



ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

INTERVIEWEE: Richard Childs

INTERVIEWER: Virginia Macleod

PLACE: Pyrmont

DATE: 11 April 2012

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **VM:** I'm speaking today with Richard Childs who is retired and we're speaking at his flat in Pyrmont on Wednesday, the 11th of April 2012 and we're talking for the City of Sydney Oral History Project, 'Shelter'. My name is Virginia McLeod.

Richard, what year you were born?

RC: 1944.

VM: And where were you born?

RC: In Dulwich Hill, which is a western suburbs place.

VM: And did you grow up there, or was your family living there?

RC: No, no, I grew up in Arncliffe but it was my father's home when he was a child was Dulwich Hill and so I don't quite know why I got to be born there but my mother or somebody chose the hospital that was over there.

VM: Maybe your mother wanted to be near your father's family for support.

RC: I don't really think so.

VM: No, you never know. Anyway, that's where you were born.

RC: Yes.

VM: So you grew up in Arncliffe?

RC: Yes, yes.

VM: Tell me about your house there. What sort of a house was it?

RC: I imagine if it was still like it was when we lived there, I don't know if it would be heritage listed or not, but it certainly had an appearance to it that was characteristic, I think, of the 1920s or '30s or something and my memory of it is that it had some really beautiful features in it, some of the way the glass was in the doors, coloured glass in doors and things like that but that's only looking back on it now. Now, at the time, I don't know if it made much difference to it at all.

2.11 **VM: Was it a freestanding house?**

RC: Yes, yes, and from memory my mother telling me that they paid, I think it was £800 for it in 1946, I think. Actually, come to think of it now, I did spend the first two years of my life or three years of my life down in Port Kembla where my father was stationed because he was working for the railways and so then they moved to Arncliffe. So the first few years were down there.

VM: But you don't remember much about Port Kembla?

RC: I can remember the hallway in the house we lived in and I can remember something that my mother can remember, was once picking up an egg and asking her to catch it and I threw the egg.

VM: And she didn't catch it?

RC: Yes, she did, actually. But that's all I can remember because I can remember her howling with laughter.

VM: Good memory.

RC: Yes.

VM: So the house in Arncliffe, so it was a freestanding house and did you have a backyard?

RC: Yes, and a very large backyard. The backyard was probably two times bigger than the size of the land on which the house was sited.

VM: And were you an only child?

RC: No, no, I've got a sister that's two years younger than me.

VM: So the two of you grew up there?

RC: Yes.

VM: And where did you go to school?

RC: First?

VM: Yes.

RC: At a little school just nearby; it was called the Wilson Road Public School. It was a kindergarten basically but that was closed down and we all marched then down to another school that was nearby which was on the corner of Athelstane Avenue, which interestingly enough was the street in which Vicky lived.

4.08 And so I went there till first class and then my father had the bright idea that he wanted to keep up with some friends of ours who were quite well-off. They had four sons and they all went to Trinity Grammar and so he sent me to St Andrew's Cathedral School in the city and so I had to trot off there. And I became a chorister in the choir at St Andrew's and that necessitated staying back after school every afternoon for practice, then singing for evensong at six o'clock. So my day at school was quite a long one and I had to make my own way home on the public transport to Arncliffe and so sometimes I wouldn't be arriving home till half past six or seven. So for an eight year old boy - - -

VM: Started when you were eight, did you?

RC: Yes, I was leaving home at eight o'clock in the morning and not getting home till – so it was quite a longish day and then during the school holidays ever second day we had to go in for practice for three hours a day and that's something I didn't like at all, I hated having to surrender my holidays. But anyway after about a year and a half I don't know what had happened at school but I came home and I remember pleading with my father to take me out of the school and send me back to a public school. And my mother and he went into a holy huddle and then they revealed to me that they were going to accede to my request and so I was duly transferred back to Bexley Public School and I was awfully glad about that.

6.02 **VM: You got a lot more time for yourself.**

RC: I got a lot more time and I didn't like the private school very much, I didn't like anything about it very much. It was the first time I'd ever

seen boys caned and I saw a lot of that and they were pretty vicious in their discipline. I never saw that in public school until I got to high school and saw that again but that quite horrified me and I never thought very much of the school teacher there either.

VM: Did you enjoy the singing?

RC: Yes, I did, actually. That was almost like a respite, particularly evensong when we used to go and have to sit in the choir stalls and we had to dress up in the cassock and the surplice and so on and I developed a love of choral music, sacred choral music, as a result of that. And we had to sing for the Queen when she came out here in 1956, I think it was, so that was sort of a momentous thing to do.

VM: But you were glad to be back at Bexley after that?

RC: Yes, yes. It wasn't enough to sort of make me want to stay there, yes.

VM: And where did you go to high school?

RC: Kogarah High School; only one high school.

VM: And was that a co-ed high school?

RC: No.

VM: Boys only, yes.

RC: No, it was a boys only but the girls school was right next to it but the twain never met; it just was not done. Mind you, there were significant violations of that.

8.03 **VM: Officially it wasn't done.**

RC: Officially it was done, no, no.

VM: And what did you do after you left school?

RC: Got the Leaving Certificate. I went to work in a insurance company, which again I hated and then I applied to work in the public service and I got a job in the Child Welfare Department, what was known then as the Child Welfare Department, and that's where I remained for the next eleven years and went through some training and became one of their district officers. And then as a result of that, that gave me insight into law courts and all the rest of it because I used to have to go and prosecute parents for neglecting their children and whatnot. And then I got a promotion to another job, preparing a team of people, a team of people was in charge of, who looked after what

we called “contested adoptions”. Once again it was a legal thing and so then I started to study law part time.

VM: Were you doing that at night?

RC: Doing it at night and working during the day and that’s when, Vicky and I were married by then, and she was doing an arts degree, so we were both going to work, then going to uni, then going to work and going to uni and it was all a bit of a treadmill really. But that was the reason we moved. After we got married, we lived for two years in Strathfield and then, for both economic reasons and also practical reasons like being close to uni, we moved to Glebe.

10.05 And my mother nearly had apoplexy when we told her we were moving to Glebe because she regarded it as a slum in those days. Well, it was pretty well.

VM: What year was this then?

RC: It was in 1972.

VM: So it had a reputation?

RC: It did, it had a significant reputation.

VM: As being not a good place to live, yes.

RC: Well, there’s a lot of students lived there - in Avona Avenue, that was away, fairly far away from the student area – they lived close to the university. So we were just travelling from Glebe. The home unit we bought in Avona Avenue, just every morning off to work.

VM: You're working in the city?

