

A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF FORESTRY WITHIN THE ACT

Oral History Interviews

Transcript of Interview

with

Terry Connolly

conducted by

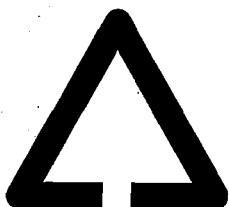
Brendan O'Keefe

at the

Australian War Memorial

on 16 March 1995

This project was carried out with the assistance of funds made available by the
ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program



ACT FORESTS

"More Than Just a Pine Forest"

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

INTERVIEWER: BRENDAN O'KEEFE
INTERVIEWEE: MR TERRY CONNOLLY
DATE: 16 MARCH 1995
SUBJECT: ACT FORESTRY HISTORY
3 TAPES 3 Hours

BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE A

Identification: This is tape 1 of an interview with Mr Terry Connolly, conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 16 March 1995 at the sound studio of the Australian War Memorial. The topics covered in this tape are the history of forests and forestry in the ACT. End of identification. That's the formal bit. I'd like to welcome Terry Connolly back to Canberra after he spent so many years here. I'd just like to start off by asking whereabouts you came from originally, Terry? - before you came to Canberra. You weren't born here?

I was born at Coogee and I was reared at Randwick. I got a cadetship just after the war because there were three offered at the time by the State. One was soil erosion, one was veterinary science and one was forestry and by default I took forestry.

So it wasn't your first choice?

No, I didn't want anything to do with horses, I'd lost enough money down at Randwick Racecourse, so I knew all about horses and I didn't want to make mud pies and it was a free trip to get a university education. After the war it was also difficult because preference was always given to the ex-servicemen at training, and being the eldest of four there wasn't that much money in the house, so it was very handy to get a cadetship and have the education free plus

and allowance. In those days we did two years of science at Sydney University and I was in the very first year that was given a year in the bush. From there I went all over the place. We went down to Batemans Bay in the beginning and we went right up the north coast, went out to the Pilliga Scrub. We went to Taree and we went to Tumut/Batlow. Naturally we went to the cold climates in winter and we went to the warm climates in summer. I think that must have been a deliberate test at the time. And then after that we came to Canberra, so I came here in 1950/51 and did the two years at the Forestry School which, of course as you know, is now part of the ANU.

These trips you were doing from Sydney University, were these to the forest areas?

No, we had a whole year in the bush and we were assigned, like slave labour, to wherever we went.

To forestry operations.

Yes, we were under the control of the local district forester but we went straight out into the bush. It was no desk job. We were out with a mattock and a hammer and a saw and we planted pines. I planted pines in '49 in Tumut/Batlow. It's very sobering to go back and see the second rotations there. In fact I saw that years ago; I saw that in the '80s. A man in his lifetime, if he lives a

reasonable age, can go about through four rotations of *Pinus radiata*.

That's certainly one way of looking at it.

You're flat out to do one rotation of *Eucalyptus pilularis* or Blackbutt. So then we came back to Canberra and we did umpteen subjects there and then at the end of it, having successfully passed the diploma course, Sydney University then gave you the science course and you couldn't get one without the other, so that's why you see us write up, B.Sc. For., Dip. For. And you never met the other students that we did at the school till we got there because they came from Western Australia and all the other States, whereas now everyone goes to the ANU from day one, and so a lot of my friends, five in particular, we went together that year out in the bush and one of them ended up being the Assistant Commissioner of New South Wales, so he didn't do too badly. I only lasted fifteen years in the fold; five as a student and ten as an operating forester.

What did you think of Canberra when you were here, studying in those early years?

It was a very small town. It was only about 12,000 people. From the Forestry School out in what was called Westridge then, there was only a gravel road up to the Prime Minister's house. The Prime Minister's house had a very low fence, barely two feet high. The Prime Minister, of course,

was Menzies. Often on a Saturday afternoon, as I'd virtually go through his backyard at the top of the hill - and you could - he'd be out walking the dog and he'd give you an imperceptible nod and you'd say, 'Good afternoon, Sir', and keep on your way to the Wellington pub. The cathedral of St Christopher's was only half built in those days. There were the only two big grey triangle buildings over at Civic, and O'Connor, I think, was just being established as a suburb but it was a route march to get out there on a bike. And to get out to Duntroon - well, forget about it; it was that far away. We only had pedal power being students. But as I say, there were only 12,000 people in the place. It was about that time that Menzies made up his mind that Canberra would roar ahead. So I never came back to Canberra again till 1973, out here, out in the suburb of Hume and by that time it was 170,000 people and it was growing at eleven per cent per annum. Now, I'm not sure, I think it must be about - including Queanbeyan - about 260,000 people in the area.

At least, I think.

I haven't seen a count for about twelve months. So I was the first forester, I think, out of Randwick.

Yes, it's a pretty strange background to enter forestry from.

Not really, because my father was one of eleven and they all come from the country and he was the only one that ever came to the city.

Whereabouts did they come from?

Around Moree, Nowendoc, Wingham and down to Goulburn. My dear old grandfather, he was a saddler of all things; he was a leatherworker. And so he used to travel around the stations for six weeks at a time in the old sulky and doing up all the saddlery in days gone.

None of them into forestry in any way, though?

No, I was the only one. In other words I went back bush, sort of affair. None of my brothers did. My two brothers are firmly entrenched in Sydney and my sister, she's overseas.

When you were a student here, what sort of forestry work did you do as part of your course? - I mean practical work. Were you out in the forests?

Yes, we planted pines during the winter at kowen and we used to work around Stromlo, climbing trees, collecting seed. We used to work in the nursery at the back of the Forestry School - that was while we were living in Canberra. But then we used to do trips away and the big trips were: one to Mathoura to study the Murray River Red Gum; one down to

Batemans Bay to study the eucalypts in the close vicinity to Batemans Bay. We went to Tassie for a trip. We were always very pleased about that. I did like Tassie because I subsequently went back there and worked and lived there for eight years. We dipped out on a trip to Western Australia and I have never in a part of all my travelling and that includes around the world a couple of times, I have never been to WA, so it's a funny thing that. We went to South Australia for the pine. Spent six weeks there straight. We were just used as labourers just about wherever we went.

And in the local area, in the ACT forests, you ...?

Yes, various trips we'd go out to We planted pines at Kowen. We'd be up at the back of Uriarra, up in the Brindabellas, working in the hardwood and then we'd come down to other places and help in the thinning. And, of course, it goes without saying, we measured tree after tree after tree and had to go back and do working plans and mensurations formulas and, well, that's what we were there to be taught, anyway.

What did you do for a leisure activity in Canberra in those days?

We never had much money. There wasn't much to do anyway.

I was going to suggest that.

There were three ports of call. One was down to the Wellington pub but then you had to get home. If you missed the bus you were a bit unlucky. There was the picture show. There were only two in town. There was only the one at Manuka and one over at Civic, that's all, and we never went anywhere near Civic, it seemed a heck of a long way away. A lot of the boys seemed to find their way over to the nurses' home at the hospital, but I never had enough money to stretch that far.

What about sport and so on?

Oh sport, we played football. I played two seasons of football and we were the only year ever to win the Canberra Cup which we were always very proud about.

So the Forestry School had its own

We had a team.

What sort of football were you playing, Terry?

Rugby Union. You could play Rugby League if you wanted to, there was no objection, because League was always played on the Sunday and Union was played on the Saturday. There were about six teams. There was Royals and there were Norths. Easts never came in till the following year after I left and there [were] so few players at the school then ... because we were two very big years; there were eighty students there

the whole time for my two years, so we managed to field two teams, a first and reserve grade. But the year after I left there were insufficient and they had to go and team up with Easts, like you heard Ron Murray talking about. Ron came in those days and Ron played over with Easts and then, of course, since the students went to the university they had to play for the university side. So we played in the famous side that won. Our greatest adversary, of course, was Duntroon - I forgot to mention. A game against Duntroon, there was no love lost there. They always considered it a battlefield and if they didn't win they were CB, they were Confined to Barracks, so we used to delight in tipping them up. They used to come out to some of our parties at the school, which were rather hilarious, and they'd generally wipe themselves and then us foresters had to get them back into the barracks, which was a real manoeuvring job to get them in there, but they used to appreciate it. They'd come out the next day and thank us, except one fellow didn't. He had a rather natty little moustache - I can always remember the darn thing - we had him propped up in bed and we locked him in it. We wrapped him in it to make sure he didn't wander around too far. He had a name similar to another friend of mine and the girl came into the dance we had at the school and 'Is Mr Stewart here?'. Well, there were two Mr Stewarts. There was one from Duntroon and there was one from Forestry School. He got in a bit of a drinking session and he had to go to sleep till about three o'clock in the morning but during that we took his 'mo' off and we taped it to the end of the bed and, of course, the first thing he saw

when he woke up is his mo on either side. We did pile him in the car and get him all back to Duntroon without the sentries intercepting us. They had an extraordinary system at Duntroon; they had grandfather, father and son, so when you came to Duntroon you were given a number and I think the number a hundred less was your father and working in the hundreds, the grandfather. The grandfather had all rights. If the grandfather came along and said, 'I'm going out tonight and I want your suit', you had to part with the suit. And, of course, this fellow crashed badly during the night and the suit didn't look any too good and I was very concerned about what the grandson was going to say when he sighted this suit next morning. But they were just the pranks we played. We got up to a couple of tricks: we did Boadicea, the armless statue of the Goddess of War, that was at the end of Commonwealth Bridge - this is before the lake went in, you must remember, there's no lake - and someone decided we'd go down and put a bra on her. The humorous thing is they went all around town, over Civic, trying to get her size but she was 'ginormous'. It's a bit embarrassing, especially in those days, walking up to a counter and asking the woman for a bra and you couldn't exactly kid it was for your mother or your aunt. Anyway, they got over there and she's there right at the end of Commonwealth Avenue, just along from Albert Hall she was - she's not there any more today but that's where she was. The bridge was a wooden bridge, a clattering, clanking, old bridge; you could always hear things coming across it because, as I keep saying, there was no lake, it was just a

dribble of water running through - the Molonglo. When the bra was no good, some one had brought some emery paper and, of course, she was a copper green colour so they started to shine her up in the obvious spots and that got interrupted several times with cars coming across and the headlights always used to come up and shine on these two 'boobs' getting shined up. Everyone got very nervous about it and someone came out with a pot of paint and they painted it, the two protuberances, and away we went into the night. Next day in Parliament, boy, did Question Time go to town and they wanted to know who the perpetrators were and who was going to fix it. We all dived for cover and no one knew a thing about it, everyone had been in bed for hours and didn't know what they were talking about. Dr Jacobs got up and he used to raise these imaginary eyebrows, we used to talk ... 'Look this, boys,' he says, 'There'll be no more of this'. He wanted saying we did it but he just said there'll be no more. Finally, the workmen, they were embarrassed, they had to come down with a three ton truck and lift her and put her on the truck and take her away to some workshop and grind the paint off in relative privacy. That got us to some notice, otherwise we kept pretty quiet. The next one, someone got the bright idea where Robbie Burns was, down near the Wellington, Robbie sits there on a seat, so we built a sort of a toilet out of hessian and mounted that over Robbie and stuck the paper in his hand. The Burns Club wanted to fight all and sundry, so we gave the gags away for awhile. There was only 12,000 people which is like a bit country town and it was that scattered, of course, nothing

much was together. I mean, from Westridge right up the hill on the northern side, those suburbs were not built to '52/53. And the Swedish Embassy had just been built when we got there, opposite the Prime Minister's house; that was the state of the pole[?]. The other side, that Embassy Motel, that was all a grass paddock. I have seen changes in Canberra because when I come to live here in '73, I lived in Hawkesbury Crescent and that was the southernmost street in Canberra at the time. Nothing had been built down into the Kambah and Wanniasa - nothing. I used to walk the dog of a morning up on top and I looked straight down to the Isabella Plains; there were sheep in the paddock. Kambah was only started in 1973/74 and now Hawkesbury Crescent is almost the geographical centre of Canberra. You look at a map and look how far - draw a line on Hawkesbury Crescent. I've seen the changes in Canberra.

Whereabouts were you living when you were a student here?

We lived out a Westridge, just down in front of the Forestry School. The Forestry School doubled up as Marist Brothers, Darlinghurst. When Marist Brothers, Darlinghurst, closed down - you remember years ago - when the Brothers came to town they used the old Forestry School, because the foresters are over at ANU, and that became the Marist Brothers, Canberra, until they then moved on to where they are at the present time, down near Melrose High.

I didn't know that.

That's right. And the years, the Brothers at Darling..., of course, 'Darlo' was our great adversary at school, being a Randwick boy. That was where Ray Lindwall came from and a few others and we didn't muck about when we played Darlo. It's a bit of history for you. They used it temporarily as a school until they built the school. I don't know why they had to move out of Darlinghurst so quickly, but the fact was they ended up finding themselves here in Canberra and the Forestry School doubled up for awhile. The Forestry School, it was a library sort of a thing.

What happened when you graduated from the Forestry School? Where did you go after that?

I got posted to Urunga. I was a State employee. Most of us had a cadetship from our State, but some had a cadetship from the Commonwealth, and with the Commonwealth you either got a job here in Canberra or Darwin or more likely Papua New Guinea. But if the States were short or students had failed or whatever, they could invite a Commonwealth graduate to come and work for the State, so we had quite a few Commonwealth students go and work with us. In my year there were five of us when we graduated but I know two or three Commonwealth students also got jobs with us in the first year, that's 1952.

You were on a bond of some kind.

Yes, on a bond of 500 pounds. That's astonishing, you know. I stuck it out. Two mates didn't. They got out after two years and paid the remains of the bond. A rather funny fellow I worked with, one I played football with and he told them he wouldn't pay it at all, and he won. And me, from halfway through the bond, I was looking for a way of getting out of the Commission. I didn't want to leave the timber industry, but I thought I'd like to be on the other side of the fence, on the utilisation rather than the growing. So yes, I went to Urunga.

The bond was four years, wasn't it?

Five. One had gone because I'd done a year in the bush and when we came out we were on second year seniority. They compensated us because instead of getting foresters first year pay, we got foresters second year pay.

Just as a matter of interest, you said in the years you were at the Forestry School there were about eighty students

Forty in a class.

... forty in a class, and a lot of them were the ex-servicemen who'd come

Yes, we were nearly fifty/fifty. There were characters like me that were only fifteen when the war ended, so when I was

in Canberra I was just twenty, and then there were a lot of fellows there twenty-eight plus, and so we were an unusual mixture because their studies had been interrupted. Maybe if they hadn't gone to the war, they mightn't have gone into forestry, but nevertheless some of them took the course and stuck it all the way through and some of them were very bright fellows. I remember a bloke called Doug Johnson - he worked here for a year in CSIRO - he was a brilliant mind and he cleaned up every medal that was going, whether it was at the uni or the Forestry School and he was just one of those sort of characters - modest, mild sort of fellow but one of those wows of a brain.

