



Fitzroy History Society Oral History Project 2015-2017

Transcript of interview with Ted Rush

(Interviewed by Meg Lee and Mary Lewis from the Fitzroy History Society at Fitzroy on 10 April 2016)

Ted Rush came to Fitzroy in the 1970s and soon became heavily involved with the Council through the ALP, before becoming Mayor after only three years. He talks about the work of the Council, changes to a more socially oriented community agenda and the origins of the Free Kindergarten movement and the work of various activist personalities in the area. He speaks about the creation of a communal backyard across four neighbouring terrace properties and the benefit to children growing up as well as general changes in the area over time.



START OF TRANSCRIPT

Facilitator 1: Mary Lewis ...

Facilitator 2: And Meg Lee. We're here with Ted Rush, an ex-mayor of Fitzroy and a long-time resident. So how long have you been here, Ted?

Ted Rush: Well I came here in 1970 after wandering around the Carlton and [unclear] and so on in search of somewhere to live, a house of my own. I went, I think, to something like 20 properties in just, school holiday time it was, and I found nothing. I was really quite disgusted with the fact that I'd wasted my holiday, so to speak. Anyway, I rang that day my brother and I was speaking to him. He was in Horsham, and he said well go around to Smythes. [1:14]

They're auctioneers I know in Fitzroy. He said, I was at school with one of them, they'll know. So I went around there and the first thing that happened was I saw the younger of the brothers and he said look, I think you should just speak with my older brother, Ken, because he knows your brother, I know that. So I did and Ken said to me alright look, I'll be in charge here now. Get into the car and we'll go and we'll first of all go to 40 Gore Street because there's a property there on the market and it might suit you.

Coming along Gore Street towards 40 Gore Street we stopped in front of this house where I now live. He said look, this has come on the market just as I've been coming out the door, really. He said, we can have a look in there if you like and oh, I couldn't believe that there was a sort of structured house the way it was put together, this is what I wanted. He said look alright, he said we'll do the papers and by later that day I had, to all intents and purposes, bought the house. It made me realise that... How easy it was if you turned up at the right place, and I've been here ever since.

Facilitator 2: So what was your neighbourhood like in those early days, Ted?

Ted Rush: Well, it was a very, it was what I'd call a dull neighbourhood in a sense because there were a few of the people from the past still living here, but not all that many. Nothing seemed to sort of be changing very much except that we would be objecting about whose around and who's doing this and who's doing that. It very quickly changed from being a dull neighbourhood to being a neighbourhood with several younger people, including myself, came and were interested in what was going on. My neighbour in here was Glyn Elias and his family.



[3:31]

He was on the Council. No he wasn't. The year after I was on the Council he came to the Council. So we had two living close by...

Glyn, G-l-y-n, Elias, E-l-i-a-s. So that became very helpful a bit later. So the first year I was here really I just got to know the street. It was mainly older people and it included people who had been here for many years. There was a Mrs Barker I remember and I think there was a lady's name over the road, I've been trying to think of that. She was, her name was...

Facilitator 1: Anglo Saxons? Were they Anglo Saxons?

Ted Rush: Anglo Saxons, yes.

Facilitator 1: Very little immigration presence.

Ted Rush: Yeah. There was some immigration presence, but not a great deal of it. So there hasn't been, I don't think you would say there's been a big overseas contingent, as it were, of present owners. But the ones that have been around are very interesting. It slowly changed to become more and more young people who were younger people who were doing well probably in their jobs and they could afford to pay what was above the general Melbourne market rate. So Glyn Elias and his family lived in here and next door well, first of all it was David Parke and then Dick Coldham and next door again it belonged to Dick and Bruce.

So we obviously shared a great deal in common and the first really notable thing, because we'd become very dependent on each other really. The first thing was that I suppose an excursion into a new area for me. I bought this house. I bought the loft and I had one for about a month and I had to sell it again. Then the other one I had about a month more and I had to sell that because I had no money. I thought I might be able to rake up someone who would be interested, and so that brought a different sort of group.

[6:26]

But Bruce Coldham had been here the longest and he's now sort of a reasonably important architect in the United States. He helped us out with things and it was decided that we would remove all the fences because they were falling down and in really, well they just couldn't be repaired. They were simply falling down.



Facilitator 1: So that was between your left hand and your right hand.

Ted Rush: Then here, and right hand again.

Facilitator 1: So you have common yards.

Ted Rush: Four, we had. When the fences came down it was really one of the funniest days of my life, to come out and go out the back and see these sort of dunnies, as it were, sitting halfway.

[Laughter]

Well that sort of forced our hands, really, we had to do something about it. So it wasn't a difficult job to do because each house had a space in it which was possible to have a sort of toilet put in. That really bound us together for the first time. Then David Parke, who was next door, I said - not right at the beginning Dick wasn't next door. He was living with Bruce. David said I will go and lay out a garden and the garden's been laid out. I'll show you after, it's very, it really is remarkable what we did, I think.

Then we had the issue of who was going to look after the garden. Well, we looked after our own bits and pieces and that was no problem. I thought it might be, but it wasn't. Gradually children began to arrive, until we finished up I can say before the first child left here there had been 12 different children spending a lot of time here if they weren't actually living here, like kids across the road. So we had all these little kids running around. They learnt to play very effectively with each other and I've just, last week there was a meeting, dinner which Dick prepared, for the Coldham children.

There were four girls and...

[9:04]

Ted Rush: Yeah. There were three children in 103. There were none here except I'm really a sort of, almost like a hotel room with relations and friends and things all going through. Then there were three there, four girls in here next door at 107 and from time to time there were two or three changes, at 109. But there were two girls in one go and then there was one boy and then there were two more girls. It was all go, go, go and these kids all, they grew up with all of that.

