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Full transcript of an interview with

JOAN BREWER

on 15 June, 19 June, & 6 July 2001

By Karen George

Recording available on CD

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This is an interview with Joan Brewer being recorded by Karen George for the State Library of South Australia’s Honoured Women’s Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 15th June 2001 at Dulwich in South Australia.

First of all I’d like to thank you very much for agreeing to be involved in the project and being interviewed today.

Thank you for asking me: I’m very flattered.

Okay. Well, can we start, perhaps, with your full name, including what your maiden name was?

Yes. I am Joan – and formerly Holland – Brewer, and I have no second Christian name.

What’s your date of birth, Joan?

29th of July 1923.

And whereabouts were you born?

I was actually born in what we now call Wakefield Hospital, but in those days it was Sister Rowe’s Private Hospital, apparently, and I was interested to read the history of the hospital when I was in there to visit my husband a few years back.

Is this the one on Wakefield Street?

Yes, yes. It was apparently a smaller one further down the street in an old house, and it’s gone through several lives before it became Wakefield Street Hospital.

Can you tell me, perhaps, a little bit about your parents, their names and a bit of background about them?

Yes. My father, Terence Holland, was born in the Klemzig area, where the parents had a small market garden, and his uncle had a wholesale market – fruit and vegetable market – business in the East End, in the days when that was where everybody went to sell their goods. He was born in 1897. He went to the First
World War when he was nineteen, I think, and didn’t come back till quite late in the year 1919, and then he built a house in Stepney-St Peters area, and met my mother. And my mother was born on a farm at Horndale near Jamestown, in 1894. She was three years older, although for many years she never admitted it, (laughs) and my grandfather retired to St Peters in nineteen hundred and one when Mum was seven. And they met, you know, locally, at local church things, and married. And my father was a carpenter-builder until the Depression, when everything crashed, and then he switched and worked in insurance companies and eventually became a superintendent of an area, I think. Well – yes, superintendent. Until the Second World War, when he went back in the Army again.

What was your mother’s name?

My mother’s name was Martha – always called ‘Mattie’ – Kelly, and she was a twin. She had a twin sister, Anne – Mattie and Nan, they were called – and they were the youngest of the children of my grandparents. And it was the twin daughters and the daughter above them that had the children [as well as the eldest son, in a family of eight], so I think my grandfather Kelly was seventy-three when I was born, but I’m in the middle of the grandchildren, so – but he was very active; it never occurred to me how old he was.

Was there any background at all of teaching or librarianship in your extended family?

Yes. Not in my father’s. My father came from a family that – well, market gardening, and Dad was a carpenter-builder, and nobody had gone on to tertiary education. I don’t think Dad had any secondary education, or the absolute minimum. But my mother’s family, yes. My mother’s brothers went to university – one was a lawyer, one was a dentist – and her eldest sister was a teacher, and her first cousins, a couple stayed on the farms up north but one was a doctor, one was a surveyor and – oh, in a number of – – –. And education was highly-valued. So I suppose the expectations of what I might do would have been quite different if my father hadn’t married my mother. I mean, he was terribly proud and very pleased that I did this, but it wasn’t a pattern in his immediate family, but it certainly was in my mother’s, though – a bit over the top, sometimes, about education.

In what ways?
Well, they were always keeping check – even on remote cousins – on who’d passed what and what they were doing. There were a lot of teachers in my Mum’s cousins’ extended families, and a lot of – among my own first cousins I was the only teacher, but there were several nurses. Of the fourteen of my grandfather’s grandchildren there were six boys and eight girls: five of the boys and two of the girls are graduates, and one, two, three of the other girls are nurses and a couple of others, one was in a bank, kindergarten assistant, you know, that sort of thing. I can remember being taken to The University of Adelaide, to graduation ceremonies, when I was quite a small child to see my cousins get their law degrees. I think in the immediate family we had this model of these older cousins – Mum’s [lawyer] brother’s [two] sons – who did brilliantly at the university, and then Mum’s sister above her, her oldest son, did Law and did very well. So I suppose there was a pattern there.

I think you mentioned when I first met you that you lived a time with your grandfather –

Yes.

– and that there was an influence there.

I think that was very significant, because when I was five I was – before I started school – my birthday’s in July and I didn’t go to school till I was six – and early that year my grandmother died and my mother had only two children – I have only one brother who’s two years younger, who’s now retired but was a dentist in Port Lincoln. Well, Mum and Dad let their house when my grandmother died and moved up to my grandparents’ house, which was in Fifth Avenue, St Peters. And we lived there until the year my grandfather died, the year I did Leaving Honours, the year I left school, right in December. And for many years Mum’s eldest sister, the teacher¹, was in that house, so that I’m sure it had a very important influence. I mean, I only spent one term in Grade One, that last term of 1929, and that wasn’t because I was brilliant. They must have taught me to read. And I suppose I had the pattern of Auntie May going to school, and she used to take me sometimes when I

¹ May C. Kelly.
was a little girl up to Norwood Primary School, where she taught Grade Seven, which was the top of the primary school.

**So you’d sit in on the classes?**

And she’d let me come up when they had parties and so on, and all these big girls – I was quite little then – would make a fuss of me. So she was – even though I didn’t realise it – was probably a very strong influence. And I turned out to be her favourite niece. When she died she left me some money, I bought my first car. Maybe that was because I followed in her footsteps. But I think it’s primarily because she lived with me for about – or I lived with her – for about ten or eleven years. So that was important.

**So most of your growing up was in the St Peters area, then?**

Yes, all of it. I didn’t leave St Peters except when I taught in the country or went to England. Yes. And my mother went – we went back to my father’s home during the War, and my mother lived there till she died in ’76, and we sold the house the next year, I think. So my mother had gone to St Peters\(^2\) when she was seven, and died when she was eighty-two. When she walked around the streets, she was always meeting people she knew.

**So whereabouts did you go to school?**

I went to school in St Peters, at the Catholic Parish School, which was in the – always called Ellangowan School with St Joseph’s School …., because that was the name of the old house, the original homestead. I don’t know whether you know St Peters at all, but the old homestead was in those grounds exactly opposite the St Peters Town Hall, and there used to be tennis courts near Payneham Road. Well, now the church has built there and, you know, it’s all changed. And the old house was knocked down in – oh, since I was married. I think it might have been in the early ’80s or late ’70s. But it was a house that was then left to the church and it became a church centre and a school. And I went there from the last term of 1929, just after my sixth birthday, until Grade Seven at the end of ’35. So six years and a term. And then I went to – by two trams, around, into town and out – to Loreto,

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\(^2\) 52 (now 54) Fifth Avenue, St Peters.
where all my girl cousins were at school, and I did all my secondary – you know, Intermediate, Leaving, Leaving Honours – and I left school the year the War started, 1939.

**What were your interests as a girl? Did you have – – –?**

Played a lot of sport, and did probably until I was about fifty, I played tennis. But I had a bit of back trouble so I stopped. But yes, so all through primary school. I can remember learning to play tennis quite young, and netball – what we used to call ‘basketball’ – and I used to go to the beach with my cousins. Mum’s twin sister used to take her girls to Glenelg and Christies Beach and places for several weeks at Christmas time and she would take me too. She had three daughters, so she’d take the four of us. So I suppose I had a very busy, active, life, and very close to my cousins, to my mother’s family. My father was – well, they were both the youngest of big families – but Dad had four brothers and sisters who were at the top of the family, and I think then there was about a seven or eight year gap to Dad and two sisters whom we saw, but one of those had one child and the other didn’t have any children. So I did see a lot of my cousins. I still do. Some of them are dead, but most of us are still alive.

**I mean, the obvious question, I guess, is where books and reading – were they part of your growing up?**

Oh yes, certainly. I can always remember being given books. This aunt and my mother, you know, I’d get books for birthday and Christmas. I can remember my first collection of books. There was an old chest of drawers in my bedroom at Fifth Avenue, as we refer to Papa’s house, and there was a big chest of drawers, and I had – any books I got were stacked across. And if I had a birthday, various people would give me – in those days: I think they would have gone out of fashion by the time you came – but my cousins and myself, we all read all the Billabong books and all the Anne books and all the Katy books, and all the things that were – and fairy tales. I can still remember one particular fairy tale book that I was given when I was

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3 Bruce, Mary Grant, *A little bush maid, et seq.*


about ten and – it’s funny how some things stick in your mind – it had a wonderful illustration of Rumpelstiltskin, I remember, and when they took a photo of me with my brother I insisted on holding the book. So yes, books were – – –.

And my grandfather used to quote poetry at us, reams of it, specially Pope, who actually is a bit soulless. However. He had some education at the Jesuit school at Sevenhill, because he started off at Mintaro and then bought land up at Jamestown, and he remembered a lot of it. He remembered a lot of his maths, too, Euclid and so on, because I remember one of my – she would be a second cousin, when she was doing her degree – a lot of them, when they came to town, would come and visit my grandfather because he was sort of the patriarch of his much older brother’s family, and he could talk to them about what they were studying, and so on. I don’t think he was there – perhaps only about a year or so, but he kept on educating himself, and I guess that’s where the emphasis on the importance of education – – – But a lot of Irish families were like that. They must have had a modicum of education before they came – because a lot of people who came were illiterate through no fault of their own – because Papa’s cousin became a teacher. Now, I think you could become a teacher if you could (laughs) – if you passed primary school, in those days. But there was this great interest. And I visited my grandfather’s family in Ireland last year again, and talking to them you can see that enthusiasm. I mean, the cousin who took me round is a science teacher in a local town, so I thought that was funny. (laughs)

So you owned books. Did you also borrow books from the library, did you visit libraries, when you were a girl?

Yes. The libraries that were around at St Peters – I think I might have gone to the St Peters Institute Library once or twice, not significantly – but there were books, libraries, where you could go and pay threepence a book that were in shops. I remember there was one near the Maid and Magpie, and there was one down the avenues somewhere. And then we used to swap books at school, and I’d borrow books. My cousin had more of the Billabong books than I did, there was a lot of books. And then when I went to school at Loreto, there was – well, we called it a library, but it was quite a good collection of all sorts of things that were in huge glass bookcases at the end of the big – well, I suppose you’d call it a hall. And there was
one nun in charge and you always had to go to her if you wanted to borrow a book. And (laughs) she was actually a very educated woman and a very – very far-sighted, but she would check to see that the book was suited to you. I mean, I suppose she picked who could read things. So I suppose you’d call it a mild form of censorship. But yes, there were books around.

So your first primary school, was that girls and boys?

Yes. But the boys left at the end of Grade Four, and went off to the boys’ schools. My brother, for example, used to then walk right through Stephen Terrace and up Nelson Street to Magill Road to get the tram up to Rostrevor, so he went to Rostrevor when he was in Grade Five, and was there till he completed Leaving and went to work in a bank for a year and then off in the Air Force. And when he came back to the bank, after a year he decided he didn’t like it and he did dentistry.

What's his name?

Oh, Bill.

Perhaps we’ll mention your cousins [brother].

James William Holland⁶. He’s got two names; I only got one. And he is married to a girl called Maureen, Maureen Gallagher, and they have – he’s a dentist in Port Lincoln, now well and truly retired, and he has eleven children and lots of grandchildren, which makes up for me because I have none. So the ones – because he’s stayed in Lincoln, his children who live in Adelaide I see a lot of.

What about your other – you have other siblings.

No, just the two of us.

No? ..... .... ..... ..... ..... 

There are just the two of us. My husband was one of six children. One of his brothers who was an accountant in Adelaide died when he was in his forties, very sadly, of a heart attack. And his youngest brother is up in Port Pirie and another brother is in Victoria. But, for example, I’ve been quite interested in what’s happened to them, because his youngest brother at Port Pirie, all this boys – he had

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⁶James William Holland is the interviewee’s brother.
three sons – and they all did very well. They came down to Adelaide after they’d finished at Port Pirie High and two of them did double degrees, Science and Electrical Engineering, and the other one did a straight Science. And John’s brother who died, a couple of his sons, one’s a geologist and one did teaching and is now working in public relations for a wine firm, which is probably much more profitable than teaching. (laughs)

Taking you back to your schooling, do you think – obviously Loreto was also an all girls’ school – do you think there were advantages or disadvantages to going to an all-girls’ school?

It’s very interesting. I was on a federal government committee since I retired, and that topic came up, and it has come up various times, as to whether girls in girls’ schools have the advantage of seeing women as role models, because it’s women who are in control everywhere. And certainly Loreto does, I think, give people confidence. It’s an interesting order, because the woman who founded it, a seventeenth century Englishwoman called Mary Ward, Yorkshire woman, wanted to provide education and because of all the religious upheavals there she moved across to Flanders and started there, and there are schools from her order all round Europe, and so on. But she wanted an order of women ruled by women, not subject to a bishop. You know, to be independent. Probably to an outsider it would seem minor, but to her it wasn’t minor. And of course she had all sorts of strife – not unlike some of the strife that Mary MacKillop had in Australia when she founded the Sisters of St Joseph. And both of them, at various times, were – Mary Ward was put in prison once and Mary MacKillop was excommunicated. And it’s interesting that it was the Josephites who taught me in primary school, Loreto in secondary school.

But one of the teachers I had – I mean, several were quite outstanding, but one in particular, and anyone who went to school at Loreto in the ’30s and ’40s would talk about Mother Bridget Jones – she was a brilliant academic who went through Melbourne University and didn’t become a nun until she was in her twenties. She was also very musical, very gifted, and it was she who really gave me my great love and interest in history. She taught us English, too, and of course I enjoyed that. But she sort of – she had great big, brown eyes, and she’d more or less sort of look at you and almost will you to do things, or assume you could. I can remember – I may have told you this – we had to give lectures, or mini-lectures, to the senior school and
some of the nuns, and we had to – she would help us if we couldn’t find things – but we had to get pictures to illustrate – I can remember one of the many ones I had to do was to give a lecture on Gothic architecture. Can you believe it? (laughs) And every time there was something you wanted put up on the screen in the old lantern slide, as you had then, you knocked the lectern so she turned on the next picture for you. But you were up there, on the stage, and I think that was very good. And that happens up here now even in the primary school. I’d forgotten. And I go up there and do a bit of voluntary work, and you see these little tackers. Say it’s a liturgy – and I was going up there a lot because I chaired the school council for ten years since I retired – and you’ll get little Year Ones and Twos who will just stand up in front of the whole assembly doing things. So they get used to doing it from the word go.

There are male teachers in the school. There weren’t many – any – when I was there except the ones who came in, like tennis coaches and physical education things.

So what do you feel you gained yourself from being at that school?

Well, I think a feeling that – well, certainly a great feeling that you were cared for, that they were really concerned for you. I mean, I can remember once, (laughs) with another girl, we were supposed to be practising a play and we got there and apparently we’d misheard the time the night before, it was after exams, and this other girl and I said, ‘Oh, if we don’t have to go,’ – we went in to the pictures. I didn’t have any money but she must have had enough. And of course we were late getting back and we had leading parts in *Midsummer night’s dream*, and I can still remember I didn’t get a great lecture except, ‘Go to your place. How dare you worry your mother,’ because apparently they’d rung home and my mother said I’d gone to school. Well, you can imagine panic stations. And of course at home I got a lecture for worrying the teachers. So a great feeling of being cared for, and you used to get a birthday card for years and years and years, and I corresponded with Mother Bridget, and there would be other nuns that corresponded, and I’m sure that applied because I had some friends who went to PGC, now Seymour, who would still talk about some of the teachers they had. Well, Elsie Morris at Adelaide High School is
another one that was famous. So there are certain teachers that make a great impression.

But I think the thing with religious orders was that they could really concentrate on you because they didn’t have – oh, they had family, but their whole lives were built around you. And so girls would go back on their wedding day and girls get married in the chapel, and there’s quite a feeling of belonging.