Were these ex-service blokes on a bond, too?

No, I don't think they were. They were on the CRTS, the Commonwealth Retraining Scheme. Some of them, bits of larrikins at the uni, they only put in the year and then disappeared but they never got through to Canberra. The fair dinkum ones, they came through to Canberra and they didn't do the year in the bush. So some of them that I started off with in first year in the uni, they were in the year ahead of me when I got to Canberra but when I went out in the field we were on the same rate of pay - if you can understand the Irish of all that.

Did they get preference in jobs?

No, they didn't preference in jobs. They got a preference in a cadetship. If it was you or them, they got the preference for the cadetship. It was funny, myself, I ended up eleventh and my father, in his wisdom, he says, 'Go and start at first term, I'll stake you for the first term at the uni because', he said, 'I rather fancy someone will drop out and then you'll be able to ...', and that's exactly what happened. One of the ex-servicemen, due to health reasons, I think, dropped out and then the Forestry Commission of New South Wales, as it was called then, invited me to take up the place, so my father was a bit shrewd. So from there on in I was working for the Commission.

When you finished the training at Forestry School and you were posted to Urunga, what happened to the ex-servicemen? Were they posted as well?

Yes, they were posted all over the shop.

Neither of you had any say in the matter?

No, you weren't asked where you wanted to go, they told you. You had to be careful where you came from and, of course, I guess I was an enigma because I came from Randwick, but apart from that there were a lot of fellows that came from North Sydney. North Sydney High seemed to breed foresters like - I don't know why - like a dog breeds fleas. Every second bloke, 'Where did you come from?'. 'North Sydney High'. A fellow came from Taree, Jack Stewart, and Jack

went on to be Assistant Commissioner in New South Wales - he's retired at Port Macquarie at the moment - and he and I went through the whole five years together so we were pretty good cobblers, but Jack, he was posted immediately down to Tumut. So [despite] the fact that he'd come from Taree and the hardwood, he went to Tumut. Another fellow I knew, ex-serviceman, they sent him straight out to Glen Innes and he started to have to put pines in at Glen Innes. My poor mate, Paul O'Neill, he came from out West Wyalong and that's where he went back to, out west into the cypress. I think whoever was doing the allocation must have thought, send them somewhere they like, but me, I went to Urunga and that was great because in those days all the action was on the north coast. It was a boom period. I was very fortunate with the Commission, wherever there was a boom I went because after I worked there for a while and did sawmilling studies and those other work I mentioned[?], I went to Orange and pine was the boom and then they dragged me back to Woolgoola and by that time I'd had it. From Urunga, and I was single, I went to Macksville and it was much the same area. There was Urunga, Macksville and Kempsey, all in the Kempsey District management area. Kempsey was interesting because I ran into the cedar boys, the Hayden[?] fellows up in the bush. The Haydens are characters because they're that mad about red cedar. They had two race horses in Sydney, one was called 'Red Cedar' and the other was 'Cedrella', well, of course, *Cedrella australis* is red cedar. I was there when the old fellow, the brother, he went out into the bush and never got found again. What they

used to do, they'd go up in the bush up around Carroway[?], on the top of the Macleay River, and you can look across and in the wintertime the cedar changes colours, so they'd spot them and they'd track all the way into it and record it on a rough map and then the following summer back they'd come with the tractors and go in and chase it. They were mad, Brendan. I've seen them with one tractor lowering another tractor down the hill to hook onto the tree to bring it back up again. I remember the church at Nambucca, Star of the Sea, it's full of red cedar. If you every go past it, go and have a look. I was in Macksville when that happened, a bloke called Joe Cooper got that. All I was responsible for was collecting the royalty. I didn't have to tell him where the cedar was. The typical thing with Joe was, he'd get in the tractor in the morning and he'd go all day, six miles in those days, we weren't talking French then, went all the way up, camped the night, went down, chopped the tree down, got it snigged up by midday and came half-way home and then the third day he came out - one log.

That's pretty keen.

It's worth a lot of money. I know where there's a red cedar up above me in Woolgoolga, only twenty minutes away from the house, it's a monster. It's nearly a metre and a half through and it's ten metres high. It must be worth about twenty or thirty thousand dollars royalty for one stick. All the time I worked there I never knew it was there until

I went back in retirement and found it. I didn't find it, a fellow pointed it out to me. Amazing. So that was Urunga.

You spent quite a few years on the north coast and then you went over to Orange.

About three, one year in Urunga, one year in Macksville, one year Kempsey, and then I got out of the pure forestry bit and I went on what they call 'snigging studies'. Snigging is the term for when you pull a log out with a track from the stump to the landing, to load onto a truck, that's snigging; you know the term, don't you? Well, I did snigging studies and also I did sawmill studies at the time. I was attached to the Economics and Marketing Branch in Head Office for the calculation of royalty. And being from Randwick, of course, I said this snigging is just the same as the racehorse - you've got the different tracks on, different conditions, you got different operators like a jockey and you've got a different horse underneath you - a tractor - because they were all shapes and sizes. So I started to analyse it like that. I would have loved to have had a computer in those days to do it. I did run out a system for them and I added points for the jockey, the operator, the tractor and the track and steepness of slope, rocky, muddy. It was used quite often. It was amazing, first practical thing I ever did.

So nobody had ever done this kind of analysis of snigging before.

No, it was just guess. It was awful. In fact it was a way of rigging the royalty - I've seen that done a couple of times. Some of the district foresters already knew what the royalty was or what they thought it should be, so they worked it backwards; it wasn't real ethical because the catch was the investigating foresters had to go out and put There was a form starting from price in Sydney, rail freight and then falling, snigging, logging, all the rest - boom - and if it came out the wrong answer, he'd just alter it and put another one in. I refused to sign it one day and the joke was, I said, 'Well, if you were hopping out three times up and down that hill, I'm getting jack of it, so if you want to sign it, you sign it. He wasn't going to bluff me on it because it's a fair hunk of money. But nevertheless the whole system was unsatisfactory and even the auction system that they practise in Queensland was also no good because the mills would rig it between themselves: you have this and I'll have that, and the bidding was all fixed before it got going. And they were only offering out tiddlywink bits of volume, but now when you've got things like big chunks of pine like the Commission offered at Bathurst the other day, 400,000 cube, well, you've got to sit down and do your sums properly and put in a tender because you've got to put in the infrastructure and you've got to build mills and you're going to employ a couple of hundred people; makes honest men of them all. In the old days with bits and pieces, it was really a haggling game. It wasn't very scientific. It wasn't what we were taught at Canberra. And then after that I asked to get out, be

relieved of that, so they said, 'Right, we'll send you out to Orange', and at Orange it was the most interesting of the lot because I had two lots of pine out there. I had mullion to the north of Orange that had been planted 1919 to 1935, and remember I'm in there in 1955, so here's a chance of doing a management plan for an area that is coming on for its rotation, because even the oldest, 1935, allowing thirty years in 1965, the whole rotation had been finished. In 1919, I was there in 1955, what's that? That's about thirty-six years, so I had a whole heap, all the 1919/20 could be clear felled. And the idea, of course, is you do a first thinning, a second thinning, maybe or maybe not a third thinning and then you do the clear falling. Roughly you started at fifteen to eighteen years and then twenty-two to twenty-five and then somewhere between thirty to thirty-five you clear fall it. The whole trick with it - and this, I suppose, is the art of forestry - is that the volume, unlike the bank where you can put money in the bank if you want to for thirty years and you can draw it out, you can always separate the interest from the capital ...

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

The volume, unlike the bank where you can put money in the bank, if you want to for thirty years and you can draw it

out, you can always separate the interest from the capital without any pain, but it's a little hard to separate from each tree the growth that's gone on over that period of time. So what you do, you calculate what the growth was, I believe the interest, on your growing crop and you make it the summation of the cleared fall volume and the thinning volumes and that equals it, and that's the art of it. It's so much easier in plantations where you've got a homogeneous stand and the faults are all the same as compared to a mixed hardwood bush on the north coast. So that was that. On the other hand, the operation we had around Canobolas - the forestry office was only about three years old when I got out there. Funny, I always got sent to where there was a bit of fun. What they'd been doing there, they'd been buying up all the old cockies farms till they'd accrued in acreage terms, 12,000 acres, which wasn't bad. That was about 7,000 hectares. No, it's less than that. The funny part was, as we got to the last of the owners - generally the funny part was the worst of the farms with blackberries and everything imaginable on them which were going to cost a lot of money to clean up, the price, of course, went up because they knew all about their mates were getting - because the first bloke to sell out, he was very niggly ... by the time the tenth fellow sold out. Anyway, that was a bit of a circus going on and that was unusual foresters going out and buying land. And then we started to plant it and we planted in big jags; we were planting 1,000 acres a year which was a lot because we even got up to 2,000 acres a year. The employment, it was always hard to get labour

except our old friends Email helped us out. Email had the big factory in Orange - white goods - and they sacked everyone during the winter because no one wanted to buy fridges in winter time, and we'd put them back on again. I can always remember taking them out of a morning - talk about all shapes and sizes, they were a funny crew - and you'd say, 'This is a pine tree and you must be careful to have this up and the roots down'. You had to give it as literal as that, just pretend you were talking to twelve year old kids. And then in those days the way you dug it was two fellows, one had the mattock and he went ahead and took a couple of blows and loosened the soil and then the second fellow came along and he had a chisel-shaped shovel which he wedged to and fro and he slipped the pine in and then either side, closed up the gap. Sounds simple but you can imagine how complicated they can make it. One morning after giving this, because every time there'd be new faces each morning so you'd have to go through the spiel all over again. I got a bit careless and I said one morning, 'And whatever you do, don't plant it that way, it just takes a little longer to grow'. And boy, the District Forester is right behind me and I didn't know he was there. He nearly blasted me clean out of my socks; I got an awful dressing down for that.

What sort of pines were they planting up there?

Radiata. The difference is that on the high cold country with about thirty-five inch rainfall and well drained area,

you put radiata in. When you get down on the coast near the salt water, flat, tends to be a bit swampy but also a high rainfall and a very high temperature, you put the slash pine. Because in America where the radiata comes from is the Monterey coast in California where they don't look too hot either, by the way, but however that's where they come from and they do wonders out here. The slash, of course, is on the eastern coast, Alabama, Georgia, round New Orleans, Louisiana, that belt through there. We've tried to copy the climagrams as they call them of the other countries and then match it with species. It was one of the other things taught at the school about how to put new species Fortunately by the time I got out, everything had been checked out pretty right of which species to put where.

So you went on to slash pine establishment up in the north coast after Orange.

Yes, I was there about three years at Orange and I was only the Assistant Forester throughout all these operations and suddenly they decided they'd throw me to the wolves and they put me in charge and so they sent me back to Woolgoola, Barcungaree[?] is the name of the plantation that's to the north of Woolgoola. I'd got married by that time so away we went back to the north coast again which I liked. I haven't had to work inland much in my life except that bit in Orange and the time I worked here in Canberra. When I went back to Woolgoola I had a combination of a hardwood area to look after and I had sixty people working on the pine

establishing it and it had been started in 1947. But when I looked at the pines I just couldn't believe how bad they were. I know comparisons are odious and I know there's two different rotations for radiata and slash, but the slash was bare. It was poor country we'd put it on. Not me, I hadn't started planting it. They'd put it on *Eucalyptus planeshowniana*[?] country and it's the ugliest looking tree you'd ever see. It doesn't even make good firewood. It's such a poor site that I couldn't imagine why they did it. It might have been political. It was pretty flat country and they'd whacked in about 4,000 acres of it. I found out how bad it was because we had to go and clean any regrowth that came up. The slash pine is called *Pinus illiotii*[?] and I noticed on the compartment of records that this was the third time we'd gone in to slash the eucalypt, it kept coming back and getting higher than the pine. And then we had some *Pinus taeda* which is loblolly pine, which is amongst the southern pine brackets, and I went down and looked at it one day and I got a shock. Sure, it was only eighteen year old, here it's dying in the top. So here was a plantation coming to the end of its physical rotation, long before it looked like getting to an economic rotation. So I rang up my noble leader in Coffs Harbour and said, 'You better come down and have a look at this.' One thing led to another and in the finish he wasn't game to tell Head Office it was no good, but I wrote a letter and he was one of these typical blokes and he'd just stamp it 'Seen and copy for your information.' I think it bounced up and down. I said to him, 'Look, we've got to stop the charade. We're wasting

taxpayers' money.' And even today there's nothing bigger than that come off it - this is 1995.

It's still going?

No, it works on a seventy-year rotation. All I'm saying is the '47 pines, I doubt if they've all been harvested even now in '95 because seventy gets you to 2017, but all the stuff goes up to a plant at Lowana, above Coffs there, and they mainly cut it up into making crates for packing glass and that sort of thing. AGI owned the factory at one stage. Anyway, I said, 'Look, if you don't want to stop it, at least when we got into block so-and-so let's thin out the pine and let the blackbutt come through', and it was that remark that spurred him. Up they came and they walked all over it again but, of course, they realised that ... so that stopped it. I had to put two years of planning in there, but it just got right up my nose that much that I had to protest that it was

So even though you didn't like it you still had to put the ...

Yes, I had to put it in. But then again it all got dismantled and work for sixty blokes suddenly disappeared. I always remember it, it was the time the West Indians had that famous draw.

That's right, 1960/61.

That year we were about to put the match in because everything had been cleared and lying on the ground for about three months and we were about to torch it and burn it before you And then the match got that interesting, we were really late that day torching it and when we did let her go we spent nearly into the night putting it out again; it threatened to go everywhere. I always remember that part of it.

You must have been at Woolgoolga for a few years.

'58 to '62. It's in the CV, you'll catch it on there. And then by that time I'd been looking for a job out of the Commission because funnily enough they were going to send me back to Urunga again, I was starting to do the ... in charge but In those days it was expensive to get shifted because the allowance when you got shifted wasn't much, and housing was very difficult to come by and it was also very difficult to sell. In small towns it would be that tight; there was only 900 people in Woolgoolga when I went there, so there weren't too many stray houses and the road back to Coffs was very, very rugged. You were isolated. There was no railway station in Woolgoolga. Woolgoolga is a funny town because Coffs and it fight that much that way back at the turn of the century they built five tunnels all the way to Glenreagh to make sure they didn't have to put the railway up the coast road through Woolgoolga. Woolgoolga should be in the next, the Ulmarra shire; there's tremendous rivalry. It's funny because when I first went up there in

'49, that was as a student, Dorrigo was the big town and you know all the fuss at Dorrigo. Dorrigo was it. Dorrigo was the shire and Coffs and 'Woopy'* were just two villages. Coffs was a little bigger than Woopy and then they had to build a harbour. The harbour could have gone at Woolgoolga as well but they didn't. Sir Earl Christmas Page made sure it went in at Coffs Harbour because we had him just to the north of Grafton, the old Sir Earl. That was when I was a young fellow.

