



COMMERCIAL ORAL HISTORIES OF CENTRAL SYDNEY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Dr. Stella Cornelius

Interviewer: Richard Raxworthy

Place: ?

Date: 07/01/01

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **RR:** **This is Commercial Oral Histories of Central Sydney Oral History Project and I'm talking today to Dr Cornelius who was involved with Cornelius Furs at one stage of the proceedings. And I'll ask you first, could you spell your full name for the tape?**

SC: My first name is Stella, S-T-E-L-L-A, and my surname is Cornelius, C-O-R-N-E-L-I-U-S.

RR: **And what year were you born, if you don't mind?**

SC: ***** 1919.

RR: **Whereabouts?**

SC: In Sydney.

RR: **Did you grow up in Sydney?**

SC: No. The - - - my family left Sydney when I was just twelve months old. We lived on the Murrumbidgee, Griffith and at Yenda [rural New South Wales] for a few years, returned to Sydney when I was, oh, not quite six, I think, and lived in Croydon and Ashfield for a few years, then went to Newcastle where I lived from the age of eleven, until I was twenty two, then came back to Sydney and have lived here since.

RR: Did you go to school in Newcastle?

SC: I went to Newcastle Girls High School there, yes.

RE: Did you go onto tertiary education or was that - - -

1.26 SC: Not at that stage of my – like, my tertiary education came much, much later and in many gulps and swallows in a less formal structure.

RR: Your parents. Now, what sort of influence do you think you got from them?

SC: Oh, enormous influence from my parents: I didn't belong to the generation who were in constant revolt against their parents – very far from it. Although they brought me up to be very independently minded - though I didn't think of them as the source of all the wisdom, they certainly set models which were easy and comfortable for me to follow. If I – one thing, the way I could describe them is they were enormously responsible people. And work which I did later in human rights and social justice, peace and conflict resolution: they would not have used any of those terms but the whole philosophy behind it was second nature to them, that feeling of responsibility.

RR: What did your father do?

2.38 SC: My father had trained himself to magnificent competence in the fashion industry but he did not always work at that all of his life. He, for instance - and my first recollections of him in Griffith and in Yenda is we were small shopkeepers, general store.

RR: And your mother was in the same line or was she from some other - - -

SC: My mother was the – very much typical of the generation. She was a pioneer's wife; she did what her husband was doing and helped him do everything that he was doing. She had come from York in Yorkshire and just thought after the weather and the poverty of the north of England - and she'd lived in Ireland for a little while too - she thought that Australia was the answer to everybody's dream and to her to be the very hard working wife of a pioneer entrepreneur was, to her, idyllic.

RR: And when you left school, what did you do?

3.54 SC: I joined my father who by this time was back in the fashion industry and I joined my father and went through formal apprenticeship. So, I am – in those days - so these days we'll have to forgive our previous generations their sexist language - I am a journeyman tradesman in the fashion industry.

RR: And what sort of lines did your father run?

SC: Women's fashion. He was most expert in women's tailoring. I never followed him, actually, into that particular line of his expertise - and indeed fashion was moving away from it. Oh, that's one thing which you did learn from that fashion industry and that is to be in love with change, to be enraptured by it, to always be looking for the new things, to be able, gratefully and lovingly to lay aside the past and move on. The fashion industry taught me a lot.

RR: Did they follow the Paris fashions, the London fashions or what?

5.04 SC: They were very – my father was very influenced by American fashion, where he had lived for some years in America and he was very influenced by American fashion and indeed into our household came American magazines which would be almost unheard of, particularly in a working class, tradesman's family; we were unique in having access to this sort of literature.

RR: And when did you leave your family business, so to speak?

SC: At the - - - at twenty two, in the middle of the war I left Newcastle where – which was the family business to come to Sydney to do war work, which of course was absolutely necessary at that time.

RR: What sort of war work?

SC: I very soon found myself managing a canvas factory for the Defence Department.

RR: Whereabouts was that?

SC: In – oh, there was a terrible, terrible fire in the first place, which I recently saw on Movietone News, and that was there and that was at the south end of Sydney - oh, wait a minute - Foveaux Street. And so later I, at the age of twenty two found us new premises in wharf full Sydney in York Street.

6.44 **RR: And you continued to run that throughout the war, did you?**

SC: Yes, for the – yes, yes. Yes. Oh, I was the only person that – the only one of my peers that I ever knew who used the geometry that

they learnt at school. We all learnt geometry those days at high school. I don't know if they still do, do they, Richard? Yes, I don't know

RR: I really don't know.

SC: Well, I was the only person who used the geometry that they learnt – you need it in a canvas factory when you were making enormous things like hospital marquees, which covered a minimum of a thousand square feet when rigged and you could keep on adding them and making them bigger and bigger and bigger until they became a sort of a field hospital. So, you needed your geometry – and algebra wasn't any disadvantage either.

RR: So, what did you do after that?

SC: By the end of the war I had married a soldier who the first night that we met had told me that he was a furrier but it seemed so absolutely irrelevant in the middle of the war that I paid no attention to it. But by the end of the war he had been discharged, very ill, from Army service with a hundred per cent pension. That wasn't the one that they plan to pay you for very long and - - -

8.14 **RR: Where had he been?**

SC: His service had been in Australia. He had volunteered and hoped that he would be sent to New Guinea but that – a previous knee injury had prevented him having service anywhere else than Australia but he had somehow or other contracted pyelonephritis and was extremely ill with it, with his discharge at the end of the war - and at that stage, more as therapy than for anything else, I left what I was doing and we - that lovely old term, we went "into business together".

RR: And where did you first go into business together?

SC: At a little shop in Edgecliff, New South Head Road, Edgecliff.

RR: And did you end manufacture there or did you just buy material in?

9.19 SC: Oh, no, no, we manufactured. There was nobody to buy anything so, from the first - a term that I didn't learn until decades later – we were vertically integrated from the first and we did everything from, you know, buying in our material to manufacturing, designing, retailing and after sales service, right from the first.

RR: And what year do you think you started?

SC: 1945.

RR: Right. You were in there fist off.

SC: M'mm..

RR: And what sort of lines were there in the first instance?

SC: Australian lamb.

RR: Lamb, right.

SC: Mm.

RR: And nothing else?

SC: Oh, yes. There was a little fur skin around that had been put into barrels during the war and that was purchased and one could work with that and that

RR: What about the rabbits?

10.20 SC: Yes, then gradually a little of that became available - because in order to have that you needed to get the tanning industry up and running and I don't believe it was in those very first years but that was one of the first things that was available, yes.

RR: So, the fur skins that were in barrels, what sort of furs were they?

SC: Oh, they were imported furs, including fox and – now, that's a challenge, Richard. I can't remember any of the other things that were in the – I remember the foxes, possibly because they were more dramatic, you know, coming out of the barrels and I cannot remember many of the others at all. There was – no, I'd be fishing in my memory and trying to reinvent it if I could in the first time because gradually everything came.