**Were you inspired at that time into teaching, do you think?**

I always wanted to be a teacher, and I enjoyed it when I did it, but it would have been partly that – I don’t think I thought of anything else. Maybe it was the influence of my aunt. But also from a financial point of view. In those days, to get a degree, if you went into Teachers’ College, you got an allowance – princely sum, I think it was fifteen and threepence a week. If you lived at home. You got another ten shillings if you had to board, so if you’d come down from Loxton you’d have had that extra bit – and so you went to Teachers’ College and at the same time you got your degree. It was quite a complicated thing. You had to go on a year’s junior teaching before you went into college. The idea was to see if you were suited, but it was abused a bit. The first six months I was up at Lenswood and was under a woman who was a marvellous teacher and I really learned so much, but then because of the War and the terrific shortage I was moved to Woodside at sixteen, and taught three classes. And the Head had the top two classes and an infant teacher. And I mean he tried to help me but you can’t very much. And then you went into Teachers’ College.

**So there was no training for that, you were just – – –.**

No, you left school and you were appointed somewhere, and it depended very much on the teachers in the school. And, as I said, my first six months were absolutely marvellous with this teacher who had Grade Three, Four and Five, and she mostly gave me Grade Three, but she’d watch what I was doing and she got me to prepare lessons. Well, I did that, but to a much lesser extent and not with the help from the Headmaster – through no fault of his own, really. So I was lucky I had that first six months.

**You said you always wanted to be a teacher. What was it about being a teacher?**
I think I like communicating with people. When I worked in libraries – you have to learn all facets of librarianship – and there are some people who love working away from the public, you know, doing all the indexing and so on. Well, I quite enjoyed that, we all had to do that some of the time, but I really loved working on the desk with the students and trying to – and staff – trying to answer their problems or help them to solve their problems. So I think I would – well, I know – I wouldn’t be happy in anything where I wasn’t communicating with people. So I guess – – –. And it was a challenge. I used to love to see the look of enlightenment on faces when suddenly you could tell that light had dawned. I went back to Naracoorte High a few years back for one of – I’ve forgotten what the jubilee was. My husband came with me. It was quite interesting, meeting these people I taught when I went out at the ripe old age of twenty and taught some boys who were seventeen and eighteen doing Leaving History. (laughs) It was quite funny.

**Were there expectations from your parents about what you would do when you left school?**

I think in some ways it might have been easier if I did what quite a number of girls did then, because the opportunities for vocations were very limited. You know, you went from Loreto – because they didn’t teach commercial – you went to business college for a year, that was a – or you might have gone to the kindergarten training college or you went to Teachers’ College or you went to the Adelaide or the Children’s to do nursing, and some girls I suppose worked in shops, some girls went home and lived on the farm, but really teaching, nursing, business college were the things that most of the people I knew went into. And I may have mentioned to you that one of my friends whose father was in the First World War like mine and had died when she was four as the result of the War, she did Law. And Legacy, of course, looks after the children. And her legatee really was trying to persuade her to do a business college course and go and work in a legal office, but she persisted and she did Law. And one of my other friends, she had to wait for a couple of years so she took a job in a bank, because she wanted to do social work. That was just coming in then. A number of my contemporaries did social work, about three girls I was at school with. And the odd one – I don’t mean odd in the sense of being peculiar, but it was a bit unusual – there was one girl that was often held up to us as a
model at school who did medicine. You’d tend to have role models also pointed out to you from the girls just a couple of years ahead of you or four or five years, and that just goes on. Somebody told me once that myself and this friend, the social worker, they used to get sick of hearing our names. (laughs) We used to get sick of hearing this Josephine who did medicine and this Pat who did arts and teaching.

**So you left Loreto in — what year did you leave?**

The year the War — the year the War started I did my Leaving Honours and my grandfather died, so it was quite an upheaval, and I went off teaching, boarding, in the Hills. I used to come home at weekends, and often stay with my aunt who had the three daughters, Mum’s twin sister. And then we moved back. My father had rejoined the Army. He didn’t ever go overseas the second time, but you see he would have been only early — in his forties. And then we went back to Battams Street, and then I went through Teachers’ College and — —. (end of tape)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

And then we went back to Battams Street, and then I went through Teachers’ College and went out teaching.

**Tell me a little bit about Teachers’ College in those days.**

Well, I went to a reunion only a few weeks ago of people that were in Teachers’ College in ’43, which was my last year, ’44, and of course it was a very peculiar college because all the boys that went into college with me, as you turned eighteen you could enlist — although some of them weren’t allowed to enlist. I remember there were a few that stayed behind who were doing science degrees, because they had to have science teachers. It was similar with Engineering and Medicine. And with Engineering and Medicine they compressed their courses, they didn’t get any long Christmas vacation, so they did Medicine in five years and Engineering in four, or whatever. And so the College was very unbalanced; it was mainly a female college.

Looking back, there were lots of things where the impact of the War — I remember that we had to race around and put all sorts of blackout material on all the windows.

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7 Battams Street, Stepney.
We also, some of us, instigated by one of the lecturers, they set up a vegetable

garden in the back of Government House, and we used (laughs) to go across and,
der under instructions, dig or whatever we had to do. And another thing that happened –
I think that was in ’43 – they came and asked University students and Teachers’
College students if we would go down to Morphett Vale and spread flax, because
flax for ropes for the sailors, et cetera – – –. It’s the hardest thing, physically, I’ve
ever done in my life, I suppose because I’m so tall. You had to bend over and spread
it out and then turn it over, and I remember one night the wind came and blew it all
down the bottom of the paddock and we had to respread it. And of course then
rationing started, clothes rationing and food rationing, but it was pretty minor
compared with people in England. Clothing rationing was a bit of a nuisance,
because you got so many coupons and if you bought material somebody as long as I
am needed a lot more material than someone small, as you are. (laughs) And then,
when I went teaching, of course you noticed it because petrol was rationed and
people had gas producers on their car, and it was a horrible smell, horrible! (laughs)

Through Teachers’ College were there women role models that you found there as
well?

Not particularly. There were some that – – – After the first year, we were mainly
working with a man who was responsible, and quite a young man. I suppose he was
only in his early thirties. And he was very inspirational. I can remember reading
books like Van Doren’s Liberal education, you know, the reading of the great books,
so that you have this. And he certainly – well, he enthused me and I think some of
the others about going out teaching. As I told you, they came down in our third year
and said would some of us go out a year early, because really we should have – – –.

You told me off of tape, so ..... ..... ..... ..... tell the story on tape.

Yes. Well, normally for a high school teacher, you did four years. And you did
subjects in the College, some of which were towards the Dip.Ed. The Dip.Ed. setup
was quite different from what it is now. And you did your degree – Arts or Science
would be the two degrees people did. Well, about halfway through our third year,
one of the superintendents came down and said would any of us go out a year early
because they were so desperately short of teachers. And I worked out that if I passed
I had only one floating unit for my Arts degree and then I could, over the years, do
the Dip.Ed. subject. So about half of us went out a year early. I shouldn’t have gone out until the beginning of ’45.

**What had you majored in, in your degree?**

English and History. And then, in those days, an arts degree was very different from now, because you had to include in your degree somewhere, if not in your major, one language other than English – I did French – and one science subject – and I did Biology – which I think was good, because it made for an all-round – – –. So most people had two majors and a sub-major and a couple of floating ones, or they might have had two sub-majors, depended how they wanted to do it.

**And you trained for high school teaching, was it?**

Yes, yes. Primary teachers and what we called infant teachers, who taught up to the top of the Grade Two, they did two years. But one of the interesting things about the Teachers’ College, which I think is interesting historically, is that early in the – or late in the nineteenth century, or early in the twentieth century, the Chancellor of the University at the time decided that Teachers’ College students could attend university and do the subjects without payment, because he obviously thought it was important for teachers to be well-educated. So that, whereas in later years when I went into the College to lecture, there were subjects given within the College – I mean, I was a history lecturer then and there were people lecturing in various subjects – but then we went over to the university for that general education. And that meant that the primary and infant people did too. They only did one or two subjects a year, whereas we might be doing three or four, almost like a full course, depending on the other bits and pieces you had. And that meant that a lot of them could then just, slowly but surely, add onto that after they left college and get their degrees. So that’s why you’ll often meet teachers who got their degrees quite late, because they did it one subject a year, at a time, by correspondence. But I think that was very good in terms of the education of teachers.

**In your – I suppose in the teaching part of your degree, was there any emphasis on libraries or anything like that, during your time?**

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8 Adelaide Teachers’ College.
9 The University of Adelaide.
No. What really pushed me towards that, when I got my appointment I had a note from the school saying that they had just established, or were in the process of establishing a war memorial library at Naracoorte High School in memory of the boys – already some of them had been killed – and they wondered if I could do something about finding out how to organise this library. And I can remember taking a deep breath and going in to Miss Morley, who was the librarian of the Children’s Library – now, that Children’s Library was in those two-storey buildings, those old buildings behind the current State Library. I think it was a women’s lying-in centre or a destitute place or something in the past, but the wing that’s nearest Kintore Avenue, that was the Children’s Library. And it was the first children’s library in Australia. It was established, I think, 1915 and lots of children used to go in there and read and borrow and, you know, I knew that well. And I remember going in to Miss Morley and saying, ‘Look, I’ve got to organise a high school library – how do I do it?’ She was marvellous. And that first year, ’44, when I was out teaching, was also the year when the Department appointed an organiser of school libraries who used to go round. So when I went to Naracoorte, I suppose it was a natural thing that one of the English teachers would look after the library.

**What library was there when you first — — —?**

Well, actually, it was a very good collection of books – of fiction and non-fiction. They’d spent a lot of money. I mean, Naracoorte – and then, immediately after the War, because I was there when the War ended – was a very prosperous area, and wool prices went through the roof. But it was a very good collection. And so every time I’d come home on holidays I’d go – if I’d struck trouble, but I learned all the mysteries of Dewey and Sears. I mean, I probably made a lot of mistakes, but I organised the library – in my spare time. I did a lot of work at weekends.

**So you more or less self-taught yourself those things?**

Yes, really. Originally. Well, then I taught there for three years, and I wanted to move back to the city. And of course that was a bit of a no-no then because there were only four high schools. And I saw a job advertised in the University library and I applied for and got it. So then, when I went there, I did all the library exams that were set by the professional body.
Just to interrupt, what inspired you seeing a library job? You’d been a teacher – what inspired you to make that change, I guess?

Well, I saw it and thought, ‘Now, that sounds interesting,’ and also because I wanted to come back to the city. And I think there was a bit of pressure from home: they wanted me to come home because my brother had been in the Air Force and Dad had been in the Army and bit of pressure from my mother. Anyway, the job was just advertised at the right time. My superintendent, who’d been my inspector, really wanted to give me leave, just let me be on leave without pay and come back some years later, but that would have been a dangerous precedent, and the Director-General at the time wouldn’t hear of it so I had to resign. But, strangely enough, I was then for ten years doing other things, but when I came back into the Education Department to Wattle Park Teachers’ College it was that same man who appointed me ten years later, so that’s quite funny. So I did library work then. I was at the Barr Smith.

Tell me a bit about the Barr Smith in those days.

That was a wonderful place to train. The Barr Smith – or the ‘Barr’, as we called it in the public libraries, the State Library, ‘Pub’ and the ‘Barr’, that’s where we used to study as students – but it was wonderful training. They had some senior women who, in the days when there were no exams offered in Australia, did the exams offered by the English Library Association and they were meticulous in their training. And the Librarian, Mr Cowan, was a Classics scholar, and he went to America and did a library course, and so they were very, very thorough in their training of staff. We all had to move round and work in different sections, and we had to sit for all the exams, and we used to be tested while we were preparing for these exams. And Miss Andersen, who was the Reference Librarian, and Miss Sorrell, the Cataloguer – and when we’d hand these things up and they’d come back with a mark, we never knew when Mr Cowan would also take them until it came back and you’d see a comment on the bottom, which was probably good for us. So I got my library qualifications, and then I went to be the first librarian at the Defence Centre out at Salisbury.

Just to talk about that training, I guess in that you became a library educator yourself, how different was the way you trained then, on the job side of training, I guess?
Well, it’s a bit like an apprenticeship, I guess. It’s like the difference between the way nurses were trained and the way they are trained now, and I suppose that applies to lots of professions. I mean, lawyers used to be articled clerks, I remember, in my uncle’s office, and they’d be going up to the University for their theory, but now they do a different way of training. But it was very good, but it was probably more on the technical side, in a way. So you learned to catalogue, and so on, and you learned a lot about reference materials, and you also learned to show students how to find – I remember giving lectures, for example, to the Engineering students, so that you had to find all the tools and things – tools of trade, if you like – all the journals and the indexing journals – well, now, of course, it would be on computer. And in libraries now you do have in university libraries librarians who specialise in subject areas, because the – whereas we were probably jacks of all trades. But we did specialise a bit, and even in our cataloguing, depending on what degrees we’d had, if somebody had done a lot of languages – they used to give me all the education books to catalogue, because that’s – you know all about education! (laughs)

**Were you unusual as a teacher, gaining library qualifications at that time?**

Very. Very. When – as I said, I went to Salisbury and then I went to England for a couple of years – while I was in England I taught, did some what they call ‘supply’ teaching, but I also worked in a technical library there, and I went back to Salisbury. But when I got the job as lecturer-librarian, which was the way it was advertised, at Wattle Park Teachers’ College in ’57, there was one other person as far as I know who was fully – and myself; we would have been the only two who were fully-qualified and experienced in both teaching and librarianship, and she was the woman who’d been my senior at Naracoorte who’d come back to Adelaide for family reasons and then did her library exams. A wonderful lady. And now, of course, it’s not at all uncommon, but it was then.

**Back when you started in the Barr Smith Library, were there many women involved in the library field in South Australia?**

Oh, yes. More women than men, but the men were at the top. So the State Librarian was a man, and the University Librarian was a man. I remember there was a woman who was the University Librarian in Western Australia, and when I first started going to library conferences, you know, these women who were in roles – – –. And
the Head Librarian of CSIRO\textsuperscript{10}, you know, and they had a chain of libraries all round the country, Miss Eleanor Archer, she was a female role model. And she was marvellous to me. When I went from the Barr Smith to take charge or set up – they’d never had a librarian before – the library at Salisbury, what’s now the Defence Centre, they sent me over to Melbourne to visit defence libraries there but also to visit Miss Archer, and she was wonderful. And I could get on the ’phone to her because it was a technical library, and they used a different indexing system – similar to Dewey, which you’d be familiar with, but it was called the Universal Decimal Classification, which was really designed for scientific libraries. And so there were these role models. I remember there was another one – oh, and a couple of the Parliamentary Librarians later on were women. But now, I mean, the State Librarian here, she’s actually not a professional librarian because – well, that happens in lots of places now, you get these people who are expert on management. But the former State Librarian who was here was a female, and she’s now the State Librarian in Victoria, and a number of University Librarians, you know, it’s quite common. It was a female profession, but the men were in the senior jobs. But that was society.

I just wondered in those days was that something that you accepted as part of how society was, or was it something you felt a little rebellion against, or not?

Well, you did accept it, because when you went in to high schools, you know, there were no women heading high schools. But women got into those positions through the girls’ technical high schools, the old central schools and the girls’ technical high schools, so you had a number of people like Ruth Gibson and, before her, Adelaide Miethke, whom – I don’t remember her, but Ruth Gibson was just around and was a very senior woman in the Department. But it was on a slightly – up a slightly different way. But now, of course, it doesn’t make any difference.

The one time that I was very cross was when I became the librarian at Salisbury. After I’d been there a few months – they were building up the staff and we were building up the library – they appointed a man who’d been in the Air Force and then went to the university under the Commonwealth – I think it was called the

\textsuperscript{10} Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, so ex-servicemen went in there – – –. So the Barr Smith Library – sidetracking – was very interesting because all these ex-servicemen were coming in, so it was a different climate. You didn’t just have people coming from school, but you had a lot of people who were older than we were coming back to do courses, like my brother. Anyway, they’d appointed a science graduate who had no library training so I had to teach him, but he got paid more than I did because there was, you know, a category of appointment, and the male rate was always bigger than the female rate, and that was bad enough but he was also not all that energetic. (laughs) But, you know, things like that would be annoying, but you didn’t – well, I didn’t – get too upset because that’s the way it was.

I remember another thing that annoyed me was – it must have been after I came back from Naracoorte, and some elections were on for the Legislative Council and the House of Representatives in the State Parliament, and in those days the only person who could vote in the Upper House was the householder, and that was my father. So here was I, with all my education, not allowed to vote. I remember thinking then, ‘This is crazy,’ particularly as women got the vote in South Australia so early.

