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Full transcript of
an interview with: **John Spoehr**

Conducted on: 3 July 2019

Interviewer: **Allison Murchie**

Transcribed by: Deborah Gard

For:

The Don Dunstan Foundation

20th Anniversary Oral History Project

1999–2019 celebrating 20 years of action for a fairer world

DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION 20th Anniversary ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION
inspiring action for a fairer world

NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

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Abbreviations: The interviewee's alterations may be identified by their initials in insertions in the transcript.

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A series of dots, … … … … indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

A dash, – indicates a pause or a digression as occurs in informal conversation.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that has not been possible to verify to date.

Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print.**

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This is Allison Murchie interviewing John Spoehr on 3rd July 2019 at Flinders in the City. This is part of the oral history project for the Don Dunstan Foundation's 20th anniversary, which naturally coincides with the 20th anniversary of Don's death. Now I know you were very close to Don, and we'll talk about that shortly, but can you just give me a few details about yourself? First, what is your full name?

It's John Douglas Spoehr and I was born on 26th July 1961. I grew up in the Adelaide Hills and went to school at the Oakbank Area School.

Is that still there?

It is still there, so I'm a Hills boy. My father's and mother's parents grew up in the Adelaide Hills. I was schooled right through to Year 12 at Oakbank Area School and enjoyed that wonderful country life that I had up there. Not long after I matriculated I ended up caught up in the university sector - - -

Very quickly.

Yes, pretty quickly, and actually at Flinders where I am now is where I first went. I had a pretty fractured university history. I was the first in my family who went on to get a university education. Dad was a truck driver and my mum worked in providing paralegal advice and things like that. Eventually, after navigating my way through that foreign environment that was universities at that time for me, which was a bit of a shock - - -

Which is very foreign.

It's a bit of a shock for Hills kids because not many Hills kids went on to - - -

There weren't that many kids of that generation who went to uni.

No, but eventually I found myself getting very involved in student politics and that anchored me in the university world in a way in which nothing else did.

I think I first met you at Labour Studies down at Adelaide Uni.

That's right, and I came into that via my involvement in student politics as an activist and then as a president of the Student Union and then as an education officer in the National Union of Students. Then that led to me being head-hunted by the United Trades and Labour Council. I was quite young and I became a community liaison officer at the UTLC – a position that was created during the Labor Government term at that time when the Trades and Labour Council had a whole range of non-industrial programs going on and the trade union was also - - -

We had an Arts officer; we had a whole range of things. It was a wonderful time, wasn't it?

We had an Arts officer – they were the halcyon days of what was then the United Trades and Labour Council. I worked with a fantastic group of people and learned an enormous amount from them. Then I was head-hunted by Labour Studies to come in and work on the development of the Bachelor of Labour Studies program. The rest is sort of history. I spent quite a lot of time - - -

Well, your resumé is pretty impressive.

Thanks – a lot has happened since then, it's true. I didn't really think that I would find myself working in academia.

What did you expect? Was it something more in the industrial field after your UTLC and Labour Studies stint?

I was a political activist and I really enjoyed that. I enjoyed the campaigning and I could have just as easily found myself gravitating towards some sort of ongoing role in unions and the Labor Movement and would have been happy to have done so.

Particularly at that time because, as you say, it was a great time to be an activist in a trade union.

It was a great time to be an activist in the trade unionists. It was a great training ground for me: student politics was a great training ground; working in the Labor Movement was a great training ground. Through all that experience I, like most of my colleagues, came in contact with Don Dunstan.

How did you first meet?

I had met him sort of casually off and on over the years but Don was a writer for the *Adelaide Review,* and there's a nice sort of symbiotic story to be told about this. Don was aware of stuff that I had written and where I worked and he got in contact with me to just ask me for a bit of advice and to talk through a few questions that he was working through for an article for the *Adelaide Review.*

How did that feel?

It was good.

That was pretty good recognition: Don was on the phone wanting some advice!

Yes, it was great; I was thrilled really. That sort of began a long - - -

When was that?

We’re talking about the ’80s and the ’90s.

It’s a long time ago.

Yes, and for a lot of the time that he was writing for the *Adelaide Review* I was one of the people who helped him out and worked with him on some of his articles. He wrote the articles but he would do his research and he would try and draw on a network of people to help him form some of his articles with evidence and so on. At that time we were going through a big privatisation campaign by the incumbent Liberal governments and Don was one of the more incisive critics of privatisation and labour market deregulation. He wrote this terrific monthly political column but that was always accompanied by his monthly culinary column as well. This is the great Don Dunstan – a man whose eclecticism and skills and knowledge and passions knew no bounds. Our discussions about political issues spilled over into long meals - - -

That he cooked for you?

