on?

CHANCE Certainly my wife and kids did, and my brother-in-law and my sister, yes. They went out handing [out] how-to-vote cards Yes, my word.

JF At the time (we're looking at the '80s now) the Burke government had come in and you were on the state executive at that time, I presume, still?

CHANCE Yes.

JF Did you have opportunity to rub shoulders much with Brian Burke?

CHANCE A little bit. I used to go and help out Ken McIver in Avon, and Ken and Burkie were great mates. It was really through only the Avon campaigns that I ever worked very closely with Brian. We were different based factionally. I was always a left member, and he couldn't abide the left, of course. But personally we got on pretty well. He's a nice guy. His public persona these days is not one anyone wants to be associated with, and I understand that, but as a bloke, he was a great guy.

JF I suppose you said that you didn't exactly support what he did in government in some respects.

CHANCE Well, I thought he did a pretty good job in government actually, yes. I had no real problems with that. In fact, some of the things that he did, which were later most heavily criticised as being part of the WA Inc thing, were really well-motivated. It was in the execution they did terrible things ... covering up financial losses. I mean, the execution was just awful, but the vision that lay behind the WA Development Commission and the other one that used to take on the longer shots. There was WADC and [pause] ... anyway, the other state development arm. I thought that was great vision, and I wish we still had it.

JF And we might have had if there hadn't been such a disaster.

CHANCE If they'd just been honest. The fact is they were dishonest, and the execution was dishonest. That really annoyed me because they then allowed all of the good things that they did to be tarnished with the same brush. Exim was the other one. You mention either of those two words now and people just think, "Oh well, that was part of the crooked '80s and that's WA Inc." Well, they were part of WA Inc, but they didn't have to be a part of the dishonesty. They were the vehicles through which the dishonesty occurred, but it's people that cause dishonesty, not the corporate structures. I just thought those structures were great; they appealed to me.

JF So you didn't have great qualms at the time?

CHANCE No.

JF Probably you didn't know at that time all that was happening behind the scenes?

CHANCE Well, who did?

JF Yes, who did?

CHANCE Exactly. I mean, we have pretty vigorous media in Western Australia. All the way through the '80s, even when people in the Liberal Party, who had worked out what was happening ...

JF Bill Hassell and co?

CHANCE I was thinking more Barry Mackinnon and the guy who was later Minister for Finance, Max Evans. Max is smart. Max is really smart. Max had worked that out, but he could never explain it to people. You know what Max was like; he used to mumble away. But, in fact, Max picked it all. He was a very clever guy. He knew what was going on. With all of that knowledge, the media didn't pick it up. There were people who did know or strongly suspect. Maybe some of it was an educated guess, but the media weren't following it. When we say nobody knew, a few people did know but they couldn't get their message through.

JF Because Brian himself was an ex-media man, wasn't he, which probably ... would that have helped in keeping it dark, do you think?

CHANCE Probably [laughter]. Probably.

JF And what did you think of the rights and wrongs of the leader's fund?

CHANCE That's dishonest, yes. I mean, passing cash out the back door. How did that cash get in there in the first place? I mean, it's a deliberate attempt to subvert the Electoral Act. Had Exim and WADC been exposed to a bit of transparency, we may still have them. That's what I am annoyed about. Congratulations to them for thinking of a great idea, but I'm really disappointed that they then let it go under. I think we all learnt a lot in that process. Everybody looked for ways in which you could guarantee that WA Inc could never happen again, and we put in this whole series of complicated manoeuvres, some of which actually make life very difficult for anybody

trying to take the state forward, when all we needed to do was to put in guarantees of transparency. I've always been a great believer in the fact that when the lights are on, people don't misbehave. Turn the lights on, let everybody see what's happening, and if you've got transparency you don't need any of that other nonsense, which clever people will find their way around. Crooks are very clever sometimes. But if all the lights are on and if everybody can see ... If there's total transparency about what an organisation like WADC is doing (you've got the Parliament, the courts, all kinds of sophisticated mechanisms, ASIC, the Federal Police, the state police) look, nothing will ever go wrong. You don't actually need a CCC. I just think the CCC has been quite damaging, because it stops people doing what actually needs to be done sometimes. Just turn the lights on; let everybody see it for what it is.

JF Thinking now about the national scene and stepping back nearly a decade, what was your reaction to the election of Whitlam and the Whitlam era?

CHANCE Whitlam was the start of modern Australia. Australia as we know it today began with, and very largely as a result of, Whitlam, yes. The first few days of the Whitlam government actually achieved more than Australian governments had achieved for years. It was the beginning of something new. Even those, I think, who at the time hated Whitlam, because he was a guy who invoked strong passions (you either loved him or you hated him) I think now, in moments of quiet reflection, look back and see that was when Australia changed. They might not have liked all the changes, but they were changes that had been put off for a long, long time. Yes, Whitlam was a remarkable breakthrough and remains today a kind of a beacon of Australia's place in the world. He was the one, I think, that [made] the world first notice [that] Australia existed. As a result of his actions I think we became an international community. I think, probably (although I never liked him much) Paul Keating was the other one. I think Keating put us on the map in the financial sense, but I always had my problems with Keating.

JF Harking back to Whitlam for a moment, do you have any personal interactions with Whitlam that are memorable?

CHANCE A couple. I had lunch with Gough here in Parliament House with John Cowdell. It was just wonderful. He was 86, I think, at the time, and he was witty and amusing, just a remarkable guy.

JF Now John Cowdell was, what, secretary of the executive at that stage, was he?

CHANCE Yes.

JF How did you find John?

CHANCE John and I got on well. I mean, we clashed once or twice, but generally speaking we had a good relationship. I think we saw the world quite differently. We came from very different backgrounds.

JF Though fellow Methodists?

CHANCE Yes. As, of course, was Geoff Gallop. Yes, different worlds, different backgrounds, different values in a sense, but we got on well, yes.

JF Now, come to Keating, whom you mentioned. What are your thoughts about him? You say you weren't always in support of Keating.

CHANCE No. I think Keating in his fervour to make Australia, in its financial sense, a part of the modern world, pushed too far too fast. I think he saw things in terms of black and white. [He was] different from Malcolm Fraser, who I think actually did understand what would happen if you freed up the Australian financial system as quickly as Keating did. Fraser did take us off the fixed dollar to a kind of a floating dollar. A term he used at the time was the "managed float", but Keating just opened it up and leapt far ahead of where we should have been at that stage. Even though the Australian dollar is a very small player in the world financial circles, it was at one stage the third or fourth most traded currency in the world. Our currency was being used basically as a betting chip by any cowboy with a computer terminal. I think that really hurt us, and we got to a stage in the recession (there wasn't much Keating could have done about the recession; it was a world recession that was going to sweep over us) when he left us in a recession at a time when we not only had very high interest rates, we also had an over-strong dollar. If you've got a strong dollar, you're going to have high interest rates. Yet they kept saying, "We have to raise the interest rates again because the dollar is too high." Well, that just seemed to me to be contrary to everything I believed in. He was the first true anti-Keynesian. I was always a Keynesian and, for that reason, I just couldn't follow their logic. I still can't.

JF You'd have revalued at that point, would you?

CHANCE I'd have left the dollar managed in the way Fraser had it. I knew we had to move on, but I would've held out on the freeing up of the Aussie dollar until I felt confident that we had the means of controlling interest rates and the dollar beyond those that were proposed by Milton Friedman; in other words, beyond the monetarist principles. I hated the system of monetarism and I saw what Rogernomics had done in New Zealand. I mean, the cost on workers is just enormous. You lose your job because all of a sudden what you made is now coming from China, and your interest rates just went up to 19 per cent; you can't find another job, what do you do? And Rogernomics forced New Zealanders into soup kitchens. New Zealand should be one of the wealthiest nations on earth. You shouldn't have workers lining up for soup kitchens. To me, that is completely anathema. While Keating didn't go as far, Roger what's his name, the New Zealand Treasurer, we had Thatcherism, Rogernomics and Keatingnomics at the time. They were the three leaders. What I could see (this was prior to the unification of Germany) is that the economies in Scandinavia and West Germany, who had not adopted monetarist principles, were actually doing extremely well. That was when West Germany really reached its peak, and yet they hadn't done any of this nonsense. They'd held their protective mechanisms. Of course, the protective mechanisms had to be broken down, but they should have been broken down at a pace we knew we could manage. Instead, Keating just swept it all off the board, and there was huge cost, mostly in the form of interest rates.

JF That grew out of asking you about Keating himself. It's mainly that sort of policy you are talking about when you say you didn't agree with Keating. Did you have much personal interaction with him at any stage?

CHANCE Met him once; didn't like him [chuckles]; cold fish; wasn't impressed.

JF A couple of other ALP figures that you might have stumbled across at the time ... What about Bill Hayden?

CHANCE I don't think I ever met Bill. Oh, yes, I did. I met him once. No, I can't say that I knew him well, but he was an impressive man. I like Bill.

JF And Hawke?

CHANCE Hawke I met, and, of course, everyone loves Bob, but Bob disappointed me as a Prime Minister. Not that he did such a bad job, but because when he was elected, he had Australia in the palm of his hand; he could have done anything. His best friend was the Leader of the Opposition. Together, those two could have done an enormous amount (Peacock and Hawke), but they just sat there and did nothing. The Hawke governments were a huge waste of opportunities. It was Peter Walsh that called Bob Hawke “old Jellyback”, remember? In a sense he was. He didn’t have the courage, having got there, to then do something with it. We all thought he was a doer, and he let us down. He didn’t do. Just a quarter of what Whitlam had, if you’d put that into Hawke’s head, we would have been a great country.

JF The Accord then, how do you feel about that?

CHANCE [It was a] significant achievement, yes, the Accord. But that was really the product of the trade union movement [more] than of the Labor government. The Labor government just facilitated it. No, the Accord was a good breakthrough.
[track 31]

JF Well, I think probably at this stage we’ve got a few minutes left and maybe in that you could talk about the actual way by which you managed to get into your seat eventually. You were able to be nominated into an early retirement seat, were you not?

CHANCE Yes. When the preselections came up in (what was it?) the 1990 election, I nominated for the number one position and I had the numbers to win it. Because both Jimmy Brown and I were left members, the other factions simply said to the left, “Well, they’re both yours, you work out who you want.” So the decision was actually not made at the state executive; it was made at the broad left executive. I actually won the poll in the broad left executive. That news filtered back to the Premier [pause] Burke. Yes, it filtered back to Premier Burke and he said, “Well, guys, I’ve already given an undertaking that every sitting member will be able to contest their seat if they want to, so you’re going to have to change it because I’ve given that undertaking to Caucus and basically Caucus have signed off.” So you had this stand-off between the political wing and the lay party, but the lay party only represented in the decision made by a part of the lay party - the left. So there was

some toing and froing between the lay party and the left, and the left came back to me and said, "Look, we're caught in a bind here. We actually want you to be the member but, you know, we've got this conflict of commitments." I said, "Oh, I don't want to cause any trouble. Jim's got to retire anyway," (because we still had an age rule in those days) "Jim's got to retire in '91 anyway, so let him retire midterm." That was the deal that was done, and Cowdell was the state secretary, you're quite right, because I remember Cowdell's involvement in that. The deal was written down and lodged in Cowdell's safe [laughs] that Jim would retire in '91. I never saw it, but I was assured [laughter]; Cowdell assured me it was in the safe [laughter]. Then I have to ... Yes, Cowdell did protect my interest very strongly then, and then Jim somehow was able to push that out a bit. I said, "Look, I don't mind; I'm doing something else now. I'm ready to start in '92, if that's what Jim wants to do." So, Jim actually served three years of that term instead of two as agreed. There was no animosity about that; he got his extra year and I was happy doing what I was doing. It actually gave me a bit more time to get ready, so that's how that occurred. That's how I came to be a member of Parliament in '92 when the elections occurred in '93.

JF Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW SIX

INTERVIEW SEVEN

[track 32]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview number seven with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in a series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on the 27th of August 2010 at Parliament House, Perth with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 33]

Today, Kim, we're going to talk through into the first few years of your parliamentary experience, but just before we do, I want to pick up a couple of things that I could have developed more from the last discussion. The first of those is: you said you had two concerns (at least two concerns, I think was your phrase) that kept you worried about becoming a member of the ALP's parliamentary situation, and one of them you said was the solidarity issue. I wondered what the others were [chuckles].

CHANCE It's a very good question because I don't actually remember saying there were two. But certainly the parliamentary solidarity, well, the party solidarity issue, the requirement to be bound by a decision that is collectively made, even though you might not agree with it, is an issue for me. There was one other minor one, I suppose. The Labor Party then had a requirement in the pledge that you signed. Signing the pledge at all was another issue, but it's disappeared now from the entry requirements of the Australian Labor Party, but at that stage we were required to sign a pledge which said that we were not members of the Communist Party and nor did we sympathise with the aims of the Communist Party. I think that was a carryover from the split in the '50s. Well, I certainly had no trouble saying I was not a member of the Communist Party; I had more difficulty answering honestly that I didn't sympathise with any of the aims of the Communist Party, some of which are very high ideals in my view. I mean, communism's a great system; it's just that nobody's ever tried it yet. But in the end I thought, "Well, I'm sure that's not what they mean", so I signed the pledge anyway; but, yes, that's probably the second factor.

JF Thanks for that. The other thing that I wanted to pick up on, you said in the course of our discussions previously that you were always a member of the left faction. I wondered if you might talk for a few moments about the rise of factional influence, which I think I'd be correct in saying, since you joined, has been pretty phenomenal in the party, because back in '71 factions were not overwhelmingly important or you didn't hear as much about them, did you, as we certainly do today?

CHANCE No, not in Western Australia. I mean, factionalism was there in the '50s. The reason you didn't observe factionalism in operation in Western Australia was because right up to and including Joe Chamberlain's time, the whole Western Australian branch of the party was a left-wing party and you didn't see the emergence of a second group, a second faction, which was the right, really until Brian Burke emerged. Now, clearly there were people who sat outside the left structures before then, but they weren't recognised as a faction (Brian's own father, Tom Burke, for example) and they were dealt with pretty brutally by Joe and the party structure that existed at the time. They were fairly straight-talking, straight-acting people in those days. But Brian Burke did bring a second faction in, and then in the late '70s, probably early '80s, you saw the emergence of a group in the middle, largely driven by the states of South Australia and Western Australia, (although I think it began in South Australia) and that was the emergence of the centre-left and that really made Western Australia a three-faction town.

JF Do you have an opinion about that development and particularly about the influence of factional leaders on policy and procedure and so on within the party? Has it enhanced or otherwise the running of the party?

CHANCE Well, not everyone's going to agree with me but I take a fairly benign view of the formalisation of the factions. I stress the word "formalisation" because in any group of people any larger than three, you're always going to have at least three different opinions and on occasions even one person will have three different opinions. But the Labor Party is a very large party; it engages an incredible scope of people. We referred to that when I referred to one of the inner-city suburbs and the way the dynamics of the suburb changed (the term we use is gentrification) where, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the gentrification, the Labor Party vote increased when the doctors and lawyers moved in in the place of the retiring blue-collar workers. The Labor vote actually increased in spite of the expectation that that wouldn't be the case, and I think that's an indication of the breadth of demographic that support Labor or that will occasionally vote Labor. In order to accommodate that within a single party, particularly one which has a very tight policy agenda and a policy agenda which binds all of its members to it, means that you have to have, I think, a formal way of resolving that, otherwise the party would be continually at war with itself. What I believe the factions' formalisation gave to the Labor Party was a capacity to negotiate those issues outside of the public eye and outside of the heat and contention of the floor of State Conference and State Executive. It meant that we

were able to organise power-sharing arrangements and generally guarantee the good conduct of the party. In its ultimate expression, though, that capacity also had a downside and that downside meant that our State Executive meetings and our State Conference meetings became really, really boring because the deals were already hammered out and you didn't see the same level of debate on the floor as we had in my early years in the party.

JF So does this mean that the rank and file members really are afforded less opportunity to have an input?

CHANCE I think that's fair to say, although, you know, I wouldn't apply that too broadly. But I think that's a fair comment because they still have the capacity to have their say at State Conference and State Executive, and people do, it's just that they're less likely to be successful if the position they have chosen to take is different from the position which has been pre-organised by the faction leaders. But nothing prevents them from making those points. Similarly, if they are activists, nothing prevents them engaging at a much higher level in that debate through their factional caucuses, and really that's where the debate has shifted to.

JF At this stage then I think we'll just flip across to your early moves to stand for election. You told me last week about the contention of preselection for your seat, which eventually saw you take over from Jim Brown. I wondered how stringent were the preselection requirements when you first started contesting O'Connor? Did you have to go through a grill then with State Executive or something?

CHANCE No. The State Executive only actively engages in the preselection process where there is more than one person seeking the position. The only time I ever appeared (as far as I can recall anyway) before the State Executive was when I was a Senate preselection candidate; an unsuccessful senate preselection candidate. But other than that, nominating for preselection for O'Connor was simply a nod from the State Executive, yes; nobody was required to address it because there was never more than one candidate.

JF And you were well enough known anyway, I suppose, by that stage, were you?

CHANCE By then, yes.

JF And similarly when it came to the seat that you finally got into, you say it was all organised within the factional system because you and Jim were the only possible contenders and you were both in the same cohort, were you?

CHANCE We did have a number of contenders, because now we're talking about a ticket vote because by that stage we ...

JF It was Upper House, yes.

CHANCE Yes, and by that stage the Upper House had gone over to the regional system so it was a ticket vote. So what you nominated for was a position on the ticket, and I did nominate against Jim Brown for the first position, but as I said in an earlier interview, the other factions had effectively said, "Well, the Agricultural Region belongs to you, both of the candidates are left candidates, so it's for the left caucus to determine who gets number one". That caucus did give me number one but that was later negotiated, mostly through the intervention of the Premier, which wasn't a great concern to me; I was quite happy to fit in with that. I thought, "Well, if that's the wish of the party that I run in number two, I'll run in number two", but there was also another candidate who had the number three position ...

JF And that was?

CHANCE I don't remember just now [chuckles].

JF Okay. I can check that out anyway.

CHANCE It was a woman, and her name will come back to me.

JF Which associates were of greatest support to you in your decision to nominate for that position?

CHANCE I had some very close friends in the party, all of whom in the left, but Senator Jim McKiernan was probably the strongest. Jim McGinty, although he and I have probably never been close friends, but McGinty was also a very strong supporter. John Cowdell, as the State Secretary, always made me feel as though I was being dealt with honestly, and then other less prominent members of the left;

Chuck Bonzas, for example. I always felt comfortable that Chuck was able to give me some guarantee of support, particularly from the Fremantle end of the party, but a whole range of people; Jackie McKiernan, yes.