Did you ever get involved in the Women’s Movement at all?

Yes, in the College I did. I had to – then I went from Wattle Park Teachers’ College and was promoted to Western Teachers’ College and went up after the first year to become (laughs) – you’ll laugh when I tell you the title – ‘the Women’s Warden, responsible for the dress, deportment and moral tone of women students’ – and I think there was a caveat somewhere that said, ‘any other duties as decreed by the Principal and the Director-General of Education’ But that was in the days when students were bonded, and they were on an allowance, and so I, for example, had to supervise where they boarded, visit hostels – they weren’t allowed to live in flats. There were certain rules that were put down. And I had to sign all the sick leave forms for girls. If a girl got pregnant, anything like that, you dealt with anything related to the females. And that was, of course, the top – well, it was the top job for women in the teachers’ colleges. There was one in each. And then there would have been people like Miss Gibson who would have been an inspector of –
I’ll just get you not to rub the table.

– sorry about that! – who would have been going round the technical schools. But when I resigned – I had to resign because I was getting married – and I had to come back as a Temporary Acting Assistant Lecturer at the bottom of the salary range, and it took me, I think, about fourteen years before I eventually got back to Principal Lecturer status, which was what I was when I got married. So for a long time I was this Temporary Acting Assistant Lecturer, and then in 1970 they asked me to establish a School of Librarianship at Adelaide Teachers’ College in Kintore Avenue, so I came in but I was still called a Temporary Acting Senior Lecturer.

What year did you marry, that that occurred?

’65, and I think it changed in ’67. But it wasn’t retrospective. It also affected superannuation, because I think in about 1972 – I wouldn’t have the exact date, but round about there – those who were temporary could become permanent, and then – not then, but a year or so after that – we were allowed to take out superannuation. But I didn’t, because by then I would have been fifty, and in those days your contribution depended on your salary. You had to buy units, and it was compulsory, and so you would end up with very little salary, so John and I made a decision that I wouldn’t because he had superannuation. So we did a lot of travelling while I was still working on a very good salary.

So what was your reaction to that, when that occurred to you in 1965?

Well, ’65, when it happened, you know, well, that was the way things happened. But I think as I got older I got increasingly annoyed, because before I retired, and even once after I retired, I appealed to the Minister. I didn’t ask for all my superannuation or anything – that was the thing: I’d paid superannuation but when I got married I got a cheque for what I’d put in, not a cent more, no interest, no nothing. But I asked that my service before marriage, in the colleges, could count for purposes of long service leave, because you’re probably familiar with the fact it used to be that if you’d served ten years you got, I think it was ten days per year, and if you’d served fifteen you got fifteen. And so I’d used up some of my long service leave but not all of it. I used some of it up because I did a master’s degree at Monash and I took some part-time leave. But I wasn’t successful, and I appealed to
three different ministers, one of whom had actually been one of my librarianship students and I thought, ‘This might be the time to ask.’ But because – no, that was – they all agreed that it was unfortunate but that was what the rule was, and they were all frightened of precedent, so I never got it.

**How we got onto this is I asked whether you were involved in the Women’s Movement. Did that – – –?**

Well, that was the fact of going – when I was in the College I became increasingly aware, probably because I was the senior woman on the staff and so I did see it as my role to give support to the younger lecturers. And I remember when we would be electing people to committees and to councils that a number of us who were there – like Denise Bradley, who’s now the Vice-Chancellor at University of South Australia – she actually came into the College, I actually interviewed her for her first job, she came in to lecture in librarianship – because she’s like me, did teaching and librarianship – but I remember she and myself and a number of us made a concerted effort to get some of the women to be nominated for committees. A lot of them were very nervous because they were nervous of how they might be put down or people wouldn’t listen to them, it was just a confidence thing, so we did quite a bit of that, and I suppose that’s part of it. And then I was the first in the ’70s – I was put on the Libraries Board with a member of the staff from the State Library, and it had been an all-male board and they certainly hadn’t had librarians, let alone women, and at the same time I was put on the Council of the Institute of Technology, and for a period I was the only female there. So I suppose – and I suppose those things helped to give me more confidence. And at the Institute they put me on their Academic Board and I became part of staff reviews and things like that. But I always saw it as my role – because I’d been lucky, I think – to give support to others. So I think it would be true to say that the librarianship staff I had, they would say I was always nagging them to – one girl who had small children, I said, ‘Well, okay, you can’t study but you can write articles for journals.’ And somebody else, you know, did a doctorate and somebody else – I’d make them go to conferences or I’d say, ‘Yes, I’ll do that’, on something and I’d come back and say, ‘I have dobed you in; you’re going to be the representative on that conference committee,’ or whatever. And I was lucky because the library profession elected me to their Board of Education so I travelled.
round the country a lot accrediting courses. I was an examiner for donkeys’ years when they were still giving their own exams and as it phased out, and I was on a number of Schools Commission things. So I was very fortunate in that I was made aware of what was happening in other states and had what they – what’s the wonderful phrase they use about the academic grapevine? Oh, can’t think of it. It’ll come to me later. But I could ring people up in Sydney or Newcastle simply because of these contacts – and that was extremely helpful. It was very helpful to us, developing our courses, but it was probably also helpful to the lecturers with me.

I’ll just stop you there because we’re about to run out of tape on this particular tape and we’ll –

Okay.

– see whether we’re going to continue today or later.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

This is the second tape of an interview with Joan Brewer being recorded by Karen George for the State Library of South Australia’s Honoured Women’s Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 15th June 2001 at Dulwich in South Australia.

I’d like to just take you back a little bit, because I think when we first met you mentioned that you were one of very few women, or perhaps only the second woman, at the Salisbury Weapons Institute.

I would have been the second professional woman, because when I went there I remember that a friend of mine, Mary Whitehead, who was a mathematician, she was the first woman professional. There were women, you know, obviously, office staff, but there were also girls who had – some of them had part-degrees who worked as, what we called them, ‘computers’ I mean, now we think of a machine when we think of computers. (laughs) And Mary was in charge of that. And she was detailed off to come and look after me and take me to lunch, because I was the second woman professional. And later there were a number of other mathematicians who worked in charge of groups of girls who did a lot of the computing of the trials that were held at Woomera, they used to go up and back. And the library grew, and we had some professionals and some, I suppose, clerical staff, you know, layers of staff. But we had a number of graduates in the key roles, and we had somebody at Woomera and some in a couple of branch [libraries] – it was a very big
establishment then. In fact, I went back there a few years back, when some of the early scientists went out for a visit, and Mary Whitehead and myself and another girl who worked in the library were invited, and we went and saw the library now, which is slightly different. (laughs)

What sort of relationship within a working environment were there between the professional women and the professional men then?

Well, certainly it was very good, because the men who were working on all the trials, there was really a very big cluster of highly-qualified people, and we got lots of reports and technical reports and information from the UK, because it was a joint project, so that we worked very closely with particularly the ones who were working on particular projects. And I remember one of the girls, a science graduate who worked in the information thing for us, when somebody new came we would interview them and say, ‘Where are you working, what are you working on, what are your particular interests?’, because it tended to be pretty specific. I mean, you wouldn’t just say ‘electrical engineering’; it would be something very specific. And then they would have other fringe things they were interested in. They might say, ‘Look, I’d like to see anything on photography as well,’ or whatever. So we had an index of what their interests were and we used to feed them material, and they would come in a lot. Now, I’m not technical, but I got to know lots of technical terms even though I didn’t understand all the detail. But we had a couple of people who were technical. It was very interesting.

What do you think you gained from that first professional position, I guess?

First professional position in charge? Yes. I suppose I got more confidence, and it was also a very happy place. It was very isolated, and nearly everybody who worked out there was either English or from interstate. I was a bit of freak – or a number of the girls in the library were locals, but some weren’t. The two girls who ran the technical information were science graduates from Sydney who’d applied. And we had quite a social life, a very good social life, of our own. There was a tennis club – I think I’ve got a mug over there that I won in a (laughs) mixed doubles thing – and we had lots of dances and socials and picnics and camping, so there was very much a social life out there. And I remember my friend who’s the lawyer used to envy me all these interesting people that I met socially. Quite a lot of marriages resulted, you
know, and obviously that would happen. And it was mainly, I suppose, the girls who were – the most educated group were the girls working on the mathematical calculations – there were girls in charge with science degrees and some that had bits of degrees – and quite a lot of university students used to come and work in the vacation – and the girls in the library. And then there were secretaries and – oh, and there was also a chemical laboratory where there was a science graduate, a friend of mine there, and a couple of other girls. But there were a lot more men than women.

**What led you to leave there? Was it the desire to go overseas?**

Yes. I decided to travel, and a lot of people from there were going to England for two years, coming back, they would be sent from the Australian government to England for two years. They were called ‘scientific trainees’. And so we’d meet them and they’d be round Salisbury and then they’d disappear for two years and then reappear. And the Englishman who was in charge at the time, when I said I was going, he said he’d write to London to the Ministry of Supply, which was the equivalent, and send through all my security checks – because of course it was very much a security place – so that I could work for them if I wanted to. So when I first went there I travelled around and taught, and then I made contact with them and then they offered me a job. And that was interesting, because I met a couple of the people that I’d been corresponding with. Because there used to be an aircraft that came out bringing mainly supplies, but it was also, if there was room, bring people, and it used to come out every week. I think it used to arrive every Tuesday and then it would go back. And it was an RAF plane, British plane. And actually, after I’d been in England a couple of years, that’s how I came home and I went back to Salisbury for a couple of years.

Well, then this job was advertised at Wattle Park, and you would have thought that it was written for me, because you had to be a graduate, preferably in English and History, and you had to have library qualifications and – but it was, I found out afterwards, written by somebody for me. (laughs)

**How did that come about?**

Well, because she knew me. It was the person who’d been my senior when I was at Naracoorte, and she had gone on and done library studies and so had I. They had actually wanted me to apply for the job when she was promoted, the job at Kintore
Avenue, and I had not long come back from England. I think I’d only been back – I started again in the beginning of ’54 – and it must have been later that year, and I said I couldn’t in conscience do that because I’d promised that I’d work there and they’d given me a free ride home. Well, actually, they didn’t; it was the British government, not the Australian. But however, I just felt I couldn’t at that stage, so I didn’t and somebody else did the job, but she didn’t have the qualifications, not as many. She had all the teaching and some library qualifications. So then, a couple of years later, when Wattle Park opened, I took the job there. And I know that this senior woman helped to word it! (laughs) So that’s how I got there.

What was your role there?

Well, I had to build up the library. I remember I opened the doors on twenty-seven books and hardly any bookshelves or anything. So you had to order the collection with the help of the lecturers, saying, ‘What do you want?’, and organise, you know, helping students. But that was really lovely, because it was – Mr David was the Principal, and he’d been a lecturer in secondary education and I knew him. Again, it was interesting. I think there were only six women and nine men, I think, fifteen of us to start with, so it was interesting because it was new. It was the second teachers’ college. There’d only been one for – what? – I don’t know how many years, and so it was quite exciting going to something that was new. And then Mr David, the Principal, used to let – who was a great scholar, he used to lecture in History, and he got sick quite suddenly about Easter time and I became the history lecturer. So all the time until I came back to Kintore Avenue in 1970, at Wattle Park and at Western, I was always a history lecturer too, because I wanted to, as well as running the library. And I wasn’t Head of the History Department, but I was one of the History team. And that’s something I’m very interested in, all kinds of history.

So how did you go about expanding a library from twenty-seven books to – – –?

With a lot of help from the girl at Kintore Avenue, you know, getting lists and making massive orders and books coming in and cataloguing and getting them on the shelves and getting staff to give me lists. And then, funny enough – I was there five years doing that – and then I was promoted and sent as a senior lecturer/librarian when they opened Western Teachers’ College.
And that is Underdale – – –?

It’s now Underdale. Then we were on South Road and in Currie Street, that building that’s now part of the Remand Centre – it was an old Currie Street school – and we used to commute between these temporary buildings down near the Thebarton Oval and the Currie Street (laughs) complex, and they’d bought the land at Underdale but it was some years before they built it. In fact, I had moved back to Kintore Avenue before they actually built Underdale, but I used to go down there, of course. And I was at Kintore Avenue then, purely in librarianship, from 1970 until I retired at the end of ’84. I did – the last couple of years was also lecturing at Magill, because it was in that period when all the colleges were being amalgamated. Sturt went in with Flinders; eventually, Kintore Avenue – the building – went with The University of Adelaide, but the actual faculties, some went to The University of Adelaide but many of them stayed in what became the University of South Australia.

So when you were lecturing – working at Wattle Park and at Western, the lecturer/librarian, were you lecturing in library studies, as well?

Yes. I started courses. I worked with the girl who was the Supervisor of School Libraries a bit, and I used to give optional courses. On a Wednesday afternoon the students had sport, or they could elect to do various things, so I did give a series of lectures to anyone who was interested on school libraries, children’s books, you know, things associated with it, because many of them who were going to be primary teachers at Wattle Park could land in a school where they’d have to know something about this. And then – when I went to Western, I did that. But my second year at Western, when I was the Women’s Warden, things blew up in Parliament about the state of school libraries, and I’ve got all the press cuttings that went on. There were questions in Parliament, and the girl who was the Supervisor of School Libraries resigned and went to Victoria, so that – – –. And the Library Association was helping to ask these questions. And in fact I went in a deputation in my holidays to the Minister about it, and the Director-General, when he found out who’d been was cross – this was when I was lecturing at Wattle Park – and I got really mad, and my boss at Wattle Park, Mr David, could see the distinction that in my role as a lecturer at Wattle Park was one thing, but in my holidays if I went as a member of the Library Association that was quite different. And it all subsided
because I said, ‘If he makes a fuss I will go back to the Minister and tell him what’s happened.’ I didn’t have to.

And so, because of that they started – I was asked to give a ‘pressure-cooker course’, and I was taken out of my job at Western, right out of it, and sent up to the old Magill Primary School and told, ‘You’re going to have forty teachers – infant, primary, secondary – for a term. Train them to be teacher-librarians.’ So that was interesting (laughs) and that’s when – you know, my contacts around helped because I got people to come in and be visiting lecturers. I did the bulk of it, and I had one – this person who I’d taught with at Naracoorte who was qualified, she did some. And then we called in lots of visiting lecturers. And because I had lots of contacts in the library profession, we got authors to come in and people like Colin Thiele helped me because they had contacts. And then there was the second course so, you know, I was supposed to be the Women’s Warden but I was hardly down there – up at Magill.

So those courses you initially began at Wattle Park and Western, did you initiate those?

The ones – the voluntary things they did on a Wednesday afternoon, yes, I did.

What made you think that it would be a good idea?

Because I think I saw what libraries could do, and I knew that particularly if they went out to country schools it could make such a difference. Because you wouldn’t realise, but at that time we didn’t have any free public libraries in South Australia. The first one was in ’57 at Elizabeth. I suppose I was very conscious of what was going on in other states, or what had gone on. The Institute system stayed here longer than it did in other states. Now, I think it was wonderful in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, but it had outlived its use-by date, really.

What do you mean by the Institute system?

Well, the Institute libraries that used to be in country towns that you paid for, and they were, on the whole – there were exceptions, like the one at Port Adelaide in the early twentieth century – but on the whole they were collections of pretty inferior stuff, lots of novels and westerns and a lot of old books. Now, they varied, and people paid, and of course there was this thing: ‘Oh, you don’t appreciate something
unless you pay for it,’ and we kept saying, ‘Well, education’s free. Access to [information] libraries, that’s – – –.’ So there was a lot of agitation from the profession. But the first free public library was at Elizabeth, which is interesting, because a lot of English migrants, were used to free public libraries. And then, in ’74 it must have been, I was put on the Libraries Board, and then I became involved in the development of public libraries. I mean, not in a hands-on way, but certainly very aware. And then later, at a personal level, I became involved because a lot of public libraries in South Australia were set up in schools and became school community libraries, and had become quite – they’re quite unique. A lot of places have had them and they tend to collapse, but here they’ve survived, and in fact there’s a Canadian who’s back here again now, he’s been out lots of times, written lots of books – there’s been a book written about school-community libraries. Well, I was training the teacher-librarians to go in there so that they had to be aware of their public library responsibilities as well as their school. Pretty hard job, and some of them are terrific, but they work very hard.