Facilitator 2: That must've been wonderful for the children.



Ted Rush: Oh they think now they're, but they were in a wonderful state on Tuesday. Just thrilled to bits because two of them have got babies and oh, and the photos of all them. So it's never been, here, very quiet.

Facilitator 2: So just can I be sure about this. The communal garden was behind three houses or more?

Ted Rush: Four. [103, 101, 107 and 109.]

Oh, it's a wonderful space, you'll see. The...

[Aside discussion]

...all kept going and we really, the Elias' then moved on later and now there's just one lady there, Mrs - she was the former Mrs - what's their names? They had a big, a very big store thing around in... beyond Smith Street there, coming up from...

[11:32]

Collingwood, yeah. Anyway, she's there now and I think she's, she told me that she's a - some of this won't appear anywhere, I hope - but she was... It's interesting, she...

Facilitator 2: So for that period of time, the '70s, a communal garden, I wonder how common that was.

Ted Rush: Oh, it wasn't very common at all. I mean I haven't come across it at all before. I think there are some. There was a newspaper article about it. I couldn't say - I've probably got that somewhere. But it just suited us as...

Facilitator 1: As adults, when you met them again on Tuesday, adults with their own families, what were some of their reflections?

Ted Rush: Oh, they think it was wonderful. Oh and they told me it was wonderful, your place there, because we sort of said - sort of said, this mightn't be exactly right - that if they were on our territory they had to put up with whatever the person whose territory it was said and did. Towards the end there was really, the youngest one, Hugh, he would be sent around to try and find me and say oh, I'd like a biscuit, chocolate biscuit. They had chocolate biscuits constantly and he would come down here. Once he got a biscuit the others had come out of the bushes like nobody.



[Laughter]

That went on for years.

Facilitator 1: Yes, yes. Did you tell them that you were going to be talking to a recorder?

Ted Rush: No, I didn't tell them that. So when I met them they were all in full flight by the time I got there. It took about one minute and, with the new babies, and so it was...

[13:26]

Facilitator 1: Yes, so was this an impetuous for you to stand for council, Ted?

Ted Rush: Well, why I stood for council is that I was the only person eligible to stand as an ALP member of council because the others hadn't been here long enough, anyone else. So the selection went on and I was being opposed by a man called someone Williams. I think he was selling property. Yes he was, he was a property man, and about a week before the application had finished he came and said to me look, I can't be bothered going through all this, I'll leave. So I was... [You were elected unopposed.] ... Didn't have to do anything. This is where the things used to really get going. I was the only one, what was called the new brand for a while and we were sort of renovators, we thought. We thought we were up to trying to get into the Council and then we'd do all these sort of wonderful...

Facilitator 1: What year was this, Ted?

Ted Rush: 1972. I was there I think at the end of - I think I was a member at the end of '71 then at the end of '72 in came people who are very prominent now, some of them. I mean Barry Pullen and he went on to become a member of parliament.

Facilitator 1: Yeah, Lance [Patford], was still there?

Ted Rush: Lance Patford. Lance, he died. but he came in in the third year. Once and the second.

Facilitator 1: Was Ralph Mclean amongst those?

Ted Rush: No, he didn't come in until even after the Patfords. But we did have Paul Coghlan, he was a member. He's now a Supreme Court judge. We had - oh, I think we were the main ones and these other ones came in.



Facilitator 1: Mm, and why were you considered the new, the new...

[15:58]

Ted Rush: Oh because it was run down. There was nothing there. The Members of Council really did nothing much, I mean...

Facilitator 2: Who were the old ones, then?

Ted Rush: There was Bill Peterson, but he did do things.

There was, the man who - [Byrne], Byrne. What was his name? Is it Byrne? Anyway, I've probably got that somewhere. Anyway, I'll come, it's not hard to find.

Harold Mackrell would have been in that third group, I think. So by the, when I finished - I became ill, because you see for our sins we weren't paid anything. We had no time and I was working at the Teachers' College and it was just impossible, I mean...

Facilitator 1: You were a lecturer there? over at Melbourne University?

Ted Rush: Yes, well yes, it was Secondary Teachers' College in those days and I went through there then until I retired, and of course by the time I finished, without having to do any further study to get there I was a member of Melbourne University staff.

[Laughter]

Except they then really said oh alright, you can stay here for one year. This is when the University took over. You can stay for one year and then if your academic things are sufficient you'll be able to just perhaps make an application to stay on. I had a Master's degree by then, so, and that was going to count as nothing. So we were given, really, a rough treatment and I think they would've let me be there a bit longer provided I didn't expect to get paid very much.

[18:02]

Facilitator 1: Mm, so you were a member of council while you were working fulltime.

Ted Rush: Mm.

Facilitator 1: How long were you a member of council before ... you became a mayor.



- Ted Rush: Oh, I was only three years, in my third year. Because in the fourth year, in the third year, I think five, or actually five ALP people were actually, won all the, I think we might've won all the seats. It wouldn't be very difficult to find out about that either. But we changed the whole face of the thing. Whereas in the first year I went, when I was the only one of my kind, as it were, in caucus, not in public view of things, they were shocking, some of them. They just were rude and [laughs], it was really, it was really an interesting experience and...
- Facilitator 1: Tough times, though, for you, Ted.
- Ted Rush: Well yes, but I seemed to be able to manage tough times reasonably well.
- Facilitator 2: But those original members of the Council, my impression was that it was always a Labor council. Is that not correct?
- Ted Rush: Oh, it was a Labor council but these people weren't participating in the Labor. They were going in as Labor councillors but they weren't, in my best, as far as I - Joe Byrne, that's the one I was trying to think of before, Joe Byrne, they couldn't, they'd had no contact, real contact with the Labor Party and the Labor Party was a very tired party by then, and it then flourished quite quickly.
- Facilitator 2: So they weren't interested in policies that the Labor Party might've been.
- Ted Rush: No, no and they weren't interested in making many changes to it. Change would be a bit of an anathema to some of them, I think.