JF And locally, who did you have as a team of people supporting you when it came to election times? I know you didn't have to contest the election as such (well, you did, I suppose). So all right, you did; correct me.

CHANCE We had three very active branches in the electorate. My own, which by then was called the Eastern Wheatbelt branch but was a combination of the branches in Kellerberrin, Merredin and Narembeen, but we re-formed as a single branch; the Avon branch based in Northam; and of course the Geraldton branch when Geraldton was in the electorate. We had good supporters in Albany (because at one stage Albany was in the electorate) and a handful of people in Esperance. So it's starting to give you some idea just how complicated and how widespread it was. In between, we had a number of individuals who used to turn out on polling day and man booths for us; terrific people. But, yes, it was a combination of individual and branch support and every year they used to turn out; yes, tremendous.

JF Did you have what you would term a campaign manager amongst those people?

CHANCE In the early years we did but usually I was my own manager. I mean, there were limited resources available and most of those resources I provided myself, so I was not only my own campaign manager but usually managing another campaign; for example, the Geraldton campaign I managed three times, and that required a lot of work. I mean, Geraldton was a highly contentious and very marginal seat. My office was in Geraldton and I managed campaigns for three different candidates, the last of whom we finally got up, which was tremendous; yes, it was great.

JF That would have posed some difficulties for you, I suppose, because Geraldton is not altogether accessible from Merredin, is it? I mean, you can get there but it takes time and driving and flying or whatever.

CHANCE Yes, well there's no air service connecting Merredin and Geraldton so it was necessary to drive to Perth or drive direct to Geraldton. In those years, in those

days the arrangement for our lease vehicles used to expire at 40 000 kilometres. They now go a bit longer, but I would go through three vehicles in one year, just driving between Geraldton and Merredin, so I got to know that track pretty well [laughter].

[track 34]

JF All right, well, I think at this stage we could actually talk about the first little time in Parliament, and I'm going to confine that to generalisation today, rather than go into the detailed legislation and so on of that period in opposition. How did you prepare yourself for taking a seat in Parliament as a first-time member?

CHANCE Well, I didn't do what I recall my uncle doing before he went into the Senate, and that was read *Hansards* like novels. I always thought it was an indication of some deep-seated sickness, but I did do some strategic reading. Mostly I talked to experienced MPs and I relied heavily on the two that I sat alongside, Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport, who were both very good friends, and still are. They sort of guided me through; it was learn on the job, basically [chuckles].

JF Was there any form of induction for new members in those days?

CHANCE There was supposed to be, but I'm still waiting for mine. It didn't happen. Jimmy Brown took me around the Parliament House and introduced me to a number of people. I should recognise here also the contribution that Laurie Marquet made to getting me up to speed. Laurie was terrific, and he remained a tremendous source of information and enthusiasm. Laurie was the parliamentarian's parliamentarian ... tremendously experienced; we were so lucky to have him.

JF Yes, and he had a particular aim, I think, in mind to develop the upper house in a way that made it more akin to the Senate, perhaps, in its procedures; is that right?

CHANCE Even more advanced than the Senate. There were factors that were shared by only two upper houses in the whole world, and that was the New Zealand Parliament, although that is not an upper house, it's unicameral, but it's a parliamentary practice that was shared only with the Legislative Council in Western Australia. Of course, the common denominator was ...

JF Was Laurie.

CHANCE Laurie was the Clerk to both Parliaments. We had a number of practices that were either unusual or unique but went to the better running of the Parliament. He did make a huge contribution. Parliament was changing anyway. The Legislative Council began to change, I think probably from the time that people like Tom Stephens and Peter Dowding came into the Parliament. Before the arrival of those two in particular (there may well have been others) it wasn't uncommon ... I honestly didn't believe this when they told me about it, so I went back and checked the *Hansard*, and they were right. There were actually times before their arrival when the President called for questions without notice, there were none. There were no questions. I could not believe it.

JF How can a house of review not do that, yes?

CHANCE Not have a SINGLE question. It really was a gentleman's club. It had no women in it and it had no politics. Of course, the arrival of Dowding and Stephens changed that [chuckles]. Our question time, I think, is one of the great advantages. People are very critical of question time in the Legislative Assembly, as they are of the house of reps, and rightly so. If you don't have an effective functioning question time, you are degrading democracy because question time, to me, is the most important single function of a Parliament. It's where you get accountability. It's where it stems from. The Legislative Assembly will go through its entire question time with as few as four questions being addressed. I used the word "addressed", not "answered", because usually there isn't any answer. I used to make a habit of counting the number of questions in our question time, and it was not uncommon for between 20 and 25 questions to be dealt with. And, of those 20 or 25, there would only be perhaps a maximum of half a dozen where you could say that answer was a non answer, but mostly because the minister would have to refer to advice; generally not because they stood up and made some kind of ministerial statement. We did have a very effective question time.

JF That was one of the ways in which the upper house here was unique. Were there others?

CHANCE This is a relatively recent change, but I was always disappointed with what was possible to be achieved during estimates week. We got one week in the year when we were able to bring in ministers and senior officials and quiz them on

their budget. I thought it was quite remarkable that the Parliament actually agreed to extend that estimates process right through the year, through the powers of the estimates committee. I might need correction here, but I think it happened at the beginning of the Gallop government in 2001. I was actually surprised and, to some extent, disappointed that that enormous power wasn't used as much as it could have been. But it's still there, and it's a very important power. To be able to concentrate on a particular issue or a particular department or a particular minister through the powers of the estimates committee is a huge advantage and absolutely essential, absolutely.

JF Did that come about because the estimates committee became a standing committee as against being an occasional committee?

CHANCE Yes. There was an estimates committee, you're quite right, before 2001, but really its only function revolved around the estimates week and its organisation. When it became a standing committee, it still had that role, although that all-encompassing estimates period, which involves the whole house now, is only one day in the Legislative Council, not three days, but its ongoing work is extremely important. Imagine you have a problem in the Department of Health, for example, at any time through the year that committee is able to bring health department officers and the minister representing the Minister for Health, if he or she is in another house, to bring them before the committee, and bring them back and back and back and back until they are satisfied. There is no limit on what they can do. I think that's tremendously important. And while a similar situation does exist in the Senate, we never had anything like that capacity in Western Australia before.

JF You had to go through a fairly sudden transition from being an active rural practical person as a farmer or driver and you became, obviously, more sedentary, urban and theoretical in a sense. How did you handle the transition?

CHANCE Not badly, I suppose. I was also 46 years old when I came into the Parliament, so the idea of being a little bit more sedentary didn't seem like such a bad idea at the time. The transition was easier than it might have otherwise been because I was capable of reading law. I have no qualification in law, but it came relatively easily to me. The biggest change is the idea of dealing with the concept that you are public property, and when a particular group of people want to speak to you, you have a duty and an obligation to get yourself there and speak to them. That

was drummed into me very quickly after I became the shadow Minister for Primary Industry then it was, not agriculture, when I was summoned to the Cue Parliament. The doyen of the Cue Parliament (his name will come back to me) Mr Price, but the then president of the Cue shire, summoned me and said, "Cue Parliament is on and you're required to be there." It was on a Friday. Parliament had been sitting that week, so I had to get out of Parliament on Thursday night and drive all the way to Cue, but I had to be there because Mr Price said I had to [chuckles]. I mean, the Cue Parliament itself was a real institution. That was a change, but it was a change I enjoyed. I like mixing with groups like that and we had a lot of fun together.

JF I've never come across the Cue Parliament; tell me about it.

CHANCE The Cue Parliament (now what do they call them?), it's a regional organisation of councils. It involves the councils of, obviously, Cue, Murchison, Gascoyne, and I guess a couple of others. It's the local regional organisation.

JF Mt Magnet would be part of that, would it?

CHANCE Yes, absolutely. It was a group of councillors, probably three from each council, or something like that, so about a dozen councillors then. Also a number of public servants, the regional managers, for example; the Agriculture Protection Board, Main Roads (people like that) people with a direct connection to local government and local government themselves, usually a senior local member. Norman Moore, for example, would have barely missed one because it was in his electorate. Norman actually used to wear a tie to them too and always criticised me for not wearing a tie. But it's a whole-day get-together in the town of Cue. You stay in the local hotel and go back to the hotel for lunch, which was a very pleasant occasion, and the meetings would be in the old Cue shire council buildings, which are an experience in themselves. But Mr Price (I'll get his name in a moment) in fact he opened the Carnarvon jetty when it was reopened after it had been refurbished. I thought, "Why is Mr Price doing this when his shire is so far distant?" It turned out it was his grandfather that built it. I wish I could remember his first name. He was a delightful character. He was very blunt, very aggressive, so much so that he was almost a caricature of himself. It was lots of fun.

JF So it was a sort of an overgrown local government association meeting but they'd called the parliament?

CHANCE But it was called the Cue Parliament, yes [laughter].

JF They gave themselves airs, didn't they?

CHANCE Yes. I've never known it called anything else. It was never referred to by its proper name; it was always just the Cue Parliament.

JF Great.

[track 35]

Now, coming back to the urban aspect, where in the city did you live whilst attending Parliament?

CHANCE Well, I shared a flat with a friend when I first came here, in Como, and that was because I was only here like three days a week, and then I was going back to Merredin at that stage. And then later, when my friend moved to Kalgoorlie, I stayed on for a while in that flat but then moved to another one in South Perth, which was rather lovely because it had views right out over the water; not an expensive one but it was a lovely location. So that continued until 2001. When we were re-elected in 2001 I found that I was hardly getting home at all, perhaps six weekends a year was all I was getting home for. I had moved from that flat, we'd bought a house then in Maylands because I think both of my children ... yeah, both of my children were then living in Perth with me and I just didn't have room in the flat. But because I wasn't getting home, Sue and one dog were living in Merredin [chuckles], myself and two children and the other dog were living in Maylands by then. Because I wasn't getting home, we then sold the house in Merredin. Sue changed jobs and moved to Perth and then later we sold Maylands and moved to where we are now, Guildford, which we're just in the process of moving again to Millendon.

JF Talking about accommodation, think now about the Parliament House, where were you accommodated in the house in terms of an office and so on?

CHANCE Right at the beginning?

JF Mmm.

CHANCE Right at the beginning I shared that office, which was immediately on your right as you enter the south entrance; so it was actually at the Legislative Assembly end. I shared that with three people, Nick Catania, Larry Graham and Yvonne Henderson. But it was just madness, four people in one office. They were all Assembly people, you know; it was a long way away from the chamber. Anyway, I ended up missing a division very early in my career, the only one that I'd ever missed, and it was then decided that my location was inappropriate and I needed to move closer to the Council chamber. Where did I go then? Well, I moved down into that area here on the ground floor at the north end of the building, in an area where actually most of the people in that area were members of the broad left. So we were almost separated factionally, so much so we used to call it the Kremlin; the whole area was called the Kremlin. It remained called the Kremlin until the Democrats were elected and they moved them into our area too, and we said, "Well, we can't call it the Kremlin anymore", so it became known as Lubyanka. I was down in that area for quite a while, sharing in the main ... I shared with John Halden for a long time (John and I were very close friends) and with Tommy Helm; and sometimes all three. We stayed together for years and years and years; in fact until I became a minister and moved upstairs.

JF What were your feelings about Parliament House as a workplace then? With more than one person to an office and so on, you obviously have limitations on what you can do.

CHANCE It was unbelievably bad. It was a shocker. Even down to not having sufficient lighting in the offices. There was no air conditioning, so it was unbelievably hot. In summer, when you opened the door to our office (because we were on the east side) it was just like opening an oven door; it was unbelievable. Smoking was permitted everywhere; in offices, in lobbies, everywhere. No air conditioning, the lights were lousy, the offices were unbelievably cramped. Even an office of this size would have three people in it.

JF Goodness. This being about, what, is it 10 foot square?

CHANCE It might be 12, yeah ... somewhere between. Yeah, three people; with all of your books and your bookcases and your desks and filing cabinets. It was just unbelievable. Then you moved into the corridors and the corridors were full of staff. They had temporary offices actually built out into the corridors. It's quite remarkable

the changes that were made. The chambers themselves weren't air conditioned. They were not bad in summer, because they had overhead fans and they're quite tall, but in winter they could be really, really vicious. We did have a little heater in front of you, which didn't work very well. So the conditions were pretty rough. You couldn't believe, actually ... you look at the building now, you couldn't believe it's the same building. The people that made the changes were the two Georges, George Cash and George Strickland. When George Cash was the President and George Strickland was the Speaker, they said, "This is ridiculous." We [were] so sensitive about not spending any money on the building that we'd actually created a workplace that wouldn't pass WorkSafe standards if they applied, because WorkSafe standards don't apply. But we had fire risk, we had electric cords all over the floor. It was shocking. So, George and George's strategy (and I'll always be grateful to them) was just to move bit by bit every year and make one little improvement every year. But at least go forwards, not backwards. It really got us to where we are now, in quite a short time. Now of course we've also had the refurbishment of both chambers, which reminds me I must go and have a look at the Legislative Council chamber. I haven't seen it since it has been done.

JF And you came into the Parliament at a time when there was no longer a resident controller I think, didn't you? There used to be a flat at the ...

CHANCE No, no, he was still there.

JF He was still there, was he?

CHANCE Vince; yes. Vince Pacecca. In fact Vince's flat was right opposite my office.

JF Oh, right. I thought that that's where they might have developed offices. I think they probably have since.

CHANCE Oh yes, that's now the Parliamentary Services wing. But that was Vince's flat, yeah, which was just crazy. But it was what had been the case for years and nobody was going to change it.

JF What were your general impressions of the Parliament in your first few weeks of sitting? I mean, was it as you imagined it might be, or were you surprised by anything?

CHANCE Pretty much. I think my main bewilderment came from the arcane processes that you went through. At the end of the bill, when you go through the end of the second reading and then the third reading and then the report back to the committee, and then the committee reports back to the President. I don't think I ever really grasped it [laughs] ... "I move that you do report the bill to the house." And the niceties which weren't written in the rules, but yes, you can do that but you don't because you do it this way. The standing orders of the house, which are not quite as written in black and white in the standing orders, what actually happens is very different and when you ask the question, "Why are we doing this contrary to the standing orders?", you're told that that's the custom and usage of the house. In other words, that's the way we've always done it. But it's contrary to the law, if the standing orders are taken as the law governing the rules of the house. You're just greeted with a look of bewilderment, "No; custom and usage of the house is part of it." It's crazy. The issues around privilege and the enormous complexity of that issue which really, really became an issue in 2008 with Fels and Shelley Archer. I don't think we've ever properly come to grips with that. Just getting to the point ... Norman Moore made some very good points in debate on that. He said, "When I look at what the term 'deliberation' means, it can mean anything. You're taking it to mean anything including one member saying, 'Shall we have lunch now or wait for half an hour?' That's a deliberation of the house and is thus confidential." And maybe there are reasons why it has to be like that, but what Fels and Archer were accused of doing was taking advice from outside, providing to those people outside the knowledge of what was imparted inside the committee. The more you look at it, the more opaque it becomes because it could be that a discussion with another committee member on the way back from the committee meeting to Parliament House (coming back from, it used to be in Hay Street, it's now Parliament Place) but coming back from that external meeting place, a discussion that you have with a committee member about a committee matter, you're still covered by privilege. Most people wouldn't have thought that, but if I was walking along with another member and I said, "I don't know about this petition. I actually think that it's been put together by a smaller group than is represented on the petition form", that's actually privileged information, even though it didn't happen within the meeting. I'm not sure the rules actually provide for that. The same if I meet somebody in the open area between the chambers, if I

mention anything to another committee member about what's happening, technically that's privileged. If I do that in front of somebody who is not a member, then I'm in breach. It really caused us all to think about it. I mean, rules are supposed to serve us, not impede us. I think the lack of clarity prevented, in some cases, people being held accountable for what they did when what they did was, in reality, wrong. I mean you do not disclose to anybody what anybody says inside a committee meeting. To disclose it to a person who has a personal and proprietorial and financial interest in the matter is especially wrong.

[track 36]

JF How did you feel about the pomp and ceremony that sometimes especially is seen in the upper house with processions and that sort of thing? Was that your thing?

CHANCE No, it was absurd; and the fact that we used to have prorogation every year was absurd. Happily, we decided during the term of the Gallop government (although Geoff Gallop was actually opposed to it as I recall) we determined that prorogation was only ever meant to happen every fourth year, not every year. What prorogation meant was that when you resumed it was a new Parliament, therefore, you had a new address-in-reply debate. The address-in-reply debate had precedence, and that meant that the Parliament wasted weeks and weeks of time. I was sitting there with 85 bills that I was trying to get through.

JF Now you mentioned the influence of Laurie Marquet in improving the structures and procedures of the house. What other staff were significant to you: people like clerks and so on?

CHANCE Well, they all were. They were a terrific bunch of people so I don't want to single any of them out. Janine Robinson (because we worked together so closely for so many years) was terrific ... no, I don't want to single them out because they were all so very good and very professional, very helpful, because sometimes, particularly while we were in opposition, sometimes we really relied very heavily, not only on their professional skills but on their personal discretion. That was always an issue with Marquet. Marquet always had the position that, "What you tell me is confidential, but you've got to understand that I'm not going to see the government surprised by anything." I said, "What does that mean, Laurie?" He said, "Well, you work it out." What it meant was, he would provide advice to the government that they

might be facing an issue around a particular point, and that point is the one that you've just raised with him.

JF Which is perfectly legitimate for him in his post to do.

CHANCE Yes, but we just had to consider that through. But having said that, he provided a vast wealth of information to us.

[track 37]

JF Tell me about setting up an electorate office.

CHANCE Well, that was relatively easy for me, because I just took over Jimmy Brown's office in Geraldton. So lock, stock and barrel just shifted over to me ... all of the hardware, and his wonderful electorate officer, Dianne Spowart, who stayed with me for years afterwards. Yes, it was a very easy process. When I hear stories from people about the problems they have setting up a new office, I just appreciate how lucky I was. I just walked into a functioning office, and that was it, so that was quite easy. Sadly, Dianne died while she was working for me. I then had to go through the process of getting another electorate officer. I was unbelievably lucky again. I actually chose somebody from outside the political spectrum, came out of the service sector. She was then in Mullewa, but she was ready to move to Geraldton because her kids were high-school age, so it suited her to come into Geraldton. She did not know half as many people as Dianne did; Dianne just knew everybody in Geraldton. She was an old Geraldton hand ... born there, and a Geraldton city councillor. But my new electorate officer, Judy, she adapted very, very quickly, so I was lucky. I only ever had the two.