What was the year actually you got married, Terry?

'56.

Did you have any kids by the time you're at Woolgoolga?

Yes, one was born at Woolgoolga. We had four, two boys and two girls.

So this would have made moving around a bit more difficult, too, especially if you weren't getting a good allowance.

Yes, Bronwyn had just been born in Orange and we had to shift her as a baby to Coffs and the only way I could get out of it, was I paid the difference between the train fare and the air fare to fly them up to make it quickly because they were only three kids under four. But the Commission

* Colloquial term for Woolgoolga, NSW

didn't seem to mind much; they weren't very sympathetic. When I got to tidy up Woolgoolga for them and even reduce the staff and everything and had it running pretty well, you no sooner sit back and you're going to have a blow and they wanted to shift you again, but there was no extra money coming. There was no extra pay from going there to the next place.

So even though they were going to put you in charge of Urunga there was no ...

No promotion. They just had another headache and they wanted me to go and do it. Whereas that other bloke that spent nine or ten years in the one town, that's was good as money in your pocket, it really was in those days. We weren't overpaid in those days.

Were they going to send you to Urunga because they thought you were a bit of Mr Fix-it by this stage?

Yes, that's where they were going to send it. I said what about some more money and they said no - forget it.

So this is why you got out.

Yes, I was getting poor, too. I was getting to be about three weeks behind with my expenses and, well any time, but particularly in those days public servants couldn't have another job and you couldn't get a reputation for owing

money or anything like that around town. I was paying all my bills but I knew I was steadily going backwards. So I finally got a job in Kauri in the north-west of Tasmania and they gave me a nice car and they gave me a house and they gave me more money than the Commission ever did. The only difference is, if I failed they'd sack me, whereas the public service it takes a long time to give you the bullet short of doing something drastic, and then if you're a bit hopeless they tend to keep you and let someone else get in your way. So I went down there in the middle of winter again and, of course, living up Woopy the kids only had shorts and shirts and no warm clothes and no blankets, and even today I don't have a fireplace in the house at Woolgoolga, that's how mild the winter is. Suddenly we took them down there - oh boy. However, the company was good and they built me a brand new house there and we could build it whatever design we wanted and my wife liked it and I had money in the bank for the first time because I sold the house I had in Woolgoolga. I was nearly a plutocrat.

Whereabouts in Tasmania was it, Terry?

Smithton, right in the north-west. It's fifty miles west of Burnie. Stanley is the next little place, on The Nut.

Yes, I know Stanley quite well.

I know Stanley well because Stanley is older than Melbourne and Melbournians hate you to tell them that. There's a pub

in Stanley that was up as a pub before they even brought licensing in. If you're ever there, go down and ask to see in the cellar, and just see the structure of it underneath there. Because it was Sydney, Hobart and then they went over to Stanley and then they came across to Georgetown and they couldn't make up their mind between Georgetown and Launceston. They finally settled on Launceston, and it is Lonceston not Lawnceston and it's Durby, not Darby, which is rather a conflict by ... I can never understand that with Tasmanians. I went down there and the big thing there was, the fellow says, 'Do you know anything about sawing it up?'. I said, 'No, only out of a book; what they told me at Forestry School'. 'Well', he said, 'You're the bloke I want'.

That sounds pretty unusual but go on.

He wanted someone without any preconceived ideas because he was a bit of a ... and he was one of the Ingrams. Now, the history of the Ingrams I don't know, we're talking about history everything bar here, really, but however The Ingrams came from New Zealand in 1910 to Powelltown, just outside Melbourne, about sixty mile north of Melbourne, and it was a railway company and they went up into the big alpine ash there and set up a magnificent sawmill, all steam driven - everything was driven by steam - a wonderful mill, beautiful power. It didn't achieve great fame until about '39 when the big fire went through and a half of Powelltown got burnt to death because they got trapped in those

trenches they used to dig at the time to dive into. The trouble was they only dug the trenches straight; they never put a loop in it. When you build them you've got to put like a Z and you come up and you go in it and the other way. If it's straight the fire will just come through and exhaust all the oxygen and you won't get burnt, you'll just get aphyxiated; like what happened to Dresden in the bombing. They were talking about it recently. They never got burnt, they got aphyxiated. He had a brother called Keith who established the radiata industry in South Australia. He started it all up at Penola. There was a family on that and another fellow, he was up at Alexandria. Bruce used to specialise in installing - he was an engineer by trade - he installed kilns and layouts. He was a great old theorist, this Bruce, but he conned me, anyway, so he got me in. He told me all the theories and they seemed reasonable, so away I went and started to put them into practice. And the reason I got away with it was about threefold. First of all, the company down there were very conservative at the top and they thought the only way to dry timber was to put it in strips and leave it outside till it dried. The first year I was there it rained 300 days out of the 365, so nothing was going to dry. They knew nothing about kilns and this big pre-dryer we built. So the first thing was this mystery thing and because I was the new bloke - I was only a Taswegian, I wasn't a Tasmanian - I wasn't too welcome because they wanted to know why one of their people hadn't got the job. The boys on the job kept asking me how the thing worked and then I woke up I had the edge because they

didn't know I didn't know, but I learnt very quickly and I studied it up until finally we had this huge building with sixteen lines going in it and it held nearly three-quarters of a million super feet, in other words, about two and a bit thousand cubic metres of wood at a time, dead green. We dried it in twenty-eight days.

This was a big new

This was a new concept for Tasmania.

Go on, the other thing was?

And they let me just spend money. I just used to build it and sign the chit but I never had any approval, like later when I went and worked for other companies, they'd put you through the cleaning house, you had to have a proposition, it had to be countersigned by 5,000 people and the tea lady and then you might proceed and then you had to get progressive reports. None of that happened down there. I spent 200,000 pounds there which is a lot of money - I'm talking about 1963. No one asked me to account for anything. I just signed everything. I checked it was right and no one ever showed me All I did was sign and order stuff. I had an order book. I made sure I ordered everything that went on the job, accounted for it that it was there, but no one's asking me and no one told me what I had to build it for either.

Was the place making money?

A bit but it really made some money because all the stock that was outside, once I had the pre-dryer, instead of it being out there from anything from eight months to eighteen months, I was turning it around in twenty-eight days, and all the stock suddenly vanished and all that cash and interest that was getting paid on it suddenly was in the pocket.

And there was a big market for the

Oh yes, we had no trouble selling it. In the terminology of the time, we sold four, five and six by one in flooring and we used to sell overseas, too: Tasex, we sent it to the west coast of America, to San Francisco. We sent it to Belgium, to Germany and France.

And it was all Kauri.

All Kauri. And then I controlled it from the bush to when it went on the boat, which was an interesting job. Because of my background as a forester I knew how to handle the contracts [inaudible], the sawmills - I didn't know how to cut the timber up, but I knew how to measure it and say whether it was good, bad or indifferent. I established quality control rules quick and lively. I got on with them pretty well so they didn't mind me because I didn't tell them how to do it, I just told them what I wanted and I'd go

around and I used to chat them every day. And then out I'd go to the drying plant and we'd be pre-drying it down from whatever it was - 120 per cent down to thirty per cent. And then it went down to Stanley where the kilns were and we dried it right down to ten per cent. Out of the kilns we went into the planing sheds and we had these huge Canadian planers that moved 300 feet a minute - they didn't muck about. They didn't know about them, so we bought them and we put them in size there again and a period of change, and it's the best thing because when confusion is rife and you know what you're doing, you can travel fast because no one is game to ... and no one has got a preconceived idea about what's going to happen, and so I made a lot of money except for the one hiccough. Kauri in their wisdom were run by a couple of - nearly said rogues - characters over in Melbourne who are long since gone and they mortgaged all the stocks right over to Western Australia. They had the biggest sawmill in Western Australia. Kauri were huge at one stage. They started in 1880 in New Zealand. These two characters, they knew how to wind it down. They did the real 'Bondy' trick on this place. What they did, everything was mortgaged, and my boss said to me on one of the few occasions, 'Terry, you can't use any timber unless it's replaced.' Well, I also knew the spirit of it was that you didn't go using the older stuff in the yard because it was dried and had added value on it as compared to stuff green, just come out that day. No one would give it to me in writing. What they wanted me to do was to take the dry stuff off one end and put the green up the other. But when

Ingram told me that we could dry from the green I thought I've never struck a better time, so I filled them all up with green. When I went out to pick my friend, Ingram, off the plane - he used to fly across about once a fortnight - well, we were halfway back over the Sisters Hills and he says, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'You'll be real pleased. I'm putting your drying the green to the test.' He went white. He had visions of all this timber being utterly ruined. Anyway, he got in and he had this beautiful blue suit with white pinstrips and a tie and a hat. Well, the hat got flown off and the cigarette out of his mouth and he even forgot to take his coat off and he walked up and down every line of this and came out in a lather of sweat and grinning and he says, 'It's going to work.' I says, 'You said it was going to work.' And that's how we did drying from the green - it worked. And then we went and built a big band mill there and I built immunising chambers and reconditioning chambers. I'd never done any of this in my life, but I suppose I always had an engineering yen about me even though I can't figure out the calculations. As I often said to people, you don't have to be a doctor of music to know when a bum pianist is playing. I always had a feel for it and what it should do and I used to talk a lot to the fellows on the floor, the fellows that did it and it's amazing how much information and practical stuff they had, but they could never coordinate it and bring it together and I guess that's where I was lucky. I used to pull it all together and say this is it, and also I'd take the bump. No one wanted to take the bump and I said, 'All right, my

headache,' and away we'd go. But in return for that they used to give me great loyalty and cooperation and we got the thing done. So there was a big break forward and people came from everywhere to see that pre-dryer then. Then we doubled it, we built it bigger. Built another one on the other side.

Who was handling the contracts, too? - negotiating the contracts for the sale of this stuff. Was that you?

No, I didn't have to do the marketing. All I had to do was make sure that the logs got to the mills so that the mills had plenty of logs. I coordinated what came out of the mill even though I didn't control the guy in the mill. The guy in the mill ... but I was really above him and I could chat him up about quality if it wasn't right; and if anything went wrong and I'd be back and chew his ear about it, but normally I left them alone. I said, 'You know how to do it better than me, all I'm telling you is this is exactly what we want'; and I used to make gauges and everything for them so they could measure it. 'You don't need me here, you can police yourselves.' I used to sit out mainly at the dryer all the time and the odd time I'd go down to Stanley. Of course, the kiln drying was easy then. I used to let the marketing bloke, he'd tell me what sizes he wanted and the order they came because in the finish when I dried from the green, if I stuck it in there and I stuck the wrong size in, he was unlucky because twenty-eight days later that was going to come out and he'd have to handle it. If he

couldn't use it, well, he'd have to wait a long time for the next lot to come on. In the finish we had a great big blackboard and we had week by week, everything that was green, partly dried, dried, undressed, dressed; and every Monday morning he and I used to sit in front of it and I'd say, 'This is it - what happens this week and this is what is going to happen for the next six'. And out of that we got control.

Very well organised.

Except some salesman in Melbourne would ring up and want something and then I'd do the nut and tell him, 'Well, you can't have it. You can't have it before such and such.' 'I've got to.' 'Well, you go to the Managing Director.' The Managing Director would ring up my boss at Smithton, he came out and 'Got to do it.' I said, 'I don't know when you blokes are going to work out what we're doing here. You're quite happy taking all the money as it comes through but to do that we've got to do certain things at certain times. The guy has just got to know his market. Tell him to go out and buy it off someone else.' 'Oh yeah, he could do that, couldn't he?' 'Of course he could, couldn't he?' I said, 'I'm not talking about not satisfying the customer. Just don't wreck what we've got going when the odd-bod turns It's better to go down the street and buy it off someone else and then bring it back, put your label on it and give it to him.' The fellow is only after service. He's not

fussy where it comes from. He wouldn't even know where it comes from.

I suppose while the place was being reorganised and all these changes were taking place, the demand was growing for the product, too.

On and off. Every ten years of my life, when I first went out to forestry to Urunga, the first job I had was to sack ten people before I'd even collected my first salary. I wasn't real pleased about that. I never liked my boss for giving me that as a job. Here I was green, straight out of forestry school, never had a salary in my life and the first job he gives me is to go out and give people notice. That was the recession in the early '50s. Then when I went to Tassie in '63, they were just coming back to work after only working a three-day working week, so that was the second recession. In the '70s, of course, I was here in Canberra with dear old Gough and he fixed that and he threw us all out. And so every ten years and in fact in the '80s or the '90s - the '90s have been two in a hurry, generally there's only one every ten years, but the '90s have been not too good. So there we were, that was Tassie and I had five very fulfilling years there, but then I ran into trouble with education because the schooling wasn't so good down there and we'd sent the young bloke up to the Marist Fathers at Burnie and he was only in fifth or sixth class and that was unfair to him so we said

That's not good.

Not good. And then the girls were coming next. I said, 'Blimey, there'll only be you and I at home and all the kids will be in boarding school.' It wasn't a matter of the money even though that would have been difficult but I could have handled it. I just said, 'No, that's not what it's all about.' So I looked for another job then and I got a job up in Benalla in Victoria in the Kelly country. Oh yeah, it's the Kelly country and how. I met some of the Kellys.

This move to Victoria, we'll hear all about that in a few minutes.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

Identification: this is tape 2 of an interview with Mr Terry Connolly, conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 16 March 1995 at the sound studio at the Australian War Memorial. Topics covered on this tape are history of forests and forestry in the ACT.

When we get there.

Exactly. Terry, we're just about to move you to Victoria. You couldn't get a proper education for your

kids, not without difficulty, in Tasmania, so you've moved up to Victoria, to Benalla.

We like to see them at the table every night which was not an unfair request. So, like I showed you in the CV there, it was only a firm that not only had a sawmill and kilns and planers but it started off in life as a joinery works because the founder, old Jack Terrot[?] himself, he came from Albury and he was a joiner by trade, and somehow or other, during the war effort of World War II he managed to get a quota from the Victorian Forestry Commission which was twofold: he got ordinary scantling type logs out of a mixed bush, just around the foothills outside Benalla, but when you went over and started to climb up into the mountains, then he got the Victorian ash which extends all the way back, and of course over the side down to Orbost. In a nutshell, within a very short time I realised he didn't know it, but he was out of wood because they just thought it went on and on up the mountain. But I climbed up there one day and looked down the other side and here's all the mob from East Gippsland coming up the [inaudible]. And then they thought they'd go north to Wangaratta, but they could forget that because Dunstons at Wodonga had cleaned that up. And of course Dunstons who'd been there for yonks, they bit the dust also and they had to turn over and start cutting pine. They did what happened in Oberon. They had to change the nature of the mill from hardwood to softwood and finally Dunstons got swallowed up by Australian Newsprint when they started up the big plant in the Albury-Wodonga [inaudible].