RR: Where in Edgecliff were you?

SC: 6 – think it was 660. I know the place; it's next to Darling Point Road and is now an excellent Indian Restaurant.

RR: Right. So, 660 Edgecliff Road, is it?

11.39 SC: Or somewhere, yes. That'll be a number something like that, I think. Yes, yes. No, not Edgecliff Road, New South Head Road at Edgecliff.

RR: New South Head Road, that's right, yes.

SC: Yes, near the corner of Darling Point Road.

RR: And so how long were you there before you moved into - - -

SC: Into the city. Well, first of all we moved into the city to a tiny, tiny little place in Martin Place and with the factory going off to Wembley House at Railway Square and separating those two functions of it. And then to – discovered that the owners of the Trust Building, this very unusual basement, basement with windows that you could see into it from the floor was – the owners could be persuaded to sell their lease on it. And that was several years later – and I have not got a record of the year but if you like you and I can work it out afterwards because I remember the age of the children and I can - - -

13.08 **RR: I might also be able to work it out from the assessment books at the City Council.**

SC: You could perhaps indeed. When, see – Tommy Wendell Hill was the owner of the lease that we bought it from and he ran a dress salon called 'The Wendell'. (phone rings) I'll get him to switch off the phone. I'm pretty sure it was '55 before we moved into the - - -

RR: Before you moved into the Trust Building?

SC: - - - Trust Building, yes.

RR: And we worked out that it's probably '48 that you moved into Martin Place?

SC: Possibly, yes. Yes, that's right. So, about a seven year period there - that seems somehow about right.

RR: And the factory part, down in Wembley House - - -

SC: Yes.

RR: When did you start that, have you any idea?

SC: That was very soon after we were running both a small factory at Edgecliff and that one there. That was very soon after we moved after '45. It would have been by '47 we were probably - - -

14.20 **RR: And the Trust Building - - -**

SC: Yes.

RR: Do you know much about the building itself?

SC: We always knew that – of course, the term "heritage building" was not commonly used at that stage – but we always knew it was a building of a historic importance because we were absolutely forbidden to

change the façade or to make those windows bigger or anything like that because it was part of the, sort of the integrity of the whole building. We were very conscious of that, or rather I was conscious of it and was the one who was persuasive to my late husband in saying, “No, no, no. This is for our products - the unusual nature of our products in the mix of fashion products in Sydney - this unusual display, an unusual window will – can be used to our advantage”.

RR: Yes, I remember it quite clearly. You could see it on the corner there, yes.

15.26 SC: That is right, and you looked down onto the display - - -

RR: Yes, you looked down, yes.

SC: - - - rather than at eye level

RR: Did you have two floors or one floor there?

SC: We had two floors. There was a – actually, although there were only a couple of steps down to it, we were described as being “a basement” and then below us was a sub-basement and which we used for store.

RR: And you continued to use the factory down at Wembley House, yes.

SC: And we continued to use the factory down at the Wembley House for many years - and I've have no ideas how many years later we bought 72 Castlereagh Street next door to us, let the shops, four shops on the ground floor level and used the upper two floors that there were for it as a factory.

RR: Roughly when did buy 72 Castlereagh Street?

SC: I just can't remember in all of that. '55 – well, it must have been late fifties or early sixties that we purchased it, yes.

16.39 **RR: And what was that building like? Or is that still there?**

SC: No, it was – I sold it after Max died in order to have some money to restore the King Street place which we'd bought in the meantime.

RR: That's Cornelius Court, is it?

SC: Cornelius Court, yes - and that had to be restored to meet new council regulations.

RR: Were the two buildings, the Trust Building and the Cornelius Court now – were they both Daily Telegraph buildings originally?

SC: I believe so. I believe that they were - but actually I never myself did the research to be sure that they both were but I believe they were.

RR: So, you remained in the Trust Building for the rest of the time you were in business, did you?

SC: Yes, yes, in the Trust Building, manufacturing next door at 72 Castlereagh.

RR: And you first used the next door building – did you manufacture there?

SC: The next door building, 72 Castlereagh – 74 Castlereagh Street, I think it was – of course, Cornelius Furs is 72. 74 Castlereagh Street, yes, we manufactured there.

18.07 **RR: Did you give up the Wembley House?**

SC: Gradually, yes, yes. My husband, who could never give up anything kept it for many years as a store and which was disastrous for him; he was a hoarder, so I wasn't.

RR: We've covered how you came to start the business because your husband was a furrier.

SC: Mm.

RR: Incidentally, where did he get his training?

SC: Berlin.

RR: Before the war?

SC: Before the war, yes, yes.

RR: And was his family in that business?

SC: His – not his parents but he did his training with family member – a cousin, I think – a second cousin, I think, sort of at that level. He was the most expert tradesman, like my father.

RR: What about the staff? Did you train staff?

SC: Yes, yes.

RR: Did you manage to hire any staff that were already trained?

19.18 SC: We - anybody who – and this was mostly – mostly, with very few exceptions, mostly migrants but anybody who came from overseas with training at all somehow or other the word had got out and they made a beeline for us and we usually found them employment, yes.

RR: Were there many other furriers in town at that time?

SC: There were a few and the leading furrier at that time was a company called Levy, I think, yes.

RR: There was also Hammerman, wasn't there?

SC: Yes, yes, that is right. I'm not sure whether Hammerman established himself before or after we came into the city but it would have been about the same period; there wouldn't have been much in years in between.

RR: And did you and your husband keep up with overseas trends?

SC: Oh, very much so – we were devoted to it. Well, you see I'd been I absolutely – well, first of all he had a European background and I had been trained by my father to keep an ear and an eye and a focus on what was happening overseas, yes.

RR: Mainly in America from your father?

20.36 SC: Mainly in America from my father but then of course that – as that became a worldwide awareness as years go on and communication became just easier.

RR: Do you remember what decided the location of the business at any time?

SC: Well, which of those locations are we talking about?

RR: Well, all of them.

SC: Yes, all, yes. Well, what decided Edgecliff was it was the only thing that ever, that ever was available in this Sydney which was short of everything. Compared with war-torn Europe, it's absurd for us to talk about being short of everything but it was so – compared with what we had known before the war, this was a colony on a spurge of development and we were short of everything and it was the only thing we were ever offered. And then of course we had no money, so there wasn't, you know – there wasn't – you had to take something that you could manage. So, Edgecliff, really, was decided for us.

21.58 SC: The Martin Place place was in serious study by myself as if we could get our foot into the city somewhere and then Martin Place was then

– as it is now – the edge of retailing and although we made wonderful use of that tiny little spot in Martin Place, once again it was the only thing available that would let us, with our modest means, get into the city. And then to get into bigger premises and closer to the centre of retailing, once again the Wendell being prepared to sell their lease was the only thing that was available there.