JF And you we're only allowed to employ one at a time then, weren't you?

CHANCE Yes, only one. Then we got .4 added to that, and then shortly after that another .4, so I went from a long history of having one to effectively two, because I didn't roll the two .4s together. I actually had two part-timers who would come in two days a week on pay, and half a day without pay, so I got a full person out of that, two .4s.

JF What routines did you establish for servicing the electorate? Did you have a system or did you just respond to crises? How did you handle it?

CHANCE Because the electorate is so big, most of the communication with my office was electronic, although we did have an office in a large city and as a consequence we had a certain amount of walk-in business. That was mostly concerned with Aboriginal affairs issues, there were Homeswest issues and Western Power issues. Those three, of our walk-in traffic, would have been 50 or 60 per cent of our whole business. All of those were entirely handled by my two electorate officers. They were just very good at that sort of thing. I would try to be in my office at least one day a week, but after I became a minister there was no way I could do that. So the idea of having a Friday electorate day just didn't work. Fridays I had other stuff to do. But they ran it just the same and did it very, very well.

As electronic communication improved ... I mean, when I started we did not even have a fax. I would hand write a letter and then I would ring my electorate officer and read it out to her. She would write it down in shorthand, and then she would type it and send it out. I didn't get a chance to read it again. And then I bought, out of my own money, two fax machines. They were old National thermal paper fax machines, and they cost me \$1 250 each, which was about a month's pay, but that revolutionised things, because then I was able to send stuff through to her. She could type it up, fax it back to me for checking. It was just groundbreaking. And then the internet and that just revolutionised everything ... PCs, laptops. It's just amazing what we've got now. I saw the whole evolution of the technology revolution.

JF Let's look into the participation in Parliament. What do you recall of the occasion of your first address to the Parliament, of your maiden speech?

CHANCE I still remember that. It was done in the address-in-reply debate, as was normally the case. I was able to expand on my views, particularly about the future of regional Australia. I drew fairly heavily on, by way of example, a particular region in Italy, the Biella region, which the Italian consul was able to help me with to a significant extent. It's an old wool processing area with a 600-year history. I said, with something like 1 or 1.5 per cent of the Australian wool clip, the Biella region has a gross revenue development which is equivalent to half the Australian wool clip. And I said, "That can be ours if you want it. This is how you're going to rebuild Western Australia or the regions." Some of that happened, and it was exciting to see some of that happening, the development of secondary industry in the regions. It's been the saviour of a number of towns. Dalwallinu is a classic example, and I noted that in my last speech. It was great to be associated with some of that. The Meenar Industrial

Park at Northam ... it already existed when I came to Parliament. Or did it? No, it didn't actually; it was just about to. That was Ian Taylor's baby, but then it went through a long period of time where it sat there and did nothing, and then we were able, while I was the Wheatbelt minister, we were able actually to get that firing and it is now in stage two or stage three, so it's been very successful.

JF Yes, and you see that as a way forward probably still, do you, for the regions?

CHANCE Yes, the development of appropriate secondary industry. I was never suggesting that we should go into wool processing, because there are a number of reasons why you don't do that. We had huge opportunities, in my view, to engage in more secondary industry than we were, and to a large extent that has happened. We've made a lot of mistakes along the way, but to a large extent that's happening now.

JF Just picking up the wool industry one for a minute, I think Albany Woollen Mills would have been one of the chief secondary industry developments in wool. Had that closed by the time you came into Parliament?

CHANCE Closed and reopened again, and then closed again while I was in Parliament, yes.

JF You said you wouldn't go into wool processing again. What are the reasons behind that?

CHANCE People always imagine with any conversion of a raw commodity to a process good that you can go part of the way; for example, with iron ore fines. It actually makes sense to go from fines to pellets or even to de-oxygenated, like the South Hedland plant, although that failed ultimately. You don't have that option with wool. If you look at wool, it would make absolute sense to wash it, to scour it and then to export the clean commodity, because when you export raw wool, half of what you're exporting is actually grease and dirt, and it's crazy. The reason that doesn't work is you can't blend scoured wool; you can only blend greasy wool, so you've got to go through the blending process before you go to the scour, and you don't know what blend is required. It is only the manufacturer who looks at what he's got at this stage, and says, "Well, that's what I need to produce in terms of a yarn. That's the

blend I'll use." So he'll then draw that stock out and send that through to the scours and then straight from the scours back into his mill. So it's not possible to do that. The only way you can do that is to go all the way through to ... probably the least manufactured stage you can go to is tops. You'd have to go all the way through scouring, spinning, to top making, and then you'd need to be able to hold sufficient to have the orders ready to go. So you'd have to have quite a lot of tops in store, which would be a very big financial risk, but it's doable. The issue now is the Chinese have got so efficient at this that nobody can compete with them anyway.

The little bit of saving that you make just isn't worth it. China's got the market tied up. But there are a number of areas in which we can. I think when you look at what's happening, say, at Meenar, or even to a lesser extent what's happening in places like Perenjori and Dalwallinu, it is possible to pick the niche that can be best serviced by industrial capacity close to where the demand is, and that's principally driven by the mining industry.

JF Did you ever visit Biella in the northern Italy?

CHANCE No. I have actually never been to Italy. I've been very close to the border on the Slovenian side ... in fact it used to be part of Italy ... which is not all that far from Biella.

JF I wondered, when I read the speech, whether you'd actually been there. Within that speech, I think you made reference to Muriel Patterson, who accused you of being in the wrong party.

CHANCE Yes. Oh well, that was fairly common, that people would say, "Why are you in the Labor Party?", but they quickly learnt [chuckles].

JF And so in the last few moments, who were some of the people close to you in those early days in Parliament who were significant within the chamber?

CHANCE Oh, well, I've already mentioned Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport; John Halden and Joe Berinson of course. Joe was my leader and just an amazing guy; he was incredible. I would've love to have seen him in his golden era, which was during the 80s when all those things were going wrong here in the Assembly. Joe apparently was just magnificent. They gave him a terrible time, because he was the

only senior minister. They'd ask him these complicated legal questions, and Joe would just stand up and go through the whole legal question, citing precedents, all without notes or warning. Apparently people were just dumbfounded by it. He could just go through and quote: "Then of course there was the Crown v Robinson in 1923 ... and Williams J found that so and so and so and so ... and on appeal that was later contested, and Saunders F made the point that Williams J had made an error in respect of his judgement", and he would just go on and on and on and on [laughter]. It occurred to some people that he was just making it up! [laughter]

JF A very clever man.

CHANCE Yes. But I never saw him do that. He was only there that one year, but he was a delightful bloke, yes.

JF You've mentioned Norman Moore briefly a while ago in another context. You both had rural areas in common. How did you get on with each other generally?

CHANCE Norman and I sat opposite each other for eight years, and we actually got on really well, yes ... we got on well. He was a grumpy old bugger [chuckles]. No, we got on, given the circumstances, very well.

JF I think probably at this stage we'd better sign off for today.

END OF INTERVIEW SEVEN

INTERVIEW EIGHT

[track 38][file **KC-29JL11T38**]

JF This medium contains the recording of interview session number eight with the Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament Oral History Project. It's being recorded on 29 July 2011 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 39] [file **KC-29JL11T39**]

Kim, I have been reading your valedictory speech, recently, and you began by saying it was a time to assess your achievements in terms of your objectives when you entered Parliament. I wondered if you would enlighten me at this stage: what personal objectives did you have, as distinct from party policies and things, as you entered Parliament?

CHANCE As I outlined in my initial speech, I was concerned about the state of regional Western Australia as it was then. It seemed to be in decline; certainly populations had heavily declined and had done basically since the decade of the seventies when our area in the north eastern Wheatbelt lost a third of its population in those 10 years. That was accelerating. Obviously there were reasons why that was happening; with better communications, better machinery, better transport, [we] needed less people to grow our staple crop of wheat. We also had the sheep industry in decline, and that had been a major employer. I indicated my concerns were that the agriculture region had never taken advantage of the opportunities for further processing of their main commodities. I gave the example of the Biella region in northern Italy and how they generate a huge mass of employment by using just a tiny fraction of the Australian woolclip (I think only about one per cent) and yet it employed some 60 000 people in one small region. [It is] an industry that is 600 years old, incidentally; that is the region where Cunzana and others have made so famous. I said perhaps that is not what we can do; however, there must be some way of rebuilding our community. So, when in my valedictory speech I referred to my original objectives, I think I said it's been good to see at least some of those objectives achieved, because if you go out into the regions now you do see more confidence, more prosperity. Certainly the towns look terrific, and there *has* been a growth of industry in those areas. I'm not sure if I referred to it specifically in the valedictory speech, but I had previously given the example of the town of Dalwallinu, which was a town in severe decline in 1992. The town of Dalwallinu now has a vibrant and very active new and profitable manufacturing base. It's good to see that

happen. It didn't happen exactly the way I thought it might have, because there is still very little use of the primary product as a raw material. However, the manufacturing base is built partly around the adjacent mining activity, but partly around the fact that it is readily available, low-cost industrial land where that is almost priced out of the market now in the Perth–Fremantle metropolitan area. We've seen that growth. We've seen the growth of the Avon Industrial Park, which had been started many, many years before I came to Parliament but sat there doing nothing. [It] is now in its first and second stages fully allocated because of its proximity to Kalgoorlie. It has been good to see some of these objectives achieved and to see the economic fabric of the Wheatbelt in a much stronger state than it was when I came to Parliament.

JF What personal qualities did you recognise in yourself that you thought fitted you to be the representative of your people in Parliament?

CHANCE I think I had a good understanding of the whole demographic of the Wheatbelt. Many Wheatbelt MPs have a fairly narrow understanding, and it's confined to their specific area, usually (that's agriculture). I think Brendon Grylls is another one with a much broader perspective on what the Wheatbelt is, and that's shown in Brendon's political activity. It's a matter of understanding, I think, that the Wheatbelt is an unusual community, but in fact it's only a tiny minority of the population [that] are directly engaged in agriculture. The Wheatbelt is a fully developed society and it includes many other things than simply agriculture. I think Brendon has that understanding. I think I had that understanding. I'd worked in the manufacturing sector in the Wheatbelt. I had an idea of what the strengths and weaknesses of the Wheatbelt might be, and what some of the opportunities might be. I think we've only just started on those opportunities. The vision that Brendon Grylls has for regional cities and bigger and more diverse towns is exactly the same as I had. One example of that is, for example, the town of Merredin trains every pilot that flies with China Southern Airlines, which is one of the biggest airlines in the world. It does all of their basic training before they convert to jets, where they begin their training in Jandakot and then later in China on airliners. But all of their initial training is carried out in Merredin. China Southern has actually built a small suburb in Merredin, which is entirely China Southern and a magnificent airport facility for which they pay a rental of, I think, \$1 a year. It was just a great example of what you can do. When you think about it, for trainee pilots, what a wonderful area to be in. The flying weather is great 350 days of the year. If they make a mistake and get lost or run out of fuel or have engine trouble, you can land virtually anywhere; it's a very

safe place to fly, and there's almost no air traffic (certainly at the levels they are flying at). It's a great place to learn to fly. It has some clear advantages. Sometimes we don't always see those advantages because we're too close to them. I once had a look at an air navigation map for the state of Kansas, and you would think Kansas in the US would be a pretty open place to fly, but the whole thing is a mass of red lines, because you've got all kinds of civilian and military exclusion areas, and it just looks like a nightmare. And it made me think: how would you train a pilot, particularly if you were in Britain or France or Germany, where the air traffic lines must be 10 times more complicated than the state of Kansas? By those [same] standards, when you look at the same air navigation map for, say, Merredin, there's no red lines on it at all; you can basically go wherever you like.

JF That's very interesting. I note you quote Brendon Grylls, who's a National Party man. Of course, one of the things you had in your background was a breadth of political experience through different family members being involved in not only one party, but several parties. Do you think that your breadth of vision derives partly from that?

CHANCE I think so. It's simply the attitude that I have evolved myself. I always regarded myself as a political moderate, but I joined the party in 1971 and I didn't see any reason to change my position. By the time I formalised a faction membership, I found the only place I was comfortable was in the left, which does seem a bit strange for somebody who regards himself as a moderate. But the left attracted me because it was very much pro-development. I've always had a deep suspicion for those people who are already comfortable, but then don't want anybody else to share in the opportunities that they had with respect to employment in the mining industry or even getting a benefit from the mining industry or the agricultural industry. You've got to have them; they're the basis for our wealth. I really appreciated what the AMWU, for example, who lead the left here, what they were trying to do in manufacturing industry. Indeed, they were the key drivers behind the Australian Marine Complex, which has been an enormously successfully industrial operation. I could see the benefit in partnerships between labour and capital. I'm very pro-secondary industry, although I come from a primary industry base. But, I think if you're going to develop a strong fabric in our economy, we've got to try to rebuild our manufacturing sector, got to. It's actually been in decline in Australia for 70 or 80 years. We've got to do something about regaining that, and I think the AMWU are real leaders in that area.

JF And, of course, globalisation hasn't helped that, I suppose; it's triggered it in some respect.

CHANCE Yes. It means if you want to be engaged in heavy steel construction, you've got to be competitive with the likes of China and Korea. But we can be. That's the point. You do have a natural advantage. People think, well, it's one-for-one at the factory gate; you've got to be competitive. Well, of course, we can't be. But because of our location in such close proximity to where this equipment is needed, we have a huge natural advantage. We also have a reputation for quality and finishing jobs on time and time is money for those big investors. I know we battle, and I know that much of our competition is still overwhelming us, but the fact is we have developed a very strong heavy metals sector and in boat building [we have] a pre-eminent position.

[track 40][file **KC-29JL11T40**]

JF Now, when you joined the Parliament, you were in the Lawrence government.

CHANCE Indeed I was.

JF I wondered if you see in Carmen Lawrence some of the things that rang bells for you. I see you both come from rural backgrounds, for example.

CHANCE Yes. Carmen and I did see eye to eye on many things, although Carmen was always more driven by social outcomes, whereas I was more driven by social outcomes, if you like, but social outcomes as a result of economic outcomes. So Carmen belonged to a part of the party that was actually closer to where the other part of the left come from—the missos [Miscellaneous Workers' Union] left. They were great partners. To have the metals left and the missos left in the same grouping was an ideal offset because we were able to keep check on each other's excesses [chuckles]. Carmen was an amazing person to work with, just the most intelligent person I have ever, ever come across, and I had the privilege of working with people like Geoff Gallop as well, but Carmen's amazing ability to follow a line of reasoning was almost frightening. I can recall trying to explain things to Carmen that I didn't understand all that well. She'd bring me in, "Can you brief me on this?", and I'd be battling my way through it, trying to get to grips with the issue myself and then explain it to someone else, and I'd get about halfway through and she'd say, "Oh, you

mean”, and then she would outline it perfectly. Even through the filter of me grappling with the subject, she could still see the facts. Quite amazing.

JF I think you paid tribute to her in the valedictory speech as ‘a person of clear intelligence and enormous compassion’.

CHANCE Yes, she was, yes. And that needed to be said, because she was driven overwhelmingly by the need to improve the role in society of the poorest in society. Her decline in Parliament, partly as a result of the Easton affair, I just thought was grossly unfair, grossly unfair. She was painted as something that is so opposite to what she really is that it was deeply saddening for me.

JF Yes, we’ll come to the Easton affair later on, because you were on the select committee. So we’ll leave Carmen for the moment. I think you also paid tribute to Ian Taylor and Jim McGinty. Would you like to spend a few moments giving me your impressions of working with either of those two or both of those two?

CHANCE I separated both Ian and Jim out because they were the leaders who never became Premiers, but they were the leaders that I served with. I think they deserve special mention because a leader who never becomes a Premier isn’t a failure. A leader who never becomes a Premier has got to be credited with getting you to the point where you can become government, and that’s what both of them did. They were very different people. Taylor was a man more in my ilk, hard economic line, left-winger; whereas Jim was very solidly in the missos’ camp, but also from the left. So they did things differently but I think both of them took us a long, long way, Taylor because he gave us credibility with the job creators, the employers. He gave us real credibility because he was looked up to by business in Western Australia mostly because of his long service as the Minister for State Development. McGinty didn’t have that, but McGinty had a capacity to appeal to a very wide sector in society and he was also an amazingly bright guy who could see his way through the manipulation of an issue. In a political sense, probably the cleverest I ever worked with. He was a great political strategist, so much so he had a few enemies in the party [laughter] because he was too clever. He did an enormous amount towards the election of the Gallop government, and then, afterwards, maintaining our position. He was a visionary. He had the vision to see that the Fiona Stanley Hospital was something that he had an opportunity to drive because of the state’s growing wealth and that that was the time to drive it. He locked into that vision because he knew it

was the right thing to do. He also gave us one vote, one value, which had been tried and tried and tried before, never successfully. I think he did it by giving away too much in the Legislative Council, but he achieved his aim and his aim was one vote, one value in the popular house; and nobody had ever been able to do that before. So, he was a man with significant achievements as a minister, but sometimes I think his leadership contribution probably hasn't been given enough credit, possibly because he was such a successful minister.

JF I think you were fairly close to John Halden; in fact, sharing an office I think you told me at one stage.

CHANCE Yes.

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes talking about perhaps John and maybe others who were close colleagues in that first period?

CHANCE Yes. Well, John Halden of course was very close to me, as were Tommy Helm and Cheryl Davenport. They were probably the three that I was closest to, and I used to sit between Cheryl and Tom. They were tremendous. In my first year, they sort of guided me through all of the things that I needed to go through. This was when Joe Berinson was our leader. Then John took over as the Leader of the Opposition, and he was a fearsome leader. He would have been very, very difficult to sit opposite, I think. [chuckles] He was clever, aggressive, tough—everything that a leader needs to be in opposition. But a great mate. We did share an office for many years and I learnt a lot of my politics from him, although he wasn't a Jim McGinty, but he was a great political strategist.

JF Are there others who were influential, particularly in your early period, that you'd like to mention?

CHANCE Joe [Berinson], of course, was just wonderful. I'm very, very fond of Joe. I just thought he was an amazing person. Who else? Those were the people that I worked with most closely. No, I don't want to go too far.

JF Okay. Among the non-Labor members, who were of most importance to you?

CHANCE Jim Scott joined us in ... When did Jim come in? He must have come in in '93, so in my second year. We also sat alongside each other in my second Parliament. I thought that was just amazing. We'd been schoolkids together; we'd played football together. It was incredible to have Jim, the first ever Green MP in the Western Australian Parliament. To have my old mate alongside me was really good. But non-Labor? There were some fascinating characters around in those days. Phil Lockyer, for example, from Mining and Pastoral. Norman Moore was always worth a bite. [laughs] Norman and I actually became quite good friends. They were a good mob generally, yes.