So all these little fellows, they just vanished. But at that time there was a takeover going on down in Tasmania, Tasmanian Board Mills, who were run by the Holymans[?] and the Holymans are quite historical people, they go back to having shipping lines which they've still got. In fact they were the original owners of what became Ansett Airlines because Ansett took Holymans Airlines and bought it and it became Ansett.

I always thought Bob Ansett started it himself in a Victorian country town.

You go back, that's the origin of the ANA, it was Holymans. Anyway, when they found they lost control of Tasmanian Board Mills to a fellow called Steel who was backed up by a Scottish firm, a shipping company, the name eludes me, but they provided the capital to take it over - and I think the chairman of Cadburys became the chairman of Tas Board Mills and a few things like that - and we pulled the same trick with the pre-dryer. He didn't have pre-dryers either. It was identical to the problem down at Kauri, so for the second time we dried a massive volume of timber and for the first time in twenty-one years Board Mills showed a profit. Just a slight aside with Board Mills. Their name didn't mean board such as in flooring boards, it meant wide boards like in particle boards and the company originally had twenty-five or thirty-five - I can't think - they were a whole heap of little mills in the north-east and up on the lake country and down around Geist[?] and those parts in

Tassie; all bits and pieces. And finally they got a bright idea, I think it was about 1956, to make this Board Mills. They sent a fellow to England and somehow he got conned because what he went to buy he didn't buy and what he came home with was in direct confrontation with a company called APM. They put up this huge building which is still in existence in Launceston which we call 'the straight six' because it looked like looking down Flemington straight. And when you go all over it, there's a huge boiler on the place which you woke up that no sawmill needed but it was for a board mill. Well, the upshot was that they went broke in a very quick time because the price war started up and APM just blasted them out of the market. APM in their goodness came over and offered to gut the place and buy some of the machinery which funnily enough subsequently turned up in Canberra at IFP because I went round and I kicked it one day and I said, 'You look familiar.' So it's a small world again how these things happen. But that was Board Mills and we made the money. I think they made a million-odd bucks the first year and they'd been in the doldrums for twenty-one years.

So this is when you went back to Tasmania in 1970.

1970, yes. I'd had two years at Terrots[?] and just when I was worrying what I was going to do next because I knew Terrots was for the chop, this fellow rang me up and asked me if I'd like to come back and run Board Mills. Of course, when I got back I found he had neither accountants,

sawmilling superintendent or anything, so I had to ring around all my mates and bring in a new crew for him which worked rather well because, again, we had people with no preconceived ideas and we all strangers except not to one another, but to the rest, and we moved very quickly very fast again.

But anyway, after a couple of years Tasmanian Board Mills was being put out of business by Australian Paper Mills.

No, sorry, Australian Paper Mills put the board mill part of it. So here we are with the shell of a giant board mill and then they woke up, 'We'll go back to sawmilling' because they had about 100,000 cube logs [and] sawmills, all these little bitty mills. So we rationalised the mills down to about five and then we built a very big mill out at Western Junction which is near the airport at Launceston. We built a very big, modern bandsaw mill. I felt pretty good about it, but again I went out to the bush and I found out she's amissing.

No resource, right.

So I went out and I talked to Paul Unwin who was the Commissioner of Tasmania whom I knew very well because most foresters know most foresters, and I said to him, 'We're running short'. He says, 'As a matter of fact, I'm going to cut the quotas thirty per cent next year, not only you but

the whole lot of you', which he did. And then I knew he was going to cut another thirty per cent the following year, so people like Kauri, APPM, Tas Board Mills and Risbeys[?] all suffered - the wood was gone. So with most of those companies operating on an average input of 100,000 cubes to suddenly have it halved, their economic feasibility was shot, so they had to get into bed with one another. So Kauri and APPM, they became one and it's still a viable, feasible show in the north-west. As a matter of fact it was one of my consultancy jobs that I worked for Yakka Pouri[?]. That's when I went down and Boral went and bought Tas Board Mills which in turn bought out Risbeys, so that shuffled it down to two companies. There's only Boral of any consequence in Tasmania on the east coast, and APPM or Kauri, whatever you like to call them, on the west coast. And the rest of them, of course, are pulp people; like A&M, they had the big show at Boyer. So how times change and that was in less than twenty years. I left there in '73 and from there up till the start of the '80s Board Mills staggered on but then they ran into trouble because it really started to bite. You couldn't have all that infrastructure and capital working and then have your input halved.

So is that why you left because you could see that the resource was running out and that they were cutting the quotas and you couldn't ...

And because I didn't get on with the managing director. We had a philosophical difference about where we had to go and in situations like that, the general manager never wins against a managing director, you can forget it. So I had a friend of mine, Evan Shields, who was down there working with Northern Woodchips - they'd just put the two big chipping companies in on the Tamar River - and he said, 'Why don't you go up to Canberra? They're having a bit of fun up there with the new integrated plant.' I said, 'Yes, I saw it last February', because when we were building the mill at Canberra [sic], we went around and had a look at all the new mills getting built on the mainland and, of course, one of the mills getting built was the one out there at Hume. So I put in an application. I understand there were fifty applications and whether I was lucky or unlucky I succeeded. I remember Mr Schultz from APM telling me, 'You realise fifty applied for this job and we picked you.' I says, 'Well, sometimes it doesn't pay to be lucky.'

Why do you think they picked you?

A couple of reasons. I had the background and I was quite friendly with Duncans, and Duncans were a twenty-two and a half per cent holder of IFP. By that time I was relatively well known in the industry and they knew I was fifty-fifty in that I was part forester, and we'd put some scores on the board with handling big volumes of timber in Tasmania. And personally, I wanted to go back and see a game of Rugby League. I'd had eight years of Australian Rules and I'd

only suffered one game and I had withdrawal symptoms and I never went near the place again, so I was determined that I had to see Rugby League. One aside, I did coach a Rugby Union side in Launceston among the kids and they came from the orphanage and God knows where, but one of my great achievements in my life was they went out and thrashed Grammar one day, and I couldn't get over how these kids, how I drilled them and I never had time to coach during the week, so I used to coach them an hour before the game and I had them absolutely running hot and by the time they ran on the paddock they were so pleased to get away from training and that they annihilated everything in front of them. They conducted themselves so well that I always remember the captain was a little Aboriginal boy from Flinders Island called Saunders and he had to live out at the orphanage as accommodation to go to the local high school where my kids were going. Anyway, it was one of those things. But it was a great day in their lives when they beat Grammar - it was hilarious. So I came to Canberra again thinking when I left in '51 I would never see the place again as ever as long as I lived.

What did you find at the mill when you got here?

Pretty chaotic. I wasn't worried about the sawmill so much because I'd seen it and I knew what was wrong with the sawmill and I figured I could fix that relatively quickly. I figured Hancocks, since they'd been in the business since 1850, they'd know all about the ply mill so I shouldn't have

too much trouble there, and I thought 'Mother', that's APM, being so big things couldn't be that bad. However, you know what thought did. When I got into it, the place wouldn't run for twenty minutes without stopping. It was incredible. It was a combination of many things.

What sort of things?

The concept of the place was a bit cockeyed because Edgerley, Mark, deceased now, the poor fellow ...

He was head of ACT Forests at this time or whatever it was called.

Yes, he had engineered the whole show. He had prepared the agreement, he put out tenders and he'd done all the dealing with APM and Hancocks and Duncans. Remember, I'd come eighteen months later and they'd lost a million bucks.

Eighteen months after the mill started.

Yes, I wasn't here day one. The original manager who was provided by APM had been dismissed. He still lives here in Canberra. His wife is Elizabeth Grant. She used to be on the council in the early days here. You mightn't have heard of her She has probably given it away now but she was very high up in the local - in the ACT Government. That was before they formed this current ACT government. The point was Howard built the place and then he was there to run it,

but he built it to a price and, well, he hadn't got it right because we needed to spend another two million dollars on it that I worked out when I got here and that frightened the partners terribly. So I had problems all round. I had three bosses who rang me up incessantly.

These were the three partners, the three firms. What were the three partners, again?

Duncans, twenty-two and a half, Hancocks, twenty-two and a half, and APM, fifty-five per cent.

But APPM had a share of all the others - of one of the other two partners.

Oh yeah, APM had forty per cent of Duncan so that meant they had another eight or nine per cent. Let's go back and take them one by one. APM got in on it because they wanted chips. They weren't interested in timber nor plywood. They wanted chips because Botany - the APM plant at Botany - was going to be expanded and a new paper line was going to be put in. Unfortunately they had a strike which lasted a couple of months and so upset the directors in Melbourne that, boom, Botany stood no chance of getting any more. In fact Botany was [inaudible] from there on in. It was going to become very much less in importance. So all the money went into Merivale[?] and they put up a big recovery boiler and then they built the new paper line. But in the interim they didn't need any chips. So here I am with an input of -

we'll talk cubic - roughly 110,000 cube of which I was going to get forty-odd thousand ton of chips. Even though I had seventy-four acres, there was no way you weren't going to get buried under 40,000 ton of chips unless you got rid of it, and it wouldn't take a year to bury you, either. Every day running - I mean, if three days' running went with no the removal of chips, things got very, very uncomfortable. So that was a problem. APM really, I suppose, could have just stepped out at that point and would have liked to have stepped out because they really didn't need the chips. Hancocks wanted to expand because although they were the biggest in Queensland and had plants at Ipswich and Cairns and also they had one down at Wauchope in New South Wales, they liked to be in on it because this plant when it got going, which it finally did, produced more plywood than the whole State of Queensland at the time. Now, relatively speaking, that was big time, but on a world-wide scale we weren't so very big at all. And then Duncans - Duncans wanted to sell the pine because they were mainly hardwood people from way back and they had no other pine; it was always hardwood. But Fred, the grand old man, he was a great salesman and all he wanted to do was sell the stuff. And for a while they made some money, they had the timber agency. Hancocks had the plywood agency and poor old APM signed the bills. So that monthly board meetings were very uncomfortable because although two of them took some money away, APM took nothing away and when I hit there it was a million dollars a year - was the loss. Someone said, 'Are you going to buy a house?' and I says no. The definition I

told you of an optimist, last night, at IFP was anyone [who] took a cut lunch to work.

Because they mightn't have a job at lunchtime, yes.

Other things happening to people for the most part and by the time I got there, in their wisdom, they were starting to work the veneer mill three shifts a day, twenty-four hours, which was crazy. And the ply mill, that's actually fabricating plywood out of veneer, it worked two shifts a day and it was just chaotic. The people weren't used to shift work because it became about the biggest single commercial operation, I think, except for the government laundry, I think it was the only thing that was bigger.

In Canberra, yes.

In Canberra at the time. And they didn't have a clue. They meant well. They were the weirdest workforce I ever struck in my life. They wandered in and out all the time. We had three gangs. One gang coming, one gang going, one gang working. So much so that I had to have a personnel officer which I'd never had on a plant in my life. For 200 people it seemed ridiculous. And then all sorts of problems. The log yard was non-existent. They hadn't bothered building or consolidating and when it rained around here it just bogged down; and the whole mill was put in back to front: the log yard was on the top side so all the mud just trickled straight down through the whole plant, instead of being on

the bottom site and taking it up. The de-barker was totally inefficient and even to the day I left they still made me keep that damned de-barker. The boiler, of course, was the worst blue: 25,000 pounds of steam, and I've got to use those figures because I don't know them in metric, and you needed 19,000 pounds alone to work the veneer dryer. You needed another two or three to work the hot presses, so there was nothing over for the kilns. So we used to push it. Boilers have additional capacity in them for safety reasons, but we pushed it. But of course we ended up with the famous black steam that went into the air and then that area, like a lot of Canberra, is an inversion area and you can see it: the hot air goes up of a morning and it strikes the inversion layer and it comes out like a gigantic anvil - oh boy. And, of course, in those days we were lucky because I lived in the southernmost street in Canberra and all the Tuggeranong Valley hadn't been thought of, but you can imagine what it was like when it did come into existence and all that traffic roared up past and looked at that stack. There'd been no provision for getting rid of the effluent and we used phenol formaldehyde cooler, and phenol has certain ratings of so many parts per million which aren't too many and you can't count them on that hand, they're less than that; and that was just going out and leaving the plant.

Where was it going to?

Across the highway and down through Miss Campbell's and then across back over towards where there is a septic system down there, a pump, on the junction where you go to Queanbeyan to your right and straight into Manuka on your left. It's a bit hard there but it's just the junction where that freeway comes in at the moment, except it was a little road at the time, and that crossed around and, of course, it went heading off for Lake Burley Griffin. And then, of course, the waste - there was nowhere to put anything. When the lathe peeled and when you're rounding up the log to get it perfect symmetrical, well, what comes off is called 'round up', the first bit, that was actually falling down to the bottom on the floor and a fellow had a wheelbarrow there and was taking it away. Well again, at 35,000 tons of log going through the veneer mill you could allow something like fourteen per cent for round up, so there's 4,000 tons on a daily basis - twenty tons a day - and a fellow's got to take it away with a wheelbarrow. And that went up to the back paddock because we were in a very big block - we were seventy-four acres. And on a suitable day or night the procedure was - remember, I'd come in fifteen months after the joint started - they'd light a big fire on a Friday night when they hoped all Canberra had gone down to Batemans Bay for the weekend, but occasionally they goofed because it wouldn't burn right and the smoke would go straight through and put old Canberra airport out of action and oh All this was laid on even in three days of sitting in the seat. I thought the seat was wired when I got there. I thought I had voltage about to come through it and that's why I told

that funny story last night about Miss Campbell coming. She still lives out there as far as I know, and boy, she wasn't kidding when she came and demanded to see the manager

Because of the black water going into her property.

It was black all right. I knew in a flash what had gone wrong as soon as I saw it. So I had no chance of settling in. I was on the hop from day one. So I blocked off the drain and I dug a big dam right outside the thing as a preliminary to hold it and then I still had the headache what to do with the water because sooner or later it had to be released. So we built another big reservoir right up the back and we pumped it from there up to there, see. But then that filled up. After it had been there and we had a pump spraying it up in the air to aerate it and do that with it, and the other thing about the phenol - I know it's dangerous - but once it's set off in the glue with heat, it won't let go again; and so you can eat it if you want to, it won't do you much harm, not that I'd advocate eating it. Well then, we used to let it dribble over the side and it went down through a marsh and the marsh sieved it all out. It was rough but remember I wasn't getting any money to fix the All they were saying was 'Fix it' and no money. They were very concerned; they had a brand new plant, spent five million bucks and things weren't turning out too well. They were losing a million bucks, so they weren't happy. And I couldn't say, 'Well, I didn't do it'; they were paying me to fix it.