RC: Yes.

VM: You mentioned that your father worked for the railways. What did he do?

RC: Yes. Well, all I can remember of him was he worked as the ticket seller down on the Arncliffe Railway. Whenever I was going to school, to high school, he was sometimes there and sometimes not because he worked shift work but he was often never at home, he used to disappear quite frequently. And I think he and my mother were deeply unhappy together and eventually he left and he left, I think from memory it was about – I was supposed to be sitting for my Leaving Certificate and he left about two weeks before the exam and he left us not in a very well-off state, very short of money.

12.02 Anyway, my mother then had to go and get a job, which in those days women were not treated very equally at all and she got a job as a typist somewhere and she worked very hard in order just to sort of keep things going and so on.

VM: And had your father bought the house that you lived in or was it rented?

RC: No, no, they had bought it, as I mentioned, £800, I think, but when he left – I don't remember too much about this but in those days getting a divorce was slightly more problematic than it is now and anyway it eventually all came through but he signed the house over, I think, to my mother so we were not left with any problems there.

VM: So you could carry on living there.

RC: Yes, yes.

VM: Now tell me, you decided to move to Glebe because it was geographically convenient to the city. And why did you choose to live in Avona Street and where did you live?

RC: Because it was economic, simply. I was working in the city and we were thinking about buying a place and we had limited funds, of course, and I was walking up – it was in Oxford Street and I walked past a real estate agent there and saw for sale a home unit for sale for – was it fourteen thousand or sixteen thousand, Vicky?

VC: Sixteen thousand.

RC: Sixteen thousand, four hundred dollars, I think it was. And so I went in and saw the real estate man and then came home and had a chat with Vicky and we'd arranged to go and see it and then of course the problem arose of having to get a mortgage.

14.15 And in those days the banks wouldn't lend to a couple with their combined income, on the basis of their combined income, because the woman might get pregnant, which was what we were told, you see. And so we had a few problems there but we went out and we got a second loan, basically a second mortgage over the thing, private on solicitor's money. So we were paying twelve per cent interest.

VM: Pretty high.

RC: So it was pretty high, pretty high, yes. And back then inflation was running very high too and so it was quite a struggle for a while.

VM: And tell me about the unit. Was it a new unit, a new block?

RC: No, it had been up for quite a while. I don't know quite how long it had been up for but the concept of home units was a relatively new one at the time and so they were springing up in various places, usually the cheapest areas. Like Campsie, for instance, had all these dreadful blockish red bricked places that some of them were very badly built and this one was definitely not ideally built either; the walls were only a brick thick and the noise coming through the walls and from above and so on was very annoying at times. Anyway, that's all we could afford, it was just the cheapest. That's one of the reasons we got into that area. Anyway, I became then the secretary of the body corporate of the business.

16.12 **VM: How many units were there?**

RC: Thirteen.

VM: So how many floors?

RC: How many floors? Yes, three levels.

VM: Three floors, yes. And was it red brick too?

RC: No, no, this was a white brick one. If it had been red brick, I think I would have drawn the line.

VM: You wouldn't have bought it, O.K. And so which floor were you on?

RC: We were on the ground floor. But the advantage of that was that there was thirteen units and I think there was only three or four garages, so our garage was right underneath and so that was a real bonus.

VM: You had a car then?

RC: We had a car, yes, we bought a car.

VM: And how many rooms did it have?

RC: Two bedrooms. And, I mean, in many ways we had a lot of fun there because we were young and Glebe was a pretty ramshackle, rough kind of place but I didn't mind it. I didn't mind it, even though my mother was horror stricken by the whole thing.

VM: You liked the atmosphere?

RC: Yes, yes. I've always liked being in cities and the inner city. I like the vibrancy like lots of people around and the contrasts that you can get and you're close to all the facilities and stuff that we always had. It was close to – well, the Opera House wasn't in existence then, not completed anyway – I used to go to lots of concerts in the Town Hall and other places, close to the Art Gallery and things like that.

VM: And who else were living in the building - was it other young people?

18.02 RC: No. There was a nurse who lived next door to us whose lifestyle was very rowdy, to say the least, and a couple of occasions we had to call the police to that. And then we had trouble with the old Swedish man, I think it was, upstairs who brought in a piano and he couldn't play very well and this irritated me no end because you could hear it all coming in and he wasn't amenable to reason. But that was the nature of the units, you could hear everything. But most of the people there were older people and I can remember most of them. There was a couple there that we became friends with.

VM: When you say "older", obviously they were older than you.

RC: Yes.

VM: But were they middle aged and working or retired, elderly?

RC: I think most of them were still working. The man with the piano was retired or he didn't work and then there was a Chinese lady who was in the unit who was a bit of a problem. I don't know what the name of the particular syndrome is but somebody who can't throw out newspapers and when you ever got a glimpse into her unit it was just full of newspapers and she had a little sort of avenue through this pile of newspapers. We never quite knew what to do about this.

VM: Just hope there was no match.

RC: Yes, just hope there was no fire, yes.

VM: And did it have any sort of open space or rooftop space or anything like that?

RC: No, nothing like that, no. It was very cluttered.

VM: So it was white brick and surrounded by concrete?

20.05 RC: No, surrounded by other units, all concrete.

VM: So that would have been built probably in the '60s?

RC: Yes, late '60s, I think, yes. Yes, I think so.

VM: And so how long were you there? How many years did you stay there?

RC: We were there from 1972 through to 1978.

VM: And then where did you move to then?

RC: We sold the unit and we bought a house, which was an old derelict Victorian establishment that had been converted in the 1930s into four units, four flats basically, and it was in a dreadful state but it was cheap. And we had some friends of ours, a couple that we'd become friends with who we'd been on a trip to England with, and so we decided we'd buy it together and so we bought that.

VM: So the four of you pitched in to buy it?

RC: Yes, yes, because it was big enough - it was huge, actually - but we could, or at least I could, I kept seeing all this Victorian grandeur in the place and we set to or we tried to set to with a great deal of enthusiasm to bring it back to its former glory. We had underestimated what was involved in doing this but nevertheless we sort of did it and we stayed there until 2001.

VM: So you were there for a long time, over twenty years or so?

RC: Yes, yes. It took us just about all of that time to even begin to get the thing to nearly a finished state where we could get it but even then it wasn't finished.

22.10 **VM: So tell me how you approached it. So it was divided into four units and there were two couples living there. So did you just rip out all the partitions and have it as open space or did you sort of say "Well, you can have these two units and we'll have these two units"?**

RC: Yes. We had to get bedrooms sorted out. I mean, that's pretty well a priority because we're all working and so we just got that worked out first of all and just moved from there.