RR: So, that was Tommy Wendell?

SC: Tommy Wendell, yes. Tommy Wendell Smith, I think the same was.

RR: Tommy Wendell Smith, you say?

SC: Tommy Wendell – that seems to me what the name is. Sometimes one finds oneself – I've got no records of it now, but yes.

23.03 **RR: Was that company title in those days, at the Trust Building?**

SC: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. It was just – he just had a lease on it.

RR: Just a lease.

SC: Yes, yes. We never owned that building.

RR: And what about the difference in the clientele over the years – the difference in the lines that you made and sold?

SC: Yes. Yes, the – as we – I became marketing director of the company. And so the difference of the lines was very – although everything was always a joint decision; my husband and I talked over everything – oh, our family joke in the year that he died was that we had been – which was thirty five years of marriage, that we'd been really married seventy years; thirty five at work and thirty five at home.

24.14 We talked over everything but ultimately it was I who would sort of put the decisions on the table to him. And it was – I had decided that we would carve for ourselves a different niche in this quite small fur industry, this particular section of the fashion, the wider fashion sweep, and that was where everybody else would have a speciality within it, we would eclectic and we would go from everything, to the most expensive, the most glamorous, to the most approachable, accessible appeal to the most price conscious wardrobe investor. And that is what we did; we covered a whole range and a worldwide reputation for doing so and doing it all well, you know.

RR: And you did collars, even, and stoles?

SC: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, because you see a tiny, like – well, not even tiny – a small collar in an inexpensive fur was, you know, the sort of thing one could do from one's, you know, budget for a scarf. So, that

gave us entrée to a new set of clientele, who often, of course, grew up, became more affluent or just invested more into their wardrobe and made more expensive purchases later on, yes.

26.01 **RR: I remember those very short jackets that women wore at one time as well.**

SC: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Short jackets were a great as were stoles, you know, essentially a shaped scarf of fur, yes.

RR: You don't see anything like that nowadays.

SC: Oh, no, no, fashion moves on, merchandising things move on - and this was within our scope. I - so well trained in it, was always ready to move on. You know, it was the - we could adapt to anything.

RR: And when did you start using mink?

SC: Because it had to be imported, it would have started in the - oh, I believe it would have been in the fifties, when modest import licenses became available after the war.

RR: And there was no mink farmed in Australia?

SC: No.

RR: And none of the other farmed - like chinchillas, was that ever farmed in Australia?

27.17 SC: Chinchilla was never farmed in Australia. It needs a particularly cold climate for them to do so - and there's no big market for it anyway. It's a fool of a fur.

RR: Is it too expensive?

SC: It hasn't got durability. It's got one look - you know, and you can't do - - -

RR: A blue smokiness?

SC: Yes, a smokiness about it. Glorious to touch but it's a - as I say, its lack of durability, its lack of versatility in use, its high expense makes it, as I say, an absolutely fool of a fur. I never encouraged much of it around anyway.

RR: But you did use it, did you?

SC: Oh, yes, yes, we'd use it on demand as it were, yes.

RR: And what other furs?

28.06 SC: Oh, a complete range; the mink and sable - the complete fox range by this time was being dramatically farmed and enormous variation was coming there to this field as later there on there was – that was the first breeding of mutations and then in the early days – then very soon after that was followed by the mutation breeding of minx, which gave you a very wide range there. There was a group of flat furs headed by marmot and peschaniki which were extremely popular. They were extremely sensible furs: they gave you not much bulk, not much weight and good durability and a good appearance and easy care. And then there were - of course, local skins were used too and the – well, I told you about sort of the beginnings in Australian sheepskins, yes, euphoniously called lamb but they weren't too young at all.

RR: How do you spell peschaniki?

SC: P-E-S-C-H-A-N-I-K-I. Oh, Richard, I don't know where that is tucked away at the back of my - - -

RR: P-E-S-C-H - - -

29.36 SC: P-E-S-C-H-A-N-I-K-I.

RR: And where did that come from?

SC: Russia, yes.

RR: Did you get any ermine?

SC: Yes, yes.

RR: And what was that – it was called astrakhan – I don't know why.

SC: That was – they were a member of the lamb families, Persian lambs and – known as Persian lambs, although many of them came from Africa.

RR: And what else did you get from Russia? That was the lot, was it?

SC: I worked the Russian auctions. I should know but I - - -

RR: Well, sable is very expensive, isn't it?

SC: Yes, yes, and one bought quantities of sable. Russia had mink and later on including later on they did have mutation minks too. Yes, not at first but later on they had mutation minks.

RR: And what about the clientele?

SC: Absolutely – once again, eclectic. We catered for everyone and we – I think that one of the things I can be proud of is that we gave good service and terrific value and those were things which stood us in good stead in building up a very, very faithful clientele, you could say.

RR: So, what about price ranges?

31.07 SC: Well, once again, with the range of that we went right through we were a kind of a department store at first; you could shop at any price range which we decided. In fact, one of the things I trained my sales staff to inquire gently from people is, what had they thought their price range would be and not to encourage them to shop out of a comfort price range.

RR: Now, this is Commercial Oral Histories of Central Sydney Oral History Project. The analogue tape is side B but we're still continuing with the digital side, digital tape, with Dr Cornelius.

SC: Oh, and I noticed it didn't seem to me to be picking up any air conditioning sound.

RR: I can hear it in the headphones but I don't notice that, no.

SC: You can hear it but it didn't seem intrusive?

RR: No, no.

SC: Good.

RR: And the clientele over the years. What about the clientele for the more expensive fur ranges?

32.21 SC: It grew, as the – well, two things happened: one is the market for it grew; there were more people with dollars to spend in that area – but secondly we, because of keeping our eye on international fashion, and watching very, very carefully - something which isn't often done in higher brackets - but watching value very carefully in higher brackets we built up our clientele for more expensive garments as well as never losing our clientele for basics.

RR: What about best sellers over the years? How have they changed?

SC: How – well, you have to say “did they change?” – remembering, Richard, that I – it's getting near a quarter of century ago, so I can say nothing about what's happening today.

RR: No, no.

SC: Nobody is less up to date than somebody who was very up to date twenty five years ago – that's particularly in the fashion industry.

RR: Well, we're talking from your experience twenty five years - - -

33.37 SC: From my experience, best sellers – well, they tended to go more into style than anything else and definitely for decades out of the list was the stole. Ideal for Australian climate, a modest purchase no matter what your price bracket was. You didn't need so much of your precious raw material for it and it fitted into our fashion world like hand into glove. So, that for many years as far as style was concerned was definitely best seller, yes.

RR: Did you make gloves as well?

SC: Oh, no. Only – no, no, we were never big on gloves. We'd make them on request and – but I'm sure there were other people who did gloves better than we did.