I went along for about six months with the thing and then I thought I'd better have an understanding with the directors, so I wrote them all a letter and said that basically I was Simpson, not Samson, and working for three bosses was no good and it was my considered opinion, even though they might chop my head off, that two of them had to disappear. I wasn't fussy which two, but make up your mind because we weren't going anywhere and it was like having three horses and there's no way you can control it. So then they had the meeting and they agreed with my finding that there wasn't room for all of them; someone had to get out. But since, like everyone else, they didn't want to lose any money, they decided they'd try and sell it to the government or try and sell it to anyone. So then I had a rather unenviable job of people coming into me from all walks of life, all parts of the industry, and saying, 'Fancy you losing a million dollars a year', but you had to sit there and take all this. So I flew the flag and they all came through because no one wanted to buy it. And then finally we had the government sawmill down at - not near Fyshwick - near the old Causeway ...

Kingston.

Kingston, and they got ideas of grandeur and they decided they'd like to buy it. I'd sense a public servant [trying] to make an empire and I thought, I've got a chance here. In fact the character that came out, he was that good he used to drive up past my house which was a company house in

Hawkesbury Crescent which is a pretty la-de-da street in Canberra. He was even asking me how many bedrooms were in it and I could see him settling him well but there was no job for me, I was going to disappear. So the upshot of that was, believe it or not, and this is typical Canberra, one of my workers at the kilns, one day he came in and he always used to call me 'chief', he says, 'Have a look at this'. And I said, 'Oh, yes'. He said, 'My son works over at the Government Printers'. 'Does he?' And here I've got this eight-page epic of a presentation to Cabinet to pay four million dollars for the show. They even put the price in; I couldn't believe it. It's all right saying one thing that they were interested in buying it but to put Lord knows what else goes disappearing around Canberra out of that printery, but I'm talking about twenty years ago but there it was - talk about leaking to the press - and here I got it. So I was a bit like Mr McLachlan - it didn't say 'not to be read only by women' so I distributed the thing.* But, of course, it was in the days Gough was in the chair and about every week there was a major or minor disaster and I know that we all knew from the other gentlemen at Kingston Mill just where this letter was getting to in the files coming up to Cabinet; it never bubbled its way to the top and by that time I think Gough was gone or as good as gone, so there was no more of this socialising a sawmill. That was the end of that.

* A reference to Mr Ian McLachlan, then federal Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and to the Hindmarsh Bridge affair in South Australia.

I thought you'd want to get rid of the sawmill except you'd lose your job.

They wanted to get rid of the whole lot because the big thing that went with it was the 110,000 cubic metres of wood, and there was a lot of the small sawmillers that had been here for yonks and taken a lot of the stuff, they thought badly about the stranger coming in and getting 110,000. But the point was the opportunity was there and it had to be someone big to come in. You're not big for the sake of being big but, I mean, for the money that had to be spent you had to have a big volume. And while talking about that, 110,000 on reflection wasn't much at all. To put up a sawmill today you need 200,000 minimum. I told you last night, New Zealand has just got a mill which pushes out 100,000 cubic metres of plywood which means it's got a 300,000 cubic metre log input, and we've got to go out and compete in that market. So you see, the whole thing was a grandiose scheme and really there was insufficient wood all round, and the Government, via Forest Branch, they insisted on the ply mill being in it. It wasn't the idea of the tenderers. It was put up - because I read this after, I wasn't here when all the tendering went on - so the idea was to be Not only did they want timber dried and dressed but they wanted veneer and they wanted plywood and then they really were angling for a pulp mill as well. One thing they didn't ask and I did put up for, was a bark plant, and that's how Pinegro came about. And we treated pine and we could give you pine bark whatever size or dimension you

wanted and we made that big tunnel screen out there. Have you been to the plant and seen it?

Yes.

Yes, we devised all that and we made more money out of that than we did out of anything else, but that went back to another section of APM who owned Pinegro, and then they used to mix coal from Bacchus Marsh - crunch it up and put it in - and that became a good substitute for spagnum moss. Getting back to the main thing, we had insufficient volume, but you're there, you know you're half-way so you've got to keep on going

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

You're there, you know you're half-way so you've got to keep on going. So to make a quick story of it, we fixed the effluent. The way we fixed that was that we mixed our own glue which wasn't there in the beginning. We made a glue mixer and all the effluent water that went out from cleaning the lines, we used that to mix the glue the next day, and we started to recycle stuff and when we did have, as you would have after five or six months, a fair bit of clagged up glue around the place, we just put it in a container, set it off by heat and gave it to the industrial tip and away it went, so that was no more trouble. So we settled all that down.

I then put a conveyor belt under the lathe and sent all the veneer off into a great big hog, so we were able to hog the veneer into chip and put it back into the boiler to burn. And we picked up the sander dust and this Finally, I proved them all two million dollars was wanted and finally Hancocks and Duncans got out at that famous lunch ...

I'm going to ask you about that in a minute.

We had a financial adviser from APM on the board by that time, whose name was Stanley Wallace who, of course, is the current Managing Director of Amcor, and he was only a young man at the time, about thirty-eight, and not long after that he went straight up to stardom. He became Managing Director of Amcor.

This meeting where they got the other two partners out, how did they manage to get rid of them at the meeting? Did they put up opposition?

No, everyone was quite friendly about the whole thing. They just realised and they didn't argue the toss; they all sent independent assessors in after I did my original calculation toll and the independent consultants also said, 'He's right. It is about two million dollars to do all the jobs and just get it back to ...'.

Two million to fix it.

Fancy, two million on five million already spent. So they didn't like the sound of that at all and they were ready ... between them, I think, they'd each lost a million bucks. And APM, of course, was up for about three and a half million because they had the biggest share. They just said to them, 'We'll give you a dollar and you walk away and we assume all the responsibility, the debts, the liabilities and everything.'

So you gave them a dollar each and they disappeared.

That made it legal. Well, otherwise they were still in. Don't forget we had consequential claims. You ought to read that agreement that Edgerley wrote up. They could slug a year in, year out for royalty, even if the mill didn't turn over anything.

So you got rid of the two partners and

It wasn't a case of getting rid of them. It was, 'Are you going to put part of the two million in or are you going to get out?' - that was what it was. And they said, 'We don't want to put any more money in and we realise we've lost a million and we'll cut the cord at this point.' Because if it didn't work - and I mean we're still on trust - a hope and a prayer - I mean there were more headaches turned up later, as I found, but at the time all you could see was this obstacle to get over and then you go further downstream. So they got out and then we started spending

the money and we had to fix up the pollution business. The last thing we fixed up was the boiler because that was another two million bucks all by itself; I never had it on the list. We all knew that but my quaint way of working the boiler by running the veneer dryer for sixteen hours and then at midnight we'd switch the kilns on from midnight till dawn - six o'clock - and then we'd take two of the kilns off and leave one on, and then worked the kilns all the weekend for two lots of twenty-four hours, and that's how we mugged our way through. But in the process the boiler used to spout black smoke and all that out. But part of that was because we didn't have, which is out there now and which I finally got built two years before I left, we put in a very special waste shed in which all the green waste from the sawmill in the form of sawdust or green veneer, hog waste, went into one side of the bin and in the other side we put all the dried waste and that was all the shavings out of the planer mill, the dried plywood - the edgings that came all crunched up, they all went in - and so we had dry and green. And then we had a junior system which pulled the fuel along the floor but at two different rates because then you could get a ratio of green and then there was perfect combustion. And that was done on a computer and the guy up in the boiler worked that out all by himself.

So that solved the smoke problem.

Yes, that didn't solve until about eighteen months before I left.

How did APM feel when you said to them, 'Well, you've got to spend two million dollars here to fix this up.' after they'd lost so much money before?

They weren't overjoyed. But they knew it was their fault because they had put poor old Howard Grant in to build it and they assured the other two that he knew what he was doing when he didn't, with all due respects. The boiler was a classic cock-up because he would not believe that the veneer line used 19,000 pounds of steam and he went ahead and blithely put in a 25,000 pound boiler where for another \$100,000 at the time, or thereabouts, I'm talking '73, he could have put in a 50,000 pound boiler and it would have been no worries. In the finish we had to put another boiler alongside the silly looking thing and hook them up and try and run them in tandem. But remember, 'Mother' said we had the boy and we'll do it, so that's why 'Mother' was caught, that's along the line, because they didn't like it getting represented that ... to their credit they stuck in.

They didn't want to pull out.

They couldn't sell it.

They tried to sell it to the government but that didn't come off, so they were in then.

They were in for the long term. So that was that. Then things just steadily came better and better and we turned around and we started to make a million bucks a year.

When did you start making a profit?

About '76 I think it was. It tied up a lot with the wind throw because the wind throw accidentally provided me with the way of getting bigger diameter logs, because when the wind throw came it was amazing how many big logs hit the ground. And then we had the problem of cleaning up the site quickly, so if they insisted on us going down to what was the old Imperial five inches under bark [it] was going to slow things down, so we kidded them to do it eight inches and that made a lot of difference because every time you did a saw cut you were getting that much wider board. It's all a matter of passes through a saw; you can't alter the thickness because that's it, but boy, oh boy, if you can alter the width, your productivity goes up enormously. And of course they were good logs to peel; they were great. And then we ran into another recession and I said, 'Well, the only way we're going to get out of this is to get greater productivity out of the veneer mill', because it was taking us two shifts to make the plywood because we had presses that had fifteen openings or daylight, as they say in the trade - you could see daylight through them. The best we could do was make about twenty-eight cube per shift per day which was fifty-six cube in total, and it involved about twenty-eight people. We went to Japan and bought a press

with thirty daylights and that was humorous because when they went there the thing was in about eight foot of water and we said to the Japanese, 'I hope the rest of it's there.' 'Ah yes, ah so!' They just cut it up in pieces and it came back and we only had paint marks where it all joined together. Our boys put it in and they made a fantastic job of it. The first time we worked it we got forty-five cube in one shift, but we couldn't lift it above this - and you'll love this story because it's always told against me. I went to the girls - there were ten girls worked on the thing - they used to put the veneer through the glue spreader and there were two on the in-feed, two on the out-feed and two either side - that was six - and then there were the two guys on the presses. That's ten people all told. I said to them, 'You ladies can do much better than this.' 'No.' I said, 'Look, I'll tell you what, I am sure you can get sixty-two cube out of this standing on your ear. If you do, you can pick whatever restaurant you want in Canberra and I'll take you all out for the night; all of you. You just nominate and away we'll go.' 'Who else?' 'I'm the only male. I'll take you girls out. I'm the ref.' So they all giggled and went away and the next day was Friday. They made sixty-three cube, so into town we went. I had to tell my missus a tall story: it was all in the interests of work. They were all dolled up; you can imagine these girls. So we went to the swishest restaurant. It cost 700 bucks for a meal. Took them back over to the Leagues club, gave them plenty of money to play the pokies. Half of them wrote themselves off. I got home. It was the

worst day's work I've ever put in. It was very laborious. On the Monday morning I said, 'Did you have a good time girls?' 'Oh, it was lovely, nice of you to take us.' 'Good', I said, 'Sixty-two is the number.' And then they had all sorts of aspersions about my background and my birth and my mother and father but at least I proved to them. Really it was easier work than when they worked the other press because it was a matter of timing. You had to go clappity, clappity, clap, get it together and then it went into a cold press, in which you initially pressed all the things together so they were When they were glued they were about that thick and when you come out of the cold press, you got it so that then you could get it into the hot press to cure the glue line. But we also told them that they didn't have to get ahead. We had to make sure that whatever they made was in the hot press within twenty-six minutes and if it wasn't, well, don't make anything, just stand and have a smoke, do whatever you like. Took them a while to wake up to that but once they got in the rhythm of it they found it easier. They'd have a flurry of activity and then just sit back and have a smoke and a mag and then a flurry of activity, and the

So they could do the sixty-two easily.

I knew it. I'd seen them do it in the States. I wasn't asking anything that I knew that couldn't be done. The trick was to kid them to do it and when they did it they went crook, they reckoned I'd trapped them. But I said it

doesn't matter, you know how to do it. And with it away went eighteen employees out the mill, so eighteen multiplied by whatever it was at the time, was a big saving in money. Now, I didn't have to sack anyone. That's a joy about Canberra, you don't ever sack anyone because they keep wandering in and out of jobs. All I did for six weeks, I said, 'Don't put anyone on.' I didn't care where they went out of the place and then I'd shift around and eighteen disappeared in that time. Whereas in a small country town you'd have had the invidious job of going in and dismissing them which wouldn't be any good. The other funny thing about the place was that they became timber men and timber women and they became plywood workers and they were on a worldwide rating because in the finish six and a half cube per person, per shift, it was good going. Unfortunately, we only worked the thing for one shift, so that's ten shifts out of twenty-one possible shifts in a week and thereby lay our promise. I couldn't get any more efficient because they didn't have any more wood. Then I said to them, 'Why don't we give the sawmill away?' - because it was a very inefficient sawmill. 'Why don't we go and buy a four foot lathe and have it alongside the eight foot lathe?' You don't need any more in fabrication, all you're trying to do is produce more veneer. I even got to the stage, we bought the lathe except it stayed over in a shed in Portland on the west coast and subsequently got resold again; they wouldn't go ahead and in their wisdom they elected to rebuild the sawmill ... which I built; that was the last month in ... January 1988 it was completed. We put it all together in

six weeks, mind you. We'd built the foundations prior to that and that went in and that was the end of it. And then the next thing after I left they sold the ply mill.

What about the chips? What had been happening with them in the meantime?

Sorry. In the beginning, *in initio*, when we couldn't sell them to Botany at APM, there was a sale done to HAL, Hardwoods Australia Limited, who make Masonite. You know the plant at Raymond Terrace, near Newcastle. They were a combination APPM and CSR. Very quickly, they used to make the caneite out of bagasse

Bagasse - which is?

The by-product from sugar cane, because Colonial Sugar - they had heaps of that. That was down on Pymont near the bridge there. Then they suddenly twigged that bagasse burns very well as fuel and doesn't give out much black smoke. And Oberon had just come on stream as a pine producing area which was only just up the road, so then they decided they would use pine chips and caneite disappeared and pineboard came in. That was the transition. So although they had a fair bit up there and knowing what strife we were in, they came down and offered us a terribly low price but they had us over a barrel; we had to get rid of it. Even if we gave it to them we had to get rid of it, otherwise it would have shut the whole plant down. You couldn't have moved. You

would have been buried in chips. So I went up and the directors told me to go up and see if you can get the price up. Well, I went up and I think the price come down. The bloke was a very nasty character I had to deal with. He had no sense of humour whatsoever. Anyway, I said, 'All right, that's your wish, that's well and good but I don't think it's wise for you to grind us like that because things change as times go by and there may be one day you might wish you'd spoken a little nicer to me.' No, he didn't want to talk nice - take it or leave it, so boom! My goodness, we're caught. But by that time 'Mother' had put in the big line down at Merivale and they wanted a lot of chips and Stanley Wallace was the Managing Director and he didn't want any company in APM with a red result, so we started selling chips.