VM: So did you have bits of it that you weren't occupying at all because you were kind of doing up those rooms and other bits you were living in or did you open it all up and then just move as need?

RC: That's a hard question.

VM: It sounds like you were doing renovations yourselves.

RC: Yes, we were, yes, mainly, except for the things we couldn't do, like the electricals and some plumbing and things like that, all of which as we now know is a problem because some of the tradespeople took one look at this old house and they just refused to work in it, the main reason being that all the timbers in it were hardwood and it would burn out their tools when they were working on it. And it happened. And we had quite a number of them just point blank say they didn't want the job and this created a bit of a problem for us.

VM: So they wouldn't be able to drill a hole through a skirting board or something?

RC: No, the skirting boards weren't a problem, they were pure cedar, but it was the beams under the floor and so to get all the cabling done for the electricals and so on – it's a bit hard to describe.

24.07 The house in its original condition, when it had been converted into flats they had put gas meters in each of the flats so there were gas pipes running all over the place and so we had to get rid of all of that. And when we'd moved in we thought we'd be able to put the gas on to be able to use that but when the gas people came they said no, they wouldn't do it because the pipes were so rusted that we'd have to get the whole thing done. So we just had to press on until we found people and the electricians gave us a terrific amount of problems; they didn't turn up and when they did they'd not finish things off properly and so on. And, yes, so we had to get the bathrooms first, that was the first thing, and we tried to make do in a room. And Vicky's parents lent us a camping stove, so we tried to cook in that which was really a bit of a nightmare; the local Chinese restaurant was used quite frequently. But anyway, then we set about getting the kitchen fixed up and the lounge room and everything.

VM: So each flat, was it like a bedsit - - -

RC: Yes.

VM: - - - or each flat had a kitchen and bathroom or shared bathroom?

RC: There was one bathroom, so the four flats shared the bathroom.

VM: So you just renovated the existing bathroom?

RC: Yes, yes. We had to completely pull that apart and we just rebuilt the whole thing, yes.

26.07 **VM: And was it the same with the kitchen, like they'd all shared a kitchen?**

RC: They all had their own sink and a cold water tap and the heating, I think, came just from kettles on the gas jet. It was all pretty primitive; yes, these gas meters, you'd put a shilling in. I don't know how long it'd been since they been used but I just can't imagine it; I don't know how people got by. I remember once there was an add-on had been put out the side and somebody had knocked out part of the wall and they'd built on this funny little outhouse, it was attached to the side of the house, and we were pulling out the cladding on the ceiling and we started to pull it down and all these bones felt out and we thought "Oh, what have we come across here?" We don't know what it was but I think it was all T-bone steaks and chops but why the bones were up there we have no idea, never found that out.

VM: Did you have any other interesting discoveries under floorboards?

RC: Not much. Only old newspapers which I think the earliest one we came across was about in the 1930s but they were in pretty bad shape. And we came across some old coins, old thrupenny pieces, and, I don't know, there were a few things.

27.56 One day we got a knock on the front door and I went to the front door and there was a very old man and his son had brought him along and he said "This is my father. He was really interested in this place because he used to live here and he was the police commissioner so many decades ago and he was just interested in what the house was like". And I was a bit stunned and I didn't quite know what to do. I presume they wanted to have a look inside but I didn't feel inclined to do that. Anyway, so we just talked for a little bit and then they went.

VM: So you found out no more about it?

RC: No, no.

VM: And you mentioned its Victorian glory or grandeur. What kind of a house was it? Was it freestanding?

RC: No, no, it was freestanding on one side and it was a terrace, a big terrace house with two floors and a long staircase. The staircase went up sort of through to the

VM: What, you came in the front door and there was this staircase?

RC: Yes, a staircase and then the staircase folded back onto itself and went up. But the original bannisters in it had all been ripped out and big planks had been put up to make the access to the top two flats fairly private and so on. But when we started to pull these planks down they were pure cedar and so we sort of tried to hang onto those and tried to work out what to do with them. We eventually did find quite some years later an older Scotsman who'd been a coach builder and he used to come along on Saturday quite happily and he used the cedar to build in some storage space under the stairs and so on. He did quite a good job with that.

30.11 **VM: That was nice. How did you find him, just through word of mouth?**

RC: I can't remember now. He still had his Scottish accent and I can still remember him when he was working at various things he'd be singing away and quite a happy sort of gent.

VM: And upstairs, did it have a verandah or balcony?

RC: It had a verandah out the front. All the wrought iron had been taken out and fibro had been put in its place, so we had to replace all of that and we had to replace all of the flooring on the balcony because it was actually rotted.

VM: Had it actually been closed in as a room, the balcony?

RC: I think they'd started to do that but for some reason had stopped halfway through. So I can't quite work out what happened there but I guess they ran into money or something.

VM: So did it have how many rooms upstairs?

RC: Five rooms and downstairs was this big double dining, lounge/dining room, sort of very formal sort of thing, and then there was three more rooms downstairs.

VM: So were they side by side, these rooms, or was it one of these long, thin terraces where you walk from front to back and the house is very long?

RC: You did but after the lounge/dining room, that large area, there was what was called a breezeway there and it was like a side entrance into the house and you sort of did a dogleg and it went 'round into the back three rooms.

32.19 **VM: And what was in those rooms? Was that your kitchen and there?**

RC: We made that into a dining room and a kitchen, and out the back a laundry and another bathroom.

VM: And did it have a dunny at the end of the yard when you got it?

RC: An outside one?

VM: Yes.

RC: Yes, it did, it had an outside one. We kept that but that was attached to another – I think the thing - the other rooms had been used there as a laundry for the units.

VM: So it had like another room next to it?

RC: M'mm.

VM: And how big was the yard?

RC: Oh, miniscule, there was not much there at all.

VM: So you didn't get into gardening in a big way?

RC: No, no. The lady we were living with there, the other couple, she did, she tried fruitlessly to grow things out there. We in fact eventually planted a tree out there.

VM: And that grew?

RC: And that grew, yes.

VM: What kind of a tree?

RC: It was just a eucalypt, yes, which created problems for us as well because the roots then went into the sewerage and we had to get council approval to take it down and when we tried to take it down – we got the council approval, so we got in the tree people – what are they called? – arborists - to take it down and so they came along with their chainsaws and all the rest of it and a couple of the younger tenants in the flats next door were outraged that we were cutting down a tree, so they called the police. And so we had the police turn up and by this stage a bunch of people had sort of congregated around to watch the proceedings and these young people were demanding to see the authority that we had and so did the police but fortunately we had the thing so the police just told them to go away and we could just finish it off.