[20:03]

Anyway, I was, the man whose position I took, I think he might've been a fireman or something. But they had no, they had no one who was really much in touch with what's going on in the broader sort of world or, and it's reading or becoming familiar with new things which were happening all around. They just seemed to not be capable of that.

They were, and they didn't like me. They didn't like me as a councillor. They weren't very rude to me. I mean I just, they'd get some motion set up and off we'd go. So that, but that was an interesting year. But there were people. There was Les Peel. Do you know Les?

He and his wife, they were both mayor at different times and he, he had been around the political bushes for a long time and he was persona non grata to them



as well, for different reasons. So I, really, discussed each week what was going to be on the notice paper with Les. I didn't always agree with Les, but I, but it was a sort of refuge so to speak to have someone to talk about. When we got going after though the other years were really remarkable.

Each Saturday if we could we went around and looked at the various properties being, applying for permits and goodness knows what and we got to know a few of the sort of Greek and Italian people who had just recently come. So that was good, and, but and really to have people like Barry Pullen and Paul Coghlan was just wonderful. We stood our ground against, not against - yes, well when the town, the city engineer wanted to run things we were, they were able to sort of quieten him down. So we sort of, but it was an interesting time.

Facilitator 1: Well where did you start? Where did the new councillors start to change things?

Ted Rush: I would say in 1973.

Facilitator 1: What did you start with? [22:44]

Ted Rush: Well some of the things had already been changed. Paul, not Paul, Barry Pullen had played a very important role in the property that was all changed up there in North Fitzroy, Brooks Crescent.... That was going.

Facilitator 2: ...Housing Commission, the battle with the Housing Commission.

Ted Rush: That's right. Then our battles began with the Housing Commission and other people.

Facilitator 1: Because, just to explain, Brooks Crescent was wanting to be taken over by the Housing Commission, totally demolished and rebuilt and there was an argument to conserve the heritage of the area. It became very bitter, didn't it?

Ted Rush: Mm, that's exactly right, yeah. So, and... Oh it did but I wasn't involved in it at all. But I know that there were all sorts of trouble. But people like Paul Coghlan and Barry Pullen, Glyn Elias and others, we really, and I - we'd stand our ground. I had sufficient experience of that with the freeway, for instance. I was, I think with Harold Mackrell, he went with me. I can remember, we went somewhere, a neutral sort of place, to talk to the CRB in those days. The Country Roads Board people I think were actually doing all the building and they said that they wanted to see us, so off we went. Then when I got there, there was just two of them and the two of us.



They said right, now this is what we're going to do. I said, I beg your pardon? I'll never forget this. I said, well they said yes, it's all laid out here. I said look, I'm not going to read this now. Thank you for coming along and we'll have a look at it, and so on. Harold used to be constantly saying oh, I couldn't believe what you were saying to them.

Facilitator 2: Harold was - we both knew Harold... he was a very polite and... a gentle person wasn't he? Yes.

Ted Rush: Yes, Harold... Yes he was, he was. [25:11]

He was a very gentle person, yes. Anyway, we were anxious with a lot of the things to see what really lay behind. We weren't servants of the bodies who were - we weren't fellow sort of travellers and so all that was really interesting. Then...

Facilitator 1: Because it was radical, what they wanted, what the Country Roads Board wanted to do...

Ted Rush: Well yes, it was not what we would want. I didn't know much of the history before but we didn't want certain things to be done just because the Country Roads Board wanted them. So I think a lot of it was an attempt to raise the capacities of the Council to affect what was going on in the city. That was one of the incidents which brought all that about. We also - well that had a funny ending really because just towards the end of when I was there we had a meeting with - what's the man, he was a member for Carioh[unclear]. No Tresize [unclear].

He was roads minister and oh, it was one of the funniest moments of my life because we talked about what we were wanting and I can't even remember what it was. But he then said when we were leaving, look, he said, oh, he said, I'll be looking for you people when you're elected too. He was in opposition actually then, but we'll be looking for people like you. I thought I can't believe he'd say that [laughs]. Oh, we did have funny times.

Facilitator 2: He was impressed with you then.

Ted Rush: Yeah, well not, I was really the third party. The other two were spot on.

Facilitator 1: You sound like a hard bargainer, Ted.

[27:22]



Ted Rush: Well, we did bargain and we were keen that the right behaviours were associated with whatever we were doing. Oh, another case of that was - see, this next one led us to see [Hamer]. But there were people bashing down buildings night and day, so to speak, and there was a building on the corner of Gore Street and... Victoria Parade, which was a beautiful big old house, had a stunning staircase, and I'd only just seen it very briefly.

Louise Elliot, she was wonderful about all these things. She became a councillor too as things went, and Louise offered to check as often as she thought was - well, whether it was, if it were strictly necessary someone else would be involved. But she was party to saying look, we've got to protect this building come high water, or whatever come. So it was the middle of winter and we had a whiff of what was going on and she rang us to say that she believed they would be there late in the day, like midnight or whatever and we should all go down there.

So down we all went and low and behold there they were. They'd been there, these people, smashing the place up and there was fog. They were hurling the things from the roof, oh preservation and they were really school kids, I think, under this man from Werribee. Well, they said they were. I mean they might've been. Could've said anything I suppose. That had to be demolished because they had done so much damage.

Facilitator 2: Was that Money Miller's house? Mm, I think it might've been.