What year was this, Terry?

Early '80s, I think.

As late as that.

It took a long while to shake off HAL. So they gave us a price which was better - not a lot but at least it was Hang on, yes, it was a lot better because it was in the company. It was only transferring from one to the other so it made it easy. But Boral used to enjoy it at the same price and they were only five kilometres from the plant at Merivale, so you can imagine how much money they made on the

books. I had a big freight charge to get it down there but I still had a nett figure far bigger than HAL. So I then I had the pleasant duty of going up to HAL within six weeks at the end of their contract, and 'Good morning,' and I said, 'Well, we're here to negotiate the price of the chips for the next period' - tongue in cheek. 'How much do you want?' I said, 'Sixty bucks a ton will do me nicely, thanks.' Well, he went clean through the roof. He was hanging from the rafters. And I kept him up there, too, and I baited him - God, I paid him back. So I said, 'Looks like we can't do business, so goodbye, thank you for your help.' He was in a hell of a mess because he then had to go back to Oberon and his chips cost him a lot more up there; they were dear and, of course, his results must have gone, boing, boing. So I had my fun [inaudible]. The same thing with Monsanto, the glue company. When I first went there someone in their wisdom had elected to - and this was the thing that worried me about Hancocks. Hancocks, although they'd been in the business for a long time making plywood, they'd never had a modern plant like this Ralco[?] plant. It was as modern as anything. You had a bloke pulling up at one end and the stuff went straight backwards and forwards through this big dryer, came out to another operator who just clipped it for fault and then it automatically clipped the rest, and then all they had to do was press the button to grade it and it dropped into a slot, so only two people worked the whole line. But they'd never had a line like it. Also, the bloke that came out to put it in was a sales engineer, not a real good engineer, and these big mesh mats that went through it

cost an arm and a leg. They were about \$40,000 each and there were six of them went in. We were wearing them out in ten months. We found a way of getting them to work. And first, they'd start up work at midnight on a Sunday night and nothing would go, the whole thing would be locked together. Anyway, you've got to be lucky. I had a friend in New Zealand and he rang me up and said, 'I've got the Finnish fitter here and he's finished with us' - because they were putting in an identical line on the North Island of New Zealand; NZFP[?] were putting one in. I said, 'Oh yeah'. 'Could he come and help you?' 'My word he could come and help me.' So over he came and it was in Christmas. We'd just shut down in December and it was delightful because I had a whole three weeks in which he could look at it and we could do anything with it. He said to me, 'You're funny people, the way you've got this to work.' I says, 'Maybe we're comedians but it doesn't work real well.' He said, 'It must cost you a fortune for mats.' 'It does cost a fortune for mats.' 'I can fix it.' 'Can you?' 'Yes', he said, 'It might cost you a couple of shifts of production. How much are you prepared to give away?' 'If you can fix it, I'll give a whole week's production away because it can't cost me as much as those mats. And once I've solved it, whatever the cost, it's solved forever.' 'All right', he said. So on start-up day I said, 'You're in complete charge, just tell us what you want and we'll do it.' So the thing, we roared it up, it operated at 140°C. And he said, 'Stop it, now. Open the doors and we're going to get in.' He jumped in and he was only in there for about sixty

minutes and he marked a notch. He said, 'Now we're going to have to wait for it to cool down.' I said, 'Oh yes.' Well, we waited. It took about five hours for it to cool down again. He went in and he made an adjustment. He said, 'Now, start it up again.' We started it up again and he did that twice. The thing was you had to make the adjustments while it was hot. You had to take the measurement and we were waiting for it to get cool and then adjusting it up. He marked it when it was red hot and then jumped out, and went back when it was cold and knew exactly what was on. He only did it twice and that was the end of it, and we didn't buy mats for another three years. I asked him which island in the Pacific he wanted to go to for a holiday. I could have spent a couple of grand on him easy - go wherever he wanted. He was a funny bloke. He went to China later and put in another plant in China. I kept correspondence with him for a while because he was the mightiest man I ever struck. So that was another major thing solved. So we'd solved the glue, we knew how to make the dryer go, we'd put the big press in, and then we ran into one other little bit of a hornets' nest. When you finished making it comes out of the hot press and it's cooled, you send it down the trim line and trim the two sides and trim that. Since we used to work the trim line two shifts that was all right but now, all of a sudden, we've got two shifts' production in one and this thing couldn't work twice as fast. So I rang up the Japanese and said, 'Come here, see how this thing goes to and fro like that. We want another one down this end - two of them. All we want to do is buy that but ...' 'Can't do

that - the electrics.' I didn't have the heart to tell him we'd rewired the thing ourselves after it had come out.

'No, you cannot do it.' So away they went. Six Japs had to come and have a look at it. You can never get one Jap to tell you; it had to be six and the six of them said, 'Could not be done.' All they wanted to do was sell us another unit. So I said to our engineer, 'Take that thing apart on there and get it drawn and build another one ourselves', which we did. So when the sheet went in then we just went boom, two passes in one and the productivity went up 100 per cent and that was it. The Japs came a couple of years later and looked at it.

You should have patented it.

It was funny though the way they did It was things like that we had to figure out ourselves and in the finish I was blessed with a very good engineer. It took me three engineers before I got him but he was something and really most of these plants are just good engineering, after you've settled down and figured out exactly what you want to do; you've got to get that firmly in your mind first and then put the engineering to match. Don't let the engineers get ahead of you, otherwise So that worked it out all right and we had it up to world rating. All we needed was more wood to put through it because only working it five days a week, we were making 15,000 cube of plywood. So if we'd worked it seven days we'd have doubled it. We could have gone twenty-one shifts. And then if we put the veneer

line in the other four foot lathe alongside it, we really could have made that hot press go a little faster again.

But the problem was the lack of resource was it?

It had it and I'd told them how to do it. 'Well, don't try any more with the timber', because all the time I told them this ACT forest resource is shrinking in diameter. I'd showed it to the directors year in, year out - the whole fifteen years. I used to go and work out what the average diameter was and I could run it off. I could extrapolate it and show them we were in trouble. And I said, 'This machinery will not go fast enough because your diameter is down, so your piece count goes up and for the same volume of wood you've got to do much more work, so why don't you put the four foot lathe in and we can get access to all that smaller wood', which at the moment was going to the others around town and we'd have had much better utilisation. But there was no way you could have put it through the sawmill. And, of course, in between all that we'd put that diameter sorter on the log line to make everything ... but that was mainly for the new mill because that new mill had to have logs sorting to work. We didn't need the log sorter for the veneer mill, not at all. And we didn't need the other boiler if we were only going work the ply mill. But when they tried both and had insufficient resource, you couldn't run it. So now it's getting old, it's fifteen years old - no, it's older than that, what am I talking about? - '73, it's twenty-two years old. The last lot of capital was when

they built the new mill - a couple of million - and the boiler. Yes, they've probably sunk another five/six million in it, so that's only been depreciating about eight years, but I guess on depreciation the cost I know they made a lot of money the last couple of years when timber prices just roared up, because even their good mill at Morwell had trouble when CSR - when their entry to the market - decided to drop the price by twenty-five per cent. No one could believe it but they did it. They tore the bottom out of everything and shows that had been very viable and done well There was no reason to do it. It was an insane reduction in price. And at the same time the Yanks had bespotted[?] our business and Clinton went and locked up all the forests so oregon and everything was getting to be a premium price. It was a good time to get top price for everything, not to go and chop the bottom out of it. It took about three years/four years before the price got up, and for years the price out there was worse than three years ago. That had nothing to do with the mill. All mills were experiencing the same problem with the marketplace.

END TAPE 2, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE A

Identification: this is tape 3 of an interview with Mr Terry Connolly, conducted by Brendan O'Keefe, recorded on 16 March 1995 at the Australian War Memorial.

Topics covered on this tape are history of forests and forestry in the ACT. End of identification.

Terry, in the time you were at IFP did you have any strikes at all?

No, we were very lucky. We went the whole fifteen years without a strike.

Not one?

Not one.

What do you put that down to?

I had a little habit and it was well known in the industry that when I was town I used to start work every morning with the workers and I used to go round and say good morning to each and every one of them. I always thought it was a good idea, particularly when I first got to the place and it was so obvious, you couldn't even talk timber to them because they didn't know what they were doing. So I used to go round and just chat to them a bit; there were a lot of women in the place at the time. I just thought, well, if they thought the old bloke in the main office was concerned about them, it might help a bit, and I just told them, and they knew darn well, that as I walked around, if they had any major complaint and wanted to talk to me, I'd prefer they went through their foreman. But they could quite feel free

to tell me and I'd see what I could do for them. It worked out rather well. A lot of people in the trade must have known, 'You're the bloke that goes round every morning and says giddy to the ...'. I says, 'It doesn't do any harm.' It didn't, it proved the point. Whereas my successor came in, I think he locked himself up in the office and they struck. The union finally got in on him and he was out for over a week - couldn't believe it.

What was the size of the staff you had there? How many people on the staff?

There was, I suppose, about 160 in the finish but when I first went there there was well over 200; it was unreal. We had personnel officers and the whole shooting match, but that all calmed down in the finish [in] that there was myself and there was the timber superintendent who looked after the sawmilling, plus the drying, plus the dressing. And then there was the ply mill superintendent who looked after the whole mill in the both shifts. There was an engineer who was responsible to keep the plant going and there was an accountant. But before that, oh boy, I had anyone and everyone working but we got it down. And then underneath that there were the foremen that broke them up into workable sections; and it was relatively a very simple plant to run. But as I say, we never had enough wood and we weren't prepared Well, what the final decision was after I left was to go 100 per cent timber and give the ply mill away. Personally, I think they made a mistake. I

think they should have gone the other way because it would be more suitable for the diameters that I feel sure are going to come out of that forest. Even the little trip I had through this morning, there's a lot of small wood turning up from here on in and you'd do better to go peeling on a small lathe and don't forget these small lathes can get down to fifty millimetre cores - fifty millimetres - whereas with any stem in radiata, the centre around the pith, there's generally an area of 100 ml by 100 ml and it's no good because it's a weakness and if you put it through the F-rating machine to strength it, it will give you F3 and lower which is no good because you need F5 minimum. And the other thing, it's pretty brittle and it's really only chip quality. But whereas you think you can peel and bring out a veneer two and a half millimetres thick and go down, and there's always the splicing and the putting it together and improving your recovery out of sight and, of course, your end product is probably two and a half times the average value of your timber. I'll sit and argue it all day, which way they should have gone. Also, they get into a niche market because there's only 20,000 cube of LVL made in Australia at the present time and that's nothing when you think of the consumption of hardwood and heavy structural I'm talking about big structural stuff which you can make out of itty bitty logs; this is the beauty of the thing. And the Finns have been doing it for yonks. Fifteen years, I saw it in Finland that long ago. Still, we are slow. One fellow's making it. I think you could go out and have a 100,000 cube on the market and still not be

conflicting with co-producers; you'd have it to yourself. But you get into building material and you've got CSR there who is a [inaudible] giant - the latest acquisition was 400,000 cube at Bathurst last year, at New South Wales. Boy, oh boy, they're just about it as far as softwood goes on the east coast of Australia. It must be policy for CSR to become that big. So I'd sooner get away in another pond, not annoy them and do it.

Tell me how did you find the quality of the timber or logs that were delivered to the mill? How did you get on with the logging contractors and so on?

There's two ways of tackling that story. When I first came the die was already cast in that in their wisdom IFP had done a contract with Crawford Logging, which was a fellow called Ivan Crawford, whose base was in East Gippsland, who was a very big contractor, supplying pulp to the Merivale mill. This was a new thing for him to come up and supply saw logs and ply logs. They had a fellow called Klapka[?] who was the local manager up here, Roy - not a bad sort of a fellow but he went by the book unfortunately - and he had an agreement. And if he had an agreement, forestry had an agreement, my bosses had an agreement, the only one who didn't have an agreement was me and I was right in the middle of all these agreements which I systematically ran and broke most of them down, thank God, otherwise life would have been unbearable. I couldn't get through Klapka's head what a ply log was and what a saw log was and how important

it was to get them right. The contractors mainly had the pulp wood concept of bringing in tons rather than volume. So it was a continuing war which was most unpleasant. They weren't very efficient.

You're talking about all the contractors.

I only had one.

They had sub-contractors, was that the ...?

No, he was the one. He had the big contract. Also, they hadn't arranged for the high lead logging. By high lead I mean to log those high slopes where conventional gear couldn't get in. It was also in the agreement that IFP had to find a way of doing it and there was a timetable and 'Thou shalt go into this area and so on.' In the finish I had to ring up Edinburgh of all things because I struck up a relationship with a fellow called Chissop[?] who worked for Klapka and he had, of course, a Scottish mate in Edinburgh who, of course, had a high lead system who, of course, brought out the whole crew and shooting match, wives and the bairns and then the population of the Robbie Burns Club doubled overnight in Canberra. And wild Normans they were. Bob Smith was his name and he was over in Queanbeyan. He had a factory there and he brought high lead to the ACT, and they were good machines and they did work. The only concession I remember at the time ACT Forests gave was they gave us four dollars back on royalty because they knew high

lead logging was more expensive than conventional logging. Mainly on account of output, you just couldn't get the output a day out of the machine that you could get out of conventional logging. So that was another one we had to fix: we had to get the high lead; so he came. And Klapka had escalation clauses in his agreement which had blown beyond belief, but he used to come down and read them to me religiously. But when the loggers' yard was empty and I rang him up he suddenly turned deaf, so ... oh dear, oh dear. There was one other clause in the agreement that we had to go down from about five inches under bark - and it was inches in those days - to three inches, because the other was a grandiose scheme of having a pulp mill. Well, we were flat out getting rid of the chips. I've told you the sad story of HAL; they had more chips coming into the yard and have to debark it and handle it and chip it - forget it. So I thought this is about the end now, so I went into Mr Edgerley one Friday afternoon late, about ten to five, and I said, 'I'd like to say goodbye to you. In case you realise, I never bought a house here, so it's not going to take me long to leave town. But if you insist on bringing those restrictions in on us' - not restrictions, they were conditions - 'we'll just go under. And I can't do it and I don't think anyone else can, but I wouldn't like to be around when you close that joint down.' So, 'We must sit and have a talk.' So we talked on and on and then I came out with a new agreement. I got rid of the three inch end, boom! And I got the five inch to go up to eight inch and I told him I just needed breathing space. I told him all my

problems. I said, 'We've all got problems', and I told him what I had. And I said, 'You are not aware of most of them but they are real headaches' - pollution and crook water and the residue, and I had to eliminate all that burning up the back. That took a while, just waiting for the right wind and letting it go. And, of course, they had old Bernie Morrison the next day, the Laird of Tralee, and I ran into trouble with him about three days after I run into trouble with Miss Campbell. So I didn't have a friend, a feather to fly with. My friend, Chris Lacey, who worked back out at CSIRO, his daughter used to come past and she said, 'Daddy, isn't that where Mr Connolly works. He kills horses, doesn't he?' Talk about keeping a low profile. The *Canberra Times* used to ring up and I'd say, 'Kelly's Wood Yard, how many tons do you want?', so that kept them at bay for a long time; they used to think they had the wrong number.