RR: What about synthetic furs?

SC: We introduced them and we'd offer them in waves every now and then. We, ourselves, never developed a big market for synthetic furs because, you see, in price comparison: compared with, say, the least expensive of things of the range like sheepskin products or rabbit products they didn't stand up to good price comparison. And we found, too, that – so, we'd drop it for a while or reintroduce it but they didn't really

35.16 **RR: What about matching skins? Did you work with shoe or boot manufacturers and glovers?**

SC: In the later years we did leather extensively – not shoes but garment leather extensively - handbags a little, yes, too but as for our own manufacture we tended to stay with our central expertise, which was in garment, the jacket, the coat, like waistcoats occasionally.

RR: Did you do coats for men?

SC: Oh yes, yes, we did. And we did - with the unique layout of Cornelius Furs in the Trust Building, we had a separate shop with a separate entrance, contact through the back for men, for those people, for those men who in those days didn't like shopping in a women's, in a predominantly women's store.

RR: Did many men buy fur coats?

SC: Most of them bought leather, yes.

RR: But you'd get some sheepskin, I suppose?

SC: Yes, yes, yes, yes, you did get that.

RR: And what about advertising?

36.37 SC: I feel – I found, myself found as marketing director, I found great interest in the field myself and had to learn it from scratch, remembering in the days that I was learning it was, for Australia, an evolving communication strategy and everything; embracing an art form and all sorts of things – and I found myself responsible for the advertising policy.

RR: So, where did you advertise first?

SC: Well, extensively – no, we used radio first, because it was – although it wasn't ideal for our product because people couldn't see but you could tell about it and as we say, it was something which we could afford to do. And that is first but then we went on to – oh, radio, yes – my husband teased me for years - one of the first personalities that we used for advertising on radio was the Piddingtons [the Piddingtons were radio stars].

RR: Why?

38.10 SC: Why? Because Sid Piddington was – first of all he had a period as a radio advertising salesman and he sold us a good idea. That was fascinating, yes. So, and the radio was quite good in our early days and it – once again it was, you know, our market; everyone, everyone; essentially, every woman but of course women did bring along their men with them too. Oh, I do not think in the years that I was there that sales to men would have ever equated with more than twelve and half per cent of our total sales; that we were essentially a women's appeal but we never forgot that. Then we moved onto newspaper with its big display ads: we used very good photography, we used very good models in Sydney and this was an art form of its period and I enjoyed that part of it enormously.

RR: Have you got any of those examples left around the place?

SC: I probably have, yes. I probably have, yes.

RR: And what papers did you use, mainly?

39.24 SC: We used all the Sunday papers first of all. The Sydney Morning Herald, the Telegraph and very little of the – what – I can't remember the name of the paper now – it was the Truth. There was – they had a Sunday paper. I'm not sure if it was under the name of the Truth.

RR: First it was the Sunday Truth.

SC: Yes.

RR: But I think it did change its name later on.

SC: Yes. But – and then we went for long periods when we only used the Sunday Herald and - - -

RR: Sun Herald, yes.

SC: The Sun Herald, the Sun Herald, yes. But we were never too far away from the Telegraph and that but the – and oh, and I can remember one form of advertising which had a surprising success; column advertising in daily Sydney Morning Herald – and I'm trying now to remember the name of that column. It was an advertising column but the style was very much reportage.

40.33 **RR: There's one called 'The Shop Detective'.**

SC: You've got it. Thank you for remembering that. Considering your comparatively youthfulness you get a – either a large medal or a gold star.

RR: Yes. Well, I should be able to find those then.

SC:

RR: And incidentally, you said that Piddingtons for radio but who did you use on the newspaper ads? I mean, any particular models or - - -

SC: Models for newspaper ads?

RR: Yes.

SC: I wish I could remember their names now.

RR: Just general models, yes.

41.12 SC: I'm sure anybody who mentions names to me, I can remember them but I'm not sure if they're in my head right at the moment.

RR: Did you go into television at all?

SC: Yes, yes, we did.

RR: Eventually, yes.

SC: Yes.

RR: Around about when, do you think? '80s?

SC: Oh, it wouldn't have been long after the introduction of television, yes. Modestly, because, you see, we never really had – I mean, compared with a national line, car advertisements, cornflakes advertisements, we never really had that sort of budget to use, so we had to be very careful.

RR: Do you remember what channel?

SC: No, I'm sorry, I can't.

RR: What about radio? Do you remember what station you used?

SC: No. Oh, no – no, I can dig it out of my memory and some of the names I would just love to remember now; people whom I could tell you their, write their biography but the name will not come and that – at eight one, you need to live with that, so that you're not going to remember everybody's name.

42.24 **RR: Yes. Well, at sixty eight I'm dropping them out all over the place or on delayed action.**

SC: Oh, yes, the name will come when I'm not thinking of it at all. Cousins – a name called Cousins just came into my mind because I wasn't thinking of it at all. Radio – he was a man on radio. I can't remember his first name – was it Charles, Charles Cousins? – and he was a radio personality of the time.

RR: So, that covers advertising. And did you have any launches or promotions?

SC: Yes, yes, regularly – and we were big in fashion parades. This is because – I really sort of carrying on a tradition of my family; I was always involved with community organisations. Community organisations always wanted to raise money and in those days the prime avenue of raising money for community organisations was to run a fashion parade - and I could always be counted on to bring our services freely and happily along and put on a glamorous fashion parade and a interesting commentary to it. So, we raised many a good charity dollar in that way.

RR: Is that how you got into the Black and White Committee?

43.54 SC: No, I don't know if that's the reason I got into the Black and White Committee but certainly we – it was all associated.

RR: Well, that's how you got in, yes.

SC: Yes, yes, yes.

RR: And did you have fashion parades for each time of year, for instance or is it all the winter fashions more than anything?

SC: We always said we were seasonless and, of course, as Australia became more and more of a travelling nation as it was, people were buying in Australia for winter overseas and things of this sort. And we did have a much longer season than people thought we had. You know, you'd think in Australia that you would have a very short season but this is actually not true and we sold on the fact of the small fur leveling out – have your very lightweight basic frock dress underneath an evening gown a small fur by you will level out your temperature differences and this, of course, this approach - only just because it's based on solid truth and the way most women feel. You know, most women in a strapless gown, with very little above the bosom line do feel to cold in an evening and a little fur wrap made that difference.

45.23 **RR: Did you do any export?**

SC: Yes, yes. For probably the last fifteen years, before '78, we were essentially an import and export company. This was part of the vertical integration and - - -

RR: Who did you export to or where to export to?

SC: We used – well, we had sort of market centres which may have distributed later. London was a very centre for us. The Frankfurt Fur Fair was a great centre for us to work from in Germany but there was also so any countries of the world that we both had an importing and exporting relationship with.

RR: And did you have shows overseas?