So that meld of teacher-librarian, was that just beginning, really, I guess – – –?

Yes. I think I was lucky. I came into the Teachers’ College when they were looking for a lecturer-librarian and there were only a couple of us who were fully qualified at that stage, and then there was the expansion of school libraries that Mrs Riddle, who was the supervisor, and her successors really did stimulate interest among parents to raise money, because they raised money and they got subsidised on a dollar-for-dollar or pound-for-pound basis, and I think, if I remember rightly – I did a lot of this in my research – the Department provided the furniture, but the parents had to raise the money for the books, and they were subsidised. So there was a push coming from that, and then of course a push for people to actually manage them, rather than a teacher having some books in the back of the classroom or some teacher doing it as I did, as a spare job.

Is that how it had been, mainly, that – – –?

Yes. The first course I took in ’64, I think there were – Marion High School, where they had a very progressive principal, and Adelaide High School had full-time teacher-librarians. But sometimes the Heads would still say, ‘Oh, you’ve got to teach x number of lessons.’ But gradually – and some quite liked it, in the way I
liked lecturing in history when I ran the library – but many of them failed to see that they weren’t just clerks getting it all in order; that they were supposed to be teachers who could help teachers and students to use those materials effectively. But I suppose – see, that was happening in public libraries. I was on the Libraries Board and I was also lucky enough to be on the Board of Education for the Library Association. And then I got put on a lot of Schools Commission things for school libraries, and would be taken to conferences, myself and the Supervisor who was appointed in 1964. I took that course in ’64, and the new Supervisor, from whom all the questions in Parliament had been asked – a new Supervisor, a man, Jim Dwyer, was appointed in about July – but there was a period of a couple of months when nobody was there and I had to go down and be the Supervisor of School Libraries, simply because it was such a hot political potato.

What did that entail?

Well, being there and helping schools who were having this sort of a problem, but mainly being there so that the Minister could stand up and say, ‘Oh, we have a qualified person acting until the new person comes.’ And Jim and I worked very closely because I was training them and then he was employing them, and we both got appointed to Schools Commission things from South Australia and to workshops and conferences. And, you see, that was a great advantage to whatever courses I was developing, because here I was making these contacts.

Did you seek out those positions, or were you chosen, or how did it work out that you became involved?

No, I was chosen, I think simply because I was – certainly to start with – the only body on the ground. (laughs) And often I’d think, ‘Mm, I wonder what the boss will say about this.’ But I was lucky because they all saw that as an advantage to the College. And I remember when Gregor Ramsay became the Principal of the South Australian CAE when they amalgamated, going to him and saying, ‘Well, look, I’m on these Schools Commission things and I’m travelling around for the Library Association and the Libraries Board and the Institute of Technology.’ – because a lot of those things were concurrent in the ’70s and ’80s – ‘Are you happy?’ He’s very happy, ‘as long as you make certain that every time you leave to go interstate or
anywhere that you tell my secretary so that I know where you are. Because,’ he said, ‘that’s wonderful for the College, to have one of our staff.’ So I was lucky.

**How much did that affect you in terms of working hours?**

It was – that was, I think, in the end why I retired. Because I was sixty, sixty-one – I could have gone on until I was sixty-five and I just made a decision. I’ve done a lot of things since, but you can choose your times. I couldn’t have done it without John, because a lot of the things I got involved in all happened after I got married, and he was very supportive. Often when I’d hesitate – I remember one committee I refused to go on for the Schools Commission, for the Secondary School Libraries Programme. I’d been to a conference at Monash and one of the people from Canberra tried and I said, ‘Oh no, look, it’s just not fair to my husband, I’m away too much.’ But a couple of years later they twisted my arm and I went on the Primary School Libraries Committee. But he was very supportive, and he retired early because he had a heart problem and had to have heart surgery, and he retired a couple of years before, and I had a lot of lectures at about five-thirty, and – because a lot of teachers could come in then – so he took over the cooking. He’s still the cook; I’m the gardener. We do all sorts of things upside down, so I’m very lucky.

**Would you like to talk a bit about that, I guess, balancing being a wife and being a professional woman in those days?**

I suppose because we were older when we got married – we must have been, what, thirty-nine and forty-one, because John’s a couple of years younger than I am – and we had both been people that had been very involved in all sorts of things. He was particularly involved in a lot of church things, and now he’s still very involved in community things like he’s the area chairman or whatever it is for Neighbourhood Watch, and because of his work in that over the years the police invited him and he’s a member of Crimestoppers. He was one of the first people to do the Seniors On-Line course up at Flinders, you know, for older people to learn how to use computers, and then became involved in that. He’s been [a board member] of a home for the aged – he finished a couple of years ago – thirty years he was deputy chairperson. He’s involved in church things, so I suppose – and I’d been involved in things. So I suppose we were both – we were older and we were both people who’d been involved in the community, and therefore you understand, you each understand
where the other’s coming from. So hopefully I’ve supported him and he’s supported me.

**Where do you think that came from, that desire to, or need to, be involved in the community and contribute beyond just your everyday work?**

I think it’s partly based on perhaps – we’re both committed Catholics and we’ve both been involved in church things. I wasn’t so involved as John, although after I retired I’ve done quite a number of things, because rashly, just before I retired, I said to the Archbishop, ‘Oh, I haven’t done anything. If there’s anything you want me to do –’ so I did a few things for them. For example, one of the jobs I did after I retired for six years, I chaired a committee for the Catholic Education Office, which was given a lump sum from the Commonwealth Government according to population, whatever they work out, and then that had to be allocated to the schools in most need, according to a set of criteria set by the government, and I chaired that and travelled around the state for that. And I’d already travelled around the state, the independent schools, a lot. Jim Dwyer and I assessed all the school libraries in the independent system between us, you know, we’d go into the school. So that was great. But all the time you’re making contacts in this wider network. And then I told you I chaired the Loreto School Council for ten years from ’87 to ’97.

**So you think the involvement with the Catholic Church is why -- -- --?**

Well, I think that you have a sense of commitment not just to yourself but to other people. We’ve also both got very strong sense of family, and so we’re very close – not to *all* our nieces and nephews because we’ve got so many of them – but to John’s sister’s children and to my brother’s children, particularly the ones that live locally, because obviously these days they’re all over the place. One of my nieces was in Japan for four years, and now she’s going to Vietnam. She lived with us for two years instead of going to boarding school, because she could ride her bike up to school. And another one of my brother’s daughters lived with us for about nine months when she was at teachers’ college. And we see a lot of their children, and we trot off to school functions like next week, or whatever. But I think also that – I think that came from, probably came from the nuns, an attitude that everybody’s given a certain bag of goodies, and you’re to use them wisely but not just for yourself but for other people. I mean, that sounds very goody-goody and I don’t
mean it that way at all, and especially if you’ve been lucky. I mean, often there’d be things that you would be asked to do and John and I both thought, ‘Well, we ought to do it because people who’ve got children have got so many commitments that they can’t do the things that we can do by doing a bit of juggling.’

So you feel that’s part of it, not having a family of your own – – –?

I suppose we wouldn’t have been able to if we’d had children, if we’d married younger. We might have been able to do some, but certainly not as much. You couldn’t.

Had your parents been people who also contributed in a community service sort of way?

I grew up in a household – particularly when we lived with my grandfather – where there were always visitors, people coming and going, so it was always interesting. I guess that’s why I was very interested in family history, because all these cousins and, you know, I got to work out the family trees. Because my grandfather was about fourteen years younger than his brother and sister – there was another sister who never married – so the two strands of the family are out of kilter, so people who are my generation in the other family are much older. And so there were always people coming and you never knew who might be there for a meal or to stay. And my parents were very sociable beings: they were involved in church things and Dad was involved in the RSL and the bowling club, and Mum was always cooking for this or going to that – I suppose a bit in St Peters, and she continued to do that. My father died quite comparatively young of cancer, just six months before I got married he died out at Daws Road, and he knew I was going to get married – my mother didn’t; we didn’t tell her till some months later, much to her annoyance: ‘Why? What a pity Terry didn’t know.’ And we said, ‘Well, he did.’ ‘Why did you tell him and you didn’t tell me?’ (laughs) And John was quite wicked – he said, ‘We knew where he was going he wouldn’t tell anybody.’ (laughter) But she remained involved in things, in the bowling club and the RSL and the church. So I suppose – and John’s father, I think was the same; not so much his mother because there were six of them and she was probably busy, and I think the grandmother lived with them. But his father was a Commonwealth public servant and he was involved, I think, in the community. So John’s always been very involved since he came out of the Air
Force. But like my brother, they weren’t in the Air Force long. They were air crew but they didn’t ever leave Australia so they didn’t ever fight battles.

So you would say it was a combination of family and your schooling that – – –?

Yes. Particularly if you’ve been fairly fortunate and particularly for somebody my generation. Not in terms of money. I mean, not that I – – – (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

Particularly if you’ve been fairly fortunate and particularly for somebody my generation. Not in terms of money. I mean, not that I ever wanted, but certainly my parents weren’t wealthy. They would have been struggling. My grandfather was fairly comfortable, let’s say. But I’ve been fortunate in my health, and that, the older I get – yesterday I was visiting a cousin who’s in a nursing home and she’s now got dementia so you have to sit for an hour and have this stupid conversation, but you just keep on responding – and she’s younger than I am. And then John’s sister has Parkinson’s Disease, and it’s her six children that we’re very close to, and she was the most wonderful person. I mean, she still is, but she’s in another nursing home. And so when I visit like that I realise how lucky I am, so your health’s very important when you get older. And also to have financial independence – I don’t mean to be rolling in money, but if I were a single pensioner renting in a little room without the advantages of the education I’ve had, a lot of these things I rattle off that I’ve been asked to do wouldn’t happen, I wouldn’t be able to do them – physically or financially or in terms of not so much ability, but because of my training.

Working as a single woman with no children, has there been any attitudes from women that you’ve suffered in terms of – – –?

Occasionally, yes. Not so much now, but occasionally –

Yes, I’m thinking in your earlier years.

– yes. I can remember once being at a party, some sort of a cocktail party at one of my sisters-in-law – you know, on John’s side – and this woman was really sailing into ‘You women that work, and there are all these young men who can’t get jobs.’ This is quite a long time ago, probably twenty years ago. And I didn’t say much, but I felt like saying, ‘Look, you are silly. If I gave up work tomorrow it wouldn’t help your’ – I don’t know whether it was her nephew, her son, her grandson or
something. And you used to get from some people a little jibe saying, ‘Oh, that’s all right for you, you haven’t got children, you can do all those things.’ I mean, I got used to it and didn’t take any notice. But I don’t think anybody ever said that to me who knew I’d had a miscarriage and that we would love to have had children. But people don’t know other people’s circumstances. And I remember once I was at a – oh, a thing I was on was the Federal Government’s National Women’s Consultative Council after I retired, and I was on it for two years then reappointed as the Deputy Convenor, and that involved going around the country and meeting with women’s groups. That was a real education for me. You know, I met lots of unmarried mothers struggling on Social Security, War Widows, old people, Aboriginal women, migrant women. It was as good for me – probably better for me than some of the people I was supposed to be helping – or informing. We were supposed to be finding out what their needs were, and also telling them what the government was offering. But I remember a woman in Hobart. I’d been asked to come and speak and I did, and afterwards she said, ‘Oh!’ – I must have been telling them where I’d been travelling and what I did – ‘Oh, you are lucky you’ve had this.’ And I said, ‘Yes, I am.’ And I said, ‘Have you got children?’ And she said, ‘Yes,’ and I said, ‘Have you got grandchildren?’ She said, ‘Oh, yes,’ and her face lit up, and I said, ‘Well, I haven’t got that. We’re all given something different and you’ve got that, I’ve got this.’ ‘Oh, yes,’ she said. And occasionally people will say something without meaning to – I was at a luncheon once, only about four years ago, and they were talking about this friend of mine who is a lawyer. She was married before I was but she was into her thirties, and she’s had strife and I know she can’t have children. And somebody was saying, ‘Oh, all the things she has done,’ because she has achieved a lot. I said, ‘Oh, well, that’s what you can do when you haven’t got children.’ And I thought, ‘Oh, you’ve got to be careful when you say things like that.’ So that’s why I knew how you’d be feeling.

Well, perhaps on that note – we’ve gone for about an hour and a half – I’d like to leave it there today.

Yes.

And I’d like to come back, because I’d like to listen back what I’ve done today, and also to talk a bit more about the courses that you were running and what you were doing and the changing role, I guess, as a librarian, too. Okay?
(laughs) Thank you.

END OF TAPE 2

[The first tape of the interview recorded on 19\textsuperscript{th} June 2001 is not recoverable after a technical failure. Because the second tape of the recording on that day predominantly records concluding remarks, this has been designated Tape 5 and is placed at the end of this transcription.]

TAPE 3 SIDE A

This is a follow-up interview with Joan Brewer being recorded by Karen George for the Honoured Women’s Oral History Project of the State Library of South Australia. This interview is taking place on the 6\textsuperscript{th} July 2001 at Dulwich in South Australia.

Well, I’d like to thank you, Joan, for agreeing to come back for an interview after a technical hitch has destroyed our third tape. So what I’ll do is start by asking some of the questions that I asked in a follow-up from the first two tapes that we did the first time.

In that interview, you talked about Mother Bridget Jones, and we just, as I came in, talking a bit further about her, and you said she was one of a number of women, outstanding teachers, who inspired you. I just wondered whether there were others that also influenced you.

Yes. She, I suppose, because she taught several subjects that I was involved in, and she was also involved with the production of plays and sport and so on. Another one who was a very significant teacher for me in Leaving and Leaving Honours, as it was then, was Mother Paul Cotter, who’d been at Marryatville for many years. I think for some time she was the bursar, you know, did all the finances. But she was a very scholarly lady, and I remember that in French, for example, she would bring in a Frenchwoman to talk to us. She herself spoke very good French, but she wanted to make our accent better, and I certainly noticed the advantage. When I did Leaving and Leaving Honours and Intermediate, you didn’t have to sit for oral French. You sat for a written exam, and when the results came out – it was ‘F’, and it would have an ‘O’ after it if you’d passed the oral as well, but you didn’t have to do the oral so that was an extra, so that when I went into university and did French I, after the first term Professor Cornell used to lecture in French and I could – I used to translate it actually, I think, as I wrote it down. But I remember a couple of girls who’d been to schools where they didn’t teach oral French sitting next to me and finding great
difficulty. So she was a very scholarly, very gentle lady – very firm. I remember we had to say a couple of prayers before each lesson in either Latin or French, which I suppose was good for us. And at primary school – I don’t know whether I’ve mentioned her before – an outstanding teacher, a Sister of St Joseph in the parish school who taught me in Year Seven, she had been a teacher before she entered, and I think one of her brothers was a prominent teacher in one of the boys’ schools – Sister Thomasine. I can’t think of her surname, it escapes me. But I remember that she, because she knew I was going on to Loreto and that I’d be learning French, gave me lessons after the Qualifying Certificate exam so that I’d get a bit of a head start, because the girls who went through Loreto started French in Grade Five, and she apparently knew that so she was trying to give me a bit of a helping hand. She was very dynamic, and I kept running across her in various ways. She taught in Port Lincoln for many years, when my brother had children in the school. She came back to teach at St Peters, and was there, actually, at the time I married because I remember she sent me a telegram. And then an extraordinary thing: when my mother was very ill and was admitted to Burnside, she was living in retirement at Kensington, and her role as a retired Sister was going to the hospitals visiting people who were ill, and Mum of course was dying. So she really crossed my path. She was a really strong character and very direct, very down to earth. So I suppose, unconsciously, you absorb a lot from women like that who don’t push it at you but just epitomise what women can do.

You showed me a letter as I arrived that you’d received from Bridget Jones at some stage in her life. Do you want to talk a little bit about how she continued, you said, to sort of prod at occasions.