Some that he cooked for us and some were where we would have regular lunches and dinners over which we had long political discussions. I learned an enormous amount from him and hopefully he also gained something from the experience from my own perspective on the events of the day. We developed a really sort of close relationship and a shared love of food and wine. Then when I was in Labour Studies I suggested to Ray Broomhill, who was the then sort of director, I think, of Labour Studies, that we should get Don in as an adjunct professor. He just happened to live next to Mary O’Kane in Norwood. Mary O’Kane was the then vice-chancellor of the University of Adelaide. I knew that that process would probably be a reasonably straightforward process and so we got Don in as an adjunct professor of Labour Studies. He used to come in regularly and spend time in the office with us. Everyone was thrilled having him in and it also gave Don and me another excuse to go down to the eateries in Rundle Street.

What were some of your favourites?

Well, it was a fantastic street in those days because there were some brilliant restaurants down there. I’m just trying to remember some of the great ones there – it was mostly the sort of modern Australian cuisine that we both shared and enjoyed together.

Like Red Ochre and places like that?

Yes, Red Ochre was there, and the same place where Red Ochre was - - -

Maggie Beer had a place there at that time too.

Yes, there was Maggie's place – gee, there were some good restaurants there. Some of those might come back to me.

They were quality.

That's right, they were great quality restaurants. Then after getting to know Don well and when he became ill I got to know him very differently too throughout the period of time that he was ill, and supporting him in whatever way I could and visiting him in hospital.

He knew he was seriously ill and it was going to cost him his job and, subsequently, his life, but he was still really positive.

He was amazingly active really, but he had a terrible lung cancer which was not treatable in the end, but he was outside the hospital for most of the time he was ill. It was possible to treat most of that and then ultimately he was able to die at home, which was a great relief for him, having all the people he loved around him in the vigil that there was in the lead-up to his death, which was a beautiful - - -

I know you went to visit him quite a bit when he was ill.

Yes.

Did you still have your political discussions?

No – well, yes at the best of times, but Don didn't really want to talk about politics so much.

You were visiting him as a friend.

Yes, as a friend because he really just wanted to share your company. Because he was such a passionate politician if you had a discussion about politics with him he'd get revved up and it would generate some anxiety for him and he didn't want to fuel that anxiety towards the end of his life when it was all a bit too exhausting. He would gently say to you, 'Let's move on,' if the discussion became a bit too deep and anxiety-provoking from a political point of view.

I remember at the time we would read that all his friends were calling in to say goodbye and he invited some of those friends around too, didn't he?

Yes.

He was stylish right to the end.

He was stylish right to the end, laying in his bed and always dressed beautifully. It *was* a stylish ending with a lot of genuine affection and love for him from a very wide range of people who admired him enormously. That collective outpouring of admiration and love was expressed in enormous terms when I was at the University of Adelaide and a number of us who were involved in thinking about celebrating the end of his life were caught up in this growing mass of people who really wanted to celebrate his life, and moving from what was going to be a venue at the University of Adelaide to something a little bigger down the road. Ultimately, it was the Festival Theatre.

Who organised that farewell at the Festival Theatre? It would have been a group, I understand – were you involved?

A little bit but mostly it was the Dunstan family itself – it was the Dunstan family that was critical to that. Andrew, in particular, played a key role in all of that with support from a range of people.

What was your relationship like with the Dunstan family?

It was very good and I came to know Andrew well, in particular, and Bronwen, in particular, and her partner, Rodney, and Tom [grandson of Don Dunstan]. Tom spent some time in Labour Studies.

How old was Tom then?

He was quite young – very young then, in his teens. He was pretty passionate, and around the time that we were setting up the Don Dunstan Foundation he was involved in some of those early discussions. It was great having him there as part of the lineage. I think he was on the Don Dunstan Foundation management committee for a while in the early days before he moved on to pursue his own interests.

Before we move on to the foundation, talk to me a little bit about the farewell. Did Don himself have some input into what he wanted as a farewell?

Yes, as I understand it he did, particularly the musical choices. He was a great lover of music and he was a very proficient pianist in his own right, and a great performer, as we all know. He was a great lover of the Arts and music. I do remember the Mahler symphony that was played at the celebration of his life, which is incredibly moving – it's such a beautiful piece of music. It brought many of us to tears.