SC: We participated in – there was a certain amount of competition in shows overseas, particularly around, surrounding the Frankfurt Fur Fair and we did do shows there.

46.39 **RR: But how did Australia have an advantage – how did you have an advantage in Australia? Was it your design particularly?**

SC: Just niche research really; what is working, what can we do better? - and constantly following it. Oh, Richard, I honestly to this day – and these days if you ask me – well, sort of, what is your basic discipline? I would tell you, “No, it's not the fashion industry”. My basic discipline now is management and I honestly cannot tell you what makes one organisation successful rather than another but there is ask, listen, respond and those are the things which gave us an advantage. Oh, another advantage is we were - - - (phone rings) [break in tape]

RR: I suppose we can carry on now. I think it's moving along. I'm just checking the machines before we carry on.

SC: M'mm.

RR: So, the next thing is manufacturing methods – how did they change over the years?

48.03 **SC: Not greatly in our industry. It was very much a craftsman field and very little changed. One would – because, particularly my husband travelled overseas and he would always visit craftsman and see if they'd picked up any new techniques and that is fine – but machinery did get better - the sewing of furs, the peculiar overlocking stitch that is so – the machinery did get better and indeed at one particular time of his life, because he was so frequently at the Frankfurt Fair and so became to be such an adviser among furriers, my husband found himself an agent for selling fur machinery, which is essentially the sewing machinery – there's very little that you can do in the cutting machinery – into Russia, so that they had the best of machines, which they had not had before.**

RR: Was that Australian machinery?

SC: No, it wasn't; it was European.

RR: There was a very fine manufacturer of small electric motors, the Quick Stop motor - - -

SC: Oh, yes.

RR: - - - that was manufactured in Australia.

SC: Was it? Yes, yes.

RR: And a world patent. I can't remember his name but I remember - - -

49.35 **SC: Yes. No, I'm afraid I don't know about the - - -**

RR: - - - when it's working, The Woman's Working Wonders or something they used to call them.

SC: Yes, yes. I think so, yes.

RR: I remember the gentleman. He was a really nice old fellow who manufactured these and he had the world patent on it, so that you could stop the machine at the bottom or the top just by pressing a button.

SC: Yes. And I do believe that Australia's strength in engineering is something which has been often overlooked because we haven't had the enormous capital investment to go with and support our engineering in Australia.

RR: What about staff in the business? Who handled them more than anything?

SC: Me. I always used to say if we'd have been a little, just a little bit bigger we would have had a human resources department. As it was, we had me and that is what it was – but the best friends I have in this – not only I had but I have in this world are people who worked for us. And I could name a handful of them right now who – my, the closest people to me are people who found employment with Cornelius Furs.

50.47 We trained people long before – this is the real story of, I think, the, shall we say, the success story of Cornelius Furs was our employment policies. Long before there was a name for it I invented flexitime. Long before it became the overused facility that it is today I developed casual work, part time work, job sharing – and I saw that within all of those fields there was good staff training and upward mobility, even if you were a part time worker, a seasonal worker or something of that sort, that you still had upward mobility. I was almost the only – when the hearings were heard on maternity leave, I was one of the almost only employers who gave evidence in favour of maternity leave and that – I haven't recorded it but that is recorded somewhere.

52.13 Our policies – because, you see, the policies came from Max and myself. We ourselves were tradesmen - we ourselves, we were - we'd been employees before we'd been employers. We, ourselves, always worked with our staff. We – for all the years I was at Cornelius Furs, my office was just a little, a tiny little section off the floor of the salon. My husband was at every tradesmen's bench that he was in Sydney that he wasn't overseas. We were a team before teamwork was invented.

RR: Now, are there any of those people or any other people that you can think of that should be interviewed for this project?

SC: Oh, I can think of people that you can interview. I can - you know, a wonderful woman, Marian Kilzer, who lives in the mountains – oh, she lives in – I mean, you're in Katoomba, aren't you? She lives in Katoomba; you've got to pop around the corner to her.

RR: Have you got a phone number for her?

SC: You know – just, look, I haven't but I'll have one for you.

RR: Kilzer?

SC: K-I-L-Z-E-R. She would be a wonderful interviewee.

53.39 **RR: There's another man who lives at – I heard about him, I haven't contacted him yet. The lady who mentioned him, she said he worked for twenty five years for Cornelius and he worked in the shop, I think. Anyway, wherever he worked. He's now working for a jeweller which is in the same building and he lives in Wentworth Falls. His first name is Peter and the lady concerned says it's such an unpronounceable name that she couldn't remember it but she'll get in contact with him.**

SC: No, I don't know. And of course, you see, it's nearly twenty five years since we left, so he may have worked in the last period when the – see, there've been two waves of people who have taken over Cornelius Furs. So, if he is - - -

RR: Are they still around?

SC: They're around in Melbourne – both those families are around in Melbourne.

55.01 **RR: And their name as a business was 'The Kempler' - - -**

SC: No, no, no, no, no. They had bought – the Kosky family had bought from us the name, 'Cornelius Furs' - which by this time had a value in Australia and overseas - and when they were taken over by the Kempler family they traded as Cornelius Furs until August of the year 2000.

RR: I think you did give somebody a mobile phone number for Leon.

SC: No, they gave me a number for him. I had an email – I had an old email address and I had sent over an email. I just wanted to give them – or the Leon brothers' mother, I wanted to send a season's greeting to her and I didn't have anything around for it at all, so I looked up and had an old email address and have sent them an email but they haven't answered yet. So, I'm not even sure. I didn't get a 'Failed Mail' from my email, which is pretty regular about giving me failed mails.

56.11 **RR: Now, can you think of any other names that should be interviewed?**

SC: Other people. Let me think, let me think.

RR: What about your daughter?

SC: Oh, my daughter hates being interviewed.

RR: Yes, she didn't take it up when I suggested that she should.

SC: No, no, no, she wouldn't.

RR: Although she did talk over the phone.

SC: Yes. No, she didn't. And she worked with us for comparatively few years.

RR: Yes, and she said that too.

SC: Yes, you see, yes, yes. And it's not her field, really.

RR: Okay.

SC: And that, yes. Even though she had no – full of admiration for what was going on but she wanted to get on with her own work. She's a psychologist and these days an author of most – you know, one of the world's outstanding writers and editors in what has become our field - the resolution of conflict. And she's not gabby like me. And I'm trying to think of anybody else and I honestly can't at the moment. You see, this is what happens; the great penalties of living into old age. All your peers keep on dying off or going into the state where they can't be interviewed because their memories aren't – not linking up with their language any more. But Marian Kilzer is ideal for all of this and she is really, really good about it and she's one from our period.

57.42 **RR:** And she lives in Katoomba?

SC: And she lives in Katoomba, yes, yes.

RR: Well, that's easy then. Now, why did you sell out in the end?

