CITY OF SYDNEY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

INTERVIEWEE: Bruce Druery

INTERVIEWER: Jo Kijas

PLACE: Surry Hills

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TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **JK:** **This is an interview with Bruce Druery and Jo Kijas at Surry Hills on the 4th of May 2012 for the Shared Terrain Oral History Project on behalf of the City of Sydney History Unit.**

And, Bruce, can we just start with your full name and year of birth?

BD: Yes, I'm Bruce Wayne Druery – sometimes called Batman for Bruce Wayne – and was born on ******** 1951.

JK: **O.K, now, we're here partly to explore the businessperson's perspective that you can give me today and then we're going to talk about all sorts of things - you also live in the city - but could**

we start by you telling me about your current business and some of your work history? Let's just start there.

BD: O.K. Well, the current business is very much a communications design company. It's distributed because it comes from a company that was formed in 1985 principally as a kind of enthusiastic advertising agency and it evolved into a design company. And by that I mean we have developed brands, logos, product concepts through to graphic design and the building of websites, a lot of print work, creating annual reports, financial reports, sustainability reports. So we've had broad experience of print and electronic communications over the evolution of that space as well. Where once upon a time it was all graphic, today it is very much digital. So that's the space that we operate in and today it's what I call a distributed networked organisation because we've always used freelancers and the people that came and worked for me - we had up to fifteen people on staff - subsequently set up as freelance people and they contract to us, they work for us, we know them and we're able to put together a project team on short notice to do huge projects or create a single logo for someone that walks in and says "I need a business card".

2.32 So for example in the last year we've delivered on a five month timeframe a three hundred and twenty two page book for 'Sculpture by the Sea', plotting the history and development of that concept over fifteen years and there was a recommendation and I went in and they said "Do you think you could deliver this by October when our next one is open?" I said "Sure, let's get on with it". So that's the sort of things that we take on today.

JK: And what's your business called?

BD: It's called United Notions and it was formed as a very enthusiastic, outrageous organisation that claimed it could do all sorts of things with ambassadors and so on and it was a fun company, started by young people as a result of an explosion inside another company where there was dispute. So we operated from the back of cars for several weeks and we went out and bought our own furniture from Ikea and set up in a little box and went out and rebuilt a business from scratch.

JK: I think you said you were in Glebe first.

BD: We originally were in Neutral Bay but then as we quickly grew again we generated sufficient cash and thought we'd go out and buy our own building, which we did, and that was a very successful part of

building the business because we weren't at the pleasure of the landlord, we were it.

4.03 **JK: So pretty much except for Neutral Bay you've been in the city for most of the history of that particular company?**

BD: Yes. Well, the reason that we moved to Glebe is that we got tired of the traffic on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and so we moved to this side which was closer and it was ten minutes across to work. And then, of course, we saw the increasing traffic across Sydney and it became problematic and we've dealt with the Cross City Tunnel and all sorts of things over that time.

JK: We're going to get back onto transporting oneself around the city in different ways in a minute but just give me some background to the rest of your working history.

BD: O.K. Educationally, I won a scholarship to university. I went and did a degree in science, I specialised in geophysics and pure mathematics and then I did another Dip. Ed. and I taught for a couple of years. I was ambitious and so I grabbed the job in the oil industry, which is what I had intended to enter – or in fact the exploration area – and I went out exploring for oil around Australia, which was pretty exciting in those days but I could see the damage that oil industry was doing around the world and I had a mentor and he encouraged me to leave the business. And I had been working with a marketing liaison group and moved into a full time advertising role at Philips Electronics and they are a fantastic, socialist type of company. And they trained us and I spent time overseas, working in Holland and Hong Kong and came back and then because I'd been working with advertising agencies I thought "I can do this" and started my own business back in 1980. And then we ran a small company, a partnership dispute and that's where United Nations were formed – I think it was over Easter in 1985.

6.17 **JK: And your background, your personal background?**

BD: Yes. I'm the oldest son of a family of four siblings. Mum and Dad, working class. My Dad was a printer, my Mum worked occasionally. She was a stay at home mum, she was a very young mum - I think she was just barely seventeen when I was born. Poorly educated Mum and Dad - Dad left school when I think he was thirteen or fourteen – but they were very encouraging in terms of education and all of the boys went on and did tertiary education and been pretty successful in their own ways in their own fields.