JF Norman Moore, of course, has been there for absolute ages.

CHANCE Yes.

JF So he's got endurance if nothing else.

CHANCE I recall the day he celebrated his twenty-fifth year in Parliament and I gave a little speech just to note the occasion and said that this is a significant time in Norman's career marking the halfway point in his political career! [laughter] It's become less of a joke now. [laughter]

JF Yes. I think you quoted him, too, in the valedictory speech as having done something that you admired when you were on leave.

CHANCE He did indeed. Yes. I was on leave but Parliament was sitting. I'd taken a week's leave because I was in Tasmania racing in the Targa. A noted ABC journalist seized on the fact that I was away and actually got ABC Tasmania to send through some film footage of us racing. He basically asked the question very publicly whether somebody being paid as much as I was should be out racing cars while Parliament was sitting, which is a fair question, I suppose. But when that question was put to Norman Moore, he said, "Look, as far as I know, Kim's on leave and what he does when he's on leave is his business", which I thought was pretty big of him. He could have made an issue of it, and it would have been an easy shot to make, but he just refused to do it. So, he grew about 10 feet in my estimation, yes, because he basically killed the story. Nobody else picked it up outside the ABC.

JF Among the other people who were non-Labor members of the Council, are there any that stand out as people that you either got on with particularly well or people who challenged you?

CHANCE Phil Pandal, and Tomlinson (what was his name?) from East Metro. .
Derrick.

JF Derrick Tomlinson, yes.

CHANCE They were two that I worked quite closely with. In fact, when we get on to the committees, I think my very first committee was with Derrick and Phil, and that was the *Batavia* committee, which was rather a big issue for me at the time. We dubbed ourselves the old wrecks committee. But both of those were very, very bright people, very articulate, very well read, and they were just fascinated, as I was, by the whole *Batavia* issue. They were always people I felt I could go and talk to about things. Phil Lockyer was another one, because Phil and I saw the world in similar terms in many ways. Not so much Norman. My relationship with Norman was more in the Parliament, not outside. We didn't really talk much outside the Parliament until we were opposite each other as leaders, and then we got on quite well. But we hadn't had much time together. Those two of the non-Labor side were impressive parliamentary performers and they had good brains.

JF We'll leave some of the others, but they might come up in conversation, some of the others, even, that you paid tribute to in your valedictory speech. But we can move on now.

[track 41][file **KC-29JL11T41**]

Moving into committee service, that was quite an important segment of your early period in Parliament, perhaps more so than the later when you were ministerial. You have mentioned the *Batavia*. What about picking up that committee? In talking about the select committees that you were on, if you can briefly outline the nature of the investigation and highlight particularly your own contribution to that committee, as well as talking about the general outcome.

CHANCE Okay. Well, there are a few select committees that I was engaged in. The *Batavia* was the first. The others tended to be select committees of privilege. Somehow (I don't how it happened quite), somehow I became a legal expert on privilege [chuckles], partly because the first privilege committee I served on was the

toughest. That was the select committee of privilege inquiring into whether John Halden had breached privilege in the Easton case. That was very tough, because Phil Pandal was a part of that committee, Peter Foss was a part of that committee, and Foss was the chairman, an acknowledged legal expert. Because he was the chairman, he had to take a more conciliatory role. It seemed very clear to me that Foss wanted a report which was not littered with minority comment or even a minority report. In the end we did achieve that aim, although on a couple of the critical recommendations I did stand aside from the majority. That was very challenging because Phil Pandal clearly wanted to bury Halden. The grounds weren't there, the legal arguments were convoluted and difficult, and it was made even more difficult by the fact that you never quite knew who was on trial. You never knew whether Brian Easton was on trial, because there was a later select committee dealing with Easton himself, or whether Halden was on trial or, indeed, whether Laurie Marquet was on trial. It was very, very difficult [chuckles]. Everybody knew that if that select committee had a set of terms of reference which excluded another party, then there would later be a select committee of privilege dealing with that party. So one thing could not be separated entirely from the other; so you were forever positioning yourself for a corner about four corners ahead.

JF For a racing driver, that ought to be quite a challenge [chuckles].

CHANCE Yes, and you had to be able to see just what was coming, what the strategies were that they were planning, whether giving ground here was going to compromise you there. I used to come out of those meetings, which usually lasted about two and a half, three hours, just exhausted. They were very tough. That was probably a useful start to one's political career. From that I did gain some expertise in the laws around privilege and somehow became regarded as our expert on privilege. I used to be consulted by Premiers on that [chuckles], with no legal training at all. They were interesting but they did dominate my life there for a couple of years off and on.

JF Essentially, Halden was exonerated in that particular committee.

CHANCE Yes, he was. He got a small smack on the wrist. I think the majority view was that he had not breached privilege but he could have been more careful. There were two minority views: Pandal, who said he did breach privilege; and myself,

who said he took all due care. I still think I'm right, but that was the compromise we settled on.

JF It is interesting to me to ponder the fact that Halden and you were fairly close in sharing an office, for example, probably at that time. Had he said anything much to you about the line he was pursuing in the Easton matter outside the committee?

CHANCE No. In fact, very little was said at all. I know that there was an attempt to portray this as some kind of conspiracy, but in fact I think he saw an opportunity come up to cause some damage to the Court government and pursued it by presenting the single-person petition. The rules then permitted exactly that. The rules are now different as a result of the Easton affair. But at that stage, any citizen could come in and lodge a petition. Now they have to provide some evidence that what they're saying is, in fact, true. It was always doubtful to me whether Easton hadn't told the truth anyway. I don't think it was ever established. Certainly you would never establish in a court of criminal law that he had done it and I'm doubtful if, under the standard of evidence in a civil court, you would find him guilty. I can't go too far into it but basically it was a matter of what he said, and there's no doubt that he said it, because what he said in evidence in divorce proceedings. The question arose as to did his wife actually say the things that he is reported to have said? Well, yes, she did, because that's also a matter of evidence. But did she say it because he told her that was the case? Well, there's actually no doubt that he did tell her that. So where is the lack of truth? It's a very hard one to prove.

JF The *Batavia* relics was also in the same year, I think, as that first Easton committee. Would you like to talk about *Batavia* for a little while?

CHANCE It was the first of two, if not three, reports on it. There was a later report done, incidentally, also involving Phil Pandal by the Legislative Assembly after Phil had moved over to South Perth. We picked that up because we thought the *Batavia* story was more obscure than it needed to be. We thought it was a great event in our state's very early history then. It was something that had occurred 365 years beforehand, and these were probably the first Europeans to reside for any length of time in the Australian continent.

JF Albeit unwillingly.

CHANCE Albeit unwillingly, yes, but the story itself was so fascinating. The discoverers of the wreck had probably never been given proper credit. So we were able to make all of that public, and that involved, in particular, Max Cramer from Geraldton. Investigations went into where the relics should be stored. That was the key political issue for me in Geraldton. It led to the establishment of the new Geraldton Maritime Museum, which is a magnificent facility, and it was a more fitting place for some of the relics than the old maritime museum, which was really a cobbled-together structure. The other key political issue is where the main hull should rest. It was then and still is in the Fremantle Maritime Museum. The Fremantle Maritime Museum argued very strongly that the hull should stay in Fremantle because they were the only people who had the technology to look after such a fragile piece of gear. That wasn't something that went down really well in Geraldton, who saw it as theirs but I think people are generally resigned to it now. The issue was: which relics could be and should be held in Geraldton?

JF And of course Geraldton being within your electorate, it was doubly of interest to you [chuckles].

CHANCE I had a real interest, yes, in Geraldton, and the Abrolhos of course. It's an amazing story. I thought what we did was useful. The later Legislative Assembly committee looked a little further than just the *Batavia*, but the *Batavia* was certainly a key part of it. But an amazing story and still one that affects me. I think if you know the story, you cannot sleep on Beacon Island at night without having nightmares for weeks afterwards (you cannot), and I'm not prone to have nightmares, but it's just such a spooky, spooky place when you know the story.

JF [laughter] I suppose you got the story from Jonathan Edwards.

CHANCE Hugh.

JF Hugh Edwards, *The Wreck on the Half-Moon Reef*.

CHANCE Yes. The Hugh Edwards book that I really enjoyed was ...

JF The *Islands of Angry Ghosts*. Yes, I was getting confused.

CHANCE ... which was very good, because one half of the story is a reconstruction of events the way he believes they would have occurred, and there is some journalistic license in that but it made a great read. The second half of the story is about how the discovery occurred and the more solid facts of the story, more technical, as to why it took so long to find and how it was found eventually and how its original finding was then covered up by the finder who didn't want anyone to know and how that story got out. It was always thought to have been located some 20 miles from its real location and that was from a misunderstanding of the coordinates. But the real discovery, and Max Cramer was a key part of that; he was in that first dive along with Hugh Edwards and another infamous character whose name slips my memory now. But it must have been an amazing discovery. It is so shallow. I've been over the wreck. I didn't dive on it because the water was full of tiger sharks. There were about 20 of them between us and the wreck so I thought discretion is a greater part of valour. But even a diver of my limited capacity could have comfortably dived on the wreck. You could see it very clearly from the boat above the wreck because it was a very calm day and you could see the shape of the wreck.

JF Amazing. Coming away from *Batavia* now, then, not much later you were involved in the second Easton select committee, Easton non-compliance, '94. You might not want to go into the details of the actual committee but what about the outcome of Easton going to prison?

CHANCE Well I think it's the first and only time the Parliament has exercised its power. The first determination of the committee was that Easton be required to apologise. Easton refused to do that. And I could understand his reasons for refusing. That meant he was in contempt of Parliament. He actually went to jail by virtue of the contempt rather than the privilege issue because there were no options. It was a silly outcome. [interruption by a knock on the door from outside]

[track 42][file **KC-29JL11T42**]

JF Right, before that —

CHANCE Yes. It was a silly outcome, and unfortunately it was the only outcome that was open to us. The options available to the Parliament then were imprisonment, exoneration or censure. There was no other capacity. Now, both houses have revised the list of options, which can include barring persons from the parliamentary

precinct. It can include a fine, which would have been more appropriate. But the point was made that even if we had initiated a fine, even if that option was available to us, Mr Easton probably would not have paid it. So, we would have been back in the same position. So, we had to ask ourselves the question: should Parliament have the right to imprison at all? And Parliament later did deal with that question, although many years later. But, because of that lack of options, that was what we did. And we jailed him for an unspecified period, but in the end it was seven days.

JF It must have had a personal impact on members, I think, having to deal with an issue like that. Did you lose any sleep over that one?

CHANCE Yes, I did, yes, because I was never entirely convinced that what Easton did was all that wrong. But then, of course, when he is told to do something and does not, then the question of his initial bill is irrelevant. He has been given an order by the Parliament and he is in contempt because he did not abide by the order. And we had no option. He might have thought he had no option. But it was a case of a number of things coming together and you've just got to go with the flow eventually. But Parliament no longer has the power of imprisonment.

JF A couple of the other select committees you were involved with included one about the use of executive power in relation to documents held by a royal commission. Is that one a notable experience that leads —

CHANCE That was the Dr Murphy issue, was it?

JF Well I've got "the failure to produce documents Murphy." That was 98–99.

CHANCE Yes. Murphy was censured for his failure to produce documents that he was required to produce. He felt he was acting correctly according to his minister's instructions, and we disagreed. Again, happily, we only censured him, but he wasn't happy about it because he thought he was doing the right thing. But it's just conflict between the executive and Parliament. It's an interesting conflict and one that I was much happier about the outcomes, even though Dr Murphy wasn't, but he didn't like me much then [laughter]. But we didn't have any option. He had been ordered by the Parliament to do something. He had refused to do it. He was in contempt. It's as simple as that.

JF You were also involved with a couple of standing committees, manager of government ... sorry, no, manager of government agencies.

CHANCE Yes, which became public administration.

JF I see; those two linked together.

CHANCE Yes. They are the same committee in that public administration took over from government agencies and had a somewhat broader charter, but it was still effectively the same committee, and I chaired that committee for some years while I was in opposition. Yes, we did some interesting work in that. Obviously at the time this was the time of the third-wave industrial legislation, and as an opposition we were pulling every string we could to remind the government of what they had done wrong, and we had issues around privatisation and contracting out, and whenever we thought we could squeeze those issues into the committee's charter, we did. [laughter]. It was an opposition-dominated committee, so the government members, including the current President, had a really, really hard time [laughter].

JF How did you become a part of that committee, that standing committee? Were you seen to have particular aptitude or something like that that would give you an obvious seat on it?

CHANCE Well, if I did, I don't know what it was because that would be in someone else's mind. But, you know, people thought that I did have an understanding of the way public administration worked, and I had an interest in government agencies, although it would have been the other way around, I suppose, in terms of time. But it was a role I really enjoyed. I loved it. It had a very broad mandate. Probably the biggest thing we did was to send half of our committee to Great Britain to look at the post-Thatcher compulsory tendering and contracting out policy as it applied to local government. Of course local governments there are bigger than our state governments. And that was timed at 15 years after the initiation of the policy. So, enough water had flowed under the bridge to be able to make a valid comparison. It was a very good report. I wasn't a member of that committee and I stood back from it, but Cheryl Davenport went, the current President, Barry House, and the Democrat, the woman anyway who was the Democrat, those three went, and I think they did a great job of reporting. It was certainly an insightful look at a

particular policy, which at that time we were beginning to pursue ourselves. It came up with some really odd findings. For example, the local government authorities which had most strongly resisted compulsory tendering and contracting out, had deployed the policy far more successfully than the local government authorities who were the strongest advocates of it, which I thought was bizarre.

JF Interesting, yes.

CHANCE Yes, the Labour councils in Newcastle and Sheffield had done really, really well because they re-formed their workforce as a private sector body; even though it was publicly owned, it was still private sector. Whereas the Conservative councils who had been the strongest advocates for the policy tended to go straight to the market to deliver the services. What they found was that even in a country as big as Britain, the market wasn't deep enough to give a true competitive base. And you were getting a situation in some of those very upmarket London suburbs where the garbage was just piling up on the streets because there was no contractor able to do the work. They would bid at the lowest possible bid. They would then go bankrupt. You couldn't find anyone behind them to pick the contract up. Whereas Newcastle, for example, they just kept all their old people, and they said, "Well, you're now working for the council corporation rather than council." And they did extremely well, and they actually achieved the benefits. They made the comment that, "We weren't in favour of this policy but we have to say it's the best thing that ever happened to us because we're now leaner, more efficient, everything's working well." So, it was interesting. But what we learnt from that was: never overestimate the depth of the supply market for services, because you'll find that it ain't there when you go looking for it.

[track 43][file **KC-29JL11T43**]

JF Now, coming away from the standing committees, you were manager of government business, I think, in the Legislative Council from some time in '93 onwards. Can you tell me about that responsibility and how it worked?

CHANCE It was actually a fairly difficult job because, in a sense, from Halden's point of view, he wanted a stopping point between him in his negotiations with Norman Moore, so that Norman would actually negotiate with me and then I would report those negotiations to Halden, who had the time to say, "All right, what's he trying to do here?" and give a more considered response. But, fundamentally, my job was to organise who was going to speak on what issues and when. So, in very short

form that was how we worked it. It was good training, in fact, for when I later became leader.

JF And, you became leader eventually ...

CHANCE Only for a very short time.

JF For a short time, yes. Outline how you came to be in that position.

CHANCE When Halden was stood down, I became the leader, but then there were issues within the Labor Party which caused the left to divide somewhat from the rest of the party, and part of that division was the left refused to hold any official positions, and so I had to stand down and Tom Stephens took over. It is just one of the bad things that happen.

JF In getting that position in the first place, are you voted into your position by your party room?

CHANCE Yes; it's a caucus vote.

JF Were there many people in the offing who were likely to be also candidates?

CHANCE I think I was unopposed.

JF Yes, because there weren't all that many Labor people probably available at that time, were there?

CHANCE I mean, Tom Stephens took over from me.

JF Tom was able to, yes.

CHANCE But we held sufficient numbers of the votes to be able to guarantee that we could beat Tom, but it was Tom that I turned to, when I found that I had to stand down, and I said, "Tom, it's important that you do this," because I didn't want Nick Griffiths to get the job by default, because I just thought Tom would be a much better leader.

JF Now, at the time that you were Leader of the Opposition in the house, you were also currently a shadow minister, I think. Do those two positions marry well together or are they inclined to conflict with each other?

CHANCE No; I don't think either statement is correct. I think they're separate in their functions and certainly holding one was never a difficulty, but it was never particularly an advantage to the other role either. They were just different things that we did. It's always nice to have a leadership role because then you've got a better chance of bringing your issues on. But there's a limit on you in doing that, too, because people will say, "Well, hang on, you're using your leadership position to exclude the issues that we want a raise." So you've got to be very careful. But, no, I don't think the two had much effect on each other.

JF It struck me that the shadow minister, especially when you were holding a number of portfolios, probably would have been quite a big job. Did you find it a big job?

CHANCE You're pretty much on your own. I briefly had Transport, which I loved, I just loved it, but transport is really an urban issue. I always I saw it as a regional issue, and of course it's important in the regions, but most of the public's investment in transport is in the urban area, and I didn't have much sympathy with those issues or understanding of those issues. So that was ultimately taken over by Kay Hallahan when I went to Primary Industry.

JF I think, at that stage, we might leave it for today.

CHANCE Yes.

JF So thank you very much.

CHANCE Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW EIGHT

INTERVIEW NINE

[track 44][file **KC-05AU11T44**]

JF This is session number nine in the series of interviews with the Honourable Kimberley Maurice Chance, MLC, which is a series being commissioned by the Western Australian Parliament History Project. It's being recorded on 5 August 2011 at Parliament House, Perth, with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 45][file **KC-05AU11T45**]

Now, Kim, on my original questionnaire I asked you was there a piece of legislation that caused you particular anguish and one which caused you particular joy.

CHANCE Yes.

JF You answered that the industrial regulations brought in by the Richard Court government were the anguish ones and I think the repealing of those was one of the joys [laughter]. So I thought we might spend a few minutes today, you telling me the contexts in which you became aware of what they were trying to do and why it was so anguish-making for you.

