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## J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Full transcript of  
an interview with:

**Jane  
Lomax-Smith**

Conducted on: 22 February 2022  
Interviewer: **Allison Murchie**  
Transcribed by: Trudy Dalgetty

For:

The **Don Dunstan Foundation**  
**20th Anniversary Oral History Project**

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



**DON DUNSTAN FOUNDATION** 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary **ORAL HISTORY** PROJECT

## NOTES TO 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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## Jane Lomax-Smith.mp3

**This is Oral History 1152, card number 15. It's Allison Murchie interviewing Jane Lomax-Smith at the State Library on the 22nd of February 2022. 1:38 This is part of the Don Dunstan Foundation oral history project, and I'll just do an acknowledgment of country first. I acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Kaurna people. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. And firstly, I'd like to thank you, Jane, for coming along today.**

Thank you for having me.

**Very important. First off, can I just get your full name?**

Jane Diane Lomax-Smith.

**With two Ns?**

One.

**And your have a date and place of birth?**

I was born on 19th of June 1950 in Walthamstow, which is London.

**Now you're well known in Adelaide as the public figure as Jane the Lord Mayor and Jane, the member for Adelaide for the ALP, but not a lot is known about the story of how you got here. Just like to spend a few minutes just explaining to me, what got you from London to Adelaide?**

Well, it's partly because of my career. I'm actually a pathologist and technically I would have called myself a morbid anatomist. It's been softened because I think that sounds a bit morbid. And now people call me, would call me a histopathologist, which means I look down the microscope, I know nothing about blood or urine or anything of that sort. I only know about tissue, so I know about bodies and cancers and leukemias and things like that anyway. So, the reason I'm here is that I was working at the hospital I qualified in, which is the London Hospital, Whitechapel and there was a professor who'd been given a job in Adelaide, at Adelaide University. And I suspect at the time the salary for university doctors was much less than out in the health system or in private practice, and they struggled to get people who could teach. And throughout my career, I'd always been a teacher. I'd raised money and earned money as a student. I used to teach histology and embryology and anatomy to other students who struggled with it curiously, I never understood why they struggled, but anyway, I used to be a presenter in lab sessions and practical classes, so he knew that I taught and at that stage I was working in the pathology department, training as a histopathologist, morbid anatomist, and he tried to recruit me to come to Adelaide. And I

can't exactly remember how much the salary was, but it was something like \$27,000 a year in the early seventies.

### **How did that compare with what you were getting in London?**

It's about twice what I was getting at the London hospital, so that seemed pretty good. But to be honest, I grew up in London and I think anyone that grows up in a capital city, I suppose the analogy in Australia would be Sydney, anybody growing up in a city of the size of London regards everywhere else as provincial and boring, and there's no way I'd go and leave London. I mean,

### **Why would you?**

Why would I? That's right. And he said, would I like a job in the University of Adelaide? I'd never heard of Adelaide, I have to say. And I told my mother I've been offered a job in Adelaide, and she obviously was better educated than me and she said, Adelaide, I think it's in the south between Melbourne and Sydney. Impressive. Better, better knowledge of anatomy of sorry, of geography than I had. And I still wasn't interested and I kept going to work and he kept going on about this job. And finally, he said, well, to be honest, Jane, you wouldn't like Australia. It's a terrible redneck backwater. You really would hate Australia, but South Australia is different. There's a man there called Don Dunstan, and it is the Renaissance capital of the southern hemisphere. And he told me about some of the legislative reform, and he talked vaguely about environmental protection and homosexuality. And the one piece of legislation that I remembered because I'd never thought about it and had never understood it had never been something I thought about was, he said, it's the one place in the world where you can sue your husband for rape in marriage, and I, but more interestingly, because at that stage, I wasn't particularly interested in legislation. He said it's got a Mediterranean climate and you can eat outdoors and there's a festival, and he did a bit of a hard sell. I thought, well, maybe it's not as bad as it sounds, and at the end of the day, I suspect, but moving to Adelaide was easier than going to Manchester because it was, you know, it seemed more of an adventure than going somewhere cold, wet and in the north. And so, I came and I was paid to be transported, so to speak, to use a rather unpleasant analogy, perhaps. But I was paid to travel. I was given funds to ship my possessions. I had very few, but I brought my Mini and that's how I came to Adelaide.

### **Excellent introduction.**

You might like to know the name of the professor. His name is Barrie Vernon- Roberts.

**Sorry, Barrie?**

Vernon Roberts. B-a double r i-e Vernon dash Roberts.

**And what's he doing now?**

He's now sadly died. He is---

**But did you work with him?**

Yes, and he is memorialised to an extent through a laboratory at the medical school, and he was a very good, significant donor to the Art Gallery through the modern jewellery collection because his daughter Reanon was a very gifted jeweller who died in a car crash. And in commemoration of her life, he and his wife gave a substantial sum of money each year to allow the collection of modern jewellery. So, there is a Vernon-Roberts collection in the art gallery.