34.19 **VM: So you were licensed to chop?**

RC: Yes, yes, we had to because of the sewerage problems.

VM: And did it have any front yard or was it straight on the street?

RC: No, it had a front yard, yes, yes, it had a front yard, only a small one but it was quite nice. By the time we'd sort of finished off things, it was looking quite attractive out the front.

VM: So with four of you living in the house - - -

RC: It was big enough.

VM: - - - yes, it sounds like plenty of rooms and how did you run doing the renovations and buying food? Was it like a community shared house or was it just like two couples living pretty separately?

RC: No, no, we pretty well lived, I mean from a food point of view and everything, fairly communally. I mean in reality the other couple, they were there between 1978 when we moved in – we moved in on the 28th of July 1978 – and by some time in 1981 the other couple's marriage had broken up and he'd moved off, which created a bit of a problem because we had to buy out his share and that set us back a bit economically again.

VM: Did you set it up like a company, with four shares?

RC: No, we were stupid; we didn't set it up properly. We should have done it as tenants in common but we didn't; we set it up as joint tenants.

36.08 Mind you, there are advantages and disadvantages. I mean, look, we were young and idealistic and at the time in the 1970s around Glebe and everything this sort of thing was happening all over the place, people were sort of getting all terribly communal and so on. And in England, when we had gone to England with them, we stayed there for nearly twelve months – more than twelve months – but for half of that we lived in a village down in Cornwall called Millbrook and we lived with a friend in an old sixteenth century workhouse. Anyway, there was a whole bunch of us all living there. It was all very hippy and whatnot and for that period of time we became vegetarian. And I must say I've never been healthier than when I lived there but it was partly due to the vegetarian regime, I think, but also the fact that I have never had so much clean air. We were right on the English Channel and we just walked an awful lot while we were there. Anyway, that's another issue completely.

VM: And were you a vegetarian when you lived in your house in Glebe, did you keep that up?

RC: No, not really, no. That was really the phenomenon of this rather strange hippy kind of community that we landed in. The guy who owned it with his partner, they had two children, and he was a true yogi practitioner. At night, he would sit up all night and he was under a blanket and you'd walk down at night to get a glass of water or something and there he would be, just sitting there, and he just meditated all night long.

38.13 And a remarkable person. He was a builder and he had the most exquisite sense of humour and this remarkable strength about him, a capacity to get on well with people and organise people and so on. So it was great fun but we got that taste for communal living, I guess, from that and when we got back here we tried to, I suppose – we didn't try to replicate it but just to see - - -

VM: But it seemed a good thing to do?

RC: Yes. We all got on quite well there and we were able to share things quite easily and stuff. But I suppose it was a bit easier there because none of us were going to work over there, we were living on just about nothing; it didn't cost us anything to live there.

VM: You grew your own vegetables there, did you?

RC: Yes, a lot of them were grown. If we weren't growing our own, we were paying minimal; it was kind of barter and all sorts of things.

VM: With other people in the village?

RC: All terribly idealistic stuff and it was great fun. Yes, these people were devotees of the Maharaji who was some kind of – I always regarded him as a fake but they all adored him. And we went off to a couple of their meetings and their meetings always reminded me, to my horror, they've always got the same feelings of church youth groups out here. But they were full of adoration with this guy and I just sort of went along with it; I just didn't say very much.

40.09 **VM: Yes, but inside you were cringeing, were you?**

RC: Inside I was, yes, but they didn't insist that I should stay around so often myself and the other guy in the four of us, whose name was my name as well, and we'd go off to the pub.

VM: So in Glebe, when you had the three of you living there, economically how did it workout, you just each had a third?

RC: Yes, we just shared out the costs.

VM: So when you were doing up the house it probably took a long time because you had to sort of get enough money to do the next thing you wanted to do?

RC: Yes, yes.

VM: And was it easy to agree what you would do? Like so doing the bathroom, was it a long process of negotiation, you know “We’ll have this sort of shower or that kind of shower head” and all that or was it all fairly easy to negotiate those?

RC: It was fairly straightforward and easy to negotiate, there was no real conflict. I mean, there were minor disagreements like about the colour of something or something minor like that but we could always work it out, there was nothing major about it.

VM: And did you share a vision for the house? I mean, you said you wanted to restore it to its former glory. Did the other two feel that same feeling for the house?

RC: No, I don’t think so. I think basically they just followed. It was kind of could see in it I had all sorts of fantastic ideas about how I was going to – for instance I wanted to have the front two rooms which I could see as being wonderful Victorian things, so I had the walls painted a deep red and painted the skirting boards black, a high gloss black and things like that; we put up lace curtains and all sorts of things.

42.19 These were primarily, I think they originated from me but everyone had their own sort of little ideas, inputs into it and it wasn’t just me dictating, I don’t think. I just always had these grand ideas for things.

VM: And what about furniture? Did you seek out Victorian furniture to complement the house and did you have much furniture? What had you brought from your flat?

RC: Whatever was in our unit was totally inappropriate for this place but we couldn’t actually afford to buy the sort of furniture that I would have liked but we got the nearest thing we could; not a lot of it was reproduction stuff.

VM: So what was genuine Victorian had been snapped up already, had it, by then, by antique dealers or could you still find things cheaply?

RC: In those days in Paddington there were still secondhand shops and Paddington was not like it is now and they were going through the same process basically except they were a bit more advanced than

..... and so we were able to buy older stuff but we couldn't afford the proper, real antiques and so on. So we bought an old lounge suite – it had a particular name to it and I can't remember what it was – and it was a bit of a mess and we just stripped it all back and had it recovered, upholstered, and all the rest of it. So, as you can see, everything was, a fair bit of effort went into it.

44.19 **VM: So it was a gradual labour of love.**

RC: Yes, yes. It ceased to be a labour of love over a period of time. It became more of a chore.

VM: So you lost that initial enthusiasm?

RC: Yes, yes.

VM: How long did you maintain the enthusiasm for?

RC: I suppose it ran out after about ten, fifteen years, I suppose. By that stage we had broken the back of most of it and the rest of the chorey bit was just finishing it off and doing the bits and pieces that needed to be done and those sort of things that we kept putting off and putting until eventually we thought "Oh, we'd better get it done".

VM: Because you'd lost interest or just they were sort of minor things and you didn't feel like spending money on anything?

RC: A bit of both, yes.

VM: And did the house have any like intrinsic features like fireplaces and mantles?