Ted Rush: I don't know whose house it was. It, yes, it was...

Facilitator 2: It was a very elaborate Victorian house.

Ted Rush: Yes, it was really the most elaborate building I think of its kind in the area.

[29:52]

So, and then that sort of brought us to have contact with Hamer and Hamer was fairly good. Another funny thing happened about that. As we persevered, Hunt was the Minister for I don't know...

Facilitator 2: Planning? Planning, do you think?

Ted Rush: Yes, he was associated with planning, yes exactly and - I think it was planning. It might have been housing might've been in the title, too. I'm not sure what his title actually was now. But anyway, what happened when that was coming to an



end, a very funny thing happened. We had to see Hunt about some matter and a good friend of mine, Howard Nathan... and he's now a supreme court judge, too. Oh he's finished. He's sort of not working anymore. But what happened was that he and I were called to see Hunt at the same time.

Hunt had no idea we knew one another and so off we went down there and really it was funny, now Councillor Rush do you know Councillor Nathan [laughs].

Facilitator 2: So, Howard Nathan was from...?

Ted Rush: South Melbourne.

Ted Rush: Mm, and so that was all really very interesting and things then began to quieten down. There was more sort of access to the Ministers and so on, but that didn't stop some of the things happening.

Facilitator 1: Well, opposite that highly decorative house on the corner of Gore and Victoria Parade was also a terrace block that was...

Ted Rush: Oh, right.

[31:48]

Yes, that was also knocked down. That's right.

Facilitator 1: Yes, yes and a long period of inaction over rebuilding on that site due to union action, I think.

Ted Rush: Yes, well we seemed to be able to get - I didn't ever have that happen, but the CFMEU or one of those unions was very pro-Green and I think they called it sometimes pro-Green. Anyway, they would be prepared to help. But of course Sunday morning at one o'clock in the morning wasn't really the best of times to try and win that argument.

Facilitator 1: Mm, so you were really, as a councillor, Ted, you were really wanting to have more information about which private developers might've been demolishing houses and also what the Housing Commission itself might've been doing?

Ted Rush: Yes, that's the case, and permits. We began to know that permits were being done in a fairly ordinary way and we could see what was going on. That was the worst of the things that happened, I think, and...



Facilitator 1: Mm, were you involved in the Atherton Gardens, establishment of the Atherton Gardens?

Ted Rush: No, I was just a bit before that, to be fair to Joe Byrne and all those people. They did some very good stuff in that area, they really did, and it's been developing more and more as time goes by. I mean I think now it's a really a very interesting locality. I think the people there are, they're not rebellious about what's going on or anything like that. It's really good that they're there. That...

Facilitator 1: Mm, but you worked on other issues, too, with Council.

Ted Rush: Well yes, there were all sorts of things. There is a very local thing. Another funny story was that I was responsible for care of Council property I think. I was never sure what it actually was.

[34:15]

But anyway - because I knew what things had to be done I'd get them done, nothing happened. But I think I was a sort of like the Council. We didn't give particular tasks to particular councillors like you would with the State Government, for example, and anyway again the, Joe Byrne and all those people really did set out to make improvements with the Library. Because there was - what's his name? A very old man...

Facilitator 2: Oh, the old librarian? ...Yes, I can't remember his name. A wonderful photograph of him.

Ted Rush: Yes. He had won his way, so to speak, I think three or four years' before I was there and I can remember going to that library and the chaos in the, it was only in the reading room, current reading room. He was so, I thought he was so old and he was about to be replaced by - oh again, you see this name business - the chap who became, he became librarian. He Harknett, Harts, Harley, a name like that, anyway he was, they were left together to try and work things out.

Now the bloke who was put in place after the old one, he was determined to have the glamorous lights. Well that nearly burnt the Council down. It was a waste of money and of course I didn't know the background to all that so there might've been lots of other things. But anyway, it was duly finished and it must've been my second or third year, second year probably, anyway I was the person responsible



for the library building. It had been, Eileen Wheeler had been before me and it was disgusting. It was disgusting I suppose what goes on everywhere now even.

But I got the honour of being in charge of the library when it was opened. I'd only been there three weeks in that position and poor old Eileen Wheeler didn't get a say. Well at least I think. Now someone's pinched the - it's interesting, I must try and find out, the plaque that was there's gone, just recently.

[37:11]

Facilitator 2: Louise Elliot has now been taking an interest again, but the plaque, would this be the plaque that was commemorating the building of the whole wing of the library, opened by the original, by the Mayor at the time, Councillor Ewing? Back in 1880?

Ted Rush: No, I don't think that was there even in 1880. There's a sketch of the Town Hall and I don't think it goes all the way down to...

Facilitator 2: No, that's the original building but then the new, the wing.... the later wing which was by - of course my memory's gone now.

Ted Rush: I know, it goes.

Facilitator 2: I forgotten the architect. [Unclear] that like...

[Over speaking]

Ted Rush: John-, was it Johnson?... Yes, George Johnson. George Johnson built it and we know his descendent who's done quite a bit of work on it.

Facilitator 2: There would've been a plaque for that.

Ted Rush: Yes I know... Peter [Johnson], yes. When I say I know him, I know who he is and, yes.

Facilitator 2: So, but back to the old chap in the library, he must've been there for many years.

Ted Rush: Look I've been, I fished all these things out that I've been...

[38:29]

Oh yes, there are stories about him. But what impressed me most was he was simply very old.