Yes. I only started to keep her letters in the last few years of her life, when I suddenly realised how old she was. She died in 1990, when she was ninety-eight, nearly ninety-nine, and I’ve got one letter written in ’76 when my mother died, but quite a number of others written in the ’80s. And I remember a couple of the letters where her handwriting was not quite as dashing as it always was because her eyes were going, and then she eventually did have a stroke and another young nun used to answer her correspondence. But it wasn’t just myself, I mean she kept tabs on all her past pupils. I think I may have told you that when I was appointed to the Federal Government’s National Women’s Consultative Council I remember getting a letter
from her, and (laughs) you could almost see her thinking, ‘Well, now Joan can be one of those who tell Mr Hawke what he should be doing,’ which (laughs) I found quite amusing. But she was very proud of her past pupils. She must have cost the order an absolute fortune in correspondence, because I had a letter from her every Christmas and birthday after I left school. Now, I’m not saying every girl did, but a lot did, and not just people that you might have thought – well, I went on with tertiary studies. But it was all sorts of people, girls that perhaps married quite young and had families, and she would prick your conscience about telling you somebody that was coming to Adelaide and she’d lost touch and what about getting in touch? Or tell you things you should do – not in any preachy way, but just saying, you know, we’ve all got to think of other people. So she, instead of saying it – we all used to laugh – there’d be a little leaflet or a – – – I remember in one of those letters – and I must have destroyed it, sadly – but she had read this sermon by a Presbyterian minister in Melbourne that she’d been most impressed with, so I got that (laughs) to read.

**And there was a small piece in the letter that you just showed me about what women could do, or something I think she – – –.**

Yes, yes, yes. She thought that it was very important, the influence of women. And particularly in families, not just women who didn’t marry and had careers, because most of the women of my generation married and had families – all my cousins did. I mean, I married but married later.

And I think the other person that was a strong influence on me was Gwen Fulton, who was my senior mistress when I first went out teaching.

**In what way?**

She was a brilliant scholar, she was a wonderful athlete, she was musical and she was just a lovely person, very unassuming, never pushed any of those things. She was a wonderful role model to be firm, but caring, for students. And when we went back to a Naracoorte High School reunion a few years back – perhaps about ten years ago – you could see that all the students still remembered her very kindly. And many of them remembered me, but she was much more significant in the school because she was the senior woman. And she came in to be the Women’s Warden at the Teachers’ College, which was the senior position on the staff, and she eventually
married, and she lives in retirement out at Walkerville with her husband. But she was a great role model and a great help to me. And also we both studied librarianship together, too, at the same time so we could check with one another. A really lovely lady. And when they named the library at Underdale after me and I was asked who I’d like to be invited I asked two Loreto nuns and I asked Gwen and her husband to be there, because I felt they’d been important.

**Is it now looking back that you see them as role models, or do you feel that you were aware of them and modelling yourself after them as you were growing up?**

I think it’s more now. I think that you absorb things without realising what’s happening. With Gwen, because I was teaching history and English and she was the senior in those areas, she helped me. When I did my first lot of marking and so on she’d point out things I could do and so on. Extremely helpful. You know, I could go and ask her anything. The whole staff there were very good to me, because I was only twenty, the baby on the staff, and the Headmaster, Mr McPherson, later became the Superintendent of High Schools. Very demanding, but I loved working for him. I suppose it would be true to say that in my working life – I think I’m probably a bit above average, perhaps, academically, but by no means brilliant – but – – –.

**I’ll just get you to stop –**

Sorry.

– that’s okay.

But I’ve always worked very hard, I suppose over and above the call of duty, so that when I was teaching at Naracoorte, you know, I came back to help teach the kids’ dancing class at night and used to go up on the weekends and catalogue the library. If you’re in it, you have to be in it wholeheartedly, I think, and I think that’s probably something I absorbed without thinking about it, at school.

**One of the other questions I wanted to raise was whether – you mentioned that when you were at Teachers’ College, because it was during the wartime period, that there was not many men around –**

Yes.

– because obviously they’d enlisted. Did that have any influence on the feel of the College, with predominantly women students?
Yes, I suppose you could say it was peculiar in the sense that it was different. A lot of the sporting teams almost folded. I was secretary of tennis, and because there weren’t all the competitions where the College team would be playing against others we had an internal competition called group tennis, between the different year levels and the different courses, of which I was secretary, and I was on the Student Council. And if you look at pictures of the Student Council there are more females than males. So that was – we were restricted in the things we could do. We became very involved, I remember, as the War got worse in ’42 and ’43 – you know, it’s only in retrospect that I realise how grim it was – we started a vegetable garden, I remember, in the back of Government House, and we used to go over there to grow vegetables. I remember one holidays – in ’43, that could have been – where we went to Morphett Vale to spread flax all through the holidays because they made an appeal to university students. And we used to have an assembly every Wednesday – it was pretty formal – with Dr Schulz. He was the Principal of the College from a young man of about twenty-six or so till he retired. Very austere, very scholarly, he never married, and he was also the lecturer in German at the University. I liked him, but you either got on – you know, liked him or you didn’t. But he had this rather formal assembly, and if I had to make an announcement about tennis or whatever you just asked to be put on the speakers’ list and he’d call you. But every Wednesday names would be read out of boys that had enlisted who’d been killed or wounded, and there was a list of those who had enlisted and there’d be a minute’s silence. And brothers – one of the girls in my group, her only brother was killed, and eventually her husband, although she didn’t marry till we left college; and my best friend, one of her three brothers. So there was that sort of thing all the time. So it was pretty abnormal. I think we got down to only about twenty men and a hundred and something women at one stage. I can’t remember exactly.

You mention the sports side – did you become involved in other extra-curricular activities at university?

Yes, very much – well, in tennis, and I was in the College basketball team. We did play competitive basketball, probably because I think the tennis teams up till then had been mixed tennis, you know, there’d be four men and four women and you’d play in District or whatever. So that the tennis became just internal. But yes, I
played basketball; all the time I was in college I was in the team. We used to have to wear terrible black stockings, so did the university students, because we had black tunics. And I remember we – because there was clothes rationing we used to mend and mend and mend them, because we didn’t want to waste clothing coupons on these terrible black stockings. (laughs)

**Did you become involved in any sort of community service type activity?**

Yes. Again because it was the War, I became involved in working at the Cheer-up Hut. I used to go down on Tuesday late in the afternoon to help get a meal, and we used to have over a thousand men coming through the Cheer-up Hut there. Often they’d be men just in overnight. They had a big hostel where they could sleep, and they might come in on a train from Perth and go on to somewhere else. Because – I digress to say that, as a civilian, unless you had a permit, you weren’t allowed to travel interstate on the train unless there was a very good reason, and there was petrol rationing, *et cetera.* So I used to go there on Tuesday night, and then later I also became involved in working – or it might have been the other way round – I started on Sunday at what was – there is a car park opposite the Adelaide Hospital now; it was the Palais Royal, the big dance centre – and we used to feed well over a thousand men on a Sunday night for tea. So I used to go in about two o’clock and we’d get the meal ready, set up the tables, prepare, stir coppers of custard or soup or – ugh! And then you’d be delegated to wash up in very primitive conditions. I mean, I might be given the job of washing the knives, and you’d just have a basin and a trestle table, but the men would come and wipe up for you, and so on. And then they’d have a concert, whereas on Tuesday night it would be dancing. But you didn’t dance on Sunday night! (laughs)

And I was also involved in First Aid courses with the Red Cross and so on. So everybody got involved. I used to sing in my church choir – not that I’m a particularly good singer. So I suppose I’ve always been involved in things, but I think that might be because my mother always was. She was a joiner, and even in her old age, right up to the time she died, she was active doing things for the church. You know, there was – I remember a young curate who was doing a lot of work with the boys at Magill, you know, the – and he’d want to give them a treat, so I’d go in home and there’d be Mum making cakes and things because he wanted to take them
up there. And she was very active in the RSL ladies’ auxiliary, or whatever it called itself, trading tables, all the usual things. You’d know, from the country! (laughter) Bowling club. My brother and I in the hot weather – she stopped bowling, I think, in matches a year or so before she died, she was eighty-two – but I used to say to my brother, ‘Oh, that weather! She might drop dead on the bowling green,’ and he said, ‘What if she does? It’d be awful for us, but – – –.’ So she was very active, so I suppose it’s a pattern, isn’t it?

Speaking of another woman you mentioned as a role model was Miss Archer who you went to Sydney to see, and I wondered what it was you actually learned from her when you went?

Melbourne, she was at. She travelled around a lot. She was the Chief Librarian for CSIRO, and CSIRO, as you know, has divisions all over Australia. She was the doyen among women in the library profession, or I guess one of them. There was a Miss Wood, who was a university librarian in Western Australia, but otherwise most of the males who were university or public librarians – well, they were males, the principal librarians. But Miss Archer, when I became librarian – the first librarian at the Defence Centre at Salisbury, I didn’t have any background in technical libraries. I’d been in the university library and I knew about school libraries. So the Department – Department of Supply it was then – sent me to Melbourne to look at technical libraries in the Department at Maribyrnong and Fisherman’s Bend, but then I spent a lot of time with her. She was marvellous.

What was she like?

(laughs) Very, I suppose, awe-inspiring. She didn’t suffer fools gladly. And very direct. And you might almost have thought of her as your stereotype of the headmistress who was in charge, but she was very kindly. And one of the big things I had to come to terms with was you know in libraries, most of the libraries you use are catalogued by the Dewey Decimal system? Well, there is a Universal Decimal Classification, UDC, which a lot of scientific libraries used to use in those days, and I had to learn to use that. I mean, the framework was the same, but the details – – –. So she gave me a lot of help. And CSIRO had a lot of centralised services that they provided to their own libraries, and they gave access and helped you, even if you were outside – or they did me. And she was on the Council, the General Council of
the Library Association. So I remember when I came back from England in the ’50s – she was still a leading light – going to Sydney for a meeting, and Miss Archer – there might have been one other woman, I’m trying to think – but being very in awe of this table full of – surrounded by all these important men, and the other person from Adelaide was Ray Olding, who later became the State Librarian here, but he was just a bit younger than I am so we were very circumspect. It was in the days when women wore hats. Did I tell you about – – –? (laughs)

No.

It’s quite funny. Because I’ve always liked clothes, and in those days you did wear hats, and I do remember that I was very careful in what I wore to Sydney and had this rather pretty hat, and the meeting was held in the Library of New South Wales, Public Library of New South Wales, and John Metcalf was the Public Librarian and the President of the Library Association and the Chief Examiner of the Library Association and the figure in the library world. So he probably knew I was feeling a bit nervous. But anyway, we sat, I remember, Ray and I on this side, and I’d known Miss Archer was there and she came in with the hat. Well, Miss Archer probably would have bought a hat and wouldn’t have worried too much what it was like. She would always look neat and trim, but she wouldn’t have been a bit interested in trying to look any way glamorous. Anyway, Mr Metcalf – I think it might have been when we had a break for something – and he came back and he was walking behind my chair and he leaned down and he said, ‘I like your hat a lot better than Miss Archer’s.’ (laughs) Which was great, because it sort of made me relax a bit. I thought it was quite funny. (laughter)

You mentioned travelling overseas. I wonder whether at that sort of time, whether a woman, an unmarried woman, to travel overseas was an unusual thing to do or not, or – – –?

No. In a period there, just before me and just after me, there was a proportion of women that did that, because there were – well, I went with two school friends. One was certainly going to England to marry one of the scientists from Salisbury, which I knew but it was all unofficial, and the other one just wanted to travel, as I did. But there were several on the ship – like I met some girls from Melbourne, one of whom I ended up flatting with. So it was a bit of a thing, this adventure. I suppose it’s a bit
like these days, except a lot more do it. We had to go by sea and it was very expensive. I remember that I had to save up for a long time. I had money taken out of my pay at Salisbury, so I had a special bank account so I could buy my return ticket and have a nest-egg beside. And our idea was to keep the nest-egg intact so that if you were in London a lot of the time you’d try and get a job so you weren’t dipping into that.

**Did you go over with the idea that you’d learn more about the field you were in at all?**

Yes, I had letters from Salisbury and they sent through my security clearance, because that was a very important thing. I mean, there’s been so much in the paper in the last few months about what happened at Woomera and Maralinga and so on. So there was a very tight security clearance. And I remember the Superintendent out here who was an Englishman at the time said, ‘Look, I’ll send all that to the Ministry in London so if you want to work for them – –.’ Well, for some months I taught, did some supply teaching. I went to the Library Association and to the Board of Education of the London County Council, because the counties controlled education – I think the London schools, I think it’s different now. Maybe it’s all – I don’t know who works them. And I did what you call supply teaching. And if you said you were available – there was a terrific shortage, especially anyone with a – I had a B.A.Dip.Ed. and all my library qualifications. There was such a shortage as the result of the War – this is 1952 – that, you know, when I’d go into a staff room they’d all, most of them would be goggle-eyed because a lot of them had only done pressure-cooker courses after the War to get people into the schools, and many of them – –. I had a friend – he and his family are still my friends – who then went on and finished his degree slowly and painfully.

**So was the teacher-librarian meld an unusual thing there as well?**

Yes. I didn’t do any library work in the schools. I taught in three schools. I taught in an infant school for a week in Paddington, believe it or not, telling stories and reading books to children. I wouldn’t be any good – I don’t think I’m artistic enough to do all those creative things that teachers of young children think up. I guess you could be taught. I love little children and get on well with them. But I taught in a couple of secondary modern schools, one in particular that was as tough – dear me, I
wouldn’t turn round and write on the blackboard, because when I got to this school they asked me to take over this class. I was there for two days, and then the Head said, ‘Look, would you stay on?’ They’d apparently had a procession of teachers coming in, and the children had beaten them and teachers had burst into tears in the classroom and disappeared, and she said would I stay on. And I said, ‘Oh, yes, if I can be as tough as I like,’ and she said, ‘Yes.’ (laughs) And I can always remember about the first or second day, when they knew I was going to be there for a while, they must have thought, ‘Okay, we’ll set about getting rid of her.’ And they had a system that had survived from the War of children buying their lunches, so children were fed well. And you had to take a list on the Monday morning, and I don’t remember the figures but say the first child paid sevenpence, the second child in a family paid sixpence, or whatever. And of course because I didn’t know them I had to do the roll, and they would mess about and do silly things. And so (laughs) – I don’t know whether you have you done any teaching? Drama’s very helpful in teaching! And I’m very tall. So I would get up, walk around the teacher’s desk, sit on the teacher’s desk in front of them and fold my arms and say, ‘I’m not doing another thing till you’re quiet and we do this properly.’ So I’d wait and they’d subside, so I’d go back and I’d call a few more names, and then somebody – if they even breathed I’d stop. And I’d go back and stop again, and one kid put up his hand, said, ‘Oh, we have to go to morning tea’ – or recess. And I said, ‘Oh, no. We’re not going to morning tea, we’re not going to lunch, we’re not doing anything until we do this properly. And I don’t care if I stay here all day.’ So eventually – it was hard, though, but it then became a challenge as far as I was concerned. But the thing was, when they knew you were fair they accepted it, but for several days I wouldn’t turn and write on the blackboard and turn my back to them, because they’d all move their desks forward or do all – – –. Oh, I had a lot of funny incidents there!

Would that be a principle, I guess, that you used in all your education, in your – in the line of – – –?

I really like teaching, and I suppose I really like people and I like children, I get on very well with my little nieces and nephews. I’ve been talking this morning – I rang my niece and her fifteen year-old is home from Brighton High School, and we’ve been having a great conversation because she’s very bright but she’s getting a bit –
‘Oh – – –.’ I said, ‘Look, hang in there, Esther, you go through periods like that.’ She’s Year Ten, she could really do extremely well, so we had a great discussion of what she enjoyed. And I was telling her, I said, ‘I know.’ I can remember at one stage at school, because I wanted to do all sorts of things, I theoretically was doing my homework but I’d often have a book on my lap, so if my mother looked in I was doing [my homework]. So I told her that, and she said, ‘Oh!’, you know. I suppose she thinks I’ve always been a good girl. So I think you really have to like children and young people. And I loved students – that’s what I missed when I retired. And when I was promoted in the College from a lecturer, senior lecturer, and became that awful title, the Women’s Warden, I still lectured in history because I still wanted to teach. And I said once to a student, ‘Oh, but I enjoy it,’ and this student said to me, ‘You can tell.’ I fell off a platform one day giving a history lecture up at Wattle Park. (laughs) I was getting steamed up, and you’ve probably noticed I use my hands a lot and I was emphasising something like this, or whatever, and I must have gone to the edge and I went straight off the edge of the platform. I just recovered myself, but probably the best history lecture (laughs) they ever had. So I guess I really think you have to like teaching and you have to like the people you’re teaching.