RC: Yes, it had five marble fireplaces in it, which had we wanted to we could have had ripped out and sold for a fortune but these marble fireplaces, four of them had been painted over with this dreadful lemon paint and once again that was a bit of a nightmare trying to get it back, the marble back to its original glory. And so we eventually devised ways – we took advice and all the rest of it and devised ways of getting the old paint off. Then, of course, we had the problem because the process of getting the paint off meant that the marble was a bit tarnished so we had to then try and revive the marble.

46.11 And I can't remember exactly how we did it now. I think there were certain kinds of waxy substances that you could buy and that was hard work. We had to rub it in and then polish it and so on; it took a long time.

VM: And the floors you said you replaced or were they the floorboards?

RC: The floorboards were O.K, they were hardwood again.

VM: So did you have it polished?

RC: We got carpets on that and the floorboards out in the back section of the house we covered those up and had it tiled out the back. So the back rooms downstairs were all tiled but all the rooms upstairs with the exception of the bathroom was carpeted.

VM: And had the windows been left intact or had they been replaced?

RC: Most of them had been left intact but they were the old – what do you call them, the '40s - - -

VM: Sash, you mean? The ones that go up and down are called sash.

RC: Yes, yes, sash.

VM: I call it sash. It would be an English word.

RC: Is it? Yes, we'd got those. But all of those were broken, so we had to fix all of those up. And some of the windows we actually had to replace because the wood was so rotten in them so we had to have those pulled out and replaced. And for that we came across an interesting pair of carpenters. They were two lesbians and they did a terrific job - we got on quite well with them - they came 'round and they pulled this thing out and they recommended the woods and they really did a good job.

47.59 And another carpenter we came across was an Englishman who was a boat builder and he replaced some French doors for us and he worked so hard to do this. He had to pull out a big chunk of sandstone and all the rest of it and he did a wonderful job on it and those were the two best tradespeople we had; most of them were pretty terrible.

VM: Do you think the carpenters appreciated what they're working with?

RC: Those two did. Yes, the two women did and the Englishman did.

VM: And how did you meet them - was it again word of mouth?

RC: I think we just found them in the newspaper under

VM: And did it have ornate ceilings?

RC: Not very, not very ornate. We had to replace a lot of the cornices. They were not profoundly ornate ones in the Victorian tradition but they were nice. They were – how can I explain it? – they were those heavily, deeply moulded cornices.

VM: For the cornices, yes.

RC: So we had to go out and we had to buy those - - -

VM: And profile it all.

RC: - - - and chop out the other ones and then put them up.

VM: And did you go into the history of the house? Did that interest you or not really?

RC: We picked up a bit of it along the way because it was an old systems title as we discovered when we tried to buy it, which of course adds to the cost of the conveyancing, because in the old system you'd get to see the history of the deeds.

VM: The previous owners all the way back to the first land grant.

RC: The title, the previous owners, yes. It didn't really tell us anything particularly fascinating. There was nothing, no scandals attached to it or no murders in the house or anything like that.

50.13 **VM: Did it give you a date for when it had been built?**

RC: Yes, it was 1900, I think. So when I say "Victorian", it's right at the end of it.

VM: Right at the end of the era.

RC: Yes, it's probably better to say Edwardian, I suppose, isn't it?

VM: Anyway, 1900.

RC: Yes.

VM: And what about the rest of the street? Were the rest of the houses undergoing this sort of metamorphosis?

RC: Yes, yes. Opposite was an old historic homestead I think you'd probably call it. It was a single storey cottage thing that the Christ Church St Laurence, the church in the city, had owned and they'd given it to the Aborigines to set up a college there and it was an Aboriginal college when we were living there.

VM: And what was it called?

RC: Tranby.

VM: So it was called that then, was it?

RC: It was called that then and that was its original name, I think. And Aborigines used to come from the centre of Australia or the Northern Territory or wherever and they'd come there and they would do things like some sort of school certificates and things like that. They were often not there for very long and very often they looked very uncomfortable. I had an interesting experience one day. We got to know some of the people that ran the place or the Aborigines but some of the students would come and some of them would be quite chatty, others would keep their eyes down and be quite frightened. But one day I was out the front of the house and this young Aboriginal was walking up the street and he saw me and he came over and he said "Hey, man. I got to do this test and I ain't got a pen. Can you give us a pen?"

52.14 So I said "Yeah, sure", so I went inside and I got him a pen and I came out, handed him the pen and then he just bent down and he put his tongue out and he went for my armpits and "What on earth was he doing?" And then I read somewhere later that this was a sign of friendship or something amongst certain kinds of Aborigines. I've never heard of it ever since.

VM: When you say he went for your armpits, what did he do?

RC: He was going to – like licking them, licking under my armpits.

VM: Really?

RC: Yes. It was a pretty strange thing but I did read about it subsequently and I don't know where, I can't remember now.

VM: But it clicked when you read about it?

RC: Yes, yes.

VM: Yes, you recognised what it was, yes. So did you have much interaction with the college? You said you got to know some of the staff there.

RC: Not a terrific amount, we just got to know them.

VM: What, on a sort of "hello" basis?

RC: Just a “hello” because we’d see them going up and down the street and so on. But there were some other, grander houses, very grand houses at the end; there was a row of three terraces.

VM: What number was your house?

RC: Number 12, yes. And the ones on the other side, the three on the corner of Wigram Road going up our street, Mansfield Street, those had been done up by some people – we knew one particular couple – and they had done a beautiful job on it and we got quite a bit of inspiration and probably a bit of knowledge from them – we’d sort of talked to them – and one of those was the guy who owned The Basement, Bruce Viles, and he owned The Basement.

54.09 **VM: That’s The Basement in the city, the jazz venue?**

RC: The jazz place, yes, so we knew him and his wife. But they were bigger houses and more substantial and they’d been left more intact than ours had but they had bought theirs a few years before ours and so I guess they got them at a better price still.

VM: Before the move to do houses up had been quite so rampant?

RC: Yes.

VM: And how did you find it, living in Glebe then? Did you feel at home?

RC: Oh, yes, terrific, I loved it, yes.

VM: What did you like about it particularly?

RC: The fact that people were not “nice”. It was a rough and tumble area, it was a mixture of people. We had a neighbour who lived a couple of doors up who was some sort of academic with Sydney University and I don’t know what – architecture or something – and he had faithfully renovated his house. It was a huge enterprise, so much so that he had actually taken off the wallpaper that existed and worked out what its date was and all the rest of it and had it reproduced and everything; I mean, he went to these incredible lengths. Bill Evans, I think it was, and he wrote a book on it, we got to know him. Why did I mention him?