- Facilitator 2: Yes, looked about 90.
- Ted Rush: [Laughs] Yeah I think he would be as old as that. Anyway, so they were the sort of things that we - it was really a renovation. I can remember once saying that we were renovators. Renovators in a funny sort of way in all sorts of areas. ... We weren't new.
- Facilitator 2: Yeah, do you remember Mrs Cutten who was the descendant of Samuel Ewing? I think his name was Samuel.
- Ted Rush: I don't think so.
- Facilitator 2: She was a descendant, she gave a lot of money [to the library] I think they've still got the Ewing Bequest, haven't they?
- Ted Rush: Yes, I think that's still...
- Facilitator 2: So I'm not sure how much money they get but it's for purchasing books as far as I know.
- Facilitator 1: You'll often get a book from the library with a nameplate in the front...
- Ted Rush: Oh yes. [...saying it's from]... The Ewings.
- Facilitator 1: So that's before your time. [39:40]
- Ted Rush: Yes, well it's really interesting. It's so much - in retrospect - so much seemed to happen just in my time I was there.
- Facilitator 2: Yes, so when did you actually retire from the Council?
- Ted Rush: Well I think I finished - I went to hospital I think in July '75. No that might, I don't know whether that's right.
- Oh, I got hepatitis and I was really quite ill. So, and I knew I'd been doing too many things. It was just hopeless, and I didn't mind doing them you see, that was, I can...
- Facilitator 1: Yes, and I was talking to Mike Moore and he recalls you talking about your work with kindergartens.
- Ted Rush: Well yes, see I've done a number of things. I was vice president for years, a number of years, of the Free Kindergarten Association and, when it was - it was



changing, trying to keep going with the money it had. Yes, I was there for more than, I think, more than 10 years I think. I was there for quite a while, anyway, and I was quasi president for quite a bit of it because of people retiring and all the rest of it. I found that extremely interesting.

We wrote up the, what is the framework of the current change that's going on in kindergartens, with all sorts of, in a very detailed way we were putting down what was acceptable behaviour for a lot of things and the way that things should be set out and so on. That was good. So, and see I've done a - I was just thinking, it's making me think about it - a million and one things. I was president of the Victoria Teachers - not school - Teaching of English Association for years.

Facilitator 1: Yes, that's a very vibrant organisation.

Ted Rush: I seemed to have plenty of things to do. So it really is interesting, and of course this...

[Aside discussion]

Facilitator 2: Fitzroy Street? [42:24]

Ted Rush: Yes, and I don't, see I've got several sources I've looked at. One says 163 and one says 183 - or more than one, I think - 183, so I'm trying to sort of grab that dog.

Facilitator 1: Mike Moore is very good on that.

Ted Rush: Yes, he is. I'll speak to Mike again. I saw him just the other day.

[Aside discussion]

Ted Rush: Anyway, what happened here was that when I came here this was very, very sort of - what's the right word? It was used by a lot of people who were drunks going up and down the street during the days and so on. Anyway, just before I came, I think just weeks before I came, the nuns in here, in the next property arrived. You see I think they were brought out by Archbishop Knox because he was a friend of Mother Theresa, at Calcutta.

Facilitator 1: Sisters of Charity?

Ted Rush: The Sisters... Yeah, Sisters of, yes, Charity. Isn't it awful, I don't notice any names like that. Oh, it really is interesting. Anyway, when I came here it was all summed up really when one of my uncles who was always pleased to say what he thought



of things, he came once for lunch. Oh, and he said, when I opened the front door they were milling around him, really and his wife.

[Laughter]

He said Christ, where do you think you've come from?

[Laughter]

[44:30]

Ted Rush: That had sort of overtones of that sort of thing. But, when they first came they were brought out here by Archbishop Knox because he was the papal something or other, papal - we still have them here - anyway, the papal appointment to Calcutta - Kolkata - and he retired from that position to become Archbishop of Melbourne. So what happened was he said to - I presume he said - something like, to Mother Theresa look, we've got all these down and out women, drunks in the streets, would you like to come and try and help us out.

Well, even before he arrived I think that had been set aside because they had a sort of a drive to find all the drunks and they only found five [laughs]. Father Everstini told me that - he was connected with Knox as well. He was sort of a personal secretary I think to Knox. Anyway, what happened was then the, presumably the dio -, the, well we'll call it Knox, I think Knox then said well, we'll set it up and it can be used to have men stay there. Well, the state of affairs was really pretty bleak because there were men, youngish men, trying to make all these other men behave and even had some of the nuns there overnight.

Oh, it was awful and that was debated by the Council whether they should be allowed to stay there and oh, I was either frightened of the Catholic Church or I was a sort of stooge to the Catholic Church. It didn't matter which way I went I was going nowhere. So when it was debated in caucus, I suppose first - anything in those days we'd always do in caucus - it was agreed that they should be left there for - after - one fuss involved with this was they should be allowed to stay there for three - for six months, provided everything was put in order which provided safety.

Well, that went on and they had to put a new fire brigade. They didn't have a fire brigade ladder. Anyway I can remember saying that provided all the issues about fire are attended to they can stay longer, we'll see if they can stay longer than that or something. So that was alright.

[47:28]



Anyway, what happened then they said, didn't even think to go ahead with any of the things we said they had to do but they had settled there with dreadful situation. They had drink. They'd be going up and down the streets with bottles and things and there were, amongst these men there was a man - I don't know whether you've come across him through anyone else - he was called Big George. I think that's what he was called. He was sort of a head honcho for these people who were wandering around and they had two or three ladies who were really just hung on at the end of the line of these people and went around with them.

One of them was murdered over the road. She was found in one of the properties that goes down and it never ever seemed to reach the newspapers, I don't think. Anyway she, no one of course knew who'd done this and it was so many possibilities I think they might just have given up. People, we, I mean we wondered whether it was Big George. Well, I suppose if I had to pick one of them that's who I would pick, but I don't think there was any sort of clear evidence. So anyway, that went on and that went on for quite some time and the nuns left and it was under the control of these young men, Catholic young men, some organisation.