**So, what did you think when you got here and you settled into your job? I'm more interested in your view about Adelaide than the job.**

I was really disappointed because I'd come with one suitcase although I'd been given the funds to ship various possessions out. Of course, nothing arrived, and I arrived with one suitcase, and I had been convinced that the weather was good. As I arrived, I think the first week in November 1977 and I had all these strappy little sandals and it rained and rained and rained endlessly. I thought I'd get trench foot. It was so wet and I was constantly cold and miserable. And I remember thinking, I've been sold a lie. This is horrible. It's wet. It's cold. It's miserable. Of course, by then by Christmas in ..., it was much nicer weather.

**So how did you get? I mean, I've traveled a lot, but actually moving to a city by yourself with one suitcase, OK, you had a job, but that's quite challenging, like getting accommodation, making friends, getting to know the culture of the place you are. How difficult was that?**

I think that I am inherently fearless. I always believe I can do anything and I look at people who survive around the world who always look a bit dopey and I think, well, if they can do it, I can do it. So, I have absolutely no fear of doing something either I've never done before or might be complicated. I think if other people do it, I can. I've subsequently, I think, moved continents about five times, so I've made a habit of it. I've done it with ---

**So, you're not frightened of anything.**

I, curiously, I don't really like flying, but I do fly quite a lot. But um, no, I think I can read, I can work out how to do things like. It never worries me.

**Perhaps explains the variety in your resume.**

Yes, I mean, this isn't really relevant for this talk, but I had never been in the Town Hall when I was elected to Council. I had never seen Question Time until I was at the receiving end of it. So, I mean, I just don't have any fear. And some people call it, stupidity.

**Or strength of character.**

But probably all those details are worth saving for your next---

**We will, I have just made a note of that for the future. So, when did you start to like Adelaide?**

I think as soon as Christmas came and it became warmer, and I think my luggage arrived in about March the next year and I had sensible shoes and sensible clothes because I do think that what's quite interesting about Adelaide is that at that stage, nobody had any central heating, and I have never been as cold as I have been in Adelaide. I think that I was quite shocked, I'd go to people's houses and have to borrow socks before dinner or a pullover.

**Total opposite in London.**

Well, in England...

**You have the central heating, but you don't have the air conditioner.**

Well, you can take clothes off in the winter in England indoors, I found it quite chilly in houses here, that's the main complaint I had about the climate. But of course, I think now people invest in reverse---

**That's common now.**

Reverse cycle heating and cooling so that now people's houses are warmer in winter.

**So, one of the selling points of coming here with this man called Don Dunstan.**

It was the thing; Don was the reason I came. I think it's fair to say that if I hadn't had this explanation about how awful Australia was and how different South Australia was, I wouldn't have come and my life was irrevocably changed because my trajectory would have been completely different. If I had stayed in England, I would have been a different person. I mean, it is possible I could have been involved in politics because I used to, I'm I have always been

a bit of a campaigner and a vexatious letter writer and, you know, I always think that something can be solved and I was always brought up never to complain about something and never say someone should do something. My mother would say, if someone should do it, you should do it yourself. So, I possibly could have been involved but I suspect that Australia was easier to get involved because I had no history. And in England, where it's class ridden and stratified in very peculiar ways, it would have been, it would have been more difficult for me to rise to the top of my profession. It would have been more difficult for me to get involved. The fact that I could come to a foreign country and within seven years of becoming naturalized to be the Lord Mayor is a pretty amazing act of generosity by the people of this country that they take foreigners. But I think one of the reasons they took me aboard so easily was that, of course, I had no history and people in Adelaide, you know, which school did you go to? They want to stratify you and classify you and put you within a class based on your background. But I have no background.

**You started as a 27-year-old day one.**

So, I had no background. I had no class and they didn't really know where I came from, which is far more working class and they'd imagined from my accent.

**Well, you've got the posh accent, but that's a London accent too, depending where you're born.**

That's from London.

**OK. Let's talk about Don. When did you actually come to know the man or when did you meet him? Can you remember the earlier input he perhaps had on you because you said he changed your life?**

Well, he changed my life because I came here, that was the first thing, and I wouldn't have done otherwise. And I think I'm part of a quite a large minority of people who came to South Australia because of Don Dunstan.

**Mike Rann's another one.**

I'm not peculiar.

**No, no and lots of Australians moved into South Australia because of Don. He was that outstanding.**

And I think that some people came because of the politics, other people came for the opportunity. And for some people, the opportunity was in the arts, where it was suddenly, there was a blossoming of the film industry or theatre and you knew that it was possible. For

me, it was more of an essence of a more interesting place and of course, the arts and the lifestyle. But it was clearly because of that discussion about Don Dunstan was really the changing point in my life. Once I was here, I saw him only a couple of times at events and--

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### **What sort of events?**

I went to an event in Norwood that was at the Norwood Football Club, and he was there and he spoke quite briefly. But I mainly got to know him when I was Lord Mayor because he used to write to me.

### **On what?**

On, because I was always, you know, I, I was quite outspoken in a way that not many lord mayors were. For instance, I was campaigning for safe injecting rooms and God knows what else, legalising drugs, and I had probably more progressive views a lot of lord mayors would have had before me.