Just tell me about - you mentioned that when they got the logs they had the pulp wood concept and they'd deliver it in ...

They'd come in incorrect lengths; that was wastage because timber had to be sold in 300 mm intervals, and we were entitled to an overcut from the forestry but we didn't want to bring in more than the overcut because we were paying on tons. I only wanted exactly what I wanted to pay for and no more, no less, and there was nothing in the agreement where

I could penalise them or cut it off. It was terribly unfair.

So they didn't care how they cut it.

They should have but they'd 'Yeah, yeah' and go away and not take any notice. But he was very quick to come down and tell me the escalation clauses.

What were the escalation clauses?

They were at the end of each year. There was a system tied up with - you know, the usual escalation clause - the cost of living or something, it was a government figure. That time, under Whitlam, it was going up through the roof. He came down and exacted his pound of flesh, so I was getting real silly. So I said to Edgerley, 'You help me because Klapka's contract is about to finish. What, if I give you all the logging? And then we'll get better utilisation because you control the other loggers for all the other millers, and then you can go through compartments one at a time and give us the products we want and what these are fellows want and so forth, whereas at the time Monier, who were cutting roof battens, were cutting up peeler quality logs, peeler-sized logs, because we had to be given a compartment to ourselves because of the agreements, because we couldn't mix with the other contractors. And the other contractors, since they were only delivering, obviously at times he let them in compartments that were very good, so I

was losing on two counts. And as a forester I knew that. He grinned because his empire was going to get big because when you count up all the contractors, oh boy, the number of people that he had under him suddenly went up. So that was the deal I struck. I will hand over the logging and I said, 'What's more, I want lower prices to the logging' - because Klapka's just ridiculous and if you've got the lot, like everything else - a scale of operation - you can bring costs down because you can give blokes a volume that can actually ... they can become cost effective. He said, 'I agree with all of that.' So that happened, so we won.

When did this happen? When did Klapka's contract start?

About '75, '76, I think, and not long after the wind throw occurs, so it all came beautifully, because what could have been awkward at the time [inaudible] Edgerley had control of all the logging and therefore he could nominate where logs had to go to, so all they needed was supervision at the landing and saying, 'Well, that's IFP, Monier, Koppers and so forth' and everyone was getting what they wanted and I wasn't losing out on peeler logs which, of course, were at a premium. We didn't want to see any peeler logs not go through the lathe. So life became a lot more bearable. I had a hell of a time convincing APM that we should let go the logging and I said, 'You're nuts.' With its integrator like that, one fellow has got to control it all because then we can go to him and complain or praise him, whichever is

the case, and he will give us one price, delivered in the yards, so we've only got to write out one cheque. It worked well. I've told other people on the north coast where integrated's happening in hardwood, they should do the same thing but they don't and it's a bit unfair. They make the contract and negotiate the sale. I said, 'Gee, that's crook.'

So once Edgerley took over the logging or control the logging, the contractors did a lot better job because ...

Well, they reduced the number of contractors for a kick-off. There's only three contractors left around here now, and I'd done the hard work for him on the high lead. I'd found the blokes, so I handed him over to him on a plate, so all his headaches were solved and he had absolute control over the lot and he knew what we wanted and I was happy, he was happy. It was one of those good deals because something was on the table for everyone. When someone puts it on and wants to take the lot and gets greedy, there's no use doing deals like that. So it was very effective and life got a lot easier for us all the time; because I only had to ring up on the phone, 'Where are the logs?'

Did you buy a house by this stage?

No, I never bought a house. What I saved, I built the house at Woolgoolga. I built it in '84, that was four years before I left.

So you had it all well planned.

You'd laugh about the house. The house is 100 per cent plywood and radiata and it's built on plywood I-beams; the most modern technology which they won't do here and still won't do it because they sent me - 'Mother' - I think they just sent me overseas to shut me up and get me away for a while and I'd come back telling them another good idea. But I went to this factory at Eugene in Portland and they were making five miles of this material a week and it was an I-beam about that high which had the top and the bottom plate out of laminated veneer lumber. It's all going the one way, the veneer, and then the web, it was a piece of seven millimetre plywood. Now, when you build a house like that, you don't have to put piers all over like the conventional house. Like there's about 100 piers under the ordinary conventional house. I've only got three walls and these span it because you can make it as long as you like. So, I've got them twelve metres long and we space them at about - whatever eighteen inches is in millimetres - 450 mm and Bob's your uncle. And then we put ply floor on top of it and then we put the timber frame up and then I clad it with plywood on the inside coated with Creson[?] paper, which you can either paint or do whatever you like; and then on the outside, down the works, we made stone ply. We put the

sheets down and we put epoxy glue on and we poured stone on it that I'd got from the Nambucca River in various grades. I'd seen the Yanks do this. I'd seen them make this stone ply. There's factories over there that have been operating for about twenty years. So I clad all the outside of the house with stone ply and then I made one big [inaudible] down the centre of the house of stone ply and it looks like there's a concrete wall, like that - what do you call it? - pebble...

Pebblecrete?

Yes, a bit like Pebblecrete and I got this nice salt and pepper shaker colours from Nambucca River - from a fellow up there. It was the princely price of about seven cents a kilo. The glue wasn't. The glue was about nine bucks a sheet. It was the dear part of it. That was almost the cost of the plywood sheet at the time. So I made the whole thing to show them how it was, and the ceiling - the roof - I had it cathedral style because it's hot up there, and I put exposed beams right along and then I put absolute clear veneer because we got that from the big fire in Adelaide - remember? - and they put it out in the pond. I was able to buy veneer at that time and I bought select clear as the same price as you could buy D grade, so I made all the sheets. And we were selling it at Canberra as well. So up went the house, so there she is. At least I've done exactly what I preached and people have come to the house and say 'Where can you buy it?', and I say, 'You can't'.

So you built this in '84, so obviously you were planning four years before you retired and left Canberra to

I could see what they were doing and thinking about the ply mill and I figured I'd better exit. It was starting to get me down as well, because it was a long time. They'd tried valiantly to get me to go to Melbourne to become the Production Manager for the whole group because we had Tumut at the time, we had Morwell and we had East Gippsland. But that was only a flash way of becoming a taxidriver, going down and doing that lot and I wasn't having that on. Besides, I wasn't going back to watch Australian Rules again; I'd had a bellyfull of that. I said, 'No, I'm not going there. I'll go north.' I remember having a serious conversation with him. He said, 'Where would you like to go?' I said, 'I'll go' I didn't tell him the place. I said, 'We'll do this and this and this.' He said, 'That's good. Where's that?' I said, 'Coffs Harbour'. He said, 'We haven't got a plant at Coffs Harbour.' I said, 'I'll go and build you one.' He wasn't interested. At the time, of course, I had a boss above me that was only a marketing bloke but the bloke above me was much more interesting; his name was Ross Adler. He was 2IC to Stanley Wallace in Amcor, and then, of course, he got a bit impatient waiting to get the job because they're nearly the same age, so he's the Ross Adler that is Managing Director of Santos in South Australia. He's been over there about seven or eight years now. So we had some interesting brains above us, but

although APM Wood Products is one of the names we subsequently became, although I think it's Brown and Dureau now. Brown and Dureau belong to Adler. He sold that to Amcor; that's how that all came about. And remind me to tell you about the submarine deal after that. We were big compared to the other timber and plywood companies around about - our peers - but in the corporate image, they weren't real interested. I think Boral suffers the same problem today. Even though they've still been buying up till three years ago, there is a distinct impression that Boral might divest themselves of their timber interests. And it's big. They're the biggest hardwood interest in the east coast.

The submarine - this is a classic. When Brown and Dureau came over - and we're always getting hunted into someone else. We were with APM Forests for awhile and then we went to APM Wood Products and finally we went over to B and D (Dureau), and when we got there, this is the thing that Adler headed up and they're a different type of people because they're all buying and selling, they never had any production. And, of course, when we came along - boy! - we had a big plant and he couldn't unload us in a hurry, because he told me one day, very confidentially sort of affair, that any of his plants he could get rid of within six weeks. He'd have a big sale and clear out the shelves. He never owned any buildings they had. He was on lease. He'd cancel the lease and sack the people and, boom! - that was the end of that. I said, 'Oh, that's lovely.' But now he had a production plant and tied up with agreements

again with people like ACT Forests and I said, 'You've got to pay them out.' He wasn't used to it. They sold all sorts of things like Bic pens and those ETC tools in the marketplace; they got them from up in northern India - that's where they buy all them from. They're made in little villages, in a cottage-style industry. But finally one day - this is in the day of telex machines - they're going to sell three hundred million dollars of Sikorsky helicopters - not submarines - to the navy. My telex machine used to start working at five o'clock at night and it would come out as long as a cricket pitch; you never saw anything like it. And then a guy would come out from town and he'd confidentially put it all in a big sugar bag and away he'd go with it; I wouldn't see him again for a while. But I was the only APM outlet in town and he was the PR bloke. I think he was stationed in Sydney. He used to come to and fro the Department of Navy all the time - that's why I was thinking of submarines but it was helicopters. It went on for seven years this sale. Finally they sold it. They made three per cent on the deal, I think, but I reckon they added it all up in expenses going to and fro, across to America and Washington and back. It just took too long. In those days all the wood products were going well and we were holding Brown and Dureau up by the scruff of the neck. But, of course, when things get tough and the housing industry collapses, well, they weren't used to that. They kept thinking people by Bic pens everyday, but I said, 'People don't build houses everyday; it comes in waves and you've

got to put the fat away to get you through the skinny times.'

How do you think APM saw you? Did they appreciate what you did for them or couldn't care less?

No, that was [inaudible] and they always used to like to come up and see the place and take them around because my shining effort was the day my daughter got married in Canberra. That must have been '85, that must have been this month, too. It was the first Saturday in March in '85 and the big fire went Were you living here when the big fire went through Canberra?

Yes.

Do you remember this hoon got on a trailbike and went all around town and lit everything up. He lit up the back of He certainly lit up down in Hume and then he went out over the top of the hill, Hindmarsh Drive, and he gave that a bit of a tickle up because Remember it was extraordinary conditions because the grass was yea high. It was a thirty degree day. The breeze got up to sixty K and everyone was down at Batemans Bay because the following Monday was Canberra Day - remember? - so it was a long weekend. And it all took off. Well, poor old - what's his name? - Leon Brune[?], his sawmill went up in a flash at midday or by one o'clock. I watched it from the top of the hill where the original old garbage tip was and it was

spectacular. And dear old IFP survived the lot. Here we are this gigantic seventy acre green postage stamp in the middle of utter blackness. I had a fetish of prettying the place up because I knew how bad it looked around the back and I thought, let's make it look pretty. They used to grizzle a bit about the maintenance but I had the lawns all around it and I put shrubs and I had a fire dam and I kept the fire trails right. Old Bert Veston who I used to play football against in Royals, he was out at Hall, he had a grader and I used to make sure Bert used to come in every summer and went around and graded everything. The fire tried to get into the place but all like grass fires they come along woosh! - and then they got right round till they're trying to find dry fuel and they couldn't because it was green. And then they took off and went straight up into Tralee and I said, 'Big Bernie, here is comes.' And the police went beserk. They really jumped out of their tree. They got on at about ten o'clock in the morning and warned all Canberra that it was an explosive situation out at Hume; there was a fire out of control and it was heading to an arsenic factory up the other end of They meant Koppers. It never got anywhere near Koppers but it wiped out And they said, 'There could be poisonous air all over Canberra and everyone had to keep' You never heard anything like it. I couldn't believe it. I went and tried to get down the hill to go to the plant because I had not only fitters in there doing the usual work on the weekend, but the engineer had his daughter who was about twelve or thirteen ... she used to earn pocket money by

titivating out the office - dusting it and so forth, giving it a good clean out on a Saturday. She was down there, trapped. I thought There was a fellow called Ray Jostead[?], my engineer, who still lives here in town on the north side, and I thought, well, they'll all have enough brains to get into the dam if it gets real bad; because the dam was fifteen foot deep, so they wouldn't boil to death because the grass fire just goes woosh! - it's passed you. So as long as you are under the water And then I found out after, they'd put a sprinkler on top of the office and had it going merrily along and they turned all the big boom sprays on on the lawn and they behaved magnificently considering there was only Ray there who was the engineer. He quietly went around and started all the sprinklers up. Sure it jumped the fence and got into dry sawdust but they just went around and beat it out. They had a terrible forty minutes until ... because the fire kept going woosh. And it got over the railway line and I went there I never got onto the plant until three o'clock in the afternoon and gee whiz, the sleepers just disintegrated - there was nothing left; that's how hot it was. And in some places the flame never got there, it was just instant combustion. They took two days to put that out because this bloke was still racing around. He went out to Tuggeranong, remember where the pines were there? And then he got the south side where my daughter was at Chisholm and they were thinking about evacuating Chisholm. But of all things my daughter had to get married at four o'clock. I finally got down to the plant. The police wouldn't let me through there, 'You'll

die'. I said, 'Don't be stupid. The fire's gone through the grass now; it's just smoke. I want to get to the plant to see it.' 'No', refused, point blank, 'You'll get killed'. So I went all the way around the back road to Queanbeyan where I said the [inaudible] and then I followed up through the properties till I got on the railway line and then we crossed over there and I came in the back way into the plant. And they were all there and they all had a big grin on their faces and they'd saved the day.