It was hard not to cry that day, wasn't it?

Yes, it was. I remember Jane Lomax-Smith, who was the master of ceremonies and who did a fabulous job, and Andrew Dunstan's wonderful speech on the day which was terrific. The warmth and the love for Don were enormous and the respect across political boundaries all came out on that occasion. Few politicians in living memory commanded the sort of respect that Don did at that time in terms of the mass of people who wanted to be there to share that event at the Festival Theatre.

What I thought was fantastic was that they had all the people that had to be there. I can't remember how I got a ticket – we rang up or we wrote in or something, so there were hundreds and hundreds of Don groupies – that's what it felt like at the time. I just thought that said a lot about him and the organisers, that he allowed us to be there. It wasn't in the days when you did live telecasts[1] and I thought that said what Don was about.

It did and nothing about it was contrived or forced. It was just a lovely celebration of his life. What it does remind me of is something that happened earlier, and that was the Gough Whitlam Lecture.

I've actually got a copy of that with me. Again, the background of moving venues for that.

Indeed. I worked with Don on that lecture and ultimately that lecture appeared in the *Politics and Passion* book, which was fantastic. It was in the *Politics and Passion* book and also - - -

It was in the ALP *Herald* as well.

Yes.

I don't even know if we still have that, but a whole issue was devoted to Don. I think I've still got a copy of that with the speech in it.

That's right, it was published there and I think I might have even published it in one of my books as well. That was a great story in its own right because I think around that time – it was 1998 – this event became a focal point for people wanting to celebrate Don's life while he was alive. His movement to the status of an Australian icon was very much cemented around that time as people reappraised how important the Dunstan decade was and what great achievements came out of that time that we should celebrate. It was all the more sharp because we were surrounded at that time by the rise of Liberalism and economic rationalism and so on.

And Don hated that.

Don hated it. Don was a very interesting political figure because whereas a lot of political figures went on to become consultants or ambassadors, Don never took on - - -

Or working for ministers.

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[1] Correction: the memorial service on 9 February 1999 was televised live.

Or working for companies or universities or whatever – whatever they did their profile was never as great as it was when they were premier. Don had his ups and downs post-politics but when he was writing for the *Adelaide Review* people loved his articles and they loved his food articles, and he was part of the Norwood establishment – he was loved in the village of Norwood as he called it. So when it came for him to do that inaugural Whitlam Lecture that became a great occasion to bring together some of his thinking and his vision for a social democratic society, which was laced with a heavy critique on the Liberalism and privatisation at the time. I very much enjoyed working with him on that speech.

He was quite ill when he gave that talk.

He was.

I was lucky, I scored a front row seat through some friends. Just to shake his hand when he was coming in – it was so weak. I thought, he's not far from dead. Then he subsequently gets up and gives this magnificent lecture and everyone was just spellbound.

Absolutely, and he is a great orator and that's what makes him stand out from a lot of other politicians.

You have no choice but to listen. He had that power over you, didn't he?

Yes – a beautiful voice and an ability to deliver a speech in a way that captivates you. The content, of course, was of great significance and it resonated with people. It sort of represented what appeared at the time a pretty radical critique of the mainstream. What I admired enormously about Don was he was certainly not a character who became more conservative as he got older – the absolute opposite. He came - - -

Probably more outspoken.

More outspoken, and he never resiled from being outspoken. He was always willing to be part of a campaign or cause – not always necessarily the most popular causes or the most well-attended causes. He had enormous political integrity and humanity about him in that he would lend his credibility to so many campaigns: the Labor Movement and the Aboriginal Movement and the Women's Movement, and so on, over the course of his post-political life. I don't think I can recall anybody really remaining so politically committed in their post-political life, and with there being no sort of personal gain associated with it, no financial gain. During all of this time he was a restaurateur and he loved his time as a restaurateur and trying to support Stephen Cheng's and his own restaurant ventures. Don's Table on the Parade was a place I spent a lot of time at.

What sort of meals?

It was modern Australian cuisine with strong Asian influences. Don was a great champion of understanding and using Asian inspirations in our food. Don's Table really became the place where that was expressed most.

His relationship with Stephen has never really been public knowledge, has it? I think Stephen, I get the impression wants to stay private about it, but it must have been an incredible time for him looking after Don while he was dying, and the input he would have had into things where the Dunstan family was the public face. It had been a very long-term relationship and he was – it was not as though he was ignored but he did seem to be on the outer. Is that how you felt about it?

I think that Don's family didn't have their lives – that it was separate by and large from the wider Dunstan family and there were tensions that I think were obvious to most people.