JK: And I think you said you grew up western Sydney. What school?

BD: Yes, in a place called Chester Hill, which at that stage was the edge of the metropolitan area and when we arrived there was a ash roadway and there was a paddock and the furniture was carried across a paddock to a Housing Commission house in a little street called Birriga Avenue, which was about half a kilometre from a big ICI industrial plant and a Monier Concrete plant and one of the biggest drinking pubs in the west at the time.

JK: And I ask that now because compare that to where you live these days.

BD: Well, I now live in Paddington Street with a view down Cascade of the harbour in a beautiful terrace which is a three/four level terrace. We've lived in Paddington for thirty years. This is not our first house but we've been in this house for fifteen years and we are big supporters of heritage and in fact my wife has been president of the Paddington Society and I've been involved as an activist in terms of heritage issues around that village and maintaining the amenity of a pretty unique inner suburb.

8.18 **JK: Yes. Tell me about the building that we're actually in now and how long your business, you've been here in Surry Hills.**

BD: We moved into this building four years ago as a result of selling the building that we invested in in Glebe to pay down debts and so on. And so I looked around for a small space and there were some atrocious spaces and then came across this building which had been a warehouse for the Timber Development Authority and so it had beautiful wood in it but it had been sympathetically restored and enhanced into, not a cooperative, but a collegiate series of studios. Anyway, I found this small office, the smallest in the building because I wanted the cheapest rent because it was just going to be me and some freelancers and occasional people. And I came across this little room that had a glass wall and some plants, which was a bit unusual and I said to the guy "Look, this is great but I really want access to the air outside" and he said "Well, there is an air conditioning duct but it doesn't actually reach here", he said, "but we will be happy to put a door in so that you can open it up to the fresh air". And that's how I came to this place because I didn't want to be using a lot of energy. I wanted access to the air and I wanted to be able to close the door and go sailing when I wanted to, go travelling when I wanted to, but still operate a very efficient business and as a

result we've got this small space, we've got shared desks, we've got full communications, broadband, all the things that you expect from a high-tech design company.

10.14 And the other reason I went for this is we had discovered over the past ten years that clients now didn't actually want to come and visit the agency and see your office. It was credible for them that you had an address and all that but they certainly were happy for you to come and visit them, take the brief and if they never saw you again other than via PDS and over the internet that was fine with them. And so we didn't need a lavish space but the space we've got is comfortable, it's very central, I can walk here, I can cycle here, and that was one of the reasons I got onto a bike in that the parking became more and more difficult. It's here and you can manage it but it's a really good way to run up parking tickets too.

JK: Yes, I thought there's a parking lot underneath here.

BD: There is. There's parking for about a dozen vehicles, so not every studio has a vehicle and in fact that space is often only half filled. There's been a move away from cars in this building. When I came here four years ago and brought my bicycle into the foyer, negotiated with the property manager, he was very happy because they had a bike rack. That's grown. Initially, people looked at me strangely when I brought the bike in and thought "What's this all about?" Two years later, there were four bikes. Now, there are a dozen bikes. And in fact, one of the designers here who runs another enterprise, a very vivacious woman who drives a very prestigious BMW, she came to me earlier this year and said "Bruce, I'm now riding to work. I'm full of energy. It's fantastic". So, big changes.

12.09 **JK: Maybe we'll keep on the bike path for a bit. What do you think has made those changes that you've seen here in this building?**

BD: There's been the availability of the bike path that runs quite close to the building – it's just one block away – but there's also been pressure in terms of parking and transport; people find that getting in a car and going to a meeting involves a lot of time. I mean, I've always experienced that and in the past we would be travelling to meetings all over the metropolitan area and to some extent our footprint has moved back into the city and so it's a bit easier in that respect. So there's certainly pressure from traffic but there's an awareness that this is a better way to do it, O.K, that it's healthier, that it makes sense, it saves time. I mean, I can hop on my bike, visit

the bank, put the cheques in, be back here inside ten minutes. You cannot do that in a car; it doesn't work.

JK: And just take me on a regular day. Do you head out to quite a lot of people and how far would you go?