SC: I had wanted to complete many years before but Max never did. See, I had gone into this business as therapy for my husband. When he left the Army, he had a prognosis of two years. I thought, in my – I'm going to say the wisdom of youth - and so it proved - that if he went back to the trade he was used to and which he'd been a great success at, it would be the best thing he could do for his health.

59.01 An aside in this – remembering we were both tradesmen and remembering that the old wisdom says, "If the only tool you've got is a hammer, you think that every problem is a nail", and I really thought – all I can say is, nothing proved me wrong afterwards - I'm sure I'm judging from too small a sample – that if I could support him in getting back into his own trade, it would be the best thing he could do for this, what was then fragile health. From a prognosis of two years we got thirty five; I wasn't far wrong. But long before that period I felt that the

purpose of what became Cornelius Furs had been completed and I wanted to get on with all the other stuff that I wanted to do. I wanted to take Max with me into all the other stuff that I wanted to do too but he didn't want to come and we had entertained in the past many takeover offers. We'd grown to the stage that we were attractive to people. We were always being asked by, you know, stockbroking firms to go public and things of that sort. Now, we were never really big enough to go public; it was an illusion that the advertising gave them. But to one of these offers I said to – and Max would always put these in front of me – I said to him – this offer from the Kosky brothers to take a – “Max, as much as I'd like to say yes to it, because you know how much I want us to go, I don't think this is it”, and Max, for some reason which – there's nothing on the surface of it that I can say why - he said, “Oh, look, Stella, make this one it”, so I worked with the Kosky brothers and made this one the right offer.

61.22 Three weeks after we'd achieved the first stage of that takeover, which was intended to be a ten year programme of gradually taking over all of that, Max died. There was nothing in his health pattern that indicated that that was so but I believe that somewhere really, really deep within him, without knowing that he knew, he knew. 'Cause why, this absolutely uncharacteristic accepting getting me to work on an offer. You know, and his answer to all offers in the past is, “Don't waste your time on it”. But this one was different. And so when you say “Why?”, I don't know why, I don't know why. But I was glad of the opportunity to complete and get – what I considered get on my way. I would have liked to be get on our way but that just wasn't to be.

RR: Were you aware of the trend against natural fur?

62.37 SC: Not at that – no, not at this stage of the takeover.

RR: It hadn't really bit then, yes.

SC: That was by '78, no, no. '78 was the year of the takeover, yes.

RR: Is there anything else that I should have asked you re the business?

SC: I don't believe so. Let me have a look. Let me go back into it and see. Oh, one of the things you didn't ask me and, as I said, you know, any great names among - - [break in tape]

0.00 (discussions re problems with the tape recorder)

0.41 **RR: The Commercial Oral Histories of Central Sydney, Dr Stella Cornelius. We're moving onto your public life, so to speak, apart from the fur business.**

SC: Right, yes.

RR: If you don't mind.

SC: Oh, no, no. That's quite all right, no.

RR: Now, what got you involved in the first – I mean, were you involved in trade activities in the furrier business?

SC: There was a fur trade association and we were always members of it. I think for a few years my recollection is not strong on this area. I think for a few years my husband held the Chair and certainly that is so; we always belonged to appropriate organisations: the things like, you know, the Chamber of Commerce, retailing associations and Institute of Sales and Marketing Directors was an early one and then later on we were both very active members in the Australian Institute of Management of which we are – were both Fellows of the Australian Institute of Management.

RR: Now, is that in the interests of management more than anything else?

1.58 SC: The interests of management, rather than specifically the fashion industry, in which we were involved. But it didn't take me long to realise that management is a profession, certainly, but certainly a social skill with much wider applications than the running of a successful business.

RR: Did you lead on from that to other things?

SC: Shall we say, it met another stream within me, which is well and truly, was well and truly established. As a child at Croydon Public School – how old, I don't know, seven eight, something like that – I joined my first organisation, the Junior Red Cross.

2.57 Richard, we were allowed to wear white veils and have red crosses of them – you know, the red cross is five equal squares makes up the red cross and we made our own in cardboard and covered them with red ribbon, mounted them on our little veils and we learnt – look, you know, basic social responsibility at that age. It was just something you grew up with, you soaked it in from the atmosphere. By the time I was in Newcastle I certainly belonged to community organisations in Newcastle. When war broke out - I was still in Newcastle – was a member of the – goodness me, it's out of my head now, whatever it was - our volunteers who supported the enlisted forces.

4.07 And when I came to Sydney at twenty two I was already a well and truly established member of, student of, and organiser with – to be a little – the Workers Educational Association whom I vow to this

day, they brought me up by hand and gave me – I have not got my tongue in my cheek at all – me, somebody who had left school at the age of thirteen years and ten months because I'd done my intermediate and I was going to be fourteen before the next school term – gave me a first class education, absolutely first class. Oh, together with public library, the School of Arts of Newcastle. And all of this stuff and appreciating what community organisations would do made me sort of stay on with – certainly keep on studying with – but organising with the whole of the adult education movement. Which I still find one of the inspiring things that happen in our society.

5.22 **RR: How long were you on the Adult Education Committee at the University of Sydney?**

SC: I can't remember. I don't - - -

RR: But a long time?

SC: Yes, yes. It came much later, again, because of my awareness, consciousness and fascination with the field I was invited to join the – I think it was called Board of Adult Education or something at University of Sydney and had a very rewarding period working with that committee.

RR: Was it for that work that you got your doctorate recently?

SC: Oh, no. No, no, no. My doctorate was in recognition of my very long period now spent in the conflict resolution movement which I started not really knowing how to give it a name. I was starting in the early seventies by - and looking for a place where I could take sort of this initiative within me, trying to do things on my own, having little successes, realising that I needed an umbrella organisation, which I found in the United Nations Association of Australia, where a wonderful President at that time, Geoffrey Hogan, said, "Oh, you bring your programme in to us. You will suit us fine". And in '73 I established the Peace and Conflict Resolution programme of the United Nations Association of Australia.

6.52 Now, that link with, first of all formal, then after twenty years less formal, with the United Nations Association of Australia is one that is very dear to me right now in the year 2001 – that is so. By this time – oh, there were many community organisations to which I was devoted. I think it was then called the Crippled Children's Society, the work with the blind, they were organisations to which I was devoted and did excellent – felt that they were excellent organisations where my own particular skills in management could have relevance to them, where I could be a resource person to these organisations.

7.54 But as the years went on, more and more I felt I wanted to work in this peace and conflict resolution field – fairly unknown - which I had

to do lots of the research myself. For instance, from 1973 I was knocking on the doors of universities, saying to them, "Please, will you teach this stuff?" and they couldn't hear me. And I had to go away and sort of learn my trade myself before I could go back to them – which didn't actually happen till '88 - and say, "Now, let me put in front of you a programme which I know you can teach in academe". But it took all of that while and they were right not to say yes to me because I didn't have the basic research, the knowledge, the practise.