END TAPE 3, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE B

And they all had a big grin on their faces and they'd saved the day. Nothing was burnt - nothing. And next door, not only Leon's mill went up, but he used to have an external diesel tank and you ought to have seen that when it vapourised and went straight up in the air about, I suppose, twenty metres it went straight up. I watched it burn for an hour from the top of the hill. And the other thing, the contractors had got a bright idea, they had brought hardwood logs - I don't know if you saw them - but they were there on the opposite side of the road to where Leon was and they'd stacked them up and they were about sixty/seventy metres long and they were easy seven or eight metres high and I suppose they were about eight metres long; it was a huge volume of wood. It caught on fire at three o'clock in the afternoon, it was gone by midnight. Because I came down

after the wedding, at the breakfast, just to have a look and even then we had to get about fifty metres away to look at it. But it was gone. I couldn't believe that volume of wood had burnt in less than nine hours. I was expecting it to burn for weeks when it took off. Nine hours that burnt - God, she was a fierce fire. And it trickled up the road a bit towards Koppers but never did any harm, but Leon, he was gone, boom! The office just exploded in front of my eyes when I watched from the top of the hill - all over between twelve and one. That was a big day. Of course, the board had to come up and all the big noses come up to see Connolly's mill - she's intact - and, of course, Stanley, the Managing Director, said to me, 'A bit lucky.' I said, 'Good management, Stan. Think of me at Christmas.' You'd love this one. We had to entertain the board and they just wanted afternoon tea, so I said to Marge Low[?] who had worked with me all the time there, 'Get some pros to come out and do it. We don't want to go mucking around.' So she rang up some mob and you wouldn't believe it, this fellow came out and he used to be the butler at the Lodge and he ran this professional afternoon tea business. So out he comes and all the silverware and silver You had to see it to believe it. I nearly died. I took one look and oh no. He brought out this little French maid - frilly little black dress and the bonnet on - and this other You had to see it, Brendan. You'd have killed yourself laughing. And, of course, Stanley said, 'Is this another one of your ideas, Connolly?' 'No', I said, 'This is a pure accident, this one'. He said, 'I think they like it, though.' But we

never had any more swisho afternoon teas like that. It was so hilarious. And all those big fellows there: the chairman, he's the new chairman at the moment, he was the general manager of Ford. We had some heavyweights there. And the head of Pacific Dunlop, he was there. He's the current chairman. But, oh boy, who was who in Melbourne business was there that day. But that's only because I got something right. I don't what would have happened if the thing had burnt to the ground. I don't think they would have ever rebuilt it. I think they would have collected the insurance and bolted. They would have took the first [inaudible] out of the agreement and said 'hooroo'. At times I don't know whether they were really thanking me for stopping it. But it was the good practice we had of maintaining the lawns and anything green that fire just didn't tickle at all.

You left the ACT in '88 to go up to Woolgoolga. You were intending to retire or ...?

Yes, that's where I stay from here on in but I'll operate out of there.

You didn't exactly full-time retire though, did you?

No, but if the phone rings and that's interesting, I'll go and do it. If it's not interesting I tell them I'm busy. You see, there's two good projects First of all a fellow rang me up in the October, I'd left in January, from

Parbury's[?] in Melbourne and he said, 'We've got a little plant up there and would you be interested to try and put added value onto it? We only sell it as green.' I said, 'Yes, sure'. So I went out for a year and a bit and the same old problem turned up - no wood.

This was at Woolgoolga.

This was only three K down the road to go to work of a morning - it was lovely. And unfortunately before I could even set I did all the designs and stuff or layouts for putting the kilns and the drying machine and then I thought, I'd better check the wood, and once again, for the umpteenth time, no wood. So I rang him up and said, 'Look, you've got no option, you better sell it'. It was a good industrial site. I said, 'You should be able to get some good money for it'. At the time right alongside us the Japanese were into a big venture. They'd bought a big chunk of country and were next door neighbours, but unfortunately it was just at the point when all those grandiose schemes took a dive. So he had to sell out to another sawmiller down the road who just wanted to change sites; he was in problems[?]. So that was that. And then they rang up [inaudible] Ti Tree one day. That was an interesting thing so I went to a seminar up there and all the hoi poloi came down from the University of Armidale and the doctors and specialists come up from Sydney Hospital and everyone waffled on about the efficacy of *Melaleuca Alternafolio*[?]. I had a fellow, he owns the pub, and he was thinking about

making a quid and he said, 'Do you know anything about that?' And I said, 'Yes.' All I knew was the botanical name for ti tree. So up I went and listened to the whole forum for him and I wrote him up a brief. The Coffs Harbour Shire were in all this trouble with effluent going out to the sea, so I said, 'We might be able to kid them and we'll go and plant ti trees and use it.' But the Coffs Harbour Council were no use at all. They didn't have any suitable land. They offered us a strip alongside the airport. I said, 'That will be brilliant; all the trouble we'd get into with DCA growing ...' So that fell through but he did have a mate out at Wee Waa in the cotton. I said, 'It would be very interested if you had water to go and grow that ti tree out that.' It's a big value crop. That oil is worth money. And a couple of fellows had done very well with it. So it was an interesting one but it's lapsed. But I could easily kick it off again if we go and find the block of land. And then I did the job for Yakopori[?] when Boral took over Duncans or took over the Adelaide Steam. And I've done quite a bit of work for Northern Rivers Development Board because they're generally interested in getting activity in the area and, since there is very little added value with timber in the area, I suggested to them about making this parquet flooring and I think it's a real winner and that was a presentation made on Tuesday at Grafton. The forestry ones saw it and they want to do it and a couple of sawmills want to do it but I'm just concerned about Boral. Not that I'm worried about it if two plants went in, I think, again, there's plenty of scope. You couldn't produce too much of

the stuff and not find a market. The market is there in Europe, I've seen it, because I was lucky, they sent me over to Sweden and Finland to have a look, and into Germany, and I saw it all there and I'm more than happy the market's there. We'd have a superior product because it would be 100 per cent eucalypt and, since it's fourteen millimetres thick and there's four are select, eight are non-select and a bit of veneer, it's beautiful, it's one to two, you'd get rid of a lot of non-select material inside and you're going to get about twenty-eight hundred bucks a cube. This is for stuff that they're selling out as shortlings, palings, pallets. Now, I don't mean for one minute that 100 per cent of what they sell is palings or pallets but take me up some of them and it's straight grain. Well, we can dry it and you can turn it into this product. If only we had the chipping plant up there, we could really go through and do a good thinning throughout all the regrowth, pull the short lengths out to get these products, chip the rest, have a silvicultural sitting and everyone is happy, except the 'greenies' - you daren't knock a tree down. That was it. The other one is the one at Nundle where the pines come up. Grabbs[?] and me, we formed a little company, just as technical know-how to sell and present a proposition, how to make LVL out of it up there.

LVL?

Laminated veneer lumber. There's only one plant in Australia and up there it's the first rotation. It's a bit

like this joint again in the early days and they've got a bit of this and a bit of that. The planting really didn't get going until '67 so it's not real old. It's about twenty-five, very little stuff's thirty plus. So as I said, we'll have a hairy time for five years till it gets through to thirty years of age but, I said, if we concentrate on small diameter logs and we buy this latest technology lathe there is no reason why you can't make veneer out of it, which is all you want to make, LVL. Forget about a sawmill. I said even if it was perfect in size, it's insufficient volume. It's not economic.

You've had a pretty varied career. Just looking back, would you say turning the IFP mill around was the achievement you're proud of most or were there other things or one other thing?

No, it was an interesting one but I didn't build much of it. I liked the time I had in the north-west at Smithton where we pulled up - you know - because a lot of that got copied after. That was something no one else had done, so I was much happier with that and I thought it was the best achievement and luckily the plant is still there and going flat out which most of the others aren't, unfortunately. Little places like Terrots collapsed and that's a pity, and places like Parburys up there. No, the one at the north-west, it is a nice plant, and unfortunately, with the Canberra plant, it didn't go the way I reckoned it should have in the finish. Starting from scratch they couldn't

much around with 80,000 cube here and go and build it and do it. They're only there, as I mentioned earlier, with the depreciation being well down now, with the majority of the plant being twenty - '71 I think it started, '72 I think it actually ticked over. That's twenty-three years and, of course, they'd have got money back for the sale of the ply mill so that must have helped a bit. But I should imagine, if you could look at the books, depreciation wouldn't be very crippling, which makes it feasible. But they're totally dependent on the housing market. Totally.

Here?

Not here. We'd never turn it on Canberra. Canberra was funny. Canberra never bought anything off us.

I was going to ask you about your customers; where you sold most of the stuff to.

The timber we always sold north and not much in Sydney. We tended to go Wollongong and then around Sydney till you got to Newcastle, and then all the way up, and we used to sell a lot in Queensland because - it's not exactly axiomatic but it's a pretty good rule of thumb - the further north you go, the higher the price is and they pick up the freight a lot better. Whereas, you see, you get the same price in Sydney as you do in Melbourne but in Canberra it costs us much more to freight to Melbourne than it does to Sydney. Therefore Sydney market, the net profit is a lot better out of there

than it is out of Melbourne. Take the timber first, we sold that all north. We sold none to Melbourne because Melbourne could be looked after from Morwell, our other plant. Tumut was in action at the time and they used to sell there, so we used to take care of Wollongong, Newcastle, very little of Sydney - a bit out in the western suburbs like Campbelltown, the fast expanding ones - and then boom, straight through to Brisbane. The plywood, sure, it was Sydney and Melbourne and Brisbane; a little bit to Adelaide, not much. We did take a load of timber once over to Adelaide just to annoy them because Adelaide came in and Adelaide when we were first here used to use Canberra as a dumping ground so we couldn't, even though they had a mill like us in the middle of the town, Adelaide deliberately cut the price because they've got great habits of dumping it somewhere and Canberra was the dumping ground, so Canberra was very lucky. If we hadn't been here with a mill, Canberra would have paid through the nose for their softwood timber. So Canberra got cheap timber on account of us being there, despite the fact they never bought off us - if you follow my drift. That's how it happened. But if we hadn't have been here, they would have We did all right because I did well on freight because everything comes in to Canberra but nothing goes out of it; and we had the chips, the plywood, the timber. We had 24,000 cubic metres of timber to go out. We had 15,000 cubic metres of plywood and we had 40,000 tons of chips. So I used to get the back freight to Sydney, not the forward freight, and Sydney was the best because things didn't come up from Melbourne so well but things from

Sydney, that was great. I liked selling to Sydney because I had the freight rate We paid a million-odd bucks to Jetspress[?] and we used to buy about a \$1,000,000 worth of glue a year, so they were very nice to us. The plywood was ironical. When they built the great Parliament House and there was about fifteen acres of form ply went into it, not one sheet was bought off us, it all came in from Indonesia. The worst one was, though, all the rainforest stuff that went in and as soon as Parliament House had all the rainforest in position then they said no more rainforest logging - the greatest pack of hypocrites I've had in my life, that one. If ever there was a rort, it was that one. You go over to the Law Court and it's full of it, too. Fair dinkum, they knocked down some rainforest to build the Law Court.

Obviously you enjoyed your time in forestry, but obviously on the side where you're making the product rather than the planting and so on. No regrets at all about your career, the direction it's taken?

No, it could have gone anywhere, I suppose, but I was very But it was fun doing and making things like that and generally I was quite happy wherever I was. It was only the children and education that I just had to move along. Tassie, for sure, I did have the difference of opinion with the managing director and I was subsequently proved right but there was no point in arguing the toss there when he

signs the cheque. So it's best to say, 'Well, lovely to have met you' and move on.

Just one little question, just about the workforce you had at the IFP mill. You mentioned there were a lot of women working there which I found a bit of a surprise. What was the percentage of the workforce that women constituted there?

I suppose fifteen or twenty. Let me put it this way: none of them worked in the sawmill because that was a bit hard and we didn't expect it; and none of them worked in the kilns; but in the planing shed, the women worked there. They used to work the automatic dockers and they still do, and they did a lot of the sorting there. We weren't fussy whether it was male or female on that section and they'd go over on the finger joining machine, things like that, which was relatively light. Don't mention that. I just immediately thought of the young lady that went and chopped her four fingers off doing that job one day. That was horrific. That was the worst accident I saw at the plant. I wasn't there, I was on holidays and they rang up and told me what had happened. But in the ply mill, oh yeah, that was good because when I got In the veneer mill first, I used to leave a man on the lathe although in Finland I've seen women on the lathes; but I did put the woman on the clipper. There were men when I first got there and I finally kidded one of the women to go up there and do it. I said, 'You can do it better than any man. I can assure you

because no one but women work this in Scandinavia'. She got up there and she was really good. She worked it because, without being sexist, women seem to have an attitude about doing washing up, washing clothes, making beds, and then if they're in a conversation they can click away and knit a sweater and still do two things at once without boredom. When you've got those sheets of veneer coming past, bang, bang, bang, all day long it gets very monotonous and I find that a male starts to lose concentration whereas the female, in her mystique, she seems to be able to do two jobs at once and not bore her. She had to do three things. She had to wait for a defect to come through, so she went just a little button like that and boom, boom, that fixed that and it automatically tray leapt[?]. She didn't have to open the tray, the tray automatically opened at the same time and let the waste drop down. When the sheets came past she had to classify it three ways: a C, a D or halves - half of it was all right and the other half wasn't all right. As soon as she pressed the button down there in the three openings, they'd go automatically into the thing. And then we also had a moisture detector on the thing, so as the thing came out of the dryer if it was over the required moisture content, this thing used to squirt a little bit of water paint on it, just to tell you that was it, so she had to segregate that one because that had to go back again through the machine and be dried. They used to do that work real well. And then on the actual plywood when There were six of them on the glue spreading machine and they did that and I'd never have a male there ever, never. They were the

girls that went out for the big dinner - they were good. The men worked the hot press because I used to think it was a bit dangerous at the high temperatures and I didn't want anyone getting trapped or leaving their hand in there absentmindedly. And all the sorting - the women used to do all the sorting of the veneer for grades, around the back. And then on the recovery units, I used to crew that always with women. So in the veneer - and even overseas - you'll find women are there all over the shop in veneer operations and very few men ... and in the planing section I'd have loved to have been fifty/fifty. You couldn't on account of the nature of the work. But wherever they were there, they had priority. So I suppose it averaged somewhere twenty/twenty-five over the whole plant.

Percentage-wise?

Yes, percentage-wise. In the ply mill it was much higher. It was probably forty per cent on the floor were women.

That's quite interesting. That's something that hadn't occurred to me, at all.

Well, they did it. And then we used to have them on forklifts. I had one disaster with that. She got a bit flustered one day and here she is with a great She was a greatly over-endowed bird. I said, 'Throw your head back' - boom! They were good because they entered into the spirit of it when I come there and, again, I could try it out

because it was a new timber plant and no one knew too much about it and you could virtually tell them anything up to a point and that was good. Whereas if you went to one of, say, a ply mill up there, one of Hancocks, and they've been in it for years, you'd have a hell of a job changing habits and everything there. I guess anyone coming in after me would have a bit of a problem, too, because they'd say Connolly doesn't say that you can do it that.

Okay, Terry, thanks very much indeed for all your information and your time.

It's a pleasure.

It's very good of you. It was very interesting, indeed. We'll probably have another several dozen questions by the time I've gone through this. We'll have to bring you down again. I'd better talk to Graham about that.

Or I can fix it on the fax for you.

Okay.

One thing about it, if you've got any drafts, at all, and you want them corrected, you could

END OF INTERVIEW