That was all that we as the general public would see.

Yes, it was a private relationship. Don didn't want to focus attention on his relationship or his sexuality. He didn't want that to become a focal point for discussion or debate. He wanted the focus to be on the issues.

What is Stephen's set-up now? I think he is still in the house.

My understanding is that he's got a lifelong interest in that house.

That was my understanding when I was doing research.

Don's commitment was to make that house available to him for the remainder of his life, so long as he lived in the house – that was my understanding.

And that would be Don.

Yes, that's right, and that was a little oasis for him and for them, with the garden out the back.

Is that the George Street one?

Yes, the George Street, Norwood house.

I live around the corner from the Clara Street one. I walk past it when I go shopping.

OK – that might be the one – yes, it's the Clara Street house. The architect, Dickeson I think it is, a modernist architect who designed it for Don with a pool out the back and then the walled garden which Don loved and spent time in. As we all know Don was a great chef in his own right, a great cook, and most notably famous for his cookbook which was revived in those final five years of his life, which we printed - - -

It may be reissued later this year as part of the celebrations with a few changes, I believe.

Fantastic.

Another book of great interest is the *Politics and Passion* one, which you did. How did that come about?

Don had been writing for the *Adelaide Review* for many, many years and that represented a very significant collection of his perspectives on a whole range of political, economic and social questions. I thought it would be a great idea to bring all those together. Rob Scott, who was involved in – I can't think of the name but he had a small publishing company that he was involved in [Bookends Books] among many other things that Rob Scott is involved in: a musician, a raconteur of sorts. He wanted to publish a collection so we got permission from the *Adelaide Review* to publish the full collection of political articles as part of our *Politics and Passion* with a foreword from Gough Whitlam.

I've got a little quote from Gough's introduction. It says:

> **No-one has done more to transform his own community and society and, by his example, the whole of Australia. He brought extraordinary joy, zest and style to the process.**

It does say it all, and you can imagine Gough saying that, can't you? It's so true, and beautifully said. There was something, I think, very powerful from having Gough write the foreword to it because they were towering figures in their own right at a similar time in Australian political history.

And moving on to your introduction, one of the best summaries of Don's life. I've got the list of achievements, which we don't need to go through because they're so well-known, but just in your summary it was very clear that you knew the man and loved the man. I've got a little quote – we might finish on that later. Also, what really set it off perfectly were the photos that the family gave permission to use. It covered so many of the classic pieces of Don, like holding back the tidal wave at Glenelg, and the champagne in the Adelaide mall fountain. Which other premier or politician would have done that? He just had that flare, didn't he?

Absolutely. He understood the importance of leadership and that was a great example of leadership at the right time, and enormous colour and flare as Gough rightly pointed out. A lot has been said and some has been written about - - -

Well, the definitive book is supposedly coming out this year. I've forgotten the woman's name [Angela Woollacott] – from New South Wales.

It’s been a long time coming, hasn’t it?

Yes, it’s been several years. The foundation is involved with the book. One of the questions that is often raised was why was the definitive book never written? Dino Hodge did a very good book; yours was a very good summary, but there’s not one that goes from A to Z. So it could be quite interesting what comes out in that, and maybe there was such a big life that it was too much to write about.

Yes, that’s right – a big life and sometimes the passing of time helps to write a book like this, emboldens some people to write some things that they may not have felt they could say at the time.

And 20 years is a good time because he’s still in everybody’s memory.

He is.

What I find fascinating is young people know about him.

Yes.

The foundation a month ago did an event, Dunstan 101. Have you listened to the podcast?

No, I haven’t.

Well, you must – it’s a riot and it was specifically aimed at young people, particularly university students, and it was done with humour by a couple of young lads [Tom and Dan] who won Emerging Artists [Historians] at last year’s Fringe. There’s a podcast out so you can listen to it. It attracted a different audience who didn’t know much about Don and the foundation has taken that on board because every time you go to a function it’s people our age. There are not the youngsters there – apart from the bad things happening with this government – all the good things that have happened in the state, so much of that is because the legislation was never changed that Don and Len King got through. It’s good that the foundation is addressing that, to spread the message.

Absolutely. Yes, there is a lot of complexity and it’s often been said that Don was a man for the times, but so was the team around him as well. He was among some equals.

Name some of them.

Like Len King, and Peter Duncan was part of that generation as well along with John Cornwall, and the list goes on really.

It was a great frontbench wasn’t it?