**Oh, you were a breath of fresh air. I actually must tell you, shortly after you became the mayor, I didn't know who you were and you gave a talk on women's issues of some sort. I don't even know what it was about at the Hyatt Hotel and I think the audience was like about ninety-nine point nine per cent women. And we were all sitting there gob smacked, our mouths hanging open, and saying, 'Who is this woman?' And that's why I said you were a breath of fresh air. I think you've probably talking about some of your views, your ideas, what you should be doing in the future here. And it was almost like, I don't want to say a female Don Dunstan although I've just said---**

Oh no, but I do think that ---

**You had that sense of future about you.**

That's encouraging.

**Well no, no I'm saying that as someone who's known you a long time. But that very first experience, I actually went up and spoke to you, and I was much too shy to do things like that in those days. I just had to shake your hand.**

Well, that was nice of you. So, I'm sorry I can't remember it.

**Oh, no, no. There was a huge audience.**

Yes. So where was I?

**Sorry, that was me. You were just saying, you're very outspoken as Lord Mayor.**



Yes. And he would write to me and I did something. I've got deep respect for archives and libraries, and I have always regretted not keeping his letters, but I sent them to the council archives and said, this is important, I hope they've kept it the rotters ...

**Yes, Town Hall archives be quite ...**

So, he used to write to me about things I'd said or done that he approved of, and sometimes I think he told me off about things he didn't approve of.

**Had you met him at this stage on a ---**

Barely.

**Over the table or anything?**

Barely.

**Okay.**

And he used to write and obviously he heard me on the radio. I mean, you know, there were all sorts of crazy, I mean, I was doing all sorts of things that would have been regarded as anathema. And somehow I then, I'm sorry I'm so vague about this. There were functions that were laid on that were to commemorate his life and his retirement when he got older and the council had been involved in a rather acrimonious development in Victoria Square that involved Stephen Cheng and Don.

**Talk a bit about that. I do know what you're talking about.**

And so the council had been involved and he, I don't, I think that I had been very keen to make sure that it was financially viable, which was a responsible thing to do, but it was quite a difficult period. But at the same time, what then happened was that there was a debacle over the Gay and Lesbian Festival Feast. And this is a whole new saga, but essentially the council used to give \$10,000 to everything – Glendi and the Italian Festival, dog racing, cats, dogs, anything. \$10,000 was the standard amount for an event. And the organisers of Feast had invited me to put a welcome comment and a photograph in their brochure, and the staff came into my room and said, 'You can't do this, it would be embarrassing.' And I remember having an argument with them saying, 'Don't be ridiculous. What are we going to do? Give them the money in a brown paper bag and pretend we're not doing it.' So, I insisted they have a photograph and a message. Now, John Olsen must have had the same advice because he said he didn't have a photograph and couldn't put it in the brochure, but he put a rather bland little message in and because of that, for the first Feast, which would have

been ninety-eight, I think, I did the opening ceremony and that was, I think that was regarded as quite brave. Though, I don't know why, because of course, the Premier refused to have a part in it, and it was the West End around the University of South Australia and on the stairs, and it was quite fun. And so, I'd been sort of on the margins of the community and when they were fundraising for the event, they had a fundraiser at Don's Table. This is a long story, so.

**That's alright I'm enjoying, keep going.**

And the event was on a Sunday, and it was a sit-down lunch for about 40 people and as it was Sunday, I had a policy of going with the boys, my sons. So, there were effectively, there was one woman, me and two little boys. It's a great event and Don was the host of that fundraiser. And it was probably the longest I'd spoken to him the whole time I was Lord Mayor because we usually only wrote to each other and I used to write back. Very strange. And then when he became quite ill, I used to go and visit him. I think it's because I'm a pathologist, sickness and death doesn't bother me. And I used to go to Clara Street and I remember that Steven was actually a really good chef, caterer. People used to go in hordes to visit him, but they'd eat in the kitchen. And I remember that I refused to eat in the kitchen because I didn't want to speak to Steven and I was there to visit Don. So, I used to eat in the death bed next to the death bed, essentially, and talk to him while I was eating the noodles. And actually, Vini Ciccarello used to do that as well. I noticed she used to go and eat with him, but I thought that that was the respectful thing to do. I didn't see the point in eating with people I didn't know in the kitchen.

**You were there to see Don.**

That's right. And so, I was sort of on the periphery of it all. But I was never a member of the Labor Party, and so I was quite surprised when he died that I was invited to be the emcee.

**Before we get to that, because I have that on my list of questions, what conversations did you have? As you said, you don't have any fear of death and some people find it incredibly difficult to know what to say to someone who's you know, is dying.**

We were talking about politics in the Town Hall, we weren't talking about death.

**And he's still telling you what to do?**

Yeah, until he became less responsive, but even then, I sat there and chatted for half an hour. So, I was invited to be the emcee at the commemorative event, which was bigger than

Ben Hur, really. And then I was invited to be on the Dunstan Foundation, so I was on the inaugural committee.

**Let's talk about the function at Festival Theatre. I was there, so I know what ...**

I wish I had the tape of it or some record of it. I have nothing.

**I don't think there was.**

How can that be? It was ABC, because the ABC gave me instructions. They told me I had to wear blue.

**Why?**

Because it was---

**Oh, it's because they were recording.**

The backdrop.