BD: Meetings in our business, you can have two a day or two a week - it really depends on what's happening – and they will be that I will leave home, walk here. I have two bikes, one here and one at home, so I can cycle backwards and forwards and drop them off and leave them. So I may walk here, do some things, then jump on the bike. I know I've got a ten o'clock meeting over in Kent Street and so I will set off probably a little bit earlier than I would have tried to in a car but inevitably in a car you run late because you can't find the spot that you're after, whereas in the bike you're there, you're off the bike early, your there cooled down and I'm used to being casual.

14.29 People don't expect me to turn up in a suit with a tie, they expect me to turn up in neat casual clothes, maybe suit trousers and an open-neck shirt and in that case I'll wear a T-shirt on the bike and then change over. It works; it's just a matter of being organised. So I'll go into the meeting and carry in the bicycle helmet and the first time they have a giggle and a laugh and think "This is really strange" because often I'm dealing with senior partners in top four accountancy firms or big financial companies and they think "Who is this crazy guy?" But we establish a relationship and that lasts, hopefully, for years and I have some clients a decade and a half. So then hop back on the bike, come back here. Rarely do I do two or three meetings a day. Occasionally I have to. If I've got to get to Chatswood or down to Botany I'll hop back on the bike, cycle up the hill, jump in the car, go out to the meeting, do the thing, drop the car back, walk back down the hill. So it can be quite busy. There's showers here in the building, which is great; I've always been able to manage that. I have panniers on the bicycle, so I can take boards and presentation material, I carry a laptop on my back, I'm very used to doing that, yes.

16.02 **JK: And have you talked to other people who have started riding here in the building and heard some of their stories?**

BD: Yes, definitely. They're kind of two types. There are, I guess, the dedicated ecofriendly people who see it as their personal statement and their personal help of the situation, evangelists who are trying to encourage other people to do it. And then we've got the funky, hipster group who are on bikes because it's the fashion and it's cool

and they've got lavishly coloured bikes and beautiful helmets and some not have helmets and all the rest of that. So it's a mixture, yes.

JK: And bikes, there has been a shift in the fashion about bikes, hasn't there?

BD: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. There are very cool bikes. The bikes that I have are probably not regarded as cool because they're touring bikes and they're not styled like a graphic designer would want them styled but they're very functional. So, yes, they are fashion statements.

JK: And so you're riding off and on the Bourke Street path?

BD: Yes, I use Bourke Street once a day probably to get to the north of the city. I often go south as well so, yes, it's a constant transit. I'm pretty gung-ho also. I have no fear of cycling down Oxford Street or George Street and stopping in the middle of the road; I hand signal. I'm a very aware driver and cyclist and you have to cycle defensively, there's no doubt about that, because the cars don't respect cyclists, not like they do in Europe when I cycle there.

18.06 **JK: And I think we're talking about the benefits of the cycleway. Obviously they're very controversial. What are some of your opinions about the ways people are debating the bike path?**

BD: The way they debate the issue? Look, there is broad spectrum. I think there's a growing support for it as a valid way to get around the city. The drivers still don't see it. Perhaps some older people think "M'mm, it's great for young people because they're fitter and they can do it" but I have to say there are people that I know in their sixties who've taken up bicycle riding for the first time in their lives because it's an option and they see it as a valid option. So it is growing in acceptance. There's a crazy minority who's vocal still about it. There are some practicalities: the tradesmen park on it early in the morning so you have to get around that, so there are issues. A few vacant people will wander across it and be unaware that there are cyclers coming either way but the onus is on the cyclist to accommodate that because it's early days.

JK: So you're hopeful that it'll be maintained and grow?

BD: I think it's absolutely essential. I see cycling in almost every city in the world that I go to these days. And I've just come back from Chicago, which is a chilly place, but they've got an entire corridor around Lake Michigan which is cycleway so you can get from one end of the city to the other end without seeing a car, which is terrific.

20.00 We have a different situation here. I mean, I've cycled through Lyons, Paris, Italy, lots of places, and they all have different geographies to deal with. Sydney's got its issues because it's a very built up city, there's time pressure where people want to get places and commuter hour, peak hour, is growing. So I was just talking to a guy at Price Waterhouse at a luncheon earlier this week which was a presentation of Movember [fundraising campaign] and he cycles in in the morning and he said "I actually get on my bike now at six thirty because by seven thirty it's getting too busy".