CHANCE Yes. The principle which lay behind the three waves of industrial legislation that the Court government introduced were principles that I felt deeply offensive. Despite some high-minded rhetoric about individual responsibility, they were principles that aimed to do nothing more than weaken the bargaining power of workers and to advantage their employers. I describe myself as a political moderate. Certainly I'm the first to accept that there were mistakes made and excesses in practice carried out by rampant union power, but at the same time the three waves of industrial legislation that made up the Industrial Relations Reform Act were highly offensive. They were a massive overreaction, and I thought destructive in that the very things that had been put in place to try to engender a stronger relationship between employers and employees, such as through the enterprise bargaining arrangements whereby workers could negotiate a better deal but they had to deliver better productivity, and that was a legally-binding structure. The new waves of industrial legislation actually broke down those EBAs and concentrated everything on individual bargaining arrangements. The way in which employers used the powers that they had under those individual bargaining arrangements, and indeed abused those powers, was entirely predictable in my view. We said so at the time, and I think our position was fully justified. Employers did make contracts with employees where

the employee was under duress. I actually personally know of cases where the employee was presented with the contract, told that he must sign it then and there on pain of losing his job, and was even refused the capacity to take the draft contract home and show it to his wife to read, not an industrial lawyer, his wife, who happened to be a schoolteacher. I just thought that was entirely predictable, and that's exactly what did happen. So it was a great moment in my life when we passed the repeal bills on those legislation.

JF Do you say that there was quite widespread abuse of them, or are you only able to instance one or two?

CHANCE No, the cases of abuse that were presented to us, principally by the union movement in relation to both their members and those workers not protected by union membership, were numerous, and we detailed them in great length. It was a filibuster debate. Tom Stephens led the debate in our house and in so doing set a record for the amount of time spoken by one member on one debate.

JF Just remind me, how long did they actually apply and how long was it before you were able to bring the repeal act in?

CHANCE Well, we repealed it virtually as our first piece of major legislation when we came in, so that would've been in 2001. How long were they in place? I think it was about '97, the last of the three waves went through. It was a major factor in us winning the 2001 election and Minister Kierath actually losing his seat of Riverton.

JF You weren't in the same house of course, but did you ever lock horns with Graham Kierath yourself personally on this?

CHANCE No, actually at a personal level I found him quite a decent bloke. I had great sympathy for him later, too, when his wife got very sick. But, no, dealing with Graham, he was a complicated person. But as an individual there was absolutely nothing offensive about him. He was tough and courageous. There were admirable qualities to his character. But he was charged with doing a job and he did it with great zeal [laughter].

JF Just before we go on to other topics, picking up something while we are talking about the Court government era, you apparently shared an interest with Richard Court.

CHANCE Yes, Richard and I sometimes on a quiet day, like on Friday if we were both in the house and there was nobody else around, we would sometimes have lunch together. The first time it happened he came in, saw me sitting on my own at the Labor table and said, "Can I join you?", and I said, "Of course you can, Premier." We do share an interest in American race cars. He worked for Ford for some time. He was in the United States at the time the Boss Mustang was a new car, and he was telling me about the opportunity he had to drive one across the state and what a great car it was. So, yes, we did share an interest in motor cars. I still see Richard from time to time because he now lives out in my part of the world; he lives out in the eastern suburbs. I run into him in places like Bunnings when we are in there buying hardware [laughs]. It's really quite strange.

JF Did you ever talk to him about things other than your common interest in motor cars?

CHANCE I can't say that I did, no. It was a very tense time, and that sort of fraternisation was looked down on.

JF Okay, well now let's look at your ministerial portfolios, which we come to pretty well next. I thought if we looked at them sort of folio by folio and asked you what were some of the memories you have of things that were issues. A couple that I picked up on, which may or may not be terribly important, what's the background to the Grain Licensing Authority? I think you were responsible for establishing that or at least appointing members to it.

CHANCE Yes, I was. This is set against the background of the competition policy, the National Competition Policy. One of the things that state governments were required to do to qualify for their NCP payments was to basically deregulate all of the statutory authorities in the state. That was something that I was absolutely opposed to. We didn't have that many within the state because most statutory marketing authorities have a commonwealth legislative base.

JF That's because they are relating to foreign trade, is it?

CHANCE Yes, basically because they're export industries, yes. But it's more a matter of convenience, because some export industries were state-controlled. One of those relates specifically to the Grains Licensing Authority, because, of the grains, wheat then was the only grain which was regulated by the commonwealth. That goes back to the post-war period, in fact even the pre-war period. And then during wartime there was a national authority established, and then in 1947 the Chifley government introduced the Australian Wheat Board because of demand from Australian wheat growers to continue those wartime arrangements, which was a monopoly market. And that worked extremely successfully for a long, long time. But in the other grains, and specifically barley, lupins and canola, which are three major grains in Western Australia, we had a monopoly exporting structure, and a monopoly domestic trade structure to some extent, which was held by state legislation and administered by the Grain Pool of Western Australia. It was the Grain Pool monopoly that the competition policy basically demanded that we deregulate. Graeme Samuels was then the head of the competition policy unit. It's interesting that at that stage there were no plans to deregulate the commonwealth-regulated grain of wheat, although that did happen later. But the imperatives did not seem to rest on the commonwealth at all; they seemed to rest only on the states.

Anyway, I was informed by the Treasurer that Samuels and the state treasury had had discussions and that they had resolved that those three grains would be deregulated. And I said, "Well, that's interesting because I wasn't even invited to that meeting, and it's not my intention to introduce legislation to do that, whatever agreement they might've have come to." That caused the Treasurer to cough and splutter a little bit, but he knew what I said was correct: if I did not introduce the legislation, then it was not going to happen. I said, "Look, I think you've made a mess of this. I'm going to go and speak to Samuels next week and we will sort this out." Then I later informed him that I had an appointment to Samuels, I think it was 6.00 am at Tullamarine airport. The Treasurer said, "Well, Treasury don't find that convenient." I said, "Treasury aren't invited. They mucked it up, and I'm going to fix what they did."

So we got on the midnight horror, flew to Tullamarine. Graeme Samuels was very generous in terms of meeting me at that ridiculous hour of the morning. I was booked on the, I think, 8.30 am flight back to Perth, because I had to be back in Perth the same day. So we conducted our meeting between six and eight o'clock in the airport,

and then I hopped on the plane and came straight back again with an agreement with Samuels. I thought Samuels was very good. The agreement was we would establish the Grain Licensing Authority, which would give effect to a continuation of the monopoly but with sufficient flexibility in it to satisfy him. In other words, there was a way for competition to occur through a licensing arrangement, whereby the name springs, and that licensing arrangement could be held by private sector exporters who could apply for the export licence. [It was] similar in effect to what later happened with wheat. In fact the wheat industry actually used our legislation as a model. We got our legislation up with bipartisan support. I was quite proud of that. It was very much my own work.

JF And it worked well after it was instituted then?

CHANCE It did, although it was repealed shortly after the election of the conservative government. Even though they had supported it, they felt that it had run its course. In other words, it had served as a transition arrangement, and that was always open in the interpretation that that could be what it was used for.

JF Yes. Did I see something somewhere, I think perhaps in the agricultural press, about it limiting the export of barley, which was not something that particular growers were interested in or were in favour of?

CHANCE There were growers who felt we would have been better served going straight to full deregulation. Even so, the organisation that represents those growers, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, still supported the legislation. They very much saw it as only a stepping stone, but nonetheless they supported the legislation very strongly.

JF Thinking of the agricultural lobby groups and so on, the PGA you say were behind it. What about the Farmers Federation?

CHANCE The Farmers Federation come from an entirely opposite point of view. Their preference is for monopoly exporters. However, they also supported the legislation, with some dissent, I have to say, but they supported the legislation because it was better than full deregulation. So the PGA supported it because it was a step to deregulation. The Farmers Federation supported it because it was delaying at least the evil day.

JF Right. Another thing related to cereal cropping is the problem of GM crops. There's some reference occasionally to that in some of the press articles relating to your time as minister. Just fill me in about the impact that the GM argument had on your portfolio.

CHANCE I was always presented as an anti-GM advocate, which isn't actually true. But I think the highest you can put it is I was a very wary sceptic. I didn't trust the companies who were bringing it in. I didn't trust their record. I didn't trust what they were saying to us. I didn't trust the fact that they would not allow their product to be tested independently; would not allow it, on penalty of jail. There were advocates of GM, principally people who were in a position to or actually were benefiting in terms of research funding emanating from the life science companies, particularly Monsanto but not exclusively so. They ran a very strong pro-GM campaign using figures which couldn't be verified, and you couldn't run the trials to give it any verification whatever. I did try to institute a trial, carried out by an independent body, specifically the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association, which is a farmer scientific body based in Esperance. In the end, Monsanto refused to supply seed to that trial. So there was no provision for independent testing, and I thought I had reasonable reason to be sceptical.

There were concerns also around health. Indeed, the main resistance from consumers, which is even stronger than resistance amongst farmers, is concern that that kind of artificial interference with the DNA code could have health issues, because cancer, for example, is a classic example of the DNA going wrong—that's all cancer is—the DNA just goes wrong; it starts doing things, it starts expressing proteins that it's not supposed to express, and those proteins become a cancerous growth. There's reason to be concerned. When I looked at what scientific work had been done, it was virtually non-existent; in terms of long-term trials on animals, virtually non-existent. Most of it had been short cut by the process of what the American food and drug authority had deemed to be substantial equivalent. So if it was roughly the same as the non-GM product, therefore it was the same.

JF Not exactly scientific.

CHANCE It meant that if the canola seed was black and round, then it was the same. The science was very shallow. There were significant examples of where

scientists had attempted to do something about it and had attempted to look at the trials objectively, and they had been pilloried by the rest of the scientific establishment, even to the point of when we did partially fund a trial to be carried out in Australia by a scientist who had laboratory rights at the University of Adelaide, that university and its vice-chancellor were leant on so heavily by the scientific establishment, they were forced to withdraw Dr Carman's laboratory rights. That was simply to carry out a trial, which was partly government funded. I think we put up about \$92 000 to do that. The trial itself was opposed bitterly, even to the point of trying to find out who the peer review panel was before the trial had even started so that they could apply the same pressure to that peer review panel. It shocked me that universities would actually be party to that sort of thing.

JF That they would bow to the pressures.

CHANCE Yes. And much of this pressure came out of other universities.

JF Did it?

CHANCE Yes.

JF You'd expect perhaps that the financial interests would be the ones pushing.

CHANCE No; these were scientists who had a financial interest, because that's where their research funding was coming from. It was so blatantly the case, but people just couldn't see it. But I was shocked, because I always regarded universities as places where diversity of opinion is celebrated. Well, diversity of opinion was brutally smothered in this instance, brutally. It left a really nasty taste in my mouth. At the same time, I still only regarded myself as a sceptic. I didn't have evidence that there was anything wrong with the stuff. In fact, I dearly wished it was really good, because ...

JF It solves some of the problems that farmers have, yes.

CHANCE Absolutely. The broader field of biotechnology, and GM is only a tiny splinter of a very big field, is fascinating, and that is where we're going to find the answers to feed a growing population. But it just seemed to me such a shame that

commercial interests had so corrupted the whole process that biotechnology now is viewed with great suspicion, when it shouldn't be, because the very issues about some of the cures to genetic diseases and to cell abnormalities like cancer may well lie in biotechnology. I'm not an anti-GM advocate, but I'm still a sceptic.

JF Because nobody's done the work.

CHANCE Yes, still nobody's done the work, yes.

JF There have been some limited trials allowed, I think, of growing it.

CHANCE It's now commercial, yes.

JF Is there any effective way of quarantining the GM product from the other?

CHANCE No. And that was one of the problems with GM in Western Australia, that the debate was all about canola. Certainly GM canola is widespread in the world, but it's certainly not the only GM plant. Had it been one of the other plants, I wouldn't have had a problem, because you can effectively quarantine it and you can carry out testing and you can do all of those things. If you decide you don't want it anymore, you can get rid of it.

JF Is that with wheat or other ... what other products?

CHANCE No, not so much wheat, because there is no market for GM wheat. For example, any of the legumes are very easily controlled; so lupins, peas, a whole range of legumes. Corn not so much so, although corn has been very successful in the United States, GM corn, but that's usually not fed to humans in the first instance. It's only in Africa that people actually eat corn. Lupins, in fact I encouraged some GM work on lupins because I thought we needed a breakthrough. Soya bean of course is the other huge one; also a legume. Unfortunately canola, whether GM or not, is a very promiscuous plant. It spreads its genes everywhere. Even the seed, it's small, it's round, it's highly mobile. It's said that if you are assessing a truck bin as to whether it can hold canola without spilling, you work on the principle that, if the tipper will hold water, it will hold canola.

JF Really?

CHANCE It flows that readily. It's also wind-borne. It has very promiscuous pollination habits, where you can pick up pollen up to five kilometres from the originating site, whereas wheat, for example, can barely pollinate across rows, so 150 millimetres. But yes, you measure pollination promiscuity in kilometres, not millimetres. So it was just the wrong plant to start with. There was absolutely no hope of introducing GM canola and expecting that you could ever get rid of it. Once you've got it, you've got it forever. I argued that were we to adopt GM canola, we might just as well do what the Americans did and go straight to non-discriminating receipt, so whether it's GM or not GM, you take it all on the assumption that it is GM. The Americans did try to disaggregate or separate the two lines but gave up after one year. The Canadians never tried; they knew it was an impossibility.

[track 46][file **KC-05AU11T46**]

JF Talking about broadacre farming or cereal farming, one of the things that's not directly related to what we've been talking about is the matter of the drought. You had a lot of drought years while you were in that seat and it caused you quite a lot of problems I suppose.

CHANCE A lot of pain, yes. All of our early years were drought years, and it was a drought which had begun in the eastern states and then visited us with a vengeance. We had farms that were successively in drought declared areas for some years, particularly in the north-eastern Wheatbelt and the northern Wheatbelt. Drought is essentially, and has been since 1992, a commonwealth issue. There was a COAG agreement in '92 and that basically gave disasters to the states and drought to the commonwealth. The assistance mechanisms that we had from the commonwealth at that time were very inflexible and required hard boundaries to be set on who could apply for assistance, and it took me years working with Warren Truss, the then commonwealth minister, to convince him that we needed a buffer zone around these hardline areas, because it was as absurd as driving out of Jerramungup, driving east from Jerramungup one day, actually with Warren Truss, I said, "Warren, see the country on the right? That's drought-declared. Now, we are on the road, see the paddocks on the left of the road, do they look any different to you?" He said, "No; they all look the same." And I said, "Well that's actually not a drought area." I was just trying to bring it home to him that you cannot draw hard boundaries. And he said, "Well, I mean we have funding limits and we can't make this available to

everyone." And I said, "No; that's not the point. The point is that whether you're in an area or not, you still have to be able to meet the qualifications. Just being in an area doesn't mean you get assistance; it means you get assistance if you qualify. And if you make the areas larger or put a buffer zone around the areas, they still have to qualify; you're not going to have any more people getting in than you do now." Eventually, he saw it my way, but it took a lot of persuasion. So, when we introduced the buffer zones, all of those issues or 80 per cent of the problem issues disappeared overnight.

JF And this relates to what they called 'extreme circumstances' funding?

CHANCE Exceptional.

JF 'Exceptional circumstances' funding.

CHANCE EC, exceptional circumstances, yes, which was actually quite generous funding. It covered interest up to a limit of \$100 000 in one year; that's a significant sum, so that's supporting a lot of borrowing. It was important because it gave bankers the certainty of knowing that their interest bill was going to be paid, or at least the vast majority of it was going to be paid, and that made them much more inclined to continue their own support for the farm business. So, I think the existence of EC meant that there are probably hundreds of farm families now still farming that would have gone under were it not for EC, even though, it has to be said, that in a typical drought in Western Australia, farmers will probably lose close to \$2 billion, and the highest amount of EC payment we ever made would have been less than \$100 million, so it's only a tiny fraction of the total losses. But, it was key money; it was key drought-support money in that it hit the interest. So, if you were in an EC area and you qualified on all of the criteria but you didn't have any debt, then you didn't get any money; and some people felt that was bad. And I used to say to them, "No; you should celebrate the fact that your neighbour got \$100 000 and you didn't; you didn't get any money because you didn't need it, because you're a good manager, or you were lucky." [laughs] But the drought was just as bad for him as it was for his neighbour. And some didn't see it that way, and I said, "This is not a reward, or it's not a compensation for having a drought; it's to actually keep your business going", and unless your business is threatened, why should the taxpayer kick in \$100 000? It's a lot of money, when you're asking (and I used this example a number of times) a hairdresser from Balga or a truckie from Kewdale to actually give

you their money. Now, you've really got to deserve that before I'm going to ask that hairdresser, who's only been \$35 000 a year, to actually give you some of her money; give, not lend [laughs]. Some understood what I was saying [chuckles].

JF Now the question of drought, of course, is always with us, but it has been more pronounced perhaps in recent years than ever before. Do you think we opened up agricultural land, particularly out around the Jerramungup area and east, too quickly and without sufficient research?

CHANCE We certainly opened it up without understanding fully how fragile it was, but that's not to say I think it was a mistake, and indeed I'm one of a tiny [chuckles] number of people who believe we can go still further; we can push those boundaries out further. But it would need to be done very, very carefully. But we now have farming technologies that enable sustainable long-term farming in very marginal country and we can actually bring back some of the land that was degraded. So, carefully carefully; I mean, I wouldn't find one per cent of people in the community that would support me in this, but it's a scientific fact, and given the pressure on our food supplies, I think it's morally defensible as well. But, you wouldn't do it on the same sort of broad scale sweep that we've done it in the past. You'd try to do in a chequerboard-type fashion so that you integrated farming into the environment much more sympathetically than we ever did in the past. I mean, what we did was clumsy and in many respects wrong, but it's not to say that the drive through the '60s and '70s to open all that land up was in itself wrong. Some of it was a bit misdirected, but you go back there now and have a look at the way it's being farmed now and it's very hard to find fault, very hard. The salinity probably is the only issue that still bugs me a bit, and when you denude a landscape of its natural cover and remove the plants that use the water from deep underground, you are going to have a salinity issue.

JF Salinity, of course, is one of the long-term problems. I remember even in the late '50s, early '60s, people doing salinity reclamation projects and so on in around the central Wheatbelt, where I was teaching. Salinity is a very big problem. But to some extent have we got potential to change crops and perhaps go into tree growing and things like that to counter it?

CHANCE Yes, there is that. And I'm also a bit of a fan of deep drainage. I think deep drainage can, very economically, ameliorate valley-floor salinity and sandplain-

seep salinity. The problem with the drainage, though, is the lack of a disposal point. I think deep drainage will be revolutionised as a technology if and when we're able to develop a low-cost desalination system where that hyper-saline water can be collected into a sump, rather than discharged into a waterway, and desalinated on site. So, that kind of implies some kind of solar desalination ...

JF Yes, and there's a salt industry to be made there, is there?