**There had to be a recording.**

Yes. And I refused to wear blue. I didn't want to wear blue. I wore yellow because I thought it stood out nicely and I had a nice yellow suit and I wanted to wear it. It was silk. And I've only worn it once and I've still got it in my wardrobe. It's beautiful. George Gross and Harry Who suit. That's not really relevant, is it?

**You're allowed to say it. You get quite a lot of your clothes from there, didn't you?**

I did, yes. And it was, there was the speakers. Of course, there was the Premier who was John Olsen. But the challenging part was Gough [Whitlam] because they said, 'Once he stands up, he'll go forever.' So, I had in my handbag an egg timer, which when I introduced him and invited him to speak, I put the egg timer just behind the dais.

**The lectern.**

Lectern, sorry, I lost the word. I had, and I just put it down and he looked at it and he looked at me. His lip curled, but he did actually only speak for about 14 minutes which was---

**Which was? That would be an all-time record.**

Which was pretty good, I thought.

**Talk about some of the others that spoke, because Gough [Whitlam] spoke very respectfully, didn't he?**

I think Gough was the best. I actually don't remember a great deal of it, to be honest. And that's why I would love to see the video again, because it must have been recorded. It was on television.

**I will check out ---**

It was the ABC.

**I'll check the library catalog and see what I can find.**

Yes. And there was an, I guess so it was, it was. In retrospect, I suspect he had said he wanted me because I can't imagine why I was there.

**He would have left very, very clear instructions.**

But at the time, I wasn't entirely sure about all that. And I suspect he had decided I would be on the inaugural foundation as well, which was very generous of him. But clearly, all of those invitations and opportunities and times of involvement would have made it clear that I was a Labor supporter and was on that side of politics. I, it was quite clear that John Olsen knew which side of politics I was on. We got on very well, but he knew that I wasn't a member of his Party, or even aligned with his Party.

**How did he speak at the function?**

He spoke well, but I was, I seem to remember I talked about Don's performances and acting and his love of the arts, and I remember saying something that was perhaps a little bit disrespectful. I did say, 'Can you imagine a Premier that could do all that?' And as I looked up, I could see John smiling across the stage at me and I thought, oh dear, maybe that wasn't the right thing to say.

**Oh yeah but it was the perfect thing to say, because that was, that was correct.**

Yes.

**And Olsen probably just had a little chuckle. But you ---**

He was quite---

**He was a one off.**

He was a generous, I think Olsen was also generous of knowing where Don stood in the pantheon of greats.

**I think he had the respect of the opposition politicians, and he was known for getting on well with them.**

I don't know. There are people who hated him, but he did have the capacity to polarise. But I do think he was always respectful in his dealings with the politicians on the other side. I think Playford and he got on quite well. There were stories of them sharing cars and going home.

**This well known, he used to take him home in his car.**

So, I think that he was respectful, but I think he was from an era when politics wasn't quite as vitriolic as it is now.

**I, when we do a further interview, we will talk about the decimation of current politics and how we got there, because it's impossible to compare that with the era when we had---**

I just wonder ---

**Well, we had Dunstan, Bannon, Rann. I mean ---**

But you look at the way people resigned when there was a scandal, you know, resigning over a teddy bear.

**And a bottle of champagne, things like that. Why?**

It's unthinkable the way things have become degraded, and the quality of the candidates are so low as well.

**Did, when you were talking to Don, did he ever suggest that you enter politics?**

No, never.

**Interested because you shared so many similarities and views.**

He talked to me about how - - -. I think the thing I found most interesting about him was his discussion of how you made something happen. Because I think that historians can be very naive, you know. They list regulations and legislation and buildings and things that happen without actually trying to explain how you make something happen because a lot of government is monolithic and immovable, and it actually takes a lot of effort to make anything change. That's one side of the equation, but the other side is actually getting consent from the community and support from the political parties. And I think that Playford was clever at that, and so was Don. I think that having seen how Playford managed to develop ETSA

against the natural inclinations of his party, I know that rural politicians are often agrarian socialists in their idea of how things should happen, but it was masterful the way he nationalised the electricity production, as a conservative.

### **Another one was the Housing Trust.**

Yes, it was masterful, and I think that Don used to talk about how degraded politics was when politicians polled and made decisions and policy based on polling. His view of polling was that if he wanted to do something unpopular, he'd poll to see how unpopular it was, then work on it and then poll again and when you'd tipped the balance to tolerance and acceptance, then you initiated the move. And that's leadership, not being led by the rabble. And I think that's what I admired about him. But also, the idea that actually changing the direction of a state or an economy requires policy change, but it also requires an understanding of the legislative process and an understanding of government. And I think one of the disappointments, and I think this is particularly true of the conservative side of government, is that conservative politicians hate bureaucracies with a loathing and they think they're the enemy. Whereas, you have to understand that if they know how things work, they know how to pull the levers and you need their help and support. And in my experience, public servants, even if they're not wedded to an idea, they'll warn you if they think it's going to go wrong. But they have, in my experience, have always been professional enough to do what they've been asked to do. And you have to trust them. And I think that's one of the elements of our politics that have become degraded in that the public service has been politicised, but politicised with incompetence and politicised with people who don't know how things work. Someone had a wonderful line; they said, 'The upper echelons of the public service are now unencumbered with subject knowledge.' And I think that's true. They're not only, they don't understand the subject, but they come from outside with a deep loathing of bureaucracy and a failure to understand how things should work and actually making things happen is the great challenge of politics.