VM: We were talking about people you knew and what you liked about living in the area.

55.59 RC: Yes. Well, he was sort of a learned kind of guy and in the flats next door to us was a photographer. So there was this incredible mixture

of people there and on the other hand there was always 'round at the Toxteth Pub there were fights there all the time, there were drunken brawls and things like that.

VM: Was that your local, did you go there?

RC: That was the local, yes.

VM: So you went there?

RC: Occasionally, not too often. It was not the most comfortable place to be but the locals there you got to be familiar with on a nodding "hello" basis, some of the old-timers that sort of lived in Glebe from time immemorial.

VM: Were there still a lot of people sitting out on their front porches of an evening when you walked down the road?

RC: Oh, yes, yes. There was Dolly, just up the road. She would call out "G'day, how are ya?" and she used to sit on her little chair out there and "Nice day, innit?". She was okay; she was a funny old thing. There were quite a few people like that.

VM: And at weekends did you spend most of your time at Glebe?

RC: Yes, well just working on the house basically, fixing it up.

VM: Yes, I wondered, yes, a lot of time working on the house. So you lived in Mansfield Street for a bit over twenty years.

RC: Yes.

VM: And then you decided to move to Pyrmont. What triggered the move?

58.01 RC: Well, the other lady that was living there has a very elderly mother and she came from a Polish family and she has an older sister who lives in England and her elderly mother needed care, really, and she lived in Newcastle.

VM: Newcastle Australia?

RC: Australia, yes, yes. And I think she just wanted to be by herself. And, yes, it was all perfectly amicable. We just had a talk one time and we're trying to sort the thing out and she was saying what she'd like to do and all the rest of it and so I suggested to her there was a particular place that we'd been through on one of our trips up north, a place called Laurieton, a little fishing village, and she'd said how much she liked it and we'd been back there and had a look at it and

she still liked it and she talked to her mother about it. And her mother was a difficult old lady and her English was dreadful and anyway I went with her up there to Laurieton one weekend to talk to some real estate agents. And she had a look at some houses and all the rest of it and went to see a few and she found one that she liked and it was the right price and all the rest of it and so she came home and told her mother and took her mother up there to see it and they just decided to buy it. So she moved out and so we were left with this huge house and by this stage Vicky had had a lot of physical problems.

60.04 She had RSI riddled throughout her body and going up and down the stairs was a problem for her and the housework was - - -

VM: A big house, yes.

RC: - - - vacuuming that place. I had this vacuum cleaner that I used to strap on my back and had this huge, long cord and I'd try and get through this; just it was really very arduous keeping the place clean and tidy and stuff. And we were both getting on a bit and I've always had this passion to live in the inner city but, of course, the prices were a bit beyond us. And this place, the whole of Pymont, was starting to change and it's not like it is now. I mean, the changes here have been quite extraordinary over the last ten years but these units were relatively new and so we just came and we had a look at a few and then we decided we liked this one, so anyway we put the other place on the market.

VM: Were they finished when you looked at them already?

RC: Yes, yes. It was already owned by a guy but he was a speculator and he had tenants in here briefly. And anyway we sold our house over there for quite a good price because it was going ahead, the property values were going up, and that all worked out pretty well so we moved in over here.

VM: And here how many bedrooms have you got?

RC: Two.

62.01 **VM: And what floor are you on?**

RC: This is the second floor.

VM: So you've got a lounge, dining and - - -

RC: Kitchen and bathroom, yes.

VM: So what have been the big advantages of coming here?

RC: Well, it's nowhere near as arduous to keep clean just for a start.

VM: Quick vacuum around.

RC: Life's a lot simpler, yes, life's a lot simpler and obviously we like Asian food a lot, particularly Thai food, and we have friends who own a Thai restaurant 'round the corner. And I think we've got about eight Thai restaurants around here, I don't know, a huge number of them anyway. But we eat out quite frequently and I love walking and because of my feeling of comfort amongst Asian people I usually walk into Dixon Street just about every day and just wander about there. I feel much more comfortable amongst Asian people than anybody else, I think. I don't know why that is.

VM: Has that always been so or because you spent time in Thailand? Is it since then?

RC: I think it's since I spent time in Thailand, yes.

VM: How long were you in Thailand?

RC: We've been there quite a few times but the longest period of time we spent was actually in Cambodia but that was because Vicky was helping out in a school there and she enjoyed that, she liked being amongst children and stuff. But our Thai friends, the first time we went there this Thai friend of ours had invited us over and so she said "Would you come, come with me?" and we just leapt at it because she's a village girl, comes from Isan. I don't know if you know where that is.

64.16 **VM: No, where's that?**

RC: That's the eastern part of Thailand. It's very distinctive, it's got a distinctive culture; there's a big Laos influence there and she speaks Laos and Thai as well. But she invited us to go up and stay with her family up in a place called Nakhonphanom but the village is about half an hour out of the main city and that was just a marvellous experience.

VM: How long did you stay there?

RC: We stayed there for about two weeks. We've been back since by ourselves. Vicky and I went back and stayed with her aunt and uncle and we met the whole family – it's a huge family. And there's just too much I can say about all that but you want to get back to this theme.

VM: So for you that's an important part of being here - - -

RC: Yes.

VM: - - - is that you feel comfortable. I mean, there's lots of Thai. Did you know the Thai restaurant people before you moved here or you've come to know them?

RC: I knew this lady before, yes, but she doesn't run a restaurant or anything. Anyway, we started going to a couple of the Thai restaurants around here but this couple, two women, run the local one here and they've been there for seven years, been working there, and this last Easter for the first time in seven years they had two days off.

66.07 **VM: Hard work.**

RC: They do lunch and dinner every day of the week. They don't do lunch on weekends. But, yes, her parents have come out here now and we met them.

VM: Do they live locally?

RC: Yes. When they were buying a unit they asked us to come along to the auction and to sort of help out for us. And so we've become quite close friends with them. And her parents came out. We hired a minibus and drove them and these two and a whole bunch of the staff up to the Hunter Valley.

VM: Showed them 'round, yes.

RC: A hoot, it was a real hoot.

VM: And what about actually in the apartment block, because it's quite a big one, isn't it?

RC: A hundred and eight.

VM: Do you know many people in the block?

RC: No, no, not really.

VM: Is there any kind of common area that people get together in?

RC: No, not really. I mean, there is a common area. There's the courtyard down there and it's got sort of a barbeque thing there but nobody uses it and for rooftop there's also got a common area barbeque up there and it's very nice up there, we've got a beautiful view over the city and everything. Some people use it.