CHANCE Well, there's a salt industry, but you can reincorporate those salts even with your fertiliser and spread them back where the salt came from, back on the hills, because some of those salts are very valuable in terms of their contribution to soil fertility, but they've been leached out and then they've concentrated over about 100 years of farming, although down at Jerramungup it happened much faster than that because the water is more dynamic. But, put it back where it came from. I don't think there's really much commercial value in those salts, no. And they tend to contain in the Wheatbelt some interesting metals that are very toxic, cadmium for one; the Wheatbelt's full of cadmium.

JF What about trees? I think you had something to do with promoting, was it a growing a mallee for oil?

CHANCE Yes, we did all of that, and also the Infinitree program, while I was Forestry Minister, with the Forest Products Commission, was a share-farming arrangement, and that was mostly around the establishment of the maritime pine in what a forester would call a low-rainfall area and what a farmer would call a medium-rainfall area. But, principally the Midlands area was our target; so from, say, Muecha to Moora, in that band. We had a drought come along and kill a huge proportion of our trees. But I still think that attempt to integrate share farming-based forestry, so the state doesn't have to own the land, with forestry projects of about 25 to 35 years in duration, to integrate that into the Wheatbelt landscape, would be an enormous advantage. It would bring a lot more jobs into the area, some of them long-term jobs. It would give farmers an alternative income to cover the bad years, once you'd got up to a certain level, and I think it would be very good for the landscape, particularly in soaking up that excess water that when it reaches the valley floor becomes a problem. So, yes, I was enthusiastic about it; the current government doesn't share that enthusiasm, but I think it is agronomically and structurally sound. I think its economic soundness in the early years is a bit weak, but once established I think it

makes a much stronger economic case. But, you've got to be able to look a decade, even two decades into the future to see that structural soundness in its economics.

JF And probably because of the long-term nature of the return, it would require some sort of government initiative, would it?

CHANCE Yes, and that is what Infnitree wants. Infnitree was actually a very generous program in terms of attracting it. And the land we were looking for, particularly for the maritime pine, *Pinus pinaster*, will grow on very poor soil; it's quite the opposite of *Pinus radiata*, which requires good soil. *Pinaster* evolved on the fringe of the Mediterranean, on both continents, on both the African and the European continents. Our particular species comes from Portugal, but that came from testing of *pinaster* species which goes right back to the 1920s. So, out around where Ellenbrook is now were the earliest trials. A whole range of both *pinaster* and *Pinus brutia*, from Turkey, were tried there and *pinaster* came up really, really well. So, virtually all of those pines from Gnangara north are all *pinaster*, on that poor white sand. You wonder how it can grow at such a huge volume, whereas *radiata* tends to be further south in kinder climates and better soils. But *pinaster* is much stronger than *radiata*; it's an excellent timber. Slow growing, but even so, within 35 years at, say, Lancelin rainfall, if you managed it properly you would have a very significant resource, much more so than the one sheep an acre that it will carry now.

JF Shifting focus for a moment away from the Wheatbelt, were there significant developments in horticulture, in the orchards and the vines and that sort of thing, in your time as minister that you'd like to talk about?

CHANCE There were some very exciting things done. The horticulture area has always been ... edgy is my word for it. You're never quite sure which way it's going to go; and that's typical with horticulture. I mean, the worst thing that can happen to you is have a great year, because if you've got a great year, you flood the market and price falls in a hole. But, yes, we saw expansion of the horticultural industry, which is in effect two industries. You have the local industry, which is very price sensitive and very supply sensitive, but supplies the local fruit and vegetables that we eat here. Then there's an export industry, which tends to be the big-scale stuff. That's dominated by carrots in this state. We saw a huge growth in the carrot industry; big farmers using machinery, relatively low labour because it's a machine harvested crop; and, some very entrepreneurial people like Nick Tana got involved,

Frank Tedesco, and created a great industry which was pretty much all focused on East Asia, particularly through the Singapore Exchange. That almost fell in a hole when China came in and undercut us by 30-odd per cent. At that stage, we'd done a lot of market development work in the Middle East and I suggested to the carrot growers that that's where they needed to go, because we'd spent a lot of time and a lot of money developing those markets. They were a bit sceptical, I think, at first, but they went and had a look. Now 80 per cent of our exports are going into the Gulf region. So, yes, that was something I was really, really proud of, that we'd opened that market up and it was able to fill that gap.

JF Did you tell me that you had a family connection with people who were in the ruling families of some part of the Middle East? Did that help at all in your negotiations [chuckles]?

CHANCE No! But, yes, we did have a relationship going back a long way with the Al Maktoum family in Dubai. My father had a long history in that area.

[track 47][file **KC-05AU11T47**]

JF A few minutes now on livestock. I think there was a little bit to do with live sheep trade.

CHANCE The *Cormo Express*.

JF The *Cormo*, yes.

CHANCE At the time it was a very serious issue. It's also one of the funniest things that I ever got involved in. The *Cormo Express* was ... well, it arrived to discharge in the port of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea. There was an issue going on when the ship arrived, and the people associated with the cargo knew there was something wrong because when they arrived there wasn't the usual mass of people there to receive them. The vets, the trucks, the stockmen, they just weren't there. There was something happening. Clearly, there was an issue inside Saudi Arabia between the importer, Sheikh Hamad, and (I've got to be a little bit careful here) other companies linked to the Al Saud royal family. Sheikh Hamad is a Bedouin and the Al Sauds aren't, and there were issues there. But clearly there was some commercial issue going on between the two groups. It transpired that the

veterinarians who received the stock held the view that the sheep had a disease, specifically scabby mouth, and they said, “Look, take the ship back out to the Red Sea; come back in three days’ time.” Now, all the Saudis were trying to do, I think, was give a little bit of time to sort the issue out inside Saudi Arabia, and they didn’t want to admit that to anyone. Bear in mind that some of this is supposition and some of this is what I put together later, particularly after speaking to Sheikh Hamad in Kuwait. Then the Australian government made a fatal mistake. There was something different about this shipment also in that those sheep were actually owned by Sheikh Hamad. Normally, the change of ownership doesn’t occur until you unload at Jeddah. These sheep were owned by Sheikh Hamad before they left Perth. That’s quite unusual, and it changes the legal status of the cargo. The mistake the Australian government made was they decided to pick a fight with the Saudis and issued instructions to the shippers to take the cargo up to Aqaba and to unload there; so, basically to unload at one of Sheikh Hamad’s competitors, which is the Hijazi company, and that’s the only place you could unload. When the Saudi Arabians heard that this load was heading north, and presumably it could only go to Sokhna in Egypt or Aqaba in Jordan, or Alat, I suppose, in Israel, they got very hostile, very hurt about this, as you would be. I mean, it was stealing a cargo.

JF Yes, especially seeing the ownership was not Australian.

CHANCE Yes; the ownership was actually Saudi. And even though the Saudi royal family might have been in dispute with that owner, they weren’t going to see him ripped off. Anyway, that started all kinds of difficulty. So, the Saudis declared the cargo and the ship black, right; nobody is to touch it. And that created a huge problem for us, it created a huge problem for the Australian government. Such was their determination that they were not going to be beaten by the Australians on this, everywhere the Australian government went to try to find another port of disembarkation, the Saudis would follow them. And they’d reach agreement here, Uganda for example, or where were some others? It doesn’t matter. They’d actually reach agreement to unload the sheep there, and the Saudis would be there the next day and say, “Oh, no, no, no, let me tell you something” [laughs]. And they’d start talking about their foreign-aid budget. It was really quite serious. And the whole issue was being run by the Australian government, but we were being kept informed almost on an hourly basis from official and unofficial sources, because I had sources inside Meat and Livestock Australia who were keeping me updated on an hourly basis. So, I knew what was happening, and I thought, all right; we’ve got to find a solution to this.

I asked some friends, who to this day need to remain nameless, but a business contact of mine in Libya and another in Cairo. I asked them if they could use their diplomatic contacts to help us, and they said, "Okay, we'll have a look." And they came back with this idea of unloading in the port of Massawa in Eritrea, which ironically is right opposite Jeddah; it's just so close [laughs]. I thought, we can't tell the Australian government about this just yet because they'll want to go to Massawa and that will be the end of it; the Saudis will be in there like a shot. But the Libyans at that stage had a bit of a grudge on with the Saudis and they were also attempting to generate some goodwill amongst African nations, because this just preceded the African unity congress in Durban where Gaddafi was trying to introduce a particular point. So, we then started the story that we were going to re-import the sheep. And we ran it in the press and we actually called local authorities to arrange disposal sites and we were going to bring the sheep back and shoot them and dump them; bury them. So, all of the world's attention was on that. Meantime, we had to go and set up the yards in Eritrea, because there were no yards suitable to hold them, so we had a team of vets there running welders and doing the plumbing [laughter]. The Eritrean minister called into the yards, approved them, and basically ... well then I told the Australian government and I said, "Get that ship in there now; and this is the deal", and then they did their financial deal with the Eritreans, because they actually paid them to take them. And it was amazing. Everything went like clockwork, and the Saudis never found out.

JF Really?

CHANCE It was quite incredible.

JF So, the original owner of the stock, did he get compensated?

CHANCE He was paid, yes.

JF On that basis, I'm surprised you didn't end up going into federal Parliament after that and become Minister for Trade [laughs].

CHANCE No, because I would have had the same difficulties. I would have had DFAT officers and DAF officers being followed around by the Saudis [laughter]. And there's a whole lot that I haven't told and some things I can and some things I can't

tell, but particularly those two Arabs that helped me out, one man, one woman, their help was on the basis that nobody ever found out [laughs].

[track 48][file **KC-05AU11T48**]

JF Is there anything cloak and dagger in relation to other animals? I notice there was some complaint in the press somewhere about goats which you were involved with, I think. Was it goats escaping from somewhere, or wild goats? I can't remember what the reference was. If it were not important, we can forget it.

CHANCE No, I don't remember anything about goats, although I think they're a great opportunity. Horse flu was an issue.

JF Oh, yes.

CHANCE Yes, horse flu was an issue. I mean we certainly had our critics in the way we managed that. But in the end we operated strictly according to the National Veterinary Council, and there were horse trainers and all kinds of people who thought that they knew how to manage a disease better than the nation's top vets. Well, I had to disagree with them. In the end, the management systems that we used were successful and we didn't get a single case of horse flu. So, regardless of what the owners and trainers thought, or at least officially, we handled that well. But I used to get this press comment coming through from the owners and trainers. Then I'd get half a dozen individual owners and trainers call me, giving me an entirely opposite story, you know; so it's just individuals with ... they were losing money. They had horses tied up in the east that they couldn't get out; or they had all their horses here, and they didn't want their competitor to get his horses back. This is a scientific question, guys: what's safe; what isn't safe? There were cases when horses were already en route by road, and they called us from the South Australian–Western Australian border and said, "What do we do?", and they were instructed to continue their journey, because you couldn't leave a horse out there. They continued their journey. We then put them into quarantine on their own farm, with at least 200 metres separation. It's very similar to human flu in its contagion. If somebody's got the flu 200 metres away from you, they're never going to be a problem to you. So we made sure that their perimeter was sound. And it was much better to actually hold them in quarantine on their own farm than it was to have them in a single group. But a lot of people didn't understand that. They said, "Well, if they're coming into quarantine,

where's the quarantine facility?" Well, actually, we don't have one, [chuckles] and they don't need one. So, yes, that was an interesting one.

[track 49][file **KC-05AU11T49**]

JF The other area that we haven't touched at all is cattle. Were you involved with anything to do with cattle? There was a big expansion, wasn't there, in your period, of cattle in the north of the state?

CHANCE Yes, and the growth of the Indonesian cattle trade, which has been on the news lately. Firstly, my comment on the West Australian beef industry is that it is not a highly developed industry in the way that Queensland or the Territory industry is. It doesn't have much depth. It's actually two different industries; the southern industry is totally unrelated to the northern industry. The southern industry is really about, principally, local demand, with some export, but the export is the tail of the dog. The northern industry is all export. There is no domestic component effectively at all and it's all live because there's now no abattoir anywhere in northern Australia. Even Katherine has closed. So we are totally reliant on the live export industry. The live export industry, in turn, is dominated by Indonesia. There have been attempts to expand the footprint to Korea and to Malaysia and they've been partly successful but at this stage it is all about Indonesia. It's such a good trade. The difficulty is Indonesia has got a lot of abattoirs. Some of them ain't real good, as we found. Some of them are bloody disgusting. I was surprised that the manure hadn't hit the fan earlier because I'd been into some of those abattoirs and knew how bad they were. MLA [Meat and Livestock Australia] are charged with the task of making sure all of the abattoir standards are met, and clearly they couldn't do anything about it. I'm not saying they were slack; I'm expressing some sympathy for them. They just couldn't physically do anything about it. We had the same issues in Egypt, and in the end we shut Egypt down entirely. Now the only Australian cattle that go to Egypt live are those slaughtered at the Port Sokhna facility, which we helped to set up. That's a modern German abattoir. It is a good industry. I'm saddened that it's had this bad exposure and I hope the exposure that it's had has some good in the end because it is a natural industry.

Kimberley country, and to a lesser extent, the Territory, is country where you can get calves on the ground probably cheaper than you can anywhere else in the world, even Brazil. It's very, very low cost breeding country, but you cannot finish cattle

there. So the only other way of actually getting the cattle to a stage where you can slaughter them is wean them early, probably bring them down a bit further south into, say, the Pilbara if the season's okay, because you've got good soil and plenty of minerals there. The Kimberley's just leached out. It grows a lot of feed but it's very, very poor quality, whereas the Pilbara grows very little feed but it's very good quality. So you can actually grow out muscle and bone there and then bring them in their third stage down to, say, Geraldton and grain-finish them, and then you could slaughter them at a local abattoir. I heard people like Nick Xenophon say, "All you need to do is put abattoirs in the north." Well, there's no cattle for them to slaughter. There's nothing marketable in the north. [The] Territory's a little bit different, and that's certainly the case with the Kimberley. There is no future for those guys without the live cattle trade. So all we can do is try to improve standards in Indonesia.

JF And now that the federal government's sort of got involved in that, is there some prospect of that actually happening, that improvements will flow?

CHANCE Yes, absolutely, because that's what happened in Egypt. So if we can do it in Egypt, we can do it here. But it's not something that's going to happen overnight. It's going to take a long time.

[track 50][file **KC-05AU11T50**]

JF We haven't spoken about dairy but the big problem about the dairy industry rationalisation project ...

CHANCE The deregulation.

JF The deregulation. That was something that caused you some problems, I think.

CHANCE That was my second most disturbing piece of legislation, the repeal bill. It was clear from the start that the deregulation of the dairy industry was going to cost a lot of people their future. The dairy industry in Western Australia is tiny by Australian standards. It's only four per cent of the total dairy production. It was only concerned with supplying the local fresh milk market. It had no real interest in manufacturing. Literally just the surplus was going into manufacturing. Brownes were making a bit of cheese and some desserts, which were quite profitable for them, the

yoghurts and ice-cream, whatever. But essentially we were a white milk, liquid milk, industry, and the difference in price between liquid milk and industrial milk, manufacturing milk, is about 300 per cent favouring liquid milk. So the more manufacturing milk you've got, the more you dilute the dollars for the total price per litre. That was the situation in Victoria, in particular, where about 80 per cent of their production was going into manufacturing. Here we were probably less than 20 per cent. It was just a nice balance. Then they decided that they were going to go to national deregulation and it was very clear to me and to others what was going to happen as a result. So I fought it from the beginning. In the end, the weight of the other 96 per cent of the industry made its presence felt, but in the end the Victorian Premier leant heavily on our Premier. That was Bracks. I have no time for Bracks to this day because I think he lied to our Premier. The Premier instructed me in the end that I was to vote for the legislation, which was one of the worst days of my life. Everything we thought would happen did happen. Even the other means of restructuring the industry that were put in place to try to give farmers some kind of ownership of the manufacturing sector, even those fell over; that was Challenge Dairy. It was successful for a while but in the end it was trying to do too much with too little, and competing against some big players like Peters, Brownes and Frontera. So, yes, really, really sad. Totally unnecessary. I mean, we were four per cent of the nation's industry. They could have just left us alone. But in the end, can't cry over spilt milk.

[track 51][file **KC-05AU11T51**]

JF Just finally, we haven't mentioned in any way your control of the fishing industry. Are there some issues there that should be canvassed?

CHANCE Well, I love the fishing industry. It was bloody hard work, though. And I remember Monty House saying to me when I took over this role, he said, "Have you got Fisheries as well?", and I said "Yes", which is exactly what *he* had, because he had that Primary Industry portfolio, and he said, "It's 20 per cent of your responsibility and it'll take 80 per cent of your time", and that's exactly what happened.

JF Really?

CHANCE Yes, exactly, because it's a highly regulated industry, far too highly regulated in my view, but it needs to be regulated because you're dealing with the

private use of a public resource, and it's a very sensitive public resource, because you've got competing users, and in greater number, with the recreational fishers, so there's all of these tensions between the pros and the recs. But it's a resource owned by the public which is used for private profit by individual fishermen. So, regulation has to be pretty strict. But it went over the top. To license a boat a foot longer than the one they're using actually required the minister's personal intervention. Just absurd. Anyway. But it was fascinating, and I really enjoyed the process, particularly of managing new fisheries. I had a lot to do with the Kimberley wetline and trap fishery, which I thought was fascinating. We are the only state who really have the majority control of all of their fisheries. In other states, it tends to be done by the commonwealth through the swap-overs. But in Western Australia, with the exception of the tuna industry, all of the commonwealth powers in the joint-managed fisheries have been swapped over, but back to the state rather than the commonwealth; whereas in the other states it's the other way round. The tuna industry has to be commonwealth controlled because you've got a resource that swims right around the country, so you have to have a single manager; and we didn't want it anyway. Yes, fascinating. The fights we had with the conservationists and the Department of Environment about their grandiose ambitions for marine parks were interesting and almost as vicious as the fights we had in Forestry over the old-growth forest. But that's the nature of government. I mean, government is there to represent differing and, sometimes, conflicting points of view. But that comes down to sometimes personal conflict with one of your best friends, which is difficult. Judy Edwards and I had some terrible blues and yet we were great mates, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW NINE

INTERVIEW TEN

[track 52][file **KC-12AU11T52**]

JF This is session number 10 in the series of interviews with Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance, former MLC, in the series commissioned by the WA Parliament History Project. It is being recorded on 12 August 2011 at Parliament House with interviewer John Ferrell.

[track 53][file **KC-12AU11T53**]

Kim, last time we were talking about your various ministries. Just to link to that, we didn't really talk at any length about the forestry portfolio.

CHANCE No.