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE B

I fell off a platform one day giving a history lecture up at Wattle Park. (laughs) I was getting steamed up, and you’ve probably noticed I use my hands a lot and I was emphasising something like this, or whatever, and I must have gone to the edge and I went straight off the edge of the platform. I just recovered myself, but probably the best history lecture (laughs) they ever had. So I guess I really think you have to like teaching and you have to like the people you’re teaching. So I was lucky to do something I enjoyed.

Do you think that’s why that teacher-librarian joint thing worked so well for you, because you – – –?

Probably. A lot of the people that came in who were teachers coming in to do librarianship – perhaps I shouldn’t say a lot – certainly a proportion of them were people that weren’t necessarily very good teachers, and they saw this as retaining a job but escaping from the classroom, and I used to emphasise, ‘Look, it isn’t. If you
can’t get on with one class, when you’re the teacher-librarian you’ve got to go from Year Seven down to Receptions if you’re in a primary school and all the subject teachers in the secondary school, and the importance of liaising.’ But unfortunately – well, it would be the same in a classroom. You know, there are some people who are there and they’re perhaps on superannuation and they can’t think of another job, but I’m sure pupils can pick it up when teachers don’t really enjoy it, it’s just a job.

So let’s talk a little about the courses, the pressure-cooker courses were the first ones you did for the teacher-librarian. You said in your first interview that you had to train them to be teacher-librarians, and that made me wonder, well, what did you see to be the most important aspects of being a teacher-librarian?

Well, the thing that I used to emphasise, and eventually that became the area in which I lectured, and that book we did – you know, one of the chapters I did – was about the role of the teacher-librarian. It was really emphasising that the teacher-librarian is not a custodian of the materials who sits there and jumps up and down if anybody makes a noise, but you are a facilitator so that people can have access to materials, but you’re also a partner with the teacher, so in the ideal situation – and we had some very good schools. Out at Ingle Farm High School was one with the teachers – where he would actually be sitting down with the teachers, say it was a history teacher, planning a curriculum, planning it with them and suggesting the materials he had or how they could do it and, you know, whether some of them would be in the library doing research while the teacher had some in the classroom – you know, real partnership. It’s an educational role, not a custodial role, and that was something that you really had to emphasise, because many people saw librarians as people that just kept the books tidy and silence in the library.

Was that a new thing at that time?

Yes. A lot of it had come because of what I’d read and I suppose what I thought, but particularly from America there’d been a big what they called the Knapp – K-N-A-double-P – the Knapp School Library Project in the United States. I’m trying to think which state it was – I think it was in Maryland, but certainly on the eastern seaboard – and we’d had, over the years, visits from a number of American librarians. There was a Sarah Fenwick who came in about ’64 and did a survey of
school and children’s libraries around Australia, and then a Peggy Sullivan came later and then several others. And then a number of us went to America and visited. So I suppose that sowed the seeds. But in America, when I went back there later, because of the local control of schools, even within the same county they can vary tremendously, depending on the commitment of the – whereas our developments that came here were more even over the – and of course, when federal funding came, you know, it just took off. And it was – primary school libraries came in ’73, I think, and – yes, the ’72 Budget – and I think it was ’68 budget and ’69 for [secondary] schools, in a way following on from the pattern that the Science Laboratories Project had set. Because – I mean, you’re too young to remember that really education was a state responsibility, and it was only after the Second World War that the Commonwealth – I think the Commonwealth Scholarships were the first foray of the Commonwealth into schools, and they were scholarships given for children to stay on at school. Well, then the Science Laboratories Project came after Sputnik, when everybody got frightened that the Russians were getting ahead of them, and so there was a pattern set up. And of course now there’s so much Commonwealth aid that it’s hard to remember that it was a change. Probably partly it was set up because during the War, during the Second World War, the Commonwealth took over income tax, so the Commonwealth got a lot more responsibility for finance so that the division between federal and state responsibilities probably started to blur from then on, and it’s so blurred now that each blames the other when anything goes wrong in health or education!

So how was it that you became involved in that development of going to visit schools and looking at the situation of libraries?

Well, I took the very first course that was established in 1964. That was largely because of a lot of questioning that went on in the State Parliament about the state of school libraries. And so the Director-General and the Minister said, ‘Well, we’ll have a course,’ and so the first lot came in and then another lot. And from then on, particularly when the Commonwealth came into it, we had, with Commonwealth money, we would have a three-week course in January – that was fairly much pretty

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11 Richard Owen.
superficial but it was better than nothing, and a lot of teachers came in to do that all through January – and then we’d have them back in June for a follow-up weekend, so there’d be that lot. Then there would be people funded by the Commonwealth for a whole year to do some of the subjects, as if they were doing the whole diploma, and then we had the people that came in for six months. But gradually they all got melded together, but it was very tricky because, you know, you’d have the January course, the first term course, people in on what they called ‘release time scholarships’ for the whole year from the Education Department, and so we were doing the what we called pressure-cooker courses, concurrently with developing a major within the Diploma of Teaching and the four-year Bachelor of Education and then, eventually, a post-graduate course as well. So people could do a four-year B.Ed. with a major in Librarianship and a major in another subject area, if they were in a secondary school. And, interestingly enough, up here – I go up to Loreto a lot because I’ve been involved – and one of the girls who first went there was a teacher-librarian who had a major in English and a major in Librarianship and got a job there, which I didn’t have anything to do with – this is years ago, when I was still teaching – but eventually she switched over to be an English teacher and she’s not in the library now, there are other people there. So it’s quite interesting, going – – –. And then, when I went out visiting the schools for the Schools Commission, when federal funding came, we did things like assessing the library collections in schools because the government wanted to have an idea of how much money they should give schools and what were the collections like.

**How would you go about doing that in a practical sense?**

Well, what they used to do is they’d get the school to put in a return, saying, ‘How many books have you got in your library? How much staff? How much money do you spend a year? What library equipment have you got?’ – the whole thing – and we would have this in our hands. And Jim Dwyer and I did the whole state between us in the independent schools. And they would count every single book, and we would do spot – sometimes, if it was a small collection in a little parish school, I’d look at every one and just – you know, there might be hundreds of books there and you’d end up saying, ‘Look, you’ve got forty books that I’d count; the rest should get the big heave-ho.’ And they’d count, if they had twenty volumes in an Arthur
Mees encyclopaedia or something, they’d call it twenty books when we called it one. So we did a lot of that, and stressing that a science book that’s published in 1940 in fact is counter-productive because the material is wrong in most cases. So it was assessing collections and assessing what they had in the way of facilities, and recommending, and then they got grants from the Commonwealth. We sent our things back to Canberra, and Canberra, they had some kind of a formula. So we were very popular when they got a cheque. And I did – there were Catholic schools, Lutheran schools, some of the fundamentalist Christian schools and then the big independent schools. It was very interesting. And then, funnily enough, when the secondary program came again, we did a bit. Then that was interesting, because we ran seminars, those of us who were involved, with architects, talking to them about the new concept of a school library. It wasn’t a big room with big tables and everybody sitting in rows; it was an area where you did different things, and audio-visual materials, of course. So we had a number of weekend seminars with architects. The first one we had was at The University of Adelaide, and we’d have presentations from some of us and from an architect we had working with us, and then we’d break into groups. We would have invited principals, teacher-librarians, architects and perhaps somebody from the school council and they broke up into groups so they got this idea, and then we became consultants. They wouldn’t get federal funding if they built a library that was less than the standards that we, as a committee, had set up. You know, there had to be so much space, so much shelving, this, that and the other, and I was involved in drawing up standards for school libraries.

**Does that still exist, is that standard – what did you say as the basis of that?**

Oh, they’d have been modified since then, and everybody does their own thing a bit more now because there’s no Schools Commission any more and – – –. The Commonwealth still gives funding for what they call ‘capital grants’, but that can be for anything, really. I got back in the act a bit since I retired. From ’87 to ’93 I chaired a Capital Grants Committee for the Catholic Education Office, and what would happen then – and it may have been modified a bit since – they would give x number of dollars to the Catholic system for South Australia. This committee had to allocate that to the most deserving cases on looking at the rules that the
Commonwealth had set, and there were certain criteria. So we then – I met up with a lot of my teacher-librarians going around the country assessing the need and then, you know, there might be thirty apply for the grant, perhaps five or six would get it. But it was very interesting.

**Taking you back to that first time you were going around all those school libraries, what was your general impression – – –?**

Oh, they were so terrible. The book collections were just so awful!

**In what way?**

Oh, old and – I mean, nobody had really spent money on them. They were just things people had given them or they’d been there for years and just accumulated in the cupboard at the back. A few schools had good collections, and I always remember Marion High School was the school that always – and Adelaide High School, my friend Pat Tomaszewski was there. Interestingly enough – Pat and I are still great friends – and she worked in CSIRO in Melbourne. She had done her Leaving Honours here and was going teaching and then her mother didn’t want her to go to the country, so she eventually – she went to business college for a year and then worked here and went to Melbourne and was secretary to one of the scientists there – and Miss Archer persuaded her to do the Library Association exam and become a librarian for CSIRO, which she did. And she came back to Adelaide and was the librarian at the Animal Nutritional Laboratory – you know that building just opposite the caretaker’s cottage in Kintore Avenue? So she became a librarian. Well, after she – well, when she married she resigned, and then she went back into libraries. Although she wasn’t qualified as a teacher, because of her expertise and her own background, and I suppose she was there for a long time and proved herself, she was appointed a teacher-librarian at Adelaide High and was there till she retired. And I used to send my students to Pat for a lot of their practical teaching, because she was wonderful at working with teachers. I can remember organising a Library Association exam – not exam, meeting – where we encouraged people to come and we got a teacher and a teacher-librarian talking about how they worked together, and Pat did it with a maths or a science teacher or something, but a number of them did it. And I used that as an example of a good school library in a number of papers I gave. I remember I had to give one in 1974, I think, in Sydney, and I thought, ‘Oh,
I’m not going to give just another lecture on the theory. I’m just going to take three case studies and say, “Well, look, this is what we’re talking about.” And so they were all different. There were at that time, and there still is – because it’s a girl who used to lecture with me who was a very good librarian at St Aloysius College, and there were some other departmental and private schools that had – so you got to know who they were. There was a good librarian at Princes at one stage, too, and later on at Saints, because people move around. You know that yourself. You know, schools can vary with new principals, new teachers and so on. Yes, well, Pat and I are still friends and she’s the one who comes with me on a Monday and we work in the church archives.

**Just talk about – in 1970 you established this School of Librarianship at Adelaide Teachers’ College.**

Yes.

**Did you have a vision for what you wanted to do with that course?**

I wanted it to become part of the normal Diploma of Teaching and Bachelor of Education, not, you know, pressure-cooker courses that didn’t have any real standing. We’d had all these courses from ’64 through to ’69 of varying lengths, and we did design before that, a number of us who got together – Doreen Goodman who was here for two years and came from Canberra but, sadly for us, went back to Canberra – and we did design School Librarianship A. And then we designed B, C and the fourth year, so we were sort of developing this major. That’s what I wanted to do: to get away from pressure-cooker courses. Of course we didn’t, because all the federal money came and you had the two going concurrently. We worked very hard and we got – well, I think at one stage I had two or two and a half people funded with federal money because we were churning so many courses, or so many students through the courses, I should have said. So that’s what I wanted. I wanted a teacher-librarian to be a specialist teacher in the same way as a science teacher or in a primary school it might be the expert on reading or whatever, that’s what I hoped for. It didn’t always happen.

**Were there particular principles or philosophies that you held?**
Well, the things that I talked about earlier. The role of the librarian in the school as a partner in the teaching process, I think that was the thing that we kept stressing. And the educational role. At once stage we introduced – we had a number of subjects, and we introduced a subject – one of the other younger lecturers became very much involved in that – and that was the concept of the librarian as teacher. And we had this unit and the student had to go to a school and tee up an arrangement – or if they were in a school they could work with somebody there – of how they were going to actually put that into practice, a co-operative venture of people planning and implementing their role as the teacher-librarian working with that teacher. That was very good. I guess, too, I tended also to – and because I was on a lot of these committees and a lot of contact with schools – to try and give the people doing the course, where there was the opportunity, the option of doing something that was directly related to their work. I remember one girl, she was one of our very good teacher-librarians – – –. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B: TAPE 4 SIDE A

This is the second tape of a follow-up interview with Joan Brewer being recorded by Karen George for the State Library of South Australia’s Honoured Women’s Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 6th July 2001 at Dulwich in South Australia.

So we were just – what were we just talking about? We were just talking about the extra work that you were doing helping women to achieve what they wished to achieve. I wondered whether you considered yourself in those days a feminist at all, or whether you were involved with the Women’s Movement?

Not specifically, perhaps, but I suppose incidentally, in that I was encouraging these women doing librarianship. And certainly in earlier years myself and other friends used to go back to Loreto talking about career choices. They used to ask – I’d been active in the Old Scholars, and they would ask people who worked in areas to come along and talk about what they did so that the students could ask you, so I suppose that was a sort of a role model thing. And then I certainly did that on Careers Nights for the Library Association. And because I was very active in the Library Association and became an examiner, and for six years was on their Board of Education, a lot of people would ask you for advice, so I suppose in that way we were helping women. And I think it was more accidental than a definite attempt to become a leader in the Feminist Movement. I think I thought – just assumed that
women could do things, and sometimes would get irritated when it was illustrated that there were these differences. And I think I may have mentioned before that when I first went to Salisbury, not long after I was there as a graduate and a qualified librarian, a man came who had just graduated. He’d returned, an ex-serviceman, but he had no library training, but he was paid more than I was although I had to train him. He was also rather lazy. And I remember years before – and I may have mentioned this, too – when voting for the Upper House, the Legislative Council –

Yes, you did.

– that only my father had a vote because he was the house owner. I remember thinking, ‘That’s all wrong.’ But not joining something so much. But then I suppose within the College, gradually because I was the senior woman and often the only woman on a lot of senior positions, I did get involved in an indirect way in helping the staff to nominate for committees. Denise Bradley who’s now the Vice-Chancellor, she and myself and a few others would encourage people to stand for election to committees and then help them, because they were very nervous about going to a committee meeting and what they did and nervous of even talking.

Were you yourself, being the first woman I think on the Libraries Board and on the Institute of Technology Board, what was that like for you?

The Institute of Technology Council, that was a bit of a surprise. I remember getting this message to go up to the Minister’s office, and I thought, ‘Oh, what’s happened?’ Because I think I may have mentioned that there was a lot of fuss about the state of school libraries before Jim Dwyer came – this would have been in ’63 – and it was as a result of that that I took the first course. But also there were questions in the House. And somebody had asked him about how many librarianship lecturers there were and we got extra lecturers because of that, but we had nothing to do with it, it was a student going home and saying, ‘Well, there are not going to be enough lecturers for all of us to do Librarianship 2’, that sort of thing. So when I got this message I assumed, ‘(gasp) Somebody else has asked a question. I wonder what this is about.’ But he was – it was Hugh Hudson who was the Minister of Education in the Dunstan Government, and he said he wanted to appoint me to the Council and I was the only woman for a while, but not all the time I was there. Someone from the general staff came on later. But certainly in the beginning. The Chairman,
without meaning to, would forget I was there and say, ‘Now, gentlemen –’ and then suddenly realise that ‘– and Mrs Brewer’ and would apologise, (sound of children’s voices in the distance) and they were very nice to me and they put me on the Academic Board, I was the Council representative. And I was also the Council representative on Staff Promotions or Assessment or something, I suppose because I came from another academic institution. I did that for six years, and of course a few more women came onto it later.

What was the attitude of the men towards you on those when you were a lone woman?

Very polite – no, they were all pretty good, actually. I don’t think anybody resented it. At first I suppose they might have thought I was a bit of a freak. (laughs) And the Libraries Board was a bit different, in that I think in the ’30s –

A bit of conversation in the background, I guess.