JK: Too busy just in the traffic?

BD: Traffic-wise, yes.

JK: Cycleways as well?

BD: Yes, yes. Well, not the cycleways but he just said the impact of traffic across cycleways is greater later. So he's a funny Scottish guy and he was happy to go to work early. He's a senior partner in this big corporation and he didn't mind getting in there and getting himself organised and he has a very long day, obviously.

JK: Well, thanks for that. Going back to your business, I read somewhere that you talked about increasingly becoming eco aware. How have you become aware, I suppose, of environmental and eco issues and how has that been able to be built into your type of business?

BD: Well, it goes back a long way because I trained as a scientist and as a physicist and very much aware as a geologist also, a geophysicist, of the pressures on the earth and that those processes are very, very long term but in my sixty years on the planet I have certainly observed big changes in climate, big changes in environment, big changes in pollution.

22.17 I sail, I get out on the water in lots of places in the world, and the oceans are full of plastic. They're still full of dolphins but the whole place is incredibly under pressure. That awareness has followed me through my small business environment and probably in the very busy '80s and '90s we were less aware and we consumed more paper and more toner and more of everything because we had more people and more pressure. As we went on, we realised that it really was an unsustainable kind of business, which is why with the technology, the digital technology, we could see that we could operate as a networked organisation, some of us from our homes, some of us from shared studios, some of us from out of town. We

were able to cooperate with colleagues who were based in Orange or Perth or Dubbo or California or the UK. And there were times when I was doing projects that were being designed by someone who'd worked for me who was living in London. It would be produced to final art and approved here and printed in Hong Kong for economical reasons and so we were aware of using the technologies and trying to be more and more aware of how much energy we're using, how much paper we were using, where we were going in terms of the costs, not just financial that fall to the bottom line but the costs of what we were doing and that included on a philosophical level some businesses that we had worked with.

24.12 We had a lot of relationships with transport and we weren't that happy that we had in fact been responsible for some very successful trucking companies growing because we could see that that impact, what it was having. Fortunately, they were taken over and went offshore but we had some regrets as well but we've been aware as an organisation of our footprint for more than a decade.

JK: And I think you've started to explain my next question but, after all, environmental awareness has been around at least since the '70s - - -

BD: Yes.

JK: - - - has it just been technology that's shifted that? Why does it take until more recently, the decade, to be able to put some of this into practice?

BD: Yes, it's a valid question. I can say that there were aspects of what we did earlier. It was also, I guess, a philosophy that as a small company what can we do that is significant? And that was part of the reason that I made a decision to form another company which was targeted at the environmental marketplace – it was called Eco-Leisure; it's still around – designed to raise awareness in a broader range of people to get them out of the office and go surfing before work to make them aware of the environment and that when they got involved with our company that some of the money that they paid to learn and to train was going into energy research.

26.00 And so that was a business that I consciously moved toward. I haven't escaped the design business because the clients keep coming back and so I'm in this somewhat two worlds that I operate in. I still operate in the corporate world, in the design world, and I'm still moving toward improving people's awareness and fitness, a climate in particular. Over the last twenty five years I've sailed on many

oceans and it's a scary place out there now because you get unpredictable storms and they are savage and they're getting worse. I'm a kite surfer, which is we love to see twenty five knots of wind coming but now you get thirty and thirty five and forty knots of wind unexpectedly. Now, the sceptics can say "Oh, it's all coincidence" and as a geologist I can say "You can't really tell for ten thousand years whether it's a trend". It may or may not be the case but there's plenty of evidence that it's changing, yes.

JK: And in this building, have you seen changes? Is this a building where people are aware of trying to be sustainable and ecofriendly?

BD: I think some people are. There certainly seems to be less paper waste than there was once upon a time. There's a trend now that you'll see people turn out the lights when they go home in the common areas. Once upon a time this was a 24/7 – you could walk in here and the lights would be ablaze in the foyer and all the common areas. If you come in here on a weekend it's dark, so there is that increased awareness, the physical signs that I can see of it anyway.