JF I just wondered whether there are some highlights of that that you would like to bring forward. I wondered, for example, by the time you were minister whether logging in old-growth forests was an issue that you had to deal with in any sense. I think probably it was earlier.

CHANCE No, no, no, that's absolutely the issue. Indeed, it could be argued that the election of the Gallop government in 2001 was very largely on the back of the Gallop government's policy to protect old-growth forests. The protecting old-growth forests policy was a key initiative and was implemented immediately on our election. We then had to work out how to make all of the arrangements for the restructuring of the industry. On the day of the election (indeed, even before the ministers had been sworn in) the Forest Products Commission suspended all logging in old-growth forests immediately, which was running rather ahead of our policy, I guess. We had a huge job then to implement the policy, to try to structure the future of the industry in such a way that we did have an ongoing native forest industry within the very much smaller scope of operation that the protecting old-growth forests policy permitted. It roughly cut the total size of the industry to between one-third and one half of its earlier size. We paid out in the end compensation somewhere between \$150 million and \$160 million to restructure the industry. I use the word "compensation", which is not strictly correct. They were restructuring payments and in some instances actually resulted in the development of new products from the smaller boll logs. That was a

difficult time, extremely difficult. There was a lot of tension between ministers in that but we did work together and we did bring down a policy that I think worked as well as it could have. Whether in the cold light of day it was the right thing to do or not didn't really matter that much. But it is very clear that we were over-exploiting the native forest.

Where I have a difference from the conservationists is that I think what we should have done is rather than set aside vast areas of forest to be completely untouched, and I'm not talking here about conservation reserves because I think they have their own place, but we set aside huge areas of the forest to be completely untouched which were not taken into reserves. I think we would have been much better off taking a lighter footprint on the forest rather than stopping logging altogether in some sections and logging to maximum capacity in others. I don't think the forest benefits from either of those approaches. I think a better approach is to be more selective in our logging and to try to leave the forest when we've finished with it. I'm applying this argument only to jarrah at this stage because karri is quite a different operation. In the jarrah and marri logging, I think the forests would have been better had we just taken a lighter approach. Karri is different because karri requires clear-felling and gap-filling and burning, so it's quite a destructive process, but karri regrows like weeds; it's just amazing how fast it grows. Indeed, if you've ever visited the 100-year forest near Pemberton, that huge forest once grew a crop of wheat. It's really hard to imagine when you see the size of the trees. It's a very rapid grower. It grows in much better soil than jarrah does. It prefers those red loamy soils that are ideal agricultural soils, in fact, and its rate of growth is enormous.

JF You would have run foul of some of your union buddies, I think, in taking that action about the forests.

CHANCE The AWU in particular and, to a lesser extent, CFMEU, although on a national level the CFMEU were more active because they had different coverage. Here it was largely the AWU. I worked very closely with Tim Daly from the AWU. Indeed, he was part of the advisory committee that I established, which was made up almost completely of industry personnel. I was impressed with the way the employers and the employees' representatives worked in that. Tim and I formed a very close relationship.

JF And they were happy in the end, as happy as they could be expected to be, I suppose?

CHANCE Had the forest management plan, which took a long time to put together, finished up with a global number of about 180 000 to 200 000 tonnes of allowable harvest and had it been spread over a slightly bigger area, we could have made it work a lot better but commitments had been given which prevented that. Much of what we did was actually out of our control because we said, “No, the Conservation Commission is going to be the arbiter on this.” Well, when you allow somebody else to be the arbiter and you’re trying to implement your policy, it just doesn’t make sense. You have to determine what the parameters are and then say to the Conservation Commission, “Now, you make this work”, not the other way around.

JF Work within the parameters.

CHANCE Yes, and that was a mistake that I will never make again. [laughs]

JF Fine. We can leave forestry now probably and leave the separate ministries now, unless there was anything else you wanted to bring forward that I didn’t talk about last time.

CHANCE I don’t think we spent a lot of time on fisheries.

JF No, we didn’t actually. Are there some specific issues that you’d like to bring forward?

CHANCE I really enjoyed fisheries. We made the point in our earlier interviews that it is a highly regulated, indeed, probably over-regulated, industry, but managing the private use of a public resource is always interesting. What I really enjoyed was actually establishing new fisheries where we could see that there was an exploitable resource and working through with the industry and with the scientists to try to determine a way that we could make maximum economic use of the resource while at the same time maintaining the ecological viability of the biomass. That was fascinating. There’s some wonderful science going on there.

JF Whereabouts were these particular ones you’re thinking of?

CHANCE One that I was heavily involved with was the Kimberley trap fishery. It's the wet-fish operation that runs north of the Pilbara trawl fishery. I suppose you could say it starts somewhere along Eighty Mile Beach and extends to the very northern extremity of the state and out all the way past that area called the deep slope, which runs into the trench eventually. That's only in lines on the map. Essentially, it was centred around the Lacepede Islands. It was a red emperor job-fish fishery. I was fascinated by the potential of that fishery. I still think it's got far more potential than is currently exploited. Trap fishing, if it's done correctly, is a very gentle way of fishing. The Pilbara fishery is a trawl fishery and because it's trawl, it's commonwealth administered. I think it is vastly over-exploiting that resource there. It's mostly a snapper fishery.

JF Trawl takes everything in its path, doesn't it?

CHANCE It takes the lot, yes, and it takes the lot regardless of size, whereas you can have some control over size in a trap fishery. It's a much gentler way of fishing. It doesn't do any bottom damage and can be quite easily regulated, but the best thing about the trap fishery is that it takes all varieties, whereas with the trawl fishery, you can target varieties. If you can target varieties, you are changing the basic ecology of the ocean because you are favouring one species over another. With a trap fishery, you take what you get and you get that mix of fish. You can control size because you have outlets to let the smaller fish get away and people then are faced with the job of, "Well, how do we sell those lower value species", but they've got them, they have to take them.

JF Were the markets for that mainly local?

CHANCE Yes. We're not big exporters in the fisheries business. The only really big export industry, setting aside the tuna industry, which is really based in South Australia, not here, is the rock lobster and the prawn fisheries. Generally speaking, our finfish fisheries are very high-value fisheries. We are actually net importers of finfish because all of the low-value type fish are basically imported. But when you eat snapper and dhufish and red emperor and, if you're lucky, coral cod and bluebone groper, you know you're getting local fish and it will be West Australian, not just Australian. But they're rather too expensive to have a place in the overseas market.

JF Yes, they're a bit expensive here for a lot of pockets too.

CHANCE Indeed they are.

JF I think we might move on then now to another aspect altogether. You worked under four different Presidents of the upper house in the course of your time there: Griffiths, Cash, Cowdell and, I think, Nick Griffiths.

CHANCE Yes.

JF I wondered if you would spend a few minutes talking about the role of the President and perhaps highlighting the strengths or weaknesses of those fellows whom you worked with.

CHANCE I could write a book about those four. [laughs]

JF Let's make it something about five minutes, 10 minutes.

CHANCE Starting with President Griffiths . . .

[track 54][file **KC-12AU11T54**]

. . . I mean, he was the first President and I learnt an enormous amount from him. He was very highly regarded. He'd been the President for many, many years, and will go down in history as one of our great presiding officers. [He was] very competent, very fair, because he was the President that handled that very very tough debate on industrial relations and I never ever felt, even though he was a staunch member of the Liberal Party, as though he played anything but a straight bat with us on that matter. He clearly didn't like what we were doing, but one of his favourite sayings was, "Members may not like what the honourable member is saying but they do have to listen to him [laughter]". And he lived by the same creed. He was an excellent President.

George Cash was very different. George is a businessman and George is a negotiator, and he's a very good negotiator. And the deals that you did with George were deals that you could rely on. And I always felt that while President Griffiths was what you saw in the Chair and he made his decisions in the Parliament for everyone to see, George preferred to sit down and talk to you about what it was you were

trying to achieve and how you might do that, and what it was that the government was trying to achieve and how they might achieve their ends. And, as a result, I think he ran a slightly smoother Parliament because he was a negotiator. That was simply George's style, but also absolutely fair. Indeed, I sometimes thought he rather favoured the opposition over the government [laughter]; and a delight to work with and he was, in his later role as Chairman of Committees, he was always good to work with. You could trust what he said and a deal was a deal with George; he would always stick by it.

John Cowdell, again, brought a very different style. He was a hybrid of Griffiths and Cash, to some extent, closer to Griffiths probably than Cash; not inclined to do deals behind the chair. He could be very short with you if he lost his patience. And even though he was one of ours, I sometimes thought that the Liberals got a better deal out of Cowdell than we did. But he insisted on very, very high standards, so to that extent he was closer to Griffiths than Cash, who preferred to let the game roll on. He wasn't an umpire that blew the whistle a lot.

And then Nick Griffiths. Nick and our group had developed a few tensions over a number of unrelated issues. He was a very capable President and I think some of his decisions were interesting and some of those decisions I actually appealed against, unsuccessfully; particularly in terms of the issues I had with Nick were around the clear wording which exists around our standing orders and the way in which he interpreted those, which sometimes seemed to me contrary to the black-letter law of the standing orders. When I challenged him on these matters, he would refer to precedent, and that's entirely proper because the custom and practice of the house is as important as the black-letter law. But I don't think the two should be in conflict; I think one should be a finessing of the other but not a turning over. So, Nick and I had a few issues about that. He was a competent Presiding Officer, but in my view not one of the great Presiding Officers.

JF Thank you for that. I think the book will be very interesting when it comes out [laughter]. Turning attention then away from Presidents, you worked with two particular Premiers that I'd like you to speak about. Firstly, Geoff Gallop, to whom you attributed the statement, "He was a beacon for WA", in your valedictory address. So, I'd like you to talk about Geoff and to elucidate your comment on him in the address and talk about how it was working with him.

CHANCE Geoff was really interesting to work with. He was clearly a very intelligent guy. He was much, much greener than I would normally appreciate, because I come from the brown side of Labor politics. As a result of that, we had a few tensions, particularly over things like marine parks and the protecting old-growth-forest policy where I had a job to do, and he always recognised that; I mean there was nothing personal in it. He said, "Well, you know, that's the side of the government that you represent. I don't belong to that, I'm sorry." [laughs] But he was always a bloke that I could sit down and chat with about things that were bothering me or where I thought we could be doing things better. He was always very open to that. Capturing his attention was sometimes challenging, and I actually wonder if that wasn't part of his later illness; whether his attention span was shorter than one would expect from somebody of his undoubted ability. But that aside, I found him a relaxing person to deal with. I always felt at ease with him and always felt as though I was getting at least as good a run as anybody else was. We had differences, and that's inevitable between a minister and a Premier, particularly over those things that I mentioned but also over the dairy deregulation issue where I thought he took a position that actually favoured Steve Bracks' point of view rather than mine, and I wondered why I couldn't have had a say in that and why I couldn't have spoken to Bracks. But that aside, Geoff and I remain good friends. We always were. Geoff made the comment after he left the role of Premier that he sat through ... what was he Premier for, seven years? At least six anyway. Six to six and a half years. He said he sat there in cabinet with the economic dry, anti-regulation Treasurer Eric Ripper on his right hand and the agro-socialist Minister for Agriculture on his left hand, and somehow he had to steer a course through the middle [laughter]. And that was pretty much the case. Yes, although, strangely, Eric and I never had any serious differences. We got on very well. So, yes, he was a beacon in that I thought Geoff offered something to WA that WA people were looking for, and it was an open, approachable style; a style which actually looked at what people felt was important to them. And how he interpreted that and how the rest of the party interpreted that and how I interpreted that is not important in the end. What's important is I think Geoff offered Western Australian people a 'light on the hill', if that's not being too presumptuous.

JF Some people have suggested that he was a bit (controlled is too strong a word) but perhaps under the influence very much of one or two strong people in the background, and I think the name "McGinty" has been mentioned in this

context. To what extent was Geoff his own man and able to maintain that within the job of Premier?

CHANCE Well, firstly, any cabinet that has Jim McGinty in it is going to be very heavily influenced by Jim McGinty, regardless of who the Premier is. I mean, there are only two ways to deal with Jim: you either lock him out or you let him play his game. And that's what Geoff was doing, and it would have been pointless to lock out such a tremendous contributor as McGinty. But if you let McGinty in, McGinty will try to run the show, but that's just his way of doing things. [laughter] Both Geoff and Alan Carpenter shared an unusual issue, which leaves both of them open to that comment. Neither of them came from or was directly supported by one of the key factions. I mean, Geoff's history was in the right, but the right had morphed and changed and split and rebuilt to the extent that it was basically unrecognisable as the right that he and, say, Kim Beazley had come from. And Geoff and Kim in many ways [are] very similar politically, although Kim had a few areas in foreign affairs and defence that were a bit different from Geoff.

JF Are you talking about Kim the elder or Kim the younger?

CHANCE Kim the younger, yes, but probably you could include Kim the elder in that too, although that was more ... yes, but certainly Kim the younger. Because they didn't have a factional base of any scale, they had to be more inclusive in the way they took their advice. Both of those Premiers, and Carpenter in particular, but it applied to Geoff ... I mean, Geoff was never seriously challenged by anyone, so the issue of factional support didn't arise much. But the left were then the dominant faction and the left strongly supported them. Now, this is where McGinty comes in as a major left player. People have made the assumption, and I think the incorrect assumption, that because both of those Premiers relied so heavily on the left, even though neither was from the left, that the left in general, and McGinty in particular, had an unbalanced influence. It's actually not correct. Had McGinty not been a member of the left, he still would have had the same influence simply because that's who he is. To the extent that the balance of the left influenced the Premiers, that was support, yes, but it was support that didn't come with a price tag. It was support that was given because we thought they were the best available and we never, as far as I'm aware, put it to Geoff that he had to see things our way otherwise our support would be removed. So, no, I think the assumption that people arrived at is a logical assumption, but I don't think it's correct.

JF Right. You were thrown into some degree of confusion, of course, by Geoff's fairly sudden announcement of illness and Alan was asked to take over. Would you like to just sketch the scene when that happened?

CHANCE I was away out of Australia at the time. I was actually in Bangladesh when the announcement came through and on my way to Qatar. Clearly, it was a fairly tumultuous time, and I can only report what I understood to be the case, but there seemed to be three players in the mix: Michelle Roberts, Jim McGinty and Alan Carpenter. Firstly, we were stunned by Geoff's revelations. We really (not even those of us that were closest to Geoff like Eric Ripper, who worked with him on a daily basis) had no inkling that he was as sick as he was because he hadn't declined quickly. I mean, what had happened was that he'd gone to visit his mate Tony Blair in England, he had a nice holiday and he realised at some stage during that event, or perhaps even as late as on the way back, that he couldn't go back to the job he was doing. So, it was the break that actually did it. He saw things more clearly. He realised that he was ill and he made the snap decision. As I said, it stunned all of us because we just didn't know. But, anyway, then there was the turmoil about the leadership. That turmoil resolved itself pretty quickly. People made it quite clear that Michelle Roberts was not their choice, and that Jim had been leader and that he was a very hard leader to sell, and Jim understood that. That left Carpenter as the only one standing unless anybody else put their heads up, and a lot of support then came in behind Carpenter because we saw him as perhaps a longish shot but a real opportunity to be a great Premier.

[track 55][file **KC-12AU11T55**]

JF Would you like to spend a few minutes, then, talking about Alan's style and success, or otherwise, and so on?

CHANCE I was one of Alan's closest supporters. I just loved working with him; he was a delight to work with. Sometimes he seemed a little uncertain of himself, which I suppose is expected when you get catapulted from being an ABC journalist to the Premier of the state in a very short period of time. His great weakness was that he just didn't understand the Labor Party. He understood in very broad terms what a social democratic party was about, and he had his own views about that and they were very strong views that he articulated very clearly, and they were views that I

strongly supported. It went back to his own youth and how he had come from a working-class family which could not have afforded the education that ultimately gave him his opportunity. It was Whitlam government education initiatives which allowed him to gain that education as a working-class boy. But the Labor Party is a complicated machine. It has a lot of different players in it, some of whom (people are people and they're complicated animals) can be difficult to deal with. I was really proud, and indeed in my later discussions with Alan I was really pleased that he always felt that the left, and Jock Ferguson in particular, were just there all the time, always supportive. That's what I thought we were doing, and that's why I said what I said earlier. We never asked for anything. We gave our support because he was the one that we thought was best equipped to do the job.

Alan for some reason was torn apart by the press. I couldn't understand why they did that to one of their own. I could never understand it; just appalling stuff. I saw interviews (standing alongside Alan doing interviews) when these 17 and 18-year-old kids were basically calling the Premier a liar, with no evidence of that. I just thought that was terrible. That was one of the reasons why I decided this was no longer for me.

JF You referred to him in your valedictory speech and said he wanted to return to the people what they had given to him. Did he say such things as that from time to time?

CHANCE Yes. When he defined his aims and ambitions as Premier, he would go back to that fact that as a working-class boy from a working-class suburb in Albany, Australian society had given him the chance for an education, a chance for a better future. That's what he wanted for everyone. He didn't just mean working-class families (he meant them, of course) but Aboriginals, the disadvantaged, the homeless, to give them an opportunity. Not a handout, but a hand up, if you like. That's how he defined his role. That's the classical role for a social democratic party, and that's what he wanted to deliver.

[track 56]

JF Now, you mentioned a few moments ago that you were overseas when the change of Premiers took place. I thought we'd spend a few minutes talking

about what travel you undertook as a politician. Perhaps you'd like to just tell the story simply.

CHANCE It was almost entirely within the Islamic world, the Middle East, Turkey and Bangladesh. I made a conscious decision to do that, even though most of our trade is with North Asia and China in particular. I didn't think I could make any difference at all in North Asia. The market is simply too big, and one little provincial minister isn't going to have any impact, whereas I felt we *could* have an impact in the Middle East. I enjoyed working there. I like the people, and I remain very close to Arabs and to the Islamic world. Although I'm not a Muslim, I can see their point sometimes [laughter]. Some of the most spiritual places I've ever been to are Islamic rather than Christian. I actually think Christianity has lost a lot in the translation, and there's been many, many translations. When I visited the Grand Mosque in Muscat, Oman, it's actually the most spiritual experience I've ever had. It remains with me as if it happened yesterday. [I was] not so impressed by the Sheikh Zayed mosque in Abu Dhabi, which is bigger, but I just find it distracting. I think a place of worship needs to be modest and it needs to be quiet. No matter how grand it is, it can still be modest. I think the Grand Mosque in Muscat is that.