Then it was decided that it wasn't a success, to say the very least. It wasn't a success so it was arranged for these men to be taken to - again you see, these names - the place midway between the airport and Sydney Road, with the Catholic...

Facilitator 2: It's not Oscenand House?

Ted Rush: No, I don't think it was, no. It was a Catholic. Anyway, all these men got into the bus and off they went and I thought well, they'll be back by later tonight. You know, they never ever came back. It was one of the most astonishing sort of senses that you could've had. I don't know why they didn't come back. I suppose because that was that was closed and all the substructures vanished I suppose. I don't know, but it was such a funny feeling. [50:12]

Facilitator 2: Would this be at the same time that a lot of the hotels were closed down as well?

Ted Rush: Well yeah, well it was mixed up with all of that. It's hard to know who talked to who about what was actually going on.

Facilitator 1: Well, the Catholic Church must've had something...



Ted Rush: Mm, unless the Catholic Church has still got it and of course, it being Mother Theresa, Mother Theresa would come out. I'm hoping to be invited to Calcutta on 4 September when she becomes a saint.

Facilitator 2: Well, I have a memory - which I thought might've been a dream - of seeing her in Gertrude Street. I thought that's extraordinary, and I hadn't realised that she visited. But well we still see the Sisters with their characteristic saris, don't we? Walking around, yeah. So you're going to go to Calcutta?

Ted Rush: Oh yes.... Yes, that's right. ... Well, if someone invites me [laughs]. But really, I was on speaking terms with her and I didn't blame these nuns. They were more protecting her when they thought she was going to be sort of bailed up by someone, I think.

Facilitator 1: Mm, so now the building is run by the Sisters of Charity for...

Ted Rush: Mm, I think...

Facilitator 2: I think it is the Little Sisters of the Poor, is Mother Theresa's group.

Ted Rush: It's on their gate.

Facilitator 2: We'll check.

[51:50]

Ted Rush: Might have missionary in the words on it.

Facilitator 2: But, so what was your impression of Mother Theresa, having met her and talked to her?

Ted Rush: Well, I didn't really get to a stage really of talking to her about what went on but she really was a very humble lady, or that was certainly the appearance, and she had done all - what they tended to do was really what should've been being provided by the Government. I mean, and oh there was incidents. We had incidents. Another incident was when one of the people, one of the group of them, one of them broke into my neighbour's car and vomited all over the front seat. Oh, God, and I can remember him washing.

I've never known whether this really got through to the Sisters or not. But as soon as he knew that she was coming he decided to take the hose out and wash the street down. That was a Sunday morning.



Facilitator 1: That's your story there, Ted, is it? Is that...

Ted Rush: These are my earliest memories of all this. So you can...

Facilitator 1: Yes, have you covered things there?

[Over speaking]

Ted Rush: Oh well you see there was, I think it's worth - see, I'm still sort of, from time to time, trying to say to people look when you talk about the institutes, around these nuns are still there after all those years nearly 40 years I would think, or more perhaps. They sort of work away all the time and they plainly take women in there in emergencies, certainly, and they're really good. I just was thinking the other day when I saw them with a Vietnamese lady and there they are, they're Indians by and large doing their work, doing the work in there. Although there are some Australians as well. [54:02]

I don't know how, I really just don't know how it all works. But that was really good, yeah. Non-Catholic, and I was not a stooge of the Catholic Church. Now, these are the ones, well there's all sorts of things. I was pleased when you asked about the social fabric because I hadn't thought about it very much, and when I did the count about 10 houses this way and 10 that way, the 10 on this side were often, most of them I think, were from overseas. They were overseas people come here. On the other side of the street, as far as I can, remember they were nearly all, as a result of this, almost all of them were Australian born.

That's an interesting thing, but we certainly have had a wide range of people around and Gore Street, continued down there. There's important people down there I think, I don't know. I think John Carr's is one of them, the...

So that all goes on. Also - let me just...

Facilitator 1: So most of the houses would be owner occupied.

Ted Rush: Yes, owner occupied, mm.

Facilitator 1: So immigrants were purchasing the houses.

Ted Rush: Yes, and we got them for practically nothing, really disgusting. But it just is amazing. You see, we're right at the top of the hill and I think some of these recent people have woken up to that and it's a very steep hill down...



...down to...

Facilitator 1: Yeah, down to Smith Street.

Ted Rush: Yes, but the thing which I find most extraordinary is I would've thought the Australians wouldn't have wanted to be on the hill running down. See, from here it goes just down and it goes down to the

[56:13]

basement level most have got and I thought that, the, they might've been more interested in having the, being on the top of the hill so to speak. It's interesting, but...

Facilitator 1: Are they bigger houses on the other side? Are the houses...

Ted Rush: Oh no, look that's another thing which is very important. I really am delighted that we've been, except for one or two places, Gore Street has kept its houses. We are a remarkable place in terms of the variety, it's just wonderful when you look at it.

Facilitator 1: Does that happen through the Fitzroy Residents' Association do you think, Ted?

Ted Rush: Probably a bit. I was a member of there but I haven't - I really only hear about the properties really, people like Louise. If I see Louise and we have a cup of coffee we'll talk about what's going on.

Facilitator 1: Mm, Ted can I take you back to the free kindergarten movement?... When you were developing policy and changing things, what were the conditions like in Fitzroy for young children?

Ted Rush: Well at that time they weren't too bad. The lady who was principal of Clyde College, I think it was, she set up a kindergarten just near the swimming pool. It's got a name. Then there was, see the kids here they all went to the one just down the street here. So in my time...

Facilitator 2: Excuse me, Lady Gowrie? Is that one, or was it a different one?