28.07 And I talk with colleagues here and they're bringing their car less, they're walking more, they're cycling or they're skateboarding to work or whatever it is that they can do.

JK: And we've talked about bicycles. What about this as a city for walkers?

BD: Absolutely. I do walk as well. It's not just personal. I certainly see that you can get around the city much more efficiently walking than trying to hop in a cab or whatever. By the time you've walked to a rank and waited for the taxi and got in it and then got to the other end of it you could have easily walked to that building or that meeting or that theatre. And I see more and more evidence of people with their walkers on and their bag over their shoulder, walking to work. I have friends who are lawyers who walk from East Sydney into town each day and back. I think most people if they have the option of walking or using public transport do so. It's the people who live outside of Sydney who want the option to get in and out of the city more quickly, perceptually, and it's becoming more clearly recognised that if you bring your car into town, be ready for a thirty or forty dollar parking cost because it's getting tough. I recently had my Mum and Dad come down – they live at Kincumber – on the train. I picked them up to go and do their wills in town, picked them up from Central, and we

parked and they were staggered that there was a forty two dollar parking fee when we got back from the meeting, they could not believe it.

30.06 **JK: And how do you see that being managed into the future by, I guess, local, state government, how will we be able to maintain or in fact grow a livable city and these sort of transport issues that we're talking about?**

BD: Yes. Well, I mean, public mass transport is the only way that it's going to happen. I've come back from Chicago and they have a fantastic mass transport system. There are countries and cities around the world that are doing it and you just have to realise that you have to leave the car somewhere. If you're going to get into and out of a city, you're not going to be able to drive from point A into the centre and park your car in George Street and walk away and expect that you can do that. It's going to have to be light rail, heavy rail, there's going to have to be for infrastructure to continue to build and that's going to have some difficulties because of the pressure groups, because of state governments' short-termism; they're not prepared to put their neck out and do something; I mean, they won't even invest in a second airport, long overdue. So will it happen? I think it will happen as energy gets more and more expensive. Just today they're starting to talk about petrol again: why does it cost a dollar eighty a litre? Because the petrol companies can set whatever price they like: that's the reality. And when petrol costs five dollars a litre people will leave their cars because it's too expensive to do that and so we will have an energy poor; there will be people that live on the fringes of the metropolitan area who have to make a decision: "Will I drive or will I eat?" And we're hearing that in lots of places now.

32.04 Just recently I had an Italian friend staying, trying to come to Australia and to escape Italy because it's just collapsing from a cost and lifestyle point of view. We're pretty lucky here but there's pressure, there's pressure, there's no doubt about it.

JK: Well, you've lived inside the city LGA, local government area, as well as obviously growing up outside it and we're talking in this project about the natural environment or the relationship between the natural and built environment. What are the key things that you think make for an environmentally livable city?

BD: Well, the key things, well I mean that's pretty difficult to encapsulate but certainly amenity, O.K, which is a weird word but the ability to be able to walk to open spaces, the ability to get fresh food - I mean,

food is going to be an issue over time – ability to grow food and not transport it on an aeroplane from California for breakfast. That's just unsustainable; we have to be able to be food sufficient. So in a city, the ability to walk about, transport for longer distances, the supply of water and food. I mean, they sound pretty basic. We don't have too much to worry about in terms of culture in Sydney because there's so much that's good about it and that's been fostered.

34.01 It's been fostered by both state and local government areas – I think the feds are way down the curve in terms of what they do. So we have those things here in Sydney: fantastic climate, great culture. I mean, the food's great now. My concern is what happens in fifty years in terms of pressure but it's going to come down to transport and energy and water and food.

JK: And so around where you live in Paddington, where are some of your favourite places out of doors?

BD: Well, Centennial Park is close by, the [Paddington] Reservoir Gardens which was rebuilt and redeveloped by the city council is a fantastic little mecca. I can walk down the hill to Rushcutters Bay. I've taken the unusual decision to actually become a member at the CYC [Cruising Yacht Club] because I've been a sailor for a long time.

JK: Why unusual?

BD: Because I don't join clubs; me and Groucho Marx, as I always say. So they're probably three areas that I go to a lot and they're all reachable on foot and by bike.