**It's often said that when Don was trying to get, well, controversial legislation through, that he took the people with him. And that's something that other leaders haven't done. I mean, when we look at the list of legislation that he achieved in his time in a basically a very conservative churchgoing state, many of whom would have been Liberal voters, he took them along for the ride and people understood, particularly his social policy.**

But I do think that people understand more if it's explained to them.

**Well, that's something he did.**

And there's a lot of politics, which is about three-word slogans without actually explaining and I think that it's disrespectful. And no wonder people are suspicious of politicians because they, for the casual observer, it's really hard to know why you have to do something or why something needs to be done. But I suppose the other issue, which I haven't lived through, is the digital era when so few people watch television or read the papers. So, people's knowledge of what's going on, I think now it would be far more difficult to explain because of the fragmentation of the media streams.

**Well, if you look at Don's time, everybody bought the daily papers, everybody watched either Channel Two or a commercial news, so they were all getting---**

The same information.

**But it was also part of the daily routine that didn't. Well, the digital age wasn't there yet. And so, they were reasonably well informed compared to the crap that they're getting on ---**

Well now it's much more difficult for people ---

**Well, it's harder to find the actual facts now. You google something, you get 10 answers.**

I know.

**You go on to Facebook. You could get some really good information, but you also get some rubbish.**

So, the question is whether democracy can be rescued. I mean, that's the issue.

**That's a good question. Do you think it can?**

I sometimes doubt it. You look at the politicians who are elected around the world. I mean, you look at Johnson, you look at Trump, you look at Morrison, and none of them have a moral basis for their action or are renowned for their integrity and honesty. I mean, it's pretty depressing sight.

**We only have to look federally here.**

I think it's difficult, and I think that even decent, honest politicians would end up stooping into the cesspit of social media.

**Well, I mean, there's no question that there are good politicians around, but they're finding it really hard to get headway and if they want to get elected, they have to play the game, I guess this is what we're saying.**

Mmm.

**If we look at particularly the Dunstan Cabinet, I don't think we've seen a better Cabinet in Australia. The talent of those politicians, like now when people you ask, 'Who do you most respect nurse, doctor, ambo?' and you go down the list politicians somewhere down the bottom. In Dunstan's time, the politicians were much higher in the list because they were honest people with integrity who worked hard for this state.**

But I don't think it's just politicians. It's all institutions. People don't respect bankers or ---

**Yes. Which again, they would have been ---**

Or lawyers or the courts

**30, 40 years ago it would have been fine.**

But they don't respect the medical profession anymore. So, there are a whole range of professions that are no longer held in high esteem. So. And in a way, I know transparency and the effect of sunlight is often praised because people imagine it will improve the quality of public life. Sometimes there are things about people's personal lives that I don't want to know about, and it makes it quite difficult for normal people to rise in public life because as everyone always has something that they're ashamed of. Everyone always has an experience that they'd like to forget, and you can never forget anything anymore. Someone's got a memory of it or a photo ---

**Or a photo of it.**

So, the question is, would anybody who's 20 today ever be able to aspire to public office in 30 years' time?

**Probably not.**

With all those photographs.

**Their Facebook record would destroy them. Do you want to talk a little bit about Don's sexuality in relation to the public response to it?**

I know nothing about his sexuality and I was never really interested in it. I am pretty well, dis-interested in the pink shorts because that was, I think before my day. Everyone went on about it.

**It was a non-event, it was hot so he wore shorts.**

I mean, I have to say, I think the safari suit is a fashion that is best left unrepeated.

**It was a fashion faux pas shall we say?**



Well, I think what it was good for is it actually allowed men to keep cool in hot weather and it took them away from the time the suit, which was a good thing. There aren't many options for men.

**And that's why he chose to wear shorts.**

But I do think shorts and long socks is a bad look.

**It was a bad look, but it fitted into the 70s and it was what was interesting, one of his minders the day he wore them, had to tag him all day, so the press couldn't see him. And so, he made sure that he escaped out onto the steps of Parliament House so the press could get a photo. Just that sort of inane, so he wore shorts, big deal. And that if you asked a lot of people not involved in politics, that's one of the things they'd remember, not the massive legislations that he managed to get through parliament.**

Well, I think if you spoke to many 20-year-olds now, they wouldn't know who you were.

**One of the things that the Foundation..., we'll start talking about Foundation now, but when, I think it was when David Pearson was running the show and we had a function one night specifically aimed at university students so that they could get to know who this man Don was, and I've forgotten their names and I'm not good on names, but there are two young university students who did a little skit, and it was fabulous. It was absolutely fabulous. And there was a lot of, a lot of photos were shown on the screen and a little bit of a talk about what Don did and they were staggered. They were absolutely overwhelmed because they're living in modern politics and to hear of this man, that was such a leader of our state and to what he did for this state. And that was one of the things, I think it sort of just disappeared a bit now but they were really trying, as one of the aims of the foundation, to get the message out to younger people that who this Don Dunstan is, it's like the Bob Hawke Foundation. The two were very impressive leaders, that have a lot of good work being done after their death. So, let's talk a bit about the foundation. First, I mean, well, I've got totally off track, but you were asked to go onto that inaugural group, which was basically Australia's high fliers, wasn't it?**

Yes, it was. It was a high-level board, but I think it was, the foundation was really the baby that was hatched by Mary O'Kane in some regards.