8.38 See, what we say about ourselves now in the conflict resolution network, the organisation which inherited the Peace and Conflict Resolution programme of the United Nations Association, what I say, "We're devoted to develop, to teach, to implement, to research the theory and the practise of conflict resolution". So, do it through an international and a national organisation and to concern ourselves with conflict, whether it's the global, the international, the creation of a better law of the sea, whether it's the most intimate and personal and family conflicts, inner conflicts. Conflict is our sphere of focus and we feel that the attitudes, the skills, the spirit that you learn in one specific field are transferrable; you can pick them up and take them to another field where they will have relevance.

RR: Did you get involved much before the business was taken over, before your husband died?

9.59 SC: Yes, I was – I always had a big appetite for activity and I was doing lots of the work while being, you know, a full time manager in Cornelius Furs. It was – one job was never enough for me. My Mum would have said I have eyes bigger than my stomach.

RR: I notice you were Vice President of the Volunteers Centre of New South Wales in 1977, from 1977.

10.33 SC: Yes, they were the establishment years and this is – now, this is one of the – because I think volunteerism is – I think the right to volunteer your services in your society is a basic human right and you'll see lots and lots again in talking about me I come back to human rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which I think is one of the most practical, one of the most intellectually rigorous and one of the most inspirational documents of our generation. It is indeed, if we still lived in the age of the mystery schools, we'd say it's a sacred text, it is such good stuff. And out of this comes things which are perhaps not specifically mentioned in the UN, Declaration of Universal Human Rights, that one of the thing is rights which are implied and the right to be involved in your community, to be able to offer your services in a volunteer capacity, even if somebody can't pay you for it. Oh, I know all the difficulties with that and the checks and balances that you've got to put into position, and I'm good at putting those checks and balances into position.

11.51 But the Volunteer Bureau gave people enormous opportunities to volunteer their service under an atmosphere of professionalism and under an atmosphere of appreciation and acknowledgement for what they were doing. And there were wonderful people. The establishing Chief Executive Officer, whose inspiration it was, Heather Buck, was one of the fantastic women of Sydney.

RR: How far do you go back in the peace movement? You didn't know Jessie Street, did you?

SC: I knew of Jessie Street.

RR: So, you didn't know her?

12.39 SC: I knew of Jessie Street. I tell you, we had a fascinating link work. I told you - when I entered the fur industry, Jessie Street was still engaged in her 'Sheepskins for Russia' campaign. Oh, well, this was a small thing in the many things that these wonderful women did, Jessie Street and the women she gathered around her, and - I want to go back and talk about Jessie Street and her things - and we, as furriers using sheepskins were conscious of this campaign of getting sheepskins to Russia. It was no more than just sort of a general trade interest at that stage, so I knew her from the first.

13.35 Then another circle came around in the sixties, when I was very, very conscious of her work for and support for the 1967 Referendum, which would enable the federal government to make laws concerning Aborigines, not ignore them any more, not pretend that they didn't exist any more, and I was very conscious of Jessie Street's influence there and that was the period in which I met my wonderful colleague, Faith Bandler too.

14.20 But Jessie Street's concern for what later would have become women's issues - and she would have just considered it, without any capital letters, as a human right issue - to see that women, particularly at the lower end of the employment scale were protected, that they got decent pay and decent conditions for work. I don't think she was even promoting equal pay, which came much probably later than her period.

RR: I think it did at the end.

SC: Of her work, yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes, very probably that it did but certainly in her early and formative years none of us thought of asking for equal rights. We had to all wait and ask ourselves that question, "Why not?", but much later on.

RR: You mentioned Faith Bandler there - - -

SC: Yes.

RR: - - - as a colleague. In what capacity?

15.20 SC: Oh, just I was on the periphery at those stage of support to the aspirations of indigenous community and that was another area in which I had to learn my trade very carefully because at the beginning of it I didn't know a great deal, except to say, "Oh, you know, this is social justice, this is human rights, this is a good thing. This is the equality of humankind to which we aspire". But I realised that my initial attraction to the field was simplistic and I had to learn of the complications that stood in the path of achieving a social and political reality for our aspirations.

RR: Did you see any conflict – I mean Jessie Street took up a peace and freedom movement.

SC: M'mm.

16.32 **RR: And that was thought to be a Communist inspired and - - -**

SC: Gee, was it ever. Everything we did in these days, as late as 1973 when I was forming the Peace and Conflict Resolution programme of the United Nations Association of Australia, I had to waste an enormous amount of my life – no, not waste; I'm going to take that word back – invest enormous amount of time in explaining to people that we were not a Communist front.

17.02 Today, it raises chuckles to people; they can't believe this is so. Oh, I do have to say – oh, we did save some time – we never had to explain it to the Communists because they believed that they knew – I have to go and say quite erroneously, of course – they knew that we were a CIA agency, you see. They couldn't believe that apolitical people, just were concerned for human rights or concerned for social justice, were concerned with the intelligence of the peaceful resolution of conflict compared with the violent resolution of conflict were not politically inspired but were human need inspired.

RR: I notice from your 'Who's Who' entry that you were an Australian Red Cross member of the Welfare Committee for many years.

18.03 SC: I was indeed and I chaired – oh, you know, life membership in the Red Cross is an award, it's not something you sort of purchase just with many years.

RR: No.

SC: And I do, I felt honoured to have been awarded life membership of the Red Cross. On the Welfare Committee and I for many years chaired the International Humanitarian Law Committee of Australian

Red Cross, New South Wales. It's a field in which I have very linking interests with all my other interests in conflict resolution. International humanitarian law is, I feel, is one of the pillars on which we build and indeed I didn't leave that committee until I saw it comfortably into the hands of someone whom I felt could carry on very well indeed, and I retain very close and warm links with Red Cross.

RR: So, what are you still involved with? You mentioned a conference next week.

19.17 SC: Yes. I'm going to the Theosophers Conference next week and the – now, I have been for, oh, since the early seventies, so we'd say sort of – well, well over a quarter of a century will do this, I have been a member, probably a peripheral member of the Theosophers. Why? Because going back to those early seventies where lots of people and organisations were busy asking, "Is this programme called 'Peace and Conflict Resolution programme', is it a Communist front or a CIA agency. The Theosophers were one of a group of people, they never asked those – what we would now call – stupid questions. They just gave me a vote of confidence and for one of the very, very early conferences that I ran with - once again, at the start of Cornelius Furs, which we did with no money; you had to get by with a bit of help from your friends - and they gave me a free of charge venue for about a three day conference in their beautiful accommodation at North Sydney. And in appreciation of their vote of confidence in me I've always given them a vote of confidence and retained my membership and indeed an interest in their work, which I see as its core as being, seeing the connection with between all religions and inviting them into dialogue with each other, so that everybody can enjoy those common connections.