JK: And have you seen some changes in the open spaces, parks, or changes that you'd like to see or changes that perhaps you feel aren't going in the right direction?

BD: I think, well, Paddington's been under pressure for a long time and we've seen things arrive, like the park at the Women's Hospital, which was a great struggle to get through but it was part of a deal that was done with the developers, and there's going to be continuing pressure, in my view, on some spaces for development. The one that seems pretty obvious to me is Victoria Barracks is just waiting for someone to come along with some great master plan and to seize that.

36.07 It's less visible because it's behind a stone wall but it is a great open space and it should remain a public property. But we'll continue to see that as consolidation, urban consolidation works against open space. I mean, I don't think people realise that once it's gone, it's

gone. It's really easy to build on it but it's gone. White City, down the hill, is another example. That's a project that's gone on for decades and it was sold out by the Tennis Association who took the money and ran off to the Olympic site. We regret that as residents we didn't all just put our hands in our pocket and pull out five hundred dollars and buy the site and keep it because it is going to be turned into a huge accommodation centre. There will be some tennis courts and things there but it'll be lost. They're the pressures: it's population and building versus open space.

JK: And do you see a place for something called nature then in this built up city and the area that you live in?

BD: Well, of course. And we always say "Oh, Paddington Street is the best street in Australia" because it's got beautiful trees and so on but then you hear the residents complaining about the footpaths that they have to clamber over because of all the root structures and all these leaves that fall out of the plane trees that have to be swept up and so on. So, yes, look, there is a place for nature in the city and I like to see the city greened and there are consequences: you know, walls crack, paths have problems and so on but that's part of it; the more green canopy we've got, the easier it is to cool and heat your house and so on. It's a hard sell but it's there and there are plenty of people that recognise it.

38.10 **JK: And what about wildlife? Do you come across wildlife in your area?**

BD: Yes. Plenty of birdlife around, more Indian Mynas than there should be, plenty of bats - you can tell from the poo on the cars and so on. I saw a fox, not in Paddington but in Colorado, running down a main street. I haven't seen one of those but there's plenty of domestic animals around. And we get out of the city so we see wildlife elsewhere but I'm aware of it; bird life is the obvious one.

JK: Some of the people I've been talking to, I suppose, see in some of our parklands the possibility of greater biodiversity, plantings and things, to encourage wildlife. Do you think that sort of thing has a place in the city?

BD: Oh, yes. Look, I think if you can create urban forests and you can create those microclimates for animals it's a great thing. It's when you come out of a city that you realise how much wildlife there is. You just have to get an aeroplane and fly three minutes and you see this great expanse outside of our cities. So there's plenty of room for wildlife there but our cities are having a huge effect on wildlife. I see

in the harbour it's much cleaner than these days, O.K, and that's as a direct result of stopping pollution but when it rains, boy, the stuff that pours into the harbour still is quite murky.

40.00 So it's there and the city continues to pollute the oceans. There's certainly more fish in the harbour and I brush up against sharks when I go in the water and cleaning the boats. So they're there and they're coming back and it's a concern for some people anyway.

JK: It is a big question about how people cohabit, I guess, in that way in the city.

BD: Yes, yes. Well, because we're human beings with superior force and so we think we can squash anything to our own ends. When you get out there in the surf and you see a fin surface, you realise that there's an environment that you fit into a different pecking order.

JK: You were talking about food before. Have you been involved or seen community gardens growing around the place?

BD: Yes. Certainly the Paddington Community Garden I'm well aware of and know the people in there and would love to be a participant in it but there's a waiting list that's as long as your arm to get into that one. I've in fact given up some of our garden in our small space at Paddington, taken out the ornamentals and started a little veggie patch with tomatoes which all got drowned in the last season but there are people close by who are of a similar mind and so we're going to turn a concrete space into a veggie patch. So, yes, awareness is there.

JK: Tell me about the concrete patch.

BD: There's a dead end stretch that comes toward the back of house which tends to be used for tradesmen to park and we have a plan to break up part of that – still leave some parking for off street for the people that own it like ourselves – and create a small community patch there which we've explored - I missed out going to one recently on composting that I would like to have gone to – but it's a project that will happen over the next couple of years that will get it up and running.