**We're hoping to interview her in Sydney. Not me but ---**

She lived next door to Don in Clara Street.

**Didn't know that.**

And so, they were constant neighbors and friends and that was, I think, how it, I'm not saying because they were neighbors that's how it came about, but they obviously had a friendship. I think at the time, we had some amazing speakers and we had all sorts of events. But I think that the challenge is now to make people understand the legacy and the opportunities in politics and I think that's one of the ways the foundation will change in the next year or so. I think that, you know, it has to reframe its mission and its activities. We've always had a lot

of young people working in the office as interns and they come in mainly with a level of ignorance and they go out completely overwhelmed with the excitement of it all. So that's --  
-

**I've met several of them through this project, actually, and it's been a lovely to watch that grow.**

They are wonderful. The recent group have, well one of the recent students, was looking at the messages in Wikipedia and editing those to make sure that Don was referenced across the board, and she's done an amazing job doing that. So, you're right, it is a matter of being relevant and having a future that's meaningful and a legacy that's vibrant. So, it's an ongoing challenge with all organisations.

**And funding is an ongoing issue too, isn't it?**

Funding is always difficult. Obviously, Labor parties in government are more generous, but at the moment, because we're a vehicle of universities, there's a particular pressure on the university sector, which I don't think is going to be relieved by letting in international students. I think that until university funding becomes more equitable, universities will always be under pressure and I haven't yet seen a policy from the Labor Party to sort it out. The Liberals clearly don't want to sort it out.

**Too hard.**

Well, it's not too hard.

**So that's their attitude, too hard, not interested.**

Well, they've actually been disgustingly negligent during the pandemic because they denied Job Keeper to universities and they've lost forty thousand staff. I mean, university, forty thousand of our best and brightest sacked. It's an appalling figure.

**And we won't get them back because they've moved on to other things or they're unemployed.**

How you can have a world class research or education system that's lost I think it's nearly 20 per cent of its staff. It's appalling, anyway.

**OK, let's talk about your role at the Foundation.**

Well, I was initially on the Foundation as a board member, and I resigned when I went into Parliament just because I thought I couldn't do everything as a Minister.

**Parliament is a full-time job, isn't it?**

And coming back, I'm now the Chair. I think that I'm ---

**When did you come back?**

Two years ago. I think what's really interesting is that I may be the last chair that actually knew Don, because will be, because now current members of the Labor Party, I think, Frances Bedford, who's left the party, she knew Don. I don't think any other members would have met him. They're all too young.

**No, they're all too young.**

And so probably Tom Koutsantonis may have met him, but Tom's only about 45, maybe not. So, I will be, even my link was more tenuous than many, I may well be the last link.

**That's a bit sad.**

Yeah. So, the next chair will be a different sort of person, as it is the directors of the board are Lynn Arnold, who obviously knew him; Cathie King, who clearly knew him.

**She had, yeah, what she knew very well through her ...dad ...**

Yes, through her father and the two Vice-Chancellors. I suspect that the Vice-Chancellor from Flinders would admire him and would have done enough research, but wouldn't have met him and Peter Hoj, I think, similarly would admire him but not have met him, though I haven't actually asked either of them. Peter Hoj was here, I think, before Don died, but now ---

**So, he may have.**

May have, may have just met him, but it wouldn't be the same because the last Vice-Chancellor, or academic would have been Mary O'Kane, so.

**So, she is lost to New South Wales.**

So, it is the end of it, no I'm not saying I'm the end of an era, but it is in many regards ---

**Well, it's unlikely to be a future chair who would have known him.**

That's right, yeah, that's right.

**Not just heard of him.**

So, it would be a more political or cultural appointment, but it's something that we have to think about for the future.

**How long is your term?**

I had said that I should do three years, but I can't see, I've got to find someone. You've got to hand on the baton, so I suspect ---

**You wouldn't consider doing a second term?**

I think that I would consider it yes, but I do think ---

**Because sometimes it takes two terms to actually get done what you like.**

I know, but it also requires us to look to the future and make sure we're sustainable.

**Oh, you can do that as part of the process. But I mean, I think ---**

Six years is about right, probably.

**Yes.**

I think six years is a good term.

**Because I think Lynn was there for a substantial period.**

He was, and Greg Crafter before him.

**Greg, that's right and they all did more than one term, and both of them had said they needed that to get things done. So, what do you want to get done?**

I'd like to have a better relationship with the government. I'd like to strengthen the relationship with the universities and I think it's important that we perceive the legacy as part of information. And I think that what we haven't got is a clear introduction into, I'd like, I think one of the things I'd quite like to do is look at the curriculum in schools and see what they have and basically, they should have Playford and Dunstan as modern politics because both of them present a view of politics and a sense of possibility that is quite exciting. So, I think that one of the things that I find quite interesting is that ignorance of young people that you talk about. I mean, obviously my sons, even though they were quite small, met Don Dunstan. But that would be unusual and they would have been twelve and ten, maybe.