It was a great frontbench. They were a very sort of scholarly group of people rooted in Labor Movement intellectual traditions, if you like, and well-read and had a bit of fire in their belly for various different reasons to make change and drive change during that particular time in history, and use the benefit of being in government and having the opportunity to lead to make a difference rather than simply govern. I think that there's a big lesson that we need to learn from that particular period in history. Circumstances were very different then too. The Labor Movement was very active, trade union density was much higher and the various social movements that surrounded it at the time were very active. Student politics was playing a substantial role in applying pressure for progressive change through the '60s, '70s, '80s and into the '90s. Since then a generational change has hit and all sorts of forces have come to bear to mean that those sort of external influences are a lot less visible in the cybersphere we live in.

That's something I would like to talk about in detail with you at a later stage. I address that with a lot of people who I've interviewed who have been in politics – the sort of shaking of heads and wringing of hands. We just feel so privileged to have gone through those '60s and '70s and '80s, and it's so different. You're probably one of the good people to analyse, which you have in your books. It would be nice to get some of that on tape too.

I'm very happy to.

I think that would take quite a while but worth doing.

I think so, it is definitely worth doing.

Before Don died he – again, I've got some words here; I think it was part of your introduction where you said that Don wanted his death to be useful, to heighten the awareness about injustice and to motivate action to overcome it. Then, to quote, 'There is still work to be done here.' He wanted something. Was it the foundation as we know it today? Was he involved in discussions about that?

Yes, he was. For the record, what happened was Ray Broomhill and Rhonda Sharp and I and my partner at the time were over at - - -

Sorry, Ray and - - -

Ray and Rhonda, and my partner at the time and I were spending a weekend over at Yorke Peninsula. We were walking on the beach – this was when Don was with us as adjunct professor – and I just suggested to Ray, why don't we propose that we establish a foundation and have discussions with Don about that. Ray was enthusiastic and we approached Don and talked to him about it. Because Mary O'Kane lived next door to Don we thought that the quickest way to cut through would be if Don just had a quick conversation with Mary about it. Mary got on board and then I went out and tried to get some initial cash to kick it off. I knew at the time that we needed there to be some interest shown in providing financial contributions to it to make it work. One of the early discussions I had was with Elliott Johnston. Elliott Johnston was the first person who made a commitment to help make it happen. I was then able to take that to Mary and others and say we've got a $20,000 commitment from Elliott Johnston to it. That helped enormously in those early stages of discussion. Then it sort of got mainstream within the University of Adelaide as a project and there was a range of other people who came to be involved after that as we established the steering committee and then the management committee and so on.

How did you work out who? There's a pretty impressive list of those people involved. How did you as a group decide who you would have as the patrons and the board, and things like that?

Don was very, very involved in a lot of those early discussions, including the writing of the constitution.

So he – I've forgotten the name – Ted Byrt [lawyer].

Ted Byrt was brought on, absolutely.

And Don was involved in those early discussions.

Yes, framing the aims for the foundation, and the five or six aims that were identified at that time. He was very involved in shaping those and the words that were originally established have a bit of Don about them in terms of the way they are phrased or framed, and they are ambitious goals and objectives too in terms of addressing global injustices and inequality, addressing disadvantages faced by Aboriginal communities and so on. He was very enthusiastic about it. It then became the task of how we could lock in government support and time for it. Fortunately, we got that sort of core financial contribution and commitment to personnel from the state government. It is probably extraordinary that that commitment has remained in place.

With whatever government.

Whatever government has been in place. That was never necessarily the objective. The objective was not that the foundation or the organisation necessarily go on forever, it was to make a difference. So long as it made a difference, that was the main objective for it – to play a useful role in fostering and supporting progressive debate.

It does look as though it's got a good life though.

There's no doubt about it.

I think with David Pearson's leadership and the crew he's got around him, even though they don't have a lot of money, they certainly are making a difference. I'm thinking particularly of the Zero Project and the work that they are doing. They're actually making a massive difference now. It probably went through a bit of a lull for a while but they've picked up well now.

Yes. It's been a small operation over the years with an enormous ambition and hunger for change. It's gone through a whole range of phases as inevitably organisations do, but the fact that it's lasted as long as it has and is thriving in the last couple of years.

I think the last couple of years have probably been some of their most active.

I think they have been. David has enormous energy and enthusiasm and the ability to bring a diverse group of people along with him and that's extremely valuable.

In fact he was recognised in the dailies as one of the 40s under 40. I think that says a lot for an organisation.

It does, absolutely.

You also had a role in the foundation didn't you?