VM: Do you use it, the rooftop?

RC: No, not really. I mean, I've been up there occasionally. No, it's a funny business, living in an apartment. You think all these people around here; you scarcely get to know anybody.

68.03 It's a fairly transient population, really, and the bulk of the units here are owned by investors and they put tenants in and tenants come and go all the time and we probably got to know the managing agent better than anybody else in the place. But it doesn't bother me. I like the anonymity of the city and I don't have any trouble finding people I'd like to be friends with; I don't live here in order to get close enough to make friends, if you know what I mean.

VM: Yes. That wasn't a reason for moving here.

RC: No.

VM: And what about maybe adverse or are there adverse things about living in an apartment right in the city?

RC: Yes, there are.

VM: What do you find?

RC: Well, as I just said, tenants behave usually – it's a generalisation, I know, but they usually do behave differently to owner/occupiers and we do have a lot of issues with behaviour of them.

VM: Is it noise?

RC: It's noise. Noise is probably one of the biggest factors that we have to face here. It's noise, pets and smoking. We've just had an annual general meeting here and one of the members of the body corporate put in the agenda he wanted to pass a bylaw preventing people from smoking inside their units if it intruded into other people's units. Now, normally when we have an AGM every year - which you've got to have – they can never get a quorum, nobody turns up, but because most of the people are investors, they don't live here themselves, and they saw this on the agenda they could see that this, if it was passed, was going to narrow down the pool of people that could be their tenants.

70.23 So it was one hell of a meeting. And anyway it got passed. So we have a slightly watered-down version of it but nevertheless it's there. If anybody smoking gets into your unit then you can - - -

VM: So this was possibly people smoking on balconies and then it wafts up?

RC: Yes, balconies, yes. There's been quite a few law cases. This particular man who's just over there in and he had a son who was an asthmatic and the guy under him was smoking all the time and it was coming in there and it was creating problems, he actually took it to court and won the court case but as he was saying then the guy moved out. So a new tenant comes in, you've got to fight the case all over again. So we've passed a bylaw now and if it happens we've got the power to do something about it.

VM: Are you on the body corporate committee or not?

RC: I'm not on the executive committee but I'm on the body corporate, yes.

VM: I just remembered you said you were in your first - - -

RC: Yes, in the first one but that was enough.

VM: - - - block of units so I thought maybe you'd picked up – that was enough, was it?

RC: That was enough.

VM: Why, was it hard work?

RC: Yes, it is. You're at everybody's beck and call and every single thing you try and do – I mean, there were only thirteen units. There was always thirteen different points of view and we think the question time in parliament house is - - -

72.04 **VM: That it was much worse**

RC: No, I'm just saying we had it easier, I think, compared to them. But, yes, I think that's probably the biggest problem is the political problem, you know, how do you get on with people. The difference between somebody who is investing in a place and putting tenants in and somebody who's an owner/occupier, the different expectations are there. I mean, to us it's our life. To them it's just money, profit.

VM: And what about when you were living in Mansfield Street? Did you have an issue with noise and those things too?

RC: Yes, all the time, yes. I would say that probably the biggest thing that is an issue is noise. We've got quite a few pubs up on the corner here. We've had lots of trouble with noise just coming from the pub

alone, just music and so on but the city council has just, I think, strengthened the powers that the rangers have. And associated with noise is the noise of pets.

VM: What, barking dogs?

RC: Barking dogs, yes. And since our Lord Mayor is a dog lover and she's kind of been – I'm not complaining about this but she's been sort of saying that it's good for people's health, particularly old people, which I'm sure it is, but it is creating one hell of a problem for people in apartment blocks like this. We've got a problem here; we have had a problem here.

74.00 We've had to pass bylaws again, stopping people from having pets in their units or limiting the people having pets here. But you can hear one.

VM: I can hear a dog barking now.

RC: Once they start it sets off all the rest. And we've got a supermarket opened up over there just recently and now people are coming there and, of course, there's a growing number of people owning cute little dogs, poodles, and things like that and they tie them up out the front and there might be three or four of them all tied together and of course they get lonely and people are inside the supermarket, so the barking starts and that sets off the neighbours', so yeah.

VM: So in Glebe was the noise from the nearby pub – you mentioned the pub or was that far enough away?

RC: That was far enough away, yes.

VM: And so the noise was just people's music?

RC: Yes, it was the next door neighbours. There were flats next door and they were right up very close to our windows and stuff. We used to get on all right with the neighbours but every now and then there were some that – as always happens there are some people you can't for some reason – I always used to find it funny if you'd go and say something, you'd say "Excuse me, I don't like to interrupt or anything but the noise is coming through to our place" most people have been quite good and they've said "Oh, I'm sorry, I'll switch it down" and there's no problem but then you get these funny things like "Oh, nobody else has complained". "Well, I'm here, I'm the first person".

VM: That's true.

76.00 RC: But anyway, that's just part and parcel of living here, I suppose. And then associated with noise, sometimes late at night you get – we've got a dead-end street here and kids come home at eleven o'clock and they'll park their car and they're drunk or something and they just turn their music up in the car and wind the windows down.

VM: And have a party on the street, yes. So, having lived both in a house and an apartment, do you feel equally at home? At the times that you were there did you feel equally at home in either place or would you look back now and say "Oh, if I think of my home I think of Mansfield Street or my childhood home"?

RC: No, I think of here.

VM: You think of here?

RC: Yes, yes. What you're trying to mean is do I sort of want to - - -

VM: Well, sometimes people, for them if they think of a home they think perhaps of the place they grew up as a child or they think of the home – for you, it might have been the first home you had as a married person or it might be the house that you spent so much time and energy on renovating or it might be here and now.

RC: I think it's here and now.

VM: It's here and now?

RC: Yes. Yes, I don't sort of hanker after something that's happened in the past.

VM: And what is it, apart from you chose the flat, are there things in your house that make you feel at home, you know, belongings that you particularly like to have?

RC: Oh, yes. My belongings are my books. I have books, like books, and my music collection. So, Vicky and I listen to a lot of music and we're a bit odd like that; we don't watch television very much and we're more inclined to sit down here with the lights off and look out at the sky, which can be very nice, and listen to an opera or something and have red wine.

78.23 **VM: And why not? Sounds good, yes.**

RC: Yes, I think it's that. The thing I like about being here is that it's light, easy to keep, it's close to everything that we enjoy and we're surrounded – it's rather a beautiful area - there's lots of parks and so

on, not that I'm terrifically – I don't rush off to parks and spend my time there usually nowadays because it's usually full of dogs. And I'm getting a bit sick of dogs sort of crapping all over the place and barking.