20.58 **RR: And is there anything else you're still involved with?**

SC: I'd have to say Human Rights Education; I serve on the national committee. It's the only national committee - in a sense of government a national committee – on which I'm still serving and I think of that as only a short period now. I've been retiring from other things repeatedly as is very seemly in my eighty one years – not to do nothing but to focus on those things in which perhaps I feel I can make the greatest contribution in what must inevitably - if not now - become reduced energy available for it. But Human Rights Education, a comparatively new committee in Australia – not doing too well because we've got to work out ways of how we're going to manage without the government funding which is not available under present context – in which, and this is a field in which I have perhaps a particular lot of experience to offer.

22.12 You remembering all the time I've been working with the NGOs – these days called the CSOs – have you heard that term? NGO stands for Non Governmental Organisations, the term used for many

years. A newer term – and I love the new buzz words – are the Civil Society Organisations, the CSOs, because the NGOs contains a negative in it. It's telling you more what it isn't, rather than the CSO, which tells you what it is, the Civil Society Organisations. There's a more of a positive in it. So, I like that very much.

RR: Is there anything else that we should cover that we haven't?

SC: Think of other organisations that I belong to. Many times these days, when asked to join another organisation with whom's aims and objectives I absolutely and heartily agree and support, what I do is to say, "No. Formal membership or formal affiliation of our organisation with yours is not something that we're feeling comfortable about doing these days" - because of limited resources and time and energy that happen - "but please consider us a resource and myself, my daughter, Helena", co-director of the Conflict Resolution Network, "as resource persons whom you can call on at any time". And that is something which I feel works very well for us, to be available as a resource to other organisations.

24.09 And, of course, these days that's become much easier through email and the internet. You can put a lot of stuff onto the internet, make it freely available in the world. I'm just as likely to go to my computer now and find an email from Roseville, just down the road, and the next one to it may be from Uzbekistan - where obviously there are people who speak English because we haven't got translation available for them there yet.

RR: And when did you discover the internet?

SC: Oh, for my – well, for the Conflict Resolution Network has been using it for probably about the last five or six years. It's in the last two years when, with less people around and available that I, in my old age, have had to embrace IT, the new technology, and not only use it but enjoy it and celebrate it – and I believe I'm doing that, yes.

RR: I assume that you are Jewish. I don't know whether this is the case.

25.21 SC: Yes, yes, I am. I belong to a liberal Jewish congregation.

RR: And I just wondered what part of you, has that part of you made you involved in other things?

SC: Yes. Jewish tradition – I am not an observant Jew. In fact, many observant Jews would describe me as a secular Jew. There are some observances which I enjoy and keep but Jewish tradition, as well as Jewish humour, has supported me at every turn - and there is an enormous Jewish tradition of social responsibility and social justice, into which I find myself very, very, very comfortably at home.

The great writers in the field have inspired me and I find myself not only quoting them but I find myself with an inner resonance with what has been said. So, I'm very, very happy with that tradition within me.

RR: Do you know many of the activists in the Jewish – I mean the Einfelds, for instance, and people like that?

26.50 SC: Oh, Marcus Einfeld is a dear friend. Oh, I have an opportunity, Richard, to make one of my jokes. At my age of eighty one, you don't know anybody any more but you knew their parents. Marcus is an exception: I both knew his parents and I do know him quite well - and indeed, it's a great joy every now and then to find our circles crossing and working with his as a colleague, as in many areas. I heard his speech on television at the Federation celebrations this week and I just thought him apt and seemly. Yes.

27.39 And I know other activists in my particular field, like the lawyer, David Bottel, who chairs the Social Justice Committee of Jewish Community, of which I am a member and I enjoy David's work very well, particularly – he's particularly noted for his work. He chairs the – is it the Australian Council of Refugees? – Refugee Council of Australia we've got, yes, Refugee Council of Australia. And certainly I would feel that I am part of his work and he's part of mine.

RR: Did you know Syd Einfeld?

28.27 SC: I knew Syd Einfeld. I was enormously impressed with him, with his work as Minister for Consumer Affairs but particularly a part of his work which impressed me greatly and he – I know he was always getting literature on it and encouraging my interest in it – he was also Minister for Co-operatives. It's not a post, not a Ministry which has retained, it's probably been absorbed into something else – and I loved his inspirations in and contributions to the Co-operative Movement in Australia. I would have loved to have seen more done in that field.

RR: Can you think of any other people that you might want to talk about particularly?

29.23 SC: Yes. Anything that one achieves, one achieves by standing on the shoulders of giants. That is true and there are so many that – like a logjam in my head, I'd have to say - in particular fields and there's people come to mind. A magnificent, sometimes overrated journalist, Canberra based, has been a colleague of many years. His name is Ian Matthews. He was editor of – editor and the managing editor of the Canberra Times for many years, now is freelance, and is still an active journalist. To have worked with Ian Matthews at any time is always privilege.

30.26 Right at the moment I work very closely with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at the University of Sydney, in which there's been many great chairs and many great people in that. But we decided we'd wear our good suits on that day – on that day an announcement came that Nelson Mandela was going to present awards to two people for their work in our field - and Faith and I are looking around to see who would be getting these surprise awards when both of us, I think, jointly sagged a little at the knees to hear it was us. It was a surprise.

31.07 Had they asked my daughter, Helena, she would have said, "Oh, please, give her a hint or something. Don't surprise my mother. She's very bad at surprises altogether", and indeed I do always prefer to know or know a little bit or just have a suspicion beforehand. But this was their decision, that it should be a surprise and Faith and I both survived the surprise.

RR: Did you get to talk to Mandela at all?

31.37 SC: Oh, yes, and he is an absolutely – he is an inspiration. Things that inspired me on that particular day and his life work is a beacon to everybody that works in the field of social justice. But on that particular day the courtesy of that man – we had, the group who was gathered together who weren't enormously large - I remember about forty-odd people were there for this particular presentation, this visit of his to the Centre – we had about twenty minutes for him to do question and answers and Stuart Reece in the Chair said to the assembly or to us, "Look, make your questions very short so that many people can share", and you know, this wonderful and this gracious man with so much to say, he made his answers very short to, so that everybody could share in that one there.

32.37 And every short answer was a like a light along the path. You could have – I didn't record it but you could have taken every one of them and quoted it. And I managed to get in a question about one of my favourite topics, which is the elimination of involuntary unemployment, the programme which we call in the Conflict Resolution our programme of "Work for all who need it", and in answer to that he assured me that written into the Constitution of his new South African government is everybody's right to employment.

RR: Is there anything else you'd like to say before we terminate the interview?

SC: No, I'm done. Look, I'm done or, shall we say, or in the middle of everything but I think this is a beautiful moment to conclude. Let's do that.

33.36 **RR: Thank you very much, Dr Cornelius.**

Interview ends