– oh, there are some children playing in a tree behind you, there are two little children live next door, so we’ll put up with them. I think when there was a joint board for the Library, Museum and Art Gallery there had been a woman way back, but two of us were appointed. I was appointed representing ‘the profession’ in inverted commas, not as a delegate from the profession, but as somebody that could express a point of view. And then one of – Margaret Bell, who was a senior staff member, represented the staff. Now, that was a breakthrough, it was written up in the Library Association journal. And I was on the Libraries Board from – it’s hard to remember dates these days. I think it was probably about the same time, about ’74 or something into the early ’80s – about eight or nine years. That was very interesting, because I was also on the Libraries Board when the great expansion of public libraries came. And then of course all the expansion of community libraries, school community libraries, which was of course a great interest of mine, and there were documents brought out about standards for school community libraries and a set of rules – that’s why it worked here – as to who paid for what. So it was all set down with representation from all the interested bodies. So I was lucky because the first public library didn’t open till ’57 at Elizabeth, but there was a great expansion later. And so here I was involved in expansion of school libraries, but also in this expansion of public libraries, especially school community libraries.
You talked, I think, after the first interview we had, about feeling that you took risks – as well as being fortunate, being there at the right time, you also were willing to take risks and challenges. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Well, I suppose that’s a product of the times, in that, for example, I resigned from the Department and went and worked in the Barr Smith Library, I resigned from there and went and worked at Salisbury, I resigned and went to England but came back there, but they offered me a job back, and I think I told you I came back on an RAF aircraft – the only lady with twenty-one men, mostly servicemen. But also because jobs weren’t hard to get it was easier to do that. And in taking on some of these jobs like the Schools Commission one, I remember I was asked to go on a Schools Commission Secondary Libraries Standards Committee, or whatever – secondary school libraries committee to draw up standards – and refused because I didn’t want to travel so much, but I’ve also been very much encouraged by John. I probably haven’t paid tribute to him enough, because we were certainly older when we got married. I’m a couple of years older – I think he was thirty-nine and I was forty-one – but I remember him saying, ‘Look, you can stay home all the time, work full-time, whatever you like, but’, he said, ‘I think you’d go nuts if you didn’t work some of the time.’ So for about four years, theoretically, I worked three-fifths time and then they’d say, ‘Oh, you’re doing more,’ and they’d pay me four-fifths. And I remember one of the Vice-Principals saying, ‘Look, you are silly. You’re doing more work than some of the full-time.’ And when Doreen Goodman, whom I mentioned earlier, who’d come from Canberra and they’d hoped she would head the Library School, went back to Canberra, they said, ‘Look, will you come back?’ So I came back to Kintore Avenue as a Temporary Acting Senior Lecturer to set up the Library School, or the School of Librarianship. But often when I’ve been asked to do things, or sometimes when I might have been asked to go and speak at this, that or the other, and John has always encouraged me to do it. He’s got a great conscience, he probably pricks mine often. He used to say, particularly in church things – sometimes we’d be asked to do things, say, I’d be asked at Loreto and whatever – that a lot of our contemporaries had children and were absolutely busy and bogged down, and that if we could do it we should because we were in a position where we could, and we’d help one another, which we’ve always done. And in fact he retired before I did – I don’t know whether I told you this – and
because I had a lot of evening lectures he took over the cooking. He’s still the cook and I’m the gardener, we’re all upside-down in our house!

So do you think that’s an aspect of it for you, your success as a woman is having the support for being allowed to have that success?

Yes, because I remember when I was at Western Teachers’ College one of the girls there having difficulty coming back to some meetings, and it turned out that her husband resented her coming back at night. Now, he had a very successful business – I can’t remember whether it was plumbing or electrical, but very successful – but he obviously felt threatened or something, or that – whereas I’ve never experienced that. If anything – you know, John would drive me to airports when I was running around the country and Jim Dwyer was on a lot of committees, and Jim’s wife and John often laugh about the number of times they’d be going to airports and Jim and I’d be going off because we were the two often from South Australia and we were overseas at things, too. The first time I went to America I went on my own with John’s support, because my mother was alive when I was thinking of going, and she was getting a bit toey that we’d be out of Adelaide. You often wonder whether they have a premonition that – because she was as healthy as anything – and I remember after a lot of discussion – this was in 1976 – John said, ‘Look, I won’t go, I’ll stay home and then Mattie will be quite relaxed, and you go on your own,’ and I went for a month. But I remember when I came back I said, ‘Look, I’m never going overseas on my own again. If you don’t come we won’t go,’ sort of thing. So I have been lucky. And he’s very good with young ones, too, although – you know, nieces and nephews who come to him for advice and loans and – –. (laughs)

To change the subject just a little bit, talking about – you mentioned that, I think, in respect to the teacher-librarian, to be an expert in reading I think was the expression you used –

Yes.

– and just in terms, I guess, of a love of books and how you think that is created in a child, where that comes from and what role the librarian perhaps has.

Well, I think that the most important impact that can be made is by parents with pre-school children, and that was one of the themes we used to hammer. Because another thing you’d be asked to do would be to go and talk to parent groups, to talk
to all sorts of groups who were interested, and we would always hammer that, that you read to them, you read them nursery rhymes and fairy tales and traditional literature and anything, and that pre-school experience is absolutely vital. And then when they get to school you hopefully can saturate them as well. But if they haven’t had anything read to them before they come to school I think they are disadvantaged, although good teachers can perhaps pick that up. But I mean, I know when one of my nieces – certainly she’s a teacher, but they’re all the same, even those that aren’t – when the children come here, they just assume that they’re going to be sitting in bed – Harry Potter, of course, is the – – –. (laughs) When I saw one of them sitting up when they were here just before Christmas and she had the one that had – number four – that had just come out. And you know it’s very thick. And they’re sitting up there, and I thought, ‘Goodness me!’ But I do think that makes a difference. And you see, I was lucky; I didn’t have a lot of books because I grew up in Depression times, but there were books in the house – not a huge amount, but I’ve still got a couple of books here that were in the bookshelf that belonged to my grandfather, and when he died we each took a few. And this aunt that gave me a book every birthday and Christmas. And then my parents gave me some too. So yes, I suppose I was lucky.

Well, we’ve covered all the questions that we missed out on the other tape, because the final tape that we did do last time survived, and that one was you summing up, so unless there’s anything else you’d like to add that has occurred to you in the interim – – –.

No, I think that – I think I’ve said it before, but I think that being on that National Women’s Consultative Council for two years as a member and then as Deputy Convenor from ’86 to ’90 was a very good experience for me, because then I did go round to lots of groups and all sorts of women’s groups. And I suppose earlier the Loreto Old Scholars’ Association years and years ago joined the National Council of Women because then they would have a voice with other women. And I guess the other thing was that we were talking about when I was showing you the pictures that I was very thrilled when, ten years ago, the University\textsuperscript{12} named the library after me. But (laughs) it’s quite funny because now they’re talking about selling Underdale, so

\textsuperscript{12} The University of South Australia.
what’ll happen to the building with all the lettering I don’t know. But I mightn’t be here by then. But that’s exactly ten years ago – or just over, I think it was March – so I’ve been fairly fortunate in that I’ve had good health and I’ve had a very supportive husband and family before that – you know, my parents and particularly my mother and my mother’s sister. And I suppose because of the education I had I’ve been able to do a lot of things in retirement that other people can’t do. I may have mentioned to you that in the last six months I’ve had two interesting interviews: one with a Ph.D. student before Christmas, who was talking about women’s attitude to ageing, and I was one of the people she interviewed, and I stressed then that good health and financial independence were pretty basic. And then a great-niece, who about six weeks ago, she rang up and I knew she wanted to ask me something and she didn’t know how to word it, but basically what it was, she had to interview an old lady about her relationships with health professionals over the years, what had been her experience with hospitals, doctors, nurses. So I’m beginning to feel a bit like an antique monument. (laughter)

Well, you’ve become quite experienced on the microphone, so thank you very much for your time today.

Okay, thank you.

END OF TAPE 4 SIDE B

[What follows (designated Tape 5) is the second part of the interview conducted on 19th June 2001. The first tape of the interview recorded on that date is not recoverable after a technical failure. It is placed at the end of the transcription in preference to following chronological sequence because it predominantly contains concluding remarks.]

TAPE 5 SIDE A

This is the second tape of a second interview with Joan Brewer being recorded by Karen George for the State Library of South Australia’s Honoured Women’s Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on the 19th June 2001 at Dulwich in South Australia.

So we were talking a bit about your role in visiting libraries and establishing school libraries. Perhaps we could talk a little bit about the other aspects of – you were involved with educational libraries in the Library Association – all those various bodies that you became involved with voluntarily, and being often the only woman on those committees.
Yes. In the Library Association, when I came back from England, I did become – that must have been in the ’50s – I was Branch President, and that was when I was on the General Council. There used to be two from each state branch on the General Council, and that was – I was talking earlier about Miss Archer and going to Sydney with all these important people: Mr Metcalf, who was the State Librarian of New South Wales, and was the President of the Library Association for many years – again, a figure in the library world.

**Were you the only woman on that particular – – –?**

No. (pause) No. There was Miss Archer, myself, and I can’t remember – there could have been one other, one other special librarian, but mainly male. I was certainly in the ’70s, when I was put on the Council of the Institute of Technology, I was the only woman, and when – for a period, and then one other person came who was the staff member, and then later another, but it was certainly predominantly male, that one.

**What was that like? Was it difficult for you, or – – –?**

Well, in the beginning it was certainly a bit different (laughs) but in a way I suppose that applied even within the College, although to a much lesser extent, because I was on the College Council and I suppose there were more males than females then. I remember in the beginning certainly the Chairman would forget and say, ‘Now, gentlemen,’ and then suddenly realise there was also a female. But no, they were very nice to me, and they in fact appointed me to the Academic Board. But that was partly because I was coming from another academic institution who supposedly would know something about what was happening on an academic board. But in the Library Association I was Branch President then, and I was on – over the years – on several conference committees. I was a Branch Councillor again at the time I retired and the year after I retired, going off to Council meetings. But I suppose the most important role I had was as an examiner, and I was examining the papers that the Association set and was the Head Examiner in school libraries, but then also did a lot of visiting accrediting courses when the Association phased out its own system and instead accredited tertiary institutions. Well, I did that for many years, both for the Library Association and for the tertiary authorities in states. I’ve done that for
tertiary authorities or the Association in every state except Tasmania, I think, at various times.

And of course that’s also a learning experience because you see what other people are doing. I know – the phrase that’s often used, that link between people is called ‘the invisible college’, and it really is true that there are a lot of things that you learn and that you know about that have not appeared in any journals or documentation but simply because of that contact with people, and that was a great advantage to me. It was a learning process and a great advantage to the institution where I worked, which is why my principals always were very happy for me to go, because it meant you were in touch with what was happening. And also I was given leave – I wasn’t paid – you know, to go to conferences in America, given leave with pay [sic].

You also at some stage did a Master of Librarianship, I understand.

Yes. That was because, again, partly because of my history, the first Supervisor of School Libraries was appointed in ’44, the year I went out teaching, and then I came into the colleges later and then had all this contact in both the Department and in libraries in general. And the Professor of Librarianship at Monash was very keen to have people do research on library history, so she persuaded me to do this critical history of the development of school libraries in South Australia. And that was very interesting, and again I was lucky because, with Jim Dwyer and with Mr Jones, who was the Director of Education, I was given access to all the documentation in the Department; because of my connections with the Libraries Board I had access to all the papers in the Children’s Library, and I knew where to go and everybody let me look at things; and this Jean Whyte, who was the Professor, kept saying, ‘You’ve got’ – she had a deep voice – ‘You’ve got to write that down. It’s got to be recorded.’ And I kept saying, ‘When have I got time to do that?’ So I was sort of fiddling away at it. I had to go and do a course at Monash for a term. I wasn’t over there all the time, but going back and forth, and I did it one-quarter coursework and three-quarter thesis. Well, she used to come to Adelaide regularly because she had family here, and every time she came I would go and see her. She was a great family friend and personal friend of Dame Roma Mitchell, and she used to stay with Dame Roma when she was here. So I’d trot in with what I had done, you know, the latest chapter or whatever. But it did take me ages. I then took some leave, took
half-time, which I would never advise anybody to do. So I’d go in, you know, some
days and then write, and it was really that we – John nagged at me and said, ‘We’re
going overseas, you’ve got to get it finished,’ and he – I did get it finished, but right
at the end of that year, when I was writing the last chapter, which I thought was not
up to the other chapters, but I just wanted to get it finished, he had to have heart
surgery and of course I couldn’t have cared less about the thesis. But anyway, he
was all right and I finished it. That was in must have been about ’81, I think. I was
in my fifties by then. Because I kept saying, ‘Look, this is ridiculous,’ you know. It
didn’t mean anything to me in terms of promotion, but it was simply that she wanted
it recorded. And Beryl Turner and the Department and those, they kept nagging me,
and they said, ‘If you do it with someone breathing down your neck you’ll do a
better job and it will be there,’ so I did it. (laughs)

So what year was your retirement? Did you retire before you – – –?

I could have gone on till I was sixty-five, but I retired when I was just sixty-one, ’84,
I’d just turned sixty-one and I retired in October, a bit early.

And you were awarded the – you were appointed a Member of the Order of
Australia in 1985.

January, on Australia Day, yes.

Can you tell me a bit about your reaction to that, I guess, how you heard about it
and – – –?

Well, I left work in October because my husband was involved in something and
there was a conference in Melbourne, so it must have been round about November
because we were there for the Melbourne Cup – the one and only time I’ve ever been
to the Melbourne Cup: I’m not a racing lady – but we went to the Melbourne Cup
and a couple of my nieces must have been staying in the house, and when I came
home there was a pile of mail, including a letter from Government House in
Canberra which said, ‘Would you ring immediately to indicate whether or not you’re
willing to accept this award?’ because I think there’s a minority of people who say
they won’t have it, especially when it was given by the Queen, you know?
However. So I was astonished. And of course you’re sworn to secrecy. So I rang
and said yes, I would accept it. Well, that must have been early November, and
nobody knows anything until Australia Day. It’s quite hard to (laughs) – you’re
dying to say things to people, but I didn’t, I didn’t even tell – John, of course, knew – but I didn’t even tell my brother. And then you get information from Government House here, telling you what to do and when to turn up, and you go and it’s quite an impressive ceremony and the Governor gives it to you.

Tell me about – well, the day that you were awarded it, the ceremony and that.

Well, you’re allowed to bring two guests. I was. My husband got an award about five years ago, and I think he was allowed to bring three, or did we get four? We got an extra one. And you go into Government House and they have the investiture first. The visitors all go into the Ballroom. I don’t know whether you’ve been to Government House, but the Ballroom is very elegant with beautiful windows, almost church-like windows, but they’re one of the features of Government House. But the recipients are taken into the dining room and told what’s going to happen. So when everybody is seated the Governor and his offsiders and the President of the Order of Australia or officebearers – and I think Dame Roma at that time, she wasn’t the Governor, she was the President Australia-wide – and she was there, seated in the front row, and the Governor was Sir Donald Dunstan at the time. Then all the recipients were brought in and we sat at the back, and it’s in order of the importance of the award. So there was one man getting an Officer AO, and then about five of us getting an AM, and then a lot of people getting the medal, the OAM. There’s a lot of confusion between the AM and the OAM, but AM is a Member. Then you go up and get it and he pins it on, and then you go out a door into the dining room and sort of round back to your seat. After all that’s over the Governor says a few words and then they have a reception, you know, drinks and nice things to eat in all the reception rooms, and then you can wander round the gardens and take photos and so on. I think in the photos I’ve pulled out one with me holding the box with the award in it. It was a great day. Yes. My husband came, my brother came and my husband’s sister, who’s always been very good to me, and she, sadly, is very sick in a nursing home now – a very clever lady who’s got Parkinson’s Disease, which seems to be very common these days.

So what were you appointed the Member for, particularly?