**Do they remember it?**

They do remember it, yes, because they remembered me, they remembered the food. They're very, they thought the food was good and everybody was friendly and they talked

to all the boys there and you know, Don was, you know, charming the ... They were quite personable; they would work the room those boys.

**Wonder where they got that from?**

I'm not sure.

**How are you going to achieve some of these aims because that first one, better relationship with the government is a biggie?**

Well, I think it's important because if we want to be, I mean, even dealing with the public service, we have an opportunity. We used to be in the Institute of Public Administration's calendar of events, that's dropped off. We worked with them quite closely with the housing initiative.

**Yep, the Zero Project?**

The Zero Project.

**That's been incredibly successful through David Pearson, hasn't it?**

It was a great experience but we need another project.

**Yep. That put you on the map to a large degree.**

It did.

**People didn't necessarily know David, but they knew Zero.**

That's right.

**And the Don Dunstan Foundation connection.**

And that's unfortunately not been picked up as well as it might have been by the government, but we're not a service delivery organisation. We can't go on forever appearing to give a service. So, we're looking, we're just going through some planning about our next big projects. We all have our preferences. I've become a bit obsessed about modern day slavery, but nobody else much is interested in that. I'm pretty well obsessed with modern day slavery.

**Tell me a little bit, we've got time, have you got time? Tell me a little bit about ---**

Well, I just think it's been highlighted by the issues around Black Lives Matter and decolonising universities and institutions. And I just think it's time we looked at ourselves and looked at the products we buy that are made in sweatshops. Look at the food we eat that's

harvested by low paid migrant workers. Looked at the issues around nail parlours and a whole, you know, prostitution. I just think that it is outrageous that modern day slavery still occurs and we should focus on what's happening today, recognise what happened in the past, but move on to today. I think that's a bit beyond ---

**It's a big dream.**

The ambit of the Dunstan Foundation at the moment, but it's one of the things that's always interested me.

**Keep flagging it though because you don't know, there might be someone that's willing to take it up that's not part of the foundation. So.**

But certainly it's probably beyond state government.

**Too big.**

It's too big.

**And the Feds wouldn't even think about it.**

But I do think we have an issue in Australia that people don't recognise.

**I think the one that it's so obvious and it gets coverage occasionally, is the clothing. I mean ---**

Oh clothing.

**I mean, we could buy a t-shirt for two or three dollars.**

It's appalling.

**And look at the conditions that that poor worker is in to make that.**

Well, it's not just the conditions, it's the environmental degradation.

**The whole thing.**

And cheap clothing, so fast fashion is another area that's getting more coverage.

**It's getting coverage now, which even a couple of years ago, it wasn't and I mean, you often see, well, this company uses effectively they used the term slave labor and this is what they're working for so that you can get your cheap two dollar t-shirt sort of thing. And I think a lot of people listen to that.**

I think that it's easy for us because we've got money.

**Yeah, we can say, well, no, well I'll get a t-shirt that was made in Australia.**

I mean, I think that the equation that people don't understand is that a decent pair of shoes are cheaper than a cheap pair of shoes because they last longer and you can resole them. I think the problem with poverty is that if you can only afford the cheapest of shoes, you're locked into them falling apart in four months.

**Yeah, because that's all you can afford now, and everything gets thrown out.**

I think that's the challenge, it's so, it's very easy for us to say you should buy better things, it's like food.

**We're running low on time. Got a few minutes left. Anything else you want to say about the Foundation? It seems to be, if I can say, in safe hands with the people that are running it.**

We're still passionate about the enterprise and the proposition. We still believe the proposal has a visionary element that is part of the legacy, and we still want to protect that legacy and enhance it and make sure that Don's name is remembered. But it does seem to me that making sure that if you do any research into anything political, his name comes up as important and making sure that people can't leave school having done politics and not having heard of Playford and Dunstan. I mean, it's unthinkable, really, isn't it?

**Yep, I mean, it was easy for us that grew up with him. That was our introduction to politics, that it was sort of ---**

So, did you meet him?

**Only socially, a few times at ALP functions. But my strongest memory is his final talk at the Entertainment Centre. I, it was free to sit anywhere and I got there, you know, to make sure I got a really damn good seat and I spotted an Aboriginal friend of mine in the front row, so I went down to chat with her, I hadn't seen for a few months and we're doing chatter, chatter, chatter, catch up and then, so I'd better go and get a seat and I looked around and it was full and she says, oh, you can be an honorary Aborigine for tonight ... I said thank you very much. And Don came along the front row and shook hands with every single person in that front row, all of them were Aboriginal and when I shook hands with him, it was, it was so weak. It was like when I held my dad's hand when he was dying.**

He lost a lot of weight.

**He was very, he was very thin, he was physically frail. He could, he must have taken a lot of effort to shake those hands and then he went up onto stage for an hour and gave the speech of a lifetime.**

You see, I don't ---

**That's such a strong memory I have of him.**

I don't know how this is authenticated, but I used to go to the gym in Light Square, which everyone said was the gay gym.