Ted Rush: No. Lady Gowrie is different, Lady Gowrie's in... Carlton. ...I think they're coming under tough times too now. It's a money business and...

Facilitator 2: Yes, I've just forgotten the names of...

[58:10]



Ted Rush: The 1930s, see what I did, it was really interesting. I haven't thrown all these things away, I'm about to open a big box. But when I was at the FKA I was in charge of... [Free Kindergarten Association]. It was never free, but then never mind. But then, when it had its 100th anniversary I was the person who did all the, I saw all the 20 initial kindergartens, went to them all. One was here, the one next to the church and... In Napier Street, yes.

Facilitator 1: Where Brian Howe was minister?

Ted Rush: Yes, that's right, yes and that kindergarten was really interesting because it got mixed up with the Hungarian people, the printers. It was really interesting to think that these things went on. Anyway, I went to present them, we had a plaque for each of them and I noticed one in the City that we had has been taken down. I just wondered how long they would last for some people. Because I wasn't prepared to say to them oh, don't worry, we won't worry about it. I was saying that this is important and I gave away all my plaques, including the one in the city.

But anyway, here what happened was that I, I thought it was interesting that I was going around there and I was going to present this and so on. So I go around there and there are about oh, 30 people there, perhaps, and a couple of clergy who knew the ways things have been working here. So I read my spiel and a voice at the back yelled, that is not true.

[Laughter]

I thought what am I supposed to do now? Oh, I'll never forget that.

Facilitator 1: Now, some of those free kindergartens are named after à Beckett down in...
[60:33]

Ted Rush: Yes, Lady à Beckett, yes.[down in South Melbourne].

Mm, and more importantly, well not more importantly but more interestingly, the lady who became, who was in charge of the Red Cross during the Second World War - what's her name? She was at the nursery at, the worst of the nurseries, she was. She was one of the Kimpton family. They were here in Fitzroy in the olden days. She left the kindergarten on condition - just as chairperson - but on condition that if she, if and when the War finished, she was able to go back from running the Red Cross for Australia to be president of this kindergarten. You know, it's really interesting what goes on.



- Facilitator 2: Yes, did that happen?
- Ted Rush: Yeah, I think it did. Anyway, there's just been a book written about her. Where's my copy?
- Facilitator 1: Red Cross, mm. Did you meet Lady à Beckett?
- Ted Rush: No. She had finished by the time...
- Facilitator 1: Mm there's a portrait of her in the State, yeah.
- Ted Rush: That's right and there were, these 20 places were in North Melbourne. Oh, there was one - that's another one I got into trouble with - the St James' Old Cathedral. It had a kindergarten and I wanted to have the plaque put up. But they said we don't want a plaque like that. That's the only one I think who...
- Facilitator 2: What date was that?
- Ted Rush: When that happened?... Oh, just recently, like four years ago I think.
- Facilitator 2: Oh, I'm just wondering whether, because it is classified by the Trust and maybe they thought we're not allowed to put a plaque on the building.
- [62:40]
- Ted Rush: Yeah, someone else asked me that. It's interesting, I'd forgotten all about that. Yes, that might be what's what, and, abut it was really, it really was preoccupied with sort of its own status, I think. So I spoke to a couple of people there.
- Facilitator 1: Well I hope they put it in the archives, got quite a...
- Ted Rush: Well yes...
- Yeah, but they, I think they might've sent it back to us.
- They sort of wouldn't have things. I know, and saying all these things I finish up with still - actually, I think I'm lucky that I don't worry about it. I just think if it's a big part of it you do it. Then they just go home, oh I went home. I mean [laughs]. But that's really interesting.
- Facilitator 1: What else have you got there, Ted? What else have you been thinking about?
- Ted Rush: Can you read, by any means can you read this? I've got arthritis and I can't even write properly anymore.



Facilitator 1: I think, Ted, you might be better at writing. Oh it's, you're writing is better.

Ted Rush: But that's all just a whole lot of things and if you were interested in any you'd have a look at because some of them I ran out of space.

Facilitator 2: Could we type it up and...

Ted Rush: Well, you certainly could but I don't know that that's...

[64:19]

Facilitator 1: So I'm just trying to pick out some key words here to, mm. Shopping.

Ted Rush: Yes, shopping. I didn't get very far with shopping. We didn't - we didn't have - we didn't deal with any shopping things I remember when I was on council.

Facilitator 1: No, but for you as a resident...

Ted Rush: Oh yes for me as... Well we had, of course, one of Melbourne's best butchers, Jonathan. You know Jonathan?

Facilitator 2: Oh, yes of course. That's Collingwood though. ... In Smith Street, Collingwood, yes.

Ted Rush: Yes, just across, yes.

Well that's the trouble, only the boundary line, you see. We were always very pleased about that. There were never very many complaints that I was aware of about the shopping business.

Facilitator 1: So you would've strolled down to Smith Street to the green grocers, butchers...

Ted Rush: Mm. We had a green grocer. We had small butchers. Coles was there and it left until it came back now and I hope - I don't want to go and yell at them, but anyway, the windows at the second level, all had people's laundry out in the sun. Look up and what do you see first? Ladies panties.

[65:57]

[Laughter]

Ted Rush: Now I'd like to, I'm not a..... But in the interests of the - because it was dreadful that that all was knocked down. It didn't need to be.

Facilitator 1: Yes, but that was a few years ago. This is the second regeneration of it, isn't it?