42.22 **JK: So tell me about the process of that. Do you go to council and how do you know that all the neighbours are into it?**

BD: Well, we know that there's a half a dozen neighbours that are supportive of that idea, we know that we'll have to go to council. I expect that they'll say "Yes, it's a great idea" but we don't know the

answer to that and we'll be dealing with Woollahra Council because we're on the wrong side of Paddington.

JK: O.K, right. And when you said composting, were you talking about some workshops that you knew about?

BD: Yes, there was a workshop that was advertised actually by Woollahra Council and I've seen similar through City of Sydney. I mean, I have been composting for a long time but I'd just be interested to see what the experts say about it. There are certain things that I do and it seems to be successful and we've had a compost bin at the back of our house for twelve years, I suppose; I haven't put food scraps in a waste bin for that period of time.

JK: So it's a nice enclosed one? You haven't had possums and ibis - - -

BD: No. The only damage we've had was a builder drive over the top of it with his vehicle.

JK: And have you seen other parts of Paddington – doesn't matter which side of the boundary it is – with similar sorts of plans to yours about using empty spaces that could be used better?

BD: Yes. Certainly in South Sydney I'm aware of little pods of people who are planting the footpath spaces and so on. Sometimes it's just flowers, sometimes it's herbs and veggies and so on with some success and some not, but there's certainly awareness of that, yes.

44.16 I kind of think there'll be a land grab when it really does come and food becomes an issue. It's quite hard to get enough to eat out of a little patch but, I mean, the community gardens are terrific and they seem to be quite prolific but I have friends who have rooftop hydroponic gardens that work extremely well, you know, in Paddington in areas you would not conceive of.

JK: Like what sort of areas?

BD: Oh, just in Little Caledonia Street there's what looks like a concrete fortress and then up on the top floor there's a garden with ponds and things and they're growing all sorts of rocket and herbs and tomatoes and things. It's just completely unexpected but there.

JK: And given that you've lived in that area for over twenty five years or so, how has that changed? Have you been aware of that increasing, were there people doing that right from when you arrived?

BD: I don't think so. I don't think I've seen a focus on growing up until the last ten years that it's become more aware. Maybe I've become more aware of it but I think I would have noticed it. Certainly, when I first moved into Paddington from living up on the peninsula up at Bilgola it did seem pretty concrete and asphalt but it's certainly greened and people are doing more to grow things.

JK: And what do you think some of those influences are? I mean, where's it come from?

46.03 BD: Where's it come from? It's come from education to some extent. I think families have pressure on the family through children. Children are told at school about the environment and they get involved in planting things and then they come home and say "Hey, Mum and Dad, why don't we have a garden?" and so I suspect that there's pressure from that, there's a greater level of awareness. I mean, it's a very intelligent community as well. They read, they travel, they understand what's happening and so I think consciously a lot of people have joined in the greening of the suburb.

JK: We talked about favourite places but, yes, I was just wondering if there were places that you would stay clear of and why you might not.

BD: Places to avoid in Paddington or in the area here?

JK: Just, yes, in the city environment.

BD: No, there's nothing really that jumps out at me. The thing that maybe is a bee in my bonnet, the corporate vandalism that I see going on with the likes of Transgrid who dig up the roads and the footpaths and create huge destruction; I just am flabbergasted at their short term engineering based concept. I can see why you would put cables under the road but you would do it in a much more intelligent fashion. You wouldn't dig up the third of the road that they do and create the chaos that happens with the engineering that goes on. Why you wouldn't lay it right next to the gutter so that it's under the parked cars when eventually it does happen, why you wouldn't be talking to NBN and laying cabling structures at the same time, why you wouldn't be putting a planned conduit down that can run water and optical cables and power, it's beyond me as to how these mega infrastructure people get away with what they do.

48.28 There's just no cooperation, no planning and no intelligence in the way they go about it. I've seen Oxford Street destroyed over the last two years in terms of what they've done in putting these little energy

pedestals alongside every shopfront. Apart from ripping up probably half a million dollars' worth of paving that took twenty years to get in place, the chaos on the footpath, the destruction of two hundred year old sandstone kerbing, just to cycle along the road I now have to dodge the tracks that these guys have left all over the place because you get bounced up and down and into the traffic by these ruts that they've created and it's not just sporadic, it's all up the place. I talk about the killing of a high street in Paddington, I think the number on the weekend with twenty eight shops that are up for lease that are businesses that have gone out of business just through the impact of Transgrid – I mean, people laugh at me when I say they're corporate vandals but they are just completely self-motivated in what they're doing and they do not care about anything else. So that's where I don't want to go.