Well, apparently it came not just from people I’ve worked with but more from the profession, so I found out afterwards. I mean, you never really know who did, but I
know one of the first lots of congratulations I got was from the National Librarian, and of course at the time I was on the General Council of the Library Association – not school libraries – and it was because of my work in the Library Association as an Examiner in School Libraries and in the whole business of the Board of Education. I was Deputy Chairperson of the Board of Education for a few years. We used to meet in – that was another thing I used to go interstate for for about six years. We used to meet in the University of Sydney library and talk about accreditation of courses and decide who would go to Wagga – I’ve been to Wagga, that’s Sturt University, two or three times, and I’ve been to Perth and Brisbane and Melbourne, Canberra. We’d decide who’d go where. And then, when people had gone, they’d come back and report. So it got less and less concerned with the exams we set and more and more concerned with accreditation of courses and sending people off to talk at conferences. But at the same time, of course, I got it because of what I was doing in school libraries and the Schools Commission.

**Yes, I think it was for service to library education.**

Yes, it was library education, not just school library education.

**So in a sense it was your whole career, I suppose.**

I suppose it was, in a way, or the major part of it. But again, you see, that’s partly luck that I was in the right place at the right time with the right qualifications.

**So what do you think were your greatest successes, I suppose, in the field of library education?**

Well, I suppose developing the courses at Adelaide, and then I suppose second to that, you know, in the wider library context. In fact, two, three years ago there was a library conference here in Adelaide, and I don’t go to conferences now but I was asked to come, and they asked Harrison Bryan, who’s my vintage, who’d been the National Librarian, and me and a student and a young practitioner, and there might have been a fifth, to talk about the issues that librarians were concerned about, and I’ve forgotten how long we spoke. So I actually spoke at a conference about three years ago in the Convention Centre, and Harry Bryan and I were laughing while we were walking along to walk up the steps to the platform and he said, (laughs) ‘They’ve probably looked at our *curriculum vitae* and wondering if we’re so old that
we won’t be able to get up the steps.’ So that was quite good, I really enjoyed that. And there were some questions afterwards. I wrote a brief paper, and I suppose that got published in the proceedings as a resurrection from the past. And I think I told you, a few weeks back, with Federation they had a number of women who’d been in education speaking for a College of Education meeting, and I was asked to talk on the ’50s and somebody on the ’60s, so forth, and that was good fun, too.

You were talking about what you felt your greatest successes were, I guess.

Well, I suppose the library course and (pause) perhaps one of the things that I’m pleased about is I think I did encourage lots of students to go on, and many of them say oh, no, they couldn’t, and I saw that as one of my roles, to really try and help people. I remember – you see, everybody came in from a different background. Some had done pressure-cooker courses which were on during the War and they had very – you know, pretty minimal training. And so you would work out what was the best course for them to follow. Particularly married women who’d left school and done a pressure-cooker course teaching, got married and back teaching. A lot of them didn’t have confidence. And we really did, we ran all sorts of programs. We used to tape lectures and things and send them to them, we did a lot of that before distance education was as fashionable as it is now. And I used to bend the rules a bit so they didn’t always have to attend lectures. I was invited, for example, about two years ago to the retirement of the teacher-librarian at Keith Community Area School, and she in her speech talked about the encouragement she got from me and Beryl Turner, because she used to come down on the train once a week, or sometimes we’d say, ‘Don’t bother to come next week, we’ll send you – – –.’ And she said we enabled her to do her study and complete it. So I guess I’m pleased about that, because it helped so many of them. Many of them developed confidence and went on to great things. They did things I used to think, ‘Gosh, I wouldn’t do that as well as they are, I’m sure.’

What do you think you gained personally from all the, I suppose, extra work you put in to the field of library education?

Well, you certainly meet a lot of interesting people, and I really love people and like being in things where I’m involved with people. And seeing people’s – their courses develop and seeing their careers develop. I think I gained a lot from that, a lot of
satisfaction. So, as I said, I’ve been fairly lucky. And I’ve been lucky since I left work, because there seem to be things that I can get involved in. Like I’m involved in the Women Graduates\textsuperscript{13} now, and last year I was involved in helping to organise a conference here for a number of people that also came from overseas, not just from Australia, and at the moment I’ve been asked to go on a committee – the Order of Australia Association’s organising a conference and I’ve been going to a few meetings with that. Well, that’s a completely different group of people. And with the Women Graduates I’ve been involved – this is the first time I’ve done it – in selecting scholarship winners, and I saw somebody at the weekend, we’re about to judge people who are applying for the Catherine Helen Spence Scholarship\textsuperscript{14}. So lots of things like that that I’m fortunate that I can do, because of what I did in my career, so I’ve been lucky.

**So you’ve continued to contribute in a volunteer way since your retirement?**

Yes. One little sidelight – this is, you know, pretty miniscule, but when Dame Roma was – I don’t know whether I mentioned this – when she was the Governor she saw me at a function one night when she was first appointed to Government House and said would I be home the next morning, she wanted to ring me about something. She knew me, not well, but she was a great personal friend of Professor Whyte under whom I did my thesis, but she also knew me because she’d been a contemporary of a couple of my older cousins doing Law, my mother’s brother’s sons, about three of my male cousins did Law. And what she wanted was somebody to just organise books that were in the library there that were presented to the Governor. So myself and a friend of mine who was a teacher-librarian at Adelaide Boys’ High – and she was the one who originally Miss Archer encouraged to take up librarianship, and she worked in a special library and then transferred and worked in the school library – we went in there and did this, organised the library for Dame Roma, and then, when it was organised, we would only come in if they rang and said, ‘Oh, we’ve got some more books to add.’ They were all put on the computer, but she just wanted an old-fashioned catalogue so that she was going to Port Pirie, she could flick through and

\textsuperscript{13}Australian Federation of University Women.

\textsuperscript{14}Catherine Helen Spence Scholarship Committee (ministerial appointment).
see if there were any books there on Port Pirie, because that’s the sort of thing she was being presented with. And we’ve done that a little bit with the present Governor, intermittently. So that was really going back to basics, to old-fashioned librarianship, that was.

**And I think you said you were involved with an archive or something as well?**

Yes, I go in on a Monday afternoon to – again, with my friend, Pat – to help in the church archives. We’re going through old baptism registers and doing some recording, and another afternoon – I’ve only just started this – I’ve been going up to help the recently-appointed archivist. One of the nuns has taken over the role of archivist at Loreto, and I just got there last week, I just sat there going through photos trying to identify people I knew or, if there were people I didn’t know, suggesting who would know. One thing I haven’t mentioned – I keep forgetting – I think I told you that when I retired I had said I would do some work for the church if I wanted to, and again this same friend, Pat Tomaszewski – she was Pat Smith and married a Pole so she became from Smith to Tomaszewski – we went to work for a term and it ended up being a year and then it ended up being about fourteen years working in the seminary library at St Francis Xavier’s Seminary, and I don’t know whether you are aware, but the three major churches worked together but they were on separate sites. But the students used to move – like if the best Biblical Studies lecturer was at Parkin-Wesley or at St Barnabas, but now they’ve all moved down to I think it’s Burbridge Road on the way to the airport, to the Adelaide College of Divinity, and they moved a couple of years ago, the end of ’97, I think it must have been. Might have been ’98. And so we stopped going then, but we were still going one day a week until then. So that was something – that was a learning experience, I’ll tell you. (laughs) We didn’t know anything about the things that you would have in – or very little – about what you’d have in theological libraries. We got a lot of help from the librarian who, sadly, died, who was the librarian at Luther College, a wonderful man called Trevor Zweck, he was a Lutheran pastor, and he was very helpful. And I found out that there was this little network of librarians who worked in religious libraries, theological libraries, and that was something I hadn’t known anything about till then. Went to a conference of theological librarians, quite good.
Would you like to say something, I guess, about that spirit of volunteering and getting in there and doing something that led to the award in a way?

Well, I suppose I’ve always, even when I first went out teaching, have always been involved. I remember I got involved in the town in – well, playing basketball, of course, and then I ended up being Secretary, arranging all the timetables for all the matches and who played who and then, at the end of the season, organising all the trophies and everything. And then – and it happened a couple of years – I was playing in one of the town teams and I was coaching the high school team, playing against my own team in the final, and knowing I had to almost break my neck to be sure everyone saw I played hard, but really wanting the students to win. Actually, we did win, but – – –. And I enjoyed it. I think I sang in the church choir – I’m not much of a singer – and I played in the tennis club and went to a keep-fit – sort of joined in things, I suppose I had that pattern. And certainly now with John, now today he’s off at a meeting, he’s very involved in a whole lot of voluntary things. His Christian Brothers Old Collegians, I think he’s the treasurer at the moment. He was Deputy Chair of the Home for the Aged, Homes for the Aged, Southern Cross Care, for about thirty years till about three years ago. That was amusing. The Board gave him a dinner and another man who were retiring down at Glenelg down at the hotel that was the Pier – what’s it called, the Stanford at Glenelg –

Grand.

– Stanford Grand, and some of John’s – the other man was bringing his children and we don’t have any, so John said he would take his three – four, well, he took my eldest nephew and his three nieces and nephews, his sister’s children, the sister who’s sick, and we’re very close to those two families, my brother’s, his sister’s – so one of them said to us, ‘No, don’t bother about driving, we’ll pick you up.’ And what they did (laughs) – and you know that we live at the end of a dead-end street and it’s difficult to turn – they had one of those stretch limousines, and we went all the way down Anzac Highway, per favour our nieces and nephews, in this stretch limousine to this dinner, because they’re very fond of John and they wanted to do that, so it was quite a bit of fun.

Have you, do you think, had an influence on your nieces and nephews? You mentioned that you’re a mentor to one of your – – –?
I think so.

**In terms of community service and volunteering and doing a bit extra?**

I don’t know, they’re all so busy with small children at the moment and working. My brother and sister-in-law are in retirement, you know. My brother for years in Port Lincoln was the chairman of one of the local football clubs and involved in church things, now he’s very involved in work for St Vincent de Paul, so I suppose – that happens in a country town. If you go to a country town you must join in if you want to enjoy it. Now, John’s – one of these nephews who teaches at Penola, he’s very involved. He doesn’t ever want to come back to the city. He’s taught in various schools, but all down in that area, you know, Murray Bridge and Keith and Penola, and his wife too is there, and another one of that family went up to – she was also a teacher – to teach in Port Broughton, married a farmer, but she’s very involved in the community. So I suppose, in a way, my brother’s children have often talked to me about things. A couple of them lived here. One of them lived here in Year Eleven and Twelve, and one lived here for the best part of a year when she was at teachers’ college, so we are very close to them. And they’ll often talk to us, and so will John’s nieces and nephews. I can remember one who had a crisis talking to John, because they know we’re fond of them, we’re close but we’re not their parents, so there isn’t that tension that you get between a parent and a child naturally. I remember one of my nephews saying to me, ‘(gasp) You don’t get so excited,’ or something, and I said, ‘I’m not your mother, I’m not your parent,’ so I guess we’re lucky. They will ring up and ask us things, or say, ‘Can I come and have a talk,’ or whatever.

**You talk a lot about ‘luck’ – do you think that’s clearly an aspect of your life, I guess, you use that ‘lucky’ word a lot.**

I think I have been lucky. I mean, I’ve had good health and had family that cared for me, and an extended family that you sort of felt you were cared for. Like one of – the sister older than Mum, an uncle who was the lawyer, the teacher who didn’t marry, and an older sister who married and lived on a farm at Kapunda, well, I used to go up there – they sold it when I was about twelve – as a child, on the train. I can still remember the names of the stations because Mum’d put me in charge of the guard, and I think I was six the first time I did it on my own, and it was Gawler-
Roseworthy-Freeling-Fords-Kapunda, (laughs) and my uncle would be there to collect me. So I’d be on the farm and it was just like being at home. And then there was Mum’s twin sister and her daughters, and then that family from the farm came to Adelaide, so – and then with John and his brothers and sisters, particularly this sister and her children, and as I said we’re quite close to those two families – like Saturday, when I was with my family at a christening and the week before with John’s family, one of the daughters of Mary’s, of the – her daughter’s wedding. (tape ends)

END OF TAPE 5 SIDE A: TAPE 5 SIDE B
– my family at a christening and the week before with John’s family, one of the daughters of Mary’s, of the – her daughter’s wedding.

In the professional field you mentioned a little bit about the changes in the role of the librarian, some of your concerns about what’s happening. What perhaps would you like to see happening in library education?

I don’t know that I – I think I’d have to look and see what they’re doing and why they’re doing it, and I just haven’t kept up-to-date, because I think the first year I was asked to come back, and then I was asked again the next year and I said, ‘No, you’re either in it or you’re out of it, and if you’re in it you’ve got to read and keep up to date.’ I still get the Library Association journal, and I go through it and read some articles that I’m interested in and look and see who’s got jobs and so on, but I don’t profess, really, to express an opinion – except that, in general terms, from what I hear from people in the university, both universities – I don’t have as much contact with Flinders, but the other two – and what I see I just think there’s not enough money being given to education, full stop. And so a lot of the clawing back of people that were in advisors’ jobs and so on, they’ve gone, and it’s all part of this change that may be – that’s a natural evolution. I wouldn’t really know enough. But I am concerned, in society, that the gap between the haves and the have-nots seems to be getting wider, and I’m not by any means a socialist, far from it, but I do think that it’s a sad day when there isn’t enough money for education and for hospitals, for health, because I just think they’re basic to a civilised society. I mean, we talk about Australia and ‘clever country’ – well, you’re never going to be the clever country unless you give money for research.
John’s youngest of his sister’s six children is – he struggled the hard way through university, you know, working as a waiter, and he did a Science degree and an Honours degree and a Master’s degree and a Ph.D. in Genetics and Biochemistry, went to America and then to England, away five years and back, as he said, his first real job at the Peter McCallum in Melbourne, cancer research. And his wife, whom he met while he was overseas, a French-Canadian, is also in that. And he was telling me how hard he has to work to get funding, and his funding for his own salary and a lot of the funding they’ve got is coming from America. And his wife’s funding is coming from the – I think it’s the American breast cancer research society – that’s not the correct name but that’s what it is. And he was actually holding seminars with people from government departments and from industry, telling them what they’re doing to try and get money for research. And he said, ‘We just don’t know in Australia the way – we haven’t the understanding of the need for money for research that they have especially in America and in Britain.’ But I was interested that he actually has these seminar-conferences to try and get interest. But it’s so much of his funding, and it’s grown since he’s been there, and he’s got a lot of Ph.D. students, he was telling me at the wedding last weekend. But a lot of it’s coming from the United States, something like – oh, I’d better not quote a figure, I’m not too sure of it, but it’s quite large.

Is there anything else you’d like to say with regard to your career in library education or the award of the Order of Australia?

Well, that was a great thrill, and then I suppose the other thrill was when the University of South Australia named their library after me.

Tell me about that.

(laughs) Well, I was quite staggered because I thought they would perhaps just name it and there’d be a photo in the foyer and I’d go down there, but in fact it was a big ceremony. Mr Rann, who was at that time the Minister of Further Education, actually unveiled the plaque, and it was ten years ago. But the irony is that now the University of South Australia is apparently going to get rid of the Underdale campus in about three or four years’ time.

So what’s going to happen?
I don’t know. I was teasing the librarian when I saw him, and I was invited to something at the university the other day and I was laughing about it, but whether it will be moved, or what. Because it’s all in great big letters right on top of the actual building, which – I was staggered when I got there, because I didn’t know that was going to happen. But that was a great honour.

What’s that like ..... ..... ..... – you’ve answered it.

Yes. And I was asked to give a list of people to ask. And one of the people I asked, for instance, was Gwen Downs, Gwen Fulton that was, who’d been that teacher who’d been so good to me at Naracoorte. So she came, and I remember Dr Penny was there, he used to be the Head of the Teachers’ College in Kintore Avenue when I was a student, and my friends. But the people that were most excited that day were my brother’s children, who were there. They were really chuffed about it. But one of Philippa’s little boys asked her did Auntie Joan have to go and live in that building? (laughter)

Proper place for a librarian to live!

He thought perhaps I had to stay there.

Well, I’d like to thank you very much for the time you spent with me involved in this project. You’ve contributed a great lot about your influences, and I think it’s been a great interview. Thank you.

Well, thank you for asking me. I’m very honoured.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.