VM: But you appreciate that you get a feeling of space and even though the city's built up if you have parks what you're saying is it gives a feeling of openness too.

RC: Yes, yes. Even in places like Phnom Penh and Bangkok I have no trouble where they've got some big pollution problems and stuff there and there's something. I used to just get out and I'd just walk and I just loved being amongst all that crazy – even despite all the pollution, it was just the people.

80.03 And my problem is that I'm an inveterate looker of things, which gets me into trouble occasionally. I'm just constantly looking and I enjoy people's faces and I'm always thinking of drawing them. And, of course, in Bangkok one of the problems, as our two Thai lady friends say, "If you look at somebody in Bangkok they think you want something", so you've got to be sort of a bit

VM: Ready to give a riposte and say "No, no". But also I can see you're an artist and you do a lot of painting, so is it that you like walking around the city inspires you in that way?

RC: Yes, yes. It's the people, I think, the people in the context of what they're doing. I just find it's so funny and they do funny things and I mean I'm funny too, I guess, to other people, I must look really weird. And I love going into Chinatown where the oriental people are all busy about their own little things and they seem to be totally unselfconscious about what they're doing and they're always working at something; they're very busy people.

VM: It's very alive.

RC: Very alive, yes. I'm visually familiar with a whole bunch of people in there. I know the delivery men and they run around, carrying things and whatnot - you just know them by sight – and some of the ladies who are cooks, having their lunch out of a bowl of noodles. Yes, it just fascinates me, the whole thing; it's like a beautiful, free performance.

82.16 **VM: Richard, where do you do your painting? And you've got a lot of painting here and do you do it in the apartment or is it too small?**

RC: It's too small and the smells are too toxic and Vicky is very sensitive to things like that. But I lost my studio a year and a half ago when my former landlady moved to Melbourne, took the business there.

VM: What did she have?

RC: She had a three-storey house and a rooftop and she used to let me have the bottom section of the house, which I think she could have used as a garage if she wanted to, and so I just worked there.

VM: And whereabouts was this, in Pyrmont?

RC: In Glebe, just about ten minutes' walk from here, just across the park. It was a nice walk and it was very convenient and she was very, very good. We got on well and she used to like it. Because of the nature of her business she used to like having a lot of my paintings all hanging around on the walls downstairs. So when she used to have customers or people she was dealing with coming through there to her was a good entrance.

VM: It looked like a smart reception and foyer.

RC: Yes, that's right, yes.

VM: So is there anywhere else now around here where you can paint?

RC: No, no. I've been looking but just about ten years ago there used to be still quite a few artists working around here but since the place has become gentrified they've sort of gone.

84.13 **VM: And there are no little warehouses going cheap.**

RC: No little warehouses. No, nothing's cheap, no.

VM: No garages probably.

RC: No. And I used to work in another studio. It was a kind of a commune studio where we used to do life drawing and things, it was a cooperative over in Alexandria, but the same thing happened there. This was run by an elderly lady who was the daughter of an ex-Governor General, I think, but she never used to like that to be known. I think she was given an Order of Australia while we were there and she was just embarrassed by it.

VM: Kept quiet, yes.

RC: But she was a lovely person. But she owned this thing we used to use as a studio and that was terrific. We used to do that five days a

week it was operating and whenever you wanted to you'd just go along and do in some money for the cost of the model and so on and you could just practice your drawing there. But the inevitable happened as happens everywhere: it got bought out by a developer; now stands on it a block of flats, a block of units.

VM: Gone, yes.

RC: Gone, yes.

VM: So you haven't managed to seek out any other venue?

RC: No, I haven't managed to seek out something. And besides that, about the third, fourth last painting I did, I was doing an experimental thing, I had the canvas on the floor, Jackson Pollock style and I was doing kind of an, you know, it was abstract expressionist and ... gestural painting thing, just as a matter of interest more than anything else. But as frequently happens when you do these things just as a matter of interest, I got completely absorbed in the way this was turning out and what was happening and I realised that I'd been bending over this thing and walking around it with brushes and stuff and making a hell of a mess and I'd been doing it for about four and a half hours and when I stood up I just realised that I'd done some damage in my back.

86.40 But then being a person who forgets things like that very quickly, I then went and started on another one a couple of days later, only to repeat the entire thing and so since then I've had this problem with my back and that's a limiting factor in painting because you're lifting and standing a lot. So that's a little problem but at sixty seven I suppose - - -

VM: Yes, have to be careful of your back, have to work on an easel again.

RC: Yes. I'm doing all these exercises for it.

VM: And I meant to ask when you retired, had you moved here already when you retired?

RC: Yes, a bit earlier.

VM: But were you working in the city still when you were working? Well, you said you'd moved to Glebe and it was near to your work and I just wondered if for the rest of your working life you - -

RC: That was way back in 1970.

VM: Yes, but did you continue to work in the - - -

RC: No, no. When we went to England we both resigned from our jobs.

VM: And were you working in the city when you came back?

RC: No, I wasn't. Vicky did. She'd been working around computers ever since they first started in the early '70s.

88.12 **VM: Pioneer, yes.**

RC: Yes, so she's grown up with them and a computer is just an extension of her.

VM: And a paintbrush is an extension of you.

RC: Yes, that's right, that's right.

VM: Anyway, it sounds as though it's worked out well for you living here on the whole.

RC: Oh, yes, yes.

VM: Yes, and you feel at home.

RC: Yes. I wouldn't easily move anywhere else. My mother is a country dweller who this is always a source of jibes between the two of us. She doesn't know how I could stand living in a place like this and I say "I don't know how you stand living in a place like that", a sleepy hollow down Mittagong.

VM: So you get on well?

RC: All very pretty and nice to look at and drive through but to live in there.

VM: Well, that's good. It's good for you here and you like the city. Well, thanks very much. You just thought of a PS that you'd forgotten to mention.

RC: Yes. I'd just forgotten about the rather nice swimming pool we have downstairs which once again it's scarcely used by anybody but when we first moved here I used to swim every day down there, which got me terribly fit but as invariably happens I started to miss out on a few days and other things started to sort of cram in and so don't use it as much as I should any more.

90.00 **VM: And do you usually have it to yourself when you're there?**

RC: Generally speaking, yes, usually it's to ourselves - it's funny. There's a gymnasium down there. I think there's quite a few of the younger people who are usually tenants and stuff will use that but once again they like to have very loud music going while they're doing that sort of thing.

VM: And have you ever had a barbeque on the roof?

RC: Never.

VM: No.

RC: No, no.

Interview ends