Yes, I was right there from the beginning on the inaugural management committee up until I resigned.

How long were you on the committee?

How long have we been going? We're coming up to how many years now?

This is the twentieth year.

I was on there for at least 15 years.

Why did you resign?

Because I really thought that my task was done in large respects, that it was in safe hands and it had managed to survive under governments of different persuasions. My general inclination is to build multiple institutions and not long after that I was involved in the establishment of the Stretton Centre around in northern Adelaide.

That's a pretty impressive achievement, and I love that it's called the Stretton Centre.

Yes, and I was so pleased to be able to work on that while Hugh was still alive, and work with Pat [wife of Hugh] to make sure that it was a fitting tribute to the great contribution that Hugh had made to the nation and to the state. I'm thrilled, really, that the Don Dunstan Foundation is potentially one of those institutions that could go on for a long, long time to come. That requires new energy, new people and these things have to be reinvigorated, re-invented.

I think that's what they're doing now too – setting it up so that the next person will make changes. I think David is there for quite a while because he's a young man with, as you said, buckets of energy and ideas, and he has surrounded himself with a lot of young people on specific projects. It seems to be working out incredibly well.

It's just what it needed too. It certainly needed to energise it through the involvement of lots of young people who could make it their own in a way. I think that's something that Don would be thrilled about as well.

Mai, who has just finished her term there, has been heavily involved and has run this project and she has done it seamlessly. She has absolutely loved it and she too is now a Don fan because she's learned so much listening to the interviews and through her own research. She's making sure that message is going out to her university friends. I think Don would be absolutely thrilled to hear that sort of thing.

Terrific, that's great.

We're struggling with time but this is again from your introduction to the book, *Politics and Passion,* and I just think it is so beautiful. If you want to pick out some of the bits when you were describing Don I think it will just sum up the interview.

Do you want me to read some of it out?

Yes, just some notes I took from your introduction. You've covered a lot of it but to put it all together, he's one pretty impressive person.

Yes, the idea of Don being a cosmopolitan man with diverse interests and talents and passions, a scholar, aware of history yet passionately engaged in the present, leading debate intelligently and arguing for reform. They are things that don't easily co-exist, and they require a lot of commitment – intellectual commitment, intellectual power, if you like; the power of the mind and Don's mind was - - -

Sharp as.

Very, very sharp.

And wasn't it one of his strengths that he could address that intellectual audience and then five minutes later talk to a man or a woman on the street and relate to them at their level?

Absolutely.

It's a strength a lot of politicians don't have but I think a man of the people does describe him, doesn't it?

Yes, it does. With the recent death of Bob Hawke you see parallels. They are very different people - - -

But the intellect and a genuine love of the people.

Yes, that's right. That intellectual foundation upon which you can draw – piano, singing, acting, fluent in Italian and Greek [John, should this be Latin?], a lawyer's eye for detail, sharp wit, encyclopaedic memory, and radical among reformers – a man of politics and a man of passion. That came from a deep wellspring in me at the time. When you are thinking about Don and trying to describe him and commit that description to words you feel a great sense of responsibility. I tried to do my best to bring together some of the complexity of Don and express a genuine love for the man and the great admiration I had for him as a political warrior. In summary, that should be inspiration for all of us over the ages I think. The courage I think that he had is also possibly something that has not really been fully appreciated as well. He had enormous courage and energy and was sort of singularly committed to wanting to make a difference in the world, but there are so many foundations to that in terms of Don's own intellectual and emotional attributes that make him stand apart from a lot of other people who you might want to put through the same lens. One thing that is probably surprising, and he was more than capable of it, is that Don didn't write more over the course of his life. He was a great writer and his columns were always beautifully written in the *Adelaide Review*. I always thought though that his food column was much more beautifully written.

Your prejudice is showing!

It's funny – I think he relaxed a lot more and he enjoyed that writing.

He wasn't a politician when he was writing that.

Yes, he wasn't a politician and he enjoyed that writing and so his great flare as a writer came out in those columns. Then if you read *Felicia,* his critical memoir, you see some of that flourish in that book, which is a pretty dense book.

It's a hard read, I thought.

It's not an easy read.

Whereas your books and his articles are an easy read. They're intellectual and saying important things but they're an easy read.

Felicia was a book that should have been maybe two or three books. I reckon he tried to condense a lot into that one book, but it's still fascinating to read and an important piece of South Australian political history.

Thank you, I think you've said everything that we can say about Don. Thank you very much for your time.

It's a pleasure Allison.