**Yes, it was.**

Where Don used to go. And I don't know when he used to go there, whether he was when he was in Parliament, but because I lived just around the corner, that's the gym I used to go ...

**Naturally it was your gym.**

Yeah. So, he used to be quite trim and muscular.

**I think he was quite proud of his physique.**

Yes. And he used to swim in the pool, in the garden and show off his body, I'm sure.

**Well, I can tell you a little story about that if you like. It's actually one of the people that I interviewed for this interview process named Robin Sellick. Do you know Robin at all? He's now a world-famous professional photographer, but he was a young Broken Hill lad getting his start and he'd come down to Adelaide and he says, 'Who should I be interviewing? You want us to interview a few famous people?' And they said, 'Oh, well Don Dunstan would be a good person to interview.' And so he Googled or the equivalent of whatever Google was, he probably asked a few friends and he thought he was going to get Sir Donald Dunstan.**

Oh, I see.

**And so anyway, he sent, I can't remember if he'd sent a letter or he rang up and he spoke to Don and Don says, 'Oh, I think you've got the wrong Don, I'm not Sir Don.' And he says, 'But you're the Premier.' And he says, 'Oh yes, yes.' And anyway, he sorted it out and he went round to take a photo and Robin's looking in the house for the right place to take a photo of Don and they end up, and Don says, 'Well, what about outside?' because he's got a beautiful garden. He says, 'In the pool.' And he says, 'Oh, I usually swim in the nude, but because you're here, I'll put some bathers on.' And Robin just took this stunning photo, but I must give you a copy of it.**

Well, talking of photographs.

**And then he cooked for him.**

Talking of photographs, during the pandemic we were trying to work out what we could do that was useful because obviously we couldn't have any functions, so ---

**Oh the ... yes.**



We settled on the Flinders Library because they've got the Dunstan collection and they've got a room that's a little bit bigger than this. It's got all his books.

**I've been there.**

Yes. All his notes, all his press releases, and they have photographs which are completely inaccurately labelled. They're obviously from books in his home and so the names are wrong, the places are wrong and so we set about trawling through them and trying to identify people. So, we, I got lots of old politicians. I had them in the room and flashed them up and got them to identify people and when I couldn't get them, I emailed things around and we've tidied up hundreds. There was one that was of a building in Victoria and it was obviously after he retired and I wrote to the council, St Kilda Council History Society, and they got the address of the building and who was in the photograph. So, basically, we'd been working on the metadata. There was another photograph that was labelled new Cabinet being sworn in, and I knew it wasn't the new Cabinet because they were in Parliament and you don't swear-in the Cabinet in Parliament, you do it at Government House. And so, it was all the people elected with Don after an election so they were all being sworn in and again, we had, you know, a row of old Ministers.

**All men.**

Yes, all men. It was quite difficult just to get the metadata we wanted because they knew the ins and outs and scandals and you have a lot of salacious and defamatory gossip passing around, but we have identified quite a lot of people and then the next stage was I thought, well, if we're going to have it searchable for these people, what about the people who are not politicians? So, I've been trying to get them pinned down and I could pick the Leigh Creek photograph. So, I've been in touch with the Leigh Creek Historical Society and I've sent them all these things and so we've got names for people, the workmen about 1970. I suppose most of them are dead now, but their families ---

**The families will love them.**

When we've uploaded it all, because we haven't uploaded back into the data set, they'll be able to search ---

**So where would that go, online under the Flinders Collection?**

Yes.

**Oh, that'll be magnificent.**

And the other thing we've been trying to do is we, actually the student who, so just to go backtrack, if you looked up Wikipedia about Roma Mitchell, it didn't mention Don. If you looked up EPA, didn't mention Don, so Don wasn't mentioned in any of the Wikipedia searches, even where he was relevant and even little things like moving a building because the, you know, there all these things that he was involved with so that people could do a Wikipedia search, which was the only way people do research and never know that Don was involved. So, what the student did was find 50 topics that didn't mention him, and she's insinuated him into it and added a reference back to mainly the collection so she could add the reference back to the act of Parliament, she could add a reference back to the Flinders Collection or sometimes the State Library, so that you could follow the trail. So, um, so that's been quite huge, it's a huge task. She's really smart and she's got another 10 to do, so we're going to get her coming back. She was had an internship, so that's actually really interesting because it's meant that he gets credit. I mean, because ---

**Because otherwise ---**

Roma wouldn't have like been involved with a lot of things but for Don, and so all those things, so for instance ---

**And researchers have to have that.**

But he wasn't in any of these places. So, we've been doing weird digital stuff, that nobody knows about

**That they will know about when they ---**

But the Wikipedia stuff I thought was really important.

**That's staggering that he wasn't in it.**

Well because the people who do ---

**Who do who?**

Well, the public, that anyone does, they do the research on Roma, but they don't understand context, the political context.

**So, it's dependent on who's put the information in.**

That's right. So, it's a whole list of places that he's been, insinuating sounds as if it was a dishonest or corrupt way of doing it but you have to actually embellish a saga or a story with

the facts that link back to the history and the culture and the context of the time. So we've been doing that, which I thought was important thing to do.

**Excellent. Good. Good place to stop. Thank you, Jane.**