We have actually covered some of this in an earlier interview, but I really enjoyed the Middle East. I've visited now every country in the Middle East except Iraq, I think ... Tunisia I've not been to, Morocco I've not been to; I'm going there later this month, but every other, and a few around it, as I said, including countries like Turkey, which, technically, I suppose, is West Asia, not the Arab world. A beautiful place; I've been back there as a tourist as well.

JF Tell me, where did the initiative or the impulse come from or the interest in that part of the world? You've mentioned your father was negotiating in the Middle East. Does it go back to that?

CHANCE In part, but no; primarily, the decision that we made (that is, the department and myself, together) to concentrate on the Middle East was based on the fact that we already had a significant trade volume in that area in agricultural commodities and the belief, which turned out to be correct, that there was significant potential to increase that. We did. In that seven-year period, we increased our trade in agricultural goods from half a billion dollars a year to \$1.5 billion a year, so it was a very significant difference that we made. I wanted to be able to see and measure

what we were doing. It's a major live animal export destination for us. It's a major grain export destination. We aimed to make the agricultural export side into the Middle East a much more mature trade, that it was not simply a live sheep and wheat market. That is where I think we were successful. We've got a lot now of horticultural produce into the Middle East.

JF Yes, you mentioned carrots last time.

CHANCE Yes. Certainly it's a startling example, but that was just one example of what we were able to do. We also looked at expanding our trade in areas other than simply commodity trade. In that, we had hoped to work (and we did ultimately do so) with other Australian and Western Australian service exports, particularly health and education. I think there's still a lot of room for growth in those two areas. Currently, the Victorians are beating us hands down in the education side of it, but they have a very mature export education industry. Indeed, I accompanied the Victorian Minister for Education in Abu Dhabi. She was due to be in Kuwait, but it was at the time that Sheikh Jaber died (the ruler). She had to cancel her whole itinerary, so we coupled up our itinerary with hers, and we had a wonderful time [chuckles].

JF Talking in general terms about travel by politicians, it's sometimes a controversial area. How do you ensure that the taxpayer gets the best value out of such things?

CHANCE Measure your performance. You could even go so far as to writing key performance indicators. In fact, that's probably a good idea, because then you've got standards to measure your performance against.

JF Did you do that?

CHANCE No, but I could do it in hindsight [laughter]. But we had in mind ... again, I say "we", because very much the department was a part of this ... the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food has an international development division which funds itself and actually returns money back to the department. We thought through each step of what we were doing very carefully, so we actually could've written KPIs, and we also monitored everything that came out of that. Some of what we did resulted in direct contracting between ourselves for our

services in things like soil science and rangeland management, particularly in Abu Dhabi and Libya we did a lot of work.

The department has been providing direct services to Libya since the early 1970s; it goes back a long, long way. Obviously we know the country very well, and we were deeply distressed with what happened there. I don't think the Libyans are going to see any benefit. I wasn't an enemy of the Gaddafi regime. He may have been crazy, but I think people in Libya were as free and as happy as any in the Arab world, but I formed that view in western Libya. I have to say that when I did visit eastern Libya not long before the Arab Spring, it was clear that there were some unhappy people out there. I think east Libyans are a bit like Western Australians; they feel remote from the centre of power.

JF Yes.

[track 57][file **KC-12AU11T57**]

Taking a totally different line for a moment, minor parties became pretty significant in the running of the Legislative Council. I just wondered if you might assess the influence that they had, in your experience. The Nationals were always a small group, but often allied to the bigger one. The Greens, of course, became very important at various stages, and even One Nation, I suppose, had one little burst of influence. I wonder if you could talk for a few minutes about what you've seen minor parties able to do, or how they worked in the upper house.

CHANCE The existence of minor parties in Parliament is the public's will, and that is the nature of democracy. Do they ever deliver what the public hopes they will deliver? Very rarely, in my view; and you've got to deal with them one by one. Start with One Nation, which was the flash in the pan. One Nation was a populist party. I was going to use the term "racist" because they did have racist elements, but it was a party based on populism. I actually learnt a lot from the phenomena of One Nation; its growth and then its spectacular burnout and its complete failure to deliver anything of any value. It was a complete waste of time. But, as an academic exercise, I found it instructive, and I think all of us that had the experience with One Nation are now looking with some cynicism at the formation of the Tea Party and its influence in the United States, and on the Republicans in particular. And I am just fascinated to see Sarah Palin driving around in a bus with "one nation" written on it. It actually seems to

be the same print style. As an exercise I accessed a couple of Neo-Fascist websites out of the United States, and I was fascinated that they had a special section dealing with One Nation in Australia. I don't know whether One Nation saw themselves as Neo-Fascists, but certainly the Neo-Fascists saw them as Neo-Fascist. Whether that was simply their racial thing, I don't know, but it was quite sickening to read it. One website in particular, "Stormfront", which is a big Neo-Fascist–Neo-Nazi website coming out of the southern states of the US spoke of the formation of One Nation in Australia in glowing terms; it was sickening. I can't see that the Tea Party in the US is going to do anything of any value; and, indeed, it is probably going to destroy the Republicans because it has forced the Republicans into a position that they are either going to support this ultraconservative right, or hold to their own values, which are going to make them look like Democrats. Because, historically, there's not a huge difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. While, if I was an American, I would undoubtedly be a registered Democrat, the Democrats have got a lot to be ashamed of as well, particularly in the southern states, where they are even worse than the Republicans. It's not simple politics, the US. So that's my view on One Nation in Australia. I learnt a lot. I think other Australians also learnt a lot from the experience. It was a painful experience. I think it was an expensive experience in terms of our credibility in our region, in particular; and in particular, in Malaysia. But any other value than the education side? None.

The Greens: I am in two minds about the Greens. The Greens, basically, picked up segments of Labor's left wing (basically the socialist left) and segments of Labor's environmental component, although they didn't take it all; that's still there. There's still a very strong environmental ethos in the Labor left, in particular. Have they made a contribution? Yes, I think so, because they so often hold the balance of power that they are able to shift decisions with leverage that you would not normally have in a big party. So, to that extent, yes, they make a difference and they can focus public attention more on issues. Do they make a contribution to the ALP? Undoubtedly, yes, because while they have taken some of our voters, they've also bought in, particularly in the western suburbs, some voters that would not normally vote Labor. So we have doctors' wives, for example, the classic Green, effectively delivering a vote for Labor in Dalkeith. To that extent, I'm appreciative, and that's of course why the Liberals hate them so much [laughter]. In the long run, do they make a difference? Yes, I think you've got to say now that the Greens do make a difference; they do have leverage. The Democrats are long gone and don't require any further comment. I'm not too sure what they were about. I think it was a personality cult

around Don Chipp. Don was a great guy. I had huge respect for him and what he was trying to do. I just don't think he was followed by people who even understood what he was trying to do. But Don was the Liberal's left, and he was trying to promote a more human conservative political structure. If the Libs learnt anything from that, they disproved that by electing Abbott, instead of, say, Joe Hockey or Malcolm Turnbull who are in that sort of mould. I think they are people who could take the Liberal Party somewhere.

So the minors, certainly from a house manager's point of view, are a pain in the backside, but that's their job, to be a pain [chuckles]. I think they rarely deliver what their voters think they can, and this applies even more so to the Independents, who have no hope at all. I'm a major party person. I like the idea of major parties. I think what's not understood by voters generally is that major parties have within them all of the political points of view which are expressed by the minors, but they're not allowed to come out and give that point of view, unless they can convince the majority that that is their point of view. The minor parties have the advantage, to the extent that they can, but then they don't have the advantage of the major parties' broader policy. I don't think it makes a lot of difference.

JF The Nationals? You haven't picked them up particularly as a minor party.

CHANCE We've been through such a long period in our lifetimes of formal coalition that the idea of a coalition not in coalition is a bit strange. But I don't see that practically it made any difference. They perform in exactly the same way, not in coalition as they do in coalition. Find one serious debate in which the Liberals and the Nationals have voted differently. It's not there. I used to have these discussions ... a number of the Nationals are close friends of mine; Murray Criddle is one of those. Murray was the sole National for a long time in the Legislative Council. I used to have these discussions with Murray, who always has been and remains a very honest, straight-talking guy, and I'd approach Murray about supporting us in a particular vote. And he said, "Mate, you know I can't do that. You know what the rules are. Why are you bothering?" That's just his style. He would always say it like it is; and that pretty much sums it up, it's "Mate, you know I can't do that. I belong to the other side." Having said that, when Alan Carpenter was having those discussions with the Nats about forming a Labor-National coalition, I really believe that the people he was speaking to, Wendy Duncan and Brendon Grylls, honestly believed

that they could deliver a Labor–National coalition. I don't think that they were in any sense being disingenuous. I think people like Terry Redman and Tuck Waldron and others could not have had those talks because they were so committed to the conservative side. But I really think Wendy and Brendon believed in what they were saying. It might have been foolhardy of them, but it wasn't dishonest; and in the end the party just said to them, "No, you can't do that." And I knew all the time that that was going to be the outcome. It was interesting though, talking to Wendy and Brendon about the possibility, and it might change in the future. Who knows? It was a brave thing for them to do. But have they made a difference? Yes, they do. Yes, the Nats make a difference. They're able, particularly now, to force what is basically an urban-based party in the Liberal Party to be far more responsive to what happens in the regions. But whether you regard them as a minor party or not is a moot point.

[track 58][file **KC-12AU11T58**]

JF Kim, what would you like to say about some of the controversial reforms that were attempted during the Gallop period; for example, the abortion debate?

CHANCE The abortion debate, like all of those bioethical issues, is in the Labor Party a free vote, because we have a substantial Catholic influence in the Labor Party and we have a tradition of having a free vote in all of those bioethical issues, so stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia are all free votes. The opposition similarly had determined on a free vote. Free vote debates, especially around controversial issues, are absolutely fascinating. Some people find them really painful; I didn't. I found it a very pure form of politics uncorrupted by party machinery. And it was an excellent debate.

Just for the record, we actually debated Cheryl Davenport's private member's bill twice in the Legislative Council because we debated it and resolved it within 24 hours, I might say, on the first occasion, then the debate went to the Legislative Assembly where it dragged on forever. Now, for some reason (and I don't know, we'd have to check the records on this) the bill came back from the Assembly and we had to debate it all over again. I don't know why, whether we had prorogation or something like that in between, but there was some issue which caused that. Again, we finished that debate in 24 hours. It was a full 24 hours, I grant you, but it was something I was really proud of the Legislative Council in the way they handled that

debate, particularly since we were the house of origin of the bill. As I said, the debate went on for weeks and weeks and weeks and it wasn't a high-quality debate in the Assembly; it was [chuckles] a very poor debate. But I was glad that Cheryl was ultimately successful in getting the abortion debate through, yes. It was very important to her and I think once she'd done that she really felt as though she'd done what she needed to do and she was ready to move on then, yes. It was ...

JF It would've thrown up some interesting alliances and associations which you wouldn't normally have seen.

CHANCE That's very true, yes; [laughter] very true. Well, in this debate, in the stem cell debate and in debates on euthanasia, those alliances fall together very quickly and they are across the chamber, yes.

JF And you said a few moments ago that you're a great believer in the big party system, but at the same time you were admiring this departure from it. [chuckles]

CHANCE Well, "admiring" may or may not be the right word.

JF Well, mine, but I'm sorry. [chuckles]

CHANCE But I enjoyed it; I certainly enjoyed it. Perhaps I enjoyed it just because it was different, but, no, I don't think so. I think it was a pure form of debate. I think it was the way that Parliaments were intended to function, probably, and it's certainly a lot more interesting and engaging than crunching the numbers in a major party-dominated debate. But just because it's more entertaining and enjoyable, doesn't mean it's better. I'm a major party fan because I think you can deal with these issues efficiently and effectively through the major parties, and logically. The problem with minor parties is if they have the capacity with their couple of votes to turn the vote one way or the other, they do deals with one, or perhaps even both, of the major parties to say, "We will vote for this part of the bill provided you put in our words here". Now, the part of the law that they're seeking to add is not developed in the context of the whole bill. It may even destroy the bill (and I've had one occasion when that happened) or it might sit out of context with the rest of the bill or it might simply just be bad law. But because they *can* do it, it's like climbing Mt Everest; they feel as

though they *have* to do it, and they can make an awful mess of a piece of good legislation.

Now, that's never going to happen with the major parties. Yes, they can make bad decisions in forcing compromises. One example of that was the compromise that the Liberal Party forced on the Labor government with the disaggregation of the energy structure in Western Australia when they forced the government to commit to, I think, it was a five-year period of no increases in tariffs. But that problem came back to visit the Liberals because when they got into government they found that because there'd been no increases (in fact, it was a decade) in power tariffs for a decade, they immediately had to lift power prices by 50 per cent over two years. So it came back to haunt them; there is some karma. [laughter]

JF The one vote, one value one is another one that was interesting.

CHANCE Yes, a great debate.

JF What's your take on that?

CHANCE It was a terrific debate; I loved it, absolutely loved it. I mean, just hearing people's justification for one person having four times the voting power of another is fascinating; you know, an otherwise an intelligent person trying to say he believes in democracy but he thinks one person should have four times the voting power of another. I loved it and I love getting engaged in it. They used to put it to me, "You know you're letting your own people down". "No, I'm not; I'm delivering them democracy." [laughs] It was great fun and a big win for McGinty, a big win, yes.

JF Now, the Clerk, Laurie Marquet, was a very significant person and I think with particular reference to the upper house. How do you think he should be remembered?

CHANCE Oh, as a HUGE contributor, as an enormously influential man who influenced and will continue to influence the way this Parliament operates for decades to come. Insightful, brilliant mind, a flawed character as a person, but that detracts in no way from his contribution or his ability. He was an amazing bloke and a very good friend. I really liked Laurie. We used to sit down for hours on end just chatting about obscure elements of law and not just necessarily current law, but

mediaeval law and further back. Yes, it was fascinating. I learnt so much from Laurie and I still miss him today, yes.

JF Was there any obvious ... was anything of his flawed character obvious to you as you negotiated with him in a private way, you know?

CHANCE Not the deepest flaws, no, but he was an unconventional guy. In terms of contact with drugs, he actually seemed to be violently opposed to particularly some forms of drugs. I can remember what he told me about the amphetamines group and how difficult they were to treat. He was involved in drug treatment; he was a contributor to Holyoake. Probably because of that as much as anything else, I thought he probably had some experience with drugs but that he was largely reformed, although he still used to smoke marijuana almost everywhere but that didn't bother anyone. But we had no clue that he was engaged in the kind of hard drugs that he was.

JF And what about the embezzlement aspect of what happened?

CHANCE Well, that's a consequence of the drugs. Yes, it was all just sad in summary in the end. But I hope he was able to sense at the end that he still had friends; that the circumstances might've been horrible, but we still thought highly of him. I hope he sensed that; I don't know if he did or not.

JF We're coming towards the end of things and I wondered if you could talk for a few minutes about the costs to you and perhaps to your family of having been in Parliament.

CHANCE Well, I don't think you can look at costs without rewards, and when you line the two up in a cashbook, there were no costs.

JF Lots of politicians cite things like, you know, they even have Parliament to thank for marital breakdowns and so on, but ...

CHANCE No, no, no, they have themselves to thank for marital breakdowns and they've found a hook to hang their grievance on because anybody who works long hours may place personal relationships at risk. I worked long hours before I came here, so that wasn't an issue for me. I mean, yes, of course there are costs but there

are huge rewards. I mean, this is an enormous privilege to be able to serve in the Parliament. I really never had much sympathy for people who said how much less money they were making in Parliament than they were beforehand or how much harder they were working or how difficult it all was, because my view was nobody forced you here, you weren't conscripted, you actually put your hand up to do this. If this is not what you want to do, go away, because there are a lot of people out there who would give their left arm to be here. I used to think about that every day; every day before the Parliament started, every day we returned to Parliament, which was never my favourite day, I have to say, it reminded me of coming back to school and it wasn't all good [laughter], but I used to remind myself every day of how privileged I was and how fortunate I was to be here. So the costs don't matter as long as they're less than the rewards and when they're less [more?] than the rewards, go away and do something else; which is what I did.

JF Yes, so talking about the decision to retire, what led you to think that it was time?

CHANCE The biggest single issue is probably what I have already said when I was talking about the way the press dealt with Alan Carpenter. I just watched that with my mouth open and [pause] I realised in that instant, in that one interview (I could actually take you to the spot where it happened) I realised I didn't want to do this anymore and I didn't want to work with people like that anymore and I didn't want to be nice to people like that anymore because they didn't deserve it. And then I thought, "There's a lot of good people out there who want to do this job that I'm doing, if I'm feeling bad about it, go away", so I took my own advice. It took two years [laughter] but I had made my decision then.

JF And talking about life after Parliament, what does it hold for you?

CHANCE Well (people have told me this and I didn't believe them) but people have told me that a little while after you retire, you wonder how you ever found time to go to work and it's pretty much where I am now. I work on two advisory committees for the Australian government: the Australian Landcare Council, which I chair; and I have just recently joined the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, Senator Conroy's committee. They take a bit of time. I did establish my own business and that was a trading and consulting business in the

Middle East, which I haven't done much with in the last 12 months, mostly because of the strength of the dollar.

JF Just excuse me, the collar is touching the microphone.

CHANCE I am the executive director of Habitat for Humanity, which is a housing solutions non-government organisation here in Western Australia. And that doesn't leave me much time to spend in my shed, which was the only reason I moved from Guildford to Millendon so that I could have a shed to play with my toys in. [laughter] So, yes, I mean, that's the one disappointment I've got. There's only 24 hours in a day and there's still only seven days in a week.

JF Yes, your toys of course being your motorcars?

CHANCE Yes, motorcars.

JF So are you going to win any more Targa events or that sort of thing?

CHANCE Well, we didn't race in 2010 because our driver's health wasn't good. Hopefully, he is going to be fit again for next year, but he'd just had a major joint operation and he was a little bit immobile. So, yes, we're building a new engine in America now (Holman Moody are building it in America now) and it sounds like a very exciting engine, and the work that we've done on the car to complement the new engine is all coming along nicely. So we'll be well and truly ready, because we've had two years to get ready this time; normally it's a bit of a rush. But, yes, I intend to keep racing as long as we can. I mean, I'm 65, the driver's 63, we're pretty much "Team Geriatric" now.

JF Right, well, look, I'm aware that there were a whole lot of things you said you might've wanted to talk about in the course of interviews, but the time is well and truly past. So I think at this stage I should draw it to a conclusion, but only to say thank you very much for your cooperation and I've enjoyed immensely speaking with you, so thanks.

CHANCE And thank you for your patience with me when I was, through that long period of time, unavailable, but it has been an enjoyable experience, thank you.

JF Good; thanks very much, Kim.

END OF INTERVIEW TEN