JK: Yes, fair enough. And I've heard some people then blame the city for that.

50.09 BD: No, no, no, no, it has to do with the bureaucratic moguls who just think "That's what we're going to do". And Sydney Water could be just as bad. There just isn't that kind of cooperation that "O.K, let's get all the services done in one big hit. Seal off Oxford Street for six months". They wouldn't do it but there could be more intelligence applied.

JK: One of the things about the world out there, the environment that city people all get impacted by sometimes is the weather.

BD: Yes.

JK: What happens on the weather front? Are you very aware of it, do you remember some big weather events as they've affected people living in the city?

BD: Yes. Look, I'm very weather prone – weather aware, shall I say. The first thing I do when I wake up is flip open my iPad, call up Seabreeze, see if the forecast is on track, see how much wind there is, what the temperature is, when the tide is. So, yes, I'm very aware of it. Sydney is in a big wet and that may dry out again. Weather impacts city people in terms of them being inconvenienced and having to take an umbrella. They seem to walk out pretty unprepared for what's going to happen. Just the other night I arrived at a meeting and I was carrying an umbrella and someone said "Is it going to rain?" I said "Yeah, about ten o'clock tonight it's going to come pouring down". So, I don't know. The information is there; people

don't really pay attention. I can tell you that on Sunday it's going to be a beautiful sunny day and there'll be a westerly wind blowing.

52.00 It will drop off in the afternoon which means I can take some people sailing in the morning, go into Rushcutters Bay, pull up a mooring and go and have lunch and then it will all be fine. Saturday afternoon, there's going to be rain. The information is there. People are busy, they hear that there's a chance of rain maybe in the news in the morning and they're not really paying attention to what's happening with trends.

JK: But you're really looking at it because of the way that you live your life out and about.

BD: Yes. I spend a lot of time outdoors and also I'm operating with people who are interested to use the weather, to use the wind when it's there, to accommodate the rain when it's going to come and be prepared for it.

JK: And any of those big event, big weather events impacted on you that you can remember in the previous thirty years?

BD: We suffered with a hailstorm in Paddington which was quite famous about ten or twelve years ago and that had a big impact on our house. We had windows and atriums smashed, we had water pour through it. We spent the next nine months living in one room while all the repairs were done, which were extensive and that was a big weather event and hailstorms are hard to predict. We lost two cars as well as a result of that, one of which was never replaced. But from a rain point of view, when it rains, if it continues to rain it will find its way into a house. There will always be a weakness somewhere and water's an amazing thing. Capillary action: it will travel along beams, it will find its way into cracks, the mould will rise; that's part of what happens.

54.11 **JK: And the hailstorms, how did you find people react to that and how did your community deal with that big event?**

BD: They were shocked but it actually created a lot of community spirit because people were in the same boat and a lot of people had been damaged and so they were very cooperative. They kind of stood out in the street and didn't hug one another but they were supportive of what had just happened. So, yes, those events, crises, fires, that, I think, brings communities together more than takes them apart,

JK: So do you have any other – what was it, soapbox, pet, I can't remember what you said – pet hates?

BD: Other pet hates?

JK: Yes, any other things to just finish up on in this discussion?

BD: No, I guess if I could have one wish it would be that people took individual responsibility a bit more. You know, “They should do this”, is what I hear – I've heard my father say it many times; I guess that’s where I’m attuned to it. It’s not a matter of “they should do it”, it’s you should get on with it. If you see something that’s wrong, address it, speak up, become active. I see too many people who live oblivious of what is happening. They go about their busy daily lives or their fashionista lives and drive their four wheel drives and do the things that are completely out of context with what’s happening. I guess it’s selfish.

56.01 A bit more awareness would be great and personal responsibility, as I said. It isn’t going to happen unless you demand it from the political people that can make it happen and will make it happen. So that’s it.

JK: That’s great. Thank you very much.

Interview ends