- Ted Rush: Yes.
- Facilitator 1: Yes, so your supermarket shopping or grocery shopping would've been?
- Ted Rush: Well that was, we had only Woolworths. So we didn't ... Get many alternatives, and certainly the big buildings down here are still, many of them are still there. It's really a worrying business for everybody because they can't be used for very much ordinary life. See I was interested when we saw the, when the man spoke at the meeting about when Val Moon was there. That was, you see that was one of the big buildings which had been fully occupied, but I think a lot of these other ones have probably not even in the past been fully occupied except for sort of rubbishy things.
- Right now, oh, I don't know why I have trouble with these names. The ones who built their, they've built behind now. There's a huge amount of change going on. They've been the...
- Facilitator 1: Oh, down on Wellington Street...
- Ted Rush: Yes.
- Facilitator 1: ...or Little Oxford Street. [67:38]
- Ted Rush: No, no on this side, on - it was Paterson's, Paterson's.
- But it's interesting that, when I read that question I thought well, I don't really know very much about it at all. You see now, but again they're on the Collingwood side. We've now got a very good Muslim business with all...
- Facilitator 1: Oh, that's Sonsa.
- Ted Rush: Yes. ... Turkish...
- [Over speaking]
- Facilitator 1: With halal, with halal meat?
- Ted Rush: Yeah, yes. They're doing very well, I think, and...
- Facilitator 2: Well, during the time that you were on the Council a lot of work was done providing sort of social services through the Council. I don't think they do that now.



Ted Rush: Well they're still doing it a bit, I've got a cousin who's now 93 and she refuses to do anything but manage her own affairs and she's in touch with Richmond Council. They're not as generous as they used to be, I don't think.

Facilitator 2: But do you remember those days, being that there was particular problems with social, with council trying to deal with social...

[69:07]

Ted Rush: Well we had trouble with the Aborigines which should never have, never ever have happened, and they moved, they sat on the Fitzroy side of the street. All the Fitzroy people in the end got rid of them to be on the other side, just on the other side of the street.

Facilitator 1: But the City of Yarra still says no drinking in the street.

Ted Rush: Yes. They're not bad, though. The Aborigines are not causing any fuss at the moment.

Facilitator 1: You've got here, Ted, not seeing with difficult association in your notes here, about the Aborigines.

Ted Rush: Yes.

Facilitator 1: So when you first came to live here...

Ted Rush: Oh, well they were in that gang I mentioned. There were several of them and there was one, Nancy, she was - there was Big George and Nancy. I don't think they had anything in common with them except being part of that show. You see, another thing, a strange thing that happened was that Mr Leascue who was about three or four houses up, he was murdered down here in, oh way back. Just after I was on the Council I think. But anyway he, they never ever found out who killed him either. He was with his wife and daughter and...

Facilitator 1: Was there a strong police presence around? A strong police presence?

Ted Rush: No, not too. Not very much, no. There was a famous, another of these - I know, if you tell me to shut up I will, but [laughs] - but it was interesting that when the nuns were in here, there was a young Aborigine called - what's his name? It'll come to me, I'm sure. Anyway, he was a nuisance of the first order, he was drunk and he would cause trouble and he - and one day I was here at home. Normally I would've been at work, but I was home here, and I bang, bang, bang on the door



to find two nuns. I said oh, hello, and they said oh, look we're in trouble. It's very difficult here. I said oh, what's happened?

[71:30]

They said oh, Leon's jumped [laughs], jumped over the fence and he's lying on the ground [laughs]. Anyway, what happened then was that the - and really, it was a comedy beyond belief in a funny sort of way, given that Leon was alright. But he just was lying there. So I then went out and had a look and low and behold Father Everstini - most amazing what happens in life - he was coming, he was involved with the nuns, with the Archbishop. But he, I said look, can you come and help and so he said yes, he said - he was a big man. He said oh, I can climb over the fence.

So he climbed over the fence and there was Leon, stunned. He wasn't injured. Nothing broken or whatever. But by that time we'd rung an ambulance and the ambulance came and the police came and [laughs] the police knew Leon from, they were on very common ground. So they can't get Leon up. The ambulance people were saying to him just get up, just get up, there's the - it was just amazing, anyway. We finally all finished up out there in the back street, in the Little Gore Street, and now the police said now, we've had enough Leon, get into the van. Wouldn't, stood there.

Leon, get into the van, and then came - the language has to be spoken - get into the fucking van. He jumped up and ran [laughs] and then the neighbourhood's like, this is the difficulty of sort of poor old Leon, oh. Yeah I can still, the nuns were there and we're all out there and [laughs]...

Facilitator 1: Well, you've obviously been very happy living around here, Ted. You're observations of the social fabric [laughs]...

Ted Rush: Yes, it's the social fabric well and truly here. But, and of course you see when I first came here there was a lady who ran the - and I don't know her name either - but there was a wine bar and that made life even more complicated I think.

[74:12]

... it was just right here at the corner of, almost the corner of... Gore and Smith. Down there.

Facilitator 1: No, Gore and Smith don't cross.



- Ted Rush: No she, Little - she was about two properties back towards Smith Street from Little Gore Street. It was only a small place, and it might even be where there's now another big place.
- Facilitator 1: Mm, Ted you've got here Bill Earl, teacher west side, east side.
- Ted Rush: Yes, that was when I was numbering the things. But it's an interesting place.
- Facilitator 1: Yeah, you've always felt safe?
- Ted Rush: Yes, although we did, we've had two or three things happen. One was when an Aborigine who had, I think he had a big stick, went into next door, got over the fence. It's hard to get over the fence, but he did and he frightened them a bit, but he didn't do anything so there was - but no, no we haven't been - I don't think any of us have felt frightened, really. The Mrs - that showed when Mrs Leascue was killed half way down to [unclear] Street. But he, he was sort of - it was dreadful. Didn't seem a local thing at all, I don't think. But come and have a look at the garden.
- If you want to talk to me any other time...

END OF TRANSCRIPT